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Misguided welfare program

We would like to direct your attention to several incorrect statements contained in your Dec. 29 editorial entitled "Interrupting the cycle of welfare dependency."

1) You incorrectly imply that AFDC recipients cost the federal government \$132 billion a year. The truth is that most of the major programs serving AFDC recipients together cost less than \$15 billion a year, which is a far cry from \$132 billion, but less than what is being spent in farm subsidies to millionaire farmers. The other \$117 billion pays administrative costs such as government payrolls and equipment, including automobiles.

2) Your editorial alleges that recipients have a choice of education, work or training under the GAIN program. This is not true. If you read the bill carefully, you'll find that the county welfare department has the option of putting one into education, uncompensated work (also known as slavery) or training.

3) You say that "They (recipients) will also be given transportation, child-care and clothing allowances." This is totally untrue. Clients may be provided with child care, if the county welfare department decides that they need it, which, according to the county plans, is the exception, rather than the rule.

The provision of transportation is "take the bus" while the county welfare director drives a county car at taxpayer expense. To date,

clothing allowances have not been given to one of the 7,673 persons who have participated in the program.

4) You state that the critics of workfare "say it is somehow demeaning to require the poor to earn their welfare benefits." What we say is that we do not believe that anybody in America should provide another person with labor without compensation. GAIN was intended to teach and train people employable skills. Workfare does not compensate for the labor that welfare recipients provide; rather, it keeps them on welfare and gives them a "welfare check" rather than a "pay check." What poor people want is a pay check and not a welfare check. Workfare fails to do this.

Finally, you state that the GAIN program is "similar" to the program in Massachusetts. This is like stating that democracy in the United States is similar to the democracy of Marcos. The Massachusetts program is not a punishment program like San Diego's workfare program or the GAIN program. In Massachusetts, the program saves money because participants are treated with dignity and respect, and are not forced to participate in the program under the constant whip of the local workfare bureaucrats like San Diego's program and the GAIN program.

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