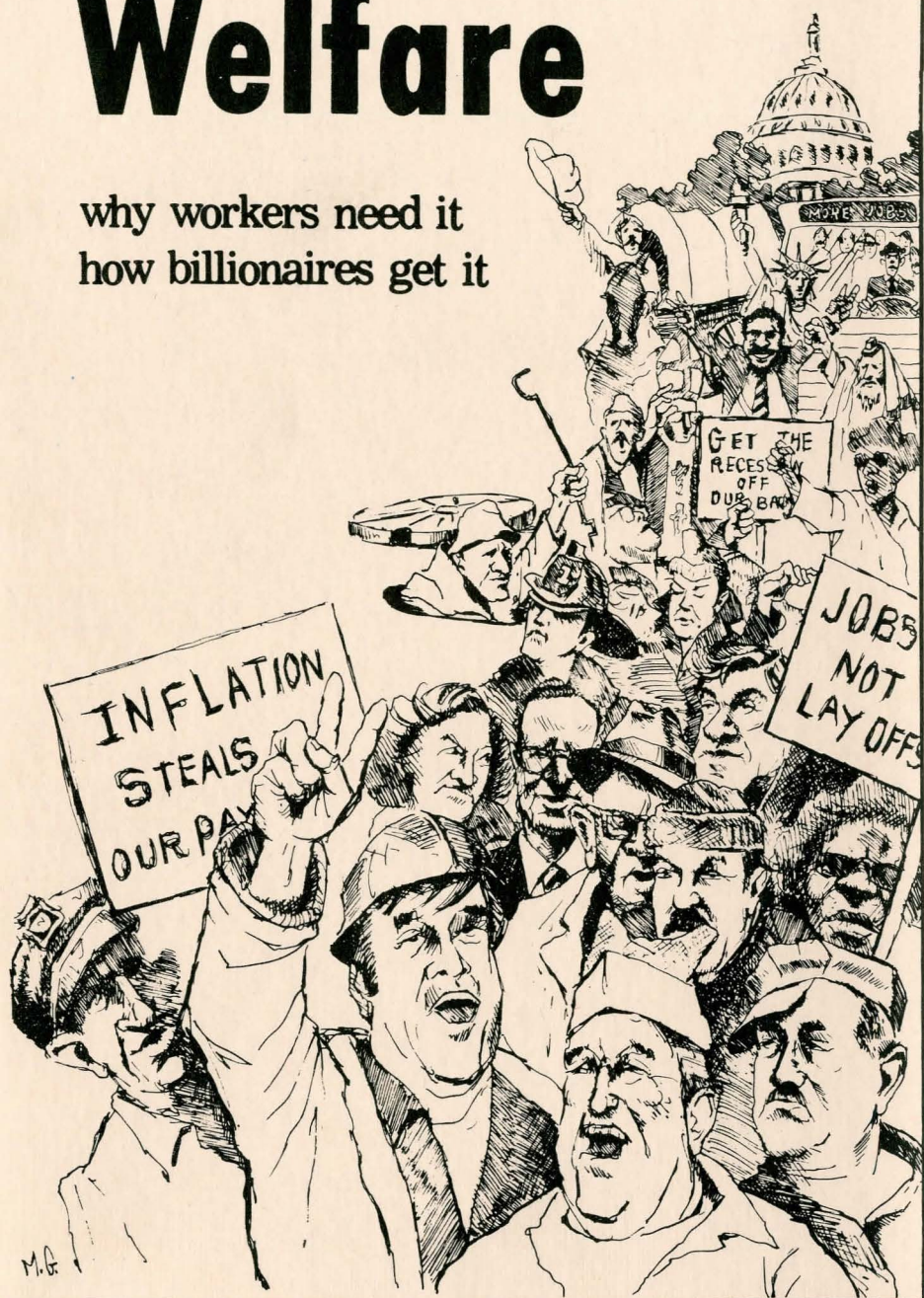


# Welfare

why workers need it  
how billionaires get it



by Elizabeth Ross

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# WELFARE

- why workers need it
- how billionaires get it

by Elizabeth Ross

There *didn't* *used* to be "welfare."

There were orphan asylums where half-orphaned children, who were either illegitimate or had neither father nor mother, were locked away from the world; there were debtors' prisons for those who couldn't pay their bills; there were workhouses in Europe and America, which were the only place where you could get food and shelter. Instead of money, food and shelter, that was the Poor House, where only the most desperate sought refuge. Both men and women crowded together, eating what they begged as much as they earned the pittance.

The welfare system, especially inadequate as it is, is struggling to red tape and reeking with the stench of bureaucracy and very, old keep nearly 18 million Americans out of the Poor House last year.

But there wouldn't be any welfare system at all if it hadn't been for the fight waged by the white people who created the new movement in this country—the working men and women of the last generation.

In 1935 they pressured Congress into passing the Social Security Act, which is the basis for old age benefits and a minimum of help for the poor.

## THEY SAW THE CONNECTION

The same people who fought down strikes for better wages in the '30s knew that the bosses would never have to give in if



Once there was no "welfare."

There were orphan asylums where half-starved children, who were either illegitimate or had neither father nor mother, were hidden away from the world; there were debtors' prisons for those who couldn't pay their bills; there were workhouses in Europe and America, which were often open bull pens where men picked hemp or broke rock and chopped wood and were paid in food and shoddy clothing instead of money. And, of course, there was the Poor House, where only the most desperate sought refuge. Both men and women dreaded entering that dismal lodging as much as they feared the plague.

The welfare system, woefully inadequate as it is, strangling in red tape and reeking with the stench of bureaucratic snobbery, did keep nearly 15 million Americans out of the Poor House last year.

But there wouldn't be any welfare system at all if it hadn't been for the fight waged by the same people who created the union movement in this country—the working men and women of the last generation.

In 1935 they pressured Congress into passing the Social Security Act, which is the basis for old age benefits and a minimum of help for the poor.

#### THEY SAW THE CONNECTION

The same people who held sit-down strikes for better wages in the '30s knew that the bosses would never have to give in if



they had an army of starving, unemployed wanderers always on hand to snap up the jobs the strikers refused to do. They knew that desperation breeds scabs.

They also knew that after their strikes were won, their contracts would never be secure if millions of people with no incomes whatever were forced by the harsh demands of poverty to undercut the decent wages they had fought so hard to gain.

They saw the connection, and they demanded that Congress pass welfare laws.

The politicians didn't act out of the same motives as the working people. They didn't mind a bit if the unemployed were willing to work for less than the going wage, but they were terrified of the anger of both the strikers and the jobless. Food riots, demonstrations of unemployed all over the country, and the rapid growth of the radical movement galvanized them into action. The Social Security Act was a small price to pay for pacifying a rebellious population.

Before there was any regularized welfare system—and very few unions—a story made the rounds of the workers who were organizing. It went like this: a woman with two children to feed, who worked in a textile factory for 28 cents an hour, found she couldn't make it on that kind of pay.

She went to her boss and said, "You've got to give me 10 cents more an hour, or else!"

"Or else what?" the boss said.

"Well, uh,—or else I'll have to go on working for 28 cents," she answered in a panic.

"You're darn right, kid. There's lots of able-bodied girls who'd jump at a job like yours. Now get back to your machine."

That's the way it was.

#### LOW WELFARE RATES AND LOW WAGES GO TOGETHER

Some people gripe about the fact that millions are living (somehow) without working while they slave at a job eight hours a day. But they should stop and think a minute instead of griping.

Even if they don't feel any sympathy for the very poor, they should be for better and bigger welfare programs out of self-interest. If those 15 million people who received welfare last year had been left to starve, all working men and women in America would be nearer starvation themselves.

In Alabama and Mississippi, where welfare payments are the lowest in the 50 states, wages are also lowest. In 1971, the average national welfare allotment per person was \$48.70, while in Alabama it was \$15.20, and in Mississippi \$12.05. In the same year, the average production wage in Alabama was \$2.86 an hour. In Michigan, while the average production wage was \$4.15, welfare payments in Michigan averaged \$112 per person a month.

If production wages are so low in states like Alabama and Mississippi, it's easy to guess what miserable wages are paid to domestic and janitorial workers, and to those who pick cotton and beans.

Still, it has also been proven that most of the people who manage to live on those terribly low wages would rather continue that way than go on welfare.

#### **HOW MANY ABLE-BODIED MEN COLLECT WELFARE?**

When a ballad singer came to the White House last year Nixon asked him to render a song well-known in the Southland called "Welfare Cadillac." In the ballad a welfare recipient tells how great it is to have his rent paid, his family's food provided free, while he rides around in a Cadillac making fools of the taxpayers who have to foot the bill.

Nixon, who has used some hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to furnish his estate at San Clemente with a golf course, swimming pool, beach cabanas, a fancy heating system (all in the name of "security") has the gall to suggest with a snicker, that the most wretched of his countrymen are living in luxury!

The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) did a lot of research into the "Welfare Mess" in 1970, and the following is what they found out:

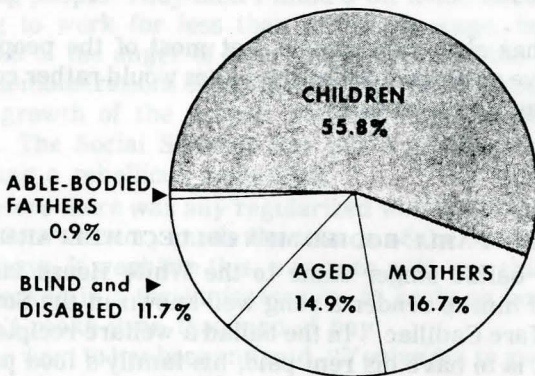
*Less than 1 percent of all welfare recipients are able-bodied men!*

The great majority of those men are employed full time at "normal" wages. Why do they need help? Simply because they all have large families, and "normal" wages are not enough to support a family with six or eight kids; the family must get supplementary assistance.

More than 50 percent of welfare recipients are children!

Mothers of dependent children made up 16.7 percent when the following graph was prepared; now they have been cut to 13 percent. The rest are disabled, blind or over 65 without enough Social Security to stay alive, since the minimum is still under \$100 a month.

**FEDERALLY ASSISTED WELFARE  
POPULATION  
(as of October 1971)**



The official rate of unemployment in 1970 was 6 percent. With a work force of 83 million, that was almost 5 million people. But the real rate was much higher, because it would include all those who had been looking for work for months and had given up going to the unemployment offices to register, knowing they hadn't a chance. It included all those who lived far from the centers and hadn't the carfare to go, and all those who had part-time jobs but felt that was better than nothing. A Democratic Party study made at that time showed that the real figure was nearer 15 percent, well over 12 million Americans unemployed!

Knowing these facts, it seems almost a miracle that less than one percent of all able-bodied males are on welfare.

**WHY DO THE WELFARE ROLLS KEEP RISING?**

After the end of World War II, more than 20 million people migrated from the countryside to the cities. Most of them came



from the farms and the small towns of the South to the industrial cities of the North. Two-thirds of those people were white; one-third were Black.

Not many people are adventurous; they don't want to leave the towns or countryside they have grown to love. They don't want to cut themselves off from the friends and family ties they have known all their lives; they feel uneasy and fearful in new, unfamiliar surroundings. But those 20 million people had to uproot themselves out of driving necessity.

There were many reasons. Foremost among them was the invention of the mechanical cotton picker, which came into general use in the decade following World War II and threw hundreds of thousands out of work. Many thousands more were left jobless when automated machines in the mills and small towns made it possible for one person to do the work of ten.

Another reason was the rising cost of all farm machinery, making it impossible for small farmers to compete with the fast-growing billionaire farm-combines. (It now takes at least \$50,000 in capital to begin farming—and that means doing all the work yourself as well as mortgaging yourself for life in order to buy the machinery you must have.)

The millions who came to the industrial cities found it was not easy to learn new skills when all they had known was how to plant beans and corn, pick cotton, or run outdated machines. When they came to the cities the first thing they were asked was, "What experience have you had?"

But automation and computers had hit the big cities hard, too.

Not all those on welfare are newcomers to the cities. Many already there and doing unskilled work were pushed out into the cold with nowhere but the chilly shelter of the Welfare Department to go to when IBM machines put stenographers, bookkeepers, typesetters, file clerks, and accountants out of a job. Those formerly skilled workers had to learn either a new trade or join the ranks of the unskilled, thus displacing many thousands already doing the hard and dirty work of the cities.

More sophisticated machinery displaced many of the workers in auto, steel, rubber, plastics, construction, food-processing, and coal mining. So it isn't only the migrants, but hundreds of thousands of the stay-at-home steady, unadventurous working men and women, who had never been without

a job before, but now find themselves being investigated by suspicious welfare case workers.

The truth is, the U.S. economy cannot put everybody to work, even when business is booming. It can operate with less and less labor each year and go on increasing its production and profits. (In the first quarter of 1973, profits were up \$11.7 billion over any previous year, and the welfare rolls went up to 15 million.)

An industrial society, more concerned with profits than with safety, exacts a terrible toll in human wreckage. Besides automobile and plane accidents, there are thousands maimed and totally crippled for life in all the mishaps caused by high-speed production. Add to this the half million, still-living casualties of the Vietnam War, the Korean War and World Wars I and II, and the numbers of human beings who must be cared for is staggering. Can they be blamed because they can't work? Who dares call them "welfare bums"?

#### SPREADING A RACIST LIE

Racists of the George Wallace ilk have spread a pernicious and widely believed lie; they give the impression that most welfare recipients are Black. That is a deliberate falsehood.

*There are many more white people on welfare than there are Blacks, Chicanos, American Indians, or Asian-Americans.*

The seven million Black migrants who came to the cities in the post-World War II years were looking for jobs just as eagerly as the 14 million whites. Besides wanting employment, they were fleeing from discrimination and the lynch mobs of the South. Many of them had brothers, sisters, or cousins who had found work during the war years, and who had saved from their earnings to help their relatives escape.

Most of the Black people who came to the big cities *did* find jobs. The majority of the men working in the nation's foundries—100 percent in some foundries—are Black. The majority of the domestic workers in Northern cities, just as in the cities of the South, are Black, and Black women work in the sweatshops of New York City, in the textile plants of New England, in the factories of Philadelphia, Chicago, and Detroit. About a third of the work force in the country's steel and auto plants are Black. The hardest and dirtiest work in America's urban hospitals is performed by Black or Puerto Rican or Chicano workers, most of them women, whose jobs in non-union hospitals are miserably paid and insecure.



But it is true that Black men, especially, have a much harder time finding work than white men or women. They are up against many employers who would never hire a dark-skinned man, no matter how much they needed help. Racist discrimination exists in the North in a much more distorted and disguised form than it does in the South, but any Black man can tell you that discrimination hits him every day of his life no matter where he lives in the United States.

He knows that he is the last hired and the first fired when lay-off time comes, and that when unemployment rises to 6 percent nationally, it goes to 15 or 20 percent in the Black ghettos. He has no recourse but to sign up for welfare, which he rarely gets, so that he often has to leave his wife and children in order for them to get public assistance to stay alive.

(That is why welfare investigators raid the homes of women on relief after midnight—not to find lovers but to find husbands in bed with them—as though it were a crime to feed one more mouth and shelter one more body on the bare subsistence income allowed a family.)

#### WHAT PART OF YOUR TAXES GO FOR WELFARE?

If you have a job that pays a half-way decent wage, when you get your weekly check you probably feel a little sick when you see how much the federal government has gouged out of your earnings. Maybe you saw a headline in the papers that the federal budget was \$201,000,000,000 (that's billions) in 1971. Somebody says to you, "God damn it, we wouldn't have to cough up so much if it wasn't for those welfare chiselers living off us," and maybe you wonder if there isn't something to his complaint.

The truth is, that of all that \$201 billion collected only 1.9 percent went for public welfare. (It is supposed to be matched by state and local governments.)

The breakdown is in the table on the next page.

If the federal government took \$1,000 from you in taxes, only \$19 of that went to keep your fellow workers out of the Poor House, while at the same time it was easier for you to get that slightly-above-the-poverty-line salary you took home.

But, though you paid only \$19 for the welfare program, the government nicked you for a whopping \$367 to finance expenditures for present and future wars.



You paid \$27 to keep farm prices skyrocketing so your bill at the supermarket would make your hair stand on end every time you passed through the check out counter, and so that 12,309 well-heeled farmers, like Senator Eastland, could collect fat subsidies for not planting cotton and other agricultural products you need.

You also paid \$89 to the bankers for interest on the National Debt—largely loans for past wars, which ought to be counted under “Military Programs” but isn’t. The interest keeps on compounding itself year after year, while the bankers could, if they wanted to, lie on the sands of Palm Beach or the Riviera swizzling martinis year round. That compound interest keeps on rolling in with the same sweet rhythm as the waves on the beach. (Isn’t it a funny thing that Nixon didn’t call on any ballad singer to render a song called *National Debt Cadillac*, or *Subsidy Cadillac*, or *Oil Depletion Cadillac*?)

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#### Fiscal 1971 Federal Budget

##### 201 Billion Dollars

Military programs	36.7 percent	73.6 billions
Foreign affairs	1.8 percent	3.6 billions
Space programs	1.7 percent	3.4 billions
Farm subsidies	2.7 percent	5.4 billions
Interest on debt	8.9 percent	17.8 billions
Public welfare payments	1.9 percent	4.2 billions
Other payments	46.2 percent	92.9 billions

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#### BUT WHERE DID THE BULK OF YOUR TAX MONEY GO?

If you’ll look above at the official budget report for 1971, you might wonder what that largest figure of all, that item labeled “Other Payments,” amounting to 46.2 percent of the budget, or \$92.9 billion, was spent for. If your federal income tax was \$1,000, nearly half of it, or \$462 went for “Other Payments.” What were they?

Besides the necessary monies for education, federal highways, conservation, health services, salaries for federal employees, etc., there are X dollars going to the CIA (its budget is secret), to the FBI, and (we have now learned from the Watergate hearings) countless other “intelligence agencies,



*Almost 15 percent of welfare recipients are the aged whose Social Security doesn't allow them to stay alive.*



including those new spies who spy on the old spies. Who can add up what all that costs?

Then, there is the little matter of pensions for the military. All officers collect a pension of half-pay on retirement after 20 years of service, or two-thirds pay after 30 years. That isn't bad, if you think of it. A man who makes lieutenant at the age of 20 can collect two-thirds of his pay at 50 and loaf for the rest of his life. Besides, it is regular army practice to promote an officer just before retirement so as to up his income in those golden years when life is supposedly most worth living.

Privates, of course, can't claim any pensions at all unless they can prove service-connected disability.

Generals, naturally, make out best of all, but it is not on record that any case worker ever asked a general why he hadn't been able to save enough from his earnings to take care of himself in his old age.

In 1972 the bill for military pensions alone—not counting any military hardware—was \$4.7 billion as compared with welfare's bill of \$4.6 billion. That's one hundred million dollars *more* for retired military men than for all the poor in the land.

It is said that there are only two sure things in life—death and taxes. One more sure item might be added: the big Brass will get their pensions, come hell or high water.

Not so with civilians. In the first place only about one-quarter of all working people expect, hope for, or are ever promised any kind of pensions from their employers. They have to depend on whatever Social Security doles out to them—the minimum is still less than \$100 a month.

In the second place, thousands who expect pensions never get them, or get only part of what they have been promised, because their employers can claim bankruptcy, or because pension funds are frequently dipped into for purposes of speculation or other uses. There are many cases on record where companies close down and move elsewhere just before a number of their older employees reach retirement age.

When they reach 65, these cheated workers help swell the welfare load.

#### WHO GETS THE REAL HANDOUTS?

Not counting the pay-offs to all those bums involved in the Watergate affair who only got peanuts, let's take a look at some



of the *known* recipients of the juiciest handouts the U.S. government can offer.

First, there's the matter of subsidies. If you have a corporation, and can spare enough money to keep a lobby in Washington full time, you can probably convince Congress that what you are selling is in the "national interest" and should be supported with a government grant, or subsidy.

A lot of corporations must have been working very hard at gaining that support from Congress because there are more than 170 subsidy programs now in existence.

They range from \$38 million for ship construction, to \$84 million for the sugar crop, to \$267 million for airplane and airport construction.

In the 1930s, when the farmers were in real trouble, and when food prices were low (though millions of Americans couldn't buy much of the food anyway because the price of their labor was even lower) the government passed "crop limitation" laws. They paid farmers to plow under wheat to raise the price, and hog farmers got government money to slaughter little pigs and bury them to bring up the price of pork.

This idea was sold to the country as a means of saving the little farmers. It didn't work. The big farmers have gobbled them up.

There were 7 million farm families in the 1930s, now there are only 2.7 million. How many of those disinherited families have helped swell the welfare rolls?

Neither crop limitations nor crop subsidies (payments to compensate farmers when market prices are below the level that would allow them a handsome profit) haven't been worth a hill of beans to the small farmers—(only 7 percent of subsidy payments went to 41 percent of poor farmers last year). But they have been a source of pleasure and joy to the big farmers who squeezed out the little ones.

Only a few of the many getting handouts for crop limitation are well known, simply because they are prominent politicians whose adversaries are very interested in letting the public in on the facts.

Of the 12,309 lucky ones who collect \$20,000 or more a year to keep food production down and food prices up the name of Senator Eastland is one of the most familiar.

In 1971 he received \$38,646 for not planting cotton, while

Kenneth Frick, head of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service was awarded \$39,111. His brother, Howard Frick, did even better; his welfare check was for \$55,000.

Until very recently the most a farmer could receive as subsidy for wheat, cotton, or food grains was exactly what Howard Frick got—\$55,000—although, if he grew, or refrained from growing, all three crops he could rake in \$165,000.

But the angry demands of the eating public has at last forced Congress to modify subsidy payments—somewhat.

In July, 1973 a bill was passed in both Houses limiting subsidy payments to \$20,000 a year for those engaged in agricultural pursuits.

During the debate in the House, Rep. Silvio O. Conte of Massachusetts brought out the startling fact that among the “farmers” receiving subsidies were, “a bowling alley in Dallas, a municipal airport in Nebraska, a radio station in Ohio, oil companies, state universities, and even the Queen of England!”

The taxpayers of America will be saved \$165 million by the passage of this bill, which seems quite a bit until one realizes that it is less than 4 percent of the \$4.5 billion spent annually on “farm” subsidies.

The giant agricorporations like Teneco, Standard Oil, and Boeing, who, besides making billions in the fields of gasoline, oil, and airplane manufacture, have spread out their investments into every nook and cranny of the economy and thrown genuine farmers and farm laborers onto the scrap heap, are no doubt quite happy that the Congress has left them 96 percent of the juicy subsidies they have long enjoyed.

However, if food prices keep on soaring—as all economists promise they will—government officials predict that the subsidy program may be reduced to only \$500 million next year! The above-named corporations and individuals will be reaping such whopping big profits, they won’t need the subsidy!

And so the poor, for whom food is a major budgetary item, are faced with two gloomy choices: to pay an ever accelerating portion of their incomes in order to eat, or to continue to pay hidden taxes to support subsidies to millionaire farmers, oil billionaires, and “even the Queen of England.” What a choice!

Big corporations also collect handouts in the form of loans. Penn Central nicked the taxpayers for \$100 million (and Penn Central is still crying). The Lockheed Corporation said it was so



much in need it had to have \$250 million—and got it, fast.

U.S. companies operating abroad save 14 percent of the taxes they would have to pay if they were doing the same thing at home. Since they make super-profits because of much lower labor costs in foreign countries—especially in all of Asia—you'd think that advantage should up their taxes (because it sure ups their profits) but instead it *lowers* them!

Since there are more than 4,000 American corporations with foreign holdings, it's anybody's guess how many billions are lost to the federal government by the 14 percent handout.

More chiseling goes on under the innocuous name of "depletion allowances," which are given to owners of oil wells, gas fields, metal mines, coal and sulfur deposits—to name some. Depletion allowances take billions more from the U.S. treasury (the oil subsidy alone costs \$1.5 billion a year). Those billions could be used to ease the burden on the poor instead of making the rich richer.

One more feeder at the public trough must be mentioned here; though his take does not compare with the colossal steals of the oil barons and the agricorporations, it is more visibly repulsive. He is the slumlord and the owner of flea bag hotels that should have been dynamited and torn down years ago. He is the modern prototype of the landlord who put tenants' furniture out on the streets if the rent was five days late.

Now he gets his check direct from the Welfare Bureau, and lets his tenants keep the rats, roaches, leaking water pipes, falling ceilings, and cold radiators without extra charge.

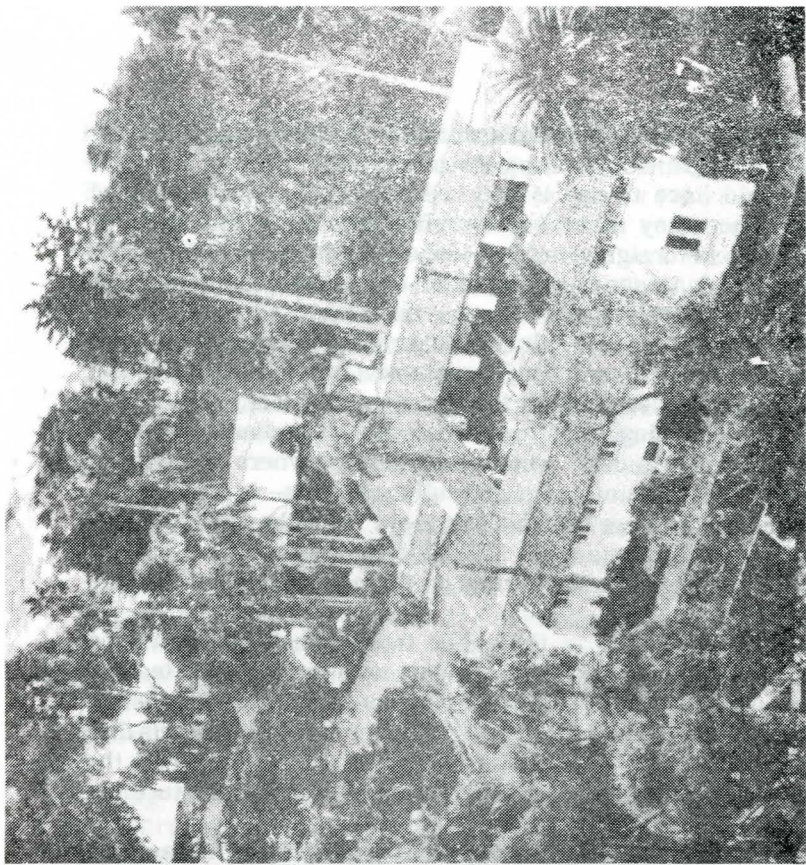
The Welfare Department, as it is now constituted, is the slumlord's best friend.

In August, 1973, the Broadway Central, a New York welfare hotel, collapsed around its occupants, killing four people. But the owners admit they made a profit of \$135,000 a year from their death trap.

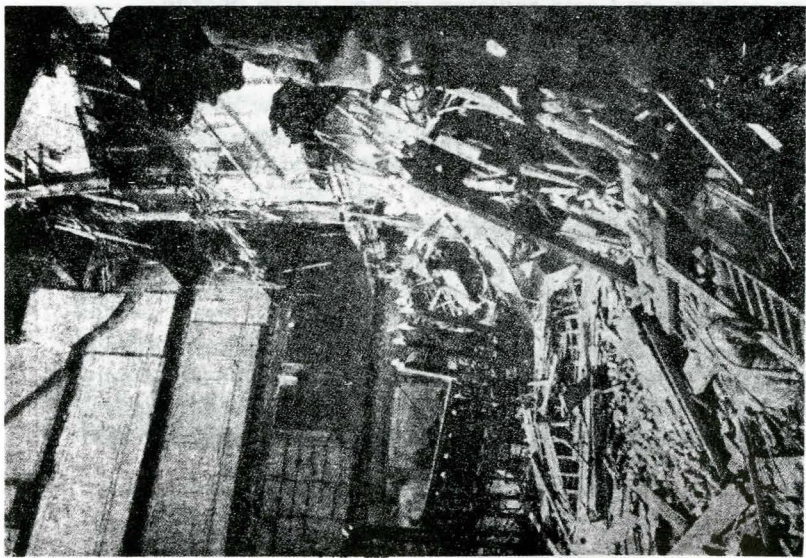
Add up all these mammoth handouts and the pitifully small attempts by a few welfare recipients to gain another \$10 a month (above the national average of \$48.70) to put more hamburgers on the table becomes a tragic joke.

Of course there *are* welfare chiselers, but how many? When a government investigation of fraud in 1969 established that only *four-tenths of one percent* of all welfare cases were fraudulent, it also uncovered the fact that 28 percent of farmers and





... and Nixon's Key Biscayne.



Broadway Central deathtrap



businessmen, and 34 percent of those living on interest payments were guilty of fraud and tax evasion!

The host of big-time swindlers are, naturally, not anxious that the attention of the public be focused on the handouts they receive. They *are* anxious to create a diversion, so that the public will look in a different direction, and pin the blame for their troubles elsewhere. So they have consciously created the image of the welfare bum, the idler and loafer who never wants a job and is happy to bleed the honest, hard-working taxpayer. They have thousands of toadying editorial writers, government stooges, and even song-writers to help them create this false image.

They are like the legendary pickpocket, who runs down the street crying, "Stop, thief!," thus not only diverting the crowd from his own knavery, but sending it in hot pursuit of an imaginary offender, while he darts into a side alley with the swag.

#### **WHY ARE AT LEAST 5 MILLION MORE ELIGIBLE FOR WELFARE, BUT NOT GETTING IT?**

Herbert Gans, who wrote an article for the *New York Times Magazine* of March 17, 1971, estimated that there were between 30 and 50 percent *more* poverty-stricken Americans eligible for welfare, but unable to collect it.

Let's take a conservative figure nearer the 30 percent than the 50 percent. Let's say that one-third more people should be on welfare than there are now. That would be 5 million people!

Five million without enough to pay the rent anywhere, or buy food or clothing. Five million face to face with starvation!

What circumstances brought them to this impasse? Why couldn't they get on welfare?

First: in order only to *apply* you have to prove you have no assets whatever. The negative assertion is as hard to establish as proving you don't beat your wife (even if she *says* you don't, a lawyer could point out she might be shielding you for reasons of her own.)

In most states you are ineligible if you own any property of any kind. If you have a beaten-up jalopie or are living in your own house you will have to sell them first, and use up the money from their sales before you can apply for welfare. No matter how ramshackle a home may be, to many people it is their only hold on



security, as well as the embodiment of all the associations of their lifetime, and they cannot bring themselves to leave it.

Once you have established the fact that you are penniless you can wait for weeks—sometimes months—before receiving any kind of financial help. You are told to be at the welfare office at 7 a.m., where you might wait for 3, 5, or 8 hours before seeing an “eligibility worker” who must interview you before your case can be “appraised.”

In New York City there is now a regulation that no center will interview more than 100 applicants a day. You are told to be on hand at 7 a.m., but you are not told that if 150 applicants come 50 will go away again without an interview. You are not told that the doors will not be opened until 8:30, even in January, and that the staff will not be on hand even then, and that you must wait, sometimes standing, for hours longer.

Those applicants who have learned the ropes the hard way often arrive at 4 a.m. to be sure they are among the first hundred in line, and so must wait for over 4 hours in any kind of weather before the doors open. To New York's early risers it is a familiar sight to see the long dreary lines going the length of the block and around the corner. Scarcely a day passes when there are not scuffles or fights on the line, when the more aggressive, sometimes armed, force their way nearer to the door. Young women report that pimps, with cold and calculating eyes, haunt the vicinity, promising those who appear to have a market value a life of luxury in exchange for the degradation of “welfare.”

Once you have finally made it, elaborate forms must be filled out, which is additionally difficult if you are unfamiliar with the English language. You must produce such documents as birth and marriage certificates and records of where you are now living and where you have lived in the past, as well as your complete work record. After that neighbors and relatives are questioned to find out if you have told the whole truth.

Many case workers avoid telling you of your rights, not just because they're mean but because it is the policy of their department.

One of the most blatant cases of evasion is on record in the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services. It is labeled Manual Letter Number 154, dated March 19, 1973.

The letter, addressed to case workers, came in answer to a court order making it illegal to deny aid to any woman who

refused to go to the District Attorney to tell him of the whereabouts or the identity of a missing parent.

The letter starts:

"No applicant recipient can be denied because of (1) refusal to be interviewed by the District Attorney, or (2) refusal to give the identity or whereabouts of an absent father. . ."

HOWEVER, the very next paragraph of the letter reads:

*"It is NOT required that an applicant or recipient be told that she has no obligation to answer questions or to be interviewed by the District Attorney concerning these matters and, in accordance with state instructions, she should NOT be so advised."* (The italics and the capital letters used twice for the word "NOT" were in the original document.)

Is it any wonder that millions who apply for relief give up trying before they are entered on the rolls?

And now (June 1973) Governor Rockefeller proudly tells the people of New York that he has succeeded in cutting the relief rolls by 74,261 persons in the year ending March 31, and that he got rid of 22,000 recipients in April alone.

He doesn't say what kind of jobs—if any—were found for them.

#### HOW MANY REFUSE "CHARITY"?

There is another reason why thousands of poor families don't get on welfare. *They never try!*

The shame attached to being on public assistance is as great for many families as going to the Poor House used to be.

Not only the stricken families, but their relatives as well, are horrified at the taint of accepting "charity." The American myth of success for everyone, of "a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage" has conditioned them to feel that way.

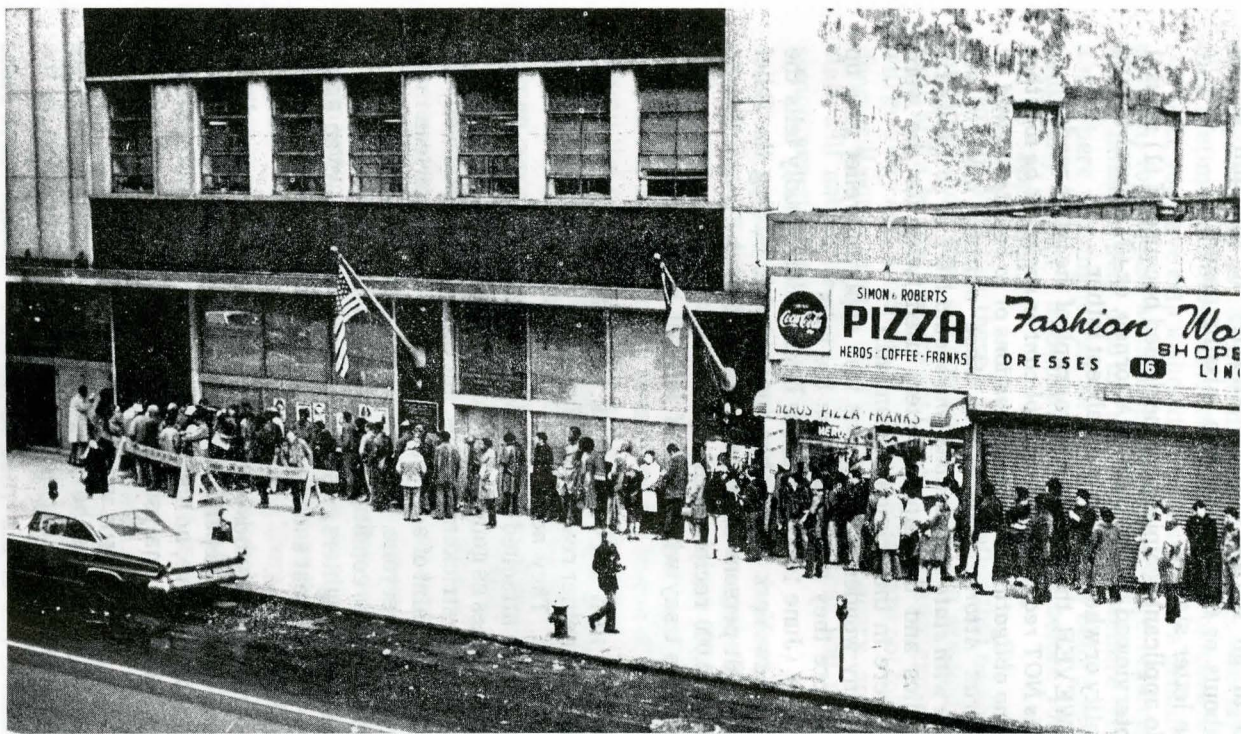
Sons and daughters, sisters, brothers, cousins—even aging parents—make great sacrifices to shield their relatives from the disgrace of welfare.

How many thousands—how many hundreds of thousands—of American families depend on the love and generosity of their relatives to stay alive, no one knows. It is not a subject that lends itself to statistical analysis.

#### THE WORKFARE HOAX

Nixon says we must have "workfare" instead of welfare. He says he believes, and that the "silent majority" believes, in the "work ethic."





*These welfare recipients have been waiting on line for hours for their pittance.*

We have news for him. At least 98 percent of the silent minority who can't find jobs believe in the "work ethic" too. The only hitch is—the work isn't present when the ethic says, "Here I am."

If 5 percent of the work force (and that's 4.4 million able-bodied men and women) are officially unemployed—if they, who have some skills and work experience can't find jobs—how is it possible that nearly 2 million mothers of small children, who have known no other occupation but the caring and feeding of their families, how is it possible that they can be put to work?

*UNLESS they can be made to toil at wages so low they will displace other women and men now working at higher wages!*

That is what Nixon's "work ethic" really means. That is the real reason for the law enacted by Congress in 1972 and upheld by the Supreme Court in 1973, that makes welfare mothers ineligible for relief unless they accept any jobs the Welfare Department forces them into.

Workfare is a device to lower wages!

Nixon's sentiments are not one iota different from those of the English Poor Law Commission, which expressed its views in 1843 in the following words:

"Every penny bestowed, that tends to render the condition of the pauper more eligible than that of the independent laborer, is a bounty on indolence and vice."

Nixon was lyrical about his much-praised scheme, which he named the Family Assistance Plan in 1969, and dumped four years later.

The Family Assistance Plan called for a national income "floor" of \$2,400 for a family of four. That miserable pittance was only a little more than *half* the amount the Office of Economic Opportunity found was the dividing line between poverty and a living wage. The OEO—three years ago, before inflation had gone sky-high—declared that \$3,800 a year was necessary for a family of four to live decently. The National Welfare Rights Organization said it should be \$6,500.

But under Nixon's FAP, a family could lose all of the \$2,400 if its "employable" head refused *any* job offered by the government. That was what workfare was all about.

In 1971 the Senate Finance Committee, finding Nixon's plan too liberal, rewrote it. This is what Tom Wicker, the *New York Times* columnist, had to say about the new version:



“... a horrendous concoction called a ‘guaranteed employment program’ that virtually abolished welfare as such and would force family heads to work at substandard wages, in either public or private jobs, at \$48 a week for those who could not find them elsewhere. This is a cheap-labor scheme to provide a big pool of workers who would be forced to accept less than the minimum wage, with starvation their alternative.”

Though the particular bill Wicker objected to so vehemently was not passed, it is almost identical to the Talmadge Amendments to the 1972 Social Security Act that was pushed through Congress last year. The only difference to Nixon’s FAP is that there is NO guarantee of a “floor” of \$2,400 a year, or of *any* floor whatsoever. All the Talmadge Amendment guarantees is lower wages for working people and higher profits for the bosses.

Fortunately, it isn’t working very well.

Out of one million people who have been registered for “workfare” since July 1, 1972, only 82,075 have been placed in jobs.

An article in the *New York Times*, dated April 19, 1973, says, “The placement figures confirmed predictions of local officials and welfare rights organizations that it would be very difficult to find work for welfare recipients, especially in a time of high unemployment.”

But high unemployment is a chronic condition of the age we live in!

Welfare is a necessary extension of unemployment insurance. Without it, wages would drop, and working hours would rise. All that union men and women have fought so hard for over the years would be in danger.

#### WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

Of course assistance for the poor in any form is only a stopgap measure. No one anywhere in this age of potential superabundance should have to go begging for the essentials of life. It should and could be the right of everyone.

But welfare for the poor cannot be ended until welfare for the billionaires is phased out, and the only way to do that is to throw the greedy chisellers out of power.

The working people, who create all wealth, will reorganize society to produce for the needs of *all* instead of for the profits of a few. Instead of holding millions of acres of land out of use to keep

farm prices up, they will increase food production to create an abundance for all our needs. Instead of building more bombers they will build hundreds of thousands of modern, liveable homes, and the slumlords will then have to work for a living like every other able-bodied man and woman.

Welfare, with its humiliation and despair, will be a distant memory.

Until then, however, all working people must fight to greatly improve the situation that faces all of us now, no matter how the mechanics of it are worked out—whether by a guaranteed annual living wage or by some more efficient method.

If it is not improved, you who are reading this pamphlet may some day find yourself jobless and moneyless, either because your unemployment insurance ran out, or because your employer found machinery to displace you, or because he ran away to some foreign country where labor is paid still less, or because a bigger boss, with enough capital to compete on an ever-tougher market, bought your boss out.

Then you too might find yourself waiting for months at the welfare office, sitting or standing for hours, up against cold-eyed caseworkers—or even warm-hearted caseworkers who wanted to help you but couldn't because the "policy" of the Department prevented them, on penalty of losing their own jobs and so becoming welfare clients themselves.

If you are a woman, and not disabled, you would learn that to get assistance you must be the sole support of one or more children, and that if you get on the rolls you must accept any job at any pay while your small children would be put into day-care centers (if any can be found in your neighborhood), and those over six, who will be going to school for part of the hours you work, must fend for themselves either at home or in the streets after school lets out. When you are finishing your day's work you will be thinking of all the dangers that could beset them—tenement fires, trucks bearing down on them, bullies tormenting them, or even dope pushers offering them "a treat."

If you are a married man, while you were waiting on line you'd be wondering where your family would find the money for their next meal. You'd wonder what you'd say to the landlord when the next month's rent is due, and how you'd buy new shoes for the kids, and winter coats and galoshes; how you'd pay the electric bill and gas bill and squeeze out enough money for bus or



subway fares. You'd know the telephone would have to go, and there'd be no more movies or trips to the seashore, and of course no family vacations.

And then, a desperate thought might worm its way into your head—the thought that the only way your family might survive would be by your deserting them. For by this time you would know that, as an “able-bodied male” your chances of getting on welfare are near zero.

One thing's for sure; you wouldn't be thinking about buying a Cadillac!

This article was originally published in 1973 by the Center for United Labor Action. The Center for United Labor Action is an association of working men and women devoted to the improvement of working conditions and the advancement of all workers of all races and nationalities in the struggle against the U.S. corporations. It helps to organize the unorganized and aims to make existing labor organizations more effective.

The Center has branches throughout the country and publishes a national monthly newsletter called United Labor Action. The subscription price is \$1.00 per year.

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