

demeaning, inadequate financial grants. We will never achieve this aim if help which is given is seen as a matter of charity. We will never achieve this aim if the manner of giving and the nature of what is given separates one group of children from another.

I am convinced that the stigma attached to our present public assistance program, a stigma that is inherent in its old English poor law tradition and its conflict with dominant American values makes it impossible to reform that program to meet the needs of those who are and those who will be financially dependent. It is a system that incurs and perpetuates contempt for those who are poor. It is a system that confuses cause and effect; that demands a different code of morality for its beneficiaries than is demanded of those who are not its direct beneficiaries. It reflects a public policy which denigrates the child and his parents, an approach to aid which makes a child feel that he and those around him are less adequate. Somehow, no matter how we feel about the sins of the fathers—or should I say the mothers—in national self-interest we must find the way to rear a new generation of children who do not perpetuate the dependency, and therefore the suffering of their parents and I would ask us to remember that illegitimacy is not created by relief. HEW surveys have shown that four-fifths of all out-of-wedlock children are not receiving public assistance. But let there be no question or mistake about it. Dependency in our Nation is a second-class status. It erodes and corrodes the spirit and body of those who are dependent. Our present public assistance program—and that happens to be the major income transfer program for millions of children and their parents—perpetuates the suffering, the human erosion and human corrosion of those who are dependent. I tell you this from my intimate knowledge of the poor and the recipients of public assistance. This is not a happy or attractive status for millions of Americans. Equally important, it is not a state of affairs that America dare continue to support or perpetuate.

A children's allowance program with an adequate benefit level in this sense is a takeoff program. It promises a floor of income which can be counted upon as a right. It assures the nutrition upon which adequate intellectual and physical growth depend. It offers the clothing, the shelter, the school supplies without which a child cannot do what a child must do at school, in play and with his family. In short, a children's allowance is a device for assuring a floor, an underpinning for all children. It offers an opportunity for a child's parents to achieve adequacy as parents, to achieve a measure of self-direction—control over the decisions that every parent has a right to make about his or her own family. It is a major step in removing the stigma of financial dependency, in reenforcing a positive constructive self-image of poor children and their families. It can remove financial dependency as one of the causes of repeated out-of-wedlock births and thus permit us to identify and focus on measures to deal with the many other causes of out-of-wedlock births in this country. By introducing a guarantee of adequate, equitably provided income for those who are in financial need, we may even relieve the nondependent of any contempt they hold for the poor and any guilt that accompanies that contempt. This, in essence, is what I, as a former welfare commissioner in the Nation's largest city and a former director of child welfare in that same city, see in the program proposed.