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*Reviews of articles from periodicals
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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Making Sense Out of Welfare

"Welfare, Poverty and Jobs: A Practical Approach" by Brock Adams, in *Challenge* (Sept.-Oct. 1976), 901 N. Broadway, White Plains, N.Y. 10603.

The present welter of income-assistance programs for the poor are little more than "stop-gap measures" that fail to provide any appreciable degree of constructive aid, says U.S. Representative Brock Adams (D.-Wash.), chairman of the House Committee on the Budget.

Predicting a protracted public debate over welfare, poverty, and jobs in the next two years, he proposes a federally financed and administered program of grants, rebatable tax credits, and tax relief for the poor that would provide a basic income floor at approximately 75 per cent of the poverty level (now slightly under \$5,500 for a non-farm family of four) and also include work incentives.

Social insurance programs (e.g., social security, unemployment insurance) have been stretched and distorted to the point that their effectiveness is strained and their financial soundness placed in jeopardy, Adams contends. And the multitude of food, health, child-care, housing, and other in-kind programs for the poor are a "threat to maximum work effort and a barrier to consistent welfare policy."

Adams says his alternative, drafted in 1974 by the Joint Economic Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, offers greater flexibility and equity. It would replace the existing food-stamp program and AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Federal management would relieve states of a heavy financial and administrative burden and allow them to concentrate on providing social services and administering supplementary benefits for a smaller caseload.

While adding between \$8 and \$15 billion to net federal outlays, such a welfare reform plan, Adams argues, would cost less than continuing Congress's present practice of ad hoc expansion of individual programs. He calls his general income supplement "essential" if a federal jobs program (e.g., as embodied in the pending Humphrey-Hawkins bill) is to avoid luring large numbers of low-paid workers into the public sector: "Supplementing the wages of workers with low and modest incomes is cheaper than providing them with public jobs, is less disruptive of the private economy, and is more practical administratively. Special public-service jobs should be reserved for persons with long-term difficulties in the labor market."