those standards rise, what were once luxuries become comforts, comforts become common conveniences, conveniences become necessities. And so it is for the poor as well as for the more affluent.

People are considered poor, and consider themselves poor, not by any arbitrary measure of what they have, but by how far what they have falls below the commonly accepted standard of the society in which they live. This does not mean that everyone is poor who falls below the average. It means that the standard of poverty is: How far does he fall below the average?

An ingenious and entirely reasonable method for establishing such a standard was proposed by Victor R. Fuchs in the Summer 1967 issue of "The Public Interest." He wrote:

> I propose that we define as poor *any family whose income is less than one-half the median family income.* No special claim is made for the precise figure of one-half; but the advantages of using a poverty standard that changes with the growth of real national income are considerable.
>
> First, it explicitly recognizes that all so-called 'minimum' or 'subsistence' budgets are based on contemporary standards which will soon be out of date.
>
> Second, it focuses attention on what seems to be a fundamental factor underlying the present concern about poverty—i.e., it represents a tentative groping toward a national policy with respect to the distribution of income.
>
> Finally, it provides a more realistic basis for appraising the success or failure of anti-poverty programs. [Emphasis in original.]

The median income is that level which places exactly half the families above it and half below it. For some purposes it represents a more satisfactory concept of what we consider the average family than does the arithmetic mean, because, unlike the latter, the median is not affected by how wealthy the very wealthy are, or how poor the very poor.

If we accept the concept of the median income as that of the average family, then Mr. Fuchs' formula means, in essence, that *any family is considered poor if it has less than half the income of the average family at any given time.*

As Mr. Fuchs himself admits, it would be desirable to refine his formula somewhat before implementing its use. He points out that there is nothing sacred, for example, about the precise figure of one-half. It is useful, however, in that one-half the median income in 1962 was only slightly over $3,000, the family poverty level accepted at that time.

Obviously, also, the same poverty figure cannot be applied to families of all sizes, ages, and locations. This was a deficiency of the official poverty concept when it was first established, and it was corrected by careful research on the part of Social Security Administration technicians. We now have different poverty levels for different types of families, based on number and ages of children, ages of adults, farm or nonfarm location, and so on. The same research could be applied to Mr. Fuchs' formula, except that instead of expressing the poverty level in different dollar amounts for different types of families, it would be expressed in different percentages of the median family income.

The startling fact about Fuchs' definition of poverty, however, is that if we accept it *we find that we have made virtually no progress at all in eliminating poverty.* He published with his article the attached table (to which UAW technicians have added one more year of data)