

The Steering Committee believes that the nation is now at a stage in its history when it can afford to give serious consideration to such a plan which would raise all 30-million Americans to at least the poverty level. We recognize the need, however, to reexamine the country's financial resources and priorities if we are to add expenditures of the magnitude that appear necessary.

Economists appear to agree that the poverty gap in the United States today is about \$11-billion.* We now spend about \$8-billion to give inadequate assistance to 8-million people. For about \$11-billion more, we can lift all 30-million Americans to the poverty threshold.

This is an exciting and exhilarating challenge and the new Commission on Income Maintenance appointed by President Johnson has been given that assignment. This Steering Committee applauds and welcomes its appointment. It offers its full cooperation to the new Commission. The proposed types, varieties and forms of income maintenance are many, and they deserve careful study and scrutiny. It is the direction which this Committee believes must be taken.

The Steering Committee watches with interest the experiment with a negative income tax now under way with 1,000 families in New Jersey under the auspices of the University of Wisconsin and funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. It would look with favor upon additional experimentation with a variety of forms of income maintenance before enactment of any such major program.

The Committee further recommends that the Congress consider passing legislation which would enable those states which wish to experiment with various income maintenance proposals to do so. It would hope that New York State, under whose auspices the Arden House meeting was convened, would implement such enabling legislation as quickly as possible.

Parenthetically, the Committee would point out that the more successful the nation is in providing jobs and employment opportunities to those now unemployed or underemployed, the smaller will be the financial commitment it must make for income maintenance.

Finally, the Committee notes that while it leans in the direction of a negative income tax, it recognizes that any income maintenance program must be carefully evolved and tested because most programs it is criticizing in this report were sold as being ideal and good at some stage in our history. The Committee is less concerned at this time with the kind of income maintenance that is finally evolved than it is with the acceptance, as a national goal, of the objective that basic economic support, at the poverty level, at least, be assured all our people.

3. NATIONAL STANDARDS

The Arden House conferees believe serious consideration should be given to the inequalities that exist throughout the country because no

*The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Central Population Survey, estimated on March 1, 1968, that the poverty gap is about \$10.8-billion.