THE TRUTH ABOUT WELFARE

A PROGRESSIVE LABOR PAMPHLET **10¢**

THE WELFARE PROBLEM

Welfare has become a major issue in the U.S. Stories in the papers and on TV constantly tell us about rising welfare costs and about more and more people getting on welfare. "Investigations" into the welfare system are being made by several government committees. Nixon is making a big splash about how he will deal with this "number one domestic problem."

There are two main reasons for all the slanted publicity about welfare. One is that the government wants to cut back the money going to welfare clients and is trying to work up anti-client feelings among working people. The other, related reason, is to stir up racism against welfare clients, since most people on welfare in cities like New York are Black and Puerto Rican. This will also help the government in cutting back the living conditions of people on welfare.

The New York Welfare Section of the Progressive Labor Party has written this pamphlet to give people a better understanding of the truth about welfare.

-printed by union labor-

THE PAPERS AND TV CAN'T TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT WELFARE

Why are people on welfare? One reason, according to the papers and TV, is that welfare clients are "crooks" and "chiselers" who want to live off the taxes of working people instead of going to work. Many workers really believe this.

The truth is that most people on welfare are always trying to get off welfare. Welfare does not give enough money for anyone to live decently. For one person the New York City Welfare Department gives $70.00 a month plus rent; or at most, a total of $150.00 a month. Even at the lowest paying jobs, a worker can make about twice that amount. A family of four gets $208.00 a month plus rent, or at most $300.00 a month. This is $3,600.00 a year, or about 1/3 of what the government says a family of four needs to live decently.

Monthly Welfare Grants in New York City.
(NYC has the highest welfare grants in the U.S.)

Number of People in Family	Food, Clothing, Light Gas, and all other expenses except rent	Highest amount that can be paid for rent
1	$ 70.00	$ 85.00
2	116.00	100.00
3	162.00	100.00
4	208.00	125.00
5	254.00	125.00
6	299.00	135.00

(For each additional child in the family, $46.00 a month more.)

Of the people on welfare in New York City about 11,000 leave welfare every month, usually to go back to work. (This is based on figures for Feb., 1969.) The government estimates that there are probably 200,000 families in New York City who make so little that they could get a welfare supplement, but who have not applied for welfare.

Since many people won't believe the lie that all of the people on welfare are "crooks," the papers and TV have more liberal explanations. They say most people are on welfare because they "cannot adjust to our society." Either they don't have the "right" education, or skills, or morals, or they "aren't properly motivated" or they "don't know how to take advantage of all the opportunities that society can give them."

All these fancy explanations want us to believe there is nothing wrong with the "society" we live in. Instead there is

supposed to be something wrong with the people. One explanation says they are crooks, another says they are misfits.

Who are the people actually on welfare? Figures for Dec., 1968 show there are 978,362 people on welfare in New York City. Most of these are children under 18 living with their parents (60%). After this there are:

Mothers caring for children (19%). Almost half of the adults on welfare are mothers whose husbands have deserted them, widows or unmarried women. Along with their children (582,366) they make up 79% of all the people on welfare in NYC.

Disabled (8%). Of these people, 32,426 are physically disabled, 2,218 are blind and the rest are considered unemployable because of mental disorders, alcoholism or drug addiction. This includes war veterans.

Aged (6%). Older people are on welfare because they get very little from social security or other benefits, or nothing at all. Persons who have worked in domestic or farm work do not receive any social security. The social security benefits that some people get remain the same while the cost of living is constantly increasing.

Employable men and women (4%). This includes single men and women and also fathers who are unemployed.

Working people receiving supplement (3%). There are 25,063 adults getting welfare supplements because their wages are less than that of the welfare budget. This is usually because they have low-paying jobs and large families. If we count the families of these 25,063 workers, there are about 150,000 people (15% of total) who depend on these wage supplements.

Throughout the U.S. there are now about 10 million men, women and children on welfare. In New York City most of the people on welfare are Black and Puerto Rican, but in the U.S. as a whole the majority on welfare are white. New York City, with about one million people on welfare, has the highest concentration of welfare clients in the country.

CHART #1

On Welfare in NYC for Dec. '68	Number of People	Their Share of Welfare Total
Children	582,366	60%
Mothers caring for children	189,414	19%
Disabled men and women	86,506	8%
Aged	54,608	6%
Employable men and women	40,405	4%
Working people receiving supplement	25,063	3%

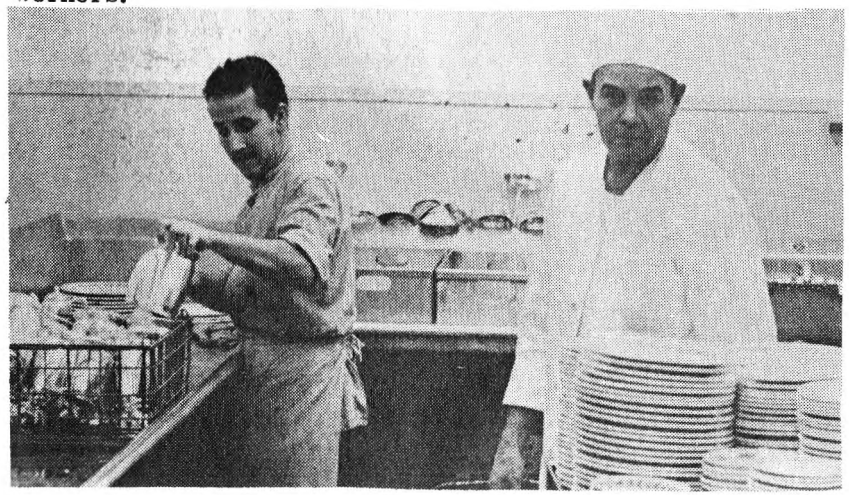
"WHY DON'T THE PEOPLE ON WELFARE GET A JOB?"

According to the figures on Chart #1, we see that about 79% of the people on welfare in N.Y. City are children and their mothers who are caring for them and therefore cannot work. Since there are about 190,000 mothers on welfare, this would mean that there are this many fathers who are not supporting their families. Many of them are husbands who have left their families either temporarily or permanently and many of them never were married. Some of these fathers are in the Army, but most of them are working and supporting themselves, since they are not getting welfare for themselves. Why aren't they supporting their families?

If we look at the kinds of jobs in New York City, we see that N.Y. has more unskilled, low-paying jobs than almost any other metropolitan area in the U.S. The industries employing the most people in N.Y. include the garment industry, hotel and hospital jobs, the utilities, real estate and insurance companies, and government offices which employ hundreds of thousands of clerks. These particular industries employ largely Black and Puerto Rican workers and pay as low as possible, usually around $70 a week basic wage.

New York does not have a concentration of heavy industry like most other big U.S. cities have. The average wages paid in NYC have fallen way behind wages paid in other cities. Of the 45 cities that have the most manufacturing industries in the U.S., New York pays some of the lowest average wages to workers in manufacturing. In 1950 New York ranked 10th in the

Restaurant and hotel workers are among N.Y.C.'s lowest paid workers.



Workers' low wages mean big profits for the garment bosses. Welfare makes up the difference.

average wage paid to workers in manufacturing, and by 1966, New York ranked 31st among the 45 cities. Average wages paid to production workers in N.Y. are less than in Birmingham, Alabama or New Orleans. Yet the cost of living in NYC is the highest in the country, 11% higher than the average for the U.S. (Figures are from the U.S. Dept. of Labor.)

Most of the low-paying jobs such as in the garment industry, hotels, hospitals and office work do not provide any security for the workers. People are often laid off (many of these jobs are seasonal) and they either don't have a union or they belong to a union like the I.L.G.W.U. which is worthless as far as getting these workers any benefits.

For a worker who is making $70 a week or even $80 a week, there is practically no way to support a family in NYC. The only way he can do it is to work two jobs or get his wife to go to work. But if he has small children, his wife probably isn't able to work, even if she could find a job. If the wife, by going to work, was only going to make $60 a week anyway, it wouldn't pay to get someone to care for a couple of children, as that is very expensive. A day care center where the fee is very low would help. However, there are day care facilities for less than 10,000 children in NYC. Waiting lists are twice as long as the number of children already in. So the chances of finding space in a day care center for the masses of children is not too good.

Most of the fathers of children who are on welfare are working in the low-paying industries of New York. If they make $70 a week it is barely enough to support themselves. Many of these fathers desert their families when they find there is just no way to support them. Many others never get married because they see that trying to support a family on such a low wage is impossible.

Industries like garment, hotels and hospitals, companies with large offices in New York, make big profits out of low-paid workers. If every worker in N.Y. could earn at least $150 a week, most of the families on welfare now could be supported by the father of these families. But the owners aren't likely to do this as long as their profits depend on keeping wages in many large industries down to $70 or $80 a week.

Practically nobody is on welfare for their whole life. Of the clients who are men, most go on welfare for a few weeks, a few months or a few years out of their lives. The rest of the time they work for a living. Most mothers on welfare have worked for at least a few years, usually at very low paying jobs, such as domestic work or the garment sweatshops, before they get on welfare. Most of the women on welfare have children who aren't teenagers yet. When their children are older, most of them will get off welfare, and go to work—even though the jobs they get are still too low-paying for them to live decently.

Even if a woman and her children were to stay on welfare most of their lives, they would still be part of the working class, because that is where their roots and ties are. Usually the father of the children is working, and relatives and close friends are workers. As with all workers, the wives and children are also part of the working class, even if the wife and children are not actually working.

Racism is the strongest force in the U.S. for dividing workers from each other. Many white workers work side by side with black workers, or they see black workers working throughout the city every day, yet they believe that black people are not mainly workers. This is because the papers and TV lead white workers to believe that black people are lazy, that they aren't willing to get a job, or that they would "rather be on welfare."

The truth is that 90% of the black people are part of the working class, even more than the percentage of whites that are part of the working class, since very few black people get any chance to become owners of companies, banks, or stores or even to become lawyers, doctors, or other professionals. In

cities like New York there is a high percentage of Black and Puerto Rican people on welfare, not because Black and Puerto Rican men aren't working, but because they are working at such low wages, and because they are the first to be laid off from their jobs. These men have to take the hardest, dirtiest jobs in the city, because of the discrimination in hiring, firing, and promotions by the bosses (who profit from this). Black people are kept out of many higher paying jobs (like construction, and building trades).

In low-paying industries like the garment industry the boss is really getting a government handout, because if it weren't for welfare, many workers and their families could not live in New York at all. These owners depend on the workers who have come to New York from the South and from Puerto Rico over the last 20 years or more, and they depend on welfare to keep these families going even though the boss isn't paying enough in wages to keep a family alive.

The mothers and children on welfare are the families of workers, but family life is a luxury these working people cannot afford. Low wages, unemployment, constant lay-offs, racism and a steadily rising cost of living drive many of these workers to leave home so their families can get on welfare, where they may be better off, while the fathers continue to support themselves. Most of these children will go to work when they grow older, perhaps at the same low paying jobs as their fathers. Many of the workers often manage to find a baby-sitter and a job, and work for a few months or a year, but may lose the job or the baby-sitter and be forced back on welfare. About 1500 welfare cases of mothers with children (ADC—Aid to Dependent Children) reopen each month after having been closed the same year, and the main reason is loss of jobs. Many more mothers would go to work, if there were proper day care facilities, and decent paying jobs.

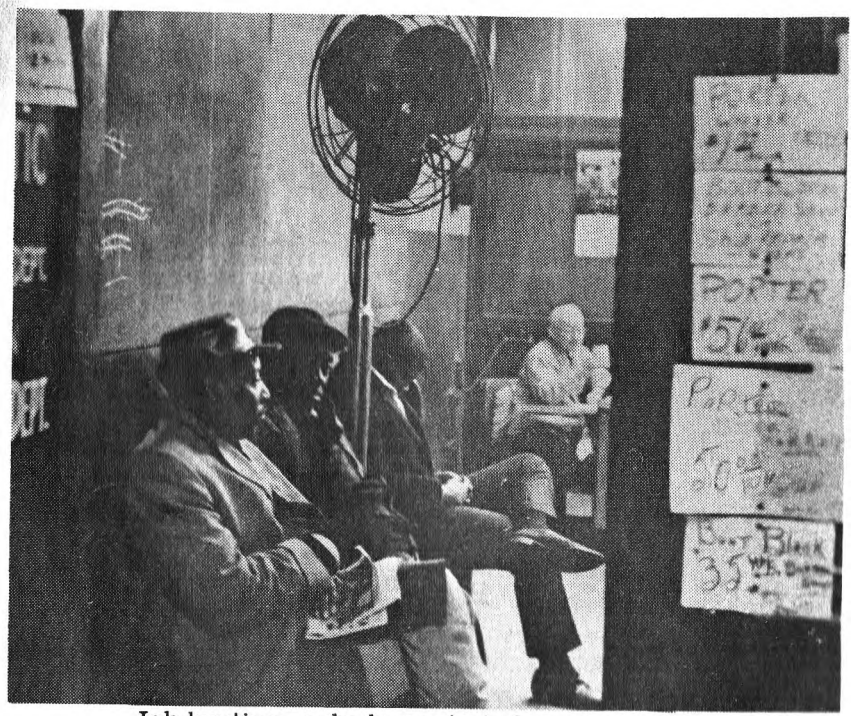
WELFARE CLIENTS ARE PART OF THE WORKING CLASS

The great majority of people in the U.S. are part of the working class: the men and women who work in the factories and in the offices or other jobs, and their families. These are the people who create all the wealth of the country; who produce the food, clothing, shelter, transportation; who keep the corporations running. But the working class does not own the factories or offices or corporations or the banks.

Workers and their families are in the working class whether they have high paying jobs, low paying jobs or whether they are out of work for certain times in their lives. This is what we mean by the working class: people who do not own any of the banks or corporations, people who are not bosses over other workers, people who have to depend on working for a living. This includes their neighbors who are in a bind and may be getting unemployment benefits, or—welfare.

The press, TV, radio and schools all push the idea that welfare clients are nothing but thieves, drug pushers or prostitutes. They push this idea so that the public will not support the clients when they protest against budget cuts, high prices etc. In fact it is really the welfare clients who suffer the most from thieves and burglars and all gangsters since the police serve the rich by keeping criminals out of wealthy neighborhoods and "arranging" for them to prey on the working class.

Part of the working class is always unemployed. These workers who are unemployed would soon begin an all-out fight



Job hunting—nobody wants to be out of work.

against the system if there were no programs like unemployment insurance and welfare. The welfare program as it exists today was set up during the depression when many more people were out of work and fighting back.

If there are always some workers unemployed, this means competition for jobs, which keeps wages down. So the whole working class is hurt by the unemployment of even a small part

of the workers. Welfare helps to keep wages down by taking some tax money from higher paid workers who are not on welfare and handing a little out to families of low paid or unemployed workers, instead of forcing bosses to pay higher wages. This system also helps to split the higher-paid from the lower-paid or unemployed workers and prevents the working class from fighting their real enemy—the bosses—in a unified way.
The government would rather use tax money to support a national welfare system than to raise the minimum wage to a decent level, which would have to be paid for by the owners. Not only welfare clients, but the whole working class is hurt by a welfare system which helps to keep wages low.

STRUGGLES OF WELFARE CLIENTS

Since about 1960 there has been a rising number of strikes by workers. Rebellions of Black and Puerto Rican people have increased. Since 1960 the welfare clients' struggle against the oppressive welfare system has also increased sharply.

Clients began this struggle by putting more pressure on welfare case-workers for more money for special needs, like clothing and furniture. As the struggle grew, clients held demonstrations and sit-ins in welfare centers, and forced the welfare department to grant more money to them. Case-workers, who know the miserable living conditions of the clients, usually helped put pressure on the welfare administration to grant more money to the clients.

In New York City these struggles grew until in the summer of 1968 thousands of clients jammed many of the welfare centers in the city, demanding school clothing and other needs. But in September, 1968, all special grants for clothing and furniture were cut off altogether by the City of New York.

Many small organizations of clients, mainly mothers, developed throughout the City, although the great majority of clients never joined any organization. And almost as soon as these "Welfare Rights" organizations were formed, the government began giving money to "lenders" of these organizations, and even helping to set up new welfare rights organizations. Today there is a nationwide network of small welfare rights organizations, funded by various government agencies, as well as a National Welfare Rights Office in Washington, D.C.

Why should the government want to support these welfare rights organizations? After all, the government made the cutbacks in welfare in New York, and is trying to keep welfare grants as low as possible throughout the country. What is their scheme?

As welfare struggles and Black rebellions began in the ghettos, the government set up programs like the Office of Economic Opportunity to create many storefront government "service agencies." The way that these agencies work is to find the most outspoken people in these ghettos, and give them jobs with the government. Once a few people get these jobs, with meaningless titles like "Community Services Liaison" or "Neighborhood Resource Assistant," they have to spend all their time trying to convince the government to keep them on the payroll. And the government is willing to keep these few people on a payroll if it keeps the neighborhood quiet.

Instead of improving the lives of most of the people on welfare or most of the people living in slum areas, these programs try to cool the whole area by giving jobs to the most outspoken "leaders" of the community. At best, if the neighborhood keeps up the pressure, these government-hired people may set up a day-care center, or other services for the community. Usually these "leaders" can do nothing for the people. And at the same time, the government is able to cut back on welfare and other services like hospitals and schools in ghetto areas, because the "leaders" are keeping things cooler than they would be otherwise.

In New York City there have been many such "anti-poverty" programs, which kept the city from having rebellions such as the rebellions in Detroit or Watts. Because the city had no large scale rebellions, the government felt free to make even more cutbacks in welfare in 1969. The latest cutbacks mean that clients can get no extra money for clothing, furniture, school expenses, or any expenses above the grants listed in the first part of this pamphlet.

Demonstrations, sit-ins, and other struggles by the clients are bound to increase because of the latest cutbacks in Welfare. Clients are raising the demands not only for higher welfare grants, which they badly need. They are also demanding higher wages in the low paying jobs throughout the City, and more jobs and day care centers, so that mothers with small children can also go to work, and get off welfare. These are demands that should be supported by other workers, as well as by welfare clients. Obviously, all workers would benefit from raising the low wages in many industries. More jobs are urgently needed in understaffed services like hospitals, schools, sanitation and transit. The whole working class can benefit from these demands.

As the struggles of clients for these demands get sharper, alliances must be made between welfare clients and other workers, especially workers in low paying jobs, and in understaffed city agencies like hospitals, schools, and the welfare department itself. A strong alliance between workers and clients could win many of these demands for more jobs and higher pay, and would help many people to get off welfare and be self-supporting.

WORKER-CLIENT ALLIANCE

In New York City workers and clients have already begun to build an alliance. Many welfare workers are beginning to see that the government's anti-welfare campaign is directed at them as well as the clients. Increased repression of clients means deteriorating working conditions for the caseworkers. It means harassment of caseworkers, most of whom are sympathetic to the clients and resist carrying out the Department of Welfare's repressive policies. The government's increased anti-welfare propaganda cuts down support that welfare workers would get from workers in other industries. For these reasons, many caseworkers see that it is in their own interest to support the clients' struggle and ally their own struggle with it.

Many clients also see that the caseworkers can be their strong allies, because they are organized into a union, and therefore have some power to hurt their boss, the government. They can also build support for the clients among other sections of workers.

Seeing this basis for unity, some workers and clients have joined together to fight united against the City. The City, of course, has consistently tried to keep the workers and clients divided. Through their anti-poverty front groups, such as O.E.O., etc., they have tried to convince clients that their enemy was not the Department of Welfare, but the caseworkers. In fact, they attempted to make it appear that what was wrong with Welfare was that the caseworkers were lazy and didn't care

about clients, and that the high-ranking bureaucrats of the Department of Welfare were on the clients' side. The Department itself has often justified its harassment of workers, and its attempts to break workers' actions by saying that they were doing it to "protect the clients."

The bureaucratic leadership of client groups such as NWRO (National Welfare Rights Organization) and City-Wide Coordinating Committee of Client Groups, has failed to involve many rank and file clients in participating in real struggles for their demands, and plays right into the City's hands by keeping clients and workers divided. Not only have they promoted the idea that the individual caseworkers should be the target of the client's anger, but they also have helped push the government propaganda that clients don't want to work and want to remain on welfare forever. They have done this by repeatedly making one demand primary: more welfare money now. Welfare clients do need more money to live on. But unless the real nature of the welfare system is exposed, and unless clients demand more jobs and decent wages, the clients' struggles remain isolated from the struggles of the rest of the working class.

At the same time, the Department of Welfare promotes the idea among workers that they are overworked because the clients make "unjustified" demands and will not live according to the "guidelines" set by the Department of Welfare. Excessive caseloads make it difficult for workers to get to know clients well. Workers are encouraged by the Department of Welfare to focus their resentment on the clients, rather than on the Department which does not hire enough workers, and which forces workers to carry out complicated and repressive procedures.

In these ways, the City tries to conceal the fact that it is the common enemy of both workers and clients. Although many people have seen through this individually, not until recently was a group organized to unite clients and welfare workers to fight the City: The Worker-Client Alliance. In the face of heavy opposition from the City, the WCA has grown. It leads actions and demonstrations, demanding more jobs at better pay, more day care centers, school clothing money for clients' children, and support for clients and workers who have been attacked by the City.

The City is clearly afraid of the WCA. They are trying to break it by arresting clients, and arresting and suspending workers. They have issued and used an Executive Order, which, in effect, prohibits welfare workers from becoming involved with clients socially, politically, or any other way, on or off

the job!

Despite this, the WCA grows. The strength of this alliance, and its continuous growth, is based upon extensive rank and file contact and participation in struggle on both neighborhood and city-wide levels. This alliance of clients and workers is the first step toward building a larger alliance of clients and all other workers to fight against the welfare system—a system which hurts both the employed and unemployed of the entire working class.

REVOLUTION IS THE ONLY SOLUTION

Practically everyone agrees that the welfare system in the U.S. is no good, and that it would be far better if everyone had a steady job and earned enough to support himself and his family. Nobody in the working class wants to have part of the workers unemployed or to have a great number of workers employed at such low wages that they can't support their families. Workers never wanted a welfare system like we have in the U.S. They want to be able to work and get a decent wage. Then why do we have the present welfare system?

Even though we, the working class, make up the great majority of the people in the U.S., and produce all the wealth of the country, we do not control or run the country. Instead, a small minority of the people—those who own the largest corporations, the largest banks, and insurance companies—control the country. They control which politicians can run for office, and usually, which politicians will win, because only the richest people in the country can afford to support expensive political campaigns, and because they own and control the big newspapers and radio and TV. They control what is taught in the schools and colleges. In controlling the government, they control its military arm—the Army, the cops, the state police, etc.—which they use to break strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of resistance by workers, employed and unemployed, including the working people of Vietnam.

This small minority of rich people, instead of working, own and control most of the wealth of the U.S. We call this class the capitalist class, or the ruling class.

The ruling class is not interested in giving everybody a job at a decent wage. In fact, they must try to keep wages as low as possible in order to maintain their own wealth. Their system always keeps a part of the working class unemployed, in order to help keep wages down. Their industries are run to make a profit, not to keep workers employed.

Under the capitalist system run by this ruling class, there have always been low wages, unemployment, and depressions which can force the majority of the working class into poverty. Today, even though we are not in a depression, we have 3 million unemployed (government figures), and this does not include workers who are in the army (about 3 million), those working part time (about 10 million), nor does it include the majority of those people on welfare.

Even under the capitalist system we can fight for more jobs and higher pay, to help many people get off welfare. But as long as the ruling class controls the U.S. there will be low wages, unemployment, and more depressions. The only way to change this, once and for all, is for the working class to smash the control of the ruling class, and to set up a new state controlled only by the working class. This can't be done by playing politics in a game controlled by the ruling class. It means—revolution.

Naturally, the ruling class hates the idea of revolution. They have built up their control of the state, the cops, the courts, and the army to defeat any rebellions against their rule. And through their control of the schools, the papers, TV and radio, they are constantly telling the worker class that "we" are better off than people anywhere else, that if any changes are needed, they should be made without changing our present "democratic" system. What they mean is, the rich ruling class should keep power.

Because the U.S. ruling class has such tight control over the country, we need a strong, well-organized party representing the working class to be able to overthrow them and set up a new state of the workers. In the countries where this has been done, the party was guided by Marxist-Leninist theory.

The Progressive Labor Party is a Marxist-Leninist party with members working in many trade unions, in black and white working class communities and in schools and colleges. We have been involved in many struggles against the ruling class, including struggles of welfare workers and welfare clients. We believe that if these struggles are properly organized they will not only win more gains but will prepare people for the big struggle to come. We know that it will be a long, difficult fight to make a revolution in the U.S., and to throw the capitalist ruling class out of power. But we believe that it can be done, and that it is the only solution to the problems of the people.

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