

For myself, as a personal judgment, I think the basic income maintenance for the so-called deserving poor—who do not work because they cannot or should not—is so very important that I will be willing to accept, as a price of the system, payments to the “undeserving poor” who might work less than they should. I use the words “deserving” and “undeserving” because they are common phrases, not because they have meaning to me. I do not think the children of “undeserving” parents are themselves undeserving of a chance in life. If we took this view, we would be perpetuating their life on welfare.

In any case, a carefully designed system would minimize the size of the “undeserving” group by building connections between income-maintenance programs and training-employment programs. Nonetheless, let us face it—any broad-brush income-maintenance scheme will have some “chiselers.” There always are some “chiselers.” The only final way to separate the “deserving” from the “undeserving” is by a careful case-by-case investigation; and this is where we are today, with the public assistance system—a system of investigation which many find unacceptable.

What I am saying, bringing together the reason for trying to get further information as well as my own advocacy of a broad income-maintenance scheme at this time, is that I do want the evidence of how many, if any, will work how much less under a basic income-maintenance system. I, for myself, would opt for such a system even in the knowledge that some persons would work less. I would accept such “chiseling” as the price of a needed system, just as we accept similar chiseling, which is much larger in dollar terms, illegal tax evasion, as the price of a nonoppressive, positive graduated income tax system. Neither form of chiseling is desirable, but the systems themselves are desirable and necessary. Any attempt to make a perfect separation between the sheep and the goats would transform both a positive income tax system and a basic system of income maintenance into far less acceptable systems.

For this reason, then, Madam Chairman, I would as a personal matter endorse broad income maintenance, while as a professional and bureaucratic matter I am sponsoring an experiment to obtain more information.

Thank you.

(Prepared statement of Professor Levine follows:)

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT A. LEVINE

I am pleased that the subcommittee has asked me to present my personal views on the welfare system and possible reforms in that area. I should like to make clear first of all that what I say here represents my own views and should not be construed as necessarily reflecting the policies of the Office of Economic Opportunity which I serve as Assistant Director for Research, Plans, Programs and Evaluation.

I am convinced that the broad system of income maintenance which has evolved over the last 30 years is inadequate to serve the needs of America, and needs reform. That part of the income maintenance system most widely known and condemned is that popular called welfare, and the most roundly criticized part of “welfare” is Aid to Families with Dependent Children. I include myself among those critics.

Before I begin the main body of my presentation I should like to suggest what we might reasonably expect to obtain from an income maintenance system. Very simply, what is needed, and what should be possible to obtain, is a system which would both provide Americans with an income sufficient to the necessities of life,