

pleasure at their slothfulness and many would be deterred from asking for help (that is its purpose, to be sure). We would once again be tutored in the lesson we seem never to learn—that the effects of poor laws are not an accident but deliberate. We are brutal in the giving of money we define as relief; we are sweetly charitable only when we have succeeded in defining the gift as something else—social security, urban renewal, business deduction.

In fact, the public assistance program visualized by the Committee on Economic Security in 1935 was meant to be residual—a safety net for a few who fell through all the other protections. The concept is as right in the 1960's as it was in the 1930's. Public assistance does not make a good mass program.

IN-KIND PROGRAMS

A second type of program that is currently enjoying a renewal of popularity is the provision of services or goods "in kind"—recent examples are Medicare, food stamps, and rent subsidies. Restricted programs have on occasion stirred powerful emotions in social workers, but these recent ones seem to have escaped our wrath. In-kind programs may represent a public conviction that beneficiaries are not to be trusted to manage their own funds, a view that certainly went into the development of the food stamp program, and it is to this paternalistic implication that many social workers react.

Despite their resurgence, in-kind programs are not currently being proposed as the dominant source of income for anyone; therefore, not much space will be devoted to the issues involved. They are probably a sound type of program so long as they remain a subsidiary type. They are acceptable so long as they are not *felt* as controlling. In-kind programs may be especially suitable when the public interest is most deeply engaged (as in the nutrition of children) or when the state is in a better position to organize services than the family

would be to buy them (as in medical care or rent subsidies). We might therefore seek a very broad extension of three specific programs—school lunch for children, medical care for those who are not aged, and rent subsidies to broaden the supply of low-cost housing.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The social security system offers a third line of development in income maintenance. In principle, social security provides benefits for stipulated risks in exchange for a regular payment during one's work life. The program is both categorical—that is, limited to the aged, the disabled, the orphaned—and directly tied to work. It has, therefore, succeeded brilliantly exactly where public assistance has failed, in providing a payment to which everyone agrees the beneficiary has a right.

By the federal standard of poverty, almost two out of five people who receive retirement benefits and a larger proportion of those who do not receive benefits are poor.⁵ The issue that must be faced is the degree to which social security is an antipoverty program. In the wake of the War on Poverty, a certain amount of sentiment has developed that social security should be *primarily* an antipoverty device. The Commissioner of Social Security observes that limiting the program to antipoverty would have been stirring in 1910, "but we can do much better in the United States in 1966."⁶ Social security may prevent poverty, to be sure, but it may also replace income well above poverty for those who have earned it. The point of view has much to recommend it. Quite apart from the effect on others, limitation of social security might do the poor a great deal of damage in the end.

⁵ Mollie Orshansky, "More About the Poor in 1964," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (May 1966), pp. 3-38.

⁶ Robert M. Ball, "Policy Issues in Social Security," p. 5. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Public Administration, Washington, D.C., April 14, 1966. (Mimeographed.)