

FACE OF THE FUTURE

Welfare Recipient

Second of a Series

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The middle class American, who comprises most of the population, tends to look at the pauper as a fellow middle class American gone wrong.

To be sure, some on the welfare rolls came out of middle class backgrounds, dropped to the bottom of the social barrel by unemployment, broken homes or other conditions that reduced them to poverty.

The welfare recipient does not fit into any single category. Given the wrong set of circumstances, any one of millions of middle class Americans could find himself in need of public assistance.

BUT, BY and large, the core of the poor live in a society that is alien to middle class America, a culture so totally different as to be almost a cultural void.

State Rep. Ross Morgan, D-Gresham, minority leader of the Oregon House of Representatives and past chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, put it this way:

"The average person damning the welfare recipient assumes the recipient is just as good as he is, but

at home and loafs. But (the recipient) probably doesn't have the equipment mentally, physically or educationally and that's the reason he is where he is."

The new challenges to help the poor break their economic, social and educational bonds take place against a backdrop of deprivation.

THERE HAVE been past cases of persons who wound up on welfare through a nightmarish set of circumstances and who virtually fought their way off, sometimes by feigning disability so that they could qualify for training.

Today a number of training programs are available and the emphasis is on helping the welfare recipient take advantage of them.

Those who recently slipped from a middle economic level to the bottom are likely to be eager to make use of the training programs. It is the others who are hard to reach.

State Welfare Director Andrew F. Juras said part of the present job of welfare is "oriented toward returning people to self-support from the moment they come into the office to apply for assistance.

"Our emphasis now is on immediate planning toward future employment, not waiting until there is a 'poverty cycle' to be broken."

THE POVERTY cycle boils down, as Curry County Welfare Administrator Arthur Holmberg put it, to "too poor, too long."

Hopelessness and defeat become a way of life.

"Nothing — but nothing — fosters dependency more," Holmberg declared.

A minimum subsistence grant doesn't provide things like transportation so the children can take in the zoo or the seashore, reading material in the home, decent clothes to wear, a nutritional diet. There are no incentives, either for the recipient to train for work or for the children in school.

"Place a family in a position where they have enough food to stay alive, but not to maintain health, let alone provide a varied diet," Holmberg wrote, "and where they have enough money to keep from freezing and being arrested, but not enough to look presentable, and then keep them in this position, say, three or four years. Do this, and then all the lovely services provided by all those im-

'Not Loafer'

aginative and educated social workers will not make the least impression — the tiniest dent — in a pattern of dependency that has been established and rock hardened."

HOLMBERG'S plea was for higher standards of assistance so that the Oregon social workers can use the tools more effectively.

The tools have come rolling off the governmental production line in recent

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years. They include training, fundamental skills in job seeking, rehabilitation for the handicapped or those whose trades have become obsolete, "Operation Head Start" to provide compensatory education to the children of deprived homes, the Job Corps for youths who otherwise have little promise, and the various community programs of the war on poverty.

The welfare department contends that in the great majority of cases, the recipient wants to work. His predicament is that he has no skill, does not know how to work and does not know how to apply for a job.

Recent employment specialists have been sent into 23 Oregon counties, Juras announced. The regular social workers will assign them every case believed to be potential for employment and the specialists will help them achieve it.

"FIFTY YEARS ago," Juras said, "there were plenty of fathers with an IQ of 75 who were willing to work and healthy and who managed to raise 10 or 12 children, keeping them fed and clothed almost literally by the sweat of their brows.

They did manual labor and they got by. In today's society which demands higher and higher levels of technical skill and competence, the same kind of person has to have help from public welfare to support a family that may be only half as large as the one his father had. We may be able to train such a person for certain kinds of work, but we must face the fact that this kind of training will not in every case lead to a job that pays enough to support a family."

While welfare is trying to help its recipients get off welfare, it is also concen-

trating on keeping persons off the rolls who don't belong there.

Definition of the problem is a problem in its own right in both cases.

Who can be freed from public assistance? Who should receive it? Who should not be on the rolls?

Nonetheless, there have been marked successes in both areas.

LEGISLATOR Morgan noted that the social pressures tend to discourage persons from drifting onto welfare and prod them to become self-supporting if possible.

"It is a deterrent to a guy who just wants to retire," he said. "The public seems to think about 90 per cent of them are just 'ne'er do wells,' but less than 10 per cent get off welfare if they're forced to work."

There have been cases of out-and-out fraud and more cases of ineligible recipients who did not know they were ineligible. There have also been cases of mothers receiving smaller grants than they were entitled to because they did not know they could have reported new babies.

Despair, Bitterness Hobble

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gled vines of inept planning or incompetent administration.

What went wrong with the war on poverty?

Haste was one problem. Initial planning for a federal attempt to mount a massive attack on the problems of poverty began in the administration of John F. Kennedy, whose concern was aroused first in the destitute hollows of West Virginia during the 1960 campaign, and reinforced later by a book dramatically documenting the plight of the poor, Michael Harrington's "The Other America."

BUT PLANNING of an anti-poverty program had hardly begun when Kennedy was assassinated. Lyndon B. Johnson, reviewing the unfinished business of his predecessor and looking for a program for the individual stamp of his administration, decided to declare "unconditional war on poverty," and set the wheels into rapid motion.

Shriver and his top associates in OEO concede that mistakes have been made because of haste. But they argue that it was necessary to move swiftly or risk losing "another generation" to the all but irreversible cycle of dependency and deprivation.

In their haste, the anti-poverty planners stitched together a patchwork matrix of old and new ideas. From the New borrowed such concepts as the old Civil Conservation Corps and launched a Job Corps for young men and women.

From experts in early childhood education they got the idea — almost an afterthought — of a Head Start program for young children, designed to bring them into kindergarten and first grade with a cultural background similar to that enjoyed by their more affluent classmates.

From the civil rights movement they drew inspiration for the most interesting and potentially far-reaching innovation of the war on poverty — the idea that the poor themselves ought to have a voice in running the community programs and deciding what would happen to them — the idea that Congress incorporated into law as "maximum feasible participation" of the poor.

BUT MAXIMUM feasible participation swiftly led to the

anti-poverty program's next great problem — politics. In designing their national crusade, the anti-poverty planners had decided to bypass where they could the traditional channels — the channels they felt had proved ineffective in coping with poverty over the years.

They made no secret of their disdain for the existing welfare and charity apparatus. They saw little hope in

oriented group called CDGM that ran successful Head Start programs, ran afoul of Sen. John Stennis and found, after a period of harassment, that its grant was not being renewed.

In Syracuse, a project for training neighborhood organizers in the methods of Chicago radical Saul Alinsky was hastily dropped by OEO when local controversy reached the boiling point.

of projected enrollments in various anti-poverty programs, for example — have far exceeded actual performance.

The publicity has raised expectations among the poor — and among all Americans — of anti-poverty results that have not been met. The consequence is bitterness and a widespread feeling that the war on poverty has accomplished even less than is actu-

Federal War On

ally the case.

But the greatest problem — from the beginnings of the anti-poverty program to the latest round of budget discussions at the LBJ ranch — has been money.

WHEN THE WAR on poverty was in the planning stage, a task force in the Federal Bureau of the Budget estimated that it would take \$10 billion a year — an expenditure

of \$100 billion in a decade — to end hard-core poverty in America. Civil rights leaders have proposed a similar "freedom budget" in recent months.

But neither the administration nor Congress nor, in all likelihood, the American people were ready to make such a commitment.

The first-year budget for OEO fell short of \$1 billion.

The second year — the year that ended last June 30 — was financed at \$1.5 billion. For the current year, a year when Shriver hoped for an appropriation of \$3 billion, the administration requested \$1.75 billion and Congress shaved the amount to \$1.6 billion.

SHRIVER HIMSELF, who is noted for putting the best possible face on the various calamities that have beset the

Poverty

anti-poverty program, called a news conference recently to talk of the "great and grave impact" of the lack of funds.

His dispirited comments — accompanied by growing indications that he may soon resign — are telling evidence of the crisis confronting the war on poverty.

Next: Education — The need outruns the supply.

Oregon Started 'War On Poverty' Early

By WATFORD REED
Journal Staff Writer

Oregon began helping people find work long before the "War on Poverty" began, but this front has been broadened since federal money became available.

One of the most impressive undertakings has been a program of the Oregon Labor Department, originally meant to help elderly workers find jobs. It has been broadened and has enabled thousands from 14 to 82 to find work.

It began seven years ago, and 11,000 persons have gone through the Portland program. Classes are held at Eugene, Salem, Coos Bay, Hillsboro and Portland, and a course began at Medford this week. Leaders hope to hold classes at Bend and Pendleton soon.

THE PROGRAM is headed by Ray Ziegler, director of creative job search techniques for the Labor Department. The program got its first "War on Poverty" money last August.

Welfare rolls have been trimmed and workers have found better jobs with the help of Ziegler's program. Ziegler points out that when a worker gets a better job he makes more room at the bottom of the ladder for others.

HERE ARE a few accomplishments of the program:

—A 62-year-old widow, out of work nine months, found a job two weeks after going through the course.

—A man 52 years old lost his job as manager of a small office when a national firm locked up its Portland office. He had never earned more than \$7,500 a year, but now he is a president of a firm in the Midwest with an income of more than \$60,000 a year.

—An unwed mother 23 years old got a high school diploma, then went to a community college, where she is training to be a court reporter — a field with many openings.

—A mother of five children faced with going on welfare found a \$2.25 an hour job five minutes from home.

—A man partly disabled by a stroke, out of work four years, got a job two weeks after finishing the course.

ZIEGLER now is striving to reach a lower socio-economic group.

The program involves a "self inventory" in which an idle man or woman writes down his own strong points, what he likes and dislikes and tools he can handle — even using a typewriter and driving a car.

Classes are held, and "after that they never are dependent on somebody else to get them jobs," he said.

"We stir people up to do something for themselves," Ziegler declared. "The opportunities are there. People must get out and go after them."

Another kind of program is being carried on under the Federal Manpower and Training Act, stressing on-the-job

training of the kind Kelly Sanchez found.

The Urban League of Portland has contracted to find training opportunities for 150 workers, the Valley Migrant League 200 and the Metropolitan Steering Committee 200.

Each "contractor" finds business firms willing to train employes and reasonably likely to hire trainees who make good.

Those whose schooling is woefully lacking are brought up to the point where they can qualify for the equivalent of a high school diploma before being sent for training.

AN APPLICATION has been made by Community Resources for Young Women at Salem to train 75 girls who could not meet requirements to get into the Job Corps.

Dammasch and Fairview Hospitals may undertake to train psychiatric aides, and Portland Osteopathic Hospital is training 64 nurses' aides. Bess Kaiser Hospital also plans to train hospital workers.

One of the problems is that an estimated 10,000 people in the Portland area cannot read well enough to qualify for the third grade, even though they went through the eighth grade.

THE PORTLAND Public Schools hire 250 students from low income homes to work as clerks, caretakers' helpers, library assistants and the like. They are paid \$1.25 an hour.

The program is under way in all 13 high schools for

"boys and girls who otherwise might have to leave school." The \$310,000 grant comes from the Office of Economic Opportunity through the Neighborhood Youth Corps.

E. Shelton Hill, executive director of the Portland Urban League, pointed out that his organization also began trying to bring workers and jobs together before the "War on Poverty" began. But it now is a contractor in the "war."

THE URBAN LEAGUE made more than 5,000 interviews among Negroes to determine who is working in each family, how much schooling adults have had and how many households have men as heads of the family.

It has placed 587 formerly idle people in jobs, and 81 people are being trained on the job.

The Urban League now is seeking training opportunities for 150 more on jobs where training will last from four to 26 weeks.

An employer is paid up to \$25 a week for each person trained and for equipment that may be ruined by a trainee. The employer pays the trainee whatever is the going rate for a learner.

"PEOPLE will be trained for jobs like pants pressing, working as filling station attendants or nurses' aides," said Hill.

He estimated that 7 per cent of Portland Negroes who seek work are without jobs and observed, "It is hardest to place those who have no skills."