

OUR FUTURE DILEMMA

Values at Issue in Quest For More Welfare Billions

Broad-Ranging New Federal Proposals Focus Greater Attention on Needs and Costs

Public welfare is a costly and expanding problem. The current series of articles in The News has focused on existing welfare ills, accomplishments and abuses as seen by Reporter Ed May, who worked as a caseworker for the Erie County Department of Social Welfare.

In this article The News offers a look into the burgeoning future of welfare in the United States.

By DICK BURKE

"Possibly the principal difference between this dissent and the prevailing views of the majority is the difference in appraisal of the seriousness of the huge additional costs which will inevitably and permanently come along with adoption of the majority recommendation."

Such is the forthright judgment of one of the 12 specialists who put together the congressional document, "Report of the Advisory Council on Public Assistance."

It was voiced by William R. MacDougall, general counsel and manager of the County Supervisors Association of California. He used five pages of the 137-page report to set out his differences with certain of the 20 recommendations and findings of the majority of the council.

5-Year Review Proposed

The idea of a higher welfare bill is implicit in all of the recommendations. Sometimes this is explicitly stated. But implied or spelled out in detail, the end product is certain — increased welfare costs measured in billions of dollars.

The recommendations start with a proposal for extending the Social Security "umbrella" so that it ultimately will provide financial assistance and other services to needy persons "regardless of the need (including, for example, the unemployed, the underemployed and the less seriously disabled)."

The list ends with a recommendation for setting up an advisory council to review at least once every five years "the status of the public assistance programs, including their adequacy in promoting health and well-being, the formula for federal financial participation in public assistance costs and their relationship to social insurance programs."

Would Raise U. S. Maximum

In between are 18 other proposals having to do with the very

fabric of this country's welfare program, including:

1—Bar federal grants-in-aid to states with residence requirements.

2—Make sure at federal, state and local levels that assistance payments "are at levels adequate for health and well-being."

3—Hold on to the going rate of the proportionate federal share of total public assistance as provided in the Social Security Amendments of 1958.

4—Raise the current federal maximums of assistance expenditures — which would include both money payments to recipients and payments to suppliers of medical care.

5—Increase the current federal maximums for aid to dependent children "to an equitable relationship with the other programs."

6—Establish a national institute for studies and demonstration programs aimed at strengthening family life.

7—Extend Social Security coverage to include as many workers as possible not now covered under any public retirement system — such as farm and household workers.

All this means more money — billions of dollars of taxpayer money.

More Medical Payments

An inkling of what this bigger bill might be comes to the surface in Recommendation 6. Adequacy of medical care:

(a) "Since it appears that future public welfare costs may increase largely because of in-

creasing medical care needs and

costs, federal and state governments, in co-operation with non-governmental agencies, should take a more active role in stimulating more comprehensive medical service of high quality, including preventive services."

Cost: About a Billion

Examining problems and questions involving the financing of "adequate public assistance payments," the report observes:

"The estimates indicate that an additional \$577,000,000 to more than a billion dollars would

have to be spent by federal, state and local governments to meet 100% of need among recipients of old age assistance and aid to dependent children for requirements other than medical care and to bring medical care expenditures in all states up to the level in states now assuming broader responsibilities."

Such is the shadow of welfare costs to come — as indicated in the "Report of the Advisory Council on Public Assistance."

It Reaches Down—to You

As an over-view the dissident Mr. MacDougall marked out his objections by saying, in part, that they are "based on differences in concept as to the nature of public assistance and its proper role in American Government."

And he offered this: "Public assistance is not intended to be a substitute for wages. It must never be permitted to become such. Easy dependency is not a desirable condition. Once upon it is both self-perpetuating and contagious."

The report is at the national level. But because of the complexities and interdependent warp and woof of contemporary government its application touches all 50 states. That reach is long. It gets to the state level and stretches to the local level.

Ultimately it involves Erie County and the City of Buffalo as this series in The Buffalo Evening News has shown. And in the end it reaches you because it's our government.

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NEXT — A caseworker discusses the problem of illegitimate children.