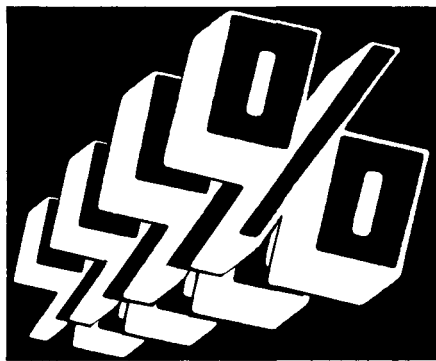


increased the bite by 31 and 28 percent. Meanwhile, corporate taxes declined under all four Republican presidents and increased under all four Democratic presidents.

As the depository of executive rules and regulations, the Federal Register is a crude index of the growth of federal regulation, but it is the best available. The big book of regulations shrunk during only one term—Ike's first. It expanded 46 percent faster under Republican presidents than Democratic ones, and fastest under Carter's and Nixon's first terms, swelling by 53 and 44 percent as they expanded regulatory power. Surprisingly, the Federal Register grew by only 4 percent under Lyndon Johnson.

Except for upholding their tradition of being the low tax party (especially for business), the Republicans have acted much the same as the Democrats when in control of the White House. The country suffered the largest budget deficits under Nixon/Ford (2.2 percent of the GNP) and Carter (2.0 percent). The increase in the consumer price index has not varied much between Republicans and Democrats (72 percent and 68 percent), and the average rate of unemployment has been only slightly higher under the GOP—5.4 percent versus 5.2 percent for the Democrats.

These figures support the cynic's contention that there isn't a dime's worth of difference between the Republicans and Democrats. United by



the ideology of spend and spend, tax and tax, regulate and regulate, borrow and borrow, the records of the Republican and Democratic presidents tend to merge. The free spending and heavy taxing former governor of California truly hit the ground running when he became president, but with budget deficits likely to exceed 2.5 percent of the GNP, and having just imposed a \$100 billion tax increase over the next three years, isn't he now running in the usual direction? ■



The welfare mystique

JOAN KENNEDY TAYLOR

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION's effort to reduce federal social spending has sparked a debate over the proper role and level of the "social safety net." One aspect of the issue that is receiving increasing attention is the so-called feminization of poverty: the fact, long identified by feminists, that the most visible of the national welfare programs is Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), with most of these families headed by women.

Last summer two quite different sources took up the issue. Ken Auletta's book, *The Underclass*, has an entire chapter on "Single Mothers: The Feminization of Poverty." A long article by Barbara Ehrenreich and Karin Stallard in the tenth-anniversary issue of *Ms.* (July/August 1982), "The Nouveau Poor," uses the same phrase, which originated in an article by Dr. Diana Pearce in 1978. Both sources also quote the same grim sentence from the thirteenth annual report of the president's national advisory council on economic opportunity, issued in September 1981: "All other things being equal, if the proportion of the poor in female-householder families were to continue to increase at the same rate as it did from 1967 to 1978, the poverty population would be composed solely of women and their children before the year 2000."

Of course, no matter how many poor women there are and how fast their number increases, we will never get to the point where there are no poor men, whatever extrapolation the figures seem to show. But the fact remains that ever larger numbers of women and their children continue to swell the welfare rolls and, in Ken Auletta's words, "threaten to become, perhaps for the first time in American life, an intergenerational underclass."

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The figures are startling and upsetting. While the number of poor families headed by men declined by 25 percent between 1970 and 1977, the number of poor families headed by women increased by 38.7 percent. One-third of all families in the United States headed by a woman are classified as poor, compared to only one-tenth of those headed by men. The *Ms.* article summarizes: "Two out of three adults who fall into the federal definition of poverty are women, and more than half the families defined as poor are maintained by single women." Add to this Auletta's figure, that in some urban ghettos over 70 percent of all the babies born are illegitimate.

Even more alarming than the feminization of poverty is that, in absolute terms, poverty is growing. It is time to consider a relationship that for most people has been unthinkable: government welfare policies are directly acting to create and perpetuate this permanent, intergenerational underclass.

Charles A. Murray, who for seven years was a senior scientist at the American Institute for Research, has presented some compelling arguments for the thesis that "social welfare policy in the last couple of decades has not simply been too costly, but has also been socially unjust." Murray points out that the official number of poor declined in the period 1949-68, from about 33 percent of the population in 1949 to about 12.8 percent in 1968. This decline in poverty was correlated with a growth in the GNP over these years, but seemed to have no correlation with the growth or shrinkage of poverty programs. But then the proportion of the poor surprisingly leveled out, fluctuating somewhere between 11 and 13 percent throughout the seventies. In 1980 we had a slightly higher percentage of poor people than we had in 1968.

These official figures include income from government transfer payments—that is, even after these have been paid out, between 11 and 13 per-

cent of the population is poor. The trend remains the same even if this income is not counted: There was a steady decline in poverty until 1968, but then a steady *increase*.

Thus, we had a steady decline in poverty from the end of World War II until 1968, both in the proportion of people who could not provide for themselves without government help and in the proportion of people below the poverty level. Then, as the welfare budget more than doubled in constant dollars between 1970 and 1980, dependency increased. Despite the huge sums of money spent there was no further decrease in absolute poverty. What happened in 1968?

Some people have argued that the increase is related to the deteriorating economy and the lowering of everyone's real income. But Murray goes further, pointing out that the War on Poverty's "big" programs started to take effect in 1968: "For the first time in American history—and I mean literally the first time in American history—it was widely suggested and then acted upon that welfare benefits be extended to working-age people who already held jobs." Across the political spectrum, people viewed this as a measure that was fair and just, perhaps because times were *not* hard—in 1968 unemployment was less than 4 percent. It looked as though a little more help from the government actually might eradicate poverty.

Instead, apparently, the government subsidized it. According to Murray, the new programs were supposed to encourage people to get off welfare by allowing them to earn a little money and still receive aid. "We changed the policy," he says, "for what seemed at the time to be a very commonsensical reason—let's provide some incentive to get off welfare." But, he goes on, "the other half of the equation which was not considered at the time is—it works both ways. You not only have an incentive to get a job, which involves a cost. There is also an incentive from the other direction, whereby if you are working at a low-paying job, there are now advantages to getting on welfare. . . . I think what happened was this—we miscalculated the relative force of the fairly small incentive pushing up. The fairly large incentive turned out to be pushing down."

Murray's recent monograph, *Safety Nets and the Truly Needy: Rethinking the Social Welfare System* (Heritage Founda-

tion, 1982), makes additional points about why the incentives may have exerted downward pressure. There is now *less* incentive to hold on to a full-time, low-paying job while trying to get a better one, because welfare and in-kind benefits allow a person to put together a package of some work and some welfare that seems tolerable for an indefinite period. What Murray calls "short-range rationality" favors doing just that.

Perhaps even worse has been the effect on values. Again for the first time in American history, "it became socially acceptable within the poor community to be unemployed *because the working poor were on welfare too*. Before, the working poor had a way to distinguish themselves from the non-working poor. They were better. They were productive members of the community while the others were not." The understandable desire not to blame poor people for being poor, says

WHAT IS IT ABOUT OUR approach to welfare that is putting women and children last? Can it be that the consequence of our programs to eradicate poverty is not only more poverty in general, but specifically female poverty? Virtually everyone who has tackled this issue acknowledges that government programs have tended to break up families by making it easier for broken families to receive aid and thus encouraging male heads of households to leave. Conservatives such as George Gilder take this observation even further by claiming that government programs wrongly interfere with traditional male/female roles: that of the man as breadwinner and the woman as dependent and mother.

But his criticism completely misses what has happened in American society. As a whole, our society has been moving away from such traditional male/female economic roles, with a

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Murray, has nearly destroyed the incentive for getting off welfare and getting out of poverty. "By taking away blame, society also took away credit, credit that has been an essential part of the reward structure that has fostered economic mobility in this country."

By itself Murray's analysis doesn't explain why young women with children are particular victims of this policy. Nor does that of Barbara Ehrenreich and Karin Stallard, authors of the *Ms.* examination of the problem. Their figures clearly show a correlation between the feminization of poverty and the growth of government programs, but they don't tackle the analytic problems that this data represent. They seem rather to assume that more of the same will be an adequate response. They recommend government efforts to provide day care, income support, job training, and minimum-wage law enforcement—the standard welfare-establishment, big-government menu.

massive movement of women into the workplace; in fact, the *Ms.* article argues that "an estimated 85 percent of American women can expect to have to support themselves (if not themselves and their children) at some time in their lives." Not only are half of the jobs in the country now held by women, but the two-paycheck family seems here to stay. John Cogan, David Henderson, and John Raisian, economists with the Department of Labor, have analyzed annual unemployment figures with this trend in mind. They found that "over the last 50 years a safety net, not created by the government, has emerged. By far the most important safety net in our society is the multi-earner family." Because of this trend, the worst effects of unemployment fall on that percentage of the unemployed who are both in poverty and either have no family or are female heads of families—less than 1 percent of the labor force. Most of the unemployed are living in families with employed members.

As women have moved into the work force, the power of what Betty Friedan in 1963 called "the feminine mystique" has radically decreased in American society. Friedan's famous book of that name explored a milieu where women no longer were content with defining themselves solely as wives and mothers, in the absence of other meaningful and productive activity. To the extent that suburban ideals in the 1950s defined masculine success by the ability to keep a woman in comparative idleness (which meant that the work she did at home was devalued) and defined feminine success by the subordination of personal interests to the care of husband and children, a malaise developed, "the problem that has no name." Since then, our society has changed. Women as well as men take it for granted that the ability to support oneself is part of successful maturity, and the mystique which dictated that outside interests devalued home and family is no longer current. In the 1980s women are working in record numbers—and they are telling pollsters that they intend to continue doing so.

Except in the ghetto. While the rest of American society has moved away from the traditional male/female role models, the ghetto apparently has not. Reading the case studies in Ken Auletta's *The Underclass*, one sees young mothers, most of them teenagers, who are almost totally passive. Indeed, passivity is the defining characteristic of welfare mothers that emerges from his portraits. They have drifted through government schools for a while; they may have taken care of younger brothers and sisters; they want something to love. In the words of a nun who works with such mothers, "lots of girls feel that if they get to be eighteen and they don't have a baby, they're not a woman. A baby is something everyone considers something of worth." But instead of marrying a man who will take care of them, they "marry" welfare.

Auletta also quotes a field report by a team of researchers at the City University of New York:

Many of the girls' mothers' friends had pregnant daughters, so that it was almost expected for their daughters to get pregnant. There seemed to exist a peer group of not only young mothers but also a group of grandmothers who were in their early thirties in the neighborhood. It seemed that the daughters continued having the children that their mothers couldn't have.

A 1978 column by Jimmy Breslin,

"Pregnant Thoughts—Out of the Mouths of Babes," describes one woman's struggle to keep her fourteen-year-old daughter from going this route. The woman worked as a legal secretary and lived in a housing project where many of the families were on welfare. Most of the other fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds were becoming pregnant. "Then her daughter began to talk about it openly. 'I want to have a baby,' she said one night. 'Why?' the mother asked. 'I want something of my own,' the daughter said. 'Well, who's going to pay for this? I'm a working woman. You don't get a cent

were not working at all, whereas, before the cuts, she would have earned \$166 more per month while working. The inescapable question is: why should she work? Absent the perspective of the women's movement, the implied answer is: she would have no reason to work.

Yet this question can be asked with equal validity of a nonwelfare wife who is entering the job market for the first time, and whose job-related expenditures for clothing and child care leave her with little or no net earnings. Why should *she* work?

The reasons she works are both eco-

Women in the 1950s saw marriage as the way to lives of their own; today a new feminine mystique is alive and well in the ghetto.

from me.' 'I'll get on welfare when I have the baby and get my own pad,' her daughter said."

Breslin goes on to summarize: "In many places today, the daughters of the poor regard pregnancy as the way to welfare, and welfare as the way to lives of their own." Young women in the 1950s regarded marriage as the way to lives of their own; today a new version of the feminine mystique is alive and well in the ghetto.

OUR PERSPECTIVE ON welfare might change if we considered the relationship between a welfare mother's dependency on government with the kind of dependency the women's movement was talking about in the late sixties and early seventies. Take current discussions of the Reagan budget cuts as an example. A study by the Washington-based Center for the Study of Social Policy in February 1982 criticized the notion that welfare is a "safety net" rather than an income-supplement program. The study concluded that welfare cuts increased the likelihood that those poor who were working while receiving some form of public assistance would stop working and go on welfare full time. In New York State, for example, the analysis showed that a mother of two children earning nearly \$4.00 per hour would net \$12.00 less per month than if she

were not working at all, whereas, before the cuts, she would have earned \$166 more per month while working. The inescapable question is: why should she work? Absent the perspective of the women's movement, the implied answer is: she would have no reason to work.

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The reasons she works are both economic and psychological. She works as a form of job training, to better herself in the expectation that she can use the job to advance to a point where she does have significant net earnings. And psychologically, she works because she feels more productive. She knows that her choice between earning a living or being supported by her husband is not accurately described as a choice between working and not working, for she is doing some sort of work in both instances. But she feels more independent if she is working out of the home, and she probably also feels that both her family and society in general value and respect her work more.

Do the same factors operate in the life of the welfare mother? They could, but often they don't. As Charles Murray's analysis stresses, policies that reward failure in life cannot at the same time reward success. "The central error of existing social welfare policy," Murray argues, "is that it insists on homogenizing the poor. In the rest of society, we continue as always to differentiate the clever from the dull, the virtuous from the criminal, the industrious from the indolent. But when it comes to the poor, all must be victims. They are not permitted to be superior to one another."

Most of the women interviewed by Ken Auletta hated welfare and wanted to get off it, even if they had gone on

welfare as a matter of course as teenage mothers. Many of them were becoming aware that they had alternatives. But Auletta ends his chapter on the feminization of poverty with a visit to a woman with no sense of alternatives—Jean Madison, thirty-nine-years old and pregnant. She has been bearing children since she was eleven. She considers that she devotes herself to them. Her goal? To have a house on Long Island and eat ice cream. “Maybe one day I’ll get it—if the right man comes along and I get married,” she concludes. “If not, I’ll be right here, waiting.”

It’s a paradox. Jean Madison seems to represent exactly the sort of “feminine” woman that conservatives honor, but it is hard to imagine contemporary society producing her in the absence of the welfare programs, which conservatives criticize, that have supported her since 1968.

As for the liberals and liberal feminists, if they believe women should be encouraged to be independent, self-confident, and self-supporting, why aren’t they raising these issues in connection with welfare? Sharon Presley, in her now-classic article, “Libertarianism and Feminism,” stated the case against the liberals:

If a woman said to you, “I want to be free from the domination of men,” but turned to a tyrannical husband not only for financial support but for decisions about her own personal and social life, you would undoubtedly consider her inconsistent. Yet that is what many feminists are doing on a political level. They say they want to be free of the domination of men but ask for favors and handouts from a government. . . .

The so-called liberal vision that our policy makers have accepted has at its heart an image of the poor, especially the ghetto poor, as permanent dependents. This in turn has seemed to give plausibility to the “public good” argument for welfare—the argument that individuals would be willing to pay a proportion of their income to care for these dependents only if they knew that all other members of the society were forced to pay a similar proportion. But this argument, as well-entrenched as it is, overlooks the reality of how individuals behave in a free society. No one would argue that since all the infants in the world are a dependent class, therefore, “if the state didn’t pay for the nurturing of these children, who would? Surely no individual would want to take on such a responsibility unless assured that everyone else in the society would take

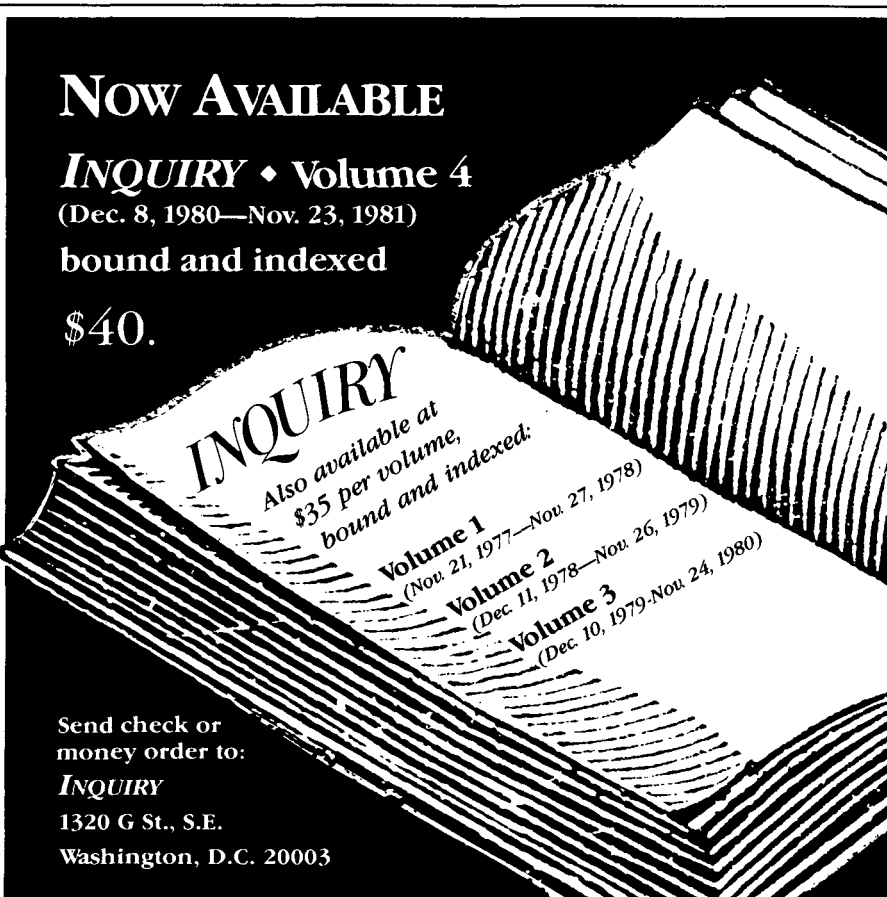
on an equal share.” The answer to the question, of course, is obvious; we still live in a society in which, despite pressures from government in the opposite direction, individuals do take responsibility for the welfare of others.

Many liberals justify the present big-government approach to social problems, for all its failings, in the name of compassion. But a close look at the programs shows that compassion is exactly what they are devoid of. Government has replaced community and tradition with the impersonal hand of the bureaucrat dispensing laws and regulations. Where people used to be aware of their interdependence, now they assume that it is the government’s job alone to take care of people who have problems—and thousands of people, both the elderly and the very young, are literally dying of loneliness as a consequence.

Feminists, in particular, should accept the full implications of welfare as a woman’s issue and apply some of the techniques that have resulted in the successes of the women’s movement, the techniques of self-help. Small-town, grass-roots consciousness raising in the 1970s was *about* dependency: about the assumptions that women in differing life situations had accepted

unquestioningly—that they couldn’t or shouldn’t make decisions, that they couldn’t or shouldn’t travel alone, that they weren’t smart enough or organized enough to enter the workplace. Why aren’t more feminists starting similar consciousness raising in the ghettos? There are already surrogate-mother programs (mostly run by religious groups) for ghetto teenage mothers. Why not augment them with Big Sister-type programs that pair teenage mothers with working women? Surely the women who have organized community day care, feminist health clinics, networks of business women, and support groups for people with every conceivable problem would have valuable ideas for ghetto mothers, too—if they weren’t blinded by the assumption that these are things that government *ought* to be doing. That is, if they really understood welfare as a psychological woman’s issue.

Rewarded behavior increases, and welfare policies have been artificially rewarding the feminine mystique, long after it has been abandoned as false by the rest of society. The physical act of having a baby is not, in and of itself, a productive activity. It is time to reward something else. ■



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The Collapse the Reagan

by Doug Bandow

DOUG BANDOW, editor of INQUIRY, was a special assistant to the president for policy development from January 1981 to May 1982.

O

N THE DAY BEFORE THE TAX IN-
crease vote last August, I received a
phone call from a friend in the White
House. She told me that I might not
believe it, but in an hour President
Reagan was going to hold a joint cere-
mony in the Rose Garden with House

Speaker Tip O'Neill and the rest of the House Democratic
leadership to celebrate his tax increase bill. I didn't believe
it, but Reagan did hold the ceremony.