

Editorial

How to think about welfare

There is no question but that welfare costs are biting more and more into public revenues, as the present depression deepens, and the tax base shrinks. Cities and even states are in a position of undeclared bankruptcy. Under these circumstances, an ugly mood has been created in the country, especially among conservatives, which blames the welfare poor for being “useless eaters.”

In a period where none of the “official” candidates who are running for office has the least idea of how to deal with the depression, it becomes seductive to simply blame those desperate people who have been reduced to joining the welfare rolls. Yet it is the bitter truth that today many families cannot meet ends meet, even with both parents working, so that at the very least they must rely upon food stamps. For single mothers, the situation can be far more brutal.

As more and more people are thrown out of work, employers who are themselves on the verge of bankruptcy, sometimes use the opportunity to cut wages below the minimum needed for survival. Unfortunately, where “workfare” replaces welfare, it has tended to lower wage scales in general, and of course, in the present situation of increasing unemployment, these new additions to the labor force cannot be absorbed without throwing other people out of work. A virtual slave labor force is thus being created at the lower end of the wage scale, and these individuals are being recycled to lower- and lower-paying jobs.

Even mothers with young children are being forced off the welfare rolls; yet in most instances it is simply unrealistic to suppose that a woman with relatively low job skills can pay for child care, as well as single-handedly support her family. Even where a single mother successfully struggles to do just this, her existence is usually so marginal that a relatively minor illness can result in forcing her to join the ranks of the homeless, with her children.

Two-parent families today find it difficult to survive financially without both parents working. Parents are increasingly faced with the brutal forced choice be-

tween being able to provide adequate personal care for their children, and providing an adequate physical standard of living for the family.

The inability of a father to adequately support his family is an indication of the present structural imbalance of our economy. Since the death of John Kennedy—when the United States was a leader in frontier technology and space exploration—the U.S. economy has been more and more burdened by the shift out of productive jobs and into service sector employment. This is the essence of the myth of Lyndon Johnson’s so-called Great Society, which substituted government-controlled welfarism for productive capitalism.

While it is the Democrats who tend to relate to the ideology of the Great Society, and Republicans to the equally pernicious “free market” ideology, it should be noted that both are versions of British political economics, and both oppose the American System of economics. Either alternative leads to the growth of a poverty-stricken underclass. Both accept the increase of poverty as a given, and the only difference between them is over how the poor are to be treated.

Over the past 18 years, there has been a public campaign intended to label welfare recipients as a lazy underclass, who choose joblessness as a way of life. As a result, welfare benefits as a whole, calculated in constant dollars, have been reduced by 25-42%, as workfare has replaced welfare.

The answer to the present crisis is to go back to American System economics (the benchmark for this in our recent past is the short-lived Kennedy presidency). This is the program of Lyndon LaRouche. He has called for the creation of 6 million jobs to rebuild the collapsing infrastructure of the United States. Along with this, he is for tax incentives to vital industries which invest in research and development, and which foster investment in high technology. Such a program would mean that the United States would again have the productivity needed to support the growth of healthy, happy families, and the welfare rolls would be reduced.