[MS-0087.007.006.012]

LEGISLATION TO ELIMINATE POVERTY AND THE WELFARE SYSTEM

S 3433

Sen. Fred Harris, the recently retired chairman of the Democratic National Committee, has introduced the "National Basic Income and Incentive Act (S.3433). Co-sponsored by eight other senators, the bill so far is the main Democratic alternative to the Administration Welfare Reform Proposal.

The Harris bill would completely Federalize the public assistance system, both in administration and financing. It would eliminate the present system of categorical aid and create one system covering all poor persons, including individuals and childless couples. It would, in a series of steps over three years, establish a minimum income floor equal to the poverty level ($2,520 the first year, $3,060 the second, and $3,600 the third, according to present statistics for a family of four.)

It would require work of the able-bodied but exempt the mother of school-age children as well as the mother of pre-school children. It would provide an incentive to work by disregarding the first $75 earned in any month, plus one-half the next $150, and one-fourth of the remainder, in computing benefits. It would require that jobs for recipients pay the minimum or prevailing wage, that recipients not be used as strike-breakers, and that job training lead to a "suitable" job that will be available when training is completed.

The Harris proposal is an agreement with the Administration plan in that both provide for a Federally financed floor under income, for a work requirement coupled with incentives, and for fiscal relief to the states. But the Harris plan is much more sweeping: it would completely Federalize the system rather than perpetuate the present Federal-State approach; it would provide a floor under income substantially greater than the $1,600 the Administration proposes (in introducing his bill Sen. Harris termed that part of the President's plan its "single most objectionable provision"); it would set strict standards for the jobs and training slots to be made available to recipients (the Administration bill has no such standards); and it would provide substantially greater fiscal relief to the states.

Since Senator Harris is a member of the Finance Committee that will be considering the various welfare reform proposals, it can be expected that the provisions of his bill will receive considerable attention.

--David M. Ackerman
in TEMPO, March 15, 1970

Letters of support for S3433 should be directed to members of the Senate Finance Committee. Write one letter. Send it to each Senator

Russell Long	Vance Hartke	Wallace Bennett
Clinton Anderson	J. W. Fulbright	Carl Curtis
Albert Gore	Abraham Ribicoff	Jack Miller
Herman Talmadge	Fred Harris	Len Jordan
Eugene McCarthy	Harry Byrd, Jr.	Paul Fannin
	John Williams	Clifford Hansen

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