

SOCIETY

*Welfare
Dependency*

"How Large is the Welfare Class?" by Martin Rein and Lee Rainwater, in *Challenge* (Sept.-Oct. 1977), 901 North Broadway, White Plains, N.Y. 10603.

Many Americans believe that welfare has become a way of life for many of its recipients. But M.I.T. urbanologist Rein and Harvard sociologist Rainwater contend that the "welfare class" is, in fact, rather small.

Using data from the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, the authors followed the welfare history of women aged 18 to 54 (taken from a sample of 10,000 adults) for six years. They then made a 10-year projection (1968-77) of that history. Applying their findings to the 50 million American women in the relevant age range, they conclude that in any given year only about 1.5 percent, or 750,000, will become welfare recipients; over a decade, about 14 percent, or 7 million, will have had some welfare income.

Of these women, only 600,000 meet the authors' criteria for chronic "welfare class" membership: on the dole for 9 out of the 10 years and dependent on welfare payments for at least 50 percent of their income during the period. However, while this welfare class constitutes less than a tenth of all women who go on welfare in any single year, its members consume up to 60 percent of all welfare dollars.

More common than chronic cases, the authors find, are transient welfare recipients—those in the midst of marital breakups or other family traumas, those in financial crises because of recurring unemployment, and those on welfare en route to other programs, such as workmen's compensation. All in all, they conclude, the notion that welfare programs contain built-in "disincentives" to work and thereby encourage the rise of a welfare-dependent class has been "considerably exaggerated."

*The Case For
Black Colleges*

"The Black College: An Endangered Foundation" by Arnold Lockett and Edward Simpkins, in *Phi Delta Kappan* (Oct. 1977), 8th and Union, Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

For more than a century after the founding of Pennsylvania's Lincoln University in 1854, black colleges and universities were the only avenue to higher education for most American blacks. Since the civil-rights legislation of the 1960s, however, blacks have gained increased access to predominantly white colleges (60 percent of all black college students are now enrolled in such institutions). Some observers argue that black colleges are now, at best, an anachronism; at worst, a segregationist dual system of education that should not be eligible for federal funds.

Lockett and Simpkins, officials at Lincoln University and Wayne State University, respectively, disagree. Black institutions, they contend, were and are "primary facilitators of integration." Their chief