

APPENDIX 15

POLICY STATEMENT ON POVERTY, JOBS AND INCOME

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION*

POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES

Remunerative employment for those able to work provides the best answer to the problem of poverty. For those unable to work, present methods of combating poverty and supplementing income—such as Social Security, minimum wages, food stamps, school lunches, public housing, unemployment compensation, medicare and medicaid, welfare payments, family and old age assistance and aid to dependent children—while having done much to improve economic and social conditions still have left many people in dire poverty, often through no fault of their own. Therefore a comprehensive new approach is needed to assure jobs and a minimum income with sufficient purchasing power for the approximately one fifth of the American people now living below what are widely minimum standards of income for health and decency. Children are the most tragic victims of poverty, through the stifling of creative potential. In essence, poverty deprives many Americans of their inalienable rights (as set forth in the Declaration of Independence) to "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

POVERTY CAN AND MUST BE ELIMINATED

Modern technology is increasingly bringing within man's capabilities the elimination of poverty in the United States. For the first time in our history adequate nutrition is possible for every person in the USA. Involuntary poverty is therefore ethically intolerable. The persistence of poverty has become a matter for which men are morally responsible.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE APPLICABLE

An analogy with the family is helpful. Each member, within his or her abilities, is considered responsible for contributing to the welfare of the family as a whole. No individual member has the inherent right to shift his responsibility to others, or to have whatever he wants without effort or contribution. But the family as a whole has the responsibility to meet the minimum needs of any of its members who are unable to contribute. Similar principles should apply, so far as they can, in the large family which is the people of our country, and to the people of the world.

GOALS FOR A RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY

1. *Basic health, education and training.*—The first responsibility of society is to give everyone the opportunity to be self-supporting, and make a constructive contribution to society. This entails the provision of adequate health care, education and training.

2. *Jobs for those able and free to work.*—The second responsibility of society is to provide jobs, either in the private sector, or the public sector of the economy, for all who are able to work. This means a massive program of jobs, both in the rural areas of poverty from which many people come to the ghettos, and in the cities themselves. Every possible encouragement should be given to bring industry and other employment into these areas. In order to bring jobs and people together, the mobility of the residents of the inner city or rural slums must be increased. Present transportation facilities are frequently woefully inadequate.

Special programs are needed to help disadvantaged people to develop their own businesses and cooperatives. The example of the successful system of farmer

*Statement submitted by E. Raymond Wilson, Executive Secretary Emeritus.