

Why Have We Spent So much Money  
and Bought So Little?

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In 1950, with unemployment running at 3.6% the poor and disadvantaged were not considered a national problem. The entire Federal budget allocated only \$250 annually per poor person. But by 1965, public perception of the poor had done an about face and legislation was introduced to create 2 million jobs before the poor revolted. Give-a-away programs were inaugurated in the 1960's which satisfied the poor through the 70's. But with the advent of Ronald Regan the cost and the effectiveness of these programs became center staged and were put under the microscope. How had the poor gained from the give-a-way programs? In 1968, 13% of all Americans were poor. Twelve years later and after welfare costs had quadrupled 13% of all Americans were still poor. The poor learned early on that being poor without working was better than working. This decision trapped millions around the poverty level.

Why did we, the more affluent workers, permit this hemorrhaging of public money to be expended for results so marginal? It started when we the public acknowledged that we some how had created those poor and disadvantaged people.

The traditional concept of social welfare is to "lend a hand" to those who could not work. Those who could work should support themselves. Any other concept would create welfare cheats. By 1960, this concept was extended to and included the working poor; those people who were unable to raise their own standards of living. This new concept was given birth when we acknowledged that our social, economic, and political system made it impossible for our disadvantaged to rise above their limitations. And with the acceptance of this new concept we were ready to provide a living to those who requested it. And it was requested, militantly.

And why not transfer income from those who have to those who have not? We are members of a rich country and can well afford the transfer. The poor will be trained to make their own living and poverty will fall only on the shoulders of those who can not support themselves. It seemed like a good idea at the time. This philosophy came to bud under President Kennedy and to full flower with President Johnson's Great Society.

By 1968, Congress had ground out a host of social benefit laws. The blacks were rioting which put spurs to the law makers decisions. Even so, responsible law makers speculated about the long range success of these liberal programs. Joseph Califano, principal aide to Pres.

Johnston, announced to the press "that a government analysis had shown that only 50,000 persons, or 1% of the 7.3 million people on welfare, were capable of acquiring skills and training to make them self-sufficient". In 1980, dollars, public aid increased from 66 billion in 1968 to 346 billion annually by 1980 and still growing. This represents a major contribution to our current 2 trillion dollar deficit.

2

If social policy is successful, we should see improvement over time. How much improvement did we see? In 1968 with Johnston's "war on poverty" programs in place the public tab amounted to 68 billion and on a scale of 1 to 10, 5 persons were considered poor.

In 1980 with the government spending 346 billion 5 persons were still considered poor. Something wasn't working right. According to the liberal persuasion the only poor people around should be those who were unable to work. But in fact, millions of working poor quit work because their subsidies totaled more in value than their working income. <sup>Now</sup> The deserving poor took advantage of programs such as Affirmative Action and Equal Employment. These workers were qualified to hold better jobs and the regulations afforded them that opportunity. Industries working on government contracts as well as industries not working on government contracts were required by law to hire a percentage of blacks. There is no doubt that the Equal Opportunity laws raised the income and the morale of many blacks which is the sole purpose of social legislation. But it is a shame that we must spend so much to benefit so few.

As in the case of the job programs the Federal investment in education was huge. More than 85 billion was spent on education between 1965 and 1980. The response in enrollment by both black and white students was enormous. But the quality of education absorbed was discouraging. Any school teacher can talk in length on this subject.

In 1981 a concerned Department of Education appointed a commission to prove or disprove a public perception that something was seriously wrong in the public school system. After an 18 month study the department issued this statement. "Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, in economic attainments". But for the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, not even approach, those of their parents. Only a few people disagreed with the statement.

One would think that because of all the Federal money being spent on the poor and disadvantaged, crime would be on the decline. Not so. From 1965 to 1980 crime escalated dramatically and especially among the urban white and black youths. In 1965 white victims of criminal activities ran 121 victims per 100,000. In 1979 the number had increased to over 1300 victims. Victims among the black society was even more startling. The black victims increased from 579 to 2100.

but the liberal attitude prevailed. Since the urban delinquent never had a chance in our society his punishment must be the least punishment. The result. The mugger who did not fear the law continuously broke the law. Civilians who could not depend upon police protection protected themselves.



3

The dramatic increase in urban hoodlums can be traced directly to a welfare program called AFDC - aid to families of dependent children. This laudable program was intended to support those poor mothers and their children who could not make it on their own. A worth while program indeed. But look what happened. Single women started birthing illegitimate and unwanted children <sup>SOLELY</sup> ~~solely~~ for the money received from AFDC and other programs. The offenders were both black and white with black women the most proliferate. We are now in the third generation of this offense and the number of families headed by a single female is huge. I presume that all of these mothers are receiving food stamps.

In 1980 the food stamp program totaled 21 million beneficiaries. Here we are only partially concerned with the billions of dollars spent in the perpetuation of this program. Most important is the impact these unwanted and illegitimate children have had on society. They have grown up on the streets and have accepted the criminal life as the natural life.

Reducing misery and increasing happiness is the bottom line of any welfare program. Currently we are running a deficit and are wondering why.

By 1980, it became clear that the welfare programs were not producing the desired results because the working poor did not use the programs to up-grade their skills but <sup>SID</sup> manipulated the programs to satisfy their immediate needs. Rather than gaining satisfied citizens and efficient workers society gained not much of anything. So what did we do wrong? Basically we are using the right approach but ~~this~~ approach is directed towards the wrong kinds of people. Let's not forget that the Great Society programs were initiated in the 1960's and that was the decade the blacks were insisting upon their constitutional rights of equal opportunity. Now the blacks could not hack it in the work place therefore it behooved society to train them and support them. Apparently, they were not too anxious to accept job training but did enthusiastically accept the support. Our social laws in effect say if your income is less than X number of dollars we will make up the difference. Now anybody in his right mind who is earning the same number of dollars will quit his job and go on the dole. As a matter of fact, people earning above X dollars quit work. Why work when the government will pay you the same dollars not to work? As a result of these good but poorly conceived social laws huge numbers of people accepted the government hand-out and became non-productive law breakers satisfied to live around the poverty level. The unfortunate who were forced into jobs remained there only until eligible for unemployment insurance.

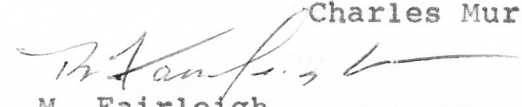
government hand-out and became non-productive law breakers satisfied to live around the poverty level. The unfortunate who were forced into jobs remained there only until eligible for unemployment insurance. Woman found that birthing illegitimate children was preferable to working or establishing a household. The children discovered that a free education or mugging in the streets was a fascinating existence. And all considered food stamps admirable.

The liberals' social goals failed and care for the poor was transferred to the working section of the population.

*FROM THE POOR*

It is time for society to re-evaluate our welfare programs and seek more equitable goals. In 1965, social legislation commenced to run off the Congressional assembly line. These laws had a two fold purpose: One goal was to help the truly disadvantaged and also to help the working poor whose sole desire was to stand on their own two feet and support themselves. The second goal was to bribe those people who wanted a hand-out and were willing to gain it through violence. Now if you buy this assertion you can rightly claim that our welfare program has been successful because rioting has become passé. But welfare, as it exists today is discriminating, unfair, suppressive, and a host of other ills. The present laws should be scrapped and rewritten around the central theme that only those who want to become lawful and productive citizens deserve our help. Those who think otherwise do not qualify for welfare. The person who has an unhealthy ~~attitude~~ attitude towards our government, the chisler, the dead beat do not deserve our help and should not receive our help. Our welfare programs should have tunnel vision and aimed at two exclusive groups of people. Those who truly need our help and those who truly want our help. All the rest can fend for themselves.

Book Reviewed - Losing Ground  
 Charles Murray



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