A family of four with an income of $33 a week would not have been considered poor in 1929. Average gross weekly earnings in manufacturing industries were only $24.76 in 1929, and the average factory worker who had a steady job, though he undoubtedly would have like to be better off, certainly did not consider himself to be poor.

By comparison, average weekly earnings in manufacturing in 1967 were $114.90 per week, or $5,975 a year for a fully employed worker. The poverty level for a family of four, at $3,335, is just 56 percent of this. Thus, a family of four is considered poor, by the Council's standard, if it has less than 56 percent of the income of an average factory worker. That does not seem unreasonable. But an income of $33 per week which provided the same standard of living in 1929 was one-third higher than that of the average factory worker. To consider $33 an appropriate "poverty line" for that time is entirely unreasonable.

Part of the difference, of course, is that it was in fact impossible for anyone in 1929 to enjoy the same standard of living as we do today. Many of the conveniences which we take for granted, frequently to the extent of considering them necessities, did not exist for anyone in 1929. Advancing technology has given us a multiplicity of new things—new household equipment, new textiles, new foods, the list could be extended indefinitely—that have revolutionized our way of life in less than 40 years.

To adopt a rigid, unchanging standard of consumption to represent the poverty level for any given family would be to deny the poor any share in the benefits of the technological revolution.

One of the major causes of trouble in our central cities has been the alienation of large sections of our people who, by reason of poverty, discrimination, and neglect, have felt themselves denied the right to participate in the mainstream of America's progress. The concept of a fixed poverty consumption standard carries with it the implication that the poor must continue to be cut off from that progress. It proclaims that if we bring the poor up to a level of consumption that was barely tolerable 6 years ago, we will have done enough. But the poor will not consider it enough—nor should we.

POVERTY IS RELATIVE

Poverty is a relative matter. It can have no absolute standard. It might conceivably be possible to draw up and price a consumption standard that was just barely sufficient to maintain human existence—just enough calories and vitamins to sustain the spark of life, just enough clothing to cover nakedness, just enough shelter to prevent death by exposure. Such a standard is conceivable. In fact, it must be admitted to our everlasting shame that there are still sections of our country where people are living at such a standard—and dying when they fall below it. But to adopt such a standard, to say that only below such a level is anyone poor, would be intolerable to the conscience of America.

Yet, the moment a higher standard is accepted, the moment it is admitted that even the poor should have something beyond the bare necessities, there must be admitted also the necessity to raise that standard along with the living standards of all the rest of the people. As