

Potential problem

The effects of the Nixon Administration's budget cuts for social welfare programs will not be confined to the big city battlefields of the War on Poverty. Under changes proposed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), Nebraska's welfare system may have to be re-adjusted.

Earlier this year HEW announced what it called a "redefinition of potential." The redefinition would eliminate federal support for programs aiding persons now classified as potential welfare recipients. Nebraska Welfare Department Director Lawrence Graham has predicted that this redefinition of potential will work to eventually put more people on the welfare rolls in Nebraska, because there will be no federal money available to finance programs for persons who need help but who do not qualify as regular welfare candidates.

More locally, the redefinition of potential will force the closing out of the Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation (LOMR) social services for retarded children. In Nebraska, the Welfare Department contracts with regional organizations, such as LOMR, to provide education and job training for the mentally retarded.

Fifty-five of the 62 children currently enrolled in LOMR's Human Development Program would be ineligible to receive federal funds under the redefinition of potential. LOMR's residential services, five-and-seven-day hostel program, would be eliminated. The foster children's program would have to end. In other words, the budget cutbacks included in HEW's redefinition will effectively eliminate all of LOMR's children's programs, since more than four-fifths of the children currently enrolled are "potential" rather than actual public welfare recipients. They would not qualify for welfare money under the new guidelines and LOMR cannot afford to continue the programs for such a small number of children.

If the LOMR programs are eliminated, the children they now serve would have to go to

one of two places—to their family home, or to the Beatrice State Home. For a significant portion of the children, home is a place, possibly in a rural area, that has no special schools or programs for the mentally retarded. And the Beatrice State Home has neither the personnel nor the facilities to accommodate children.

The children currently enrolled in LOMR programs are not the only people effected by the redefinition of potential. Many persons have gone through the training programs for greater independence and now hold full-time jobs and are no longer on welfare. If these people still needed LOMR social service assistance the proposed changes would require them to take a step backward onto welfare, because the LOMR services would have been financially eliminated.

LOMR and similar regional programs throughout the state have earned Nebraska national praise for having the best and most projects to aid the mentally retarded of any

state in the union. With the financial support of federal, state and local funds, these services have been made available at no charge to the parents of retarded children, who in most cases would be unable to afford such programs on their own.

But now the LOMR services to children will be eliminated by administrative redefinitions. Apparently there is little consideration being given to the merit and success of individual programs by the Washington budget trimmers.

LOMR officials say the new regulations will become law on March 14. They have launched a desperate attempt to change the HEW decision or to get an exemption for LOMR. A petition opposing the redefinition has been drafted and may be signed by concerned citizens at a booth near the north entrance to the Nebraska Union. Letters of protest should be sent to the office of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Washington D.C.

Tom Lansworth



"You are typical American housewives... Do you think food prices are too high?"



"Reporters are always dragging in red herrings!"

Liberals, conservatives oppose aid to North

Indicative of the isolationist mood now prevalent from Congress down to the local citizenry is the growing opposition to the Nixon Administration's proposals for reconstruction aid to North Vietnam (\$2.5 billion over five years, plus an additional \$5 billion for the rest of Indochina).

Liberals are out to torpedo the plan for a number of reasons. Some

contend that domestic programs have a greater priority than does Indochina. While the President subjects social welfare projects to either total dismemberment or "ruthless" cutbacks, it seems distorted to send money so badly needed at home thousands of miles away to Southeast Asia. Others claim that Indochina aid could be used as economic blackmail by the United States to influence the

region for political purposes.

Conservatives argue against aid to North Vietnam on grounds of "fiscal responsibility." As Congressman Charles Thone indignantly exclaimed, "It's inconceivable to me that they're going to shovel out tax money over there."

Furthermore, it is not outrageous to help rebuild a country whose men and material just two months ago were slaughtering American soldiers? Would we not be, in effect, rewarding North Vietnam for her military crusade and strengthening her capacity to renew the conflict?

But let us pursue this topic further. Does the United States not have a moral obligation to help put back together the country that we have ripped apart, and to help the people of Indochina to reconstruct their own lives after years of suffering in a cruel and dubious conflict? Certainly those quarters which saw our destructive role in the war as immoral must now agree that reconstruction is the only moral path. Justice requires at least a minimum of restitution.

Henry Kissinger last week made several good arguments for the administration's policy. He reminded us that the leaders of North Vietnam have spent almost all their lives either in prison or in fighting. "At no time in their lives have they had an opportunity to participate in a normal diplomatic relationship with other countries, or to concentrate on the peaceful evolution of their country. Now, for whatever reason, they have indicated some interest in at least exploring the possibility of a more constructive relationship and of a more peaceful evolution," he said.

Kissinger added that assistance, therefore, should not be looked upon

as a handout but as an attempt "to build peace in Indochina and therefore to contribute to peace in the world."

In addition, aid to the North will contribute to its self-sufficiency, making the country less beholden to the USSR and China, perhaps increasing its independence to the point where North Vietnam may become the Southeast Asian counterpart of Yugoslavia.

Also, it is hoped that American aid to Hanoi may soften its (Hanoi's) territorial ambitions (if there ever were any beyond unification of the country) and bend the North towards moderation and increased respect for Washington.

Consider that in 1965 Lyndon Johnson made a personal

john vihnstadt
different
drummer

reconstruction commitment once the war was over. Consider too that offering help, being an announced policy of the Nixon administration, no doubt figured in Hanoi's consent to the cease-fire.

There is one more consideration—the system under which the aid is to be extended. In order to depoliticize the plan, the best provision seems to be to funnel funds through the United Nations or another appropriate international organization. This is far preferable to our going it alone and risking charges of blackmail and political opportunism.



"I think it's called a policy of peace with honorarium."