

UNIFORM NATIONAL STANDARDS

The Board urges the Congress of the United States to establish realistic national standards for public assistance which would provide a floor below which no person in the land would be expected to live.

One of the principal weaknesses of the present welfare system is that it does not assure every needy American that he will be protected in his essential right to food, clothing and shelter. The lack of federally mandated standards causes a wide variation in public assistance benefits in the fifty states. Such variations range from granting a small percentage of a minimum subsistence standard in some of the poorest states to meeting 100% of basic needs on a more liberal standard in states like New York.

Only Congress can correct this indefensible injustice. It can mandate national standards, and in doing so it would necessarily be required to provide a federal reimbursement formula which would take into account the economic capacity of the state to finance such a standard.

ELIMINATION OF "CATEGORIES"

The Board has long urged the elimination of the so-called federal "categories" of public assistance.

These "categories" have been embedded in the federal public assistance program, dividing up needy people by age or by the condition which created their need. There are dependent children, and families of dependent children, and blind, and aged, and disabled and persons on home relief receiving general assistance.

This jungle of categories complicates administration and creates more problems for people who already have problems enough.

The Board has consistently advocated action by the federal government to establish a single category of assistance based upon need. Such action would make federal financial aid available to all needy persons, including home relief recipients and poor children in foster care, who are not now eligible for federal assistance.

In 1962 the Board combined the categories of Aid to the Aged, Aid to the Blind, and Aid to the Totally and Permanently Disabled into a single category known in the State of New York as Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD). Moreover, the standards of assistance in this state have been made uniform for all basic items in all categories of assistance.

THE PUNITIVE ASPECTS OF THE 1967 SOCIAL SECURITY ACT AMENDMENTS

The Board opposed the action of Congress last year in amending the Social Security Act, and today urges the Congress to repeal or modify the restrictive and punitive provisions of these amendments.

The Board repeats its urgent request that the ADC "freeze" be repealed, that children of unemployed mothers as well as fathers be aided, that ADC payments be permitted to supplement Unemployment Insurance Benefits when these are not sufficient to meet basic needs, and that mothers of dependent children be encouraged to work only when it will be in the best interests of their children.

As this law now stands, it shows a hostility toward needy people that the Board cannot believe to be a reflection of the American conscience.

The Board's views on this legislation have been transmitted to the Congress and to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in the past, and the Board repeats them today, with equal earnestness.

INCOME MAINTENANCE

The Board has given much thought to the various proposals designed, in effect, to replace the present system of public assistance with a new form of income maintenance. These new proposals are intended to separate the provision of financial support to needy persons from the provision of social services to such persons, and to provide a more dignified system of delivery of the funds required for food, clothing, shelter and other basic human needs.

In recent months most of the discussion of such a major change has focused on the proposal of a negative income tax and on the proposal of family or chil-