The system could be reformed by the provision of federal funds, the requirement of federal standards, and the recognition of some rights for the poor as against the bureaucracy. But were all this done the system would hardly differ from the negative income tax proposal.

Automation has made an income maintenance program both necessary and economically feasible.

A STATEMENT BY ECONOMISTS ON INCOME GUARANTEES AND SUPPLEMENTS

The undersigned economists urge the Congress to adopt this year a national system of income guarantees and supplements.

The Poor People's Campaign in Washington is demanding a guaranteed minimum income for all Americans. The Kerner Commission on Civil Disorders called for a national system of income supplements. A group of business leaders recently advocated a "negative income tax." These proposals are all similar in design and purpose.

Like all civilized nations in the twentieth century, this country has long recognized a public responsibility for the living standards of its citizens. Yet our present programs of public assistance and social insurance exclude millions who are in need and meet inadequately the needs of millions more. All too often these programs unnecessarily penalize work and thrift and discourage the building of stable families.

The country will not have met its responsibility until everyone in the nation is assured an income no less than the officially recognized definition of poverty. A workable and equitable plan of income guarantees and supplements must have the following features: (1) Need, as objectively measured by income and family size should be the sole basis of determining payment to which an individual and/or family is entitled. (2) To provide incentive to work, save and train for better jobs, payments to families who earn income should be reduced by only a fraction of their earnings.

Practical and detailed proposals meeting these requirements have been suggested by individual sponsors of this statement and by others. The costs of such plans are substantial but well within the nation's economic and fiscal capacity.

As economists we offer the professional opinion that income guarantees and supplements are feasible and compatible with our economic system. As citizens we feel strongly that the time for action is now.

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