

# Welfare

## The big lie

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**L**ast fall Nixon suddenly announced he was going to cut the guts out of welfare. The Aid to Dependent Children program, which keeps 4 million kids barely alive is going to be wiped out. So are food stamps, at a time when food prices are higher than ever, and going up.

In place of the old welfare system, Nixon is planning a minimum income of--\$1600 a year, for a family of four! And to get this, those of us on welfare will have to do some kind of slave-labor, either for the government itself or for the large corporations that run the government.

After announcing this, Nixon just as suddenly dropped the whole thing--for the time being. He plans to bring it up before Congress. But first the big capitalists have to try to brainwash working people. Already they are spreading all their old lies about welfare--how only lazy people get welfare, how we live better on welfare than people who have a job, how we spend our welfare checks on booze, or fancy cars, and all the rest of the lies of the rich.

The ruling class of bankers and big factory owners is not just using its usual mouthpieces, the governors, senators, congressmen, welfare administrators, etc. Now they've even got a few "popular" songs to push their line on welfare.

One of the biggest hits in the country and western music scene is a fascist number called "The Welfare Cadillac." It's supposedly sung by a hillbilly on

welfare, but it's really a lying attack on welfare recipients, especially poor Black people. The whole song is about this guy who has a rundown house and doesn't take care of his family (his kids get free lunches, anyway, and the Salvation Army gives them their clothes). He says some people call him a fool, but he thinks they're the fools, because he uses his welfare check to buy a new Cadillac every year while other people work and pay taxes to send his kids through school. And on top of that, things are getting better because there's a new president who's putting in a new poverty program, giving poor people money in big sacks, so his wife can get her a new Cadillac.

Anybody who has ever had to struggle to keep their family alive on welfare knows what a lot of garbage this so-called "song" is. According to the government's own figures, there are about 8 million people on welfare at any one time, although, at any one time or another, ten people out of every 100 has been on welfare. Only 60,000 of this 8 million (or less than one out of every 100) is an able-bodied man who can work but isn't working. Two million people on welfare are retired people, over 65, who have slaved all their lives for the lousy capitalist pigs who run this society. Almost 1 million more are blind or handicapped in some other way. Very very few of these people, or of the parents of kids who get welfare, drive



around in new Cadillacs. Sure there are free lunch programs in a few places now. But only because people fought for them, and revolutionary organizations, like the Black Panthers with their Free Breakfast for School Children program, embarrassed and exposed the government.

And there sure as hell isn't any new poverty program, with free money in big sacks, being put in by the new president. We know they're cutting out welfare and other programs that were supposed to help the poor.

As if "The Welfare Cadillac" weren't bad enough, the "soul" stations are now playing a song called "The Welfare Blues," which pushes about the same fascist lies. "Welfare Blues" is all about how women on welfare just keep on having more kids, so they can get more money from the welfare department. Then all they do with the money is run downtown to buy fancy things, leaving the children behind.

#### WHAT ARE THE REAL FACTS?

In California, one of the "best" states for welfare recipients, a mother with one child gets a little less than \$150 a month, plus, if she and her child are lucky, some food stamps and some medical expenses paid. With this money she's supposed to buy the food stamps, plus pay rent, keep her kid clothed and warm and fed. Forget about any extras; they're not even considered. If she has another child, she gets about another \$20 a month.

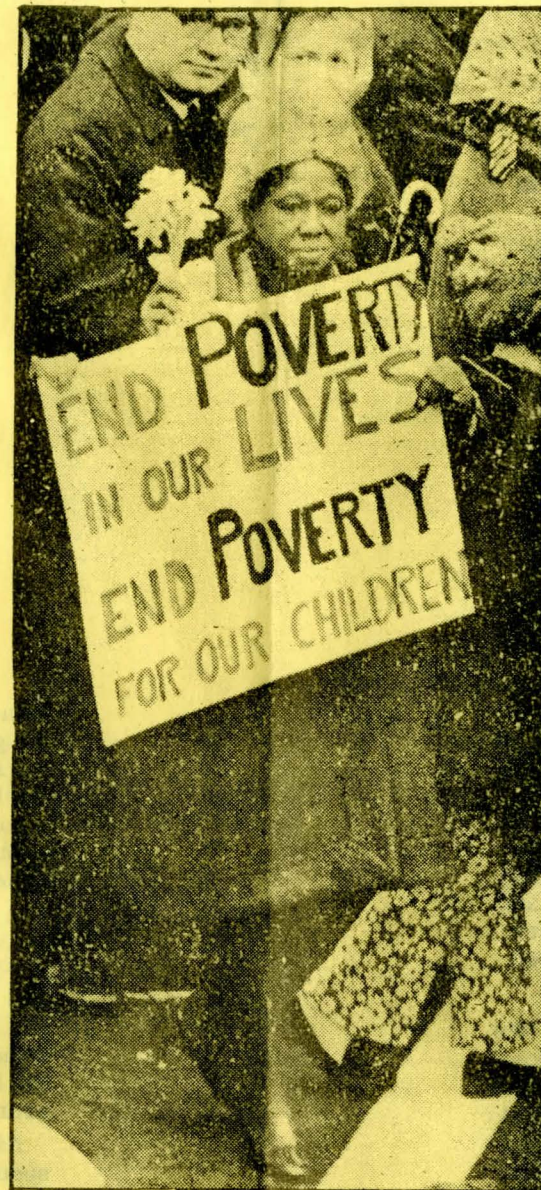
In order to get such "handouts", she's supposed to answer all sorts of insulting personal questions, like where did conception occur, who was there, etc. But Nixon and the other spokesmen for the ruling class have the nerve to say that they are eliminating welfare because it's "degrading." Yes, the degradation is real. But the way you look at it depends on whether you're the recipient who's degraded or the ruling class and its agents who do the degrading. They should be de-graded--that is, smashed from their class position--for running things so that unemployment is increasing, so that people don't all have the dignity of working. Already workers with several years seniority are being laid off in key places like the auto industry.

These songs and the timing of their release is no accident. It's part of a propaganda offensive by the ruling class and all their media to pave the way for crushing poor people even more. One sister on welfare, a member of Welfare Rights Organization, put it this way:

"The Taxpayers Association says we lose pride because we get free money. I think the welfare recipient and the Taxpayers Association see things far different. We don't get the taxpayers money free. We play the lowest games to get that money. You have to be harassed the whole month to get \$200 from welfare." (From Welfare Rights Organization, a case in point.)

Unfortunately, even some of us on welfare have bought the pigs' line that we are beggars, that we haven't really earned our money. That's because too many of us don't know the history of welfare, how it was fought for and won by our class, the working class. We don't even understand why the rulers give us welfare--or why they are going to try to take it away now.

Welfare grew out of the struggles of the working people, especially the unemployed workers, during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Millions of unemployed demonstrated for relief from starvation and misery. They had to go up against the police and the army, directed by General Douglas MacArthur. Many working people were shot, beaten and jailed. But they stuck together and fought by the millions. And they won many real victories: social security, unemployment insurance and finally welfare. Then as now most of the poor and unemployed were white, although the hardest burden of poverty and unemployment fell on the Black and brown peoples, just as it does now. Today, of the 8 million people on welfare, about 6 million, or 3 out of 4, are white. The group the federal government admits is poor--living below the "poverty line" of \$3000 for a family of four--takes in about 50 million people, or 1 poor person for every 4 men, women and children in the country. Of this 50 million one out of every four is Black or brown, which means that 3 out of 4 are white. They live in the Appalachian mountains, the farmlands, especially in the South, and crowded into big city slums. So, even though poverty hits the Black and Brown people the hardest, it is a question for all working people. Especially when you keep in mind that by far the great majority of people who are poor are not on welfare, but are working in miserable underpaid jobs like dishwashers, cooks, waitresses, maids, gas station attendants, and assembly line workers in the textile mills of the South and the sweatshops of the North. Like the needletrades, where many women



make less than a dollar an hour. And workers who are organized into unions and get better wages are always just one step away from the poor house, even in the best of times.

#### WHY ARE THEY HITTING US SO HARD?

These aren't the best of times. More and more families, husband and wife together, are forced to go on welfare, as jobs are wiped out and unemployment benefits are harder and harder to get. Welfare is not something that takes from the hard working people. Often, it is their last resort, when the bosses won't let them work, or when they go out on strike to try to keep up with the cost of living. Recently, in California, striking workers at Standard Oil and Dow Chemical, in the San Francisco Bay Area, had to go on welfare, while the strike

lasted, so their families wouldn't starve or get thrown out of their homes and apartments.

Still, women with children and no husband make up the largest group of welfare recipients, not counting those over 65. Why did the government grant these women some kind of relief in the first place, and why is it plotting to rob them of it now? During the Great Depression of the 1930's, when one out of every four workers was out of work--17 million people in all--the working class was damned fed up with the bosses and their system of capitalism. Communists and other militant workers led the struggle for relief for the poor and unemployed. Millions of working people joined together, under the leadership of the communists. Many of them became convinced that the system of capitalism could not provide for the needs of the great majority of people, the working people. Rebellion grew against the handful of big bankers and factory owners who run this system of capitalism and do benefit from it, even while millions of people are standing in bread lines, or going without food.

As bad as the Depression was, it did not yet spell the end for the big capitalists and their criminal system. The ruling class of big capitalists was able to pull itself out of the crisis for a little while, by throwing the country into World War II, and by pushing their way into almost every other country--setting up factories and paying starvation or near-starvation wages in Europe and in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They were able to make a few "concessions" to the people: social security, unemployment insurance, welfare--just enough to give most working people a small sense of security and the hope that their children would have a better life. Also, they had to keep the workers and their children alive, because they need the workers, generation after generation, to make their products, and their profits.

They were willing to pay welfare to women with children, even though the women themselves didn't work directly for the bosses, because the children could be raised as future workers and as cannon fodder for the "cold" war--Korea, Vietnam, Laos, etc. If the economy kept on growing, more and more workers would be needed. It went all right for the bosses and their capitalist system for awhile, but then things started going wrong. The people in the poor countries, like China, Korea, and then Vietnam, began fighting back against the misery that the big U.S. companies forced on them. Under the leadership

of their communist parties, the people of these countries moved to throw the big U.S. companies out. They too had to go up against the powerful U.S. army (in Korea it was MacArthur again), or local puppet governments backed up by the U.S. army. But in China, they won, they ended the domination of the big foreign companies, mainly U.S., and the armies that backed them up. They took over the factories they had built, the mines and oilfields they worked, the railways they had laid, the farmlands they tilled. They began working together and planning together to lift themselves out of the miseries of centuries. The people of Vietnam are doing that today. And throughout the rest of Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa, and in South America, the people are lifting up their heads and beginning to fight back.

So time is running out on the big bosses in the U.S. They are still sitting on top of the world, but the world is turning over on them. Now they are taking it out on us, the U.S. working people once again. Their whole system is starting to fall apart. They are headed for another great crisis and Depression like the 1930's. But unlike the 1930's, there is no way out for them. They have no more small crumbs to toss to us. They are getting frantic. They are snatching back the few crumbs they have already thrown. And they are getting ready to take their profits from us directly at gun point. They are heading for fascism, the open rule by terror of the most powerful financial giants of the U.S., like Bank of America, Standard Oil, General Motors, etc.

They cannot afford to think of future workers. They have to squeeze as much out of the workers today as they can. Women who cannot find work but still have children, women without husbands, women on welfare, cannot be allowed to eat into the profits of the bosses. And they certainly can't be allowed to keep on bringing children into society, when there is no prospect of work for them and no extra profit at all to keep them alive. That's why welfare is being cut out. That's why poor women, especially Black and Brown women are being tricked and forced into being sterilized in county hospitals. The working people, those who are lucky enough to still have a job, are being pushed to the wall--with their wages falling further behind prices and taxes climbing out of sight--just to keep the bosses and their system of private profit gasping for breath a little longer.

These workers can't be taxed even more to pay for welfare, because then they, too, would all be in the poor house, looking for relief. Fascism crushes the



working people into dirt, at gun point, and those who cannot be put to work cannot be allowed to live.

#### WHAT CAN WE DO?

First we have to realize that this move to fascism is a sign of desperation, of the great weakness of our enemy, the class of big capitalists. We have to see that just because there is no way out for the bosses, there is only one way out for us: to join together our strength in common struggle against them. To fight to survive today to keep them from crushing and killing us completely. But we can't stop there. We have to knock them over once and for all, and put the working people in power. We have to understand that their system of capitalism is causing chaos and suffering for working people today. And that only socialism, where the working people run the industry, control the credit, and run the government for the benefit of us all, can provide real security for ourselves and our future generations.

Immediately, we have to see that the move to cut out welfare is only one part of the bosses' plan to crush us all. It is part and parcel of their fascist scheme. We have to combine the fight for increased welfare with the fight against lay-offs and wage cuts. And with the fight to defend the political organizations like the Black Panther Party that are the first targets of the bosses' fascist attack, because they have been leading our struggle. We have to force the U.S. government out of Vietnam and other countries they are robbing, because this will weaken the U.S. bosses even further and help our sisters and brothers in their struggles around the world. We have to gather our strength, unite with all our real friends, to bring down the whole miserable private profit system.

We can start by throwing the burden of taxes off our backs and onto the capitalists themselves. We must unite behind the women on welfare to turn back the fascist offensive against them. The fascist-minded ruling class believes that it can divide us and smash us by striking at women with extra viciousness. They hope the women will lie down in defeat, while the rest of us stand around, confused by their lying propaganda. But they are in for a great disappointment. The women, the poor people, the whole class of working people, are joining together to turn back their mad drive to-

ward fascism.

Already welfare women are fighting back. In Delaware, Boston, Michigan, Wisconsin, women are taking over welfare offices, and even state capitols to demand the right to live with dignity. In San Francisco, women on welfare protested threatened cutbacks by mobilizing the community to take over a County Supervisors meeting. The struggle of welfare rights groups is growing stronger, and is beginning to unite with the struggles of working people. Together we will resist the attack on living and working conditions, and defend ourselves against the greed of the capitalists.

We are building a united front led by the working people and pulling together every group, every person that will fight against the big capitalists and their fascist attacks. Through our struggles, we are finding and developing the most courageous, the most self-sacrificing, the most far-seeing in our ranks, as our leaders. This is the core of what will be our new communist party--a true, fighting organization of the working people, female and male, black, brown, white, yellow, and red. This communist party will guide us through the many struggles to defend our lives and our freedoms and to build our new socialist society where the degradation of poverty will be wiped out forever.

In socialist society, we will use all our industry and farmlands together. We will decide how to use our common profits--the amount of everything we produce that's left over, after everyone gets what they need to live decently. We will build new factories, machines, transportation systems, parks, theaters, schools, hospitals, and the other things we need to provide for ourselves and future working people who will inherit together what we produce together. Automation will be used to give us more leisure in common, not to lay us off and increase the competition among us for the jobs that are left. There will no longer be any need for unemployment insurance and welfare, because there will be plenty of work for everyone--women as well as men--in all fields of production. And there will be plenty enough for everyone to live comfortably.

This is not a dream, but a reality that already exists in countries like China. We can make it happen here--by uniting in struggle and smashing every link in the capitalists' chain of slavery--especially the oppression of the Black and brown peoples and the degradation of women.

