

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS

THE WELFARE SYSTEM

The Commisison believes that our present system of public assistance contributes materially to the tensions and social disorganization that have led to civil disorders.

Our present system of public welfare is designed to save money instead of people, and tragically ends up doing neither.

This system has two critical deficiencies:

First, it excludes large numbers of persons who are in great need, and who, if provided a decent level of support, might be able to become more productive and self-sufficient. No federal funds are available for millions of men and women who are needy but neither aged, handicapped nor the parents of minor children.

Second, for those included, the system provides assistance well below the minimum necessary for a decent level of existence, and imposes restrictions that encourage continued dependency on welfare and undermine self-respect.

A welter of statutory requirements and administrative practices and regulations operate to remind recipients that they are considered untrustworthy, promiscuous and lazy. Residence requirements prevent assistance to people in need who are newly arrived in the state. Regular searches of recipients' homes violate privacy. Inadequate social services compound the problems.