

Discussion
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It seems to me that there are three major factors which must be dealt with in "measuring welfare loads," if this measurement is to have any meaning. Since welfare is a very important contemporary issue, it does not suffice to rattle off some static indicators of caseload characteristics, nor to test some laboratory-like hypotheses concerning response rates to mailed questionnaires. Furthermore, asserting that the AFDC rolls have evinced a meteoric rise in the last three years despite great economic progress reveals a misunderstanding of what welfare really is all about. Welfare is a measure of imbalance in our society.

The first factor with which we must deal is related to the dimensions of the poverty pool of eligible and potential recipients, and thus to the economics of race and class in America. Data concerning this issue are available, or may be derived, from various Bureau of Labor studies from the Census, and from many surveys. We must confront the fact that the median family income in New York City's ghettos was \$4000 in 1966, or exactly what it was in 1960...except unfortunately for inflation and sales taxes, etc. And we must confront the fact that one out of every five jobs in this City today pays under \$80 per week, that minimum wages stand at \$3200 per year -- gross income -- while the current welfare grant for a family of four is roughly \$3500 annually -- net income!

Yes we've had economic progress, but not the poor. They are worse off today than six or eight years ago. Approximately 200,000 families in New York City are headed by a man who is working but earning less than what welfare defines as his household's minimum needs. Most of these families are Black or Puerto Rican. Why should a man work 40 or more hours each week to maintain his family in defined poverty? Out of pride? Why shouldn't the man leave, at least ostensibly, keeping his \$3200 job, and put his wife and children on welfare for another \$3000, or more....thus bringing his total family income close to the median for the City as a whole of \$7000 to \$8000?

The second factor in measuring welfare loads is related to these questions: acceptability of welfare. Welfare, for many, is no longer a dirty word. In fact it's not a problem, but rather a solution. Welfare has become a "right;" it is no longer a privilege. Get out your attitudinal surveys and delve into the Black or Puerto Rican mind. You know, in this City about 30% of the Blacks and 40% of the Latins receive welfare. In the face of such staggering statistics it must be obvious that welfare is now acceptable. Look at the newspapers; recipients are organizing and demonstrating for benefits. They are not ashamed or embarrassed! Welfare is their right. But more than that too. Anti-poverty agencies, community corporations, and Medicaid teams have played no little part in referring potential clients to the Department of Social Services. Welfare is acceptable to many of the professional

and "para-professional" people in the poor communities. It is no coincidence that the caseloads doubled with the advent of the War on Poverty, and with the incursion of these agents into the ghetto's daily life.

The final factor I wish to bring to your attention is perhaps the most difficult to measure: the political-administrative welfare apparatus. Let me give an example. The State Legislature passed a regressive welfare bill here on March 29. While grants were cut by about 8%, and although such humane concepts as minimum standards were abolished, this Bill should not have had too great an effect on caseload growth. Poverty was still here; inflation was still rampant; welfare was still a right. Yet the word was out; the screws were being tightened. Almost immediately, the caseload growth dropped from an annual average of 16,000 additional persons each month to only 5,000.

In what can only be characterized as a "work action," the Department of Social Services began to follow the letter of the law with regard to welfare applications. Every document suddenly had to be verified, although the Department has maintained that its ineligibility rate among recipients was constant for years at well under 5%. Clients were harassed, applicants discouraged. How else does one explain a 60% drop in growth rate within the course of a month or two. But how does one measure the variable enforcement of laws and regulations, and how does one measure the side-effects of crackdown and repression?

I want to be brief, but I can not close without mentioning President Nixon's recent welfare proposal, especially that part related to Manpower and Training, which is close to my area of expertise, and which I consider doomed to abysmal failure.

New York City's Department of Social Services schedules some 10,000 interviews each month with recipients to determine employability. Of these, 5000 are kept. Of these, some 500 result in job or training placements; for a 5% to 10% batting average. Four out of five jobs obtained for recipients pay less than \$80 per week, in the most vulnerable occupational areas. And former welfare recipients act no differently than other people in dead-end jobs: they lose them. A child-care problem, a sudden illness, or a moderate debt -- these are enough to create a crisis which puts the family back on the dole. With no financial cushion, they have nowhere else to turn.

So we find, in New York City, that almost 40% of the AFDC case openings each year are in fact re-openings. Of the roughly 20,000 AFDC case re-openings each fiscal year which closed previously during the same fiscal year, about 12,000 are brought about by job loss. There is a revolving door between welfare and work among the poor. In fact, some 15% or more of this City's recipients are in families getting public assistance in

addition to wages. Many other cases are publicly aided in addition to work-related benefits such as OASDI, pensions, unemployment compensation, etc.

A study I conducted of male heads of AFDC-U households in New York revealed that less than one third were rated as having good potential for more than marginal jobs. Almost half were in need of intensive remediation; over two fifths had less than a grammar school education; one fifth had chronic health problems; and half manifested a history of poor job stability.

Let's face facts! Many welfare recipients are not going to become permanently self-supporting at a decent standard of living under our current system. In its first year of operation, New York City's Employment Incentive Program, which allowed clients to keep a fair proportion of earnings in addition to their welfare grant, only managed to remove 100 of the roughly 4000 participants from the rolls. The Work Incentive Program in this City has only filled about 3000 of its 8500 slots; and this includes both training and employment opportunities.

So what's all this talk of Manpower and Training. People work for money in this country -- for how much they can go into the weekend with. People are not going to go out of their way to earn \$3920 a year, at least not up North. We don't have the jobs and we're not willing to pay and we're not going to put a dent in the rolls under Nixon's plan.

Is there a way out? Yes! You know, in New York City garbagemen earn \$9500 per year, base salary. Here's a job that requires no training, no skill, but pays almost \$5 an hour. The government foots the bill. If the government were willing to use the same criteria for other jobs as it does for garbagemen, it could lick the welfare problem. The secret is adequate pay, a guaranteed adequate income. If we offered every AFDC mother, and every working man with a family, a job paying \$7000 or more we'd cut the rolls by 70%.