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***Fighting Poverty with Policy:
The Center for the Study of Welfare Policy and the Battle for the Poor***

The University of Chicago (U of C), located in the city's South Side, had a reputation for being different. So different that by the mid-1960s it defied conventional institutional classification. "The University of Chicago, more than any other educational institution in the country," announced the *Chicago Tribune*, "has introduced interdisciplinary programs that transcend the old fashioned, rigidly segregated departments.... [It] recognizes that the humanities and the social sciences are interrelated, that demarcation lines between the physical and the biological sciences have become blurred, and that a free interchange of ideas and information among scholars and scientists of all disciplines stimulates learning."¹

But U of C also paid a price for cutting so hard against the intellectual grain. An American Council on Education (ACE) survey of the nation's top graduate programs offered evidence that the university's interdisciplinary commitments were actually harming its reputation. Although the ACE ranked 24 of 29 departments as either "strong" or "distinguished," none of the university's pioneering work between the disciplines—in biophysics, mathematical biology, paleozoology, and virology, to say nothing of all the splicing and dicing in the humanities and social sciences—registered at all.² Not that most faculty cared. "As for the

¹ Chesly Manly, "U. of C. Approach to Graduate Work Described," *Chicago Tribune*, Jul. 3, 1966, A2.

² Ibid.

traditional departments,” scoffed one professor, “the [ACE] report is not grossly unfair to Chicago, but the academic pie here is not cut that way.”³

To be sure, U of C faculty divided up the academic pie however they preferred. Many faculty stayed put, in their departments. Others sought collaboration in the novel committee system. Others headed to Argonne National Lab, in the far-western suburbs of DuPage County, to work on team-based “big science.” And still others turned the Chicago itself into a kind of lab, subscribing to William Rainey Harper’s dictum that “great cities represent the national life in its fullness and variety.”⁴

Faculty and students in the School of Social Service Administration (SSA), the country’s oldest social work school, spent more time in the city than any other unit.⁵ SSA’s distant origins were traceable to Jane Addams’s Hull House (est. 1889), which served as a key research site for male faculty in U of C’s department of sociology until the reassertion of gender norms and the pursuit of basic knowledge severed the relationship between the male-dominated discipline of sociology and the female-dominated field of social work.⁶

Undeterred, in 1908 three Hull House reformers and Chicago graduates—Edith Abbott (PhD), her sister, Grace (MPh), and their friend Sophonisba Breckenridge (PhD, JD)—opened the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, subsequently absorbed by U of C and renamed SSA in 1920. SSA codified the caseworker method, the defining human technology of the field,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York, 1991), 307-11; Steven J. Diner, *Universities and Their Cities: Urban Higher Education in America* (Baltimore, 2017), 11-52, here 19.

⁵ In 2021, a \$75-million gift from James and Paula Crown renamed SSA the Crown School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.

⁶ On Hull House and the department of sociology, see Mary Jo Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1988).

awarded the first PhD, published *Social Service Review* (est. 1927), the field's marquee journal, and trained more deans and directors of social work than anywhere else.⁷

To date, scholars have probed the feminization of social work (and poverty itself), the field's search for expert jurisdiction, and the development of a public-private welfare regime in the twentieth century.⁸ These studies have showcased the enduring influence SSA pioneers on the formation of the "maternalist welfare state" and the spread of the helping professions but missed SSA's impact on "poverty knowledge," policymaking, and politics later in the century.⁹ This chapter picks up where this earlier story leaves off, chronicling how SSA's multiple experiments in center building in the 1960s and 1970s placed the modern university in the thick

⁷ Lela B. Costin, *Two Sisters for Social Justice: A Biography of Edith and Grace Abbott* (Urbana, 1983); Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York, 1990); Ross, *Origins of American Social Science*, 227. In 1966, 25 percent of all deans and directors of social work schools were SSA alums; see Fact Sheet, 1966, file 9, box 14, SSA, Office of the Dean, Harold Richman, 1969-78.

⁸ On the social work profession, see Andrew Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); John H. Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States* (Ithaca, 1985); and Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career* (Cambridge, MA, 1965). Polsky's interpretation is unique in that he views social workers as a powerful professional community that played a defining role in helping to "normalize" marginal populations in the twentieth century. For the role of social workers in policing and surveilling the poor, see Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration* (Cambridge, MA, 2016). For the gendering of the profession, see Regina G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945* (New Haven, 1993); Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (Feb. 1992): 19-54; and Karen W. Tice, *Tales of Wayward Girls and Immoral Women: Case Records and the Professionalization of Social Work* (Urbana, IL, 1998). On the public-private welfare state, see, for example, Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States* (Princeton, NJ, 1999); Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle Over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York, 2002); and Andrew Morris, *The Limits of Voluntarism: Charity and Welfare from the New Deal through the Great Society* (New York, 2009).

⁹ Edith Abbott, SSA's founding dean, along with Breckinridge, the university's first female law school graduate, professionalized social work training, while Grace Abbott, head of the US Children's Bureau, guided New Deal social welfare programs for women and children.

of local and national fights over “public-private” service delivery and welfare policy from the war on poverty to the Reagan administration’s war against the poor.¹⁰

Part one, “Services,” explores SSA’s attempt to deliver integrated social services in “Woodlawn, the University’s black neighbor to the south.”¹¹ The SSA-led Woodlawn Social Services Center was the pet project of SSA dean Alton Linford. Linford was an old-school caseworker who had gotten his start during the Great Depression. He embraced the “center concept” in the early 1960s as part of the “service strategy” to rehabilitate the poor off welfare. But there was a problem: Many in the Woodlawn community blamed U of C and its vast urban renewal program for contributing to the very slum conditions that SSA now claimed to want to cure—and stayed far away. “I believe the University is governed solely by self-interest,” exclaimed one aggrieved Woodlawn resident, “and has never given a damn for anybody or anything that stands in the way.”¹²

Part two, “Policy,” shifts to the late 1960s and the creation of SSA’s novel social welfare policy track and its allied Center for the Study of Welfare Policy (CSWP)—the centerpiece center of this chapter. The focus on welfare policy was pushed by Linford’s replacement, Harold Richman’s, and their colleague Margaret Rosenheim. Like the Abbott sisters before them, Richman, an expert in social policy, and Rosenheim, a legal scholar, believed there was more to

¹⁰ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, 2001). The literature on the history of the US welfare system is enormous, for background I have relied on James T. Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (1981; Cambridge, MA, 2000); Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: America’s Enduring Confrontation with Poverty* 2nd edition (New York, 2019); and Jennifer Mittlestadt, *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill, 2005).

¹¹ “A Random Guide to the University of Chicago,” *Maroon*, Sep. 17, 1968, 3.

¹² Don Abel, “Blues for Mister Who?” *Other*, Oct. 20, 1966, 2, folder 3, box 17, SSA, Office of the Dean, Alton Linford, 1956-1969.

social work than training case workers. They agreed that better policy research was needed to fight poverty. Richman established the policy specialization and the CSWP to “challenge social work and the other contributing professions to assess their own practice as well as to promote the rational development of welfare policy.”¹³

But, as I explain in the final section, “Politics,” the collapse of the “service strategy” and the economic downturn of the 1970s forced Richman to reconsider the utility of his center and the “evaluative, issue-oriented research” that it produced.¹⁴ After vacillating about what to do next, in 1976 Richman agreed to let his friend Tom Chul Wan Joe, one of the country’s top welfare policy analysts, organize and run his own CSWP “branch office” in Washington, DC. The branch office began as a nonprofit arm of Joe’s then-employer, Lewin & Associates, Inc., eventually spinning off as the Center for the Study of Social Policy in the early 1980s. Joe wasn’t an academic—and didn’t need to be. He made up for his lack of an advanced credential with policy expertise that no amount of formal education could ever provide.

With the help of a handful of young analysts mostly trained by Harold, Tom charted a new path for the CSWP that led right to the back rooms and legislative forums of the nation’s capital, where policymakers, not professors, held sway. The small branch office center was created from the “inside out,” first in Hyde Park and then in Washington, and ended up playing a crucial role in the heated welfare battles of the early 1980s and beyond.

I. Services

¹³ “Overview of the Center for the Study of Welfare Policy,” fall 1969, file 4, box 68, SSA, Office of the Dean, Harold Richman, 1969-78.

¹⁴ Harold Richman, Alumni Association Speech, Oct. 29, 1970, file 8, box 83, SSA, Office of the Dean, Harold Richman, 1969-78.

Alton Linford became dean of SSA in 1956. At the top of his to-do list was “a new building for SSA” with room for a “Social Welfare Center.” The school was lodged in Cobb Hall, the oldest building on campus, part of the Main Quadrangle. But in this case, he had already decided, prime location was not everything.¹⁵

Cobb Hall was so rundown it was hurting SSA’s ability to attract faculty and students. Office and classroom space was in short supply and what was available was “uninhabitable” and hostile to disciplined study. “Students tell us that they are embarrassed and repelled by our present housing,” said Linford, who remembered the building being ramshackle back in the late 1930s when he first arrived in Hyde Park to earn a master’s degree from the school he now ran. It had not improved with age. “It is decrepit, dirty, gloomy, ill-arranged, crowded, and generally slummy,” he continued. Moreover, it had become hard for him not to take SSA’s situation personally. Social work was not highly regarded, after all, and his fellow deans enjoyed far better accommodations: “Everyone knows where the Law School is, and Business, Theology, Medicine, and Education”—yes, education!—“but where is SSA?”¹⁶

Linford, fed up, approached U of C president Lawrence Kimpton about the possibilities of a new building. He was told “funds were not available” but to go ahead and try to raise the money himself. A native of tiny Afton, Wyoming (population 600), Linford had gotten his start working in state-level public welfare and emergency relief during the Depression and wasn’t afraid to get his hands dirty. He huddled with his visiting committee, chaired by Inland Steel Executive Phillip Block, and composed a fundraising plan. The first “check in the amount of \$100 for the SSA building” arrived December 17, 1958—an early Christmas gift. Based on his

¹⁵ “A New Building for SSA,” n.d., file 5, box 68, SSA, Office of the Dean, Alton Linford, 1956-1969; Linford c.v., file 2, box 17, SSA, Office of the Dean, Alton Linford, 1956-1969.

¹⁶ Ibid.

back-of-the-napkin estimates, Linford thought they would need at least another \$1 million or so before the contractors could break ground.¹⁷

Kimpton was well aware that SSA and much of the rest of U of C was badly in need of a refresh. He had been around the block a few times since arriving to the university in 1943 as chief administrative officer of the Manhattan Project's Metallurgical Lab. Kimpton left Chicago in 1947 for a post at Stanford, only to return in 1950 to serve as vice president of development before ascending to the top job a year later. By the time he became president it was as if a bomb had exploded: the university budget had cratered, morale and enrollments were down, there was a growing pile of deferred maintenance, and Hyde Park was a fast-deteriorating neighborhood buffeted by rapidly changing socioeconomic and racial dynamics. In private correspondence Kimpton described the situation facing the university a "fantastic mess."¹⁸

U of C's challenges predated Kimpton and were complex, the result of feckless leadership and fiscal mismanagement, mass migrations in and out of the city, and broad shifts in the political economy. But the administration kept its explanation comparatively simple, blaming the postwar growth of the South Side "Black Belt," previously limited to a narrow thirty block stretch of State Street, for putting the future of Hyde Park and U of C at risk. Believing that the university could not expand and rebuild without blocking the "negro invasion," Kimpton in the 1950s, and his successors George Beadle and Edward Levi in the 1960s, used every play in the urban renewal playbook—racial covenants, clearance, conservation—and, where none existed, designed new plays, to maintain the affluent, "controlled, integrated environment" necessary to

¹⁷ Letter to Linford, Dec. 17, 1958, file 1, box 69, SSA, Office of the Dean, Alton Linford, 1956-1969.

¹⁸ John W. Boyer, *The University of Chicago: A History* (Chicago, 2015), 323-25; and <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/profile/lawrence-kimpton/>

advance the mission of an elite, predominantly white university.¹⁹ “It is extremely important,” Kimpton advised, choosing his words carefully, “that we maintain a community in which our faculty desire to live and in which our students will be secure.”²⁰

In 1952 Kimpton greenlit the nonprofit South East Chicago Commission (SECC) as the university’s official development arm to solve the school’s “neighborhood problem.” He tapped lawyer and Reynolds Printasign Company executive Julian Levi (younger brother of law dean and future provost and president Edward Levi) as SECC director and urban studies professor Jack Meltzer as chief planner. Under their watch the SECC partnered with Mayor Richard Daley’s office to become the most powerful university development operation of its kind in the nation, shaping state and federal urban renewal policies and programs to the advantage of the entire urban higher education sector.²¹ In 1953 Levi headed to Springfield and persuaded lawmakers to make it easier for universities to gain “eminent domain” authority to acquire and clear blighted areas; in 1959 he went to Washington, DC, to loosen the federal purse strings to help universities pay for it. Levi led a consortium of sixteen urban universities (including Cal, MIT, Harvard, NYU, and Vanderbilt) that convinced Congress to provide a federal match, at a rate of 2-to-1, in support of university-located renewal projects, making the taking a private property by private universities a constitutionally protected use of taxpayer dollars. The Section

¹⁹ On urban renewal in Hyde Park, see Peter Rossi and Robert Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal* (Glencoe, Ill., 1961); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1950-1960* (1983; Chicago, 1998), 135-70, here 13, 147; Sharon Haar, *Urbanism and Higher Education in Chicago* (Minneapolis, 2010), 49-68; and LaDale C. Winling, *Building the Ivory Tower: Universities and Metropolitan Development in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, 2018), 79-118. For a more sympathetic view of the university’s motives and goals, see Boyer, *University of Chicago*, 321-91.

²⁰ Julian Levi, *The Neighborhood Problem of the University of Chicago* (Aug. 1961), 7.

²¹ Levi, *Neighborhood Problem*, 3, 14; *The University of Chicago Chronicle* 16, no. 4 (Oct. 24, 1996). Daley was elected in 1955 and proved amenable to U of C’s renewal aspirations, unlike his predecessor Martin Kennelly.

112 credit program, as Levi's funding innovation was officially known, unleashed federal treasure that made university development an attractive investment since city planners could apply earned "credits" to infrastructural projects anywhere within the metropolitan area, not just the originating site.²² In Hyde Park, the SECC leveraged state and federal renewal instruments that cleared the way for massive redevelopment projects, checked racial succession, and strengthened the school's control over the physical landscape. All in, the SECC's projects encompassed over 925 acres of prime if rundown Hyde Park real estate at a total cost of \$135 million—a mere \$10 million of which came from its own coffers!²³

The SECC's aggressive tactics precipitated strong antiuniversity feelings as U of C pushed outside Hyde Park proper and into adjacent neighborhoods. According to urban historian LaDale Winling, local resistance peaked in 1960 when U of C moved to expand and relocate its seven professional schools to the South Campus area—a one-block-deep by one-mile-wide strip between 60th and 61st Streets, below the Midway Plaisance, in all-Black Woodlawn. Where the university owned 60 percent of the space already and had built a dormitory complex, faculty apartments, an art studio, and the recently opened Law School Quadrangle. A continuing education conference center was next up followed by a new building for SSA, plotted at the corner of 60th and Ellis Avenue, literally down the street from Cobb Hall, but otherwise a million miles away from the Main Quadrangle.²⁴

²² The Illinois legislation was the Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation Act of 1941; see Boyer, *University of Chicago*, 348. On the Housing Act and the Section 112 program, see Charles Fels Special Projects Editor, N. T. Adams, Richard Carmody, Margaret E. Clark, Randolph H. Lanier, James C. Smith, and Robert M. White, "The Private Use of Public Power: The Private University and the Power of Eminent Domain," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 27, no. 681 (1974): 681-813, here 705-9; Winling, *Building the Ivory Tower*, 107.

²³ Boyer, *University of Chicago*, 350.

²⁴ Winling, *Building the Ivory Tower*, 107-17; John Hall Fish, *Black Power/White Control: The Struggle of The Woodlawn Organization in Chicago* (Princeton, 1973), 17-8; Boyer, *University*

Woodlawn's defiant stance surprised U of C. The neighborhood had little tradition of sustained political action, and most of its 80,000 residents suffered under chronic precarity. All the economic and social indicators pointed in the wrong direction: inadequate housing and services; failing schools; high unemployment and public assistance, including 2,000 AFDC families; pervasive gang activity and high crime. The area around the 63rd Street Train Station, the port of call for tens of thousands of Southern Black migrants who moved north during the Depression and war years, signified the community's slow, painful demise. Once "the main business section of Woodlawn," east 63rd was now "Baby Skid Row"—a strip of twenty bars and liquor stores and a center for the sex and drug trade. Considering Woodlawn's dire state, Levi and the SECC assumed that a "majority of the population in Woodlawn wouldn't care" one way or the other about what happened in South Campus.²⁵

of Chicago, 350. The list of professional school included: law, medicine, divinity, business, education, library sciences, and social service administration; see Campus Map, ca. 1960, file 6, box 68, SSA, Office of the Dean, Alton Linford, 1956-69.

²⁵ Jack Meltzer, HUD Study, Nov. 7, 1968, file 4, box 11, WSSC Records, University of Chicago; "Woodlawn: What Hyde Park Might Have Been," *Maroon*, Sept. 30, 1966, 21; Ernestine Cofield, "The Battle of Woodlawn: Ministers versus Evils of Urban Renewal," *Defender*, Nov. 19, 1962, 1. The Blackstone Rangers and the Disciples were the two rival gangs.



The controversial South Campus area, outlined above right, below the Midway Plaisance, July 1960. University of Chicago Photographic Archive, [apf2-02626], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

But Woodlawn residents did care. They formed The Woodlawn Organization (TWO)—a big-tent coalition of church congregations, block clubs, neighborhood associations, and social groups—to prove it. With support from the Catholic Diocese and SSA-trained social worker and community organizer Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation, TWO waged “The Battle of Woodlawn” along multiple fronts, organizing around key issues, using Alinsky’s direct action, nonviolent “community focused approach” to stave off U of C’s efforts “to keep the Negro less than a free and equal American.”²⁶ TWO protested crooked merchants along 63rd Street,

²⁶ On the history of TWO, see Arthur M. Brazier, *Black Self-Determination: The Story of The Woodlawn Organization* (Grand Rapids, 1969); Fish, *Black Power/White Control*; and Elizabeth Todd-Breland, *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill, 2018), 47-80. Quote in Cofield, “The Battle of Woodlawn.”

demanded better schools with more community control, protested police brutality, fomented a rent strike against exploitive slumlords and demanded more affordable housing. These early victories, claimed TWO cofounder Arthur Brazier, a Pentecostal minister and Alinsky acolyte, cultivated “the kind of political sophistication that would bring to these people the power to make basic and fundamental changes in their lives here in their own neighborhood.”²⁷

TWO also fought U of C for greater community input on the South Campus project, having been left out of planning the \$75 million deal. TWO took the fight right to Mayor Daley’s office, who, after months of delays, brokered a “win-win-win” deal for the university, TWO, and his own political machine. In the final agreement TWO withdrew its opposition to the university’s development of South Campus in exchange for the construction of affordable housing on a renewal site between 60th and 63rd Streets—all the sweeter since the new housing would be paid for with a portion of Levi’s Section 12 credits.²⁸ In 1964, as TWO was notching wins and building momentum, journalist Charles Silberman of *Commentary* marveled at Woodlawn’s meteoric rise “up from apathy,” calling the 30,000-member-strong body “the most significant social experiment to be created in a Negro neighborhood” in the United States.²⁹

In other words, by the time SSA’s new \$1.6 million building finally opened, in January 1965, seven years after Linford held that first \$100 check in his hand, everything about the project had changed. TWO had become a powerful neighborhood nonprofit. The war on poverty was in full bloom. And social workers were in demand as never before thanks to the passage of the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments, which commenced the federal government’s new approach to poverty prevention. For the first time, the government mentioned, but did not define,

²⁷ Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 68.

²⁸ Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 12-64.

²⁹ <https://www.commentary.org/articles/charles-silberman/up-from-apaty-the-woodlawn-experiment/>

“social services,” and created a 3-to-1 match for “rehabilitation and other services” to help ween clients off welfare (i.e., means-tested Aid to Families with Dependent Children, of AFDC) using therapeutic interventions instead.³⁰

The dawn of the “services era in public assistance” would be short lived, but long enough to turn the opening of the low-slung steel and glass SSA building into the event of the winter quarter at U of C. President Lyndon Johnson sent a congratulatory telegram calling it a “blessing to our entire society which needs the contributions of trained creative minds in achieving our high objectives of social service.” His commissioner of public welfare administration at DHEW, Ellen Winston, a U of C graduate, delivered the keynote, praising SSA’s faculty and students for their role as the “architects of the Great Society.” Dean Alton Linford presided over the event. He was all thankyou and compliments, especially to the visiting committee, for delivering the funds—though he forgot to acknowledge the government for the urban renewal programs that had really made it possible. He called it a “great day for the school.... At 57, it has at last acquired a home of its own.”³¹

³⁰ Joel F. Handler and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, “The Administration of Social Services and the Structure of Dependency: The Views of AFDC Recipients,” 43, no. 4 (Dec. 1969): 406-20, here 40; Elizabeth Wickenden, “A Perspective on Social Services: An Essay Review,” *Social Services Review* 50, no. 4 (Dec., 1976): 570-85.

³¹ “Addition to Chicago U. Given LBJ Blessing,” Jan. 18, 1965, file 6, box 72; “U. of C. Dedicates New Center,” Jan. 18, 1965, file 6, box 72, ALP; Profile, Office of Public Relations, Jan. 14, 1965, file 6, box 72, ALP. Visiting committee member Frank Woods, of Woods Charitable Foundation, donated \$500,000 to the building.



The new Social Service Administration Building, designed by Mies van der Rohe, opened in 1965 during the heyday of the war on poverty, n.d., University of Chicago Photographic Archive, [apf2-07559], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The only thing that would have made the day better was if the new 50,000 square foot building had included enough room for the social service center that Linford had “talked and dreamed” about for years—and that he was still dreaming about, now more than ever, to enhance SSA’s training and to streamline service delivery in Woodlawn, “a geographic area,” as everyone knew by now, “upon which the future of the University depends.”³²

Indeed, U of C faculty and students had grown increasingly inspired in Woodlawn in recent years, partnering with TWO and developing cooperative arrangements with key service

³² SSA Newsletter, Autumn-Winter 1968, file 6, box 17, ALP; The Social Science Center, ca. early 1966, file 1, box 6, WSSC.

providers in an effort to relieve poverty and improve the “opportunity structure” within the community.³³ Medical school personnel were operating a mental health facility and child health clinic, the law school a legal aid clinic, and the education school a tutoring program and an experimental school district. SSA faculty were administering three school-based social work programs and had dozens of students in field placements at the newly opened district offices of the Cook County Department of Public Aid and of United Charities—two of the fifty-five different agencies sponsoring field placements for SSA’s two-hundred-thirty students. TWO, Boys’ Club, the Urban Progress Center, Reverend Brazier’s Apostolic Church, and a host of other voluntary groups and block clubs, most of whose memberships overlapped with TWO, were also contributing services and engaging in community action of one kind or another.³⁴

Yet the piecemeal delivery model bothered Linford. The scattershot collection of providers was hit or miss, and services were hard to access and not robust enough to meet the profound welfare needs in Woodlawn.³⁵ So, Linford enlisted social work professor Donald Brieland—an ordained minister, expert on child welfare, and founding director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services—and headed back to the drawing table. With the help of a small seed grant from the US Children’s Bureau, their ten-person committee reemerged by year’s end with a proposal for the Woodlawn Social Services Center (WSSC)—a “social welfare equivalent of the teaching hospital” that would combine “community service and

³³ Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs* (New York, 1960). The

³⁴ The Social Service Center, n.d., file 9, box 2, WSSC. The list of voluntary groups is on p. 16; Fact Sheet, 1966, file 9, box 14, HR; Edward E. Schwartz, “Findings from Midway,” *Social Service Review* 41, no. 2 (Jun., 1967): 113-14; Sheppard G. Kellam and Sheldon K. Schiff, “The Woodlawn Mental Health Center: A Community Mental Health Center Model,” *Social Service Review* 10, no. 3 (Sep. 1966): 255-63.

³⁵ SSA Newsletter, Autumn-Winter 1968, file 6, box 17, ALP.

educational objectives” to provide faculty, students, and Woodlawn families with a one-stop social services shop in their own backyard.³⁶

Linford and Brieland’s committee turned to the “center concept” for integrated service delivery in Woodlawn.³⁷ Endorsed by OEO, DHEW’s Office of Welfare Administration, and the Council of Social Work Education, the neighborhood center concept—a kind of latter-day settlement house—emerged as the preferred organizing model during the service delivery era, one that offered a possible solution to the social work field’s political and organizational problems. By “integrating” service providers, faculty, students, staff, and local people under one roof—and “separating” demeaning cash assistance programs and locating them elsewhere—the center model hitched the war on poverty’s call for community action and client dignity and self-determination to social workers’ interest in rational planning and the consolidation of fragmented services along neighborhood lines. Neighborhoods like Woodlawn were tired of being “studied too much and helped too little” by so-called ‘experts,’ cautioned Linford and Brieland; the only way to end poverty and advance the profession was through collaborating with local residents to identify and deliver services, together. “After a careful review of the community needs ...,”

³⁶ The Social Service Center, n.d., file 9, box 2, WSSC; Planning committee in “Feasibility Study of a Child Welfare Facility: A Progress Report,” June 17, 1966, file 4, box 2, WSSC; Descriptions of WSSC in fundraising letter, April 3, 1967, file 8, box 3, WSSC. Washington University, in St. Louis, and Western Reserve University, in Cleveland, were also awarded seed grants from the US Children’s Bureau.

³⁷ On the center concept, see the Social Science Center, ca. early 1966, file 1, box 6, WSSC; see also, Arthur Hillman, *Neighborhood Centers Today: Action Programs for a Rapidly Changing World* (New York, 1960); *Community Action: The Neighborhood Center* (Washington, DC, OEO, 1966); Robert Perlman and David Jones, *Neighborhood Service Centers* (Washington, DC, DHEW, 1967); and, for a history of the neighborhood center, see Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York, 1987); and Claire Dunning, *Nonprofit Neighborhoods: An Urban History of Inequality and the American State* (Chicago, 2022).

wrote the planning committee, in early 1966, “we are confident that such a [center] facility will significantly serve the needs of the field of social work, of SSA, and of the community.”³⁸

The committee next sought Julian Levi’s advice for ways to pay for the 62,000 square foot, three story center, located behind SSA at the southwest corner of 61st and Drexel, in Woodlawn. Levi, now a professor of urban studies, recommended a creatively financed “public-private partnership,” like the one at Argonne Lab, but with HUD and the Children’s Bureau replacing the Atomic Energy Commission as the main sponsors.³⁹ A 1965 Housing Act neighborhood facilities program grant in the amount of \$1.3 million, approved and fast-tracked by Mayor Daley’s office, covered two-thirds of the estimated \$2 million building costs, with SSA picking up the rest; a second \$2 million, five-year grant from the Children’s Bureau supported the “instructional costs and student traineeships” to staff it.⁴⁰ The sweetheart deal relieved SSA of most of the upfront expenses for construction and graduate training, and granted the ability to collect “user fees” from the agencies and organizations that set up shop there to cover upkeep and maintenance.⁴¹

Brieland, the inaugural WSSC director, then turned to the local community to establish open channels of communication to ensure input on the day-to-day operation of the center. The

³⁸ The Social Science Center, ca. early 1966, file 1, box 6, WSSC. On the purported organizational benefits of the center model, see Polsky, *Rise of the Therapeutic State*, 173; and Joseph H. Helfgot, *Professional Reforming: Mobilization for Youth and the Failure of Social Science* (Lexington, MA, 1981), 182. The model gained popularity during the late 1950s and the battle against juvenile delinquency; see Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 47-8.

³⁹ Julian Levi to Linford and Brieland, Feb. 22, 1966, folder 1, box 3, WSSC; Linford to Edward Levi and George Beadle, Mar. 8, 1966, folder 1, box 3, WSSC; Basic Provisions of the Proposed Agreement, n.d., file 3, box 3, WSSC.

⁴⁰ News Release, 2-8-67, folder 8, box 17, ALP; HUD Grant Press release, Feb. 8, 1967, file 8, box 17, ALP; DHEW Grant Press Release, May 12, 1967, file 8, box 17, ALP.

⁴¹ Federal regulations permitted operation of the center by non-profit groups, but the application had to originate with a governmental body, in this case the mayor’s office. For funding details, see Financial Summary, file 1, box 17, ALP.

first thing he did was set up an advisory board, with TWO representatives occupying a majority of seats. “The role of the Advisory Board,” he explained, in the spring of 1968, at an early meeting of the board, “would be to interpret the Social Services Center to the community, to determine unmet needs in the community to which the Center can address itself, to point out problems in agency programs, and to point out cases where agencies were not operating in an acceptable manner.” In another move intended to get the community’s buy in, Brieland also agreed that nonprofessional “aides and community people” would be hired to work at the center. Employing community members was important, said Brieland, because many of the “problems of professional social workers in the past have developed because they have not used enough community aides.” Although these bureaucratic innovations met the bare minimum definition of “maximum feasible participation,” they represented the main instruments of community action at the WSSC.⁴²

Despite all the good intentions, and Linford and Brieland were brimming with them, when the WSSC opened in 1970 it struggled to fulfill its promise of community-based human services delivery in Woodlawn.⁴³ Neither a new building, nor the separation of services and cash assistance, nor community participation did the trick. With the exception of a child health center and an early childhood center, the monochromatic concrete building was as lifeless inside as its brutalist design was outside—a casualty of the social work profession’s state of “disarray” by the 1970s; TWO’s mounting legal problems stemming from investigations into fiscal impropriety and ties to local street gangs; and SSA’s ill-advised decision to “follow the money” and make Illinois State Government the building’s major lessee. The mere presence of the Board of Health and the Department of Child and Family Services confirmed Black Woodlawners’ worst

⁴² Advisory Board Minutes, April 18, 1968, file 1, box 1, WSSC.

⁴³ Richman to Faculty, Sep. 18, 1972, file 7, box 79, SSA, Office of the Dean, HR.

suspensions: the WSSC was never really about *their* community and U of C's "ultimate goal" remained the total "clearance of Woodlawn and a rebuilding designed for middle class white and black residents."⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, residents kept their distance from the WSSC, and deep into the 1970s "a substantial portion of the space within the facility remain[ed] unoccupied," and worse still, Woodlawn remained poor.⁴⁵



Woodlawn Social Services Center, 1970. University of Chicago Photographic Archive, [apf2-08501r], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The WSSC situation was just one of the administrative tangles left for new SSA dean Harold Richman, age 32, to figure out. Richman replaced Linford in the summer of 1969 and,

⁴⁴ Polsky, *Rise of the Therapeutic State*, 166; and Ehrenreich, *Altruistic Imagination*, 187-208, here 208. On communitywide hostility toward U of C, see Arthur Brazier, "What Kind of Model Cities?" in Eddie N. Williams, ed., *Delivery Systems for Model Cities: New Concepts in Serving the Urban Community* (Chicago, 1969), 7-13, here 13. On TWO's legal problems, see Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York, 1991), 246-9.

⁴⁵ Mayor's Office to Richman, Jul. 3, 1974, file 3, box 76, SSA, Office of the Dean, HR.

like Linford, was an experienced caseworker and had earned his doctorate at SSA. And Richman, again, like Linford, was an ardent supporter of integrated services that combined “sufficient income where it is needed” and wraparound services for “everyone, not just those living below the financial aid eligibility level”⁴⁶

The main difference between the men was that Richman didn’t think social work schools knew that much about social services—how to define them, organize them, or deliver them. He didn’t mince words: Social work and services, he told his colleagues just before becoming dean, at a conference hosted by U of C, suffered from a “lack of knowledge, lack of agreement on scope and definition, lack of adequate rationale for organization in planning, and a lack of ability to measure effectiveness and make the necessary consequent judgements.”⁴⁷ The field spent too much time training social workers and not enough time thinking about policymaking or testing and evaluating delivery programs to figure out what worked, and why. Richman thought social work schools were a mess. He was anxious to put some of his own ideas about professional training and the “center concept” into action to clean them up.

II. Policy

Richman was born in 1937 and raised in Shaker Heights, Ohio, near Cleveland, with his sister Nora. Their parents, Leon and Rebecca, were both social workers. A scholarship delivered Harold to Harvard College where he excelled in and outside the classroom, studying history and English literature and serving as an officer in the Key Society and in Phillips Brooks House. He also ran Harvard’s social service club and organized student volunteers to work in Boston

⁴⁶ Harold A. Richman, “Financial Assistance and Social Services: Major Issues and Guiding Questions,” in Williams, ed., *Delivery Systems for Model Cities*, 45-9, here 46-7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

settlements. On weeknights he taught literature classes to incarcerated persons at Norfolk State Prison. Summers were spent back home doing public casework in the all-Black Hough neighborhood on Cleveland's East Side.

He graduated *cum laude* in 1959. His history honors thesis, "Humanitarianism in Search of a Method: The Settlement House as a Solution to the Problems of the City Slum," anticipated the main thrust of his life's work: How should human services be organized and delivered to relieve the plight of the poor? That fall, he accepted the Edith Abbott Fellowship and began graduate training at SSA to begin answering this question for himself. And except for a stint as a social worker in the US Health Service (1961-63) and as a White House Fellow (1965-66), Richman's whole career was spent in Hyde Park teaching, researching, and consulting on state and federal welfare policy.⁴⁸

When Richman began his training SSA resembled most every other social work school in the country. The faculty was filled with social workers and casework—the individualized therapeutic treatment of clients originally diagrammed by Mary Richmond in *Social Diagnosis* (1917)—dominated the curriculum. Group work was added in 1959, community work a few years later, and Richman studied these, too, but they were really just scaled-up adaptations of the case method applied to small groups of individuals and communities of groups. These offerings dissatisfied Richman. He wanted to know more about the policy, political, and institutional apparatus that undergirded the social services and decided he needed alternate training if he was ever going to push "at the boundaries of traditional social work education."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Harold A. Richman, Curriculum Vitae and Biographical Information, file 7, box 1, CSWP; [https://legacy.suntimes.com/us/obituaries/chicagosuntimes/name/harold-richman-
obituary?pid=130896033](https://legacy.suntimes.com/us/obituaries/chicagosuntimes/name/harold-richman-obituary?pid=130896033).

⁴⁹ Info on the curriculum and case, group, and community approaches, see Continuation Funding Report, May 14, 1974, file 3, box 45, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78. On the therapeutic imprimatur on

In 1965, Richman took leave from his doctoral studies and with his new spouse, Marlene, a guidance counselor, moved to Washington, DC, in search of inspiration. He found it as a White House Fellow and special assistant to secretary of labor W. Willard Wirtz. Richman regularly worked a “12-15 hour day.” He trailed Wirtz wherever he went. Richman attended cabinet meetings and meetings in the Oval Office and participated in a hands-on “program of reading, seminars and trips” that brought the “policy making process ... dramatically alive.”⁵⁰

The utter power of the President impressed Richman, but the power of the federal bureaucracy impressed him far more. Complex intergovernmental relations wreaked havoc on grant-in-aid welfare policies that unspooled as they made their way to the “person or institution which is theoretically to benefit.” The year “field placement,” as Richman kiddingly called it, was a “thrilling and challenging and immensely instructive”—an experience that revealed the limitations of his own clinically focused training as well as the benefits of policy research and evaluation to “prod the bureaucracy to examine its programs, to re-think old assumptions, and to provide meaningful alternatives to the people who are dependent upon government help.”⁵¹

Practically speaking, the main takeaway of Richman’s DC tutelage was that “there wasn’t a place in Washington ... where an understanding of the policymaking process and the special skills of policy analysis [was] not needed.” He wasted no time institutionalizing that lesson back in Hyde Park.⁵² Appointed assistant professor of social welfare policy in 1967, while ABD (all-but-dissertation), Richman advanced to full professor and SSA dean over the next two years—all

social work, see Morris, *Limits of Voluntarism*, 59-67; Polsky, *Rise of the Therapeutic State*, 65-84.

⁵⁰ Harold Richman, “The White House as a Field Placement,” ca. 1966-67, file 9, box 83, UC, SSA, 1969-78.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Harold A. Richman, “Social Welfare Policy as a Specialization in the Graduate Social Work Curriculum,” *Social Welfare Policy* (Spring 1970): 53-60, here 56.

while serving as a consultant in Washington and in Springfield and starting a family with Marlene! Richman's meteoric professional ascent was partly due to his unusual talents and deep ambition to strengthen the profession and partly because the heavily applied social work profession, after years of false starts, was finally ready to incorporate Richman's policy perspective. As far as he was concerned, the shift toward policy was long overdue, and, likely, the only way for the helping professions to keep pace with the economists and sociologists who had already made the jump.⁵³

Richman made the creation of the nation's first social welfare policy specialization his opening move. The policy specialization (funded with grants from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation) aimed at preparing students for "careers in social welfare program and policy development." The first cohort was small, just seven students, and began work in the fall quarter of 1968. Three interdisciplinary seminars on social welfare policy, research, and administration comprised the curriculum, which was anchored by a two-and-one-half-a-day per week field placement in a local, state, or federal government agency, "where [students] experience firsthand the complicated processes of policymaking and administration."⁵⁴

That November, the still boyish looking Richman, barely older than his students, chaperoned a three-day "field trip" to Washington, DC. The cohort met with officials at the DHEW's Social and Rehabilitation Service to discuss "federalizing the nation's public assistance programs," which was one of Richman's long-range goals to overcome the wide variance in aid and services from one state to another.⁵⁵ Two months later, in January, he shared the benefits of

⁵³ Harold A. Richman, Curriculum Vitae and Biographical Information, file 7, box 1, CSWP. Richman served as a consultant to DHEW secretary John Gardner and to the Director of Finance of the State of Illinois—the first of many consulting assignments of his career.

⁵⁴ SSA Newsletter (Autumn/Winter 1968-69), file 6, box 17, SSA, AL, 1956-69.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

the new program with colleagues at the annual meeting of the Council of Social Work Education. “We must work today to solve the problems of our policies just as we have worked it the past to solve the problems of our clients,” he said. “Such problem-solving for policies involves special capabilities—just as does problem-solving for people.”⁵⁶



Harold Richman, third from left, with students from the social welfare policy program, at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969, Washington, DC. Photographs Collection, Box 9, folder 22: Center for the Study of Welfare Policy, ca. 1969. Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

In the specialization’s early years, students joined by default, after discovering that the school’s clinical methods and focus on training “junior therapists” was not for them. Judith Meltzer (nee Levy) and Frank Farrow fell into this category. Judith, from Brooklyn and a

⁵⁶ Harold A. Richman, “Social Welfare Policy as a Specialization in the Graduate Social Work Curriculum,” *Social Welfare Policy* (Spr. 1970): 53-60, here 55.

graduate of the University of Rochester (and newly married to Jack Meltzer's son Richard), and Frank, from a small town outside Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and a graduate of Yale, enrolled at SSA in 1969. They met in class and became friends in their second-year field placement (1970-71) at the Social and Rehabilitation Service's regional office in Chicago.⁵⁷

Like most of their classmates, Judith and Frank arrived to SSA wanting to be community organizers. Their plans quickly changed after discovering that, as Judith put it, "the first year wasn't intellectually stimulating at all." It was also demeaning. The faculty decided that Judith was too petite and young for community organizing. "They didn't think it was going to be safe or appropriate," she said. She decided to try group work, but that wasn't any better. A difficult experience with "kids in South Shore [east of Hyde Park] Chicago who were having trouble in terrible schools" left her thinking about leaving SSA altogether, possibly for a "PhD program in child development, of all things." Frank was also dispirited. "Much like Judy, between the first and second year I was really not happy with the experience of the social work school. It was not what I had thought it would be. Community organization wasn't and the rest of it wasn't."⁵⁸ The policy program offered Judith and Frank the kind of training that Richman had been forced to find on his own. "Harold aimed to carve out a more rigorous, more intellectually challenging" program of study, Frank reflected, "and sort of engage people he saw becoming unengaged in the school and also who he thought probably had a policy bent."⁵⁹

Richman's dynamic personality and boundless energy won over increasing numbers of converts. In a few years the program grew from one faculty and a few students to fifty students

⁵⁷ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

and twelve faculty “devoting a substantial portion of their time to the concentration.”⁶⁰ Some of his senior colleagues worried that “casework would soon be dead at SSA,” but what Richman really provided was a complementary approach to studying poverty to help fulfill the field’s “primary commitment to human values and individual dignity.”⁶¹ His required policy seminar on the history of US welfare policy from the New Deal to the Nixon Administration offered a case in point of the benefits of Richman’s real-time policy perspective. Judith and Frank wrote a “policy critique” of Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan that stuck with them fifty years later. (Though Judith bristled at the memory of knocking Nixon’s proposed \$1,600 monthly allowance as inadequate. “Now, fifty years later, I think ‘oh, my god, how much better off we would have been if that had gotten passed.”) The program had the effect that Richman wanted, offering students an alternative to casework and deep engagement with the policy nuances of the country’s evolving—and politically combustible—welfare system.⁶²

First as a teacher and mentor, later as a colleague and friend, Richman changed the course of Frank’s and Judith’s lives. Judith called Richman an “exceptional human being” and one of the smartest, most insightful, and kindest people you could ever meet. “For me, personally, and, I think, for Frank,” she said, “he was totally supportive of us as we developed our careers” at U of C and then in Washington, DC, working in welfare policy. “All those qualities in seemingly inexhaustible supply,” added Frank. “Harold offered the kind of mentoring

⁶⁰ Harold Richman, *Social Welfare Policy: Teaching and Research – A proposal for the Examination of an Educational Program*, Jul. 1, 1974, file 1, box 35, UC, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

⁶¹ Harold Richman, *SSA: Change and the Future*, Oct. 29, 1969, file 8, box 83, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

⁶² Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014; FAP Seminar, ca. 1969-70, file 8, box 9, CSWP.

that we each felt—and that, literally, there were 200 others [students and colleagues] each feeling they were special, too. An amazing man!”⁶³

Richman’s next move was the launch of the Center for the Study of Welfare Policy (CSWP) in the summer of 1969 to “encourage sustained interdisciplinary efforts to evaluate existing welfare programs and institutions and to explore new approaches.”⁶⁴ He co-founded it with his colleague and friend Margaret “Peg” Rosenheim, who had floated the idea back in 1966 only to have it run aground until Richman got involved.⁶⁵ Rosenheim was a legal scholar and, like Richman, counted herself among SSA’s small cohort of non-social workers (along with a political scientist, sociologist, economist, philosopher, and urban planner). The two shared an interest in public policy, in her case, juvenile justice and “legal issues in the field of child welfare.”⁶⁶ She became the first CSWP director after new president Ed Levi, who had replaced George Beadle in 1968, appointed Richman dean.⁶⁷

The CSWP’s major sponsor was the DHEW’s Social and Rehabilitation Service (SRS). Career civil servant Mary Switzer, “well-known for her distaste of social workers,” ran the SRS, and was attracted to the CSWP because of its commitment to upending the social work status quo.⁶⁸ Donald Simpson, of the SRS regional commission in Chicago, where Judith and Frank

⁶³ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

⁶⁴ CSWP Overview, Sep. 25, 1969, file 4, box 68, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

⁶⁵ Rosenheim to School Policy Committee (SPOA), Nov. 12, 1966, file 4, box 2, CSWP, 1964-81. Rosenheim was a graduate of Wellsley and U of C law school.

⁶⁶ Margaret Rosenheim, Curriculum vitae and Biographical Data Sheet, file 7, box 1, CSWP. Her spouse, Ned, was a professor in the English department. Her signal contribution was the idea of the “juvenile nuisance”—a legal classification she coined to describe “youths who commit minor offenses” and who should be granted social rehabilitation rather than remanded to juvenile court or detention and “branded criminals”; see Margaret K. Rosenheim, “Notes on Helping: Normalizing Juvenile Justice,” *Social Service Review* 50, no. 2 (Jun. 1976): 177-93

⁶⁷ Switzer to Simpson, May 15, 1969, file 8, box 15, CSWP.

⁶⁸ Wickenden, “A Perspective on Social Services,” 77-8, here 77.

worked, assisted Richman and Rosenheim with their grant application.⁶⁹ Simpson knew Richman and held him in the highest regard, telling Switzer that Richman “is well known by national and regional welfare leaders and HEW staff.”⁷⁰ Of all the applications that he had reviewed, CSWP’s had the most “well thought out and balanced program of research, publication and dissemination of information and educational development in the welfare field.”⁷¹ The CSWP’s interdisciplinary approach and mix of programs and research projects set it apart from the competition. The SRS named the CSWP the country’s first Regional Research Institute and awarded a \$400,000 grant to support its mission—part of DHEW’s total investment of more than \$2.5 million to help Richman and Rosenheim challenge casework’s hold on the social work profession and train “a new graduate for the social welfare field.”⁷²

Because the SRS aimed “to push the expansion of social services,” it was especially interested in the CSWP’s proposed Social Service Delivery Project.⁷³ It was Richman’s idea—part of his ongoing effort to locate a standard “method” for the delivery of social services that he had first considered as an undergraduate at Harvard and continued studying in graduate school. His recently defended, award-winning dissertation, “Alms and Friends: The Relationship Between Social Services and Financial Assistance in Public Welfare Policy” (1969) combined history and policy analysis, arguing that social services alone—whether delivered by “friendly visitors” or caseworkers or staff at full-blown social service centers—were incapable of ending

⁶⁹ Donald Simpson to Harold Richman, Nov. 19, 1968, file 8, box 15, CSWP.

⁷⁰ Donald Simpson to Mary Switzer, May 15, 1969, file 8, box 15, CSWP.

⁷¹ Ibid.; First Progress Report, Jun. 1970, file 13, box 10, CSWP.

⁷² DHEW Grant Application, July 1, 1969, file 4, box 2, CSWP; Award Letter to William Cannon, VP for Research, U of C, July 10, 1969, file 5, box 15, CSWP. Four other regional institutes were subsequently funded. CSWP’s region included Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois. On DHEW’s support of SSA, see Harold Richman, “SSA Alumni Dinner at the School,” Oct. 29, 1970, file 8, box 83, SSA, Office of the Dean, HR, 1969-78; and Consolidated Grant Report, May 14, 1974, file 3, box 45, CSWP.

⁷³ Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants*, 36.

poverty absent material assistance. In fact, except for the Great Depression, when financial aid was temporarily destigmatized, Richman's history suggested that the preoccupation with services had prevented the pursuit of more redistributive practices—and with little to show for it. The only solution, concluded Richman, was to combine “adequate financial assistance to anchor the recipients' efforts toward rehabilitation and self-support, and skilled professional services to enable these efforts.”⁷⁴

Rosenheim and Richman kept close tabs on the study, but it was left to Virginia Burns, from Boston University, to manage the Delivery Project, which dominated the CSWP's research agenda between 1970-73. She enlisted the services of contributing researchers and consultants, from an array of training backgrounds, who together prepared thirteen separate studies covering everything from vocational rehabilitation and the Family Assistance Plan to separated services, food and nutrition, and even mobile home dwellers. Burns synthesized these into a final 100-page report for submission to the SRS.⁷⁵

The report was scholarly in the most predictable, which is to say, worst, ways: lifeless prose, heavily footnoted, literature reviews galore, capped with a litany of stale recommendations. Burns and her team framed the study using “social development theory,” which was basically a warmed-over community action model that advocated building “structures within which people could come together to determine the kinds of programs of self-development the community needs.” The study also called for an integrated services and income approach and commended the use of a “Local Social Development Center” (LSDC) for the

⁷⁴ Harold A. Richman, “Alms and Friends: The Relationship Between Social Services and Financial Assistance in Public Welfare Policy,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1969), 242-54, here 251. It received SSA's Elizabeth Dixon Prize. Richman's findings mirrored those of Alfred Kahn, “Social Services in Relation to Income Security: Introductory Notes, *Social Service Review* 39, no. 4 (Dec. 1965): 381-89.

⁷⁵ All 13 studies are in the SSA Library; see HV85.C53 1972.

distribution of services and aid. The LSDC—the latest take on the “center concept”—would “assist neighborhood residents to define problems, assess their needs, establish goals and service priorities and determine the kinds of programs needed at the neighborhood level.” Funding, meanwhile, would flow through “linkages from the neighborhood to the federal level.” The model, concluded Burns, parroting Richman, “is that all in need are entitled to the services *and* benefits necessary to achieve and maintain a prescribed level of well-being, regardless of their positions as producers in the economy or their status in the society.”⁷⁶

Richman had big aspirations for the study. When it launched, he boldly claimed that the research team was at work “producing a blueprint for a model social services system” that he wanted to take nationwide. He talked about the study whenever he had the chance, sharing his vision—a clear definition of services, a statutory framework, administrative systems, plans for systematic evaluation and improvement—with anyone who would listen.⁷⁷

Unfortunately for Richman, by the time the SSDP report was finished, three long years later, it sank like a stone. One reason was President Richard Nixon’s surprising support on behalf of the Family Assistance Program (FAP), a guaranteed federal income plan for poor people. The FAP died in committee—too stingy for liberals who balked at the work requirement; too generous for conservatives who thought it was another giveaway to the underserving poor—but not before shifting the national debate away from services and toward income strategies.⁷⁸ The other reason was that the services strategy itself had run its course. Championed as a way to cut welfare rolls, between 1969-72 those rolls exploded instead. Led by creative welfare bureaucrats,

⁷⁶ Virginia Burns, “Social Service Delivery Project: Final Report,” January 1973, folder 7, box 21, CSWP 1964-81, here 96, italics added.

⁷⁷ Harold Richman, “SSA Alumni Dinner at the School,” Oct. 29, 1970, file 8, box 83, SSA, Office of the Dean, HR, 1969-78.

⁷⁸ Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

the National Welfare Rights Organization, and sympathetic caseworkers looking to make relief available to all persons who qualified, spending on services boomed, from \$354 million to \$1.7 billion, *and* welfare rolls doubled to 10.4 million people. The stunning costs of fighting poverty with services *and* aid turned public opinion irrevocably toward “welfare reform!” for the remainder of the 1970s—particularly as the economy worsened and social spending to fight poverty kept growing.⁷⁹

All of this left Richman feeling down and searching for answers of his own. Aside from the policy track, which remained strong, SSA was struggling. Three years of research, writing, and editing and the delivery project was a bust. The Woodlawn Social Services Center lay dormant. And, what’s more, Peg Rosenheim had decided to step away from the CSWP directorship, leaving him no choice but to “assume the position” and run the center himself.⁸⁰

But what kind of center was the CSWP, exactly? Federal and state budget cuts brought on by the worsening oil crisis and economic downturn meant big trouble for the entire academic research economy. SSA and U of C more broadly had formed its own dependent relationship on public-taxpayer dollars over the last decade, and it wasn’t clear where all the money was going to come from to cover the cost of research and graduate training now that federal budgets had plummeted. Indeed, the CSWP was in its last year of funding from the SRS and Richman had heard rumors, subsequently confirmed by Judith Meltzer, his regional office contact, that the “central [Washington, DC] office feels less kindly towards us” and that “SRS would like to discontinue us.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*, 153-65.

⁸⁰ Levine to Terango, Sep. 10, 1973, file 5, box 15, CSWP.

⁸¹ Status Report on the Activities of the CSWP, Aug. 17, 1973, file 6, box 72, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78. CSWP funding cut confirmed, Ad Hoc Committee on Research: Final Report, Oct. 22, 1974, file 5, box 12, CSWP.

Richman would spend part of the next few years, during the worst stretch of America's worst economic recession since the 1930s, thinking about ways to reenergize the school he led and the welfare policy center that he still thought had a role to play in shaping the future provision of social services and aid. One idea he pursued, starting in the summer of 1973, was the construction of a brand-new umbrella "center for social welfare research at the University." The new center would supplant the CSWP, which Richman referred to as "Peggy Rosenheim's Center" even though he was technically running it. Richman pitched the center in letters to prospective donors and foundation program officers. "I believe the case for the new center can be put quite simply," he wrote, "we have in Chicago, in Illinois and in the country a range of social welfare problems which have become increasingly complex and which do not adequately respond to the techniques, policies and institutions which we have developed over the last fifty years to cope with them." This was not because voluntary and government agencies had ignored these issues, but rather that the "vigorous social welfare activity in the community has not been paralleled by similarly vigorous research and experimentation in the University."⁸² A new supersized research center was Richman's first idea.

Revamping the CSWP was his other idea. He turned to his friend and SSA colleague Bill Cannon for guidance on how to do this. Cannon was a political scientist and had been bouncing between university administration and government service for twenty years, most recently in the Johnson administration planning the war on poverty's community action program and as division chief at the Bureau of the Budget at OMB. He was currently vice president for programs and projects at U of C and an active member of the CSWP. Cannon was also likely the only person at

⁸² Presentation to Trustees, April 28, 1973, file 1, box 69, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78; Richman to Smith, Jul. 31, 1973, file 1, box 69, SSA, Dean HR; see also other letters to prospective donors and foundations in this file. Richman didn't give up on the idea of the research center; see SSA, Ad Hoc Committee on Research, Oct. 22, 1974, file 5, box 12, CSWP.

SSA who knew Washington, DC, better than Richman. He gladly obliged Richman's request for some thoughts about the CSWP and, in Cannon's words, "where," in the difficult summer of 1973, "we go from here."⁸³

Cannon thought the CSWP had, so far, been a mixed bag. He was impressed by some of CSWP's work. "There is some good stuff there," he wrote. Noteworthy projects included a 70,000-case file to tackle quantitative analyses, such as patterns of public assistance usage; comparative studies of US and foreign welfare models; and a study of compliance reporting. "I hope much of it is being placed in the right hands for reading."⁸⁴

But the CSWP also had some major shortcomings, in his opinion. The biggest of these was the lack of "a sense of sweep" and the CSWP's failure to make "a major contribution to current public debate on major public issues." Cannon thought the center needed to take "a bold position, supported by science and reason"—perhaps a study on the "Black family" or "social inequality" or "blue collar welfare and work." He admitted the "value-laden approach" that he recommended wasn't for everyone, including Richman, whose training and disposition favored academic research, but Cannon believed such an approach was required to tackle the "serious problems of public policy." Based on his long tenure in DC, and his read on the current moment, this was the only way forward. "The risk of course is that of being or of appearing to be involved in the partisan and political passions of the day, thus making enemies.... But I do not think we can do public policy without this danger."⁸⁵

⁸³ Cannon to Richman, Jul. 17, 1973, file 10, box 70, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78; Biographical Statement: William B. Cannon, file 1, box 1, Papers of WBC. See also Hugh Davis Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph* (Chapel Hill, 1984), 61-2; and O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 160-2.

⁸⁴ CSWP Third Annual Report (1971-72) and Fourth Annual Report (1972-73), file 3, box 11, CSWP; Cannon to Richman, Jul. 17, 1973, file 10, box 70, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

⁸⁵ Cannon to Richman, Jul. 17, 1973, file 10, box 70, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

After Richman failed to raise the \$3 million needed for a new research center, he took Cannon's suggestion and decided to try something different with the CSWP. Three years of handwringing later, in 1976 he signed off on a CSWP "branch office" in Washington, DC, and handed the keys over to his friend Tom Joe, age 41. Tom had been an SSA nonresident research fellow for the past three years and was one of the leading welfare policy analysts in the country. He knew his way around the state and federal welfare bureaucracy better than anyone. He had served in the Nixon administration and was working with the incoming Carter administration on welfare reform. And he had a hand in all the major welfare policy action of the last decade—the "service strategy," Nixon's Family Assistance Plan, Supplemental Social Insurance, the Earned Income Tax Credit. *Maybe Tom could do something with the center concept?* thought Harold.⁸⁶

At the time, Joe was splitting his days between Lewin & Associates, Inc., and the Carter White House but searching for fresh opportunities—something connected to the university that Richman inhabited and his government realm but distinct from both. Richman thought Joe was brilliant and wanted to give him a platform—a branch office, in this case—to build his own welfare policy center in the nation's capital. Initially, Joe bandied about the idea of an inter-university center, talking with friends at Harvard, UC San Francisco, the University of Minnesota, and Chicago, about creating a hub for social policy analysts to work together. When that proved administratively impossible, however, he settled for a CSWP franchise instead. Richman had no idea whether anything would come of it. But he trusted and believed in Joe, and, besides, what did he have to lose. He scribbled down the basics of Joe's plan on a little piece of

⁸⁶ Tom Joe CV, file 1, box 38, CSWP.

U of C letterhead and tucked it away in his “Tom Joe file”: “Tom 1) CSWP – Washington office – Tom as dir of federal policy analysis.”⁸⁷

These days, the weight of his own failed academic innovations bearing down on him, Richman was in a contemplative state. He found himself thinking often about the early social work pioneers—the Abbott sisters, Sophonisba Breckenridge, and Jane Addams—who had built SSA, still hoping that the social work field might yet become the “vital force for change” that he so badly wanted it to be.⁸⁸ He was especially fond of a quote he attributed to Jane Addams, which he regularly shared in speeches and at other decanal gatherings: “The work [social work] is difficult because it must involve both theory and application; but it is also exhilarating because it gives us the opportunity, as Jane Addams put it ‘to keep one foot in the library and one foot in the street.’”⁸⁹ Richman preferred the library, Tom Joe the street.

III. Politics

Tom Joe knew about poverty. He was born into it in Milwaukee in 1935. His parents were Korean immigrants who split up after their grocery store shuttered. Joe’s dad went to California to work as a bellhop; his mom and all six children went to Honolulu to stay with her mother. They lived in “a poor section of town with ... little shack houses, chicken wire on the windows,” recalled Joe’s spouse Cheryl Rogers, and got staples from the local food bank. Joe’s mom, who had been diagnosed with Marfan Syndrome and was going blind, sold newspapers at the airport to make ends meet. After Tom and four of his siblings developed the genetic disorder,

⁸⁷ Personal note, n.d., ca. 1976, file 12, box 5, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78; Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

⁸⁸ Harold Richman, *Social Work Education: Vital Force for the Future?*, May 25, 1971, file 9, box 83, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

⁸⁹ Presentation to Trustees, April 28, 1973, file 1, box 69, SSA, Dean HR, 1969-78.

they enrolled in the school for the blind in Honolulu and then in Berkeley, California, where they moved when he was 14. “They didn’t have any money,” Cheryl continued. “They lived very meagerly. Tom was always very aware of that and thought that, you know, people should have basic, decent necessities of life—that there should be food and shelter and healthcare for everybody.”⁹⁰

Joe was “doubly disadvantaged”—poor and disabled—but didn’t let that stop him. While at the Berkeley School for the Blind he was mentored by Jacobus tenBroeck, who had also lost his sight as a teenager. A lawyer and political science professor at nearby Cal, tenBroeck was also a famed civil rights activist. He had helped found the California Council for the Blind and its national counterpart and was a leader of the emerging disability rights movement that sought the complete integration of disabled persons into society. TenBroeck had a powerful influence on young Joe. He thrived under TenBroeck’s tutelage and personal example, gained confidence, learned braille effortlessly, and came to believe that the only thing he couldn’t do, that a sighted person could, was drive a car. In 1954, Joe graduated sixth in his class from Oakland Technical High School. A caseworker suggested a job as a pillowcase folder—a slight Joe never forgot—but Joe had other plans. He won a scholarship to Cal, tenBroeck’s *alma mater* and employer, where Joe earned a BA (1958) and MA (1961) in political science. He finished the coursework for a PhD in political theory but never bothered with the dissertation, though he still won the nation’s outstanding blind student award in 1961.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014.

⁹¹ Tom Joe C.V., file 1, box 38, CSWP; Vincent J. Burke, *Nixon’s Good Deed: Welfare Reform* (New York, 1974), 50-1; “Welfare Expert Joe,” *National Journal* 4, no. 25 (Jun. 17, 1972), 1013; Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014. On tenBroeck, see “Jacobus tenBroeck, Political Science, Speech: Berkeley,” Online Archives of California, available at <http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb229003hz&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00026&toc.id>

Joe left academia that year for a Ford Foundation-sponsored legislative intern position in the California State Assembly, where he thought he had the best chance of improving the lives of poor and disabled people. He spent the next seven years as a staff member and analyst in the office of research, building his reputation, one policy innovation at a time, as the most creative welfare policy analyst in Sacramento and as an in-demand consultant at the state and national levels. He designed California Medicaid (Medi-Cal), a state preschool program, and adult and child protective services programs, developing policy expertise in human services financing, long-term care, disability, and welfare. Joe was a liberal Democrat (“very far left,” according to Cheryl) but “a realist and a pragmatist” when it came to his work. He developed his policy expertise on the Public Welfare Committee, working with assemblypersons Phil Burton, a liberal Democrat, and former peach grower John “Jack” Veneman, a liberal Republican. Joe’s core commitment was increasing aid to the poor—cash most of all, services too—that they might live lives of dignity and respect. He was willing to partner with anyone who shared the same goal regardless of political ideology.⁹²

Joe drew national notice as the first to espy the “social services loophole” in the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments. Absent a statutory definition of “services,” he defined the term as elastically as possible to maximize the 3-to-1 federal match to help California amass more federal money for services than any other state. “To an exceptional degree,” wrote Martha

His most famous article was Jacobus tenBroek, “The Right to Live in the World: The Disabled in the Law of Torts,” *California Law Review* 54, no. 2 (1966): 841–919.

⁹² Tom Joe C.V., file 1, box 38; Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants*, 33-4; Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014.

Derthick of The Brookings Institution, at the time, “[Joe] had a grantsman’s gifts of detecting possibilities in the rules and daring to propose their exploitation.”⁹³

In 1967 the American Public Welfare Association commissioned Joe to draft a “how-to” guide to help state welfare officials strategize ways to “maximize the total resources available to the poorest segment of society.”⁹⁴ Aptly titled *Finding Welfare Dollars* (1968), Joe’s policy missive emphasized the importance of being “creative” and “productive” and of trying out “innovative approaches to combining and redeploying available resources” with the aim of “large-scale program expansion and positive redirection.”⁹⁵ He recommended streamlining eligibility requirements and reducing investigation costs, which squandered precious time and money. He encouraged officials to take on “low need” cases “to produce money for the state.” And he challenged officials to deploy a flexible definition of services that supplemented caseworkers’ “soft services” with a broader array of “hard services,” such as “child care, attendant care, and homemaker services,” for example, along with “special diets, hearings aids, and eye glasses” and other reimbursable assistive technologies and aids.⁹⁶ Joe personally helped welfare officials in Pennsylvania and Nebraska adopt his particular brand of “creative federalism.” It soon diffused to other states looking for new money to cover the growing cost of human services. “Joe figured out more ways to raid the federal treasury than any anyone else,” mused one California official, matter-of-factly.⁹⁷

⁹³ Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants*, 35. Another major player was private consultant William C. Copeland, who also strategized ways to maximize federal dollars for social and rehabilitation services; see William C. Copeland, *Financing Rehabilitation Services* (Washington, DC, 1969). Copeland estimated that there was upwards of \$14 billion in new federal money available for the taking (6). See also Morris, *Limits of Voluntarism*, 200-1.

⁹⁴ Tom Joe, *Finding Welfare Dollars* (Chicago, 1968), 1-19, here 1.

⁹⁵ Joe, *Finding Welfare Dollars*, 2.

⁹⁶ Joe, *Finding Welfare Dollars*, 5-8.

⁹⁷ “Welfare Expert Joe,” 1013.

In 1969 Joe joined the Nixon administration as a special assistant to DHEW undersecretary Jack Veneman. The *National Journal*, a DC policy weekly, ran a story on Joe, noting wryly his new appointment, given his past role “shaping social programs in a way that maximized the federal financial contribution.” He kept a “low profile,” continued the *Journal*, wasn’t visible on any “organization chart,” but nevertheless ranked “among the most significant day-to-day forces” operating within the welfare state. “Joe is an outside operator, jabbing at the bureaucracy,” remarked one DHEW official, “But SRS knows well that he is a force with whom they must reckon because Veneman most times backs him up.” The bureaucracy had Joe’s back, too. In April 1971 he was honored with the HEW Certificate for Superior Service.⁹⁸

Joe and Veneman’s major policy victories were also behind the scenes and “low profile,” taking place in the bureaucratic backwaters of the Federal City, far removed from the legislature’s visible churn. In June 1971, Joe took the lead in drafting a guidance memo that made federal dollars available to “purchase services,” from both private nonprofits and other public state agencies, in the ultra-elastic terms that he had earlier championed in *Finding Welfare Dollars*. Illinois officials, looking for ways to cash in on the 3-to-1 federal match and cover a gaping state budget deficit, had made the request. Joe obliged by helping Illinois add a host of “hard services,” such as drug and alcohol abuse and prevention programs, programs for the mentally disabled, and even juvenile and adult corrections, to its federal tab—an audacious list of items that impressed even him. When other states followed suit, Congress finally caught wind

⁹⁸ “Welfare Expert Joe,” 1013; Tom Joe C.V., file 1, box 38.

and closed the service loophole in October 1972—but not before throwing another \$800 million at the program, capping DHEW’s service budget at a cool \$2.5 billion.⁹⁹

The creation of the Supplemental Security Income program (SSI) marked Joe and Veneman’s signature accomplishment. Quietly passed in the “closing hours of the 92nd Congress” of 1972, SSI marked the federal government’s first minimum cash-income guarantee for the old (65 and older), blind, and disabled, and who were unable to participate in the labor force. Yet the addition of SSI in the Social Security Amendments of 1972 “went virtually unchallenged” in Congress and elicited minimal news coverage, leading one contemporary chronicler to dub it the “unseen revolution” in American welfare history despite providing immediate income to 6.2 million Americans upon implementation. Backed by pressure groups for the aged and disabled, SSI originated in a “committee room closed to the public and press,” with members of the Ways and Means Committee, the commissioner of Social Security, and the undersecretary of DHEW John Veneman and his assistant Tom Joe.¹⁰⁰

SSI was only possible because of the collapse of the Family Assistance Plan—the guaranteed income program to replace AFDC that Joe had a hand in writing—after three clamorous years of public debate. Joe’s lengthiest statement on the topic came in the form of a review of Daniel P. Moynihan’s book, *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income* (1973), published in the journal *Social Work*, shortly after Joe departed the Nixon administration in the winter of

⁹⁹ Derthick, *Uncontrollable Spending for Social Services Grants*, 43-70. The authority to purchase services from other state agencies and nonprofits was codified in the 1967 Public Welfare Amendments.

¹⁰⁰ Brian Steensland, *The Failed Welfare Revolution: America’s Struggle over Guaranteed Income Policy* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 177; Burke, *Nixon’s Good Deed*, 188-204, here 191, 195, 198-99; Tom Joe, *A Primer on the Supplemental Security Income Program*, McKinsey Staff Paper, June 1, 1973, 1-50, here 1; Lewis H. Butler, “A Life of Public Service,” conducted by Ann Lage in 2008-2009, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2010, here 282.

1973. Moynihan, Nixon's domestic policy advisor, who had led the failed effort to sell FAP to Congress, provided an overly cheery view of what happened, according to Joe.¹⁰¹ In Moynihan's self-serving version of events, FAP was a "paradigm of social policy, a plan of theoretical purity and simplicity, a creative adaptation of the social theories of the left (the guaranteed annual income) and the right (the negative income tax)" capable of fixing the welfare mess—if only the politicians and welfare bureaucrats had really "understood the bill."

But Joe, who had watched as the bill got picked apart by competing interest groups before dying in committee, absorbed a different set of lessons from the whole "unfortunate business of FAP." The superficial FAP debate had lulled policymakers into believing that welfare reform was all dollars and cents, as if the only question left was for economists to cost out various levels of guarantees based on what the nation could afford. In Joe's mind, the FAP debacle exposed how out of touch most policymakers were, Moynihan included, and how little they knew about the cutthroat politics of the welfare policy world: "The history of the Family Assistance Plan indicates a need not for the pure theories of academia," he concluded, "but for a mechanism to integrate those theories into the real world: in short, the need for ways to turn policy-makers into problems solvers."¹⁰²

Joe spent the next two years bouncing around the private sector in search of the right venue in which to pursue this crucial educational work. He tried McKinsey & Company, briefly, then the Seneca Corporation, for a little longer, but struggled to adapt to button-down consulting-firm life and the demand for billable hours that came with it. In 1975 he took a job at Lewin &

¹⁰¹ Butler, "A Life of Public Service," 233. Butler, assistant secretary at HEW, states unequivocally that Joe and Veneman wrote the legislation and put "Pat's [Daniel Patrick Moynihan] name on it."

¹⁰² Tom Joe, review of Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income: The Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan* (New York, 1973), in *Social Work* 18, no. 3 (May 1973), 3-4, 112, 114, 116.

Associates, Inc., a small healthcare consulting firm founded by his friend (and former HEW colleague) Lawrence “Larry” Lewin. It was a good fit. Lewin indulged Joe’s wide-ranging interests, giving him free reign to build a portfolio that included projects with public and private organizations on the issues that interested Joe most, including health, welfare, manpower, urban, juvenile delinquency, and disability policy. And, in 1976, Lewin also agreed to let Joe set up the CSWP DC “branch office” as a nonprofit arm of his firm, located in L’Enfant Plaza.¹⁰³

Joe had big plans for his DC branch, but when it opened it was small, a work in progress, with just two people: “Tom and me,” recalled Judith Meltzer.¹⁰⁴ Judith and her husband Dick, a legislative staffer for Democratic representative Abner Mikva of Illinois, had recently relocated to Washington when Richman recommended her for the job—followed, two years later, by Frank Farrow. Judith’s first project was a thirty-page report on long-term care for the elderly. The project was subcontracted to Joe by his friend and former HEW assistant secretary Lew Butler, co-director of the Institute of Health Policy Studies at the University of California at San Francisco, and covered Judith’s modest salary. Her experience working with Joe was eye-opening. She spent weeks talking with Joe and researching the paper, and pulled an all-nighter drafting it, only to have it shredded by her new boss. “That was how you got feedback on your paper. You’d sit there and read it to him. And I read this thing and he basically said ‘What is this bullshit? This doesn’t make any sense. This is terrible.’ I was just flabbergasted.” Accustomed to Richman’s kindly professorial manner, Judith eventually adjusted to Joe’s schoolmasterish methods; and innumerable rewrites later, he finally gave her a passing grade. “In the early

¹⁰³ Lewin obituary at <https://www.medpagetoday.com/publichealthpolicy/healthpolicy/32450>

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

years,” said Judith, “we’d do them [reports] over and over and over again until we got them right.”¹⁰⁵

Judith’s next assignment was planning a welfare policy retreat to give the CSWP DC office a proper introduction and to prepare policymakers for the Carter administration’s imminent plans for welfare reform. Carter had made scrapping welfare a main talking point during the campaign, and Joe had served as a key advisor and was counting on playing a role in shaping the administration’s approach. The two-day CSWP Seminar on Welfare Policy Issues was auspiciously scheduled for late January 1977—within a week of the Inauguration and the President’s decision to place welfare reform at the tippy top of his domestic agenda.¹⁰⁶

The seminar was held at Airlie Farm Conference Center in Warrenton, Virginia, fifty miles west of DC. The guest list included a bipartisan collection of congresspersons and staffers, welfare experts from academia, including Joe’s intellectual patron Harold Richman, and other leading experts from across the human services sector. “The purpose of this seminar,” wrote Joe, in the study packet provided to participants, “is to begin the process of understanding the complexity of welfare policy issues by examining in depth the current Federal program structures which—taken together—have come to be known as ‘welfare.’” The schedule was jam packed with presentations and discussions and a viewing of Frederick Wiseman’s recent documentary *Welfare* (1975). Breaks for meals and drinks broke things up, but guests hoping to slip away to cast a line, shoot skeet, or hike Airlie’s expansive grounds were surely disappointed. The entire weekend was spent holed up inside, getting back to the basics, unpacking the

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014; Tom Joe and Judith Meltzer, *Policies and Strategies for Long-Term Care* (May 14, 1976), Personal Papers of Judith Meltzer (in author’s possession).

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014. The Seminar convened Jan. 28-30, 1977; Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., and David deF. Whitman, *The President as Policymaker: Jimmy Carter and Welfare Reform* (Philadelphia, 1981), here 119.

difference between needs-tested and in-kind aid, the welfare programs that Joe cared about, and federal insurance programs, like Social Security, SSI, and unemployment, that already functioned as a right to defined populations. Joe wasn't worried about the insurance programs. He focused the seminar on sorting out the jigsaw puzzle of federal, state, and locally administered needs-tested and in-kind programs and services "aimed at helping the poor move toward self-support and self-sufficiency."¹⁰⁷

Joe soon joined the Carter welfare team as a paid consultant. Having bided his time, for several years, in the corporate wilderness, waiting for his political stars to realign, he arrived at the first welfare planning meeting, only days later, having already circulated versions of his own reform proposal to colleagues at DHEW, the Department of Labor, and the domestic policy staff. He advocated a streamlined delivery model that built on existing programs. One that dovetailed with the administration's plan to boost the faltering economy with jobs (CETA) and tax rebates (EITC) and that returned cash assistance "to its original concept of income support for persons who cannot be expected to work and their families."¹⁰⁸

Joe called his plan Triple Track (employment, tax credits, and income maintenance) and placed *work*, firmly, at its policy core. In 1967 Congress had created the Work Incentive Program (WIN) to decrease caseloads by enticing welfare recipients into the labor market with a \$30 and one-third plan that exempted the first \$30 of earnings and one-third of additional income. The program departed drastically from AFDC's original aim of keeping mothers out of the workforce while simultaneously reinforcing disproved but powerful stereotypes about the

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014; Guest list, background reading materials, Airlie Farm promotional material, Personal Papers of Judith Meltzer (in author's possession).

¹⁰⁸ Tom Joe to Stu Eizenstat, Dec. 16, 1976, Welfare Reform, 1977 folder [1], box 52, DPS-Bert Carp Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

idle poor and the debilitating effects of the dole. States adopted work requirements unevenly until the early 1970s, when California governor Ronald Reagan began scoring political points by making “workfare” the centerpiece of his punitive “California-style” welfare model.¹⁰⁹ Joe kept close tabs on the budding antitax and antiwelfare trends in his home state. He despised Reagan, Veneman’s and his nemesis from their state assembly days, and knew California’s workfare experiment had so far delivered negligible results. But Joe also knew that “jobs for the unemployed” was a political winner and that any meaningful federal reform would have to confront it head on, since, for millions of Americans, wrote Joe, “welfare assistance is not an acceptable alternative to effective employment and training services.”¹¹⁰ With Triple Track, Joe sought to strike a balance between work and welfare—“between people who can work and people who can’t work”—in the hopes of preserving targeted cash aid to those persons without any chance of an earned income, as he had done previously with SSI.¹¹¹

Following months of starts, stops, and executive dithering, Carter shelved Joe’s plan for cost reasons, opting for a guaranteed income strategy based on a negative income tax instead. Joe, with the FAP fiasco still fresh on his mind, was apoplectic—*As if nobody had learned anything from the recent history of welfare reform*. He unloaded in a twelve-page memo to Stu Eizenstat, Carter’s chief domestic policy advisor, nine days before the August 6 rollout of Carter’s Program for Better Jobs and Income (PBJI), dismissing the plan as “divisive, punitive,

¹⁰⁹ Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (New York, 1982), 176-84; Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, *Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America* (Princeton, NJ, 2017), 140-6; Winifred Bell and Dennis M. Bushe, *Neglecting the Many, Helping the Few: The Impact of the 1967 AFDC Work Incentives* (New York, 1975), 6-9. California voters enacted Proposition 13 in 1978; see Isaac William Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt: How the Property Tax Transformed American Politics* (Palo Alto, CA, 2008).

¹¹⁰ Tom Joe with Cynthia Stearns, “Jobs for the Unemployed: A Requisite of Welfare Reform,” Dec. 9, 1976, Welfare Reform Folder [1], box 52, DPS-Bert Carp Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹¹¹ Tom Joe to Stu Eizenstat, Jan. 12, 1977, Welfare Reform 1/77 Folder, box 317, DPS-Stuart Eizenstat Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

administratively complex and conceptually confusing.” Rather than less administrative burden, fumed Joe, “the plan treats and rewards people very differently, making many distinctions among people on the basis of family composition,” adding new hurdles and hoops to the welfare’s circuslike federal-state-local delivery system. Joe liked Eizenstat and the President but didn’t let his personal feelings conceal the bitter political truth: “To present the plan as is, as the first major domestic initiative could potentially embarrass the Administration, make a mockery of the expectations of both Congress and the public and probably put off any constructive action on the subject for another four or eight years.” Joe, who often joked that “sighted people can’t see,” took no pleasure in playing the proverbial blind prophet. PBJI, along with the rest of the Carter agenda, began unraveling as soon as it was unveiled.¹¹²

Ironically, the collapse of PBJI kept welfare reform alive on the Carter policy agenda just enough for Joe to keep collecting a government paycheck. For the next few years, he split his time between Lewin & Associates and the Carter administration, cycling from L’Enfant to his office in the Eisenhower Executive Building to the White House and back. He divided his time with DHEW and Eizenstat’s domestic policy staff and shrewdly directed a portion of the overhead charges he collected to expand the CSWP and cultivate new business. In 1979 Joe amicably severed ties with Lewin (and the 7 percent cut he gave him) and took the CSWP out on

¹¹² Tom Joe to Stu Eizenstat, Jul. 27, 1977, Welfare Reform Folder [3], box 318, DPS-Stuart Eizenstat Files, Jimmy Carter Library. On PBJI and the collapse of Carter welfare reform effort, see, for the standard account, Lynn and Whitman, *President as Policymaker*; see also James T. Patterson, “Jimmy Carter and Welfare Reform,” in *The Carter Presidency: Policy Choices in the Post-New Deal Era*, ed. Gary M. Fink and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence, KS, 1998), 117-36; and Jeff Bloodworth, “The Program for Better Jobs and Income: Welfare Reform, Liberalism, and the Failed Presidency of Jimmy Carter,” *International Social Science Review* 81, no. 3/4 (2006): 135-50.

his own. “There were things we wanted to do,” said Judith, of Joe’s decision, “that he couldn’t do in a for-profit consulting firm.”¹¹³

A “funky townhouse” on K Street was their first stop, then a more expansive office suite at 236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, near Capitol Hill, where Joe liked to be. He surrounded himself with a talented group of young analysts: Judith, there from the start; her graduate school friend Frank Farrow, from Hyde Park, where he had been trying to fix the mess at the Woodlawn Social Services Center; and Cheryl Rogers, raised in Texas, a former teacher-turned-analyst who had gotten her start at the Urban Institute; together with a rotating cast of U of C graduate interns and AFL-CIO- and Ford Foundation-funded postgraduate fellows.¹¹⁴ Harold Richman stayed in the game, too, despite his abrupt resignation as SSA dean (Margaret Rosenheim replaced him) following a rumored health scare that left him sick and tired of being in charge. Loyal to Tom, Harold continued as ghost director of the CSWP Hyde Park location, now largely gutted—recommending his best policy specialization students for field placements in DC, offering occasional advice, and using the sponsored programs office at U of C as the fiscal agent for Joe’s suddenly bustling operation.¹¹⁵

By 1980 the DC office had cultivated a burgeoning \$1.5 million research portfolio and an organizational culture distinct from its plodding Hyde Park counterpart. The CSWP DC office developed expertise in social services and welfare, long-term care, and disability policy while engaging in two main types of work. The first type of work included the production and

¹¹³ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014; Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014; Tom Joe’s consulting contract, Sept. 14, 1978, Joe folder, WHCF-Name File, Jimmy Carter Library.

¹¹⁵ Abbe Fletman, “Dean of SSA steps down after eight years in office,” *Daily Maroon*, Oct. 28, 1977, 1; Boyer, *University of Chicago*, 390-3; Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

dissemination of turnkey “policy ideas” for application in the domestic policy arena, for example, a position paper on energy assistance for the poor, a study of a halfway house for decarcerated females, a paper for the social security commissioner on social security refinancing, a study on the Medicare reimbursement of psychotherapeutics, the development of a teenage pregnancy program for the Urban Coalition, a study for the Corporation for Enterprise Development on manpower and service strategy, and a paper on school vouchers and tuition tax credits.¹¹⁶ This work, sometimes funded by small foundation grants but otherwise pro bono, was closely tethered to the second, federally funded “full-scale research and demonstration” work that served as the CSWP’s bread and butter. Multiyear grants from Health and Human Services, from the Department of Education, and from the National Institutes of Health, among other government bodies, had the CSWP studying eldercare, the role of voluntary agencies in youth services delivery, AFDC-Food Stamp consolidation in Michigan, and several projects related to the implementation and coordination of services under the Education for all Handicapped Children Act.¹¹⁷

In both cases Joe and his team took the lead “to persuade and assist policy makers in deciding what new knowledge is needed.” Rather than waiting on government agencies to release a request for proposal, the CSWP pitched its own proposals. The CSWP DC’s embrace of policy work—pushing ideas to policymakers and bureaucrats and in so doing becoming self-interested political actors armed with policy preferences—reversed the standard operating procedure of the federal-academic research matrix. “All of the major grants now at the Center,” explained Richman, in a funding request to Ford Foundation vice president and CSWP fan

¹¹⁶ Richman to Sviridoff, Mar. 20, 1980, and Joe to Arnold, May 5, 1981, Ford Foundation Grant File, PA 80-511, Reel 4093, Rockefeller Archive Center.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Mitchell Sviridoff, “developed from this process of urging government officials to consider a new perspective on current problems.”¹¹⁸

The DC office’s organizational culture closely resembled the action-oriented “legislative model” that Joe had learned in the bureaucratic trenches. He placed the highest premium on generating fresh policy ideas and doing whatever he could to get in the way of bad ones. That was the whole point of the CSWP, as far as he was concerned—to create an incubator to advance social policy that really improved the lot of the poor and disadvantaged. He spent most days in his office, huddling with staff or jawing on the phone, long drags from his Camel cigarette the sole interruption. “It was all about the ideas,” said Judith—the more exciting the better. “He had a huge network of people that he interacted with about ideas constantly. So, if he got an idea about something, he would immediately get on the phone and call up the eight people who he thought could contribute to that idea and help him develop it.” He expected a healthy debate from his interlocutors, and when they didn’t deliver, or if he became bored, he’d call someone else. His “tell” during these gab sessions was the toe tap—the quicker he tapped the closer he was to ending the exchange. “He did not suffer fools, and any idiocy or pretentiousness or phoniness drove him crazy, and he couldn’t contain it—almost literally couldn’t contain it.” His toe would start tapping and then “he’d start barbing them or being more confrontational,” recalled Frank, of Joe’s infamously short fuse, in order to end the conversation as quickly as possible.¹¹⁹

Despite Joe’s dread of time-wasting meetings and mediocrity of all kinds, he was a supremely devoted mentor and friend to the young people that worked with him. He just had his own way of showing it. He could be riotously funny, salty yet charming, especially after

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

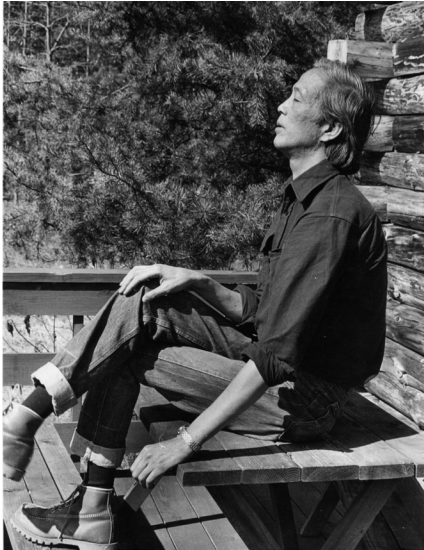
¹¹⁹ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

knocking back a few drinks, which somehow intensified his appeal. Lean and long limbed, with a big smile, Joe liked laughing and carrying on. But at work he maintained a serious comportment in which his preferred mode of didactic interaction was the argumentative dialogue—a sort of streetcorner Socratic Method—where members of his team would descend upon his office to read a bill, news article, or draft paper or proposal and he would respond with a flurry of questions, clarifications, corrections, and lots of criticisms. This was Judith’s first memory of working with Joe on the long-term care project, back in their Lewin days, and so too Frank’s and Cheryl’s, and just about everyone else who encountered Joe, including his colleagues in the White House and scattered across the welfare bureaucracy. Lew Butler, who worked with Joe in the Nixon administration, and arrived to DHEW unable to “tell Medicaid from Medicare,” received “evening tutoring from Tom Joe” to get up to speed on the specifics of federal social policy. “And the famous story,” recalled Butler, “was that every time I’d leave his room he’d say, ‘Now, remember to turn the light out.’” Joe’s utter brilliance—his uncanny ability to listen intently and grasp ideas fully; to read and recite verbatim entire paragraphs and dozens of pages of text; to distill arcane policies, statutes, and codes down to the simplest terms; to be, frankly, the smartest guy in the room—at once disarmed and enthralled those around him, particularly after they found out he was blind, which usually took a while. Unless, that is, his toe started tapping.

Cheryl, who fell in love over several years and married Joe in 1984, and knew him better than anyone, returned multiple times to the question of his inimitable interpersonal style.¹²⁰ He possessed a “very strong moral compass,” she said, but was also adamant: “He was no saint.” Although he was “incredibly thoughtful” about ideas, he was not always kind. He enjoyed

¹²⁰ Tom Joe was married previously and had four adopted children from that relationship.

having fun and being mischievous but sometimes at others' expense. And he was "humble about his amazing intellectual gifts" but never hesitated to use them to pick apart, word by word, line by line, an opposing argument, especially if the argument had to do with welfare policy, which it invariably did. Because, more than anything else, said Cheryl, "he was driven by this notion that disadvantaged people should be somehow helped by government."¹²¹



Tom Joe, in a rare moment of repose, at his cabin near Warrenton, Virginia, where he and Cheryl Rogers enjoyed spending time together, ca. early 1980s. Courtesy Cheryl Rogers.

The watershed event in the early history of Joe's CSWP DC's office was its showdown with the Reagan White House. This was when Joe realized the rich possibilities of his center and the impact that his unique brand of personalized policy research could have in shaping welfare policy preferences and politics. In 1980, with the economy still wobbling and caseloads climbing, Reagan rode to victory by successfully campaigning against big government and big spending, and, most of all, against big spending on big government social welfare programs.

¹²¹ Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 214; Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014; Butler, "A Life of Public Service," 220-1, 232. Butler called Joe "about the smartest person he'd ever known" and marveled at his ability to "memorize fifty-page pieces of legislation."

Reagan broadcast his plan to slash welfare on the trail but buried the details in the fine print of the skinny version of his inaugural budget. The first step in his effort to reduce the deficit and jumpstart the economy by cutting dependency and unleashing the natural market to take care of the rest. His budget proposed historic tax cuts (23 percent over three years) and increased spending on national defense (from \$176 billion to \$221 billion year-over-year), paid for with massive cuts to social welfare spending after nearly five decades of continuous expansion, including lopping off over \$7 billion from AFDC and Food Stamps alone—the last line of defense for the “truly needy.”¹²²

Joe always read the fine print. He knew what ‘fucking Reagan’ was capable of, having experienced it back in California, and understood the political advantages of hiding “California style” welfare reform deep in the budget. And he knew that the proposed cuts would be devastating. What he didn’t know, but needed to figure out, was exactly how devastating, and whether there were any weaknesses in the White House’s plan that he might be able to exploit politically. Keeping the tattered social safety net from giving way completely, he thought, might depend on it.¹²³

After playing around with different benefit levels under the administration’s proposed four-month-limit on the \$30 and one-third income disregard (which previously lasted indefinitely), he found what he was after: the Reagan cuts would hurt all poor people, but

¹²² Gareth Davies, “The Welfare State,” in *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism & Its Legacies*, ed. W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence, KS, 2003), 209-32, here 211-12.

¹²³ Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014; Tom Joe and Cheryl Rogers, *By the Few for the Few: The Reagan Welfare Legacy* (Lexington, MA, 1985), 49-50.

especially the working poor, undercutting the White House’s professed belief in workfare as the surest path to overcoming the scourge of welfare dependency in America.¹²⁴

‘He’s [Reagan] such an idiot,’ Cheryl recalled Joe exclaiming, from his office. Joe summoned members of his team—Cheryl, Frank, and Rick Weissbourd, fresh from undergrad, one of the ten or so new personnel brought on board at the beefed up CSWP (much needed with Judith then on leave in Chicago)—to show them what he had learned.¹²⁵ ‘Reagan thinks that the way to cut is to take it out of people who are working. But that’s going to be a huge disincentive when we should be incentivizing people to work and still get some cash assistance.’ Joe next told them to divide up all fifty states (and fifty different welfare programs serving 1,150 counties) and calculate the effects of the cuts to AFDC and Food Stamps on low-income families in each one. Joe thought aggregate figures desensitized already confused readers about the plight of the poor, fueling anecdotes and stereotypes about “welfare queens” living large on public money, spending food stamps on a piece of fruit and using the change to buy liquor. Joe suggested deploying a personalized approach—moving from state to state, comparing a hypothetical “Mrs. A, Non-Earner” to “Mrs. B, Earner” to “Mrs. C, Earner”—in order to demonstrate the severity of the combined cuts on individuals’ lives. Cheryl, Rick, and Frank worked late nights, over several weeks, crunching numbers on “little calculators,” handing off the results to colleagues to type up and tabulate and share with Tom.¹²⁶

The Poor: Profiles of Families in Poverty offered a damning indictment of Reagan’s “hastily drawn [welfare] reforms.” The cuts would “push poor families deeper into poverty” and

¹²⁴ Joe and Rogers, *By the Few for the Few*, 38-41.

¹²⁵ Payne (for Tom Joe) to Arnold, May 13, 1981, Ford Foundation Grant File, PA 81-821, reel 3377, Rockefeller Archives Center. The employee roster submitted to the Ford Foundation counted 14 professionals and 4 support staff.

¹²⁶ Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014; Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014.

ill health, since, in most states, Medicaid and AFDC were linked. When a client lost welfare they lost healthcare, too. Next, the cuts would “shift significant fiscal burdens onto states and localities” and weren’t really “savings” at all but a sly intergovernmental maneuver to pass the buck. Finally—and here was the kicker—the cuts would either close or eliminate entirely the wage differential between working and nonworking AFDC recipients! The very working mothers, reminded Joe, “to whom the Reagan Administration has pledged its support in its expressed desire to encourage work effort among welfare participants.” So, in Louisiana, for example, a fulltime working mother with two children and average earnings stood to collect a mere \$40 more than a nonworking mother; using the same scenario, a working mother in New York stood to make just \$15 per month more than her nonworking equivalent, and so on. The study was loaded with one explosive counter claim after another. “It turned into a report,” said Cheryl, “that we thought was a pretty compelling way to show that this was going to be a huge loss for women who are working”—and that would strike a blow at the Reagan administration’s heartless plan to gut welfare.¹²⁷

Joe circulated advanced copies to journalists to spread the news of his findings about the Reagan administration’s paradoxical work disincentive. Reporters in Boston, Washington, and even Great Britain, took the bait. The *New York Times* ran two front-page articles over a three-day stretch that coincided with the report’s release. “STUDY SHOWS PLANNED WELFARE CUTS WOULD MOST HURT POOR WHO WORK,” declared the second headline; the story that followed highlighted all the key findings and introduced Thomas C.W. Joe, “who was a ranking welfare official in the Nixon Administration,” to his widest audience yet. The article also

¹²⁷Tom Joe, Cheryl Rogers, and Rick Weissbourd, *The Poor: Profiles of Families in Poverty* (Washington, DC, March 27, 1981), 1-63, here 1-11, 16, 62-3; Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014.

confirmed Joe’s worst hunch about the Reagan administration when a spokesperson for the Office of Management and Budget confessed that “the Administration had not done a state-by-state analysis of the potential impact of the proposed budget reductions on individual families.”¹²⁸

This was on March 20—just ten days before President Reagan was tragically shot outside the Washington Hilton Hotel. Bad luck that not only stopped Joe’s study in its tracks but also neutralized the organization of any real opposition to Reagan’s budget from moving forward, little altered, in the months that followed. With Reagan’s public approval ratings hovering between 65-70 percent well into the summer, and in an effort to match the public’s outpouring of support, the Democratic-controlled Congress conceded to the basic terms of Reagan’s Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, signed on August 13, 1981, with all the grim consequences that Joe had forecast. All means-tested programs took a hit, but AFDC and Food Stamps, the main line of defense for the country’s poor, absorbed the hardest hit of all. The government’s \$1.2 billion cut to AFDC removed 400,000 cases and decreased benefits for another 279,000 over the next year, while cuts to food stamps removed an astounding one million recipients, with federal “savings” estimated at \$6 billion over three years.¹²⁹

Down but not out, Joe and this team regrouped in preparation for the start of next budget battle, then just six months away. When it arrived, remarkably, given the nation’s worsening economic recession and the public’s increasingly gloomy outlook, the Reagan administration

¹²⁸ See David E. Rosenbaum, “Reagan’s ‘Safet Net’ Proposal: Who Will Land, Who Will Fall,” *New York Times*, Mar. 17, 1980, A1; and David E. Rosenbaum, “Study Shows Planned Welfare Cuts Would Most Hurt Poor Who Work,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1981, here A1. See also “Working poor to suffer under budget: study,” *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 20, 1981; Douglas Frantz, “Budget cuts to hurt working poor: study,” *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 31, 1981, A1; and “Discouraging Work,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 8, 1981, E2. Joe and Rogers discuss the reaction in *By the Few for the Few*, 44-6.

¹²⁹ Davies, “Welfare State,” 211-2.

doubled down on its slash and burn budgetary tactics, according to historian Gareth Davies, and “placed the principal burden for deficit reduction on a fresh round of cuts to Medicaid, AFDC, and the food stamps program.” Joe would be ready—this time with dramatically different results.¹³⁰

Profiles of Families in Poverty: Effects of the FY1983 Budget Proposals on the Poor marked the coming out of Joe’s newly branded Center for the Study of Social Policy. Like the first study, *Profiles* dispensed with the technical jargon and provided a state-by-state comparison of the combined effect of two-years-worth of Reagan’s cuts to AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid on “nonworkers” and “workers.” Joe shrewdly cut right to the chase in the first sentence of the Executive Summary: “The effects of the Administration’s new proposals ... when added to the effect of last year’s reductions ... will be to reduce the incomes of families totally dependent on public assistance and virtually eliminate any incentives for welfare mothers to work.”¹³¹

Joe again coordinated with journalists to broadcast his findings and to ensure that *Profiles* became “required reading” both in and outside government circles.¹³² The nation’s major papers featured the report, with Tom, Frank, and Cheryl dividing up interview duties. On February 25, the day the study dropped, Robert Pear, Joe’s contact at the Washington bureau of the *New York Times*, posted a feature story under the headline, “INCENTIVE FOR NOT WORKING IS FOUND IN STUDY OF BUDGET.” The lede was music to Joe’s ears: “Poor people who choose to work would have less disposable income than if they depended entirely on Federal aid under President Reagan’s budget for the next fiscal year....” Pear cited data and extensively quoted the

¹³⁰ Davies, “Welfare State,” 216. The new proposed cuts totaled \$4.7 billion.

¹³¹ Tom Joe, *Profiles of Families in Poverty: Effects of the FY 1983 Budget Proposals on the Poor* (Washington, DC, Feb. 25, 1982), 1-28, here 1.

¹³² “Required Reading: No Free Lunch,” *New York Times*, Mar. 24, 1982, A20.

findings of Joe's Center for the Study of Social Policy, telling readers, contrary to President Reagan's professed commitment to the working poor, that his administration's new round of proposed cuts would make it "clearly more profitable for most poor people to rely entirely on welfare and food stamps than to work at the low-wage jobs available to them."¹³³

Joe also delivered copies of the study to the Washington policymakers best positioned to do something about the Reagan cuts. Joe's report took center stage at the first full "public debate" on the Reagan budget, on March 9, in a hearing of the Republican-controlled Senate Finance Committee. Lawmakers from both parties piled on Richard S. Schweiker, Reagan's secretary of Health and Human Services, who was apparently the only person present not to have "seen the report by the [University of Chicago's] Center for the Study of Social Policy." It showed.

Republican senator John Heinz of Pennsylvania and Democratic senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas "chided the Administration for trying to eliminate the 'work incentive program.'" Bentsen called the budget "pennywise and a pound-foolish," asking the secretary what was to be gained "if you save nickel by abolishing a program that helps people go to work and get off welfare, then have to spend \$5 on higher welfare costs?"

The hearing's punchiest exchange pitted Schweiker and Democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York. This time Moynihan did not let Joe down. "Your proposals

¹³³ Robert Pear, "Incentive for Not Working Is Found in Study of Budget," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1982, A18; Spencer Rich, "Welfare Cuts Said to Reach 'Truly Needy'," *Washington Post*, Feb. 25, 1982, A6. See also, "What's Happened to Welfare?" *Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 1982, A16; "Sob Sisters," *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1982, A26; D'Vera Cohn, "Working mothers lose under Reagan budget," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Mar. 6, 1982, 1; Robert Lekachman, "'Bootstrap' Theory Will Backfire," *LA Times*, Mar. 9, 1982, E3; Lewis M. Simons, "Fauntroy Says White House Is Failing 'the Moral Test'," *Washington Post*, Mar. 9, 1982, B1; Spencer Rich, "Welfare Cuts Boomerang, Study Finds," *Washington Post*, Mar. 9, 1982, A17; "Some Safet Net," *New York Times*, Mar. 13, 1982, 24; John C. White, "With welfare cuts, some hare lives getting harder," *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 25, 1982, 21.

declare war on working women,” scolded Moynihan. “You will make a mother choose between her children and her job. You really like to abuse these people, don’t you?”¹³⁴

Moynihan’s disdain for the Reagan Revolution’s “crackdown on welfare requirements” was shared by increasing numbers of his colleagues and the wider American public, who let their congresspersons and president know what they thought at the ballot box in November. Democrats widened their margin in the House and picked up one seat in the Senate, as a bipartisan majority began the process of restoring, slowly, the draconian budget cuts of Reagan’s first two years.¹³⁵ Follow up studies conducted by government and private research firms remained equivocal as to the real effect of the work disincentive on welfare caseloads, with the most robust study, by North Carolina’s Research Triangle Institute, finding that only 10-15 percent of the working poor who lost benefits quit working to go back on welfare instead.¹³⁶ This did not surprise Joe. He understood better than anyone the dignity of the poor and the significance of social services and of the lifechanging benefits of even minimum-wage work.¹³⁷ But when it came to the politics of knowledge beyond the university, Tom Joe knew something

¹³⁴ Coverage of the hearing in Robert Pear, “Lawmakers Assail Welfare Budget,” *New York Times*, Mar. 10, 1982, 23; and Spencer Rich, “Key House Panel Rebuffs Reagan on Spending, Taxes,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 10, 1982, 8.

¹³⁵ Following two years of cuts, social spending began to climb and, by the time Reagan left office, it was higher than ever before. See Davies, “Welfare State,” 212.

¹³⁶ For some of the differing findings, see, for example, Robert Pear, “Few of the Poor Quitting Jobs to Get Back on Welfare Rolls,” *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1982, A1; Juan Williams, “Poor Found Remaining Off Welfare,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 18, 1983, A1; D’Vera Cohn, “Study released indicates work preferred to welfare,” *Afro-American*, May 7, 1983, 1; and Michael Isikoff, “Welfare Caseload Is Growing Again, Confounding Economizers,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 1, 1983, A13. The follow-up evaluations are systematically covered in Joe and Rogers, *By the Few for the Few*, 89-104.

¹³⁷ On the working poor, see Ken Auletta, *The Underclass* (New York, 1982).

else: you didn't always have to get it exactly right to be right. You just had to be right at the right time and know how to use knowledge to advance your political agenda.¹³⁸

The battle over the Reagan budget made the Center for the Study of Social Policy into one of the go-to social policy shops in Washington. The heightened demand and increased foundation support that followed allowed Joe to cut ties with University of Chicago and set up, finally, as an independent nonprofit. Never one to protest paying taxes in exchange for services, even Joe balked at U of C's 44 percent grant management overhead charge. Particularly after Harold shuttered the home office and turned his attention to the study of childhood poverty as the new director of Chapin Hall, a few blocks east of SSA in Woodlawn. Harold had always dreamed of running his own research center. He finally got one.¹³⁹

In 1986 the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation name Joe one of its "Genius Award-winners," confirming what everyone who had crossed paths with him in the past twenty-five years already knew. Letters of congratulations poured in from all over. Through it all, Tom remained embarrassed by the attention. In a profile shortly after being named a genius, he confessed tongue-in-cheek astonishment at his good fortune, telling an interviewer: "That's very difficult to absorb. I guess if I was a genius, I would have thought of an easier way to make a living."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Davies, "Welfare Policy," 212.

¹³⁹ Interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014. The grants management for the DC office was temporarily run by the National Opinion Research Center from July 1, 1981, until Joe severed ties in 1982-83; see Gerst to Arnold, May 15, 1981, Ford Foundation Grant File, PA 81-821, reel 3377, Rockefeller Archive Center.

¹⁴⁰ Kathleen Teltsch, "Magician Makes the List of 25 'Genius' Winners," *New York Times*, Jul. 15, 1986, A15; Congratulatory letters in author's possession, Personal Papers of Judith Meltz;

Tom kept directing the CSSP and fighting for the poor and disabled until he died of complications from lung cancer in 1999. He was survived by his spouse and longtime collaborator Cheryl. She left the CSSP a year later and moved with their daughter to start anew in the Bay Area, grateful to have known Tom and to have experienced “his loveable side up close.”¹⁴¹ Frank and Judith took over the CSSP. Harold was the first person they called for help. Harold obliged, of course, and remained active on the CSSP board until he died a decade later. Partners and friends in life and death, to this day portraits of Tom and Harold hang, side by side, in the entranceway lobby of the CSSP headquarters in downtown DC.¹⁴²

David E. Rosenbaum, “Tom Joe, 64, Policy Maker on Poverty,” *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1999, B11.

¹⁴¹ Email communication with the author, Jan. 24, 2024.

¹⁴² Interview with Judith Meltzer and Frank Farrow, Oct. 30, 2014; interview with Cheryl Rogers, Nov. 14, 2014; <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/harold-richman-founder-chapin-hall-1937-2009>.