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# Praise due for 'workfare'

**IN THE SPIRIT** of giving credit where credit is due, we offer the following recognition as Gov. Deukmejian prepares to sign the state's pioneering "workfare" bill:

- To the Democratic members of the Legislature for avoiding knee-jerk reaction to welfare legislation.

- To the Republicans for resisting a chance to characterize welfare recipients as cheats and bums.

- To the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations for overstatement.

With a single word — "slavefare" — the coalition has dismissed an unusual bipartisan effort to return welfare recipients to the job rolls in a dignified and positive way.

Contrary to what opponents may think, workfare would not sentence people to chain gangs, would not force people to perform demeaning work, and would not make people slaves of the state.

From what we can see, the program would offer qualified recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children workshops on job-hunting, expanded training programs, referrals to vocational schools and academic training.

IF NONE of those steps paid off, the government would assign jobs to AFDC recipients who are physically able and have children old enough for school.

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## Editorials

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They would be paid the average California wage of \$5.07 per hour as they gain skills that could pay off later.

If they choose not to take jobs, welfare benefits could be cut off.

That's a fair trade, in our view.

The program, which won unusual support in the Legislature from liberals and conservatives, reflects the enlightened philosophy that most people on welfare would just as soon be doing productive labor as taking government aid.

By providing tips on how to look for work, supervised job searches and, if necessary, on-the-job training, the state would give the "hard-core" unemployed a better-than-even break.

The estimated price tag by 1990 would be \$190 million. Savings from those who graduate from welfare and return to work is pegged at \$110 million to \$150 million.

Workfare, the first statewide program of its kind in the country, seems a reasonable investment, considering the potential returns.

Legislators on both sides of the aisle deserve high praise for striking a bargain that stands to benefit welfare recipients and taxpayers alike.

The program, expected to be signed into law Thursday, is an idea worth trying.