

J.W.J.

Does welfare create disincentives to work?

By J.W. JOHNSON

According to the federal government's Department of Health and Human Services, some 10 million persons in this country are on 'welfare' of some kind or another. That's roughly 2.6 per cent of the nation's entire population.

The government also says, however, that of those 10 million persons, 40 percent are black and 38 percent are white.

Still, and perhaps more to the point, the real numbers are these: one out of every 50 white persons in this country receives some sort of government welfare...one out of every six black persons receive welfare, and one out of every ten persons of Hispanic origin are on the welfare rolls.

And when you add the following fact...that as late as the 1930's, illegitimate black children were far fewer in actual numbers than illegitimate white children, then the abject failure of the liberal approach to welfare becomes all too apparent.

We also now have a service, rather than a manufacturing economy. In concert with this shift to a service economy has been a move in education which, ironically, has deemphasized vocational training, replaced by emphasis on the so-called professions.

We have now, in fact, institutionalized the notion of our daughters (and sons) growing up to marry doctors, lawyers and accountants, while deriding the notion of craftsmen, and manual laborers in general. We have, in effect, said that non-intellectual work is unworthy; therefore, the people who do it are unworthy. Works out great for one's self-esteem, doesn't it?

What does all of this have to do with welfare and/or abuse of the system, and/or illegitimate children. Read on....

The rhetoric of those who allege fraud and abuse of the welfare system is the least of welfare problems. The major problem is the system itself, not its manipulations.

Welfare benefits often equal or exceed the pay of many jobs. This creates a disincentive to work. As a result of misplaced humanitarian concerns, many states now give welfare recipients a package of benefits which far exceed the value of the recipients potential earnings. Conversely, there's no small connection between an individual being pushed into (and unable to grasp) an intellectual educational track, and that same individual ending up on welfare in the first place.

Likewise, it is ridiculous to believe that welfare recipients would be willing to give up these benefits for a lower net income since working itself may be inconvenient, uncertain in duration and expensive in itself. And if a family can get even more money based on the number of children it has, is it any wonder that we've had a dramatic increase in the number of illegitimate births among those already at the bottom of the economic ladder?

On one hand we have an educational system which largely laughs at manual labor (vocational education), and other so-called educated in a system which provides more compensation than a person could earn by using his or her own, even refined, abilities. Does it then take a college degree to figure out this system will be replete with fraud? Will be abused?

Put another way: How many of you would, given the opportunity, pass up a free lunch? How many of you do?

At the same time, the welfare system has all but eliminated the 'push of poverty.' Without deficit spending by the federal government, therein lies a major reason for a stagnant economy and repeated cycles of recession and recovery. People whose poverty may only be temporary if left alone (or if manual labor were once again elevated to a position of honor) are treated as if they have a permanent and debilitating disease. By putting these people on welfare, we give them more money (in actual cash and benefits) than they could earn at the bottom of the economic ladder.

And what's wrong with that you might ask?

It's wrong because it effectively removes those persons from any opportunity to climb the economic ladder because incentive has been removed. Without incentive, access to the economic ladder is effectively denied.

Now citizens below an arbitrarily established poverty line are labeled "disadvantaged." Incentive has been stolen from them by a welfare system which cannot wait to smother incentive mounds of humanitarian concern.

Incentive has also been side-tracked by an educational system which now refuses to value manual labor, replaced by a glorification of the professions.

Being poor is nothing to be ashamed about.

In a free enterprise system, doing nothing about being poor is the cause for shame.

When a government, in order to keep itself employed, artificially raises a citizen's standard of living beyond that citizen's ability to do the same, it's time for reevaluation.

When an educational system devalues vocational education in favor of the professions—and when the latter is the idealistic exception rather than the realistic rule—then it's time for reevaluation.

While this country may now be reacting smugly to events in Eastern Europe; while we may now think we are poised on the pedestal of greatness as a shining example of what our European brethren believe they want, our present course of manual labor derision and its welfare/illegitimate children by-product, actually is threatening to topple us into an abyss fraught with the very real danger of a future Civil War between ever more clearly defined haves' and have nots'. In the meantime, and with manual labor derision, there may soon not be enough people left to construct the ivory towers in which those we've created this mess have hidden themselves.



Old Photo

All that we can tell you about this photo is that it must have been taken in the fall. There are lots of leaves in the background. Maybe it's three generations? You tell us. Call 675-5211 and identify.



Old basketball photo identified

The Old Basketball photo that ran February 3rd sure was a big hit with our readers. Maybe because it's basketball season.

Our first call came from 8-year-old Steven Neiman of 32 Old Mill Road, Dallas. Steven's mom, the former Beverly Pugh, went to school with this team.

Cindy Lefko now living in Forty Fort, called her mom who lives in Dallas with the names to give us also.

Then Jim Walsh's mother called, Jim is in the photo. She said Jim is married, has one child - probably two by the time you're reading this - and he and his family live in Las Vegas.

Mrs. Supulski, Jeff's mom called to tell us her son is in the photo and that the paper has been sent to Texas, where he now resides. "He'll really get a kick out of this," said his mother.

That's what it's all about! If we can make just one person happy, our old photos are a success!

The photo is Dallas High School's Junior Varsity team of 1974. Pictured from left are, row 1: John Majewski, Jim Walsh, Bruce Riefenstahl, Scott Davis, Bill Kleiner, Gregg Steele; row 2: Clinton Brobst, coach; Jeff Supulski, Ron Heffner, Mike Carey, Mike McGroarty, Jim Parker, Milt Heft, Mgr.

Pathfinder

(continued from page 1)

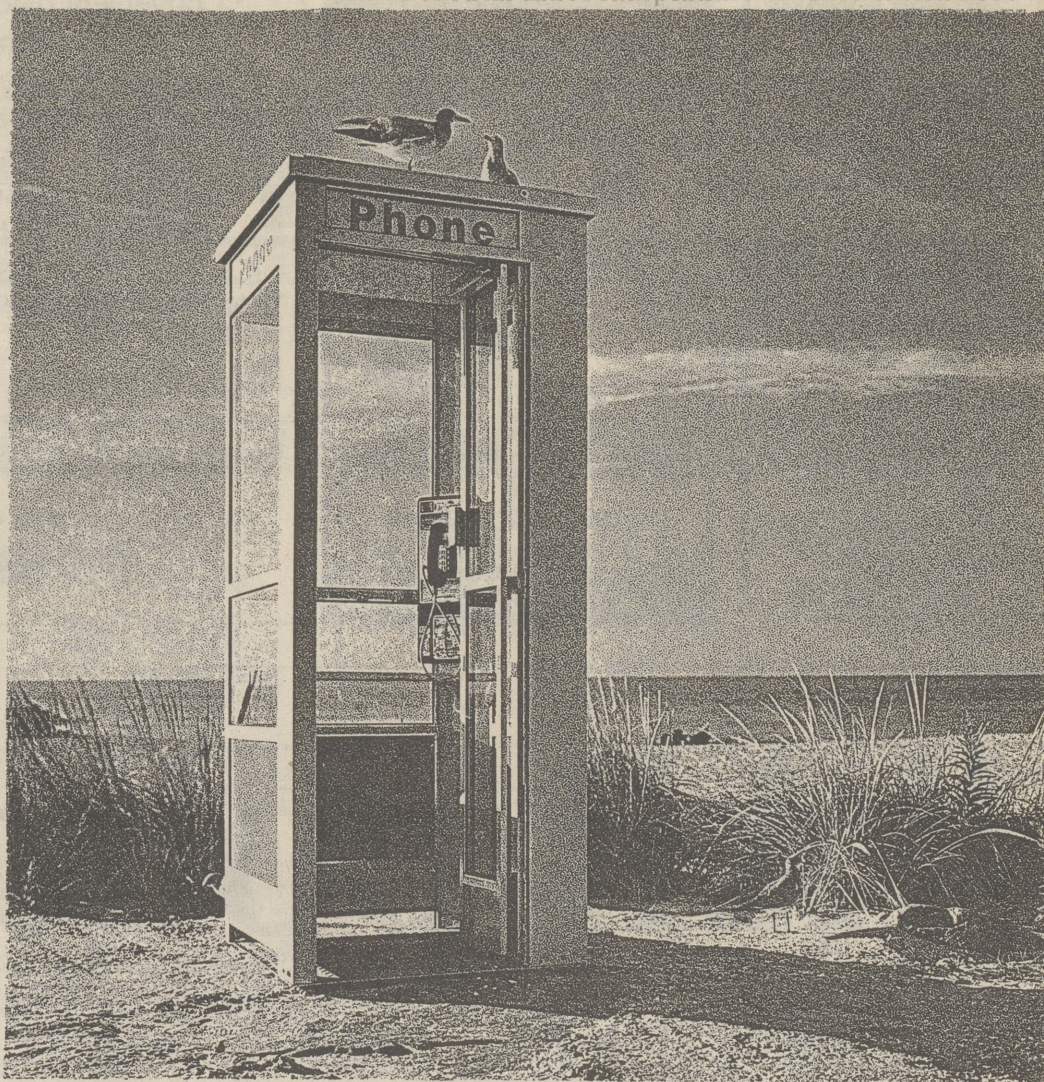
Sordoni, Patricia Davies, Anne Vernon and Nancy Noonan for achievements in the field of education; the Rev. Anita Ambrose, Sr. Julian Baird, R.S.M. and June Blum, Golubock, for their work in the religious field; Lea Casala and Sr. Barbara Craig, R.S.M., for their peace activist work; Evelyn Gurbst for efforts in developing child care programs; Sr. Siena Finley, R.S.M., for her work in ethics; and Phyllis Belk, Harriet McGeehan, Audrey Wynn Spence, Shawn Murphy and Susan Nienstiel, for their work on behalf of women's equity.

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