

DECENCY, DIGNITY, AND DEMOCRACY

The National Welfare Rights Organization regards adequate income for every citizen as its most basic and urgent priority. We believe that no system which does not provide income maintenance and allow the recipient to keep his self respect, his dignity as a person and his democratic rights under the constitution, is not a valid system. Our present welfare system fails miserably by all of these tests. A few basic elements to insure these rights are needed:

1. The program should operate by a simple, fixed set of rules which do not allow subjective judgment by an administrator.
2. Statements of income or other personal information should be by declarative affidavit such as used by the Federal Income Tax System.
3. Information about the system should be widely disseminated and generally available.
4. Should have a built-in grievance system which allows the recipient to get a fair hearing when he has a grievance against the system.
5. Should include some work incentive provisions to allow the family to keep some portion of earnings beyond the guaranteed minimum income level.

This last point relates to the fact that most welfare recipients and other poor people want to improve their lot by working just as other Americans. Work incentive however, provides a serious dilemma since they can rapidly increase the costs of the program beyond the levels indicated earlier. Our organization regards the setting of a high minimum payment level as the most important priority as opposed to building in large work incentives. It is our view that most of the "negative income tax" schemes that have been advanced, squander potentially available income maintenance dollars, especially on work incentive provisions and set the minimum income for those totally dependent on government support at too low a level.

Representative GRIFFITHS. Thank you very much, Mr. Wiley.
Mrs. Sanders?

**STATEMENT OF MRS. BEULAH SANDERS, SECOND VICE CHAIRMAN,
NATIONAL WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION; CHAIRMAN, NEW
YORK CITYWIDE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF WELFARE
GROUPS**

Mrs. SANDERS. Madam Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, Dr. Wiley has given you somewhat of a broad statement. But in my participation in the speech, I would like to hit on key issues that affect welfare recipients. I am going to try to bring to you highlights and points of just how it is to live on welfare with a budget as small as it is.

Some of the things I shall be talking about are things that are not in the budget, things that we need for our children to survive in this society, with a decent education along with other necessities that they have to have.

In grants that welfare recipients receive today, there is no money for newspapers, magazines, educational TV. Teachers give children assignment to bring in for current events. One of the things that the welfare recipients are saying is how can we give our children these things to help the school system educate them when we do not have the money to buy them? We have asked and listed demands over and over again, that our children must have newspapers, they must have magazines, they must have a television. There are lots of people that would tell you practically every welfare recipient I know of has television. But where did they get the money from to buy that television? In order to buy a newspaper or television that a child might need for education, he has to take the money from somewhere else,