

simple answer to a complex problem. The problems of poverty in this country will not be handled by a single program, no matter how well developed. Our sad experience as social workers has been that every program carries with it certain limits; and no programs, as we see it, will be able to do the total job. My concern is that we at least accept the concept of responsibility which has been established in our country for many, many years. When we are told that to guarantee rights is a new concept in American history, I must point out that at least in the field of education, we, unlike many other countries of the world, have accepted the fact that the Nation as a whole has to accept the responsibility of guaranteeing to each child the right to an education.

And when people talk of morality, I would have to ask which is more immoral: To take from the affluent to help those who do not have the wherewithal to live, or to deny generation after generation the wherewithal with which to hope. Or, if you please, to punish, degrade, attack those to whom we give inadequate assistance?

In my own city of Baltimore, it was only 2 or 3 months ago that the welfare department was finally convinced that the checks for those on welfare might not have to be printed with a distinct color so that, as recipients cashed the checks, the stigma of being on welfare would be communicated quickly. I mentioned this because it seems to me that we are really fundamentally in the field of values, and we need to make some decision as to the sort of country we want to become.

Now, I do want to indicate what has happened to us as social workers, because the National Association of Social Workers is a professional organization with a membership of 50,000 individuals located throughout the country in 170 chapters. Our members are employed in governmental and voluntary, health and welfare agencies. A substantial proportion are employed in State and local welfare departments.

I presume that it is news when social workers attack the system for which so many work by saying that it is outmoded, inadequate, and cannot begin to do the job. I shall try to develop this view.

In essence, we believe that every individual in our society has a right to a certain and adequate income and that society as a whole benefits when this is realized. This goal can be achieved only through a combination of approaches. This combination includes:

First: The opportunity for employment, and I guess we are not as pessimistic as others are about the desire for people to work. Somehow, there are lots of other incentives in our society that prompt people to work, in addition to money.

Second: The improvement and expansion of social insurance. We realize that many Americans will be out of the poverty, above the poverty lines, if we use the social insurance scheme to provide them with adequate income.

Third: Some device for raising to an adequate income level those persons not in the labor force or those whose work experience is so insubstantial as not to enable them to qualify for adequate social insurance benefits.

Fourth: A reformed and reorganized public assistance program.

I will spell these approaches out in more detail in the course of my testimony. Before doing so, I would like to present a short description of the development of our association's thinking with respect to the