

ernment programs intended to ensure economic security. *Welfare* “retained its Progressive Era association with modernity, progress, science, and efficiency, and with services rather than relief” for the poor, the authors observe.

The Committee on Economic Security, appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, called for a comprehensive program of “social welfare activities,” including insurance for unemployment, old age, and sickness; expanded public health programs; pensions for the uninsured elderly; and aid for “fatherless children.” This, say the authors, is what “welfare,” at its inception, was: an expanded system of social insurance coupled with public assistance for those ineligible for coverage. By replacing “the old poor laws and their invidious distinctions” with Aid to Dependent Children as part of a broad concept of “welfare” to which Americans were entitled as citizens, Katz and Thomas write, the committee thought that the stigma of family assistance could be erased.

Eventually, it was hoped, public assistance would become “almost unnecessary,” the authors note. Even in 1950, this expectation “did not appear unreasonable.” Amendments to the Social Security Act in 1939 and 1950 extended social insurance to widows and their children, as well as to many domestic

and farm workers originally excluded. Meanwhile, labor unions were winning medical insurance, pensions, and other fringe benefits for more and more Americans.

But Cold War controversy over whether the “welfare state” was “socialistic” or even “un-American” rubbed off on the word *welfare*, and as more of the “deserving poor” became eligible for social insurance, those left on public assistance—chiefly unmarried mothers with children—“inherited the degraded mantle” of past “relief” efforts. Welfare cheating scandals didn’t help matters. And the rolls of those receiving aid, later renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), rose 41 percent during the 1950s, with recipients disproportionately black, and 169 percent during the 1960s.

By the mid-1960s, the definition of *welfare* had narrowed, becoming synonymous with AFDC, and identified with the “undeserving poor.” After 1973, the value of “welfare” benefits, in constant dollars, plummeted. By 1996, a Democratic president was proud to claim that by abolishing AFDC, America was “ending welfare as we know it.” But America did not end welfare as we *used* to know it, the authors note. Welfare in the form of social insurance, especially Social Security, for those who weren’t so down-and-out, “remained unsailable.”

The DNA Case against Jefferson

“The Thomas Jefferson Paternity Case,” letters from E. A. Foster et al., in *Nature* (Jan. 7, 1999), Porters South, 4 Crinan St., London N1 9XW, England; “The Tom-and-Sally Miniseries (Cont.)” by Lewis Lord, in *U.S. News & World Report* (Jan. 18, 1999), 1050 Thomas Jefferson St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

How certain is it that Thomas Jefferson fathered at least one child by his slave Sally Hemings?

Since dropping their scientific bombshell last November making Jefferson seem, in all likelihood, guilty in the paternity case (see *WQ*, Winter ’99, pp. 115–116), pathologist Eugene A. Foster and his colleagues have returned to the pages of *Nature* to elaborate.

They reiterate that the simplest—and, in their view, on the basis of the available historical evidence, the most probable—explanation of the DNA data (matching the

Jefferson male line’s Y chromosome with the Hemings male line’s) is that Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings’s last son, Easton. However, Foster and his colleagues point out, that is not an absolute certainty, as the headline on the original *Nature* story misleadingly suggested. It is possible, they note, that Jefferson’s brother, Randolph, or any of Randolph’s five sons could have fathered Sally Hemings’s later children.

Herbert Barger, a retired Pentagon supervisor and genealogist married to a Jefferson descendant, had helped Foster’s project by

persuading descendants of Field Jefferson, the president's uncle, to take part. According to *U.S. News & World Report* senior writer Lewis Lord, Barger had expected that the DNA tests might link Samuel and Peter Carr, sons of Thomas Jefferson's sister, to Hemings. Grandchildren of Thomas Jefferson had said the Carr brothers probably fathered Hemings's children. But Foster and his colleagues found no DNA match between the Carr and Hemings lines.

Barger now suspects, according to *U.S. News*, that the father of Hemings's children was Randolph Jefferson, who lived 20 miles from Monticello, or his sons, who were in their teens or twenties when the children were born. He cites a Monticello slave's memoir that said Randolph "used to come among black people, play the fiddle, and dance half the night." He also quotes a letter in which Thomas Jefferson invited his brother to Monticello nine months before Easton's birth. However, Lucia Cinder Stanton, a Monticello historian who has been examin-

ing Jefferson documents for two decades, tells *U.S. News* that Randolph can be definitely placed at Monticello only three times between 1790 and 1815. Thomas Jefferson, in contrast, always happened to be at Monticello when Hemings conceived a child.

Yet another possibility is outlined by Gary Davis, of Evanston (Illinois) Hospital, in a letter in the same issue of *Nature*: that Thomas Jefferson's father or grandfather, or one of his paternal uncles, fathered a male slave who had one or more children with Sally Hemings.

Foster and his colleagues call Davis's theory "interesting." However, they conclude: "When we embarked on this study, we knew that the results could not be conclusive, but we hoped to obtain some objective data that would tilt the weight of evidence in one direction or another. We think we have provided such data and that the modest, probabilistic interpretations we have made are tenable at present."

PRESS & MEDIA

Four-Star TV News

"Local TV News: What Works, What Flops, and Why" by Tom Rosentiel, Carl Gottlieb, and Lee Ann Brady, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1999), 2950 Broadway, Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. 10027.

Everyone knows that "tabloid" local TV news shows can reap high ratings, but a study of 61 stations in 20 cities finds that "quality" newscasts can sell, too.

Five of the eight local stations that the study judged tops in journalistic quality had rising ratings (as did four of the worst seven stations), report Rosentiel and Gottlieb, the director and deputy director, respectively, of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, which conducted the study, and Brady, senior project director at Princeton Survey Research Associates, which helped.

"The stations least likely to be rising in ratings," say the authors, "were those in the middle, which were often hybrids—part tabloid and part serious. This suggests that audiences . . . are segmenting," with one group panting for "revelation, scandal, and celebrity," and another wanting "a more sober, information-based approach."

More than 8,500 stories from some 600 broadcasts were scrutinized in the study. The stations were then ranked according to "quality," and the results compared with the stations' Nielsen ratings over a three-year period.

Just what makes good newscasts? They "should accurately reflect their whole community, cover a wide variety of topics, cover what is significant, and balance their stories with multiple points of view, a variety of knowledgeable sources, and a high degree of community relevance," the authors say.

Big-city stations do a worse job journalistically than those in medium-sized markets, according to the study. "Stations such as WABC in New York were doing overblown 'exposés' into bizarre body piercing," the authors observe, while two stations in Evansville, Indiana (pop.: 126,272), were doing a good job of covering their community—and doing well in the ratings, too. Evansville, in fact,