

public assistance programs to a federal Family Security Program would be to extend and expand the extremely limited range of state and local welfare services now provided through public assistance agencies, and to fashion them into a comprehensive flexible program of public services for families. Together with our developing public child welfare service programs we would then have an organizational base for a well-rounded public welfare service available to all the people. Freed of the incubus of the means test and properly selected and equipped and well related to the community and to the social work and other professions, state and local public welfare staffs would have a fair and rare opportunity of making a great contribution to the war against poverty.

POLITICAL REALITIES

Politicians as well as caseworkers know how to "partialize," and among the kinds of questions that will be asked about the present proposal sooner or later will be, "Do you have to have all of this?" and "What part of this is most important?" One possible ploy will be, "Let's start with children or better yet the aged—they vote."

Almost two decades ago the writer suggested that the unfolding of the Canadian experience with family allowances could be observed with benefit by those in the United States who are concerned with social security and child welfare.²² Over the years social workers, when overwhelmed by public assistance bureaupathology, are wont to murmur rather wistfully that perhaps they ought to start thinking about family allowances. It is, of course, possible that the present proposal to abolish the means test may not seem to be overly modest to some people and we may be forced to settle at this time for a family allowances program. But this should be resisted even by those of us who think children are the most important

people but who would also like to prevent further "hardening of the categories" and increased complexity in the intricate mosaic or crazy-quilt pattern that characterizes our present social security and welfare nonsystem. The case for starting a noncontributory Family Security Program for the aged might have political appeal, but the fact is that parents of children vote too.

Temporizing is another technique of practical politics and, in a form that social workers themselves have been known to use, includes the appeal to "demonstration and research." We must have research and we must also be clear about the function of research and how it differs from careful planning, detailing, documentation, and justification of proposals for social policy.

Nevertheless, consideration may well be given to the desirability of a geographically limited demonstration of some aspects of the proposal for an FSB plan. For example, through use of federally available research and demonstration funds a state welfare agency might develop a procedure for checking the feasibility of a central mechanical check of eligibility through the use of data processing equipment after the necessary arrangements were made for social security or other numerical identification of all salary, wages, and other types of income payments within the state.

This kind of jurisdiction-limited demonstration would appear to be feasible in a state having a small daily commuting population and an effective state income tax law. Financing of assistance payments in this kind of demonstration would not require new federal legislation inasmuch as nothing in the present public assistance titles of the Social Security Act requires the kind of means test currently used and states are free to submit their own plans for determining need. One of the points of administrative interest in such a demonstration would be a check on possible differences in the completeness of social security identification of income in low- as compared with middle- and upper-income brackets. Other administrative problems such as the frequency of

²² Edward E. Schwartz, "Some Observations on the Canadian Family Allowance Program," *Social Service Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (December 1946), pp. 451-473.