THE DEPENDENT CHILD IN MISSISSIPPI;
A SOCIAL HISTORY, 1900-1972

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INTRODUCTION

The future welfare policy of the United States provides an enormous challenge for those who direct the nation's affairs. No other single issue seems to involve so completely the past failures of America's economic, political, and social system. Before further endless discussions on where the nation is heading in the field of public welfare policy, it is necessary to explore where we have been. Why has the United States developed its principal public assistance program around the idea that society is responsible for aid to children whose families cannot provide adequate care and supervision? How have poverty and racism affected the delivery of aid to the dependent population? The effort to aid dependent children, the most important element in our welfare system provides the most useful area of historical inquiry in the study of welfare. Our society has recognized its responsibility to care for the dependent child since the colonial era, creating a long historical record of child welfare at the local, state, and federal levels. Child welfare has also attracted continuing interest from private groups whose activities reflect society's concerns. Several volumes would be required to identify all of the currents and cross-currents which affect the delivery of services
to dependent children in the United States. This study concentrates on child welfare activities in Mississippi. Such an approach will illuminate the influences shaping America's dependent children programs. Moreover, a state study is important because welfare policy in America has traditionally been a responsibility of state and local, rather than federal, government.

Any state presents special problems in analysis; none are typical. If one wishes to evaluate the effects of poverty and racism on the response of a society to the needs of dependent children, Mississippi offers an excellent field for inquiry. In that state such characteristics as race and poverty and their effect on child welfare policies are readily apparent. During the twentieth century Mississippi was the poorest state, the most rural state, the state with the highest proportion of its population black— invariably one must employ the superlative degree. Yet, despite its uniqueness, the state has participated in the national debate on child welfare and has been subjected to the child welfare programs of the federal government. A massive economic transformation since World War II has brought Mississippi into the mainstream of American life in terms of income, education, and industrial jobs.

Over time, any society constructs a complex response to perceived community problems. During the twentieth century in Mississippi, the response to the needs of
dependent children ballooned from a minimum effort on behalf of only a few to a multifaceted effort reaching a large number of children. In the course of that expansion, certain children were selected for aid, others were specifically rejected, while some were simply overlooked. An understanding of selection processes is essential in order to comprehend the community's developing response to the needs of the dependent child.

A social filter has been at work in Mississippi which selected the dependent child who deserved society's attention. That filter permitted only limited aid to the most destitute children in 1900, but as the century progressed, state authorities redefined the characteristics which determined the definition of dependent child so that more children passed through. The characteristic most often redefined was poverty—as the state became more affluent, it adjusted its definition of poverty upward in economic terms. When confronted with a national definition of poverty in the 1930s and the 1960s, however, Mississippi lacked the resources in the former case and the will in the latter to apply the national definition of dependency. Race has been the most restrictive factor in the social filter of Mississippi. For half a century a dependent child who deserved the support of organized society was white by definition. On the one hand private efforts stemming from humanitarian impulses have been a factor in opening the social filter; on the other hand, the imposition of private
morality has been one of the most influential forces in limiting the definition of dependent children. Although private groups have had an important influence on the social filter, the government has held the primary responsibility for defining which children should receive aid. The role of government in that decision making process has increased over the course of the century. The locus of responsibility has shifted since 1900 from local government to a state-federal partnership. Although the process should not be thought of as a simple progression up the units of the American federal system, the trend has been in that direction.

Scholarly work on child welfare in modern America has tended to focus on the federal level because the Social Security Act produced an extensive national child welfare system. The fact is that the Social Security Act programs for children have been operated under broad federal guidelines which gave the essential policy making power to the states which have constructed programs of great diversity. While national studies may provide some useful generalizations, if one wishes to understand the development of child welfare in modern America, the state is the most useful level of inquiry.
CHAPTER I

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY LEGACY OF LOCAL AND PRIVATE
CONTROL: CHILD WELFARE IN MISSISSIPPI 1900-1932

Most child welfare work in Mississippi has been con-
ducted since the Great Depression; but, the people of the
state had developed a program of child welfare years before
the 1930s. The pre-Depression approach to the problem of
the dependent child stressed private aid and local govern-
ment response. Aid and protection was granted principally
to children who had some prospect of achieving the status
of a socially accepted and contributing member of society--
that is white, healthy, and legitimate. The introduction
of national programs during the Depression and the decades
that followed submerged the pre-Depression child welfare
policy. For many Mississippians, however, the pre-
Depression approach—which was a policy designed largely
by local tradition and concerns—has never fully lost its at-
traction.

During the nineteenth century Mississippi dealt with
the problem of dependent children through a series of leg-
islative acts placing principal responsibility for the care
of dependent children on local government. In 1807 the
territorial legislature required the overseer of the poor
in each county to count the number of orphans and children whose parents were unable to provide support and to report such findings to the county court. The court had the authority to bind out these children to masters under a complicated set of state requirements. The master had to provide the apprentice with food, clothing, washing facilities, and proper lodging arrangements. The master also had to teach the apprentice an occupation, and allow him or her to learn to read, write, and cipher as far as the rule of three. Boys remained apprenticed until eighteen, girls until sixteen—at the expiration of which, the boy received a suit of clothes, the girl a new dress. In the case of abuse, an apprentice had the right to appeal to the court for release from the master; if the appeal was successful the court could bind the child to a new master.¹

This territorial statute formed the basis of state policy toward dependent children throughout most of the nineteenth century.² In 1871 the legislature amended the law to require parental consent before a child could be apprenticed unless a parent had been neglectful, abusive, or immoral.³ In 1890 the legislature transferred the power to apprentice a child from the county court to the elected county board of supervisors.⁴ In 1906 the state solons made it unlawful for county supervisors to place a healthy child under ten years old in the county poorhouse.⁵ The supervisors were given the power in 1916 to place orphans,
dependents, and convicts' children in orphan homes. The superintendent of the home became the master of such children and therefore filed a report with the county board of supervisors concerning their welfare.\(^6\)

Although apprenticeship was the principal means of dealing with dependent children during the nineteenth century, the state approved some alternatives. In 1880 Mississippi legally sanctioned adoption in a statute which remained the basic state law on this matter until 1955. Under the statute, the circuit courts (the state's basic criminal tribunals), or the chancery courts (the basic civil judicial system), had the authority to change the name of a child, legitimate a birth or grant legal adoption. Adoption required permission of a parent or guardian as well as the consent of the child if beyond the age of fourteen. Since the petitioner stated the terms of adoption, one could adopt a child with the condition that he would be unable to inherit from his adoptive parents. The law required neither an investigation into the desirability of the adoption nor evidence of acceptability on the part of the adoptive parents. Once the adoption was completed the court exercised no jurisdiction or review power over the child. The child received one protection: the right to know the circumstances of his adoption. The law required that the entire proceedings must be publicly heard and maintained as part of the public record.\(^7\)
In 1892 the legislature sought to deal with the problem of children born out of wedlock by establishing a legal procedure through which the mother could seek support of the father. The mother of an illegitimate child—the statute used the term bastard—could file a complaint with a justice of the peace who would call upon the accused father to defend himself before a circuit court. The court, if it found the man culpable, could place a lien on his property in order to secure support for the child. When a court decided that the man was legally responsible it might also collect a one thousand dollar bond or send the offender to jail for six months. If the child became a public charge, the board of supervisors could institute proceedings against the father on behalf of the county.\(^8\) Such coerced support was seldom sought or ordered with the result that the illegitimate child usually remained legally fatherless and could inherit property only from his mother and her family. The legitimacy of a child born out of wedlock rested on the father's willingness to marry the child's mother or his agreement to obtain legitimacy for the child before the chancery court.\(^9\)

In 1900 Mississippi dealt with dependent children most frequently by apprenticeship or through the adoption or bastardy statutes. An additional means of support for dependent children was available in the form of outdoor relief since the county board of supervisors had the legal
authority to take an application from a pauper and grant limited emergency relief. State law provided for an informal mechanism of relief under which the pauper applied to a supervisor who then presented the case to the full board at a regular meeting.\textsuperscript{10} County boards authorized this form of general poor relief infrequently during the first decades of the century. When granted, aid was given on a limited scale to alleviate emergency situations.\textsuperscript{11} Most counties met their obligations to care for dependents by providing institutional care in an almshouse. Poorhouse relief became an acceptable practice in Mississippi during the 1820s at the time when the institutions first emerged as a major factor in the care of the poor throughout the United States. Adams, Claiborne, Jefferson, and Wilkinson counties operated poorhouses in 1820 when the state first gave statutory recognition to this new approach to the problem of the poor.\textsuperscript{12} These early almshouses were operated under a five-man board, the trustees of the poor, which employed a county overseer of the poor.\textsuperscript{13} In 1880 the state legislature placed the poorhouses under the control of the county board of supervisors which determined admission policies and operating procedures.\textsuperscript{14} Generally, local government required the pauper to enter the poorhouse before granting relief and in 1821 the state required those entering the poorhouse to surrender their property to the county.\textsuperscript{15} Nineteenth century Mississippi poor law assured that anyone entering the poorhouse had exhausted all legal means
to obtain support from personal and government sources. The county could compel fathers, grandfathers, mothers, and grandmothers to provide support for a dependent child. Similarly, descendents of the poor, aged, or blind could be held legally responsible for the care of destitute parents or grandparents.\textsuperscript{16} The state legislature added brothers and sisters as responsible relatives in 1906.\textsuperscript{17} Any private citizen as well as governmental units could recover expenses incurred in caring for a pauper from legally responsible relatives. The county could force payment of eight dollars a month from a relative to support a pauper under county care in 1900 and ten dollars a month under the law of 1930.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1900 Mississippi's poorhouses cared for hundreds of people many of whom were very young, very old, or mentally or physically handicapped. In 1880 the legislature sanctioned sending the mentally ill to the local poorhouse since the state's mental hospital, founded in 1855, was overcrowded.\textsuperscript{19} Conditions in poorhouses were so crowded that the legislature in 1906 prohibited retaining a healthy child ten years or younger at those institutions.\textsuperscript{20} During the early part of the twentieth century, about two thirds of Mississippi's counties maintained institutions for the poor.\textsuperscript{21} Nathaniel Bond, a graduate student at Tulane University, who toured a number of these facilities in 1922 described them as repulsive places which sought to maintain people on seven to twenty-two dollars a month.\textsuperscript{22}
Most poorhouses operated under a contract system in which the county leased buildings, grounds, and labor of inhabitants to a private businessman who attempted to operate the institution for a profit. Many counties which lacked almshouses sent paupers to county convict farms. A 1925-1926 study of the American poor farm found Mississippi's poorhouses were underfinanced, understaffed, and generally neglected. Mississippi provided the lowest per capita support for its poorhouses in the nation.\textsuperscript{23} The study described the Oktibbeha county facility as so inadequate that, "paupers won't stay; none there now; the two inmates were married last year, with consent of officials and left."\textsuperscript{24} Descriptions in the report provide a disturbing picture:

**Attala County:** one four room one-story building; two colored women in one room; colored man in each of the other rooms; one two-room cottage occupied by old white man; in other room an insane white woman and her four year old daughter, whose father was an inmate; among the inmates are insane, feeble-minded and blind. Food insufficient; no recreation; no music; no nurses; men and women mingle freely; sleep in adjoining rooms; no bath room, no running water, outdoor privy used by both sexes, well, no sewerage; unhealthy.\textsuperscript{25}

**Clarke County:** Food bad and insufficient; clothing poor and insufficient; . . . one pregnant inmate with her ten year old boy; . . . a colored inmate died a few days before the visit; the slats on his filthy bed were exposed through the hole worn in the mattress.\textsuperscript{26}

**Noxubee County:** No recreation; no segregation of sexes; feeble-minded or diseased; illegitimate child born to inmate; no running water; outdoor privies; cistern which goes dry; no sewerage.\textsuperscript{27}
Rankin County: The county supervisors make a change of superintendents each year, so as to give each supervisor a chance to name his own favorite supporter in the election.28

Yazoo County: A mess of human offal, and a few intelligent old folk are kept at this filthy place. There are a number who are violently insane and kept in cells; there are epileptics, paralytics, feeble-minded; the management is poor, the inmates neglected in their filthy rooms. The place is horrible—not a redeeming thing about it.29

Mississippi's poorhouses, the most meagerly financed almshouses in the nation during the 1920s, remained poorly supported during the 1930s. In 1934 Mississippi's poorhouses operated on three plans: some under contract to a private individual; others by a superintendent employed by the county; and a few as combination penal and poor farms.30 An observer in 1932 described an almshouse administered under the contract system as consisting of "six two-room, one-story cottages, three . . . occupied by thirteen whites, three by thirteen colored and one blind white."31 This almshouse contained a woman and her two feeble-minded children, a severely disturbed black deaf-mute woman who lived alone, and an old black man who had been maintained at the county's expense at the almshouse since 1880. Inmates received two meals a day in winter and on Sunday sugar for their coffee. The superintendent obtained twelve dollars a head each month; the money he saved from that amount was his salary.32

In the early 1930s almshouses managed by a superintendent who was a county employee became more popular.
A report from one county indicates the administrative set-up this system introduced:

Until 1923 the county boarded out its paupers for $25 per month--now a superintendent is paid $75, his wife who is his assistant receives $25 per month. They receive $10 per inmate for which to provide for 20 inmates ranging in age from 26 to 107--four of whom are blind, three paralyzed, and four feeble-minded.33

An observer in 1932 described the third type of almshouse which combined the poorhouse with the penal farm:

It contained three, two-room cottages occupied by nine aged defectives. Four old blacks live in one room, one blind partially paralyzed, one totally paralyzed, one scarcely able to move from rheumatism, one is club footed. Two paralyzed whites are in a second cottage. Of the institution's three women, one is feeble-minded, deaf, and dumb and has been a resident for 30 years. The attendants are the guards of the penal farm.34

This institution was unique in that it contained no children; most poorhouses did, despite the state law which attempted to prevent the admission of children. Many accounts of poorhouses point out the presence of children as well as noting that it was not uncommon for children to be born in such institutions especially to retarded or mentally-ill inmates. A 1934 report of a Mississippi poorhouse noted that the facility contained:

One feeble-minded white girl, thirteen years of age; the illegitimate child of a woman who has been in the county home since she, herself, was eleven years old; a white boy of five and his mother who are there because of poverty.35

This poor farm grew $3,471.85 in crops in 1934. Since expenses for twenty-three inmates were only $1,657.72 the county turned a handsome profit!36
Mississippi began the twentieth century with a system of relief for the dependent population concentrated at the local level. The system's effectiveness was limited since local officials undertook to care for the needy, whether adults or children, only under the most extreme circumstances. When relief was granted, it was limited to bare subsistence. Mississippi's approach to relief, however, was fully within the nineteenth century American tradition of poor relief. The state's poor laws were comparable with those of Alabama, its territorial sister state.\footnote{37}

The response of government to the needs of dependent children was not the only community effort in their behalf. The private sector also played an important role in meeting the needs of unfortunate children. The state legislature in 1818 chartered a private Natchez institution for the relief and care of orphan children and poor widows.\footnote{38} From that year forward, the citizens of Natchez, the city which dominated the cultural and political life of the state during its territorial and early statehood years, supported an orphan home for white children. In 1850, the Orphan Asylum moved to quarters which could accommodate fifty children. The Natchez Protestant Home, as it was later called, served both sexes and drew most of its children from the dependents of Adams county.\footnote{39}

Natchez's large Catholic community—a result of the city's Spanish and French heritage—established its own orphanage in 1847 under the auspices of the Bishop of
Natchez. The original Catholic child-caring effort was directly attached to the new cathedral. Then in 1848 the Catholic Diocese of Natchez established St. Mary's Orphanage for girls in a separate building and in 1854 incorporated the institution under the laws of Mississippi as an orphanage for white girls. An orphanage for boys was made possible in 1858 when D'Evereux Hall, one of the state's most famous estates, was bequeathed to the Church. The widow of William St. John Elliot, the plantation owner and benefactor of the project, wished to retain the mansion and purchased the home from the Church for $27,000. With those funds the Diocese of Natchez founded an orphanage for boys in 1858 and named the new home D'Evereux. The orphanages of Natchez provided the only institutional care for dependent children in pre-Civil War Mississippi.

Although the War Between the States, which devastated large areas of the state, created enormous needs for efforts on behalf of dependent children, mid-nineteenth century Mississippians made little progress in providing institutional care for children. Only the state's Baptists confronted the problem, founding, before the war's end, an institution for war orphans at Lauderdale Springs, a small community near Meridian. After fourteen years of existence a tornado destroyed the institution on the evening of November 27, 1878. The Baptists did not enter the child-caring field again until 1894 when they established the Mississippi Baptist Orphanage in Jackson.
A yellow fever epidemic forced removal of the home from its first location during its initial year but the Baptist Orphanage survived as an institution for the support, education, and industrial training of destitute orphans of white parentage.\textsuperscript{43} By the turn of the century the Jackson orphanage, the first founded by Southern Baptists, was the largest child-caring facility in the state.

Methodists founded the Methodist Orphans' Home in Water Valley in 1897. Before it burned on July 11, 1904, the home accommodated about fifty children of both sexes.\textsuperscript{44} The fire forced a reevaluation of the orphanage's site so that a new facility was built in Jackson and the children were transferred to the capital city in 1906.\textsuperscript{45} The Methodist home expanded rapidly, accommodating one hundred children at the turn of the century, giving it approximately the same capacity as the Baptist facility. The state's remaining large Protestant denomination, the Presbyterians, also established a child-caring facility in the 1890s, the Palmer Orphanage in Columbus. The Presbyterian Synod of Mississippi and Louisiana incorporated the institution in 1898 as a home for destitute white, normal, legitimate children.\textsuperscript{46} By the early twentieth century the orphanages of the three major Protestant denominations in the state cared for more than four hundred children.

In 1900 Mississippi had six orphanages: three were the products of the Protestant and Catholic communities of Natchez; the others had been constructed in Jackson
or Columbus by Protestant groups. In 1908 the Masons, who were important contributors to the Natchez Protestant Home, opened a coeducational institution for orphans of Masons in Meridian. Later, in 1921, the Masons constructed a new, separate facility at Columbus for male orphans.\textsuperscript{47} By 1922 the two Masonic homes cared for more than one hundred children with emphasis on vocational training. The program provided elementary schooling for youngsters supplemented with work experience. Each Mason in the state contributed one dollar per year to the facilities plus one dollar for each degree obtained. As a result of solid financial support, the Columbus and Meridian Masonic homes boasted the finest physical plants of the state's child-caring organizations.\textsuperscript{48}

In 1910 superintendents of the Baptist and Presbyterian orphanages, at a meeting of the National Children's Home Society, pointed out the great need for adoption services in Mississippi. With the aid of the National Children's Home Society, a group of the state's prominent citizens headed by Governor Earl Brewer founded the Mississippi Children's Home Society. In 1912 the state Society opened offices in Meridian but transferred its operations to Jackson in the following year.\textsuperscript{49} The Mississippi Children's Home Society won membership and support from the National Children's Home Society and the Child Welfare League of America. The Society was the state's first professional adoption agency and from its
founding it remained Mississippi's chief adoption agency. It worked closely with the state's orphanages and received enthusiastic support from the Jackson community. 50

Another specialized service, the care of unwed mothers and their children, came to Mississippi in 1912. The King's Daughters Home, established by the International Order of King's Daughters and Sons in Natchez, served unwed, white mothers of previous good reputation. 51 The home received state funds during the 1920s and until the 1950s remained the chief custodial institution in the state's program for unwed mothers. 52

The twenty year period 1892-1912 witnessed a significant increase in services to dependent children in Mississippi. In 1892 only apprenticeship or the poorhouse awaited dependent children relying on public support. Mississippi's two child-caring facilities were both located in and served primarily Adams county and its chief city Natchez. During the next two decades, the state's major religious denominations and its most influential fraternal order established major orphanages to serve the state, and the Mississippi Children's Home Society and the King's Daughters Home filled major unmet needs of homeless and dependent children. Thus by 1912 a dual system was in operation: on the one hand, county governments furnished an elementary level of support in local institutions or through apprenticeship and, on the other hand, private groups controlled and administered state-wide programs for the
care of dependent children.

Although voluntary agencies offered needed services to dependent children of the state, they also reflected the prejudices and goals of private groups by excluding many types of children from their services. The religious groups did not overtly discriminate on the basis of religion, but their orphanages were frankly intended to meet the needs of their own religious groups. These orphanages refused admission to handicapped and mentally deficient children.\textsuperscript{53} The Mississippi Children's Home Society also rejected handicapped children.\textsuperscript{54} An exception to this general trend was the King's Daughters Home which accepted mentally ill pregnant women.\textsuperscript{55} Most of the orphanages declined to accept illegitimate children.\textsuperscript{56} On one disqualifying characteristic there were no exceptions: private institutions were for whites only. The private sector did not provide a child-caring facility for black dependents during the early twentieth century. Although blacks accounted for a majority of Mississippi's population and although poverty, the factor that often produces dependency, was undeniably acute in the black community, no private group stepped forward to serve the needs of the black dependent child.\textsuperscript{57}

The policies pursued by the private agencies resulted in a system of services to selected dependent children at the state level. Black children, handicapped children, and often children whose parents conducted lives at
variance with acceptable community norms were inadequately served or refused aid altogether. At the local level the counties assumed the ultimate responsibility for the destitute, but their efforts inadequately met the need.

The early years of the century were a period of unpleasant discoveries for those interested in child welfare in Mississippi. The long tradition of local responsibility plus the development of private agencies seemed to indicate that the state was making progress in meeting the needs of the dependent population and dependent children in particular. But, two events in the early part of the century graphically demonstrated the low quality of care for the children of Mississippi. In 1918 the State Board of Health requested the United States Children's Bureau to evaluate the need for a state child welfare program. The survey focused on a north Mississippi hill district. The report revealed that in this area only forty percent of prospective mothers saw a doctor at some point during pregnancy; midwives delivered sixty percent of the children. Many mothers refused to accept the Children's Bureau pamphlets because they could not read and did not have access to anyone who could read.\(^{58}\) Appalling as the facts were, the conditions in the Children's Bureau survey area were better than in most of the state. The county used by the Children's Bureau had an urban center of more than 4,500 population, which was atypical of Mississippi in 1918, and the Bureau's sample included only thirty-three percent blacks while the county and the state population was fifty-five percent
black. The Children's Bureau maintained that Mississippi's infant mortality rate exceeded the national averages and that basic health and child-caring techniques were primitive. The county under consideration had a number of doctors, but their small fees were simply beyond the means of a large portion of the population. One white farmer's wife told an interviewer, "If I had a doctor, then when winter came there would be nothing for clothes. Poor families can't have such things as doctors."  

The 1918 Children's Bureau child welfare study indicated the need for a state effort to deal with the lack of child-caring information and services available in Mississippi. Another demonstration of the poor health facilities and practices in the state proved to be even more influential in provoking state action than the Children's Bureau study. The draft examined 65,000 Mississippi men for induction into the military during World War I. Of that number, the armed services rejected 468 of each 1,000, with more than thirty percent of the total examined rejected as physically unfit. That statistic moved the director of the State Board of Health to comment:

In the past this has been a life wasting state, and until recent years little effort was made to prevent disease, and curative medicine was practiced with little thought of preventing disease.

In 1920, in order to bring preventative medicine to Mississippi's children, the State Board of Health established a bureau of child welfare to oversee the health
interests of the state's children from the unborn through school age. The state legislature appropriated $40,000 for the Board of Health's Bureau of Child Welfare; $10,000 for organizational work in 1920, and $30,000 to support the initial program year, 1921.⁶³

The State Board of Health undertook the project with the expectation of widespread community support. The disturbing statistics of men rejected for the military, compiled at the county level, had an impact on local leaders. Moreover, the women's suffrage movement in Mississippi had contended that problems of children would receive increased attention from an electorate expanded to include women. The Board of Health therefore expected the newly enfranchised women to be the greatest ally of the Mississippi Bureau of Child Welfare.⁶⁴

The director of the Board of Health was extremely optimistic about the new bureau, writing in 1921:

We are at the dawn of a new era and the state legislature and the Board of Health are entirely unwilling that Mississippi should meekly follow the trail blazed by other states, but prefer themselves to show the way.⁶⁵

Indeed, the establishment of the first county child welfare unit, even before funds became officially available, in 1921 spurred further optimism. Lowndes county founded a unit to distribute child health information in December 1920.⁶⁶ Meanwhile the State Board of Health adopted an innovative program to reach the child population of the state.
In 1921 Mississippi was overwhelmingly rural; roads were often impassable during the rainy winter months, and the people lived on isolated farms and in small towns. In order to reach these people, the Board of Health purchased a Ford roadster and had it outfitted with the latest Delco lighting equipment and a motion picture machine. The traveling roadster, showing a number of child health films and several comedies, played to crowds in excess of three hundred in rural counties where such gatherings were uncom-mon for any event short of a major revival meeting. Undoubtedly, many rural Mississippians saw their first moving picture along with a film providing basic instruction in health and sanitation.

In 1921, because of the small state appropriation, the Board of Health limited its child welfare program to a state-wide health survey of school children. The Board collected extensive data which demonstrated the poor conditions of state school facilities. It also found that as many as one third of the children attending school (a minority of the state's school-age children) were underweight. The Board's child welfare program received a major boost in 1922 when the state legislature approved Mississippi's participation in the Sheppard-Towner* grant program approved by

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*Sheppard-Towner Act: The Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921 was a program of grants to the states. The guidelines emphasized efforts in rural areas to reduce infant and maternal mortality and to protect the health of infants and mothers. Critics called it socialized medicine and charged it gave too much federal control over lives of children. The first federal program for direct aid to children, it was discontinued in 1929.
the Congress on November 23, 1921. With federal assistance after 1922 and with the aid of funds provided by the State Board of Development, an organization of the state Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Health expanded its program to children despite rather limited and erratic support from the state legislature.

The basic children's program of the Board of Health centered around the schools. Nurses or physicians examined all pupils and recorded health data for each child on the school records. By special arrangement with the county health department or through a local child welfare committee, the Board staged meetings in both black and white schools in most counties at which competent medical personnel examined infants and preschoolers. Parents received lectures on proper health procedures. At child health clinics and at school examinations, personnel of the Board of Health offered advice, distributed literature, and consistently pushed for local support of a hot lunch program in the schools and for the adoption of a milk drinking habit among underweight children.

The Board perceived poor nutrition as the cause of underweight children. During the first few years of the child welfare program, an inspection of 2,950 school children in Bolivar county demonstrated that 1,514 were underweight. A similar examination in Yalobusha county found 876 of 2,874 children suffering from the same condition. To counter this deficiency, the Board of Health set up
growth classes which measured and weighed underweight children on a regular basis to determine progress, and both the child and his parents received nutrition education. Teaching simple rules of nutrition was a major goal of the state's program, and those involved took every opportunity—school examinations, growth classes, baby clinics, even displays at county fairs—to demonstrate that many of the health problems of the state's children resulted from the poor nutritional habits which stemmed from ignorance bred by poverty. From the summer of 1921 through the summer of 1923, the State Board of Health examined 43,000 school children and spread its children's programs into every corner of the state.

The Department of Health made a major effort to bring some basic training to the midwives of the state. In 1912 the legislature required the registration of midwives. In 1920 the American Red Cross helped the State Board of Health set up a Division of Public Health Nursing, and the establishment of the Child Welfare Bureau in the same year provided added impetus to the effort to bring state control and training to midwives. Sheppard-Towner funds which entered Mississippi in 1922 primarily supported the midwife program. After only two years of an expanded program to reach the midwives, seventy-three percent of the state's doctors reached by a Health Department survey reported they found significant improvement in the cleanliness of midwives. The program required licensing and
registration of midwives. It also instructed midwives on basic medical practice of prenatal and delivery care, particularly hygiene techniques. Most midwives were black and apparently distrusted white state officials. To counteract such suspicions, the Board created a system of midwife clubs to disseminate information to the midwives in an informal social setting. In these clubs, state personnel consistently stressed cleanliness, the necessity of calling a doctor in unusual cases, and the need for midwives to record births and deaths so that the state could acquire reliable infant and maternal statistics. During the 1920s, the midwife program expanded to every county in the state, but the basic goal of the program—eliminating "the granny"—was not reached during the decade. Although over one thousand grannies failed to meet the registration requirements, in 1929 three thousand midwives continued to practice in Mississippi, with the places of the proscribed taken by new midwives willing to comply with state rules. In 1929 midwives delivered eight percent of the white children, eighty percent of the blacks, and forty-five percent of all children born in Mississippi that year.

The midwives' co-operation proved invaluable in collecting data on births and deaths which provided a base for the first genuinely reliable statistics on child welfare in the state. In 1920 the State Board of Health
reported that eighty of each one thousand children born in Mississippi died before their first birthday. In 1932 the figure was slightly more than fifty-three per one thousand births. The decline was all the more striking since many other states were unable to demonstrate significant reductions in infant death rates with programs funded by Sheppard-Towner grants. Federal aid under the Sheppard-Towner Act constituted the most important financial support for Mississippi's child welfare activities in the 1920s. The federal funds quite simply saved the lives of thousands of children in the state. When in 1929 the Sheppard-Towner Act expired, federal grants dried up. As a result, Mississippi faced the Great Depression with its major financial source for child welfare activities eliminated. The Depression's economic impact plus the loss of federal assistance set back the fight against infant mortality in Mississippi during the 1930s. The state did not significantly improve its 1932 rate until the 1940s.

In the last years of the Sheppard-Towner grants and before the economic collapse of the 1930s restricted state funds, Mississippi inaugurated several new child welfare activities. In 1927 and 1928, the state set up a Children's Health Camp to provide summer recreation to underprivileged, physically underdeveloped children. At camp, the children received good health practices and
several weeks of outdoor activities. During the camp project's pilot stage, it served forty-one children in 1927 and sixty-one in 1928. Although the program showed such promise that the state legislature agreed to set aside a special appropriation to fund it, the withdrawal of federal matching moneys brought an end to the project in 1929.83

The state sent a large delegation to the White House Conference of 1930*; the Children's Charter**adopted by the Conference provided an excellent framework for child welfare discussions held throughout the state. A series of meetings held in Mississippi in June 1931 acquainted state leaders with the national meeting's recommendations and especially its Charter. Fifty-four counties sent delegates to these follow-up meetings and seventy-eight state, local, and private agencies sent representatives to learn what was being done about child welfare in Mississippi and

*White House Conference: The meetings in Washington were gatherings of officials from throughout the nation interested in child welfare. Conducted under presidential sponsorship, the first meeting occurred in 1909 and subsequent conferences met in 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950 and 1960, and 1970. The White House Conferences have focused attention on major problems in child welfare and given central direction to child welfare in America.

**Children's Charter: The 1930 White House Conference adopted the Children's Charter. It spelled out the specific goals of child welfare in the United States and asserted that American children have a right to decent health care and a proper home environment. The Charter's importance lies in its insistence that children have a right to a decent home.
what could be done to achieve the goals of the Children's Charter. In 1930 the Board of Health guided the state's first participation in Child Health Day with the aid of many private groups drawn into the program for the welfare of children by the activities of the State Board of Health. In a state where so many problems for children stemmed from a lack of health knowledge, the Child Health Day activities provided a major opportunity for basic community education. State and local authorities organized pageants and parades in twenty-six towns in 1930 and in sixty-four localities in 1931. The Board of Health urged ministers to preach a sermon on child health, called upon merchants to provide window displays, and distributed literature through local child health conferences and midwife clubs. In addition, the Board of Health designated an immunization program for each year--diphtheria in 1931 for example. The State Board, which lacked funds after 1929 for increases in specific programs, concentrated on the public education aspects of child welfare. The May Day activities provided the focal point for that educational effort. The White House Conference of 1930 with its Children's Charter provided a framework for action and the goals for achievement. The Board of Health attempted within its limited resources to relate the needs and goals of child welfare to the people of Mississippi.

During the 1920s the State Board of Health dealt with many basic problems of dependent children indirectly
through a program designed to deal with the problems of all children. Similarly, a 1916 attempt by the state legislature to address the problem of delinquency produced a state law and a state institution which dealt indirectly with dependent children in the course of treating juvenile delinquency. In 1916 the Mississippi Industrial and Training School Act authorized construction of a reformatory for delinquent children in Columbia, a small town in the southern part of the state. The law also created an elementary separate court system for youthful offenders by authorizing informal hearings for children eighteen years of age and under and prohibiting jail terms and penitentiary sentences for children under sixteen. Although frequently amended during the 1920s the law remained confused and contradictory. The statute did not serve as a useful youth court act because it did not require all youthful offenders to be tried under its provisions. In practice, most juveniles were tried under the ordinary criminal law. Many juveniles, however, were brought before chancellors who, under the Industrial and Training School Act, had sweeping authority to commit them to the Training School for indefinite sentences. The Training School accepted children declared incorrigible, immoral, or delinquent by order of the judge of a circuit or chancellery court. Therefore children often arrived at the Columbia institution with no explanation of their offenses except that they had been sentenced to an indefinite term
because of a matter involving "immorality." The 1916 act creating the Mississippi Industrial and Training School stated that the institution was to be a custodial institution "for the care, education, and training of destitute, abandoned, or delinquent children." The school opened on August 21, 1918, and quickly became both a juvenile reformatory for youthful lawbreakers and a custodial home for dependent children whose only crime was being poor, abandoned, or without means of support. In 1939 one fourth of the Training School's more than four hundred residents were dependent rather than delinquent children. Many remained at the institution until they reached the mandatory release age of eighteen.

Throughout the 1920s the institution, which admitted whites only, received meager funding from the state. In 1933 it operated on less than sixty-seven cents a day per capita. A major portion of its support derived from produce of the six-hundred acre farm developed over the years by the labor of the children. The following provides some indication of the institution's admission policies:

Boys and Girls Committed to the Mississippi Industrial and Training School from October 1, 1931, to September 30, 1932.

Alleged Cause of Commitment:

- Incorrigible: 39
- Delinquent: 9
- Dependent, Abandoned: 6
- Criminal Environment: 2
- Petit Larceny: 8
- Murder or Manslaughter: 3
- Immorality: 7
While at any one time during the early 1930s, the Training School housed three to four hundred white children, the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman held from one hundred fifty to two hundred mostly black inmates aged twenty or younger. The State Penitentiary was located on 19,800 acres of delta plantation land. Through intensive cultivation, the institution produced a huge cotton crop which provided such a substantial income that in 1931, for example, the facility required very little state support to maintain its inmates at a daily rate of about thirteen cents per person. The Training School was hardly a model juvenile reform institution for white inmates, but it was certainly a much more appropriate facility than the State Penitentiary to which the courts assigned black youngsters.

The Mississippi Industrial and Training School Act marked the beginning of state responsibility for the care of delinquent and dependent children. Before 1916 the state's only contribution to the care of dependent children had been support for the Natchez Protestant Home; with the 1916 law Mississippi for the first time accepted responsibility for the care of dependent children at state expense in a state administered institution. The law creating the Training School and the institution itself combined concepts of delinquency and dependency with the result that dependency could, and did, lead to a childhood of reformatory confinement for some white dependents. The state ignored the problem of black dependents. Black children
found guilty of misconduct had no alternative to the ordinary adult penal system.

The state also made tentative efforts toward protecting working children during the first years of the twentieth century. In 1906 Governor James K. Vardaman proposed that the state regulate the working conditions of children. In 1908 the state legislature adopted Mississippi's first child labor statute which prohibited the employment of children under twelve in mills and factories. The statute provided for a ten hour day, a forty-eight hour week, and prohibited work between the hours of 7 P.M. and 6 A.M. The act also prohibited children under sixteen from operating dangerous machinery.  

Although the legislature revised Mississippi's child labor statute several times before the Great Depression, the statute only protected the several thousand children working in mills and factories. A 1924 revision of the 1908 law reduced the legal working day to eight hours. The 1924 law, which with minor changes remains the child labor statute in Mississippi, also took an important step backward because it imposed a lower minimum age for employment than revisions of the 1908 statute made in 1912 and 1914. The legislature rejected the national child labor amendment in the 1920s.

The late 1920s produced one important expansion of the state's ability to aid children when in 1928 the legislature adopted the Mississippi "Mother's" Aid Law (also referred to as the Mississippi Children's Aid law). Missouri
had pioneered such legislation in 1911 and by 1934 forty-five states had widow's pension laws providing basic support grants to children of deceased fathers. Mississippi's Mother's Aid law authorized assistance to any dependent or needy child under sixteen. The law contained no exclusion of illegitimate children and no restrictions on property or available resources other than the requirement that the child be needy. The state did not assume financial responsibility for the Mother's Aid law. Funds were appropriated by the county, the traditional source of aid to the dependent population. The law was permissive rather than obligatory, allowing the counties to appropriate up to $25,000 for dispersal to needy children. Aid was granted to a needy child under the law if a legal guardian made an application for assistance, if the child had a proper home, and if there were no relatives legally bound to support the child, and if all efforts had been exhausted to compel support from legally obligated parties. If a child met those qualifications and the county board of supervisors appropriated funds, the judge of the chancery court could grant a mother's aid pension to a child resident in Mississippi for one year. The judge could inquire into property and other resources available for child support, but the law contained no legal restriction on resource totals. The judge determined the amount of the grant.  

The counties did not widely adopt the Mother's Aid law. As an indication of the state's approach to direct
aid to children, however, the Children's Aid Law of 1928 was important since the method of administration, the extent of funding, and the determination of recipient qualifications were all established by the state and reflected the Mississippi tradition and experience with child welfare. In June 1931 only thirty-four grants were in effect in Mississippi with an average monthly payment of $11.11. Of those thirty-four grants, thirty were to children of deceased fathers; two were to convicts' children; one to a child deserted by the father; and one to an illegitimate child. All of the children receiving aid were white.

In summary, Mississippi's pre-Depression child welfare system saw the state government creating a legal framework for apprenticeship, adoption, and the status of illegitimate children. The state permitted the county government to carry out the practical details of apprenticeship, and prohibited, although it did not undertake enforcement measures, the assignment of children to county poor farms. The state offered limited protection to children in employment, and authorized, but did not fund, county mother's aid pensions. The state built, administered, and poorly supported a custodial institution for dependent children, the Mississippi Industrial and Training School, where concepts of delinquency and dependency overlapped. The State Board of Health established a children's program to deal with the most basic level of
child welfare, infant mortality, and that agency did pioneer work in behalf of the state's children. Most of the Board of Health's funds for its important campaign against infant mortality came from federal sources and when federal contributions ended in 1929 the program became a burden upon the state's limited treasury. After the Sheppard-Towner Act expired the federal government's contribution to child welfare in Mississippi was principally in the form of influence and direction emanating from the United States Children's Bureau and the White House Conference of 1930.

The essential responsibility for child welfare in pre-Depression Mississippi resided with the counties, and specifically, with the county board of supervisors. The county governments arranged for apprenticeship or assignment to an orphanage; they controlled almshouses, granted emergency outdoor relief, and on rare occasions provided a mother's aid pension. County governments worked closely with the private agencies whose orphanages provided the major custodial care of dependent children in the state.

Mississippi's system of child welfare failed to provide for black children. The legal code confined illegitimate children to second class citizenship and government and private agencies frowned upon aid to illegitimates. Handicapped children were served very inadequately; they were rejected by private agencies, insufficiently provided for by state institutions and on occasion left to spend
lives in almshouses. The state sent some destitute children, who were normal and white but failed to qualify for any county or private aid, to the Training School for treatment as delinquents. All in all, Mississippi's pre-Depression child welfare system was designed to help those children who could eventually help themselves. The social filter operated to aid those children who might with help become members of the dominant element in society; namely: the white, the healthy, the offspring of morally upright parents.

Pre-Depression child welfare in Mississippi was dominated by the attitudes and the policies of local governments and private agencies since those two groups carried the burden of responsibility during the 1900-1932 period. They aided dependent children on the assumption that society had some responsibility to aid the deserving needy—and both drew exacting definitions of deserving. However, during the same period the Board of Health developed an entirely different approach to child welfare. The Board of Health's program centered on the simple axiom that all children have a right to live, a right to a decent chance at survival. The idea that society has a responsibility to insure the survival of a child through the initial stages of life was an important step forward in child welfare in Mississippi.
NOTES - CHAPTER I

1Mississippi, Statutes of the Mississippi Territory, (1807), c. 1.


3Mississippi, General Laws of 1871, c. 24.

4Mississippi, General Laws of 1890, c. 12.

5Mississippi, General Laws of 1916, c. 227.

6Ibid.

7Mississippi, General Laws of 1880, c. 12.

8Mississippi, General Laws of 1892, c. 15.


11Mississippi, Code of 1930, c. 144.

12Public Welfare Administration in Mississippi, p. 7.

13Mississippi, Revised Code of 1824, c. 91.

14Mississippi, Revised Code of 1880, c. 29.

15Mississippi, Revised Code of 1906, c. 35.

16Mississippi, Revised Code of 1824, c. 4.

17Mississippi, Revised Code of 1906, c. 35.

18Mississippi, Code of 1930, c. 123.
19 Mississippi, Revised Code of 1880, c. 29.

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22 Bond, p. 41.


24 Ibid, p. 56.

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Public Welfare Administration in Mississippi, pp. 44-45.

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32 Ibid.

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43 Clarion Ledger, December 12, 1965, 3.


46 Bond, p. 19.

47 Private Child Caring Institutions and Agencies in Mississippi, p. 10.

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51 "The King's Daughters Home" (unsigned, undated pamphlet, Mississippi Department of Archives and History), subject file "King's Daughters Home."

53 Reviews of intake policies of the private institutions are available in: Bond, pp. 19-28; Public Welfare Administration in Mississippi, pp. 61-65; Private Child Caring Institutions and Agencies in Mississippi, 3-64; Mississippi Committee on Children and Youth, Mississippi Report on Services to Children and Youth 1940-1950; the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth, (Jackson: Mississippi Committee on Children and Youth, 1949), pp. 64-65; Mississippi Report on Services and Opportunities Offered Children and Youth; 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth, pp. 58-59.

54 Private Child Caring Institutions and Agencies in Mississippi, p. 34.

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60 Ibid, p. 33.

61 Mississippi, State Board of Health, Biennial Report of the State Board of Health for the Period July 1, 1921-June 30, 1923, p. 163.
Mississippi, State Board of Health, Biennial Report of the State Board of Health for the Period July 1, 1919-June 30, 1921, p. 178.

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Ibid, p. 198.


Biennial Report of the State Board of Health 1919-1921, pp. 158, 166.


79 Ibid.


81 Mississippi, State Board of Health, Biennial Report of the State Board of Health for the Period July 1, 1931-June 30, 1933, p. 52.

82 Mississippi, State Board of Health, Biennial Report of the State Board of Health for the Period July 1, 1939-June 30, 1941, p. 51.


85 Ibid, p. 312.

86 Felix J. Underwood, (memo of Director State Board of Health, Mississippi State Board of Health Library, 1936), subject file "May Day Activities."


88 Ibid.


94 A typical example is July 1, 1933-June 30, 1934, when 166 of 941 prisoners were age fifteen to twenty while six inmates were less than fifteen. Mississippi, State Board of Trustees Mississippi State Penitentiary, Biennial Report of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi State Penitentiary for the Period July 1, 1933-June 30, 1935, p. 50.

95 Mississippi, State Board of Trustees Mississippi State Penitentiary, Biennial Report of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi State Penitentiary for the Period July 1, 1931-1933, p. 9.


97 Mississippi, Revised Code of 1972, c. 43.

98 Duncan U. Fletcher, "The Child Labor Amendment; Remarks in the Senate of the United States, April 23, 1934 (pamphlet, Mississippi Department of Archives and History), subject file "Mississippi child labor."


101 Ibid, p. 27.
CHAPTER II

THE RESPONSE TO THE GREAT DEPRESSION: CHILD WELFARE IN MISSISSIPPI DURING THE 1930s

The early twentieth century system of child welfare in Mississippi developed out of more than a century of experience. That accumulated experience sanctioned the belief that local units of democracy could alleviate best the problems of the poor, the unfortunate, and the dependent. Events of the early 1930s called into serious question those lessons drawn from past experience since the system of aid to dependents based upon local responsibility collapsed under the Great Depression. The old system was abandoned reluctantly when local efforts proved inadequate to meet the crisis of the 1930s.

The economic decline, which began adversely affecting the nation in November 1929, arrived late in Mississippi. The industrial slowdown had little impact on a state in which 83% of the population depended on agriculture for its livelihood. Initially the underindustrialized nature of the state's economy coupled with low agricultural prices, which had prevailed since the end of World War I, made the news of a depression seem little more than another Yankee exaggeration. Then, in 1931, cotton prices plummeted even
from the low levels of the 1920s. By 1932, the state was part of the most widespread economic depression in living memory. Historians have estimated that one fourth of the state's farmland fell under the auctioneer's gavel in the early 1930s, often at a price of 25¢ an acre. This was less than it brought when sold under the title of the Mississippi Territory more than a century before. Theodore Bilbo remarked that some of his people were beginning to talk about becoming communist. He noted that if things did not improve he could forsee himself becoming "a bit pink." 

Through the spring of 1932, Mississippi responded to the developing crisis by relying upon the time tested formula of local care for the dependent and poor. But, as the economic situation deteriorated, it became evident that general relief programs offered by county governments were deficient in resources, manpower, and organization. In the summer of 1932, Governor Martin S. Conner selected a State Advisory Relief Committee composed of twenty-five prominent citizens. On August 17, 1932, the Governor sent a questionnaire designed to determine the capacity and demand of local relief to all members of boards of supervisors and municipal authorities in cities whose population exceeded five thousand. Local officials indicated in their responses that they were unable to fulfill the role of the basic relief agency of society.
In late August, armed with the questionnaire responses, Governor Conner journeyed to Washington to appeal for federal aid for the destitute. In Washington Governor Conner received a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation of almost $900,000; if the state failed to repay the loan, it would forfeit a like amount of its federal highway allowance. Critics of the Governor's action quickly pointed out that the RFC loan set a significant precedent by replacing the century of practice with local responsibility and control of relief for a new concept of state responsibility augmented by federal aid.

Having obtained funds, the Governor hurried to create an organization to deliver relief to the needy before the normal winter agricultural layoffs increased unemployment. The RFC placed the money under the Governor's complete control, a situation which Conner regarded as politically disastrous since it potentially subjected him to charges of political favoritism. To provide an administrative agency, the Governor selected a nine person board from among the members of the State Advisory Relief Committee. The board was a distinguished group of Mississsippians. Among its members were Willard F. Bond, the State Superintendent of Education who had obtained the designation "the father of public education in Mississippi." Felix J. Underwood, the Director of the Board of Health, was a similar pioneer figure in the field of public health; and Ellen S. Woodward, whose background included service on the State Planning
Board, eventually became one of the U.S. Social Security Commissioners. The Governor chose Aubrey Williams of the American Public Welfare Association to be the director of the Board of Welfare's relief effort. In November and December 1932 Williams set up a functioning organization and then left to pursue a career in Washington that eventually led to the directorship of the National Youth Administration.

The Board of Welfare initially sought to make the old system of local relief function under state co-ordination. Distribution of relief by the Board of Welfare proceeded through the board of supervisors in each county or the municipal authorities in larger towns. Chancellery clerks acting for the supervisors and city clerks acting under instructions of city authorities distributed funds under the Mississippi poor statutes. Under this arrangement, local authorities simply expanded general relief and mother's aid. Nonetheless, the fact that the effort now had state direction did not alter the reality that local officials lacked the administrative ability to process the rapid growth of applicants. With 75,000 Mississippians receiving aid by 1932, the antiquated, make-shift system soon collapsed. Consequently, in 1933 the Governor began to appoint relief workers for each county charged with overseeing the state program at the local level. Thus the county welfare agent emerged of necessity from the acute crisis of 1932. Even with the arrival of the welfare agent, however, local
control remained since the agent requisitioned funds from the board of supervisors.\textsuperscript{14} Such local control continued to prove too time-consuming and cumbersome to meet demand in many counties, where supervisors delegated total responsibility to the county welfare worker who dealt directly with state officials. By early 1933 the trend toward state directed relief efforts, administered through local agents responsible to the state, was clearly established.\textsuperscript{15}

The State Board of Welfare, created in November 1932 by Governor Conner to administer the RFC loan, in May 1933 became the directoral body of the Mississippi FERA. Under the Mississippi Emergency Relief Administration control of the relief remained with state officials who conducted the effort under federal policy guidelines. The new agency was not bound by the old poor relief statutes which dictated local control of relief; thus, local autonomy in poor relief was formally discarded with the arrival of MERA. Nevertheless, the realities of the relief problem had forced an end to local control as a matter of practical administration in most counties several months before.\textsuperscript{16}

Federal loans under RFC ended with the arrival of MERA which drew its support from federal grants matched by state and local funds. In cases of extraordinary need, however, the federal government agreed to relieve state and local governments of matching responsibility. In 1933 Harry Hopkins assured state officials that Mississippi could obtain FERA funds without state matching.\textsuperscript{17} In the
initial year, November 1932 to November 1933, relief spending under RFC and MERA amounted to $6.2 million. Despite Mississippi's massive, federally sponsored, relief effort, MERA social workers in 1934 pointed out that the state contained thousands of unassisted needy.

In the spring of 1934 federal alphabet agencies abounded in Mississippi. CWA and PWA were functioning in the spring of 1934, and both worked in close co-operation with MERA which was the most heavily funded and organizationally widespread relief agency. The large input of federal dollars went totally unmatched by state funds. Through 1935 the state did not appropriate one penny to attract federal money. The state's only appropriation for relief aid was $6,000 toward rent for MERA offices in Jackson, and the Governor wrung that amount from the legislature only after repeated messages. MERA officials and the Governor took great pains to point out that the state was in no manner obligated to repay most of the funds. Repeatedly the Governor assured the legislature that the largest part of the funds were going for work relief--not handouts! The legislature remained oblivious to appeals for state funding of poor relief.

Despite the legislature's refusal to participate financially, the state received a wide range of social programs which attempted to prop up the faltering economic system. In addition to the agencies already cited, AAA, FSA, and NYA made significant contributions to the
dependent population of the state. All of the programs contributed to the needy in some fashion, but in the 1930s the most important agency in the state was MERA. That organization provided the basic structure from which, in 1936, the State Department of Public Welfare emerged.

MERA's plan of relief greatly expanded the Board of Welfare's program which had simply distributed general relief and mother's aid under the old poor relief statutes. In 1933 MERA distributed 1.3 million pounds of salt pork, 33,000 bushels of sweet potatoes, and 33,000 gallons of syrup to needy families. The potatoes and syrup were purchased in Mississippi so that the distribution program also served to support the price of those two commodities. The MERA's distribution of foodstuffs constituted an important step toward a program of supplementing family diets. Although a small-scale effort, the basic concept of government purchasing surplus foodstuffs as a means of alleviating food shortages and of supporting the price level of overproduced products bred a host of food programs during the next few decades. The first food program was significant in another feature: it was a general relief program which reached the poor requiring only demonstrated need. It was the first large-scale distribution of state-directed relief services to the destitute based on need alone.

In its first year of service, MERA expanded beyond the old poor relief statutes to provide sewing rooms for
unemployed women responsible for dependent children. MER
assigned thousands of women to work as county health offi-
cers and as aides to boards of supervisors, city author-
ities, and public libraries. In the summer of 1934 MER
operated 16 state and 200 local programs for more than 5,000
women who were among the 77,000 Mississippians on relief. Many of the agency's women's programs aided children. For
instance, its women completed an indexing of birth records
for the state archives which, besides being valuable to
future researchers and statistics gatherers, aided in iden-
tifying the areas where doctors and midwives failed to
record births. MER moved into several fields which the
Board of Health had pioneered during the years of Sheppard-
Towner funds. It conducted immunization programs to reduce
the toll among children from smallpox, diphtheria, and
typhoid fever. Hygiene classes conducted across the state
at both black and white schools stressed cleanliness while
caring for very young children. The home canning program
allowed women to use their homespun skills to aid both them-
selves and the community, especially its children. During
the summer of 1934, MER women produced 1.5 million jars
and cans of food for relief families and for use in the
school lunch program which went into operation with the
autumn term. MER provided funds to local school districts
to build lunch room facilities, approving 56 such projects
in 1934.
MERA also publicized the extent of need among its relief clients. In the autumn of 1934 the agency reported that a survey of its clients found 11,684 children not attending school because they lacked adequate clothing. Apparently shoes were not considered part of a necessary wardrobe for a school child since more than 30,000 of the children had no shoes; nor did most of these people feel that it was necessary for their children to have a change of clothes to attend school because 33,000 children had only one set of clothing. The same report indicated that relief families needed about 45,000 mattresses to provide a decent place to sleep and in excess of 78,000 quilts to prevent suffering during the winter. MERA offices reported that they had 39 reported cases of death due to malnutrition since the agency began work.26

MERA reached many of the state's needy through providing funds to state agencies. The State Department of Education received MERA funds to provide teachers for illiterates, to supply lunch supervisors, and to set up recreational programs in the school and community. The MERA-SDE recreation program provided puppet shows for children, community nights and square dancing for young adults. The program even introduced soccer to Mississippi. The Department of Agriculture received MERA assistance in its home demonstration program while the Board of Health received valuable clerical help and some additional personnel in local health clinics.27
Although MERA found the existing state agencies valuable allies in confronting the Depression, MERA carried out most of its work through its own organization which experienced phenomenal growth during the first year and one half. The organization which Aubrey Williams hastily threw together in November and December 1932 grew by June 1934 into a bureaucratic agency employing about 3,000 workers. At that time, the MERA had eight district social workers who administered 99 county and city units. Each contained a welfare worker and home visitors.28 This welfare bureaucracy lacked trained professionals, and many employees were welfare recipients. In addition, political appointments were common. MERA welfare workers responding to a 1934 questionnaire ranked political meddling as the most serious problem facing the agency.29 Despite the agency's problems, MERA funneled millions of dollars to the needy of the state, and the cost of administration was low enough to receive the praise of federal and state officials.30

By October 1935, the federal government had poured $35 million in relief for the destitute and unemployed into Mississippi through MERA. In addition the organization distributed $3.4 million in commodities and received $2.4 million in federal funds to augment teachers' salaries.31 The massive influx of federal dollars remained unmatched by state funds. Governor Conner made glowing reports of MERA activity to the legislature to spur the lawmakers
into providing at least token aid. The Governor did not request large legislative appropriation for relief since he shared the lawmakers' belief that the state could not afford an extensive effort. The Governor did contend, however, that the lawmakers could approve $1 million for MERA as a sign of good faith and appreciation for the federal effort.32

Despite the lack of state participation, federal money continued to flow into the state, especially into MERA, but on January 1, 1935, the Governor received instructions from Washington which directed that all unemployables be dropped from the MERA rolls.33 The assumption in Washington was that the state would be forced to aid MERA or assume responsibility for the destitute and dependent with its own resources. FERA informed the Governor that the cutoff of federal funds for direct relief would remain in effect until the state appropriated $1.5 million to aid unemployables.34 The legislature was not in session and according to its biennial calendar would not reconvene until 1936. Moreover, many legislators had already expressed opposition to any co-operation with the federal relief effort because they felt it was no longer needed.35

On February 1, 1935, MERA dropped thousands from the relief rolls. Suddenly, it was October 1932 all over again--local governments operating under the old poor relief statutes found themselves besieged.36 The Governor surveyed local units of government and found that there
was a widespread demand for some action to restore federal funds—even if it required state participation. Governor Conner, in commenting on the episode later, reported with a note of satisfaction that many of those same individuals who had contended that there was no longer any need for large scale relief urged him to go immediately to Washington to seek restoration of federal funds. The Governor went to the capital and quickly reached agreement for an end to the federal cutoff. He promised federal officials to call the legislature into a special session to appropriate $1.5 million for relief of unemployables. The agreement, however, was never implemented, because FERA informed the Governor that all federal aid to unemployables would end on November 1, 1935. FERA was closing nationwide. Federal policy in the summer of 1935 slowly shifted the burden of relief for unemployables from FERA to the Social Security Act, which was passed in August. As the Governor pointed out to the legislature, whether one liked the Social Security Act or not, the only alternative to accepting it was a return to the situation in February when the brief cutoff of aid resulted in a veritable storm of protest from local officials.

For Governor Conner, the Social Security Act was a bitter alternative to the once bountiful federal assistance, and it came at the very moment when the short federal cutoff had finally persuaded the conservative legislature to commit the state's limited resources to
the relief effort. In the special session of October and November, the Governor urged the legislature to accept the Social Security Act provisions for Old Age Assistance and Aid to Dependent Children. Since the Act required a permanent state agency to administer its provisions, Conner asked the lawmakers to create a Mississippi department of public welfare. The Governor indicated that the state should accept the Act with few illusions. It was not an effort to bring about a solution to the nation's economic problems; it was simply a relief measure to shore up a national economic system that suffered greatly from the maldistribution of wealth. Conner was disturbed because the legislation called upon the poor agricultural states to contribute proportionally as much as the wealthy industrial states. He told the legislature:

Only the federal government can levy taxes upon wealth without regard to its geographical location, and distribute the benefits without regard to state lines. Many states will be unable to match fully the federal appropriations, and those in greatest need will receive the least assistance from the government. Moreover, perhaps the major cause of the present economic disorder and great human suffering in America is the concentration of wealth of the nation to an extent that is inconsistent with American ideals, and threatens the happiness, economic well-being and political security of the American people. If this problem is to be settled by orderly governmental processes, it must be through the courageous, intelligent, and patriotic use of the taxing power of the national government. A worthy, practical, and beneficial way the taxing power may be used for wealth decentralization is for the national government to tax wealth and apply the proceeds to the support of a Social Security program, including old age benefits,
maternal and child welfare, assistance to the
blind and other physically handicapped persons,
and other worthy purposes.44

The Governor neither spelled out what sort of program
would have pleased him, nor provided detailed objections
to the Act. His position at the time necessitated keeping
objections to a minimum to persuade the legislature to ac-
cept the Act's major sections. What the Governor objected
to was the complete shift in relief policy which the Social
Security Act represented to the state of Mississippi. Since
early 1933, the federal relief program had sent millions
of dollars into the state without requiring Mississippi to
make any monetary contributions. Mississippi had received
aid based on easily demonstratable need. In effect, the
more fortunate sections of the United States were accept-
ing the social responsibility of providing a decent stan-
dard of life for Mississippians, a policy that would lead
to a much more equitable distribution of national wealth.
Had the Social Security Act been a courageous tax on the
nation's wealth, which Conner wanted, it would have marked,
not a departure from past practice, but the continuation
of the policy which Mississippi had enjoyed since 1933.
In addition, the Social Security Act's state matching re-
quirements threw a great burden back upon the poor states
with little regard for need and available resources.

Willard F. Bond, the Superintendent of Education and
an astute judge of the state's financial and political
realities, estimated that it would take $30 a month to all the needy in the state to approximate the level of relief that had been granted by federal programs during the 1933-1936 period. To accomplish that under the Social Security Act would require an $8 million tax per year in Mississippi. He adjudged such a tax to be a political and economic impossibility. Based on the state's small resources, he contended the tax would spread poverty more than reduce it. The democratization of poverty was neither a solution to the problem nor an available alternative in a state in which the legislature jealously guarded property rights.

The six months following the opening of the special session of the state legislature on October 1, 1935, must have been bewildering for a relief recipient seeking the proper agency for aid. The situation was complicated by a number of facts: since FERA was being phased out MERA would lose its funding in January 1936, and its ability to function as a relief agency would be compromised seriously during the winter months as the agency disbanded. As FERA in Mississippi slowly ground to an end, the Works Progress Administration began to function on a state-wide basis. It provided work relief, but was not empowered to grant direct relief. At the state level, the special session considered which parts of the Social Security Act to implement while complaining about the cost of the program. Creation of a state agency to administer the Act provided a special problem inasmuch as elections in 1935 had
produced a new governor and legislature who would assume office in January. Those new officials would certainly wish to control the political appointments that followed the creation of a new state department.\textsuperscript{47} To avoid the possibility of the new legislature's reorganization of an agency created by a lame duck assembly, the special session created a temporary body to handle welfare measures until the January assembly could bring final form to the new department. MERA would lose its funds for unemployables on November 1, 1935; it would cease to exist on January 1, 1936. To complicate affairs, the Social Security Act would not become operational until February 1, 1936.\textsuperscript{48}

During the summer of 1935 the changeover began. WPA accepted the temporary role of dispersing funds to MERA clients as that agency would up its activities. White clients were given preference in the transferal to WPA in order to protect them from the uncertainties of the fall and winter.\textsuperscript{49} The legislature created the State Emergency Relief Administration, and gave it an appropriation of $700,000 and the duty of dispensing funds through the county governments.\textsuperscript{50} SERA was to cushion the shock of MERA's demise, and was to undertake the preliminary work of drawing up plans to meet federal guidelines for participation in the Social Security Act.\textsuperscript{51} The new state relief agency opened offices in Jackson in December 1935 and began issuing checks for the aged, the blind, and dependent
children according to the lists of the MERA. The first checks, although issued in December, covered amounts due from the previous month. The county governments were again used as the dispersing agency for welfare in Mississippi as the welfare departments of MERA closed. The talent and experience of MERA workers were not discarded, however, since SERA drew many of its workers from the older agency. 52

The new legislature extended the life of the SERA through March 1936 when the newly created State Department of Public Welfare became operational with a budget of $1 million for the period April 1936 to July 1937. 53 The legislature authorized the new department to implement the OAA portion of the Social Security Act, but ADC was not acceptable to the lawmakers because the matching ratio for ADC was fifty cents federal money for each state dollar. The legislature chose to wait until the financial arrangement was more advantageous. 54 OAA was financially more equitable with a matching ratio of $1 federal to $1 state, and it was enormously popular in Mississippi as it was throughout the South. 55 ADC was less fiscally attractive; it did not have the political support of OAA, and it was the subject of serious constitutional objections in some courts. 56 In a situation in which priorities had to be assigned for limited state resources, OAA won legislative approval; ADC did not.
As the Welfare Department organized for action in 1936, it represented a remarkable departure in public policy over a brief span of time. Only four years before, the responsibility for the state's destitute was, by the traditions and experience of more than a century, a matter for local authorities. Indeed, for the destitute and dependent of Mississippi the most important long range result of the Depression years lies in the shift of locus of responsibility for aiding the needy from the local community with its limited resources, informal guidelines, and lack of specialized professional talent to the state and federal level at which resources were much more plentiful and the delivery system was organized with statewide guidelines administered by a bureaucracy of professional workers.

Local relief was given repeated opportunities to work: before November 1932, in the winter of 1932 under the Governor's Board of Welfare, and in February 1935 when MERA lost federal funding for unemployables. All of those trials demonstrated the inability of local officials and resources to meet the crisis. Moreover, it was the local authorities, themselves, who asserted most outspokenly the inability of local government to meet the state's welfare needs. In 1932 when local efforts failed, the state stepped in to direct the relief effort. The state, however, neither assumed the full financial burden
nor went beyond the policy position of the old poor relief statutes. In 1933 the federal government funded the relief effort and laid down the guidelines for the distribution of services and direct relief. Under the Social Security Act of 1935 the national government sketched the outlines of aid to dependents, but federal policy was so broad that the states could construct programs of great diversity both in terms of variety of services offered and levels of support. Such a general approach left control of welfare policy to the individual state. In Mississippi's case, the Social Security Act shifted a large measure of the responsibility for establishing public policy and for the funding of public welfare onto the state for the first time. The state reluctantly accepted its responsibility to control policy and contribute funds to public welfare.

The trials of the Depression years had relocated the source of responsibility for social welfare in Mississippi. The dependent child was no longer at the mercy of local government's limited resources. The state was now in charge of fulfilling that role. As first organized, however, the state's Welfare Department had neither the staff nor the official authorization to deal extensively with the problems of children. When SERA gave way to the Welfare Department, which was not authorized to spend funds for ADC, Mother's Aid temporarily returned to county control. In 1936 a special session of the legislature passed enabling legislation permitting the Welfare Department to
draw up plans for Mississippi's participation in Title V Part 3 of the Social Security Act to allow the state to take part in the child welfare grant program. The state, however, did not fund any child welfare activity.57

With its initial state funding of $1 million for the first fifteen months, the Welfare Department made an average OAA grant of $3.84 a month.58 In addition to administering OAA, the Welfare Department certified recipients and distributed the clothes produced by WPA sewing rooms and about $100,000 a year in surplus commodities.59 The Welfare Department was the selecting agent for the CCC which operated 42 camps (35 for whites and 7 for blacks) accommodating more than 6,000 young men in the year following May 1936.60

For its first fifteen months organizational problems consumed the new agency. With a small appropriation the Welfare Department was charged with building an extensive bureaucratic organization on the lines of and with many of the former personnel of the MERA. Inevitably the organization began in humble surroundings: in Adams county the Welfare Department opened in a large barn-type building with a staff of a county agent and a clerk-typist; the office records were neatly arranged and filed in a row of discarded applecrates.61 In Marion county the Welfare Department used a second floor jury room in the courthouse. Office equipment consisted of a cabinet which had bins for files and fastened with a lock and hasp. Few
improvements in office equipment were possible until 1941 when merchants, grateful for the adoption of the food stamp program, purchased three metal desks, a large table, eight chairs, and two filing cabinets, and the board of supervisors contributed a typewriter. Salaries were so low that only people who lived in the county seat could accept the job of welfare agent; and there being no travel allowance, travel was kept to a minimum.

Willard Bond was the first commissioner of the new state agency. He had been active in relief work since the summer of 1932 when the then State Superintendent of Education accepted a place on the Governor's Relief Advisory Committee. When selected as the State Superintendent of Education in 1916, he was the head of the Department of Latin and History at the Mississippi State Teacher's College (University of Southern Mississippi, 1974) at Hattiesburg. For the next twenty years Bond maintained a position as the leading advocate of public education in Mississippi. He guided the pro-education forces against a consistently conservative legislature and the state's often hostile press led by Colonel R. H. Henry, publisher of the Clarion Ledger. (The latter never became reconciled to the idea of what he called the rural free delivery of children to school; he thought they should walk.) Bond did not bring professional expertise in social work to his position at the Welfare Department; he brought the expertise of a long-time state bureaucrat who was accustomed
to fighting the necessary political battles in order to achieve programs of social justice for the state's children. Bond's presence did not guarantee instant success for the Welfare Department, but it did mean that the Department would receive a hearing in the legislature and throughout the state.

Unlike Governor Conner, who saw the Depression as the result of a basic flaw in the nation's economic system that produced poor states like Mississippi and wealthy states like New York, Bond viewed the Depression as a consequence of lax immigration laws, automation, the closing of the frontier, reckless exploitation of natural wealth, the backlash of World War I, and over-speculation. His critique of the crisis as arising out of particular conditions rather than a flaw in the basic economic system itself was much more suited to the spirit of the Social Security Act than Governor Conner's hypothesis. The shift in the responsibility for relief in Mississippi from MERA to the Social Security Act seems properly mirrored in the transfer of the administrative authority from Governor Conner to Willard Bond.

After 1936 the Social Security Act provided the basic outline for welfare policy in Mississippi. During the late 1930s the state carried out the Social Security Act without changing the basic state welfare laws which left substantial power over relief with local government. Mississippi had no state general assistance statute so that, if
the Social Security Act did not provide relief, a person's only alternative was to appeal to the board of supervisors under the pre-Depression statutes. Since the state implemented only the OAA provisions of the Social Security Act in 1936, the lack of a state general assistance law allowed the counties to play an important role in assistance to the needy, yet that role diminished as the state gradually adopted additional features of the Act. By 1939 the State had adopted the full Social Security Act program except for ADC. The Welfare Department assumed the administrative responsibility for aid to the needy aged, aid to the blind, and child welfare services. Unemployment compensation came under a separate state commission; the Board of Health administered maternal and child health services and public health programs; while the Department of Education controlled programs for crippled children and vocational rehabilitation.

Title V Part 3 of the Social Security Act enabled Mississippi to set up its first state organization dedicated to the welfare of children since the Board of Health's efforts twenty years earlier. In 1936 the legislature permitted the Welfare Department to draw up a plan of child welfare services to meet federal guidelines as set down by the Children's Bureau, but the legislature did not provide specific funding for the project. The Welfare Department developed a plan, using funds from the Children's Bureau which did not require Mississippi to provide a
matching amount. The legislature gave the newly organized Division of Child Welfare extensive powers and responsibilities, but continued to refuse any money. The division operated through special permission of the Children's Bureau or with funds matched by such Mississippi sources as the Red Cross.

In 1938 under House Bill 567, the Welfare Department's Division of Child Welfare attained authority to protect the children of Mississippi. The law authorized the Welfare Department to license child-caring agencies, institutions, boarding homes, and foster homes. It was to supervise the care of dependent and neglected children in any and all types of institutional care as well as supervise the interstate transportation of children. The legislature approved the plan drawn up with the aid of the Children's Bureau wherein the Welfare Department assumed the additional tasks of offering case work services to children; assisting in the development of local resources on behalf of children; extending and developing services in rural areas and in areas of special need; co-ordinating the work of all agencies or groups offering aid to children; making studies of homeless, dependent, and neglected children as well as those in danger of becoming delinquent; promoting mental health services for children, and providing the opportunity and guidelines for the development of a professional child welfare staff in Mississippi. Although the legislature was miserly in assigning funds,
it was generous in granting responsibility.

The initial duties delegated to the Division of Child Welfare represented a goal rather than an effective program since lack of both funds and trained personnel hampered progress. Child Welfare at a professional level was a new development in Mississippi. The state did not possess a single degree-granting program in social work and as a result qualified personnel were unavailable.\(^7\)

One of the most serious problems in child welfare programs, as well as other welfare programs in Mississippi, was a lack of trained professionals.

With limited resources, the Division of Child Welfare began with two field consultants in child welfare who set out to sell local governments on the ideal of a child welfare worker for each county. The program involved sending one of the consultants to meet with a county's board of supervisors, school officials, local judges, or other opinion makers to convince the local officials that the county needed a child welfare worker. Since there were no state funds to pay for such a worker, the county had to be convinced to pay for this service. In light of the long record of county frugality in welfare matters, the accomplishments of the Welfare Department in promoting children's workers were very positive. By 1939, seven counties had accepted child welfare workers and many more counties were awaiting only the training of adequate personnel.\(^7\)
The early child welfare workers had little resources of their own to offer; their primary function was to locate children in need and then attempt to find some local group, institution, or individual who would agree to lend a helping hand. They placed homeless, dependent, or neglected children with private institutions, helped unmarried mothers find maternity homes (which were most often out of state in New Orleans, Mobile, or Memphis since Mississippi had only one such facility), referred cases of neglect or delinquency to the courts, and located many physically and mentally handicapped children and pointed out their plight to the local community or public health officials. During the late 1930s the Welfare Department helped to co-ordinate child welfare work in Mississippi, but the funding came from such private groups as Children's Aid Committees, the Red Cross, the Mississippi Parent-Teacher's Association, the American Legion and its auxiliary, the Service Leagues, or from other state agencies such as county health departments, Crippled Children's Services, the Commission for the Blind, and the State School for the Blind and Deaf. 75

The most important work carried on by the Welfare Department for children was a series of child welfare studies. For the first time in Mississippi a state agency took a serious look at the extent of child welfare services in the state. A report issued in 1939 expressed surprise that provisions in the 1916 Industrial and Training School Act
had permitted many dependent children to be admitted to what was intended to be a juvenile correctional institution. The Welfare Department also discovered that many children below the age of twelve were being admitted to the reformatory. Since its founding, those who had administered the Training School had not attempted to disguise that it accepted very young children and that circumstances had resulted in the sentencing of dependent children to a reform school. For years the reports of the school to the Governor and legislature had included this information along with suggestions for remedies. The Division of Child Welfare of the Welfare Department now added its voice in the call for reform of the Training School. As a practical matter, the best the Welfare Department could do in 1939, however, was to place a child welfare worker at the institution.

The Division of Child Welfare reviewed the state laws regarding children and found that "most of Mississippi's laws for the care of children are very old and haven't changed since first enacted," and that, "most of these laws have an economic rather than a social base." The latter comment referred to the state's apprenticeship and poorhouse laws against which the Division of Child Welfare began a ten-year crusade. The Division found that the state had inadequate laws governing child placement which provided few protections for children or parents in the adoption procedure. In June 1939 there were 776
children housed in the nine private child caring institutions. All of the children were white since there was no agency in Mississippi for black children. 82 Despite the fact that 4,430 illegitimate births were recorded in 1938, no state or voluntary agency offered specialized services to illegitimate children. 83 As a result of the first full scale review of child care in Mississippi, the Welfare Department called for funding of foster home care so that the Training School option could be eliminated; the construction of facilities to house black delinquents, and a thorough updating of the state's child placing statutes which dated from 1880. 84

The Welfare Department attempted in its early years to do more than simply identify problems. One of the most important problems which the Welfare Department faced was what to do with families who had received aid to dependent children under former relief programs, now that the state had failed to adopt ADC under the Social Security Act. From 1933 throughout most of 1935 MERA had maintained a monthly case load of approximately 1,000 such cases, and when the SERA assumed its five month emergency role of providing transitional aid between MERA and the opening of the Welfare Department, it extended aid to dependent children to 1,288 families representing 3,800 children. 85 In 1936 when the Welfare Department came into being without ADC, SERA handed its ADC cases to WPA which found work relief for many. 86 By the summer of 1937,
WPA in Mississippi was handling more than 7,000 cases involving women in its highest priority ranking; many of those cases would have qualified for ADC under almost any sort of regulations. In the summer of 1937, WPA in Mississippi received a severe cutback with the result that the agency abandoned many sparsely settled rural areas as too expensive. The agency also cut back its rolls by eliminating people having a history of agricultural labor or domestic service because improved cotton prices in 1937 seemed to offer the promise of a greatly increased job supply on the farms and plantations. This policy fell particularly heavily on the black population who almost to a person had a history of farm and domestic labor. The Welfare Department found its county offices crowded with former WPA recipients who wanted some relief from the state for their dependent children. The local county welfare offices could offer no hope except the promise of commodities.

WPA's work relief projects provided at least indirect relief for dependent children in the state, as did CCC and NYA. The CCC continued to function throughout the late 1930s with an average of 33 camps in operation each month serving approximately 6,000 young men. The NYA provided work and job training for thousands of youth. In May 1935 one out of every five youths in the state between the ages of 16 and 25, more than 37,000 young
people, received some sort of state or federal relief. During the late 1930s, however, the availability of work relief for dependent children in Mississippi declined. By 1940 WPA, CCC, and NYA provided the only work relief available to Mississippi youth, and these programs served less than 10,000 young people. The contraction of relief resulted from the closing of relief agencies such as MERA, the reduction of funds for programs such as WPA, and the redirection of programs such as the change of emphasis in NYA in 1940 toward job training rather than work relief. The major reduction in programs for youth, however, occurred in April 1936 when the Mississippi Welfare Department discontinued ADC grants. Such grants did not serve the largest number of young people, but they did aid the most needy.

While the Welfare Department advanced slowly toward providing assistance and protection to Mississippi's children, the State Board of Health, which had long aided youth, emerged from the Depression with most of its children's programs intact. The Board of Health met with some success in maintaining its programs in the uncertain financial conditions of the early 1930s. After 1929 when Sheppard-Towner funds ended, the campaign to reduce the state's infant mortality rate relied upon the limited resources of the state. In 1936 the Social Security Act provided the means for an extended program of maternal and
infant care. Interestingly, the Board lowered its expectations in regard to the midwife program even after the transfusion of federal funds. The original goal of the program was to eliminate the granny, but a decade of experience with the realities of the medical facilities available in the state taught the directors of the program that this was not a realistic goal. Consequently program emphasis changed to training the midwife as the most appropriate allocation of resources.⁹³

Throughout the 1930s Mississippi continued to record the highest infant mortality rate in the nation, but the state made some progress on this problem.⁹⁴ High infant mortality was not characteristic of the state's white population whose 1935 rate was about the national average. This development stemmed largely from better medical care for whites at birth. Only 8% of whites had a midwife at birth compared with 85% of the blacks, and additional statistics such as doctor attendance at birth, prenatal attention, and hospital care were similarly skewed toward the white population.⁹⁵ Mississippi's extremely high infant mortality rates were based solidly on the black population, but here too, the raw statistics masked significant progress by state authorities. The black infant death rate in Mississippi was less than 50% more than the white rate, a more equitable relationship than that present in most states with significant black populations.⁹⁶ The high overall infant mortality rate did not
stem from the fact that the infant death rate among blacks was any more severe than in other southern states but rather from the size of the state's black population. About 60% of the children born in Mississippi during the 1930s were black; in fact, Mississippi was a close second to Georgia, a state with twice the population, in total number of live black births in the United States. Two factors indicated Mississippi's midwife program had had excellent results. Firstly, Mississippi achieved a rate of infant mortality in its black population comparable with other southern states despite the fact that it depended more heavily on the midwife than any other state. Secondly, its rate was even comparable to other southern states though it had the nation's highest percentage of rural population, a variable associated positively with a high infant mortality rate.

The Board of Health received the support of private groups in its drive to reduce the infant mortality rate, the most notable of which was the Mississippi Maternity Center Association which grew out of the May Day child welfare committee organization. The Association pressured the legislature for funds to correct the state's high infant mortality rate. The organization, made up mostly of women, concentrated upon the problem of infant mortality among whites. It had as its "great goal" a situation in which every pregnant white woman would receive the attention of a doctor. As soon as circumstances permitted, the
Association was prepared to lobby for legislation to make it a misdemeanor for a midwife to deliver a white child.¹⁹⁹ No similar group pushed for such legislation for blacks.

In addition to the midwife program, throughout the 1930s the Board of Health continued to sponsor May Day activities which promoted public education on child health matters.¹⁰⁰ The Board also began to see some significant results from its immunization program which had been an important segment of its May Day program since the 1920s. Doctors immunized thousands of children against diphtheria, the target disease of 1931. Cases of diphtheria in Mississippi declined from 2,329 in 1931 to 592 in 1935.

The Board of Health also managed to keep its program for child health clinics operating throughout most of the 1930s. The effort to give a basic physical examination to all school children was begun in the 1920s and supported by Sheppard-Towner funds; after 1929 the Board turned to the state for aid, and with the advent of the Depression, the Board established child health clinics through the financial co-operation of MERA. When that organization ran its course, the program lapsed until 1937 when the Board persuaded the WPA to fund the clinics.¹⁰² The Board's determined efforts to find financing for the program kept it operational and resulted in hundreds of referrals of medically deficient children to local public health authorities. By such successful
efforts at juggling sources of financial support, the Board of Health managed to keep its programs largely intact throughout the 1930s.

The Social Security Act provided important funding for projects of the Welfare Department and the Board of Health. It also authorized the state to undertake a crippled children's program. In March 1936 the legislature authorized Mississippi's participation in federal grants for services to crippled children and in April the Children's Bureau approved the state plan. The first state plan established a Crippled Children's Service in the Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the State Department of Education. When the legislature failed to appropriate money for the service, the Department of Education provided $5,000 so that the service could obtain federal matching funds to begin an operational program. During the summer of 1936 and again in the summer of 1937, polio epidemics swept through the state striking approximately 600 children. Although federal funds were available to fight the disease, the legislature refused to appropriate state matching funds. The Crippled Children's Service obtained about $3,000 from the Red Cross with which it gained a like amount of federal assistance.

The 1938 legislature appropriated $50,000 for the Service, and up to $100,000 in federal funds was available, but the polio epidemic had run its course after two and one half years. With funds finally available, the
Crippled Children's Service established permanent clinics in Jackson and Mobile where children whose parents could not pay for treatment received weekly attention. The service established a similar clinic in Memphis which began to operate shortly after the Jackson and Mobile centers, but funds were not adequate for the construction of an institution for residential care which was what the state needed. The organization of the clinics in cities in Alabama and Tennessee demonstrated an important problem which confronted those trying to establish social services in Mississippi: the overwhelmingly rural state lacked professional urban-oriented talent so that undertakings such as the Crippled Children's Service had to develop adequate personnel and construct new facilities simply to begin a program. The alternative was to spend funds in Memphis, Mobile, or New Orleans—an action that was unpopular with the legislature and that only further retarded the growth of needed talent within the state. In 1940 the state did not maintain a hospital, convalescent home, or special school for the care or treatment of crippled children. The Crippled Children's Service was the most extensive effort on behalf of needy crippled children in either the public or private sector.

New services for children authorized by the Social Security Act were as a rule poorly funded by the state; both child welfare and crippled children's services were authorized and then largely ignored by the legislature.
New services fared poorly during the 1930s at the hands of the legislature; so did state institutions. In its first reaction to the Depression, the legislature passed an act in 1932 which made it unlawful for any state institution to run a deficit, and it then provided only a 50% appropriation for such institutions as the State Penitentiary and the Training School.\textsuperscript{110} This approach to cutting costs resulted in severe austerity at state institutions. The State Penitentiary with its agricultural holdings became an even more intensively cultivated plantation, and it managed to meet the decree of no deficit.\textsuperscript{111} During the 1930s an average of 150 inmates at Parchman were 15 to 20 years old and the institution contained 20 to 30 inmates below 15 throughout the decade.\textsuperscript{112} Most white children who required institutionalization for crimes were sent to the Training School which remained the only state institution maintained expressly for dependent and delinquent children throughout the 1930s.

The Training School suffered badly under the constraints of the budgets of the 1930s. The legislature gave the institution little choice except to develop its available acreage through the labor of the children. By 1937, the inmates with the aid of 22 mules had converted a 90 acre farm into a 600 acre plantation.\textsuperscript{113} In 1939 the Superintendent of the institution reported to the Governor:
It is tragic to financially shackle an institution which has such great potentialities for serving youth. Proper repairs, equipment, and financial support mean the difference between a functioning efficient school and a mere keeping institution. Buildings and equipment do not need to be fine and expensive, but they do need to be sanitary, comfortable, and usable.\textsuperscript{114}

The Superintendent also noted that a dormitory constructed six years before had been unused since its completion because the legislature did not appropriate funds for furnishings; the dormitory now needed repairs before it could be used.\textsuperscript{115} Such appeals brought little relief; in 1940 the institution was given a new superintendent who proved to be far less complaining.\textsuperscript{116}

Lack of state support for children's programs and institutions retarded progress in the field of child welfare throughout the 1930s, but that decade was an important period in the history of the development of child welfare in Mississippi. In 1930 the local governments served as the basic relief mechanism in society in Mississippi with an assist from voluntary associations which provided institutional care at the state level. By 1935 that system of care for needy dependents, children as well as adults, had collapsed under the crush of the economic disaster. The federal government had stepped in to provide a wide range of services to children and the state authorities who were not yet ready to shoulder the burden for a large scale relief and social welfare plan were nevertheless convinced by the realities of the times that
local government could not once again assume its old familiar role as the sole repository of care for the dependent. For a brief time there were even those in the state who believed that the policies pursued by the federal government would end dependency in the state by a long range program of redistribution of national wealth, but that visionary goal was shattered by the Social Security Act.
NOTES: CHAPTER II


6 Ibid.

7 Works Projects Administration, Final Report of the Archives of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration of Mississippi, (Report, Mississippi Department of Archives and History), WPA file, p. 1.

8 Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Conner MSS, RG. 27, no. 681. Letter to the Legislature, November 1, 1935.

9 Ibid.


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29. Ibid; Emergency Relief Administration for Mississippi, Questionnaire Response of November 15, 1934 (Jackson: Mississippi State Planning Commission, 1934), p. 85.


34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

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54. Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Bond MSS, Bx. 1, folder 12, Weekly Newsletter of the Commissioner, December 31, 1938.


57. Report of the State Department of Public Welfare April 1, 1936-June 30, 1937, p. 3.

58. Ibid.


60. Ibid, p. 6.


62. Ibid, p. 5.


64. Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Bond MSS, Bx. 1, folder 12, "A Tribute to Dr. Willard F. Bond.


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Mississippi, State Board of Eleemosynary Institutions, Biennial Report of the Eleemosynary Institutions of the State of Mississippi for the Period July 1, 1931-June 30, 1933, p. 7.
111 Mississippi, State Board of Trustees Mississippi State Penitentiary, Biennial Report of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi State Penitentiary for the Period July 1, 1931-June 30, 1933, p. 1.


115 Ibid.

116 Mississippi, State Board of Eleemosynary Institutions, Biennial Report of the Eleemosynary Institutions of the State of Mississippi for the Period July 1, 1939-June 30, 1941, 85.
CHAPTER III

WORKING ON THE HOMEFRONT; CHILD WELFARE
IN MISSISSIPPI DURING WORLD WAR II

The Depression decade brought a wide range of social services for children into Mississippi, and as the decade came to an end the state was directly involved in promoting child welfare programs. In 1938 the legislature assigned sweeping authorization to the Welfare Department to protect and promote the welfare of Mississippi's children, but as constituted in 1938, the Welfare Department was not a proper instrument to exercise such authority. One of the most important aspects in the development of child welfare in Mississippi during the 1940s was the emergence of the Welfare Department as a major force within the state. During the early 1940s the Welfare Department grew in size, influence, and activities so that at the end of the decade its power to protect and promote child welfare was significantly enhanced.

The Welfare Department demonstrated its value to the state during World War II when wartime activities greatly expanded its assigned functions. In 1941 the agency accepted the responsibility of conducting investigations into the validity of deferment status claims at the request of
Selective Service which later used the Welfare Department to conduct mental examinations for inductees. The Welfare Department conducted thousands of such investigations and examinations and also was involved in programs to provide services to war impacted areas while it worked closely with the civil defense authorities.\(^1\) During the early war years, the agency administered the food commodity and food stamp programs and served as certifying agent for NYA, CCC, and WPA. The Welfare Department explained veteran's benefits to former service personnel. The Department performed all these duties plus administering the programs of Old Age Assistance, Aid to the Blind, and after 1940, Aid to Dependent Children.\(^2\) By 1943 the state agency created in 1936 to administer the Old Age provisions of the Social Security Act had experienced a rapid growth in assigned functions. Along with the growth in its number of programs came increased appropriations. The Department's state appropriation doubled for each biennium from 1936 to 1944 while the federal input increased even more rapidly. The Welfare Department also grew in relative size because its only large rivals in the field of social welfare, NYA and WPA, disbanded in 1943.\(^3\)

Aid to Dependent Children represented the singly most important aspect of the Welfare Department's increased ability to aid the state's children. Mississippi began its program of ADC in March 1941. It was designed to provide aid to children who had been denied parental support
and were therefore in danger of losing the benefit of growing up in the home of their parent or parents. Preservation of home life was at the core of the program as had been the case with its precursor, the state Mother's Aid laws. During its first four months of operation in Mississippi, March-June 1941, the program served a total of 4,319 children of whom 3,292 were living with their mother; 527 lived with both parents one or both of whom were disabled. In the case of 51% of the children the father was dead while only 1.1% of the children were illegitimate. The program reached approximately 1,000 families and 2,500 children each month and the recipients were 83.6% white. The recipients of the program did not differ markedly from those who received aid under Mississippi's Mother's Aid statute as administered by the counties in 1931.

Since the program had the potential to become costly if the state actually tried to meet the needs of all those who qualified, the legislature placed the maximum amount per child per grant at $10 for the first child and $7.50 for each additional child per month. The Welfare Department computed the actual amount of a grant from an official budget which included the estimated cost of necessities for a family according to the number of family members. The grant was then computed as the difference between the budget and the family's income, but regardless of the difference between the budget and income, the family received only the maximum. The difference between the
budget and income was the need, a computed total never met by the ADC program in Mississippi. The state paid only a percent of need: in 1943 60%, in 1949 86%, in 1951 30%.\textsuperscript{8} The Welfare Department controlled cost in several ways: putting an absolute limit on the total expenditure for the program; setting maximums per child or per grant; raising or lowering the estimated cost of the items on the standard budget; or of course, changing the qualifying rules. These were only a few of the means available to control the program's output and the nature of the recipient population. The federal government provided funds on a matching basis that gradually liberalized over the years from 50% in 1941 to more than 80% in the 1960s. The basic rules, however, were left to the state; thus, Mississippi constructed and manipulated ADC to reflect its own concerns and priorities.\textsuperscript{9}

During the war years the Welfare Department was concerned about the cost of the program so that it designed policies to keep the number of recipients within acceptable limits. In December 1941, 2,529 families received ADC payments for 6,556 children; in June 1945, 2,837 families representing 7,293 children were on the ADC rolls.\textsuperscript{10} Growth in terms of total number of recipients and amount of the grants varied only slightly from late 1941 through the summer of 1945. The total number of recipients remained practically stationary; only on three occasions during the forty-one months between December 1941 and June
1945 did the number of families change more than 2%—and
there were as many negative monthly changes as positive.
In December 1941, the state paid $20.29 per family and
$7.83 per child to the average family on ADC. In June 1944
those statistics stood at $20.92 and $8.26, but in July
1944 the average grant rose to $25.59 representing $10.11
for each child. In June 1945 those levels were almost
unchanged: the average grant was $25.91; the rate per child
was $10.00. The increase in the size of the grants re-
lected the fact that the 1944 legislature changed the
maximum grant figures from $10 for the first child and
$7.50 for all additional children to $15 for the first
child; $10 for the second, and $5 for additional children.

Program cost responded immediately to the increase
in the maximum because the state paid the maximum grant
to approximately 95% of its recipients. During the early
1940s, the state paid only 50 to 60% of need; thus, any
addition to the maximum was immediately reflected in the
payment levels. Welfare Department policies held ADC
in Mississippi at a static level throughout the first half
of the decade. The Welfare Department had only a lump
sum appropriation from the legislature and thus could not
allow the program to seek its own level. Actually, the
demand for ADC varied widely during the early 1940s, a
fact obscured by the statistics of payment. By 1943 demand
decreased noticeably as the war brought increased payrolls
to the state. During 1944 and 1945, many families left
ADC because they began receiving allotment and dependency grants from servicemen and because of wartime demand for submarginal labor. Because the state never paid ADC to all qualified applicants, the places of families who dropped out were taken by those on the waiting list and as a result actual program costs remained fairly constant.

Mississippi's ADC program was inadequate by its own standards; it did not pay need based on the standard budget which was a minimum figure at best. For example, the allowance for food in 1943 was $11.31 a month per person. Comparison with other parts of the United States in level of ADC payments placed Mississippi in the very lowest group of states. Most of the southern states were in the same category. In June 1945 Mississippi spent $288.97/1,000 population on ADC; only Texas spent less at $253.10/1,000. Southern levels varied from Louisiana's $1,009.68/1,000 to the Texas low. At the end of the war Mississippi's ADC program failed to provide a minimum standard of income, and the program compared unfavorably even with those of its neighbors. In absolute or relative terms, ADC in Mississippi was an inadequate program. Even so, the program never exhausted its waiting list.

Since the state did not adequately fund ADC, the lack of a general relief statute in Mississippi was a major flaw in the child welfare system of the state. As child welfare workers repeatedly pointed out, Mississippi needed a general relief program for dependent children
to supplement ADC. The county governments retained the power to grant general relief, but they usually limited their efforts to providing emergency medical aid and burial of indigents. In such circumstances, the food distribution programs operated by the United States Department of Agriculture in co-operation with the Welfare Department became the basic general assistance program in Mississippi.

The commodity program provided surplus food products to the needy without cost. In 1934 MERA had been first to employ the concept in Mississippi. In 1937 the federal government opened up an extensive effort to disperse surplus foodstuffs to the needy. The basic concept behind the effort was to support the price level of surplus agricultural products, but it very quickly assumed the aspect of a general relief program in Mississippi. Social workers consistently listed commodity distribution as a welfare resource. All 82 counties in Mississippi rapidly adopted the program so that by 1938 it provided aid for one tenth of the population. The rising rate of participation was a problem for the Welfare Department which tried to keep the program within bounds. In 1938 Bond admonished his employees:

Only a small part of the entire county is eligible to receive commodities and garments. These things come under the head of direct relief and are to be given only to those who would suffer for the necessities of life such as food, clothing or shelter, without them. Before giving commodities or garments to anyone, the
county welfare agent is supposed to look very carefully into needs . . . As I understand it the main idea the Government had in mind in buying surplus commodities was to save the producers from ruin on account of low prices. Of course, after the commodities are purchased the best possible use is to give them to people in real want as a supplement to what they already have. The government is trying to help as many different families as possible in need. 

Bond's memorandum went on to suggest that the program was obviously serving great numbers of people who were not truly indigent. Welfare personnel were applying qualifying rules rather liberally because food distribution was the basic general relief program available in a state where OAA did not meet need and ADC was unavailable. ADC's adoption did little to change the situation since it also failed to supply need.

The commodity program had one adverse effect on the economy: it removed many food purchases from the private sector, or so local merchants charged. The food stamp program which entered the state in 1940 had the advantage of permitting commodity distribution through the normal channels of trade. In July 1941, 338,000 people received food stamps while 84,000 were commodity recipients. A county chose one program or the other, not both. The stamp program won the approval of local governments rather than the commodity program even though the adoption of the food stamps led to a reduction in recipients of the county's food program from 30 to 50%. The food stamp program was more complicated in its qualifying rules and some stamps
cost, as a result many recipients dropped out. Food stamps were far less effective than commodities in delivering aid to the state's needy of whom as many as 50% were children, but food stamps did attract powerful middle class support for a food program. Nevertheless, the essential justification was agricultural and when prices rose in the early 1940s to reflect wartime conditions, the Federal government discontinued food stamps and commodities. In March 1943 welfare workers distributed the last food stamps and commodities.

Although programs such as ADC and commodity distribution significantly increased the role of the Welfare Department in child welfare activities in Mississippi, the Board of Health continued to play an important role in the field. It operated its program for midwives, baby clinics, and a school health program that offered diagnostic services to most of the state's school age children. From 1943 to 1946 the Board of Health was the operational agent for the school lunch program conducted under the auspices of the War Food Administration. During the early war years, the Welfare Department administered the program as an appendage of the commodity and food stamp programs. With the adoption of the National School Lunch program in 1946, the state Department of Education took control. Although the administrative agency at the state level was switched three times, the effort reached more than 20% of
the state's children during most school terms throughout the 1940s. The Board of Health's important contribution was providing operating personnel during the three critical years, 1943-1946, when the program faced reduced federal support and an uncertain future.

The most important new effort undertaken by the Board of Health on behalf of children was the Emergency Maternal and Infant Care program which the Congress adopted to provide care for the wives and children of servicemen in the lowest four grades, private through sergeant, of the armed forces. Mississippi began co-operation with the federal program on April 19, 1943, and the effort was terminated on June 30, 1948. Under the plan, any expectant mother who declared that the father of her unborn child was a service-man in the lowest four grades was eligible for medical, obstetrical, and hospital care. The woman did not have to be a legal resident of Mississippi, only a resident in fact. Any child under one year of age whose father was in the lowest four grades was eligible for medical, pediatric, and hospital care. The state did not fund the program lavishly: it agreed to pay up to $35 to doctors for five prenatal visits, delivery care, and doctor's services for the mother for six weeks after delivery, and up to $25 in medical bills for the child.

Long lists of rules and regulations did not hamper the program. The entire qualifying procedure was little more than a declaration by a woman that she or her child
met the program's specifications. The doctor's signature of approval to her statement was the only additional proof required. Once the Board of Health acknowledged the receipt of the request and gave its approval, service began. During its seven years the EMIC program served more than 25,000 applicants in Mississippi. A study of the program's results for the year 1944 demonstrated that the maternal mortality among this group of women was one third that of other women giving birth during the same period in Mississippi. The stillbirth rate was 50% less.

EMIC was an unqualified success, but it was the only major advancement for needy children in the area of medical services during the war years. The Crippled Children's Service languished during the war because doctors were in short supply due to wartime demands. The Service also suffered because the cost of medical care increased rapidly under the pressure of wartime inflation, and transportation became more difficult with gasoline rationing. In addition, the legislature appropriated only a minimum amount for the program.

The expansion of the Welfare Department under wartime demands, the emergence of ADC, the use of the food programs to provide general relief, and the continued importance of the Board of Health were all important developments of the war years. The growth in the size and influence of the Welfare Department enabled it to make major advances in
child welfare after the war. ADC was firmly established during the war years; its potential growth was enormous. The precedent was set for widespread use of the food programs and when they reappeared in the 1950s, their wartime success helped lead to rapid acceptance. The Board of Health retained an important role in child welfare in war as it had during depression. The Health Department's continued role in child welfare activities was important because it offered an alternative to the Welfare Department. In future decades when the Welfare Department encountered severe public censure and a hostile legislature unwilling to expand its functions, the Board of Health provided a less controversial alternative to administer needed child welfare programs. In addition to those important broad developments of the war years, there were two significant changes in specialized areas of child welfare during the war. In 1942 the state improved its juvenile justice system for black youth, and in 1944 a political dispute resulted in a new relationship between the state and the religious child caring agencies.

One of the most important problems facing children in Mississippi was inequity in justice provided to black juveniles. In 1942 the state took a tentative move toward equal treatment for black delinquents with the passage of the Negro Juvenile Reformatory Act. The 1916 Training School Act had not specifically created an institution for whites but the custom of assigning whites to Columbia
was followed without exception. Although the state schools for the blind and the deaf were segregated institutions, they served both races. The Training School was unique in that its racial policy not only separated blacks but altogether denied them a basic service of the state. The result of the racial policy at Columbia meant that the state did not have an institution for black delinquents or dependents, nor was there any private facility. The Piney Woods School founded in 1910 near Jackson by a disciple of Booker T. Washington served as a home for several hundred black students enrolled in industrial education, but Piney Woods was basically an educational rather than a correctional institution.

The Negro Reformatory Act provided $100,000 for the construction of an institution, and for each year of the first biennium the school received $25,000 for operational costs. The new facility might have been relegated to the category of a war casualty when the War Production Board refused to grant permission for the purchase of materials needed for construction, but the Board of Trustees decided to proceed with the building with existing materials. Since the school was to occupy 2,714 acres near Oakley which had been a farm operated by the State Penitentiary, the Board decided to use some of the scrap materials available on the site. "These temporary quarters or shacks are now practically completed," the Board reported in 1943, "and it is expected that the institution will open
January 1, 1944, with 30 occupants." A survey of county sheriffs revealed that they believed the state needed a reformatory to accommodate more than 1,000 black youths; the state obviously had more modest plans. 44

Several groups assisted in the construction and furnishing of the institution. The National Youth Administration Center at Brookhaven provided a loan of beds, blankets and stoves. 45 Camp McCain, an army facility in Grenada, provided steel cots, cooking utensils, and important transportation aid. 46 The State Penitentiary provided convict labor to dismantle several old buildings at the State Insane Hospital in Jackson which, with the material left at the Oakley farm by the Penitentiary, provided the basic building materials for the institution. 47 The facility opened in 1944 with 44 inmates housed in quarters intended to accommodate 30. Overcrowding continued during the 1940s despite a grant of $160,000 in the late 1940s that went toward the construction of two dormitories. 48 The inmates of the institution were boys. Opening in Spartan surroundings deemed suitable only for males, the institution was always so overcrowded that females were not admitted. 49 State courts sentenced young black women convicted of crimes to terms at Parchman while assigning males to Oakley, which despite its imperfections was infinitely preferable to the Penitentiary.

Although state protection for one small group of children, delinquent black males, received increased
attention during the early 1940s, state protection for children under the care of voluntary agencies received a severe setback in 1944. The controversy over state licensing of private child caring institutions had its roots in the Administration of Child Welfare Act of 1938 which authorized the Welfare Department to provide for the supervision and inspection of all public and private child caring institutions in the state and to license such institutions that met minimum child care standards.\textsuperscript{50}

The Welfare Department moved very slowly toward meeting that statutory responsibility. It obtained aid from the Board of Health in drawing standard health rules. In consultation with the private agencies, the Department carefully constructed rules for child care and safety which took into consideration Mississippi's lack of resources and scarcity of professional talent.\textsuperscript{51} The Welfare Department issued periodic reports about each of the nine child caring institutions in the state. The Director of the Division of Child Welfare told a child caring conference in 1941:

> We have attempted to show you [voluntary agencies] that licensing is a means of protection for the state, the institution, and the child. . . . It is by approving your agencies that we are in a position to disprove other agencies not equipped to give adequate service and care to children.\textsuperscript{52}

Investigations of the institutions were not always very complimentary to their administrations; for example, the state discovered that only one institution had fire drills,
but the Welfare Department moved slowly to bring the agencies into compliance when it found a violation of the rules.  

The child caring institutions were not easily brought into compliance. Those organizations had served the state as its principle resource for child care at the state level throughout the nineteenth century. The Natchez homes included some of the oldest institutions of any type in Mississippi. Moreover, the Welfare Department needed these agencies to provide for dependent children since the lack of a foster care program made the private institutions the only alternative to the Training School for white children. With their long history of service to the state, their importance in care of dependent children essentially undiminished without a public alternative, the voluntary agencies were in a position of strength. Most of them were church related; another powerful source of support. In 1944 bills introduced in both the senate and the house of representatives sought to amend the authorizing statutes of the Welfare Department to exempt religious child caring institutions from the jurisdiction of state child welfare authorities. Spearheaded by Methodist and Baptist leaders who charged that the forced compliance to public standards violated the concept of the separation of church and state, the movement to strip the Welfare Department of its licensing power succeeded quickly. Before the measure
passed the Masons obtained an amendment freeing child caring institutions operated by fraternal organizations from state control. 54 Interestingly the religious denominations did not call for their release from rules which brought public accreditation to their schools and hospitals. 55 At the episode's completion, the Welfare Department had the authority to review, approve, and license two child caring institutions in the state. 56

The Welfare Department did not actively resist in the legislature. The charge of a violation of the separation of church and state doctrine placed the issue on such absolute terms that a proper response would have been a lobbying effort pointing out that the churches were violating the concept by preventing public protection of children. Such a course of action would have produced a serious political battle in the legislature between the Welfare Department and the state's largest religious denominations. The Welfare Department had grown remarkably during the war years, but it was not at the point at which it could win a major political confrontation with the Baptist and Methodist churches. 57
NOTES: CHAPTER III

1 Public Welfare in Mississippi, July-September 1946, pp. 42-43.


3 NYA and WPA both terminated their Mississippi operations in July 1943: Mississippi, National Youth Administration for the State of Mississippi, The National Youth Administration in Mississippi June 1935-July 1943 (memorandum to President (sic) University of Mississippi, from C.B. Lund, Administrator, NYA, The Mississippi Collection of the University of Mississippi), unindexed, p. 1; Public Welfare in Mississippi, January-March 1943, p. i.

4 Mississippi, State Department of Public Welfare, Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare for the Period July 1, 1939-June 30, 1941, p. 27.

5 Ibid.

6 See Chapter I, pp.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Mississippi, State Department of Public Welfare, Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare for the Period July 1, 1941-June 30, 1943; Statistical Supplement, Table XIX, p. 62; Mississippi, State Department of Public Welfare, Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare for the Period July 1, 1943-June 30, 1945; Statistical Supplement, Table 17, p. 56.

11 Ibid.
12 Mississippi Committee on Children and Youth, Mississippi Report on Services to Children and Youth 1940-1950; the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth (Jackson: Mississippi Committee on Children and Youth, 1949), p. 45.

13 Ibid.


16 Ibid.

17 Public Welfare in Mississippi, July-September 1946, p. 50.

18 Ibid.


20 See Chapter II, pp. 9-10.


22 Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Bond MSS, Weekly Newsletter of the Commissioner, Bx. 1, folder 12, November 26, 1938.

23 Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare 1939-1941, p. 34.

24 Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare 1941-1943, Statistical Supplement, Table XXV, Table XXVI, pp. 72-73.


28 Mississippi, State Board of Health, Biennial Report of the State Board of Health for the Period July 1, 1945-June 30, 1947, p. 244.

29 Ibid.


31 Mississippi State Board of Health Division of Maternal and Child Health, Rules and Application for Medical and Hospital Obstetric Care for Wives of Men in Military Service (Copy of rules and application forms, Mississippi State Board of Health Library), subject file "EMIC."

32 Ibid, Rules, p. 5.


35 Ibid.


38 Ibid.


41 Ibid.

42 Mississippi, Board of Trustees of the Oakley Training School, Biennial Report of the Board of Trustees of the Oakley Training School for the Period July 1, 1949-June 30, 1951, p. 3.


44 Ibid.


46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.


52 Robbie W. Patterson, "Licensing and Approving Child Care Institutions," June 24, 1941 (Minutes of the Mississippi Conference of Child Caring Institutions, Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare Library), subject file "child care," p. 6.
53 Public Welfare in Mississippi, July-September 1943, p. 20.

54 Public Welfare in Mississippi, January-March 1944, p. 10.

55 Ibid.


57 Public Welfare in Mississippi, July-September 1946, p. 17.
CHAPTER IV

EXPANSION, ACHIEVEMENT, AND PROMISE IN THE POST WAR YEARS; CHILD WELFARE IN MISSISSIPPI 1945-1949

The immediate post-war years were extremely fruitful ones for child welfare in Mississippi. The Welfare Department emerged from the war years with a reputation of proven worth that was reflected in its growing influence with the legislature. One of the most important developments of the post-war years began when the 1944 legislature appointed an Interim Joint Senate and House Committee on Child Welfare Legislation.¹ The Committee and the Welfare Department asked Governor Thomas L. Bailey to create a state committee on child welfare. In response, the Governor invited a large group of private citizens and public officials to a meeting at which those present considered creating a commission with the authority to study and review the functions, facilities, agencies, and institutions which offered protection and care to children in Mississippi.² The Governor personally conducted the meeting on October 22, 1945, out of which came the Executive Committee of the Governor's Commission for the Welfare of the Children of Mississippi. In December it reported to the Joint Senate and House Committee that it would lobby for a youth court

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act, a law to give more funds to the Welfare Department for child welfare services, and legislative authorization and funding of a children's code commission which could review and recommend appropriate reforms in Mississippi's laws affecting children. ³

The need for a youth court act arose because the only law before 1940 which provided for dependent and delinquent children at the state level was the Mississippi Industrial and Training School Act of 1916 which made no mention of a special youth court system. Despite frequent amendments, the Training School Act was a poor instrument for judicial proceedings for children. In 1940 the legislature passed the Juvenile Court Act. Unfortunately, this new law was confusing and contradictory and served as poorly as had the 1916 statute. The Juvenile Court Act's major accomplishment was its symbolic value as a statement that the state was committing itself to treating abandoned, dependent, neglected, and delinquent children in a special manner when they were brought into court. The law, however, did not bring about that specialized treatment. ⁴ In the early 1940s the courts treated three-fourths of the children brought before them under adult statutes with proceedings appropriate for adults. ⁵

The Youth Court Act of 1946, passed at the behest of the Governor's Committee, went into effect October 1, 1946. It created a youth court as a division of the county court and in chancery courts for counties without
a court. These courts had jurisdiction over cases of delinquent or neglected children who were brought before a referee rather than a judge. The referee was usually a chancellery clerk whose decisions the judge had to approve. The referee or judge conducted the hearings informally without the complexity of adult proceedings which according to the child welfare theories of the 1940s was the most appropriate judicial procedure for children.\textsuperscript{6} This youth court could take jurisdiction over cases involving juveniles 18 and under. The law specified that no child under 13 could be prosecuted for a misdemeanor or a felony in criminal courts. Thus the law was inclusive for children under 13 while it left older youngsters to the discretion of local authorities. The Youth Court Act of 1946 did not bring an immediate end to the assignment of children to criminal proceedings, but it did serve as the solid foundation of a separate court system for children in Mississippi.\textsuperscript{7}

The same 1946 legislative session also passed the Second Administration of Child Welfare Act, the first being the 1938 law granting the Welfare Department the right and duty to conduct child welfare activities in the state. Passed at the urging of the Governor's Committee and the Welfare Department, the measure repealed the statutory right of the boards of supervisors to apprentice children. That authority had long since fallen into disuse, but the
Governor's Committee urged its repeal as the necessary first step toward restructuring child welfare in Mississippi. The act assigned the duty of promoting child welfare activities and protecting children to the Welfare Department. To aid the agency in accomplishing those ends, it authorized a foster care program and repealed the Children's Aid Law of 1928. The new law also made statutory changes so that the counties could continue to provide Children's Aid funds which would be under the direct control of the local welfare office.

A foster home program was a goal for which the Welfare Department had long worked. Before 1946 the state sent white dependent children for whom no benevolent aid was located to the Training School. Foster care provided a humane alternative to such treatment. The state agreed to assume 75% of the boarding cost in a foster home; the county paid the remaining 25% plus all incidentals such as clothing, educational materials, and cleaning expenses. Repealing the Children's Aid Law of 1928 and turning over those funds to the Welfare Department for dispersal was not a major financial boost for the Welfare Department. The funds amounted to a few thousand dollars in some counties each year to a few hundred dollars in most, but the money often provided the county share of the foster care program. The money also became the miscellaneous fund for child welfare workers. If one could not find federal, state, or local authorization for some small, but important, item
then these county funds often filled the void.  

The Administration of Child Welfare Act was an important document because it provided for a foster care program and freed county funds for aid to children from a tangled set of administrative procedures set up under the 1928 law. The most important aspect of the bill, however, lay in its recognition that the responsibility for the welfare of children in Mississippi had passed from the control of local authorities to the state. In 1946 the legislature formally discarded as archaic the power of the board of supervisors to apprentice children, the central feature of child welfare in Mississippi for generations. The same legislature relegated the Children's Aid law of 1928, the most progressive piece of legislation existent in Mississippi less than fifteen years before, to the status of a miscellaneous fund.  

The Governor's Committee also persuaded the legislature to adopt an act giving statutory authorization to the Children's Code Commission, a group of public officials and private citizens authorized to study child welfare in Mississippi and make recommendations to the Governor and legislature. Although the law provided no funding, the Commission of nine men and women held its first meeting in Governor Bailey's office on August 26, 1946. J.O. Snowden, Superintendent of the Mississippi Children's Home Society, was the Commission's first President; Willard Bond was Vice-President. The organization subsequently
received funds from the Children's Bureau and private charities. The State Department of Education and the Welfare Department provided services such as clerical help and printing. Without a state appropriation but with the support of the Governor and influential men like Snowden and Bond, the Children's Code Commission began a career of more than a decade of positive accomplishments for the children of Mississippi.

The year 1946 was an extremely important one for child welfare in Mississippi. The Children's Code Commission, the Youth Court Act, the foster home program, and the transfer of county child welfare funds to the control of the local welfare worker were all significant developments. The implementation of the 1946 reforms was especially effective in bringing changes in the manner in which the state treated delinquent children. As the Youth Court became operational attention focused on the state's juvenile institutions at Oakley and Columbia and major changes resulted.

The legislature's inadequate appropriations had compelled the school at Columbia to become a working farm during the 1930s. Anyone who read the school's official reports knew that it was in a deplorable state of repair, that the labor of the children relieved the state of its obligation to support the institution, that one fourth of the children were dependent, not delinquent; and that it
was a custodial institution, not a reformatory. The magazine *Delinquency and Crime*, a publication of the Mississippi Association of Delinquency and Crime which included many of the state's judges, lawyers, and private citizens interested in adequate justice for youth offenders, began an investigation of the institution in February 1947. The magazine reported that the children at the Training School were roused at 3:30 A.M. each day to do chores such as milking cows, feeding livestock, cleaning the buildings, and preparing breakfast. Classroom exercises extended from 7 A.M. to 12:30 P.M., lunch and rest from 12:30 to 1:30, and labor in the fields from 1:30 to 5:30. The children went to bed at 8:30. Since the legislature's no-deficit, 50% budget decision of 1932, the farm had planted 100 acres of cotton which the inmates chopped, plowed, and picked. The investigation uncovered irregularities in the records of the sale of the cotton crop.

An investigative visit by a state senate committee found a number of disturbing circumstances. The committee heard corroborated accounts of children being beaten in the fields for refusal to work and a story of "gang-girls" who were forced to wear special checked dresses and were assigned to work in special details because they had committed some transgression against the rules. The committee investigators found a room, properly barred, in which females were whipped, and received allegations of sexual abuse of the inmates by employees. The magazine's
findings and those of the senate committee essentially agreed. The Welfare Department, which had had a child welfare worker at the institution since March 1939, issued a report in which it was pointed out that the Department had called for reform of the school for years. The report played down the sensational aspects of the institution's past while stressing the positive steps that could be taken to solve the problems and transform the institution into a genuine child caring institution dedicated to serving the needs of delinquent youth.  

On October 31, 1947, the Clarion Ledger, Jackson's morning newspaper, published a report of conditions at the school based on findings of the senate committee investigators. The disclosures aroused public outrage as a result of which the school's administrators resigned. State laws regulating the treatment of juvenile delinquents were rewritten, and the legislature reorganized the ruling body of the Training School by creating a Board of Trustees with staggered terms so that no one governor could appoint all Board members. The school also received a large boost in its appropriation. The Industrial and Training School Act of 1948, which followed in the wake of the scandal, standardized the qualifications for admission to Oakley and Columbia. Previous statutes had permitted younger children to be admitted to the black facility. The problem of dependent children at Columbia
was given added attention after the scandal. The Youth Court Act forbade the practice of admitting dependent children to Columbia but compliance was difficult until the foster home program became operational.\textsuperscript{25} By 1948 the foster home program was sufficiently established to make the elimination of dependents at Columbia a realistic goal.\textsuperscript{26}

At the end of the 1940s, the progress in the treatment of delinquent children in Mississippi had taken major steps forward. The Youth Court Act was far from perfect. It was not a system run by youth court judges who were specially trained in children's cases. Social services to children accused of delinquent actions were very limited, especially in rural areas. The system permitted the housing of youth offenders in local jails along with adult criminals; and because the act failed to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over all children's cases, youngsters 14 to 18 often continued to receive justice through the ordinary criminal process.\textsuperscript{27} Nevertheless, courts frequently employed the act throughout the state and the trend was toward youth court participation.\textsuperscript{28} Statistics of the State Penitentiary provide one indication of the improvement in justice for children in Mississippi. Although a change in statistics reporting obscures the data somewhat, it was clear that the State Penitentiary was in the process of reducing its role as an institution
INMATES AT THE MISSISSIPPI STATE PENITENTIARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admission Dates</th>
<th>Age 15 to 20</th>
<th>Under 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/1/35--6/30/36</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/1/40--6/30/41</td>
<td>160</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1/45--6/30/46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 14 to 19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1/50--6/30/51</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for children as the state made progress toward more equitable treatment of youth offenders.

The post-war years also produced advances in the medical care of destitute children in Mississippi. Once again the improvements resulted from the legislature's increased attention to children's problems and public pressure brought about by disclosures of unfortunate conditions at state institutions. After the war, the Welfare Department and the Children's Code Commission focused attention on the lack of funding provided to the Crippled Children's Service. The Welfare Department pointed out that the generally greater availability of talent and resources in post-war Mississippi plus increasing federal support for the program made the Crippled Children's Service an attractive and sound investment for state child welfare funds. The legislature responded with increasingly generous appropriations after 1945.

In July 1946 a polio clinic founded by the Service in 1943 was transferred to the control of the private Children's Hospital of Jackson thus giving Mississippi the
third largest polio hospital in the United States.\textsuperscript{30} On January 1, 1947, the Crippled Children's Service began to accept cerebral palsied children as well as polio victims. Mississippi was the first southern state to expand its program to treat cerebral palsy victims.\textsuperscript{31} In 1947 the Crippled Children's Service maintained 14 diagnostic clinics and made 100 hospital beds available to the state's crippled children in Jackson, Memphis, Mobile, and New Orleans.\textsuperscript{32}

During most of the 1940s hospital beds available to Mississippians were in short supply. In 1946 a survey revealed that the state had 4,200 beds to serve approximately 2.2 million people, a rate of 1.6 beds/1,000. The Surgeon General estimated that 4/1,000 was an adequate rate.\textsuperscript{33} Mississippi implemented the Hill-Burton Act of 1946 with amazing speed. The 1946 legislature appropriated $5 million for hospital construction; the 1948 general assembly followed with another $5 million, and private efforts brought in another $6 million.\textsuperscript{34} Federal officials approved Mississippi's plan to co-operate with the Hill-Burton Act July 1, 1947, making it the first state plan approved, and by August 1948, 1,000 beds were either under construction or authorized.\textsuperscript{35}

The rapid expansion of hospital beds in the state provided improved care for the state's needy, who were provided with a minimum amount of support at charity wards
in most state hospitals. In 1955 expansion of available facilities allowed the state to close the Jackson Charity Hospital, the largest of the state's five hospitals devoted entirely to charity cases. All of these institutions had cared for the needy, including children, for many years. The Natchez facility was established in the early nineteenth century to meet the medical problems of indigents who were part of the transient life of a major Mississippi River port. The Vicksburg facility was of almost equally historic beginnings while the charity hospitals of Laurel, Meridian, and Jackson were of twentieth century origins. All of the facilities had survived for years on small allowances from the state and local governments, only Vicksburg having an important endowment. These facilities served many children over the years; one year after its opening on June 1, 1912, the Jackson Charity Hospital reported that 21 children had been born at the institution. All five were overcrowded, lacked staff, and were poorly financed during the twentieth century.

Jackson seems to have been the most poorly managed as well as the most underfinanced. In its 1929-1931 report to the legislature, the Jackson facility reported the birth of 63 children of whom 12 were stillborn. In April 1949, the Jackson Director told a newspaper reporter that since the facility had no incubators standard procedure for premature infants was to send them home to die.
The statement reported by the Jackson Daily News caused an immediate public response: an outpouring of contributions and the calling of a grand jury.42 A tour by state lawmakers produced more horror stories: bed linen was so scarce that a majority of the patients slept on bare mattresses; surgical instruments were so few that local doctors brought their own. Medicines were so scarce that Jackson doctors kept wastebaskets in their offices in which they deposited sample medicines which were regularly collected for the Charity Hospital.43 As soon as the building program made beds available, the legislature ordered the closing of Jackson Charity.

Such facts as those related by the newspaper and the legislative investigators were largely available to the public through the reports of the institution since the 1930s. The importance of the public and legislative reaction to the scandal, as in the case of the Training School incident the year before, does not lie in the fact that the public reaction forced reform, but in the fact that there was any reaction at all. Outraged sentiments expressed because children at Columbia were overworked and children at Jackson Charity did not have modern medical devices at their disposal were sentiments which Missis- sippians had not been able to afford for many years.

The level of human deprivation which the public would tolerate had changed rapidly in Mississippi during two
decades which, though marked by depression and war, had witnessed extensive economic growth and large scale governmental efforts to upgrade social conditions. Surely those who had worked on behalf of children in the past two decades in the state were in part responsible for that upgrading of public attitudes. Mississippians were shocked at the automatic death of premature babies in 1948; yet, that had been the most likely result of premature birth for decades. But, the Board of Health had made it evident that the state could reduce the infant death rate significantly even for the most destitute part of the population by providing simple education and occasional emergency treatment. By 1948 it was a widespread assumption in the state that children need not die in Mississippi because of lack of equipment and professional service. Achieving that assumption represented decades of work by the Board of Health. Similarly, treatment of children at Columbia was not tolerable because the public had a much higher standard of child care than it had in the 1930s or even the early 1940s. Those who had worked in child welfare activities in the state since the early 1930s brought upgraded standards of child care into the state and by 1948 many of those ideas were winning acceptance. It is a measure of how rapidly those assumptions were advancing during the 1940s that practices fully reported during the 1930s and the early 1940s in official state documents were the cause of public scandals in the late 1940s.
During the post-war years significant advances had been recorded in the field of child welfare. The 1946 reforms and the changes at Columbia and Jackson Charity gave evidence of an increased concern in Mississippi for the welfare of children. Moreover during the late 1940s a significant change occurred in Mississippi's ADC program. The Welfare Department had repeatedly called for the lifting of the maximums to the federal levels and the proper funding of the Department so that ADC could be expanded to meet demand. In 1948 with a $10 million state appropriation, the Welfare Department began to expand ADC by attacking its 19,000 backlog in applications. In July 1948, 5,791 families received ADC funds for 15,420 children.\textsuperscript{44} In 1949 the expansion accelerated when the legislature removed all restrictions on the program except the maximums. The Mississippi ADC effort advanced remarkably in numbers served: in July 1949 the rolls included 8,417 families, 22,864 children, and in July 1950 had expanded to 13,015 families with 36,079 children. In addition, the percent of need met which had been from 50 to 60% during the mid-1940s rose to more than 80% after 1948.\textsuperscript{45}

Meanwhile the characteristics of the population served began to change: overwhelmingly white in 1941 (86%), the program in 1949 served blacks in much greater numbers; up to 35% of the total. With the influx of blacks came the much higher illegitimacy rate of the black population. A program designed basically for the children of deceased
parents at its inception in 1935 was beginning to serve a different group of children: those who were without parental support because of the absence from the home of one parent due to such causes as divorce, desertion, separation, or illegitimacy. Such children did not make up a majority of ADC recipients in Mississippi in 1950; the actual number was less than 20%. Their numbers were however increasing, and without doubt, increasing black participation was a well established trend.\textsuperscript{46}

The late 1940s witnessed a remarkable effort on behalf of the ADC recipient in Mississippi. The state spent $3.2 million on ADC from June 30, 1949 to July 1, 1950. Payments approached the actual need of the recipients. The rolls were expanding according to demand, and thousands of black children were being aided by the state.\textsuperscript{47} The total amount of funds expended was important: $3.2 million in state funds spent in a single year; the entire state biennial appropriation for the Welfare Department in 1942-1944 was $4 million.\textsuperscript{48}

This expansion of ADC had several causes. The Welfare Department had served the state well during the war and it had become a major department of state government whose agencies and functions spread its influence into every corner of the state. The emergence of several influential citizens' committees in the late 1940s helped the Welfare Department in its relations with budget conscious lawmakers.\textsuperscript{49} Increased federal participation in
ADC made the program more attractive to state officials while the state's ability to participate in welfare programs had been enhanced by the economic growth experienced during the decade.\textsuperscript{50} During the late 1940s the Welfare Department lobbied continuously for an expansion of ADC and the legislature responded in 1948. The episode marks one of the few occasions when pressure for social justice within the state produced a major welfare effort and it should be recognized as such. Finally, the expansion of ADC probably would not have occurred without Willard Bond, who in 1950, in point of years of service, was the senior director of public welfare in the United States. He occupied an unassailable position as one of the state's most distinguished public servants over three decades.\textsuperscript{51} His reputation helped to insulate the welfare program from petty and unjustified attacks, and he lent an important sense of respectability and legitimacy to a welfare department trying to win approval in an essentially conservative society.

Although ADC expanded rapidly in the late 1940s, other children's services of the Welfare Department did not receive similar attention. The Division of Child Welfare of the Welfare Department had authority to act in the interest of children by acts of the legislature in 1938 and 1946, and the Welfare Department developed a small staff which directed and coordinated the activities of
the local children's workers. At first, it had been necessary to sell the local county officials on the need for a children's worker, but the law of 1946 greatly simplified the task of obtaining funds from the county for a child welfare worker. 52

Whether carried on by the local welfare agent or by a special child welfare worker, the individual in charge of children's programs at the county welfare office was usually the only person offering case work service to children in the county. The job of such workers in the 1940s was basically one of managing federal, state, and local resources, and although resources were limited by the economic condition of the state, the number of alternatives for aid was large. Local organizations such as the Lions Club were especially interested in providing services to children. The American Legion spent several thousand dollars each year to aid the children of veterans, and the list of other service clubs was lengthy. 53 At the core of resources was ADC which provided direct payments to children. The commodity or food stamp program could also be of aid to children. A number of state agencies also provided useful services. The Board of Health had several programs of aid for school children conducted through its Division of Maternal and Child Health. It maintained a program of aid to expectant mothers, provided child health services in infant and preschool clinics, and conducted a
child guidance program which brought professional psychological services to children.

It was the job of the local county welfare agent with very little funds to cut through the maze of possible areas of support in order to bring aid to children. That was not an impossible task, but the understaffing of the Welfare Department left little time for involved case work. The few special child welfare workers reported that they were overworked. The state needed a large number of child welfare workers to administer the resources available on the local level, but the staff remained small throughout the 1940s. The Welfare Department reported that it had served 4,000 children with child welfare services during the July 1, 1941-June 30, 1943 biennium. The Welfare Department served most of those children in their own homes, a situation which reflected the lack of custodial care. The funds and available personnel of the Division of Child Welfare expanded only moderately over the course of the decade so that the Division provided services to about 3,000 children a year in the last years of the decade.

The foster home program, authorized in 1946 and placed in operation in early 1947, grew slowly so that it cared for only 79 children in December 1949. The Welfare Department had legal authorization to issue standards for day care centers, but there was nothing
compulsory about meeting those standards. The state had neither the funds to inspect day care centers nor a federally funded day care program of sufficient magnitude to make compliance with the Welfare Department's standards profitable. Furthermore, many of the state's day care centers were operated by the churches, and an attempt to supersede them with a governmental organization or to bring them under public supervision might well have led to another test of strength in the legislature, a situation which the Welfare Department hoped to avoid. As in the case of child welfare services, the foster home program and day care did not benefit significantly from the increased attention paid to child welfare which marked the post-war years.

Despite some areas of stagnation, the 1940s were largely good years for child welfare in Mississippi. During World War II the Welfare Department, which carried the major responsibility for child welfare as the federal depression agencies ground to a halt, achieved a position of importance and legitimacy within the state. With its influence and sheer financial size enhanced during the war, the Welfare Department achieved remarkable results for Mississippi's children in the 1946-1949 period. The 1946 legislative session was the most important general assembly for the legal status of children to meet in the twentieth century, and the 1948 session was the most financially generous body for ADC in the program's history.
The period also marked a genuine step forward in public attitudes as demonstrated by the actions of the legislature, the reaction of public opinion to reported misdeeds against children at state institutions, and the willingness of prominent citizens to take active roles in organizations for children like the Governor's Committee of 1946 or the Children's Code Commission. By 1949 efforts of the various child welfare programs and committees were paying real dividends. At the decade's end the legislature was reevaluating and rewriting child welfare laws; ADC grants were approaching percent of need, and blacks were taking part in welfare programs in greatly increased numbers. It had even become possible to remove the dependent children from the Training School ending that practice of thirty years.

Finally, the late forties did mark a unique period for child welfare in Mississippi because the civil rights movement and the national movement toward retrenchment had not yet filtered down to the state. It was a secure society that reformed its children's laws in 1946 and permitted the great expansion of the welfare rolls in 1948 and 1949. The members of the Mississippi White House Conference delegation of 1950 viewed the civil rights rumblings at the national level as "pure political rhetoric." In 1949 the state had achieved something approaching national levels in such areas as infant mortality rates and standards of child care at public
institutions for its white children. In the late 1940s, Mississippi began to move toward extending its new standards of child care to black children. That effort encountered bitter opposition beginning in 1950 when its proponents encountered a national trend against the expense of welfare and opposition from those inside the state who began to realize that equitable treatment for black children would seriously threaten the doctrine of white supremacy and thus the very nature of society itself.
NOTES: CHAPTER IV


2Ibid, p. 4.

3Ibid, p. 6.

4Mississippi Committee on Children and Youth, Mississippi Report on Services to Children and Youth 1940-1950; the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth (Jackson: Mississippi Committee on Children and Youth, 1949), p. 45.

5Delinquency and Crime, July 17, 1945, p. 4.


7Ibid, p. 19.

8Public Welfare in Mississippi, July-September 1946, p. 18.

9Ibid.


11Ibid.


14Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

The Mississippi Association on Crime and Delinquency, The Rehabilitation of Mississippi's Delinquent Children; A report of a Study of Mississippi's Two Institutions for the Rehabilitation of Delinquent Children in 1947 (Report, Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare Library), subject file "delinquency."


Ibid.

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State Department of Public Welfare, Youth Court Statistics 1961 (Report, Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare Library), subject file "delinquency."

The data is contained in the statistical supplements of the following Biennial Reports of the Penitentiary: 1935-1937, p. 30; 1939-1941, p. 27; 1945-1947, p. 17; 1949-1951, p. 33.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Mississippi Commission on Hospital Care, Report on the Hospital Progress in Mississippi, by Dr. D. V. Galloway (Report, Mississippi Department of Archives and History), subject file "hospital plan," p. 1.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Mississippi, State Charity Hospital, Jackson, Biennial Report of the State Charity Hospital, Jackson, for the Period July 1, 1953-June 30, 1955, p. 4.

37 Laura Harrell Sturdevent, unpublished notes, "the Natchez Charity Hospital."

38 Mississippi, State Charity Hospital, Jackson, Biennial Report of the State Charity Hospital, Jackson, for the Period July 1, 1912-June 30, 1913, p. 11.


40 Mississippi, State Charity Hospital, Jackson, Biennial Report of the State Charity Hospital, Jackson, for the Period July 1, 1929-June 30, 1931, p. 12.


42 Ibid.


45 Ibid.
Mississippi, State Department of Public Welfare, Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare for the Period July 1, 1949-June 30, 1951; Statistical Supplement, Table 15, p. 56.

Ibid.

Ibid, p. 11.


Mississippi State Department of Archives and History, Bond MSS, Bx. 1, folder 12, unidentified newspaper clipping.


Foster Home Program; Trends in Number of Homes, Children, and Amounts of Board Payments (Report, Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare), subject file "foster home program."

59 Ibid.

CHAPTER V

REGULATING THE POOR; CHILD WELFARE
IN MISSISSIPPI 1950-1961

The 1940s witnessed the expansion of child welfare programs in Mississippi, especially during the latter few years when Aid to Dependent Children expanded rapidly. In July 1950, 36,100 children received ADC at approximately 86% of the budgetary need; the expansion during the late 1940s brought advancement in terms of percent of need and numbers of recipients. In 1950 a reaction to that expansion became fully evident in the legislature. Prior to 1950 the Welfare Department operated on a lump-sum appropriation. The state gave the Welfare Department a budget which was disbursed according to priorities assigned by the State Welfare Board. The Welfare Department had great influence on the Board so that the Department was not subjected to arbitrary decisions but largely determined policy. Welfare policy was basically in the hands of the professional welfare staff who had chosen in the late 1940s to spend an increased amount of state money to match federal ADC funds.

The 1950 legislature changed all that. It asserted the right not only to control the purse but through that
power it grasped control of ADC policy making. The legislators ended the practice of providing a single sum appropriation for the Welfare Department and substituted a budget allocation according to program. It restricted the Department to an expenditure of funds for ADC during the July 1949-July 1951 biennium to the amount spent during the previous biennium.\(^2\) That policy, which took effect July 1, 1950 in the middle of the biennium, produced chaos because the state had spent more on ADC for the first year of the new biennium than in the comparative period July 1947-June 1948.\(^3\) On July 1, 1950, the Welfare Department therefore faced the task of making ADC conform to expenditures of the last biennium even though the agency had already spent almost the total authorized amount in the first half of the fiscal period.\(^4\)

At first the Welfare Department attempted to meet the legislature's policy goals by reducing the amount of each grant. Percent of need met plummeted from 86% to 30% in one month until it became evident that further reductions would make a mockery of the program. Next the Department issued new regulations to eliminate or exclude as many people as possible. The program had received public criticism because it provided aid to illegitimate children. Opponents frequently asserted that it fostered a decline in the work ethic, and few detractors failed to point out that the program was rapidly becoming a service for black families almost exclusively.\(^6\) The Welfare Department
consciously designed the new regulations to grant aid to those families toward whom public sentiment was favorable. 7

Under the Department's new rules it granted ADC to families whose breadwinner was totally unable to work. The new policy eliminated ADC grants for families who needed short-term emergency aid because sickness or accident brought temporary disability. 8 Mississippi lacked a general assistance program to meet such needs, and since the Social Security Act overlooked farm and domestic labor in most provisions, the policy change produced genuine hardship for many children in the state. The Welfare Department decided to rule out all children who were not being provided with a decent, safe environment. From a standpoint of good public relations, it was inappropriate to subsidize family life disapproved by the state's voters. That consideration led to rules which excluded ADC from homes in which children were neglected or exploited; in which the mother had promiscuous relationships or illegitimate children, or which contained parents who ran afoul of the law. 9 The requirement of a suitable home was not a new concept enunciated in the 1950s. The apprenticeship statutes had been very specific about the type of home environment provided to an apprentice. The Mother's Aid Law of 1928 contained a suitable home qualification. Since the ADC program was based upon the idea that the best possible environment for child rearing was
the home with the natural parents, it seemed only reason-
able that the state would seek to define what constituted
a suitable home. Federal policy under Social Security left
such specifics of welfare administration to the states.

Having established a suitable home rule, the Welfare
Department required a mother requesting aid because of a
deserting father to undertake every effort to locate and
compel support by the father. The mother had to establish
legal desertion or separation before ADC payments began.10
This requirement, too, had precedent in Mississippi poor
law. To receive the limited aid provided in a Mississippi
poorhouse one had to exhaust all personal resources and
possible means of support. The old poor relief statutes
subjected relatives as distant as uncles and aunts to
prosecution for failure to support indigent relatives. In
contrast to such earlier policies the one adopted in 1950
simply required a father to support his children.

In the year following July 1, 1950, the Welfare Depart-
ment eliminated more than 16,000 children from the ADC
rolls and added about 11,000.11 Percent of need provided
dropped dramatically. In July 1951 the Welfare Depart-
ment had cut the rolls to slightly more than 30,000 child-
ren.12 In 1952 the legislature again made a specific ADC
authorization and the lawmakers placed a limit on the
total amount spent on ADC in state or federal funds.13
The latter prohibition gave the legislature absolute con-
trol over expenditures even if the federal ratio varied
during the next two years. It also precluded a federal bail-out of the program similar to a federal effort which helped preserve the state foster home program which also suffered budget restrictions at the legislature's direction.\textsuperscript{14} In 1952, 1953, and 1954, despite legislative action, the Welfare Department took thousands of new applications which swelled the rolls to more than 44,000 in July 1954.\textsuperscript{15} Support levels did not approach 1950 figures even though the federal matching ratio increased in 1952 before the legislature restricted total expenditures.\textsuperscript{16} In July 1954 the Welfare Department paid approximately 30\% of need to its ADC clients.\textsuperscript{17} In that year the legislature again restricted the totals on ADC and it moved further toward defining the policies of the Welfare Department. Prior to 1954 the legislature forced the Department to design regulations producing a recipient population acceptable to the lawmakers. In 1954 the legislators further limited their definition of suitable home in a provision incorporated into the Welfare Department's appropriation. According to the 1954 statute, "No child living with his/her mother shall have assistance whose mother has had an illegitimate child after receiving a check from the welfare department unless there is proof that the mother has ceased the illicit relationship and is maintaining a suitable home."\textsuperscript{18} To insure that the Welfare Department diligently enforced the rule, the
legislature gave county welfare boards the power to oversee the suitable home provision.19

The state welfare system placed a local agent in each county whose general actions were legally subject to approval of a county welfare board made up of one member from each of the five supervisory districts. In practice, the board simply reviewed the work of the agent. The lawmakers, however, believing they could rely on local board members more than welfare agents to enforce the suitable home law, required a woman who lost her ADC grant under the suitable home statute to obtain the specific authorization of the local board to have the grant restored.20 The legislature gave the local board the right of approval over public assistance recipients only in such cases. The board exercised no authority over old age assistance recipients or in any other aspect of the ADC program. Thus in 1954 the legislature asserted its right to control the expenditures of ADC, began to legislate Departmental rules regarding illegitimacy, and limited the Welfare Department's authority to interpret the law's intent and meaning by placing that power in the hands of the local boards. The most extensive child welfare program in Mississippi was returned step-by-step to an organizational framework similar to local control during the pre-Depression years.

The early 1950s reaction against ADC was in no sense limited to Mississippi. The program was under attack at the national level especially since it often appeared to
provide a means by which men evaded the responsibility of providing for their families. Fathers often avoided prosecution for desertion by escaping across a state line. Once the deserter was in another state the process of extradition was costly and time-consuming and as a result ineffective in relieving the state of the cost of supporting the abandoned family. It made little financial sense to spend huge sums to force support payments; on occasion it was cheaper to place the children on ADC. In Mississippi the cost of supporting an ADC child was less than $10 per month while pursuing a runaway father might cost hundreds of dollars.

In 1951 Congress passed legislation enabling the states to adopt a Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act under which a court of the family's resident state held a hearing concerning the abandonment. That court transferred its hearing records and decision to the state of the father's residence for enforcement.\textsuperscript{21} Such an approach cut the cost and the time involved in obtaining an order of parental support. In 1952 the legislature required the Welfare Department to give notice to the local district or county attorney when it made public assistance grants based on desertion. In a survey of its clients the Welfare Department discovered that one half of the deserting fathers whose families were receiving ADC lived outside the state. Because of the low level of support which ADC provided in Mississippi the Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act did
not guarantee a reduction in cost for the state and as a result the legislature did not rush to adopt the measure.\textsuperscript{22} The Welfare Department and the Children's Code Commission lobbied for the act pointing out that many women who were required to seek the support payments lacked the financial means to sue under the expensive extradition process.\textsuperscript{23} The legislature required the local district or county attorney to handle such cases, but compensation of $100 per case was hardly a sum sufficient to attract vigorous enforcement.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1954 the legislature finally adopted the Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act and Mississippi became the forty-seventh state to adhere to its provisions.\textsuperscript{25} The result was a flood of cases in the chancery courts. The Jackson \textit{State Times} reported, "the chancery courts were besieged with a growing onslaught of desertion cases touched off by the state's reciprocal agreement."\textsuperscript{26} Since welfare policy required women to exhaust all means of support to obtain ADC, the full weight of the desertion cases of ADC fell upon the chancery courts. The burden was relieved somewhat because many women did not have the financial resources to pay a lawyer and legal aid societies were few. In localities like Jackson where there were active societies demand far exceeded supply of lawyers willing to take charity cases.\textsuperscript{27} Women desperate enough to want 30\% of need support payments averaging approximately $10 per child per month were seldom able to afford
legal services. Even with the Reciprocal Agreement the requirement to sue for support pruned many children from the welfare rolls.

The 1956 legislature continued to adopt rules to limit ADC rolls and to usurp policy making power of the Welfare Department. One of the major problems the Welfare Department encountered was how to define "unsuitable home." Prior to 1956 the legislature made its wishes known only on the issue of what degree of illegitimacy constituted an unsuitable home. Prior illegitimacy, for example, did not constitute unsuitable behavior on the part of a woman under the 1954 statute. Giving birth to an illegitimate child after accepting a Welfare Department check was the disqualifying act.\(^{28}\) In 1956 the legislature identified a full range of activities which established an unsuitable home.

The legislature defined an unsuitable home as one in which there was: "abuse of the child"--beating, overwork, cruel treatment, or improper relations with the child; "exploitation of the child" which included causing a child to beg publicly, allowing a child to sell or contract to sell illegal products, and prostitution of a child; "disorderly conduct of the parent" such as alcoholism prostitution, and repeated criminal behavior; "neglect of child care" such as leaving a child alone and unprotected or being so mentally deficient as to be unable to provide adequate supervision; or "failure to provide a stable
environment for a child" which was a prohibition against the practice of conducting a promiscuous personal life and of giving birth to illegitimate children. Failure to provide a suitable home for a child under the regulations resulted in the termination of ADC grants. Interestingly, malnutrition was evidence of neglect of basic needs unless malnutrition resulted from poverty. If parents neglected the basic needs of a child because of poverty the Welfare Department continued to provide a grant of 30% of need. If malnutrition resulted from mismanagement of resources, the Welfare Department eliminated the ADC grant.

In its definition of unsuitable home the legislature did not refer to marital status of parents as constituting any bar to ADC. In Mississippi that was an important distinction because the state had long recognized common law marriages. Such arrangements were widespread in the black community. A favorite project of those most interested in maintaining segregation in the state was to end state recognition of marriages initiated without the consent of church or state. Once such relationships became unlawful, a home in which the male and female were unmarried could be declared unsuitable even if the relationship did not produce illegitimate children. In 1956 the legislature withdrew state recognition of common law relationships entered into after that year. Of course while the law slowly altered the practice of decades the
illegitimacy rate in the state was destined to increase. The 1956 legislature also required the creation of a Special Investigations Unit in the Welfare Department to conduct investigations into the cases of ADC in which the father had deserted. The unit conducted investigations and turned over the results to the local county or district attorney. The unit aided indigent mothers who were required to press their claims for support by relieving some of the economic burden involved in documenting their cases.

All of the legislature's restrictions on ADC had the desired effect: in July 1956, 33,592 children were on the ADC rolls in Mississippi which represented 10,000 children less than the figure of July 1954. The number of children had been reduced below the levels of July 1950. In 1957 legislative pressure on ADC relaxed somewhat when the state lawmakers removed the restrictions on the total amount spent by the program to enable the state to take advantage of increased federal matching. The special session of 1957 also raised the maximums under ADC to $25 for the first child, $15 for the second, and $5 for the third. Under the new matching formula the federal government provided $14 for each $3 of state money, but the legislature placed a $90 maximum on all grants so that large families received little additional aid.

The legislature did not move to control the program more effectively again until 1958 when it redefined the
unsuitable home statute in terms of the marital status of the parents, a more exacting legal test made possible by the 1956 revocation of state recognition of common law marriages.\textsuperscript{38} The same legislative session extended the reporting responsibilities of the Special Investigations Unit to include the grand jury and the county sheriff.\textsuperscript{39} In 1959, the Welfare Department reported that it was sufficiently empowered through the various actions of the legislature to insure that ADC in Mississippi did not contain elements to which the lawmakers objected.\textsuperscript{40}

Indeed, by 1959 the Welfare Department had state laws defining unsuitable homes which effectively eliminated women who led promiscuous personal lives; a $90 maximum that provided a genuine hardship for people who were poor and insisted upon having large families, and a Special Investigations Unit which provided assistance in tracking down and bringing deserting fathers to justice. In addition the Welfare Department developed a system by which each county certifying agent took five special ADC cases which were frequently visited to update information.\textsuperscript{41} Routine ADC cases received a personal visit by a welfare worker at least two times each year.\textsuperscript{42} With those controls weeding out undesirable elements, the legislature permitted ADC to expand in 1958 and 1959. In the summer of 1959 ADC reached 56,396 children, but the Welfare Department again assured the legislature that the safeguards were adequately shaping the ADC population to meet the
intent of the lawmakers.  

A basic change in the characteristics of the recipient population of ADC brought about the legislative assault of the 1950s. The white, fatherless children aided under Mother's Aid or by ADC until the late 1940s were no longer the dominant element in the ADC program. In the 1950s Old Age Survivors Insurance, a Social Security program providing benefits to children of deceased workers, became a major factor in child welfare in Mississippi. On January 1, 1950, the survivors benefits served 6,394 children with an average payment of $10 per month; in January 1955 OASI served 14,778 children. On June 30, 1958, 22,851 children received OASI in Mississippi with an average monthly payment of $27; at the same time ADC average monthly payments of $10.67 were going to more than 56,000 children. The major difference between the two groups was race. OASI was overwhelmingly white; ADC was overwhelmingly black. OASI met the needs of the children who were the traditional focus of attention on the part of child welfare in Mississippi: white children of deceased working fathers. OASI was not the only reason for the change in the ADC recipient population. The state retained the highest infant mortality rates in the nation, but in three decades of activity the Board of Health had significantly altered the survival rate among infants. Disease and infant death no longer culled a large number of children from among those who were potential responsibilities of the state.
Black children, children of the destitute, and those born out of wedlock had a greatly improved chance to survive the first year after birth. Thus there were simply more poor black children who needed state support.

In the post-war years illegitimacy increased in the state as in the rest of the United States, and Mississippi had the highest illegitimacy rate in the nation. While the phenomenon of birth out of wedlock became more pronounced it continued to carry debilitating social ramifications which could lead to dependency. That was especially true in Mississippi which had the distinction of having the nation's lowest rate of white illegitimacy (1.1% in 1956) and the highest rate of nonwhite illegitimacy (21.6% in 1956). The reported white rate was lower than reality since whites had the means to deal with the indiscretion, but there was little doubt that illegitimacy was a severe breach of the moral code among white Mississippians. Among blacks the white taboos against illegitimacy simply failed to apply. As ADC increasingly became a program for blacks, reaching 73% by 1958, the illegitimacy rate of the recipient population advanced steadily. Similarly, as the number of fathers who deserted their children increased there was a rise in such children receiving ADC which was matched by a reaction against desertion in the white community reflected in legislative regulations on ADC.

The 1950s saw the greatest migration of blacks to the North in the state's history. More than 100,000 blacks
fled Mississippi in the 1950s and in the next decade even more migrated to the North. In 1940 Mississippi was 49% black; in 1970 it was 37% black. Black males who left their families behind to become the responsibility of the state spearheaded this massive exodus. One account of the delta in the 1960s described it as a region of poor black women, their children, mothers, and older men. Some white politicians realized that the migration was probably better insurance against "black domination," which the civil rights movement threatened, than the legal system of segregation. It was certainly no accident that the one liberal feature of the state's ADC program was its provision allowing recipients to receive Mississippi ADC payments for one full year after fathers moved out of the state. The great migration increased the ADC rolls; it increased the number of deserted children on the ADC rolls, and it provided a reason for whites to make the program as ineffective as possible since an effective effort might stem the tide of black migration.

The new population of ADC did not contain the type of children who received aid readily in Mississippi. Usually black, sometimes illegitimate, often the children of migrants, and most often the children of farmworkers and domestics, people denied Social Security protection thus OASI benefits—these children of ADC received an extraordinary amount of attention from the legislature. That legislative attention focused on guaranteeing that they
did not receive any aid to which they were not legally entitled.

The legislature kept ADC at a low level of support throughout the 1950s, and its efforts to weed out illegitimates and expel children whose fathers could be held legally responsible for support achieved genuine results. In late 1958 the Mississippi program served a population that had fewer cases of fathers absent from the home than one might expect from a state with the highest illegitimacy rate in the nation and a huge migratory movement underway: 53.8% of the fathers of Mississippi's ADC children were absent from the home while the rate was 57.4% in Alabama, 62.4% in Tennessee, 70.9% in Florida, and 65.4% in the nation as a whole.\(^{52}\) Despite high illegitimacy and mass migration Mississippi ADC had less fathers absent from the home than the national average. That results was not attained by eliminating blacks: 73% of Mississippi ADC recipients were black while 42% of the population was black, a relationship easily comparable with the other southeastern states.\(^{53}\) Mississippi achieved such rates because its program carefully selected those who received ADC. Whites on ADC needed the aid because the father was absent from the home in 30.4% of the cases; the national average for whites was 56.1%\(^{54}\) Of the black Mississippi ADC cases 62.6% arose from absence from the home while the national average for nonwhites was 78.7%.\(^{55}\) Similarly, the statistics for both whites and blacks in Mississippi indicate
that recipients of ADC were much more often the product
of the incapacity of a parent or the death of a parent in
that state than in the nation as a whole or even in other
southern states. 56

The state was unable to keep the percent of illegit-
imates on its ADC rolls below the national average: in late
1958, 20.8% of the state's ADC recipients were illegitimate
children; the national average was 20.3%. 57 It obviously
took a remarkable effort to keep the ADC illegitimacy rate
in Mississippi only .5% higher than the national average.
In addition, the state achieved the nation's highest rate
of working ADC mothers. 58 Fully 62.6% of the black women
whose children received ADC payments worked part or full
time; 23.6% of its white mothers worked and both were
national highs. 59 The proportion of black mothers working
reflected both the low level of support offered by the
grants and the low wage scale offered to black women. Both
the relatively low illegitimacy rate and the high percent-
age of working women demonstrated the state's successful
effort to restrict aid to those children whose parents
conducted their lives within the rules of moral conduct
valued by the dominant white community.

The policies of the legislature forced ADC in Missis-
sippi during the 1950s to serve the recipient population
of the 1940s as fully as possible. Children were not aided
in terms of need arising from the realities of the 1950s.
They were selected for aid according to how closely they resembled the old recipient population before OASI, rising rates of illegitimacy, and the influx of blacks into the program changed the basic characteristics of those seeking assistance.

Although the legislature's determination to control the ADC program was successful in the 1950s, that effort aroused some vocal opposition. In 1952 an official publication of the Welfare Department recounted without comment the various legislative measures taken to reduce the ADC rolls and then concluded, "the cuts have severed many hungry children from the program."\textsuperscript{60} In 1955 J. A. Thigpen who succeeded W. F. Bond in 1952 as Commissioner of Public Welfare noted:

A child has no choice as to the type of home into which he is born. When he starves to death we are all horrified, yet some people think it right and moral to refuse to give a child food because his mother's pattern of life does not conform to their moral code.\textsuperscript{61}

In 1952 J. O. Snowden, the veteran Director of the Mississippi Children's Home Society told the \textit{Clarion Ledger}, "It's oftentimes the parent who is illegitimate, not the child."\textsuperscript{62}

In 1959 the Welfare Department presented the legislature with a report in which it pointed out that only 20% of the children on ADC in Mississippi were illegitimate. The report warned that efforts to deny funds to the 20% had worked hardships on the remaining 80%. The
agency also drew the legislature's attention to the fact that the illegitimacy rate among ADC children in Mississippi was not excessive if one considered the rate in the total population. Finally the report suggested that the legislators should consider the children—what was happening to the children cut from the rolls because they were illegitimate? The Welfare Department posed the question without providing answers.

The Children's Code Commission attempted to answer that question. The Commission had divided into committees, one of which, the Children at Home Committee, looked into welfare programs for children in their own homes including ADC. During the 1950s the Children at Home Committee became the most vigorous defender of ADC and its children in Mississippi. A 1954 pamphlet by the Committee maintained, "In Mississippi any charges of abuse [in ADC] have been emphasized out of importance and few, if any specific cases can be cited." The Committee pointed out that ADC children received only about $9.00 per child during the 1951-1953 period at a time when the Welfare Department estimated that a child needed $41.20 to provide for the basic necessities. The Committee attacked the assumption often voiced that people remained on ADC for lengthy periods by pointing out that the program actually served a population with a more rapid turnover than any other Social Security public assistance effort. The average family received ADC for approximately two years and the
great majority of the families added monthly were new, not repeat, cases. ADC in Mississippi provided basic emergency aid to families in temporary difficulty—it was not a lifetime dole producing welfare generations! Finally, for those who persisted in looking at the problem of dependent children as primarily one of finances, the Committee noted that ADC was the cheapest method of saving destitute children. The alternative was foster homes or state institutions both of which were more expensive than ADC.

The Committee's logic went unheeded in the legislature of 1954, but the Committee moved one step further: during 1956-1957 it conducted a statistical study through the sociology departments of several state colleges in order to determine what happened to children eliminated from ADC because of unsuitable homes. What About These Children? published in 1958 pointed out that ADC reached primarily the black community, a segment of the population which did not share the values and perceptions voiced in the legislature about illegitimacy. The report commented:

In interviewing these clients and studying records one gets the impression that illegitimacy lacks stigma. There is less effort than among white clients toward giving the illegitimate child for adoption, there is greater acceptance of the child and its mother in the home, among groups with whom they associate and with the church.

The report appealed for the legislature to recognize the cultural dichotomy in the state and terminate its attempt
to use child welfare as a means of imposing the values of the white population on the blacks.

Of the 323 families studied most remained in the state after their cutoff and the parents usually went to work. In 61 cases the mother became a domestic; on occasion the disabled father found a job despite his handicap. Some, like the woman described by an interviewer in the following account, simply existed:

She said she had not been able to get any work to do in four months. They have existed on what "one or another" gave them. She said they haven't enough to eat, and they possess no shoes at all. She gave her child, born December 16, 1955, to her cousin in Chicago. The last clothes they have gotten were sent last year from a friend in Chicago. . . . Viola did not complain or beg, she seemed to accept her condition as a matter of course.70

As for the children, in 90% of the cases they lived with the family severed from the ADC rolls because of unsuitable homes. Of the 829 children of school age in the group, 504 attended school of whom only 29 were at their proper grade level. The modal group of 10 and 11 year olds was in the third grade, 15 year olds in the sixth, and one 16 year old was in the eleventh grade, the highest academic achievement of the entire group.71 The cutoff had not aided the children and it had not altered the behavior of the parents: of the 187 children born to the group since its cutoff 176 were illegitimate.72

The Children at Home Committee's research was followed up with lobbying efforts which helped relax the legislative attack on ADC in the late 1950s.73 The course the Children
at Home Committee followed was an extremely difficult one especially since it depended upon the legislature for financial support. The Committee defended ADC and pleaded for a recognition of the state's cultural pluralism at the time when white supremacy entered its final crisis. Throughout the 1950s the Committee provided solid factual evidence to rebut charges frequently leveled at the ADC program.

ADC was the most widespread welfare program for children in the state during the 1950s, but there were important additional efforts to improve the welfare of children such as the Welfare Department's foster home program. At the end of 1949 state foster homes contained 99 children; in 1959 there were more than 600 such children. Foster care occupied a special role in Mississippi because the inadequacy of services to children in the state made the foster care program a last resort in a whole host of areas. Most states cared for orphans in private institutions or in public facilities. Mississippi's private orphanages refused to serve groups like blacks or the handicapped and the state had no public alternative. The Welfare Department reached the conclusion in the early 1940s that the private institutions were inadequate to meet the state's need for institutional child care. The foster care program thus functioned as the public orphan care program. The state needed custodial care for unwed mothers but the only such facility was the King's Daughters Home. It,
however, accommodated only thirty and had very precise rules as to whom it would admit. The state desperately needed some sort of custodial care for children under the care of the courts. Jail was often the only alternative for youthful offenders, dependents, and runaways during the 1940s, and the problem became more acute as the Youth Court began to function widely in the late 1940s. In each case the public sector met the need for custodial care of children or unmarried mothers through the device of foster homes.

In the early 1940s the Welfare Department established county boarding homes in which it placed children on a temporary basis. Since there was no state money local welfare authorities had to appeal to local groups for aid, an erratic, unreliable source of income. In 1946 the legislature authorized a foster care program, and before the end of the year thirteen children were being cared for in ten foster homes financed at a 75% state 25% local funding ratio. In the early 1950s the program grew rapidly but the number of homes never approached demand. In 1955 a welfare official noted that the need for foster care in the state was best demonstrated by the fact that dependent children often remained in hospitals for days after their medical needs were met because they had no place to go.

The foster care program had enormous potential for growth in the early 1950s because it was an all-purpose
custodial system in a state which provided inadequate services for any welfare purpose. Both the Welfare Department and the legislature recognized foster care's growth potential. In 1950 when the legislature moved to limit ADC and to sever unsuitable homes from public support, it guaranteed--by placing a budgetary limit on state funds for foster care--that the Welfare Department would not remove children from unsuitable homes and place them in foster care at state expense. 79 The action of the legislature clearly indicated that it was more concerned with punishing parents and illegitimate children than in trying to produce suitable homes for dependent children. The action not only prevented a flood of ADC children into foster homes but also brought controls to a program whose potential for expansion even without the ADC cuts was enormous.

For two years, however, the Welfare Department out-flanked the legislature on the foster home issue by appealing to the Children's Bureau for aid. In the special 1950 circumstances federal authorities stepped in to provide enough funds to keep foster care in Mississippi at the pre-1950 level. 80 In 1952 the legislature limited the total amount of funds spent on foster care in Mississippi, local, state or federal, thus finally achieving effective control. 81 The 1954 legislature cut back sharply on foster care funds. 82
The Children's Code Commission worked against the cuts and restrictions on the foster home program and succeeded in limiting the cuts to figures below those originally proposed in legislative committees, but the legislature had effectively curtailed the program's growth. Some counties made efforts to substitute local money for dwindling state support. In Washington county the local Welfare Department, with the support of the Greenville Delta Democrat Times, aroused community support to keep the program growing in Greenville despite the sharp cuts of 1954. Such efforts were temporary measures at best because the counties simply could not absorb the 75% state share of foster care funds.

The legislature had another means of controlling the foster care program. State law obligated the legislature to provide funds for foster homes only if home operators accepted children at a set monthly rate. If a home operator wanted more money the state did not participate. The county was free to pay the entire bill but money was usually not available for such a purpose. By keeping the state authorized amount low the legislature limited the number of people willing to undertake the financial obligation of providing a foster home. In August 1949 the average foster home monthly payment in Mississippi was $38.48 per child; in June 1961 it was $37.63. During the 1950s the average monthly payment varied between $36 and $38. It should be kept in mind that in 1953 the
Welfare Department estimated that $42.81 per month was the minimum necessary to provide a child with the basic necessities of life.

Despite inability to offer adequate compensation to custodians of foster homes, the Welfare Department drew up and enforced an elaborate set of rules and procedures for foster home care calling for adherence to health and sanitation standards and spelling out conditions under which the child was to live.\textsuperscript{86} Other than homes for which the Department paid a monthly stipend, the program also made widespread use of free homes and work homes. In the latter, home operators provided older children with room and board and the children worked for the custodial family. The young people received wages for their work, but were not supposed to be servants.\textsuperscript{87} The legislature's actions in the early 1950s compelled ADC to become an extremely limited program similar to the Mother's Aid program or the general assistance efforts of the counties. The legislature's restrictions on the foster home program moved it toward greater reliance upon the free homes which were products of private benevolence or the work homes in the apprenticeship tradition.

The foster care program in 1951 was becoming a system providing temporary quarters for children in the process of transferal to more permanent arrangements. Most children were very young: 70\% were 10 years old or below.
More than one fourth were the subject of continuing court actions.\textsuperscript{88} The thousands of illegitimate children cut from the ADC rolls did not, as the legislature intended, fill places in foster homes since only 16.5\% or 33 children were illegitimate.\textsuperscript{89} The program was not large enough to accommodate the children in unsuitable homes in the state. It took almost one half of the space available in foster homes in 1951 to accommodate children whose custody was awarded to the Welfare Department or children for whom legal custody was not known.\textsuperscript{90} Only the most destitute found space in Mississippi's foster home program, those children who had a home, even those in homes the state declared legally unsuitable, did not qualify for foster care.

The legislature gradually relaxed restrictions on expenditures in the foster home program during the late 1950s as a result of lobbying by the Foster Care Committee of the Children's Code Commission.\textsuperscript{91} The 1957 special session which withdrew some of the limitations placed on ADC also removed some of the restrictions on foster care, but the monthly boarding payments remained at 1949 levels.\textsuperscript{92} By 1960 the program expanded to provide foster homes for more than 600 children, but the low boarding payments by the state and the inability of local government to provide large sums kept the number of foster homes below demand.\textsuperscript{93}

The fate of child welfare programs in the state, like ADC and foster care, was inextricably linked to the
fortunes of two agencies: the Children's Code Commission and the State Department of Public Welfare. The Welfare Department experienced rapid expansion in size and number of functions during the 1940s. The new state bureaucracy completely overshadowed the old welfare system of local control. In the late 1940s the Department expanded its children's programs rapidly as the legislature made large increases in its appropriations. In the early 1950s the legislature placed serious limitations on the Welfare Department's children's programs and insisted that it undertake economies to reduce the spiraling cost of welfare.

The first major change in the Welfare Department occurred on May 1, 1952, when Willard Bond stepped down from the office of the Commissioner which he had held since 1936. The new Commissioner, J. A. Thigpen, had served in the House of Representatives since 1942. Thigpen informed the Clarion Ledger that he would reduce the number of employees at the Welfare Department. He indicated that the Welfare Department would not hire any new personnel in the foreseeable future. Since the turnover among the Department's staff was large because many employees were young, unmarried women who frequently resigned upon marriage, a hiring freeze would cut the Department's staff rather painlessly.

Between Thigpen's arrival in May 1952 and July 1953 the hiring freeze reduced the Department's staff from
771 to 622. Each county lost at least one employee.\textsuperscript{97} Before the reductions the major Social Security programs had a lower administrative cost in Mississippi than any other state. After the reductions Mississippi was firmly entrenched as the state with the lowest pay for welfare workers and the highest ratio of welfare cases per worker.\textsuperscript{98} The reductions in manpower in the 1950s effectively brought an end to the Department's rapid expansion which had characterized the late 1940s. The early 1950s were a period of austerity throughout the welfare system in Mississippi. In 1950 the Department even strengthened the regulations controlling OAA--always a politically unpopular action.\textsuperscript{99}

The legislature's frugality in the early 1950s made the county boards of welfare increasingly important since the latter made the decisions as to which children resided in unsuitable homes. Made up of local citizens who were usually over fifty, the local county five-man boards had never previously enjoyed such power.\textsuperscript{100} The legislature bypassed the expertise of the welfare workers in order to rely upon county citizens' committees which in organization and function were similar to the nineteenth century trustees of the poor. In the 1940s the concept that local units of democracy were the most appropriate means for the administration of welfare appeared to be doomed, especially after the 1946 legislature stripped the boards
of supervisors of their apprenticeship rights. The 1950s brought a re-emergence of local control.

In 1954 Thigpen wrote:

We of today are so busy making the wheels go round and trying to keep up with the Joneses that we have lost the consciousness of suffering, hunger, and filth . . . we are living in changed times. No more can we individually, or through our churches, take care of the needy. They must be taken care of for we cannot let people die of starvation in America.  

As early as 1932, even the legislature had accepted the fact that individual charity and voluntary agencies were unable to prevent widespread suffering. The concept that people should not starve in Mississippi regardless of cause had from all indications won approval in the 1930s and been acted upon as late as the 1940s. Nevertheless, the lessons of the Depression did not fully take root in Mississippi. In the early 1950s the legislature demonstrated neither deep concern for present suffering nor understanding of the lessons of past experience. It was even moving back toward local control of welfare which had failed so badly in the Depression. Thigpen in 1954 was not calling for new realizations in Mississippi, he was appealing to the citizens of the state not to permit the reaction of the early 1950s to undo two decades of progress. The Welfare Department received increases in its appropriations in the late 1950s, but it did not return to the rapid growth of the late 1940s.

The other major agency promoting child welfare in Mississippi during the 1950s was the Children's Code
Commission. When the state gave formal statutory recognition to the Commission in 1946 it had already achieved major accomplishments such as piloting the Youth Court Act through the legislature. During the 1950s the Commission drew the legislature's attention repeatedly to the human misery which its restrictions on ADC permitted. It consistently pointed out that black children were not receiving equal treatment by the state under the separate but equal doctrine. Its committees lobbied long and hard to preserve the gains in child welfare made in the 1940s while pushing for new programs and children's laws. The Commission did not simply base its appeals on compassion for children. During the 1950s the committee structure of the Commission enabled it to produce detailed professional studies on almost every facet of child welfare in Mississippi. The Commission answered the false rhetoric about ADC with solid empirical evidence to the contrary. There was for example a widespread assumption in the state that ADC encouraged illegitimacy, and that the rolls were filled with adults who refused to work. Even a cursory examination of the program in Mississippi revealed the irrational basis of such assumptions; it was the Children's Code Commission which consistently drove home the facts.

In 1951 the Commission divided into a series of committees each of which addressed a special area of need. The Adoption Committee spoke anywhere and everywhere about
the state's adoption laws, conducted an in-depth study into how the adoption process actually functioned, drew up a proposed statute in 1954, and won legislative approval in 1955. The Children in Trouble Committee produced a detailed report of the detention facilities for children in the state—again, the Committee detailed how the detention system worked in reality, not how it was designed to work. The Children at Home Committee pushed for the adoption of the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act and spoke out against the assault on ADC. Its pamphlet What About These Children? was a clear indication that the idea of a social conscience was not completely in abeyance in the 1950s in Mississippi. The Committee on Day Care boldly called for a system of public supported day care centers, a forlorn hope in a state where the Welfare Department lacked the right of mandatory licensing for private centers. The Foster Care Committee concentrated on lobbying the legislature for increased support for foster care. Its private meetings with members of the Appropriations Committee of the House and the Finance Committee of the Senate on occasion led to positive results.

Funding for the Commission was tenuous. It was subjected to two common phenomena of child welfare organizations in Mississippi: firstly, the state often authorized child welfare activities but did not fund them. The Commission received authorization in 1946 and received
its first state appropriation in 1956.\textsuperscript{108} Secondly, the federal government often stepped in to provide aid to a very worthwhile effort in Mississippi as a temporary measure, but then withdrew leaving the program to the mercy of the state legislature. The Commission received funds by special permission from the Children's Bureau during the early 1950s, but federal authorities emphasized that funding was temporary.\textsuperscript{109} Despite limited funding (a state budget of $25,000 for 1956 and 1957), the Commission managed to play an important role in children's affairs throughout the 1950s. No other voice in the state came out so consistently on the side of the children of Mississippi. The Commission repeatedly protested the repeal of the compulsory education law.\textsuperscript{110} It consistently called for the upgrading of facilities for black children.\textsuperscript{111} Such a course did not endear the Commission with the legislature.

The Commission seems to have been able to pursue such an independent course because of several factors. The lack of state funding during the 1946-1956 period limited the scope of the Commission's activities. During that period, however, it operated free from financial pressure by the state and since the legislature gave the Commission statutory recognition, it spoke as an official organ of state government. The most productive period for the Commission in terms of studies published and success with
the legislature occurred during the 1946-1956 years. Accepting state funds in 1956 may well have been the Commission's most serious error. Secondly, the Commission's records were replete with the names of some of the most prominent men and women in public life in Mississippi. Men like Willard Bond and J. O. Snowden were associated with the Commission; women like Evelyn Gandy, the most successful female politician in the state's history, were also active at various times. In addition the agency was the pet project of Governor Thomas L. Bailey who died in office shortly after the legislature recognized the group. It was difficult indeed to shunt the Children's Code Commission aside as another liberal group whose ideas were imported into the state. It was a Mississippi institution created and supported by influential state residents.

Finally, the Commission dealt with the problems of children; its studies were factual accounts of the needs of children in the state and they seldom strayed into politics. The facts were generally allowed to speak for themselves. Moreover, a commission devoted to the welfare of children had a certain inherent immunity from criticism simply because of the nature of its subject. Even in the political atmosphere of Mississippi in the 1950s, an outright attack upon a group of prominent white citizens working to aid children would have been difficult.
The 1950s were not years of retrenchment in every field of child welfare. The Welfare Department and the Children's Code Commission achieved a measure of success in the field of adoption. The state's adoption law dated from the nineteenth century and required little more of adoptive parents than that they have money to pay court costs and lawyers fees." The court approved legal transfer of custody to new parents who adopted a child with or without the right of inheritance. The court had no supervisory role before or after the adoption. Parents frequently petitioned the court and received permission for adoption on the same day. The law obviously led to numerous unfortunate situations. In 1945 a social worker described two of her experiences:

A Mississippi bootlegger, a drunkard not married to the woman with whom he lived adopted two children. He gave the woman $100. The kids ran away. Wonder if the mother sold them again." I saw a child whose mother and grandmother were feeble-minded given to a non-state approved agency, and two weeks later adopted by a fine family. What will they do when they discover the baby is probably retarded?"

That such incidents were common seems plausible from the frequency of similar reports. The Children's Code Commission, which launched a drive to get a new adoption law soon after its founding, conducted an intensive study of adoptions in 1949 and 1950. The Commission found that most children adopted were white males less than two years old. Only about 20% of the children adopted were black.
A common concept prevalent is that "the Negro takes care of his own," [the Commission explained] and that one more child "given" to a Negro mother grows up a member of the family without benefit of legal action.

The money involved in court procedure, the pattern of common law relationships and illegitimate off-spring, the absence of child placing or maternity homes for Negroes, all may explain why there were six times as many white children as Negro children adopted.117

The records of adoptions in the state demonstrated wide divergence in standards from court to court. Some judges allowed the child, himself, to consent to adoption. In one case a friend of the natural parents consented. Most children were illegitimate, and most were adopted on the same day of the petition filing. State law did not require courts to conduct background investigations of the children or the prospective parents and it was their custom not to do so. According to law the records of the court hearing were open to the public; most were, except in isolated cases in which records of the hearing had disappeared.118

The Commissions's study provided a solid base of evidence for its recommendations to the legislature for a new law.119

While the Commission lobbied for its adoption law, the Welfare Department set out to remedy the lack of adoptive services for black children. In 1953 the Department set up an adoption program for black children. Since the state had no institution dealing with adoption services for blacks and since there were obviously large numbers of
black children who needed the service, the Welfare Department expected a large demand. Inexplicably no such demand developed. Finally, the Department contacted all of the black families who had expressed interest in obtaining a child since the late 1940s. Even that thorough procedure proved unfruitful because the Welfare Department learned that "some had secured babies through relatives and friends and others were sharing their neighbors or friends children and were doubtful if they wanted the legal responsibility of a child." The program remained frustrated until a black social worker in Jackson visited a midwife club meeting. There, she discovered the adoption agency of the black community. The midwives matched unwanted children with aspiring parents. Once the social workers gained the midwives' confidence, they produced lists of unwed mothers who wanted maternity care and adoptive homes for their children and the names of black couples who wanted children. After the meeting with the midwives the state program had a steady stream of parents and children.

The only adoption agency in the state which had the approval of the Welfare Department was the Mississippi Children's Home Society in Jackson. It maintained professional standards such as a one-year waiting period between petition and decree. The institution held a child for at least three weeks before adoption procedures began, and in all cases the Society's staff of social workers
conducted thorough investigations into the backgrounds of the child and the adoptive parents. Several other agencies went into the adoption field in the 1950s but the Welfare Department did not have the authority to compel them to meet minimum standards. The supply of white children was very limited during the 1950s and demand was extraordinarily high. The Director of the Children's Home Society noted in 1954 that fifteen couples applied for every available child. Such a situation led to abuses by unlicensed agencies which went uncontrolled by the Welfare Department. Because of professional standards and reputation for competence, however, the Society remained the largest adoption agency in the state.

In 1955 the legislature approved the Children's Code Commission's adoption bill. The law required that adoptive parents grant inheritance rights to the child. It imposed a ninety day residence period for prospective parents, and a six-month waiting period between petition and decree. It provided for confidentiality of records and required parental consent, "unless . . . the parent so objecting had abandoned or deserted such infant or is mentally or morally, or otherwise unfit to rear and train it. . . ." In addition the law authorized, but did not obligate, the judge to conduct an investigation into the background of the child and the parents as a result of which the judge could refuse to grant permission
to adopt if he deemed adoption adverse to the child's interest.\textsuperscript{126} Although the statute did not require investigations, they quickly became standard procedure, with the Welfare Department conducting them at the request of the court.\textsuperscript{127}

Adoption was the field of child welfare in which the Welfare Department and the Children's Code Commission scored their most conspicuous triumph during the 1950s. Bringing state control to day care was the period's outstanding failure of those interested in promoting improved child care in Mississippi. Day care became increasingly important during the decade. In 1955 approximately 24,000 Mississippi children received care each day in 200 centers, nurseries, kindergartens, and similar institutions.\textsuperscript{128} Before the end of the decade the number of such facilities surpassed the 300 mark and an estimated 30,000 children received care daily.\textsuperscript{129} In 1946 the legislature authorized the Welfare Department to license, inspect, and provide personnel training upon request to day care centers.\textsuperscript{130} Supervision was minimal and entirely voluntary: if a day care center asked for an inspection, the Welfare Department provided service, otherwise the state played no role.\textsuperscript{131} Support for public day care occurred only in a few isolated areas. In 1953 Greenville established a day care facility for its black children with the U.S. Children's Bureau providing funding. Federal commodities supplied food. Local community volunteers provided a building
and fuel, and the working mothers contributed from 25¢ to $8 a week according to ability to pay. 132 It was a measure of the paucity of support for public day care that the Greenville facility was a model center toward which the Welfare Department pointed with pride. 133 The Washington county facility received national publicity as an example of community centered day care. 134 Yet, the Greenville center was the best public day care available in the state. Its physical plant was poorly constructed, funding was uncertain, and the entire project depended for its future on the limited resources of the black community of Greenville. 135 Good day care was available principally in the private sector, and it served whites and most particularly urban whites. Vicksburg, Natchez, McComb, Greenville, and Greenwood had excellent private day care centers for whites. 136 Throughout the 1950s the Welfare Department attempted to promote the idea of mandatory licensing with little success. In 1953 the founding of the Mississippi Pre-School Association created a private, voluntary organization through which the Welfare Department exerted some influence on the care of pre-school children, but the organization's effect was mainly to strengthen the power of the private sector. 137

In addition to foster care and day care the Welfare Department was involved in a number of specialized services to children during the 1950s. Its program of child
welfare services, begun in the 1930s, expanded in the 1940s so that in 1951 the Department had twenty-five child welfare workers in eighteen counties.\textsuperscript{138} The austerities of 1952 and 1953 retarded growth, but in the following year services of child welfare workers were available in forty-one counties.\textsuperscript{139} In June 1961 seventy-five child welfare workers were at work in fifty-nine counties serving 15,019 children, more than seven times as many as in June 1950.\textsuperscript{140} The child welfare worker's duties change little from decade to decade. The job involved co-ordinating the various sources of child welfare in order to meet children's needs including financial assistance, neglect, abuse, physical handicaps, and illness of the parent or the child.\textsuperscript{141} Child welfare services suffered less than any other major state welfare program from the hardships imposed by the legislature during the 1950s. In fact, its overall growth was impressive. Child welfare services and child welfare workers were very popular at the local level. They performed useful services which were visible to the community and on every occasion when a child welfare unit fell vacant the county petitioned for a restoration of service.\textsuperscript{142}

In 1952 the Welfare Department began an expanded program to meet the needs of unwed mothers. In that year the federal government made funds available to the state for aid to unwed mothers in boarding or maternity homes.\textsuperscript{143} At the time the only in-state resource for the care of
unwed mothers was the King's Daughters Home founded in 1912. The Home's building, which pre-dated the agency's founding, was in need of extensive repair. Its admission policies barred blacks, women with venereal disease, those with any prior reform school or correctional institution record, women who were or had been married, and those who had a previous pregnancy. Women had to arrive at the institution before the seventh month of pregnancy and remain for six weeks—the King's Daughters were not running a "lying in" hospital. The Welfare Department ran a survey of the women who requested maternity home services and discovered that one-third requested aid after the seventh month. One-fourth were married or divorced and one-fifth had a previous pregnancy. None of those women were acceptable to the only in-state maternity home, nor were black women.

The King's Daughters Home agreed to renovate its physical plant to meet the minimum standards for maternity homes issued by the Welfare Department. By 1958 the old institution was rebuilt, licensed by the state, and given the services of a state social worker. In 1957 the Children's Home Society founded the Crestview maternity home in Jackson giving the state two licensed maternity homes. Crestview was a modern facility meeting all of the specifications of the Welfare Department but like the King's Daughters Home, it admitted whites only.
In 1954 the Welfare Department undertook a new program, homemaker service. Public homemakers had been one of the most popular and useful services provided by WPA. The service had disappeared in Mississippi with the closing of that federal agency. Although the program was an extremely valuable children's program it had the unfortunate aspect of high cost since one homemaker was unable to provide service to a large number of families. The Mississippi program grew slowly; in 1959 eleven counties had fourteen homemakers. The program was completely federally funded since the state did not allocate any funds and the lack of adequate financing prevented the program from approaching need.  

Another program spawned in the New Deal era returned to Mississippi in 1954 when in reaction to a severe drought the state began to co-operate with the federal surplus commodity program. Initially the food program was a modest undertaking in Grenada, Lafayette, Rankin, and Tishomingo counties. The Department of Agriculture provided food; the Welfare Department paid the transportation cost and distributed the commodities at the local level. The county board of supervisors had the basic authority to accept or reject the program and it set the qualifying rules. If the board chose to accept, it decided to extend benefits to public assistance recipients or to all needy, and it selected a year-round plan or winter distribution. Under the federal commodity program
local government made basic decisions but options were limited.

In June 1961, sixty-one counties distributed surplus commodities year-round and five employed the winter program. February was the month of greatest need. In that month in 1957, 257,969 people received commodities--in 1958, 623,002; in 1959, 441,242. Thus in February 1958 more than one in four Mississippians received aid in the form of surplus commodities. The state continued to lack a general assistance program and as in the early 1940s the food program quickly became the basic general relief program of the state. After 1954 the federal food program became a basic element of life for the poor people of Mississippi. In 1955 the legislature passed a joint resolution requesting that the national government redesign its commodity program to distribute food through the retail trade system. It was a call for a food stamp program like that which had superseded commodities in the 1940s.

Many services and programs for children in Mississippi operated outside of the jurisdiction of the Welfare Department. Under the Youth Court Act services for delinquent youth developed rapidly during the 1950s. The Youth Court served 377 cases during 1946; in 1960 it handled ten times that number. By 1955 almost all counties had a youth counselor who operated as the parole officer for the Training Schools and as a social worker for the Youth Court. Social services were made available to the
court in every county from the Welfare Department or through a youth counselor. The system expanded over the years so that in 1960 it was the exception rather than the rule for a court to try a child under criminal proceedings. In 1952 the system overcame a major obstacle when the state Supreme Court ruled the act constitutional. Opponents charged that the informal hearings in a civil court protected neither the child's rights nor the public's safety. Since the act did grant original jurisdiction to the Youth Court, a civil court, in cases which often involved criminal acts, there had been a genuine question about the validity of the statute.

In 1960 Mississippi had a functioning juvenile court system providing informal hearings for youth offenders. In 1957 the Youth Court conducted entirely informal proceedings in more than one-half of delinquency cases and in 38% of neglect cases. The entire system was geared toward reformation rather than punishment. Justice for youthful offenders improved remarkably in only a decade; by 1961 Mississippi had a Youth Court system reflecting the dominant juvenile correctional theories of the time.

The system, however, was far from perfect. The Youth Court did not hear blacks at the same rate as whites; 60% of the children in Youth Court in 1957 were white, while more than one-half of the children held in jails were black. Whites were more likely to receive the more
humane treatment of the Youth Court if accused of a crime and were less likely to be incarcerated in a jail while awaiting trial or as punishment. Cases of children being sent to Parchman continued to occur. In 1954 the Memphis Commercial Appeal reported that a sixteen-year old youth was sent to Parchman without consultation with the Youth Court. The youngster's plight was newsworthy in 1954; in 1944 it was perfectly acceptable to send children to the Penitentiary. By the end of the decade, the Oakley facility was expanded to include housing for girls so that the last segment of the delinquent youth population received reformatory care rather than a prison sentence. Perhaps the major problem in the treatment of delinquent children was the condition of detention facilities for youngsters who awaited Youth Court hearings. Mississippi Laws of 1946 contained the following section.

No child can be placed in or committed to any jail or other place of detention for adults unless in the opinion of the court, his habits or conduct is a menace to other persons, or necessary to assure attendance of such child at court; but he shall not be placed in a room or ward with adults. Any county may from its general fund build or maintain a detention center.

The law was another example of the tendency of the state to adopt statutes before means were available to make the laws operative. No county built such facilities, and since jail was the only available detention facility, most localities ignored the law. In 1954 a survey of jails by the Children's Code Commission inquired if
prisoners were given clean mattresses. In a reply that exemplifies both the dearth of local concern and the nature of conditions, more than one-half responded no. One-fourth replied that they did not keep the bedding clean. One-half of the respondents informed the Commission that they did not provide separate facilities for children. The Commission published the results of its survey and called for county governments to construct separate facilities for juveniles. The lack of detention facilities for children awaiting trial or disposition of a case was certainly an important problem, but that was the major problem in juvenile justice addressed by the Commission in 1954. It was an indication of the extraordinary progress in the state in the field of juvenile justice that only ten years before when Governor Bailey's Committee began to organize, the problem which needed attention was not a few days residence in a seedy county jail but the very real prospect of confinement in an adult prison or in an overcrowded, underfinanced Training School.

In the 1950s the juvenile laws of the state took a giant step backward when the legislature repealed the compulsory school attendance law. The 1956 repeal measure was a favorite of the rabid segregationist legislators whose victory meant that a state truancy statute would not compel white children to attend integrated schools. The law damaged more than the public school
system. In 1958 Youth Court judges and counselors reported that when asked about school attendance children often replied that no law forced them to go.¹⁶⁸ Most importantly, the statute's repeal played havoc with the state's already inadequate child labor law which in one of its most progressive features allowed youth 14-16 years old to work only if they were meeting the state school attendance laws. The repeal freed that group for employment.¹⁶⁹ The child labor statute, which remained largely unchanged from its original 1924 form, was so narrowly defined by the Mississippi Supreme Court that it was largely ineffective. For example the state workmen's compensation statute provided for double benefits if the victim suffered injury while working in violation of the state child labor law: not a single claim was so filed during the 1950s.¹⁷⁰ The Mississippi Report to the 1960 White House Conference commented, "our Child Labor Law is so weak it is difficult to violate."¹⁷¹

Many of the traditional child welfare programs continued to function in the 1950s largely unchanged from their forms in previous decades. The Board of Health continued to provide all school children with a physical examination and its infant and maternal care program remained active. The number of midwives declined to slightly more than 1,000; their services were of great importance only in the delta.¹⁷² The Crippled Children's
Service reached more than 12,000 children in 1957; it spent in excess of one-half million dollars yearly principally in the fight against polio. The school lunch program also continued to function throughout the 1950s. At the beginning of the decade the program in Mississippi reached about 100,000 children daily during the school year; at decade's end the program served about 200,000 children each day. Mississippi failed to adopt the medical vendor payments plan authorized by Congress in 1950. The program to provide medical aid to public assistance recipients was generally ignored in the South; Tennessee and Alabama adopted limited vendor payments plans in 1958 and were the first to do so in the Southeast.

In the 1950s one traditional source of child welfare activities in Mississippi, the private orphanages, underwent important modifications. The vastly improved medical services in the state plus the development of public welfare for children sharply reduced both the number of orphans and the number of orphans who required care in an institution. In 1955 the Methodist Home contained only two true orphans. The private agencies became institutions for dependent children who required temporary care. Despite the decreased demand, in 1953 the Pentecostal churches built a new custodial facility, the Tupelo Children's Mansion. It was built, maintained, and supplied with children through consultation with the Welfare
Department. By the late 1950s the private agencies had lost their once dominant position. In 1959 they cared for 754 children while the state reached thousands indirectly and cared for almost 700 in foster homes. During the 1950s the Baptist and Methodist facilities reorganized their programs around the cottage plan rather than the dormitory style of care. The Sisters of St. Paul de Vincent who founded St. Mary's Orphanage for girls in 1847 also completely remodeled their facilities and updated its program. The institutions modified their function as well as their physical make-up during the 1950s, but suffered because white orphans were declining in numbers and when available were rapidly adopted. Since the private institutions continued to insist on a whites only policy, the great untapped source of the black community did not flow into the orphanages to replace the whites. The need in the state in the late 1950s was for temporary care of dependent children which the state foster homes provided as well as the orphanages and for services to black children which the orphanages declined to undertake. In 1959 the orphanages operated at 76% of capacity.

The 1950s in Mississippi saw the decline of the private institutions, a concerted effort by the legislature to restrict ADC and the foster home program, an end to the Bond era at the Welfare Department, and the repeal
of the compulsory school attendance law. During the same
decade the Children's Code Commission spoke out author-
itatively and intelligently on behalf of children. The
Youth Court reached maturity. The Board of Health contin-
ued its child welfare programs seemingly immune to politi-
cal attacks heaped on other welfare agencies. The com-
modity distribution program returned to the state provid-
ing a basic assistance program that reached thousands of
children. More than anything, the decade in child wel-
fare represented a loss of the upward momentum which,
begun in the Depression, had carried the state by the
late 1940s to the point at which it was beginning to ad-
dress the most acute needs of the child population, even
the black population. In 1950 the state stepped back
from accepting responsibility for treating the needs of
all its children. Instead of exploring and developing
new means of meeting the needs of dependent children,
the legislature resurrected the concept of local control
of child welfare. After 1950 those interested in child
welfare in Mississippi struggled primarily to maintain
the advances of the post-Depression era.
NOTES: CHAPTER V


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CHAPTER VI

POLITICS, POVERTY, AND RACE; CHILD WELFARE IN MISSISSIPPI 1962-1972

By the 1960s ADC became the most extensive and expensive public welfare program in America. Concern about its seemingly inexhaustible ability to expand in number of recipients and cost led to restrictive measures being applied by Congress during the 1950s. Mississippi, as we have seen, followed the national trend with a series of measures in the early 1950s which centered upon a suitable home provision. The state so carefully controlled ADC that it continued to serve a population reminiscent of the early 1940s.

In 1961 the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare touched off a crisis in Mississippi with a ruling that invalidated unsuitable home provisions in some state ADC regulations. HEW forbade state policies which denied ADC payments to children permitted to remain in an unsuitable home. Mississippi had refined its unsuitable home provision during the 1950s through a series of acts of the legislature and finally arrived at the rule that if a woman had an illegitimate child while receiving ADC the Welfare Department stopped its support payments. The
birth of the illegitimate child constituted adequate evidence of an unsuitable home severing the state's relationship with the entire family. During the 1950s the unsuitable home provision removed more than 8,000 children from the ADC rolls in Mississippi. The HEW ruling invalidated the Mississippi law because under its provisions the state declared that a child lived in an unsuitable environment and then, in effect, condemned the child to remain in that situation. The federal ruling provided for two possible alternatives if the state wished to retain its unsuitable home statute: the state had to either continue ADC payments under such circumstances or create a legal framework which allowed the state to remove children from unsuitable homes and provide them with appropriate living arrangements. Since taking either course required changes in state laws, Congress delayed the effect of the HEW ruling until September 1962 so that a regular session of the legislature could address the problem.

Unfortunately, the 1962 legislature met under extraordinary circumstances. In 1961, blacks employed sit-ins, demonstrations, and freedom rides to express opposition to continued official segregation, and time was running out for the beginning of state compliance with Brown v. The Board of Education. Several blacks pressed their cases for entry into the all-white state universities. Governor Barnett who assumed office in 1960 was an acknowledged
segregationist. He maintained close ties to the White Citizens' Council which even had access to state funds under his administration. In such a setting the ADC suitable home controversy, which might have been easily resolved by a few changes in state law, became a major political issue.

In 1962 ADC children in Mississippi were more than 79% black and about 20% illegitimate. It was a black program and thus open to threats of elimination as punishment for racial unrest. Ending ADC also could help stimulate what was already a massive migration of blacks from the state, and the entire confrontation could be fought out over illegitimacy—an issue which touched almost as many sensitive public concerns as race. Thus the program was an ideal target for those who wished to maintain white supremacy in the state.

On September 6, 1961, Tom Ethridge, whose column appeared in the Jackson Clarion Ledger, commented:

Another way of looking at it is that taxpayers might save money by getting out of the business of subsidizing Negro bastardy. Once separated from our welfare rolls, many immoral mothers and their illegitimate offspring might migrate to Chicago, Detroit or other "liberal" areas. Thus, we could be rid of undesirable elements and the ultimate tax savings might offset the so-called $18 million loss.

On September 9, 1961, the Jackson Daily News editorialized that if slum landlords could be forced to upgrade housing for welfare recipients:

Why then, please cannot welfare funds be withheld to make the recipient meet the challenges of his individual responsibilities—
namely that able bodied at least attempt to make an honest living and the promiscuous mamas to cease their bedroom bastardizing?6

The Memphis Commercial Appeal reported in August 1961 that several leaders of the Mississippi legislature had stated that the state would not back down; rather the legislature would refuse to revise the law, let the program expire in Mississippi, and place the entire responsibility for 62,000 children, "in the federal government's lap."7

On February 8, 1962, after six months of such reports, the issue finally came to debate in the House of Representatives, the seat of segregationist power in state government. Representative Fox of Claiborn County, who had sponsored the 1954 unsuitable home bill, informed the House, "I'm not going to be a party to making it advantageous to people who refuse to live by the moral code of this state."8 Representative Martin of Monroe County commented, "We already have a deplorable situation and this bill [to revise the statute] gives additional provision for prostitution."9 According to the New Orleans Times Picayune race rather than morality was the issue under debate in the House: "Staunch segregationist in the House fought the measure on the grounds that most of the illegitimates are Negroes."10 Debate on the bill was so intense that the House narrowly escaped defeating the perfunctory Thursday motion to adjourn until Monday. Voting before the weekend recess, the House in a surprising tally approved the measure
to comply with federal guidelines by three votes.\textsuperscript{11} Three
months later segregationists in the Senate attempted to
reinstate the unsuitable home provision as a rider to the
Welfare Department's appropriation bill, but they met with
no success.\textsuperscript{12} The Senate eventually passed the House re-
visions of Mississippi's unsuitable home law with only five
dissenting votes.\textsuperscript{13}

Militant segregationists, at the pinnacle of their
power in state affairs in 1962, failed by only three votes
to end the ADC program in Mississippi. That failure, so
remarkable in light of their success in many other vital
areas of state policy, stemmed from a misreading of the
extent of support which ADC had accumulated during its
twenty years of service to children. Even if ADC was pre-
dominantly black and contained a large number of illegiti-
mates, it had powerful advocates in Mississippi.

Outside the capital, newspapers did not voice over-
whelming support for the anti-ADC legislators. The
Tupelo Daily Journal scoffed at the whole effort as one
more silly confrontation with the federal government the
outcome of which was perfectly predictable by anyone who
read Mississippi history.\textsuperscript{14} The Lincoln County Advertiser,
a local paper in south Mississippi, commented that the
legislature was about to dump ADC on the county, not the
federal government. It noted that someone had to feed
hungry people, especially hungry children.\textsuperscript{15} Both the
Commercial Appeal, the most widely circulated newspaper
in north Mississippi, and the *Times Picayune*, widely circulated in the south, reacted negatively to the segregationist onslaught against ADC as did the delta's most respected newspaper the Greenville *Delta Democrat Times*. At least three arguments against the cutoff of ADC emerged from the newspapers: the cutoff would damage the state economy; the local governments could not assume the burden of aid to needy children, and the state had a moral obligation to see that children did not suffer within its borders.

Besides the press support for ADC, a number of individuals and agencies spoke out against the termination of the program. Lieutenant Governor Johnson used the humanitarian appeal, "The hounds of hunger follow the illegitimate as well as the legitimate child." He also asked a Senate committee to consider the economic effect of ending ADC on county merchants. The Welfare Department used a similar appeal in repeatedly pointing out that ADC constituted an $18 million state payroll. Some people challenged the basic assumptions of the anti-ADC legislators. A Union County Representative pointed out that at least 70% of the children on ADC were legitimate, a fact often overlooked or misrepresented by the program's opponents. Another legislator, after hearing constant references to how ADC made illegitimacy profitable, called for a poll to determine how many in the assembly were bringing up children on $11.90 a month. In 1962 ADC
was much too much an integral part of the socio-economic system of Mississippi to permit its elimination, and there was widespread acceptance of the concept that the state had a responsibility to insure the survival of dependent and destitute children. Not even the severest political pressure applied in an emotional political year could alter those facts.

Although they had failed to strike down the entire ADC program, legislative conservatives were not powerless, and they proceeded to make 1962 a year that anyone interested in child welfare in Mississippi would never forget. The legislature passed a revision of the unsuitable home law which altered the statute only slightly to make foster home care a legal alternative for children found in unsuitable homes. The new statute required the Welfare Department to report unsuitable home cases to the Youth Court, and it gave that system authority under broad definitions to remove children from their homes.22 The law was a legal justification to obtain ADC federal funds. It did not create a realistic alternative because the legislature did not allow the Welfare Department to place large numbers of children in foster homes.

A frequently voiced objection to ADC was the excessive cost, but under the 1962 matching formula the state supplied about 20% while its obligations to the foster home program called for Jackson to pay 75% of the monthly boarding fee.23 In practice, that meant the state fulfilled
its obligations to a dependent child under ADC for approximately $3 per month for the direct payment. Administrative cost under ADC was approximately $5 per month.\textsuperscript{24} Under the foster home plan the state paid about $23 per month.\textsuperscript{25} ADC was obviously a less expensive method of dealing with dependent children. In 1962 the legislature expressed its intentions by applying severe restrictions to the growth of the foster home program.\textsuperscript{26} The federal government permitted the continuation of ADC payments to children in unsuitable homes while they awaited movement to a more appropriate environment. Consequently, the legal fiction of the foster home alternative spared the state the cost of foster homes and permitted the state to enjoy ADC federal funding while continuing to harass ADC parents who violated, in the words of Representative Fox, "the moral code of the state."

In 1962 the legislature sliced $1.5 million from the Welfare Department's request. It appropriated only $24.5 million for state welfare which marked the first decrease in the Department's biennial funding since its founding in 1936.\textsuperscript{27} The reduction in funding struck at a particular inopportune time because the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act provided for an increased liberalization of the federal matching formula. The amendments sought to upgrade social services offered to ADC recipient families by providing that the federal government would pay
75% of the cost of social service work under ADC if the states undertook intensive case work services. Progress toward that goal at the state level was measured in Washington by the number of cases handled by each ADC social worker. The federal guidelines required caseworkers to specialized— that is, they were to work only on ADC. Under the program the federal government required the states by 1967 to have each ADC worker serving an average caseload of 60 ADC families. In 1962 the average social worker in Mississippi treated 395 cases of all types.\textsuperscript{28} Achieving the goals of the 1962 Social Security amendments in Mississippi demanded a significant increase in state as well as federal sources of income.

The 1962 legislature not only reduced the Welfare Department's appropriation but it also refused to repeal a 1940 statute which bound the Welfare Department to an administrative budget not to exceed 10% of the total appropriation. Repeal of that provision was absolutely necessary to achieve federal guidelines under the 1962 amendments. The Welfare Department attempted to meet federal guidelines by reducing social services in other areas to concentrate on ADC, but the federal goals were unrealistic in a Mississippi context. Before the end of 1963 the Welfare Department lost the increased federal funding for ADC social services because it was not offering adequate social services to ADC cases. The federal action served no one and proved only that convoluted logic was
not a condition peculiar to Mississippi politicians. An extremely important casualty of the 1962 atmosphere was the Children's Code Commission which had played an important role in child welfare in Mississippi since the 1940s. It sponsored state participation in the White House Conference of 1960, produced an excellent, and as usual straightforwardly critical, *Mississippi Report on Children and Youth* and lobbied against the cutoff of ADC. Two bills introduced in 1962 to abolish the Commission failed to pass, but the legislature did not fund the Commission. In July 1962 it quickly folded.

In view of the Children's Code Commission's past accomplishments, its demise attracted little public reaction. Commission members explained to the press that they had not done an appropriate job of public relations so people were unaware of the Commission's accomplishments. One Commission member explained that the legislature seldom listened anymore, anyway. The *Clarion Ledger* reported that an important reason for the legislative cutoff was attendance by Commission members at a "conference in Washington where left-wing ideas were expressed." In the political atmosphere of Mississippi in the early 1960s, the Children's Code Commission was no longer tenable. It was not a period which valued individuals or groups who called for action on the basis of well researched facts—even if the subject was children's welfare, especially if the subject was the welfare of black children.
Having reduced the funding of ADC, prevented an expansion of social services to the recipients, and finally disposed of the Children's Code Commission, the legislature also placed an absolute limit on the amount of funds which the state spent on ADC.\(^{34}\) In another 1962 action the legislature strengthened the effort to compel support by deserting parents.\(^{35}\) Mississippi had been a pioneer in the field of special investigations units which ferreted out deserting fathers and forced support payments. Indeed the state constructed a very complex process to deal with deserting parents whose children received ADC.

In a typical case in 1961, the woman came to the welfare office and filled out an application for aid at which time she completed a form reporting the deserting father to the district attorney, the county attorney, the sheriff, and the grand jury. That information was turned over to the Special Investigations Unit as well; it sought the whereabouts of the father. The next circuit court session called upon the woman to testify in her husband's case. If the court found the father guilty of desertion, it ordered the father to pay support payments. Desertion was a felony in Mississippi so that courts could order the offender to prison, but the usual court action stressed obtaining support for children.\(^{36}\)

Governor Barnett appointed a special committee in 1961 to study the state procedures dealing with deserting
parents in order to see how the system could be altered to produce more support orders. In 1962 the committee reported and as a result the laws regarding desertion were changed so that with or without the mother's co-operation the district attorney could pursue a support order. The legislature gave the Youth Court the power to initiate suits against parents who deserted their children. The 1962 revisions also allowed the mother or the state to compel support from natural as well as legal fathers. The applicant now had to identify the father of her illegitimate child and sue him for support. Hundreds of women refused to name the father of their children or to initiate support proceedings. The Welfare Department dropped those women from the ADC rolls. The investigations unit pursued thousands of cases during the 1960s; it conducted more than 1,700 investigations in 1962--its most active year during the decade.

Although 1962 marked the high point of state pressure on ADC, the legislature continued throughout the decade to develop legal means to prevent the ADC rolls from becoming a refuge for irresponsible parents who had illegitimate children or deserted their children. For example in 1964 the legislature made it a criminal offense to produce an illegitimate offspring. A first offense subjected both the mother and father to a $250 fine and ninety days imprisonment. A second offense could lead to six months in jail. The law required the Board of Health
to report illegitimate births to the county and district attorney on the tenth day of each month. For all its seeming stringency the 1964 law represented a moderate response to the desire in the legislature for an illegitimacy law. The 1962 proposals for such a statute included sterilization clauses, a concept which the 1964 legislature refused to entertain.

During the 1960s the judiciary offered some protections to the ADC recipients of Mississippi. Most of the restrictive features of the Mississippi ADC program eventually reached the United States Supreme Court in cases arising in other states. The Court was especially active in the field after 1966. It struck down the man-in-the-house rule in an Alabama case in 1967; the concept was first employed in 1962 in Mississippi although it never became a major bar to ADC like unsuitable home provisions and the deserting father statutes. The Court invalidated lengthy residence requirements for ADC in 1969 thus terminating Mississippi's one-year requirement. The effect on the Mississippi program was small inside the state, but many recipients who had left the state and were receiving ADC benefits from Mississippi now received payment from their resident states. The decision actually relieved Mississippi of a sizeable burden. In 1969 in a Connecticut case the Court overturned ADC provisions which compelled a woman to co-operate in suits seeking to force support for a deserted child on penalty of
forfeiting a grant. That practice which had disqualified many children in Mississippi was discontinued in the state in 1971 after a welfare recipient brought suit to compel the Department to follow the Court's decision.47 In June 1972 the United States District Court for South Mississippi ruled that the Welfare Department must grant ADC to sixteen and seventeen year olds who were not attending school. The court found that since the state lacked a compulsory attendance law the provision posed an unreasonable condition of eligibility for ADC.48

Judicial decisions produced a liberalization of ADC requirements during the 1960s, but the Social Security Act continued to place emphasis on the rights of the states to control policy. The state of Mississippi had so many tools at its disposal to control ADC that an occasional blow by the courts had little effect on the level of support maintained by the program. In July 1961 the ADC rolls in Mississippi contained 63,731 children. The 1962 legislative assault actually reduced the rolls so that in July 1962 they included 62,710.49 The average support payment per child varied very little during the early 1960s averaging about $11.50 per month.50 In 1966 payments fell to $9.81 in July and there were no significant increases until July 1969 when payments rose to about $12.50 per child per month.51 Throughout the decade the percent of need varied from 27-40% and during most months payments
represented about 30%. Increases in the support levels generally reflected increases in the federal share, but even federal increases were occasionally offset by reductions in the state appropriation. 52

One of the major developments in ADC at the national level during the 1960s was an attempt to devise programs which led to the employment of the ADC household head. In the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, Congress created the Work Experience and Training program to provide employment training and opportunities as well as adult education to unemployed breadwinners of families with dependent children. The Welfare Department conducted the program through the Mississippi Employment Security Commission. In 1967 the program served 3,000 individuals most of whom were ADC heads of households. 53 The program recipients often had difficulty in finding a job after training, and a shortage of trained personnel to provide adult education limited that portion of the program. 54

The 1967 amendments to the Social Security Act stressed building a broad base of working adults among ADC recipients. As a result the amendments revised the regulations to permit recipients an increased amount of income from employment without reducing ADC grants. Youngsters over fourteen kept their entire earnings without affecting the grants. 55 The 1967 amendments also created the Work Incentive Program to provide employment training to ADC heads of households. In Mississippi, the Welfare Department
conducted a program-wide survey of its recipients to determine the number of employables and with the co-operation of the Employment Security Commission opened the WIN program in Oktibbeha, Clay, Lowndes, and Hinds counties with a capacity of four hundred.\textsuperscript{56} In 1972 WIN operated in the same counties with the same capacity.\textsuperscript{57} The federally funded program brought little change to ADC because of its limited size. In one respect WIN made an important contribution to child welfare in Mississippi because it authorized the state to provide day care for the children of WIN enrollees. Thus the state received its first government sponsored program of day care providing services to about 125 children each month.\textsuperscript{58}

The work programs had some basis in need in Mississippi, but less so than in any other state. Mississippi had the nation's highest percentage of employment in ADC families. All other states had adopted provisions of the Social Security Act which permitted payment of a grant to the ADC caretaker, the head of the household, and thus adopted the name Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Mississippi did not do so; there the program remained ADC. The adult caretaker worked if possible, not as a matter of government regulations but as a matter of practical necessity. The whole thrust of the 1967 amendments was to give ADC recipients a job so that they could begin to enjoy the psychological as well as the monetary benefits
of being a wage-earning, contributing member of the community. The majority of Mississippi's black ADC household heads had always been employed. Their problem was low wages and the unavailability of adequately paying jobs. The work experience, incentive, and training programs did not genuinely address those basic problems of employment.

Efforts by the national government to direct the program toward increased social services and to provide employment opportunities were useless as long as the state retained the power to fund and to administer the over-all program. The legislature was determined to keep ADC at a level which would meet the minimum requirements necessary to obtain federal matching funds. The state had accepted the principle that it had the responsibility to care for dependent children, but it was unwilling to go beyond a minimum effort to meet that obligation. In 1971 the total number of recipients was 60.0 per 1,000 which placed Mississippi behind only five states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia in the percent of its population receiving ADC.\textsuperscript{59} Mississippi distributed ADC to a large percent of its population, but in most years during the 1960s it refused more requests for aid than it granted.\textsuperscript{60} Since the 1940s Mississippi had been the consistent leader among the southern states in percent of population receiving ADC. The basic inadequacy of Mississippi's program stemmed from the meager financial support provided
to the individual child. In March 1971 the average ADC payment per child was $13.95. Mississippi ranked behind all states, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia—only Puerto Rico paid less per month. At the same time the expenditures per inhabitant in Mississippi was $8.15, a rate less than that in only four other states: Indiana, Arkansas, Alabama, and South Carolina.

The widespread use of ADC even with low monthly payments represented a major effort on the part of the state in the late 1940s. The state was very poor; the federal matching formulas were not nearly so generous as in later decades. The ineffective nature of the program in the 1950s and 1960s, however, cannot be explained as the result of poverty and inadequate federal assistance. Federal matching formulas advanced to the point by the 1960s at which they paid between eighty and ninety percent of the grant outlays and Washington paid 75% of the cost of social services if the state chose to accept such aid. Furthermore the state underwent a thorough-going alteration in the post-war years. In the late 1940s the state per capita income was slightly less than one-half the national average. In 1959 it approached 60% and in 1971 it was approximately 67% and rising rapidly in relation to the national average. The economic realities fully justified Mississippi's position as the state paying the lowest average ADC grant, if one accepts the Social Security Act's assumption that care for dependent children should
at least partially reflect the economic level of the state. The economic realities did not justify Mississippi paying one-sixth of a similar grant in Minnesota.64

It was the public policy of the state government that prevented the program from approaching need during the 1960s. Mississippians adopted such a public policy because they, like other Americans, became concerned about the cost of welfare; that factor was especially important in producing the restrictions placed on ADC in the early 1950s. In addition, the program suffered in Mississippi because it served blacks and illegitimate children. The legislature imposed many of the restrictions adopted during the 1960s because the program served those two groups. During the 1960s ADC became one more area of struggle between the black population and the emerging white majority. Whites employed ADC to compel blacks to accept white attitudes. Accepting an ADC grant in Mississippi subjected a recipient to a rigid set of regulations which attempted to install the values of the white nuclear family. The ambivalent attitude that Americans have always had toward welfare which produces an outpouring of humanitarian aid and condemnation of the recipient simultaneously also affected ADC in Mississippi. The state accepted as a matter of principle the duty to aid dependent children. Even the patently racist assault on the program in the volatile atmosphere of 1962 could not overturn that commitment. Yet, aid granted was meager, and accepting that aid
subjected the client to public and private humiliation.
In 1967 a Mississippi woman told the Poverty Hearings of
the U.S. Senate how she and her fellow poor people in
Mississippi felt about the state's welfare program:

The welfare program--first you be disen-
couraged in the first place, because you be asked
I don't know what all kinds of questions--you
know, how long has it been since you seen a man
and all these kind of things. I don't know what
all. All your dignity be took away from you in
the welfare office.65

The assault on ADC had an important impact throughout
the child welfare system in Mississippi. Nowhere was that
more evident than in the foster home program, which pro-
vided the only state resource available for the custodial
care of dependent children. In 1965, 65% of the children
in foster homes were abandoned, neglected, or exploited by
their parents. Handicapped children whose families were
unable to cope with their problems and children released to
the custody of the Welfare Department for adoption made up
an important segment of the foster home population. Some
children received foster care under temporary, emergency
conditions.66 A large number of the children in foster
homes came to the system as a result of the 1966 Battered
Child Amendment to the Youth Court Act. Under its pro-
visions, reporting of abused, or suspected abuse of child-
ren, became mandatory for specified medical personnel. The
reports to the Youth Court were turned over to the Welfare
Department which provided counseling to the family. If
that failed to correct the situation, the Youth Court removed the child from his home or transferred custody to an interested party or the state.\textsuperscript{67} Such action often led to a foster home.

The legislature placed an absolute limit on the amount of funds devoted to the program so that it grew very slowly in the early 1960s. In July 1961 the homes served 650; in July 1965, 797.\textsuperscript{68} The low level of boarding payments blocked genuine expansion. Boarding payments remained slightly below $40 per month at roughly the same level of the late 1940s.\textsuperscript{69} After 1965 the state raised the support payments and allowed a moderate expansion so that in June 1969 the program served 1,050 children at which time the Welfare Department admitted only the most desperate cases from a long list of dependent, abandoned, and neglected children who needed the service.\textsuperscript{70}

One major service of the Welfare Department which grew rapidly during the 1960s was adoption. The state program initiated in the 1950s tapped a large unmet need in the state. The effort reached only black children until 1965 when the state began to offer white handicapped children and whites over six for adoption.\textsuperscript{71} The Welfare Department handed white infants over to the Mississippi Children's Home Society. A provision in the 1955 law which required parental consent handicapped the Welfare Department since it often served abandoned children. A 1968 revision of the statute remedied the problem by giving the Welfare
Department a procedure through which it terminated parental rights. The Department's standards for adoption were not restrictive; the Welfare Department insisted from the beginning that adoptive families did not have to be above average in income. Previous divorce did not disqualify an applicant nor did the presence of other children in the home. The Department required all adoptive parents to have a church affiliation in order to insure religious training for the child. The Welfare Department's procedure required a thorough study of the background of the family and a lengthy probationary period with observation by staff before the final decree.

The program expanded rapidly in the 1960s, but it began to level off at approximately seventy adoptions a year in 1970. The number of available children was much smaller than the number of parents who wanted children in the 1960s. Adoption in the late 1960s was perhaps the only child welfare service in the state's history to reach a point at which there were more people and institutions offering a service than children needing it.

Child Welfare services offered by the Welfare Department had a history during the 1960s which reflected some of the tendencies apparent in the ADC program. The Welfare Department did reach a large number of children. In 1968 Mississippi public child welfare services reached more children per 10,000 than all other southern states except Louisiana and Virginia. The state had the
highest rate of "in home" service in the nation which was indicative of its type of program. 76 Many states spent funds on expensive custodial care in foster homes or institutions. Mississippi had to concentrate on in-home attention which was relatively inexpensive.

Children served most often suffered from neglect, abuse, or exploitation; almost one fourth needed aid because of parental inadequacy and another large group were children referred to the Welfare Department by the courts. 77 In 1967, fifty-eight counties had full time child welfare staff. Before the end of the decade more than 30,000 children received child welfare services each year. 78 Loss of funds and personnel diverted into ADC or in trying to maintain the foster care program hampered the growth of child welfare services throughout the 1960s. 79

The Welfare Department undertook a very slow expansion of its homemaker services during the decade. In 1964 the state had only eleven homemakers; in 1969 there were thirty-two. 80 In 1968, 800 children received the homemaker aid which placed Mississippi above thirty-three other states in such services. 81 The advantages of such a service were numerous. It, perhaps more than any other program, actually made tangible contributions to strengthening family life. Homemakers taught a woman how to run a household and served as substitute mothers when necessary. The alternative to such services was often removal of the child from his own home. 82
The state continued to provide care for unwed mothers at the King's Daughters Home in Natchez and Crestview in Jackson. The state also began to provide counseling to unwed fathers and it referred many individuals to private family planning sources. In 1971 the Welfare Department served sixty-eight mothers at the two in-state homes or in homes in the large cities in adjacent states. The facilities for unwed mothers in the state remained inadequate to meet demand. Care for unwed mothers was one of the few areas of child welfare in Mississippi which continued to employ facilities available in Memphs, Mobile, and New Orleans. There were thousands of illegitimate children born in Mississippi each year but the pressure for the services to unwed mothers was alleviated somewhat because many poor people and many blacks did not look upon illegitimacy as a particular social evil. In the white community where the old taboos were less stringent but still important, the illegitimacy rate was very low.

Most of the services offered by the Welfare Department were well established features. The agency had provided child welfare services since the late 1930s, foster homes since the 1940s, and adoption since the 1950s. Some of those services were meeting needs which were more acutely felt in earlier years. Undoubtedly the need for adoption services in the 1950s required state intervention in the area, but during the 1960s the need decreased. During
the 1960s day care was the area of child welfare that increasingly demanded more attention.

By 1970 more Mississippians made a living from non-farm than from agricultural pursuits. Industrial growth and urbanization had transformed the very nature of how people conducted their lives. Mississippi had had to cope with the problems of a nascent industrial society in the late 1940s and within twenty years face the problems of a people the majority of whom made their livelihood in business and industry. In 1970 approximately one in ten Mississippians lived in the Jackson metropolitan area. One in twelve lived in the Biloxi-Gulfport urban district, and De Soto county, part of Memphis metropolitan area, was one of the most rapidly developing areas in the state. Day care was the child welfare service which this new industrialized, urbanized society demanded most acutely. In 1970 there were approximately 1,000 centers operating in the state and yet the power of the Welfare Department to control them was limited to the right to license day care centers if the operators requested the service.

The 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act firmly established day care as a major social service goal of America's basic welfare program by earmarking funds so that the states could establish or extend service. Mississippi's Welfare Department did not have a staff to administer even its limited responsibilities in the
area. In 1965 the Welfare Department drew up a code for licensed day care centers even though it had no authority to enforce the regulations. Many of the first Head Start centers operated in hastily contrived surroundings that, although probably the only available alternatives, did not provide a safe environment for children. The Welfare Department did not have the power to license these centers and they did not request the service. One of the problems with the WIN program stemmed from the fact that the Welfare Department had difficulty in locating appropriate day care for ADC children while their parents received job training. In 1969 the Welfare Department provided funds to only three day care centers: a Hattiesburg project run primarily with local private donations; a pilot project center in Jackson supporte by HEW, and a private foundation center in Columbus. The Welfare Department co-operated closely with all three in the hope that they would become models for the remainder of the state.

Mandatory day care licensing faced a powerful lobby in the legislature. Many of the day care facilities were under the control of religious groups and they resisted state control as a violation of the separation of church and state doctrine. Local citizens operated many day care centers in their own homes, especially in small towns. They often objected to state regulation of the immediate home environment as a violation of personal rights of privacy. Commercial establishments argued that
competition provided adequate safeguards to the public. Furthermore the anti-day care licensing groups argued, certainly with overwhelming historical precedent, that if the state set up standards the enforcement effort would be so starved for funds as to be inadequate thus leaving those who attempted to apply standards at a competitive disadvantage with less scrupulous operators. In 1970 Mississippi was the only state in the Southeast without mandatory day care licensing. Two hundred centers operated in Jackson of which five were licensed.

The situation remained unchanged until 1972 when the legislature, after turning down similar bills in the three previous years, passed a statute carefully designed to avoid clashing with the more powerful special interests in the field. The law, which went into effect August 1, 1973, provided for mandatory licensing of day care centers which kept more than five children under six years old for more than four hours a day. The law did not apply to centers maintained by public, private, or parochial schools. Thus the small operator and private benevolent groups were exempt. The law gave the Board of Health the power to license day care centers in Mississippi. Despite the law's exclusion of many centers, the Board of Health licensed more than nine hundred within four months, and about eighty closed quickly to avoid an examination; the Board denied permits to twenty. During a period when the legislature looked upon the Welfare
Department with little favor as it did after 1961, the Board of Health had once again been called upon as the agent to bring a basic child welfare service to Mississippi.

The 1972 law transferred an important responsibility for service to children outside the realm of the Welfare Department where many such programs existed. The Youth Court continued to offer extensive services to delinquent children. In 1971 it served almost 7,000 children, and increasingly it dealt with cases involving black youngsters. In 1970 blacks accounted for 51% of the cases which, with the altered racial balance of the population, was in excess of their numbers in the population. Increasing black participation in the system may have been a reflection of more frequent arrest of black than white children, but procedurally, at least, the juvenile justice system no longer subjected blacks to overt discrimination.

The private agencies continued to operate as they had for decades although they were almost totally devoid of true orphans. In 1965 the Baptist institution reported that 90% of its children had parents. At the end of the decade there were almost twice as many children in the custodial care of the state in foster homes as in the private institutions. The relative importance of the private institutions declined over the decade except in one instance, the Children's Home Society.

The Society remained the most important adoption agency in the state and it had expanded to take under its
direction maternity home responsibilities in Jackson. It was the only major institution that co-operated with the public child welfare authorities from the beginning of the Welfare Department. It did not free itself from state control in 1944 as the other well established private child welfare institutions. The relationship between the Society and the Welfare Department over the decades was a fruitful one for both agencies. The Welfare Department had available an excellent adoption agency during the many years when public child welfare was so hampered by lack of funds that it was unable to serve orphaned children effectively. When the number of orphaned children declined, the Welfare Department often directed children into the Society's hands. The close working relationship between the two agencies provided invaluable service to the children of Mississippi over the years. The relationship, however, undoubtedly resulted in separate treatment for white and black children since the Society insisted that its services were available to whites only.

In addition to the Youth Court and the private institutions a number of agencies of state government continued to play an important role in child welfare activities. The Department of Education conducted the School Lunch Program which during the 1960s reached more than 250,000 children daily. The Department of Education also continued to administer the Crippled Children's Service which during the late 1960s expanded to treat more than
5,000 children annually. Unfortunately the Service ran into serious difficulties in the latter years of the decade.\textsuperscript{103} In each year from 1968 through 1970 more than 18,000 youngsters requested aid and the Service provided assistance to approximately 5,000. After 1968 the number served declined slightly each year.\textsuperscript{104} Soaring medical costs was the principle reason for the decline in the effectiveness of the Service. In 1970 the Board of Health took control of the Crippled Children's Service.\textsuperscript{105}

In the 1960s the Board of Health continued its campaign against infant mortality and overcame a rather static level of infant mortality statistics prevalent since the early 1950s. Once the hospital plan adopted in 1946 was well underway in the early 1950s infant mortality statistics had dropped to levels at which they remained for about a decade.\textsuperscript{106} In the late 1960s the rates began to decline again, especially among blacks. The best explanation for the improvement was the decreased use of the midwife. In 1970 approximately 90\% of the children born in Mississippi were delivered in a hospital. In 1972 the Board of Health declared that "the midwife is no longer important in the state."\textsuperscript{107} Another important reason for the decline in black infant mortality in the late 1960s may well have been the integration of the hospitals which occurred during that period and which certainly led to upgraded services.
As for the midwife, it was true that she was no longer important in the state as a whole but the granny remained an important institution in the delta. Infant mortality rates in that region continued to range in the 60s per 1,000--rates twenty points above the black population of the state; in fact rates achieved by the black population in 1930s.\textsuperscript{108} In 1969 a doctor in the all black delta community of Mound Bayou told the Senate Poverty Hearings: "We have contrived a society in which many of the poor and the black die before they are born. A fate of death before birth is, I suppose the ultimate expression of a nation's indifference."\textsuperscript{109} The physician's statement accurately characterized the delta in the late 1960s, but it was accurate only for that region and must be placed in the perspective that there had been great progress even in that area since the 1930s. It was not the first time a Mississippian had pointed out to a major political forum that poverty was so acute that it destroyed many children before birth, but without exaggeration, it may well have been the last such remark justified by facts.

The Board of Health continued to provide health examinations to school children and it participated at the local level in screening applicants for the State Hospital Commission. Under the program local government paid one half the cost and the state paid the remainder. Eighty-five hospitals plus the charity hospitals co-operated with the Hospital Commission. The program paid $12.50
per day and applied only to indigent children. The parents or local service clubs paid the local part of the bill and it was used basically for emergency aid to the most needy children. Until 1970 that very small program was the major effort to provide indigent children with medical services in Mississippi.

In 1965 Congress adopted the Medicaid Act and eventually set a deadline of 1971 for state compliance. In 1968 Governor Williams appointed a Public Health Advisory committee to plan for Mississippi's entrance into the program. In 1969 a special session of the legislature adopted Medicaid for Mississippi. On June 1, 1970, the program went into effect and provided for in-patient hospital care, out-patient hospital services, laboratory and x-ray services. It was the basic federally required program. Medicaid, as its predecessors under Social Security, offered a wide range of alternatives to the state so that individual states constructed programs of great diversity. Mississippi put forth the minimum effort. In 1970, however, the state added drugs, eyeglasses, and dental bills to the services offered. When first adopted Mississippi extended the program only to welfare recipients. In 1971 under court order, Mississippi Medicaid added the caretaker of an ADC family to the program.

In its initial year Medicaid required $7.5 million in state financing which was 17% of the program's cost; Washington paid the remainder. The program brought
basic medical services to ADC children in Mississippi who according to a national survey in 1967 received less medical attention than any other group of ADC children in the nation.\textsuperscript{115} The results of that medical inattention was demonstrated in 1970 when the Welfare Department undertook a preliminary examination of children who were potential Medicaid recipients. In June 1970 the Department reported that it examined 942 children of whom 240 had dental cavities, 210 were anemic, 24 had impaired hearing, 84 had ear problems, 48 had hernias, 7 showed signs of abuse, and 4 were pregnant.\textsuperscript{116} The Welfare Department certified recipients under Medicaid but the Mississippi Hospital and Medical Service (Blue Cross) handled the financial administration.

Specialized programs offered many important services to children in Mississippi, but perhaps the most important welfare program reaching children during the 1960s was the food program of the United States Department of Agriculture. The food distribution programs were an integral part of the state welfare system and that was especially true of ADC which had the lowest support levels of any of the social security programs. Numerous sources indicated that the commodities and food stamps made the difference between a survivable diet and the genuine possibility of widespread malnutrition among children of welfare recipients.\textsuperscript{117} In 1967, 36.5\% of Mississippi ADC families received assistance under the
food stamp program and 37.2% received aid under the food distribution scheme. The national rate of ADC family participation in the food programs was 56.7%; the rate in the East South Central Region (Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky) was 50%. Only three states—Delaware, New Mexico, and Washington—exceeded Mississippi’s 73.7% participation rate. Faced with the inadequate ADC program in Mississippi, most of Mississippi’s ADC families turned to the food programs for aid.

The food distribution efforts began in its latest phase in 1954 with the introduction of the commodity program. The USDA shipped surplus food to Mississippi where it was stored in two central warehouses before distribution to those counties whose boards of supervisors agreed to pay the cost of local distribution. Most counties included only those on welfare as recipients, approximately 40% of whom were ADC families. Since most counties restricted participation to welfare recipients about 75% of those receiving the food had some additional government assistance. Commodities were also available to institutions.

In June 1970 commodities served 28,992 children in 475 Head Start centers and 27 state institutions. In July 1961 the general commodity program served approximately 240,000 people and it expanded in the winter to reach more than 425,000 in February 1962. Those levels remained basically static throughout the first years of
the decade: in July 1965 it served 185,056 and that winter increased to 466,930 in March. After 1967 the program reached fewer recipients. Its high point after that year was March 1968 with 209,619 recipients and in January 1972, normally a month reflecting high winter demand, commodities went to 83,180. Until the commodity program declined in number of recipients in 1967, it reached one in five Mississippians during the peak winter distribution.

The basic reason for the decline in the commodity program after 1967 was the introduction of a second major food program. The food stamp program which Congress authorized in the Food Stamp Act of 1964 became available in Mississippi in early 1967. Introduced in Jones and Harrison counties the program spread throughout the state. In June 1967 thirty-five counties issued food stamps; two years later fifty counties distributed stamps. The trend continued with counties slowly adopting the program. Serving about 175,000 monthly in 1968, it reached approximately 300,000 monthly in 1970 and 1971.

Under federal regulations a county chose only one food plan, and most counties chose the food stamp program although the changeover was not without acrimonious debate. Begun as the result of federal agricultural surpluses accumulated while providing guaranteed prices for farmers, the commodity program quickly became a basic supplement to the living standards of the poor and the dependent in
Mississippi. The program served the interest of the farmers and the poor, and in Mississippi it served the interest of large planters because the commodities made a major contribution to the welfare of their labor force. Mechanization transformed plantations into agri-business establishments and caused massive unemployment problems in the plantation areas, especially in the delta. Nevertheless many farmers needed large numbers of unskilled laborers for seasonal work well into the 1960s. Commodities played a role in keeping a suitable reservoir of labor in the state even though thousands, indeed, hundreds of thousands, were leaving.

On the other hand, the commodity program worked a hardship on merchants whose businesses were losing a large share of the food market. That basic conflict of interest between planters and merchants had very little to do with the welfare aspects of the commodity program, but it often decided the program's fate. In 1961 in Greenville the quarrel broke into open public charges. Merchants accused planters of using the commodities to supplement laborers' incomes, thus allowing the county to subsidize the farm workers' earnings.\textsuperscript{129} A merchants' association charged that planters committed fraud by signing affidavits that their workers were eligible for commodities when many were not eligible under Washington county regulations.\textsuperscript{130} The association called for prosecution of planters as well as their workers.\textsuperscript{131} A few
recipients were arrested and compelled to pay for their ill-gotten gains; no planter was indicted or tried. 132

In 1962, the year all welfare programs encountered severe criticism, the commodity program came under increasing attack. Morris Lewis, owner of the largest wholesale food company serving the delta, attacked the commodity program as a threat to the free enterprise system. He recommended the food stamp program which Congress had authorized in 1959 and which was being tested in pilot projects around the country. 133 Lewis pointed out that the food stamp program utilized the regular channels of trade and thus spared states the expense of building up a staff of federal and state employees to administer food relief. 134

In 1962 the controversy over food commodities came to a climax in Leflore county. When the board of supervisors decided to cut back the commodity program so that it would include only public assistance recipients, local farmers demanded a hearing. 135 Leflore county distributed commodities to all needy as was the custom in the delta; a statement of need signed by the employer was sufficient for certification. Spokesmen for the farmers pointed out that the new policy reduced the rolls from 27,000 to 5,000 and eliminated most of the county's tenants. The farmers were unable to carry the meeting and the board sustained the new policy on the motion of a local banker. 136

It might well have ended there with the county's planters arguing with the board, but by 1962 the interest
of the welfare recipients had to be considered because within a few weeks the controversy had attracted the attention of national civil rights leaders. They charged that the cut was an attempt to frustrate voting rights activities in Leflore county.\textsuperscript{137} There were visits by prominent black leaders and even a food lift from Cincinnati to combat such "atrocities against blacks."\textsuperscript{138} Although there were certainly enough incidents in the state's history that fit that description over the years, in the Leflore county controversy race seems to have been only an incidental matter. The basic conflict was an economic one involving planters and merchants quarreling over the economic benefits of the state welfare program. An investigation of the affair by the state Civil Rights Advisory Committee found the dispute primarily an economic one.\textsuperscript{139} As the Leflore county incident demonstrated local merchants objected to the commodity program and would embrace the food stamp program readily when it appeared in 1967. As for those cut from the commodity rolls by Leflore county in 1962, the county board restored the program to all needy in 1963 under heavy federal pressure.\textsuperscript{140}

Which program actually benefited the recipient more was debatable. The food stamp program offered a better selection of foods and its rules and regulations did save taxpayers the cost of fraud under commodities thus making stamps less vulnerable to political attacks. Although
food stamps did ultimately provide better and more abundant food supplies to the needy, the commodity program lost its narrow surplus food base in the mid-1960s. In 1966 the Department of Agriculture increased the diversity of foods offered in the commodity program when it began to buy foods for the effort on the open market. In Mississippi the Welfare Department launched a large scale effort in 1966 with an OEO grant to provide all needy in the state with commodities. Under operation HELP the Welfare Department pushed the commodity rolls beyond the 450,000 mark. Recognizing that distributing food did not insure proper use, the Department engaged demonstration agents, many of whom were low income people, to instruct recipients on the correct preparation and storage of foods. Operation HELP provided basic nutritional advice to thousands. It made the commodity program a genuine instrument of social change, a device to change habits and attitudes. The Welfare Department received federal funds to extend the expanded commodity program through 1967. Operation HELP, redesignated the Expanded Food Distribution program in 1967, suggested that the commodity program, given a determination to make it a true social welfare program, had the capacity to become a major factor for upgrading the nutritional habits of the state.

In number of recipients commodities were much more widely distributed than food stamps. In a state with
the recognized poverty of Mississippi, numbers were impor-
tant. Jones county had 9,940 food recipients in October
1964 with commodities and 4,700 in October 1967 with food
stamps; Harrison county went from 9,600 to 2,200.143 Food
stamps brought reductions in the number of recipients
wherever the system was adopted. Where blacks could or-
ganize they fought the imposition of the stamp system.
In 1967, blacks defeated an attempt to replace commodities
in Issaquena county, a small county where the population
was overwhelmingly black and politically active.144 The
change to stamps, although often opposed, usually suc-
cceeded. The change-over decreased aid to the dependent
and destitute population of the state, and in a situation
in which ADC met only 30 to 40% of need such a reduction
was significant for the needy children of the state.

Blacks consistently contended that poor people took
part in the stamp program less often than under commodities
because they did not have the money to buy the stamps.145
The Department of Agriculture contended that poor money
management on the part of public assistance recipients
coupled with a failure of local welfare offices to teach
recipients financial management often resulted in recipi-
ents not having funds to buy stamps.146 The Agriculture
Department also suggested that many of the poor did not
understand the complicated food stamp regulations.147
Additionally, the commodity program reached many people who
were not technically qualified; the food stamp program did
not allow such qualifying procedures as a note from an employer. 148

Unlike the Social Security Act programs which gave states so many options that ADC in one state was hardly comparable with ADC in another, the federal guidelines for the food programs were straightforward, allowing for very little variation. Both were inexpensive to administer, and the stamp plan attracted support within the community beyond the poverty population. Mississippi also distributed its food programs widely, and, unlike other welfare efforts, widespread participation was not purchased at the price of reducing the effect at the individual level to minuscule amounts. The federal government determined the actual amount which went to an individual; the state simply administered distribution.

In June 1966 all eighty-two counties had either food stamps or commodities. Mississippi was the first southern state to achieve that goal and its accomplishment was meaningful because many southern states never achieved anything approaching 100% participation. 149 In 1967 Mississippi distributed food to a larger percentage of its population than any other southern state. 150 In the same year the state was one of only six in the nation providing aid in all its counties. 151

Mississippi employed the food programs widely, but they were not widely hailed. In February 1969, 89% of the population in Sharkey county received commodities,
75% in Noxubee, 64% in Benton, and 61% in Issaquena. In Marshall county 73% of the people received food stamps; the same figure held for Jefferson county. Such figures disturbed people. The Fayette Chronicle commented that the large number of people on the food program was "costing us our liberty." The Jackson Daily News found the fact that 52% of the citizens of Sunflower county in the middle of the rich cotton growing delta received food commodities to be "scandalous." It went on to declare:

We know the waiting line is filled with moochers, leaners, grafters and gimme guys who are physically able to support themselves without the aid of government handouts.

A columnist writing for the Tunica Times-Democrat commented that the nation had gone so far down the road toward free handouts and money that it was difficult to find a yardman.

The Welfare Department seldom replied to the charges against the food programs. The agency was hardly in a position to defend any of its programs for it suffered badly in the 1960s. The assault on ADC reduced the Department's operating budget and made welfare very controversial. The legislature's failure to fund ADC at an adequate level to retain the 75% federal share of social services to ADC was a major lost opportunity. The Department suffered particularly during the early 1960s. Under the Barnett administration, Fred Ross, the Commissioner, issued threats that all welfare could be stopped unless
racial unrest ceased. He wrote a pamphlet entitled *Racial Amalgamation Propaganda Versus Segregation and Racial Co-operation* which the Welfare Department published. It contained such statements as:

> A simple majority of both Houses of the legislature can abolish the Welfare Department. . . . He [the Negro] lived in his jungle home; he worked his wife; he sold his children; he ate his brother. . . . It is reported that there have been over 200 cases of cannibalism recently in the Belgian Congo.

In 1963 Ross attempted to explain how the Barnett administration managed to diminish the state's financial position seriously by pointing to the extremely large welfare expenditures of the early 1960s. In fact, the 1962 welfare appropriation reduced the Welfare Department's biennial state expenditures for the first time in its history.

The women and men who succeeded Ross were able and moderate, but the early 1960s were unfortunate years for the Welfare Department. In the second half of the 1960s the legislature increased the Department's appropriations. For two decades, however, controversy swirled around the Department because it dealt with so many problems of the black community. By the early 1970s the Department had not recovered the enviable position it occupied in the late 1940s. In 1972 when the state at last asserted the right to license day care, a program for which the Welfare Department had worked for decades, the legislature assigned the licensing function to the less controversial Board of Health.
The Poverty Program agencies that flooded the state in the 1960s largely bypassed the Welfare Department. Attention to the needs of children played an important role in the War on Poverty. Head Start was the most important single program offered. It provided a pre-school experience to children of poverty families. The state did not have public kindergartens. In fact, no important group seriously advocated such a project after the demise of the Children's Code Commission in 1962. In 1964 Head Start entered the state and in 1967 it served approximately 23,000 children aged three to five. In 1970 the program reached more than 40,000 youngsters. From its inception Head Start was the most popular Great Society program in Mississippi.

Under the organizational set-up of the War on Poverty two types of groups administered Head Start on the local level: the community action agency and the single purpose agency. Community action agencies were associations of local citizens who drew up plans for poverty programs in their locality. Their jurisdiction most often included one or several counties. Other centers were under the control of an agency set up for the single purpose of administering Head Start. In order to operate the program all agencies had to receive permission from the Office of Economic Opportunity. The governor during the first few years had a veto over agency recognition unless they were founded by an institution of higher learning. In
1968 OEO dropped even that small measure of state control.\textsuperscript{162} Initially Head Start did not attract local authorities, but it did attract several groups who saw in the effort a core around which to build an extensive program to meet the basic needs of the deprived child.\textsuperscript{163} That the state needed such an effort was quickly confirmed when administrators began to come into contact with the preschool children of the poor. A Head Start official described the children in his program:

Our children came from communities whose social and economic deprivation resulted in severe educational deprivation in both home and community. Many entering children were passive and withdrawn, many had never handled a crayon or pencil, few had seen paints, clay or blocks.\textsuperscript{164}

The Child Development Group of Mississippi was the largest of the groups which first entered the Head Start field. CDGM had strong ties to the Delta Council of Churches, and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party.\textsuperscript{165} It operated on the acknowledged objective of getting both children and parents involved. CDGM openly called for a black Mississippi Head Start program which accepted the language and customs of blacks while teaching basic skills. The program directors rapidly learned that parents approved the emphasis on black culture, but those same parents demanded that Head Start teach some practical lessons such as letters and numbers.\textsuperscript{166} A graduate student who had been conducting research for a dissertation in the delta was the organization's initial director.\textsuperscript{167} It won approval
from OEO by incorporation through a predominantly black junior college thus avoiding a gubernatorial veto. CDGM won permission to operate the Head Start program throughout most of central Mississippi and the delta. 168

During its early years, CDGM was innovative, effective in attracting input from the community, and controversial. It was a favorite target of the political right which charged, correctly, that it was involved in politics. 169 In the late 1960s CDGM became mired in financial difficulties and lost its position as the most important Head Start agency. During the mid-1960s CDGM performed a genuine service to the state's children directly through its program, and indirectly through the reaction it caused. Once CDGM began to operate Head Start applications from local school boards and competing agencies proliferated. 170 Areas in which no one but CDGM had been interested developed two, three, even four competing agencies founded by blacks, whites, and bi-racial groups all of which applied for Head Start grants.

The largest single purpose agency which emerged to compete with CDGM was Mississippi Action for Progress. It had strong ties to the state NAACP and influential white support groups in Greenville and Jackson. 171 In the late 1960s MAP emerged as the chief Head Start agency in Mississippi. Less outspokenly dedicated to political and economic causes, MAP concentrated on pre-school education. 172 Neither CDGM nor MAP completely dominated Head
Start. Jackson produced an independent organization run by the black social worker who had discovered the midwife adoption system for the Welfare Department in the 1950s. Head Start in Jackson had powerful supporters in the white community. In the northeast a multi-county community action agency headed by the editor of the region's largest newspaper ran Head Start. In many counties the local board of supervisors dominated community action agencies and Head Start programs operated by those agencies.

The program encountered numerous problems in Mississippi, not the least of which was how to involve poor whites. The emphasis many directors placed on pre-school education for black youngsters was adequate to the needs of the delta where the overwhelming number of poor children were black. Outside that area, however, Mississippi's poor included both races. Head Start did a poor job of reaching needy white children.

Some whites who wanted their children to have the opportunities afforded by Head Start encountered intimidation. Occasionally an agency lost its federal grant because it provided no services to poor white children. In 1967 a black attorney for the NAACP active in Mississippi affairs explained to the Poverty Hearings in Jackson:

I think that while I am talking about the poor Negro, the poor white has been more forgotten and while we are screaming about representation of poor Negroes on CAP boards, the poor white is almost non-represented anywhere and the poverty program, I feel, has almost not touched him.
The program encountered a number of additional problems. As a symbol of black advancement it attracted occasional violence. Thus some centers in the southwestern portion of the state mysteriously burned. Cultural problems also caused concern. Poverty had denied many facets of the larger culture to poor children and as a result they often faced the problem of educational materials designed for more affluent children. One Head Start program threw out an entire set of books because it attempted to teach B as in Bison, I as in Igloo, K as in Kangaroo, none of which meant anything to a poor child from the south Mississippi piney woods.

Head Start was one of the most useful and widely employed programs for children in the state's history. The program produced a confusing, complex struggle for power among political groups throughout the 1960s, but out of that conflict came programs which served thousands of children. During the 1960s experimentation by directors and community input marked Head Start in Mississippi. The program, even as operated by CDGM, provided a doorway into the national culture for thousands of children in Mississippi where Head Start flourished as in no other state. In 1967 one-tenth of federal money allocated for Head Start went to Mississippi. Even so the program had its nay-sayers in the state. The editor of the Jackson Daily News denounced it as, "One of the most subtle mediums
for installing the acceptance of racial integration and ultimate mongrelization ever perpetuated in this country." The program survived such attacks because it served a basic unmet need for pre-school education, and because federal authorities had the foresight to avoid control by the state government.

A second major children's welfare effort to emerge from the War on Poverty was an expanded food distribution program in the delta which followed growing concern that children were seriously undernourished in that region. The mechanization of the cotton culture proceeded rapidly in the 1950s and the 1960s so that labor needs declined markedly. The eighteen county area contained no large cities but was well populated. In 1950 the core of ten counties contained approximately 380,000 people, 113,000 whites and 267,000 blacks. In 1970 the area contained approximately 122,000 whites and 164,000 blacks. Thousands of blacks had left the area and the mechanization caused massive unemployment among those who chose to remain. In 1965 a federal minimum wage for farm workers went into effect and many more workers were forced from the land. Even black leaders spoke disparagingly of the minimum wage law because it accelerated the migration due to loss of jobs. From 1967 to 1969, concern expressed at Poverty Hearings in Jackson and in a series of nationally syndicated newspaper articles focused
national attention on the delta's poor children. 186

The Mississippi Council on Human Relations told the Poverty Hearings that the problem of hunger was acute in the delta, particularly among ADC women, heads of households, whose families often existed primarily on commodity foods. 187 The project director of the Tufts-Delta Center in Bolivar county asserted that official infant mortality rates in the county did not truly reflect the problem,

We can tell you [he noted] on the basis of our own detailed health survey of a one third random sample of the black population, that 12% of all the black women in north Bolivar county who reported ever being pregnant have no living children. 188

At the same hearings, Mrs. Unita Blackwell, a black woman who lived in the region, testified:

Mechanization took over and the people don't have anything to do. . . . Now, the people in Issaquena county have sons that they are trying to scuffle and feed and when they grow up and get 18 years old they still have--some of those illegitimate, you call it, because they have a lot of mothers that don't have, you know, they are not married to the daddies and all this--but they are not illegitimate when it comes time for them to go to war. This is one of the things stirring up all over the South and all over the Delta. People is very angry because they can't eat. 189

The controversy about hunger among children in the delta led to a stepped-up federal effort to see that all counties distributed food to the needy, not to welfare recipients alone. The controversy also produced a Children's Bureau-sponsored study which tested pre-school
children and concluded that there was, "no overt evidence of malnutrition." The Clarion Ledger released the study's findings under the title "Mississippi Starvation Myth is Exploded." Although the study did not find "overt" evidence of malnutrition it concluded that:

Children in poor families--mostly Negro--were found, as a group to be receiving suboptimal diets by usual standards. These children were below average in stature and were somewhat anemic. In addition, blood and urine levels of certain vitamins and other nutrients were indicative of a restricted dietary intake.

The delta did not have masses of starving children in the 1960s and the Children's Bureau Study effectively dealt with such reports. Nevertheless, the situation there among children was not pleasant. Child Welfare activities such as ADC and direct social services provided little aid. State and federal food programs were preventing starvation, but the number of needy children in the area was very large. Infant mortality rates were higher in the delta than any other part of the state. The situation in the late 1960s cannot be explained entirely as a result of factors such as mechanization, minimum wage laws, and the outmigration of wage earners. Poverty had existed in the delta for generations. Poverty and its effect on children in the delta was simply rediscovered during the 1960s. The social workers of the MERA discovered the delta's poor children in the 1930s. The Board of Health's surveys found them in the 1920s. Considering the availability of state and federal services, income levels, and infant mortality
statistics, the region in the 1960s provided its children with a better opportunity for a full useful life than ever before.

The Poverty Program gave the state Head Start; it focused attention on the children of the delta, and a third major program, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, also aided the young people of Mississippi. The Employment Security Commission administered most Youth Corps projects in the state. It offered job training to youth sixteen to twenty-one. Recipients were young people from poverty families who had dropped out of school at least three months and who, in the opinion of a counselor, would benefit more from job training than a return to school. The program offered a wide range of job training opportunities from clerical work to training for specialized industrial skills. The program enrolled approximately 1,900 young people in 1967. Unlike the Depression era NYA which trained many blacks for domestic service, the program stressed meaningful jobs and was open to both races equally.

Growth in child welfare activity in Mississippi during the 1960s was less than one might reasonably have expected in a state which recorded stunning progress in most areas of its social and economic life. The state emerged from the decade with a much improved economy. After seventy years the post-Reconstruction racial system collapsed. The federal government entered the state in an
official war on poverty with two major program advances for children: Head Start and Medicaid. The only welfare programs offering significant services to children that entered the state before 1960 and flourished in the decade were food programs. They were active because the state, as it had for decades, badly needed a general assistance program. Most child welfare programs active before 1960 scored modest gains during the decade. Despite all of the debate over ADC, it remained throughout the 1960s a widely distributed effort so limited in its financial impact at the individual level that it achieved little of lasting value. Lack of any significant progress in the state during the decade can best be explained by want of leadership in the field. Two decades of political attacks weakened the Welfare Department and the legislature destroyed the Children's Code Commission in 1962. The 1970 White House Conference Report concentrated its attention on the six-to-ten year old group, and it made only one vigorously stated recommendation, a call for mandatory day care licensing.\textsuperscript{195} The report stands in marked contrast with the all-encompassing, detailed 1950, 1955, and 1960 reports which committees working under the Children's Code Commission issued. The Children's Code Commission's reports had provided a blueprint for action, specific recommendations, evidence of need, and some visionary goals. Child welfare in Mississippi needed the kind of advocacy
offered by the Children's Code Commission. Without state leadership dedicated to children's welfare, the state can render federal programs for aid to children hopelessly ineffective.
NOTES: CHAPTER VI


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15 *Lincoln County Advertiser*, November 9, 1961, p. 6.


18 Ibid.

19 *Clarion Ledger*, September 6, 1961, 10.


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24 Ibid.


26 Ibid, p. 28.


31 *Commercial Appeal*, June 15, 1962, p. 27.


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41 Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare, Report to the Governor of Mississippi and to the Legislature Concerning Aid to Dependent Children Cases Involving Deserting Parent or Parents During the Calendar Year 1962 (Jackson: State Department of Public Welfare, 1963), p. 22.


43 Ibid.


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132 *Clarion Ledger*, June 29, 1962, p. 11.


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147 Ibid, p. 742.
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172 Ibid.


176 Clarion Ledger, June 1, 1967, p. 23.


182 Division of Social Science Research, Statistical Abstract of Mississippi (Jackson: Mississippi State University, 1971), pp. 46-50.

184. Ibid.

185. Ibid.

186. Division of Social Science Research, Statistical Abstract of Mississippi, pp. 50-60; Commercial Appeal, April 1, 1968, p. 22.


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CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY; SELECTIVITY AND CONTROL
IN A SOCIALLY CONSERVATIVE SOCIETY

The Mississippi child welfare system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was very selective. The apprenticeship statutes furnished aid principally to white, healthy males. The voluntary agencies such as the orphanages served girls and boys, but they too restricted their activity to whites. In addition, illegitimate children received aid from voluntary agencies less often than children of legal marriages. The Mother's Aid law of 1928 authorized the distribution of relief based on need, but it too discriminated against illegitimate children by requiring that a parent exhaust all legal means of support before obtaining aid. Since the state laws pertaining to illegitimacy made it virtually impossible to compel a natural father to support his illegitimate child, such a regulation in practice was little more than a requirement to submit oneself to public embarrassment prior to receiving aid. As administered by county authorities, the Mother's Aid law was very selective. County boards did not choose to aid blacks; only on rare occasions were
illegitimates aided. The pensions went largely to widows of deceased legal husbands. Until the late 1940s the child welfare system in the state dealt primarily with white, healthy children. Sex was also important in the selection process. In the case of apprenticeship, adoption services, and in providing protection for juvenile offenders the system selected males more often for aid than females. The child most unlikely to receive aid from society throughout the first half of the century was the black, female child.

The Board of Health conducted the least selective programs of child welfare in Mississippi. Its programs, however, were largely directed to school children which meant that they favored whites over blacks and failed to reach the most needy children of both races who did not attend school. Nevertheless, the Board's programs were the first major child welfare efforts conducted by a state agency without overtly discriminatory features. Throughout the 1900-1970 period the programs of the Board of Health were less subject to racial and moral discriminatory factors than any other portion of the child welfare system.

The Depression years brought widespread aid to children in Mississippi largely through programs designed to help the needy in general, but again black children were discriminated against because their parents also suffered discrimination. During its first years, ADC favored white, legitimate children. The selection process was not
significantly altered until the latter half of the 1940s. Among the many advances of that period, handicapped children received their first serious program of child welfare. The juvenile justice system expanded to include blacks. Most significantly, ADC began to serve large numbers of blacks. The expansion of the selection process for children in the late 1940s occurred because of a fortunate combination of circumstances. Economic growth during the war created an increased state capacity to aid children and greater federal participation spurred the movement toward expansion of the child welfare system. The late 1940s was a unique period in the social life of Mississippi. Depression and war created dislocation and change for more than two decades. In the early 1950s, the very center of society, white supremacy, was intensely challenged, but for a few years in the aftermath of World War II, Mississippi faced no external threats to its basic way of life. It was during that brief span that the state opened up its system of child welfare to children who were handicapped, illegitimate, and black. Reform in its truest sense, lasting change, occurred in Mississippi's child welfare system in the rather prosperous, secure atmosphere of the late 1940s.

Once the state began to include blacks, illegitimates, and the handicapped in its child welfare system, it never again automatically excluded them. During the 1950s the state legislature attempted to reintroduce a more selective
child welfare effort. The legislature dredged up almost every discriminatory feature of past child welfare policy in an attempt to restore the old selectivity to the child welfare population. Nevertheless the fact was that the old population which received aid under the apprenticeship statutes, the private agencies, and ADC in the early 1940s was no longer particularly needy. When all efforts to re-make the recipient population of ADC failed, the legislature effectively destroyed the program and crippled foster care in the process.

After 1964 federal programs and federal pressure brought increased attention to child welfare in Mississippi. At the end of the decade Medicaid and ADC distributed child welfare benefits basically on the basis of need, not race or the morality of parents. Nevertheless ADC continued to be inadequate and the poverty program introduced a new group of children, poor whites, who were often excluded from benefits.

Government was the instrument which most often selected children for aid. Child welfare in Mississippi suffered badly from a lack of direction and centralization of governmental control. Before 1932, eighty-two counties, several private groups, and the Board of Health competed for the power to control child welfare. During the Depression years the extensive federal effort had central direction at the state level through MERA. Centralization
of control under MERA lasted only a few years and other federal agencies had overlapping programs and were constantly being created and liquidated. The 1935 to 1937 period was the high point of indecision and confusion about which agency controlled what. Between November 1935 and March 1936, a dependent child, if his parents were lucky enough to meet all of the qualifications for each agency, transferred from MERA, to WPA, to SERA, to the Welfare Department. At the end of that process the Welfare Department informed the parent that although authorized by federal legislation ADC was unavailable in Mississippi.

The Social Security Act brought centralized control to child welfare policy. From 1936 to 1950 the state exercised control through the Welfare Department. In the 1940s when the Depression era record of local government failure was fresh, and when federal intervention was limited, Welfare Department-directed efforts established basic advances in child welfare such as a foster home program, the Youth Court system, a meaningful ADC program, and the Children's Code Commission. After 1950 the legislature struggled with the Welfare Department for power over child welfare policy. The federal government made important decisions during the War on Poverty years, and the Board of Health reemerged after 1950 as a major agency for child welfare. There were major accomplishments in the field of child welfare after 1950, but few came from within the state.
The child welfare system in Mississippi also encountered serious problems of finances. Prior to the late 1940s, the state was too poor to undertake a large effort for dependent children. Unfortunately, the emergence of the racial question in the state occurred at approximately the same time the state began to make economic advances. Before 1950, when Mississippi had only limited resources, the state government, under Governor Conner and Willard Bond, was eager to undertake an extensive child welfare program if the federal government paid the basic cost. The federal government, however, was unwilling to undertake that responsibility for the poor states until the late 1940s. After 1950 when Mississippi was increasingly able to afford aid for its children and when federal policy increasingly benefitted the poor states, the state legislature, which had wrested control of child welfare policy from the Welfare Department, was unwilling to take full advantage of federal assistance.

Mississippi was often too poor to participate in federal welfare programs for children. The federal government offered funds to aid crippled children to a state without enough doctors and with very limited hospital resources. Often funds went unspent or were sent to neighboring states only increasing the disparity between services offered in Memphis or Mobile and those available inside the state. Federal funds were available for
maternity-home care, but the state had a capacity to provide for only thirty women. Money was available for child welfare services and the federal government specifically authorized huge sums for rural areas. The most rural state spent little on child welfare services and most was expended in urban areas because the Welfare Department had no reasonable delivery system in rural areas. Rural counties could not afford child welfare workers. The state decision not to take ADC in 1935 was made because the state did not have the required funds; the racial bias against ADC did not develop until the late 1940s. Even the 1962 episode in which the legislature refused to allow the expansion of social services to ADC was not entirely racially motivated. Meeting the federal guidelines to keep the 75% matching formula would have entailed massive expenditures that were unrealistic in ideal circumstances of public support which did not exist in 1962. Federal programs consistently presupposed an infrastructure of facilities, talent, training, and experience which was unavailable in a rural, agricultural state such as Mississippi.

The dual nature of society which developed during seventy years of separate but equal racial policy consistently hampred child welfare in Mississippi. Blacks even developed their own informal structure of child welfare through the midwives who operated as nurse, doctor,
and adoption agent for the black community. The separation of the two races legally and the economic disparity produced strikingly different societies. The national ADC program with its emphasis on maintaining the nuclear family was much more suited to the white society in Mississippi than the black. From that fact stemmed many of ADC's problems.

Throughout most of the century blacks encountered second class treatment in many fields of child welfare. The list of such occasions is simply too lengthy to repeat. Moreover, accounts of discrimination against blacks inevitably assign a comparative superiority to treatment received by whites when the difference was often one of degree of neglect. On occasion, the discrimination against blacks did result in superior treatment. For example, in the late 1940s black youth ordinarily went to trial in criminal courts with the procedural protections of the criminal law. White youth more commonly faced the Youth Court's informal justice, which often meant a hearing before a referee. Thus, the state provided service to white youth that was, according to the theories of the period, sound and superior to that given blacks. It is probable, however, that blacks received justice which provided greater safeguards for the rights of an individual.

Powerful special interest concerns often influenced child welfare programs in Mississippi. Private groups performed extremely useful functions for white children
in Mississippi throughout much of the century. Along with benevolent aid, however, came prejudices against blacks and often against illegitimate children. From 1900 to 1947 private institutions were the only available resource for custodial care of dependent children at the state level so that their prejudices determined the fate of many children. The religious agencies on occasion rolled back or limited the scope of public protection for children. The movement in 1944 that stripped the Welfare Department of its right to inspect religious and fraternal child-caring institutions and the opposition of religious interests in the 1960s to government controls on day care centers were two examples.

Powerful economic interests played an important role in determining the fate of several welfare programs that aided children. Conflicting economic concerns of merchants and planters helped determine the form of the food programs. The impact of ADC on local businessmen provided a powerful support mechanism for that program. In the early 1960s proponents of ADC found that their appeals for the continuation of the program on purely humanitarian grounds were ineffective. Opponents charged that such sentiments were misguided; that the state should help needy children, but that ADC was actually a threat to children because it was creating a socialist, racially mixed, and immoral society. The argument that ADC helped local merchants
and grocers served as a last line of defense for ADC supporters. Private business could be hostile to protective services for children. During the 1960s private business played a role in preventing day care protective legislation. Thus, private economic interest provided support for some child welfare programs, delayed or ruled out others, and determined policy shifts in some.

By the 1970s child welfare in Mississippi had become a complex response by the society to the needs of children. In 1900 the system of children's aid was a rather simple structure being a matter of private orphanages at the state level and apprenticeship and the poorhouse at the local level. In 1928 Mother's Aid provided an indication of the future path of public policy, but it did not shift the decision making power from the local level. Activities by the federal government during the Depression years threatened to make the entire idea of child welfare moot by moving toward a redistribution of income that would aid all needy citizens. The Social Security Act spelled an end to a policy of economic justice through general welfare relief and shifted federal policy to providing aid only to specialized segments of society. The effect in Mississippi shifted welfare from the underlying concept that the economic system had failed requiring general welfare programs for all needy to an assumption that the economic system was sound and required aid only for especially
distressed groups. Governor Conner questioned the basic assumption that the national economic system was a workable one any longer. Nevertheless, the state had no choice except to participate in the Social Security Act, and in 1941, it accepted ADC.

ADC was supposed to provide a proper home to a dependent child. It never achieved that goal in Mississippi. The state could not afford to provide an appropriate home environment to all its dependent children in the 1930s and the 1940s. By the 1950s when federal participation and economic growth enabled the state to begin exploring the possibilities of providing a suitable home to all its dependent children, Mississippi's state officials had to define "an appropriate home environment." They took as their model the ideal family of the dominant white community and proceeded to provide ADC to those who most nearly approached that family model. The program became much more an instrument to reward living patterns deemed appropriate than a support program for children. The 1935 decision to make the state an important contributor to welfare cost guaranteed an ineffective program in Mississippi for the program's first decade; the 1935 decision to allow the state to control the basic policy decisions doomed ADC after 1950.

State policy became increasingly hostile to welfare in general over the decades after 1932. During the Depression, state policy favored wide distribution of
welfare and accepted the assumption of federal policy as applied in Mississippi that a fundamental economic collapse called for widespread relief to upgrade the level of income in the state. During the 1940s state policy accepted the federal assumption that the basic economic system was sound and that the situation only required aid to special groups. The state endorsed that view to such an extent that it actually funded ADC to a level approaching need in 1948 and 1949. After 1950 federal and state policy pursued divergent courses. The pre-Depression view that individual deprivation sprang not from economic forces beyond the control of the individual but from defects in moral character began to reemerge in Mississippi even more strongly than at the national level. In Mississippi that view of the cause of deprivation was immeasurably aided by the white stereotype of blacks as lazy, ignorant, and immoral. From 1932 to 1950 while the system served primarily whites, state welfare policy operated on the theory that welfare need arose from economic causes. As blacks entered the system in the late 1940s and 1950s, the old view of defects in moral character reemerged. As a result the legislature designed policies which sought to insure that the state did not reward or promote defective personal characteristics which were perceived as having produced the dependency of blacks. As its model for such policies the legislature took the pre-Depression child
welfare system which operated on the theory that dependency sprang from moral defects. White children and their families received aid from the county governments and the private agencies in the pre-Depression system only if they exhausted all means of support and conducted lives deemed appropriate by society. After 1950 the state subjected blacks to the same conditions of aid.

Finally, it should be noted that child welfare in Mississippi developed in a conservative society, but in a society whose conservatism was essentially social, not economic. The child welfare programs which encountered the most opposition were those which appeared to pose a direct, immediate threat to the basic social life of the state and to the basic socialization process of the individual. Programs which dealt with or touched upon such concerns as the organization of the family, race relations, or basic issues of morality fared poorly in Mississippi. ADC, maternity programs, foster care, child welfare services, even adoption suffered in Mississippi because they were performing functions which allowed direct governmental participation in the child rearing process. The opposition to public education in Mississippi which prevented a widespread system until the 1920s was based on the same kind of social conservatism which affected public child welfare in later decades. The fear that a government which was the basic socialization agent in the
life of a child would determine his values and command his loyalty was deeply rooted in Mississippi. The most successful welfare commissioner in the state's history, Willard Bond, was neither a professional welfare bureaucrat trained in social work nor a politician, but an educator who had fought the battle for public education. He seems to have understood that the most important roadblocks to a public welfare program lay in the fears of rapid, government directed social change, not in financial conservatism.

Programs which provided children with some basic need but which were administered without direct governmental control over their upbringing and posed no immediate threat of social change were received rather well in Mississippi. In the late 1940s, for example, when the state began to have the economic resources to fund ADC it did so generously. As long as ADC served children who were needy and white and had parents whose lives met acceptable moral standards, the state gave support. However, within a few years, ADC offered aid to large numbers of illegitimates and blacks and as a result the program came under increasing attack for fostering social change. Once ADC was identified as a threat to the basic social system the legislature quickly rendered it ineffective. Food programs which occasionally came under attack as a threat to the work ethic and because they aided large numbers of blacks
were nonetheless never rendered ineffective. After 1954 Mississippi distributed food commodities and food stamps more widely than any other southern state and more widely than only four other states in the nation. These programs provided invaluable aid to many children and they served a basic need without giving the government any genuine control over the child's upbringing, nor did they threaten to produce any fundamental social change. In fact, planters in the delta used the commodity program to prop up the old plantation system.

The best example was the Board of Health; it escaped censure for "social engineering" entirely. Its programs for basic medical aid to children were thoroughly uncontroverted, yet its work since 1916 with children basically altered the way children lived and died in Mississippi. The Board's programs strayed from providing simple medical aid to touch directly upon family life, moral values, or race relations only on rare occasions. Especially after 1950, the child welfare programs of the Board of Health had much greater success with the legislature than those of the Welfare Department.

Head Start was an excellent recent example. By the 1960s education was apparently not widely perceived as a direct instrument of social change; education had become a well-accepted public function. Head Start was very popular in Mississippi. The one segment of Head Start, however, which openly declared itself to be an instrument
of social change, CDGM, encountered bitter opposition. MAP, which stressed basic skills, not only survived but prospered despite the fact that it was clearly black controlled. Of course, programs like food stamps, immunization programs, and Head Start did produce social change, but only after years of application. They were not obvious threats to the social order nor did they infringe on the family or private morality.

Mississippi's welfare system had been inadequate to meet the most basic requirements of its needy children. ADC has been a failure by any objective test, at least since 1950, and with the exception of 1948 and 1949 it has not provided anything approaching need since its founding. The Welfare Department continues to suffer understaffing and lack of funds for specialized programs. Medicaid, although promising, serves public assistance recipients only. The food program is widely employed and the Board of Health continues to offer excellent services to school children. A thorough examination of the history of child welfare in Mississippi suggests that the best solution to its inadequate program lies in a general income maintenance plan or some such similar scheme which would be distributed widely to all those who need aid, adults as well as children. With basic policy decisions and funds flowing from Washington, the Welfare Department, which has always been amazingly cost-efficient, could administer such a program well. Most importantly, the
The historical record clearly indicates that such a program dealing with the basic problem of economic deprivation without any overt attempt to deal with social ramifications of poverty would be the most politically viable, socially acceptable, and potentially successful program to meet the needs of dependent children in Mississippi.
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