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ROUNDTABLE:

THE WAR ON POVERTY: THEN AND NOW

MODERATOR:

E.J. DIONNE, JR.

PANELISTS:

LISBETH B. SCHORR, STUART M. BUTLER, RON HASKINS,

HARRY HOLZER, ISABEL V. SAWHILL & ROGER WILKINS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

JUDITH FEDER: It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this conversation, or forum, related to The War on Poverty: Then and Now. We are pleased to be holding this event in partnership with the Brookings Institution, in whose lovely auditorium we are all sitting, and with Atlantic Media, who is responsible for the beautiful artwork that is advertising the event, which we think we will keep for posterity. So, thanks to both Atlantic and to Brookings.

I will say very little, just to point out that the year 2005 is the 40th anniversary of the launch of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty. It is also the year in which hurricanes seem to have reminded the nation that poverty still needs a whole lot of work. So broadly speaking, the goal of this event is to look back at the War on Poverty, examining what they did, what we know about what they did. We hope we can derive some lessons from what we can do now.

Without further ado, I'm going to turn the program over to E.J. Dionne, who is well-known to all of you. He is going to set the stage for our conversation and introduce our guests. E.J.?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very, very much, and I'm grateful to Judy and Belle for bringing together two pieces of my life at Georgetown and Brookings.

"Because it is right, because it is wise, and because, for the first time in our history, it is possible to conquer poverty, I submit, for

the consideration of Congress and the country, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964." Those were Lyndon Johnson's words on March 16, 1964, launching the War on Poverty.

Here's just a bit more of what LBJ had to say: "The Act," he said, "does not merely expand old programs or improve what is already being done, it charts a new course. It strikes at the causes, not just the consequences of poverty. It can be a milestone in our one-hundred eighty year search for a better life for our people."

Johnson called for "a job Corps, a Work-Training Program and a Work Study Program." He argued that "Thousands of Americans have volunteered to serve the needs of other lands. Thousands more want the chance to serve the needs of their own land. They should have that chance." And so he launched VISTA. We also know that Lyndon Johnson fought to enact Medicare and Medicaid and also aid to elementary and secondary education.

"I do not," Johnson declared, "intend that the war against poverty become a series of uncoordinated and unrelated efforts - that it perish for lack of leadership and direction. Therefore this bill creates, in the Executive Office of the President, a new Office of Economic Opportunity. Its Director will be my personal Chief of Staff for the War against poverty. I intend to appoint Sargent Shriver to this post."

LBJ concluded with these words: "And this program is much more than a beginning. Rather it is a commitment. It is a total

commitment by this President, and this Congress, and this nation, to pursue victory over the most ancient of mankind's enemies."

And so began the War on Poverty enacted into law 40 years ago this year. And four decades later, as Judy mentioned, after the ravages of Katrina, we as a country were at least said to commit ourselves again to a new battle against poverty. There may be reason to doubt whether we will make that commitment, but it's a commitment that we certainly ought to make. And if we do make it, we should learn from our past efforts, and in particular from Lyndon Johnson's heroic commitment of four decades ago.

This gathering was inspired by an event organized some months ago at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, with the help, again, of our friends at the Atlantic magazine, to celebrate the life and work of Sargent Shriver. And by the way, doesn't that look like the great cover of a book--which I hope everybody on this panel will help us produce at some point.

Judy Feder and Harry Holzer and I were excited by that event and by the commitment of so many to Sargent Shriver's legacy. We thought that after so many years in which people offered many dogmatic declarations about what had and had not been achieved by the War on Poverty, it would be worth revisiting Shriver and LBJ's legacy to ask what worked in the War on Poverty, what didn't, and to see how this

might have a bearing on our future efforts to lift up and empower the poor.

My own view has always been, as that great and learned skeptic Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it, that there were more successes in those years than we want to know. But it's also true that future successes depend on learning from past failures as well as success, and so tonight we will be dedicated to exploring the War on Poverty from a variety of viewpoints.

I can't imagine a better group of people to discuss these questions. The hardest part of my job tonight was to take bios that could have taken me the entire event to read and to try to cut them and still do justice to all the people on this panel. So I apologize for anything I left out here.

Lee Schorr, who's going to kick off this discussion, was present at the creation of the War on Poverty. From 1965 to 1967, she headed the Health Division of OEO's Community Action Program. She is a brilliant author and thinker, a lecturer in social medicine at Harvard University, director of Harvard's Project on Effective Intervention, and she co-chairs the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Community Change. She has never given up on fighting against poverty and for the poor, and she has always insisted that the only good solutions are practical solutions, evidenced in her important book, "Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage."

Lee, bless you for never giving up, never surrendering, and, if I can be Churchillian about it, for being willing to fight on the beaches if necessary. It's great to have you here this evening.

Roger Wilkins is another friend I admire hugely. He was an assistant attorney general in the Johnson years, worked at both the Washington Post and the New York Times--I'm proud to call him a colleague--and shared a Pulitzer Prize--listen to this, group--in 1972 for Watergate coverage with Woodward, Bernstein, and Herblock. He is now the Clarence J. Robinson Professor of History and American Culture at George Mason University, has done so much civic and civil rights service that it would take all night to list it, and he is the author of many important books, including "Jefferson's Pillow: The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism."

I am blessed with great colleagues at Brookings and Georgetown, and I'm grateful for the other distinguished participants in today's discussion. Belle Sawhill is senior fellow and vice president and director of economic studies here at Brookings. She was a senior fellow at the Urban Institute and served as associate director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1993 to 1995. We could staff a good part of the government with just the people who are up here today.

She is one of the smartest people most of us have ever met, and her concern for both fiscal responsibility and social justice is captured by the titles of two of her many books, "Restoring Fiscal

Sanity" and "One Percent for the Kids: New Policies, Brighter Futures for America's Children." And all of us should be grateful for her work as president of the board of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. And when you look at the numbers, it is indeed one of our nation's most effective not-for-profit organizations.

Harry Holzer is another practical intellectual who cares passionately about the poor and about programs that work. He is a professor of public policy at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute and is associated with just about every important study group on poverty in the nation--the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan, the Program on Inequality and Social Policy at Harvard, and the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin. Imagine how little we would know if Harry didn't exist.

He was an important figure in the Clinton administration's Labor Department, and he's done pioneering work both on gathering data about low-wage workers and employers and on the urgency of improving opportunities for low-income men, so often left out of our discussions about welfare reform. And I have to say this: Harry is a jazz-lover, which says something very good about him.

Ron Haskins is a brilliant scholar/activist who spent 14 years on the staff of the House Ways and Means Committee, which might have been more challenging than his years in the United States Marine Corps. He was principal author of the welfare reform enacted in 1996. And

while members of Congress might claim that work, Ron actually did it. And he remembers every critical word I ever wrote about that bill, for some reason.

We have been blessed to have him as a colleague here at Brookings, where he's done extraordinary work with Belle at our Welfare Reform and Beyond project, now reborn as the Center on Children and Families. If I revealed how many liberal friends Ron has and how much I respect his work, I'd ruin his reputation in conservative circles. So instead, I will point out how conservative Ron really is and how much I disagree with him. And yes, he did work as a senior advisor to President Bush for welfare policy.

And we are very grateful to be joined by Stuart Butler, vice president of domestic and economic policy at The Heritage Foundation. Stuart was a compassionate conservative long before compassionate conservatism was cool; indeed, long before anyone had ever heard of compassionate conservatism. He speaks and writes English particularly well because he was born 80 miles south of Manchester, England. He is the son of a mechanic, who left school at 13. He is clearly smarter than the rest of us, because he has degrees in physics and math.

He is passionate about the need for universal health coverage and has proposed conservative approaches to this problem that may yet help us out of the partisan morass that's prevented us from getting something done. He was also for Enterprise Zones before anyone knew

what they were. And his many books, notably "Out of the Poverty Trap," have forced many liberals, even me, to acknowledge that compassionate conservatism is a real thing and not an oxymoron like "jumbo shrimp." I am very, very grateful to have learned from Stuart over many, many years and to be his colleague at Georgetown.

So, as you can see, we have many views represented up here, brilliant exponents of those views, and I would invite Lee up to open our discussion today. And thank you all so much for being with us. Lee Schorr.

[Applause.]

MS. SCHORR: Well, you know, it's tempting to just reminisce endlessly about what seems like the glory days for those of us who were at OEO during the first two or three years of its operation, long before it was shrunk and cut back and weakened. But I'm just going to try to focus on two aspects of the difference between the world then and now: First, the difference in climate about what seems possible, especially what seems possible through government action; and secondly, the difference between then and now about how much we know about what works.

First the difference in climate. There was a sense in those early OEO days that the possibilities were endless, especially if you were working, as I was, in the health part of OEO. I worked some on the early

childhood part and Head Start. I worked in the part of OEO where it didn't really take huge sums of money to make a big difference.

Now, people like me were only dimly aware of the fundamental constraints under which we were working. We knew, but weren't given a lot of pause, by the decision made at the 1964 Cabinet meeting, when the planning group for the War on Poverty presented its proposal for the centerpiece of the new federal initiative, which was a massive jobs program that would be financed by a cigarette tax.

Senator Moynihan described what happened at this meeting to the Washington Post many years later. He said, "President Johnson listened for a moment or two and announced that in that election year we were cutting taxes, not raising them. He thereupon picked up the telephone attached to the cabinet table, called someone somewhere about something else." Moynihan believed that at that moment the war on poverty was lost before it began.

Now, Sargent Shriver accommodated to the inevitable and he announced what was probably a rationalization that, the problem was not jobs, it was people qualified to hold a job. Or, as David Brooks wrote about it in yesterday's Times, it's human capital, stupid. He didn't say "stupid." He said it's all about human capital.

I can tell you that, despite the fact that we were doing all this sort of with one hand tied behind our backs, we did think that everything was possible. We were flush with good ideas, with what

seemed like enough money to put behind those good ideas, and an overflowing optimism. If I can just tell you a personal story to illustrate that:

I met the man whom I married a few months later, who's now my husband, on June 20, 1966. He had come back from Europe, was just assigned to the Great Society beat, and he had been hanging around OEO. After we were introduced and he found out that I worked at OEO, he said--well, I guess we had talked for a little while. It was long enough for him to decide that he was going to invite me to have lunch with him, but it was one of the most inelegant invitations to lunch I ever got. What he said was, I stopped by Hy Bookbinder's office today, and Bookie said he couldn't go to lunch with me because he was standing by for Sargent Shriver.

He said, now, if I were to invite you to go to lunch, would you tell me you were standing by for Sargent Shriver? And I said, No, but what I would tell you is that I wouldn't want to go to lunch still in this fiscal year because I still have $12 million to allocate to neighborhood health centers--which was my domain.

Now, Dan says today that he was so proud that even though he was so recently back from overseas, he did know that the fiscal year ended on June 30th. And we did make a date for July 1st--which he subsequently couldn't keep because that turned out to be the day that Medicare began, which he also covered.

But the neighborhood health centers that we funded in those early days--and we did fund, I think, four of them between June 20th and June 30th of that year--demonstrated that health outcomes of populations in concentrated poverty could be significantly improved, and health costs reduced, through radically new methods of organizing services that made them responsive to a wide range of human needs. And we saw health centers as not only providing medical care, but we saw them as being key to making sure that children's development was on track, that kids were nourished properly, that pregnant women were nourished properly, that not only medical but health-related needs of poor populations were met.

From where I sat in those first two years, even the political realities that later became such obstacles--like grumbling mayors and governors--could be overcome. The very first health proposal that I was given to review when I arrived at OEO in early 1965 came with a note from Sargent Shriver which said, "This is the eighth proposal that has come from Mayor Daley. The first seven have been turned down. You will approve this one." I did understand enough even in my naiveté that that was serious. But I also knew, after I read the proposal, it was the worst proposal I had ever read anywhere, anytime.

However, we were able to go to Chicago and get some people who really knew about delivering health services to poor people to put one together and to get the mayor to sign off on it and substitute it for that first one.

When we wanted to fund the people who really conceptualized the neighborhood health center--Jack Geiger and his colleague Dr. Gibson, whose first name has left me for the moment--

MR. DIONNE: That's pretty good 40 years later.

MS. SCHORR: Well, I've thought of him a lot since then because they had this idea, which really came out of South Africa, where Jack, who was a professor at Harvard by then, had worked briefly and where, in rural areas, the neighborhood health centers had become the community health centers for that region. And they came up with this idea and it was one--

Count Gibson.

--health center that would be in Columbia Point Boston and a similar one would be in a rural area in Mound Bayou, Mississippi. And they wanted to compare how the various aspects of what they had in mind for these neighborhood health centers would look in rural and urban areas.

Now, the way Jack Geiger tells the story is that the grant would never have been made for the Mound Bayou center, because Governor Johnson of Mississippi was threatening to veto it, if the president of Tuft's University had not sat in on Sargent Shriver's office and said we had to make the grant through Tuft's to fund both of those health centers. I don't know whether the sit-in was what made it happen,

but there was a radically new kind of health center funded in Mound Bayou, Mississippi.

When we made a grant to the University of Southern California to set up a health center in Watts and the local docs and dentists began to grumble, I was sent over to the Justice Department to get some advice on how to smooth those waters--and that was how I first met Roger Wilkins.

Nothing was more emblematic of the optimism of the time than the beginning of Head Start. Shriver, soon after becoming director of OEO, had the idea that the economists' plans for OEO left out the majority of the poor who were kids. And he knew from his time as chair of the Chicago School Board that poor children were being left behind even before they started school. He asked for a memo on what a massive new program for young children might look like. And he got that memo in late '64. And against the advice of a lot of experts, he decided on the massive launch of a program for the summer of '65.

Ladybird Johnson became the honorary chairman. The president announced that Head Start would make certain that poverty's children would not be forevermore poverty's captives. Nobody really believed that a single summer program could do that, but Sarge wanted to signal that the war on poverty wouldn't be just a handful of model programs. He said he was determined to write Head Start across the face of the nation so that no Congress and no president could ever destroy it.

Letters went out to every state and local health officer, school superintendent, welfare commissioner announcing the availability of funds to provide poor pre-school kids with early education, immunizations, health checkups, hot meals, social services, and supports for their families.

Special efforts were targeted at the 300 poorest counties in America, because there was a fear that only the most fortunately situated places would get the funds. And instead, government interns were sent out to those 300 poorest counties and helped the ministers, the teachers, the whomevers they could find to submit programs that were fundable under that program. And within five short months a half a million children were enrolled for the summer program, and soon the applications were coming in for the year-round program.

Shriver's wish was realized. Head Start was so deeply embedded in the American landscape that no administration could later uproot it or even significantly cut it back.

I want to give you one more example of what we were able to accomplish at that time, and that was to establish a federal role in family planning. At the time OEO began, there was no federal money going explicitly to fund family planning services. We assumed that some maternal and child health money in HEW was going into contraceptive services, but both Congress and HEW preferred not to acknowledge that.

We had a few local proposals asking for funds for family planning, but the general counsel's office didn't want us to act on them.

Nothing much happened until OEO's Division of Research, Planning, and Program Evaluation came up with a comparison of the cost-effectiveness of various proposed strategies. Joe Kershaw, the head of research, planning, and evaluation made a presentation to the staff and showed how family planning programs would be six times as cost-effective as anything else that had been proposed. It had a cost-effectiveness ratio, a magic ratio, of 18:1.

Shriver was impressed and asked Kershaw to please take his charts and make his presentation out at Timberlawn the following Saturday. Timberlawn was where the Shrivers lived. When Kershaw arrived, there was not only Sargent Shriver, but Eunice Shriver flanked by two priests in Roman garb. He made his presentation and didn't know what the result would be, but the rumors began to circulate and everybody got very, very nervous and said there would surely, under these circumstances, be no family planning grants.

Well, Shriver ultimately painted his own profile in courage and he issued a statement affirming that local anti-poverty agencies could request family planning funds.

Now, it sounds very quaint now, but eligibility, the general counsel's office said, would have to be limited to married women over 21 and women who had already had children. But it was a beachhead, and

for the first time, federal funds were being used explicitly to support family planning services. It ultimately became a special emphasis program, and in 1970 Congress passed Title 10 of the family planning services part of the Public Health Service Act.

Now, the neighborhood health centers, Head Start, family planning were very small victories. But along with legal services and Job Corps and Upward Bound and VISTA and the Neighborhood Youth Corps, they showed that government could solve problems and make people's lives better. The Community Action Program drew a new cadre of previously excluded young people into the political mainstream, with results that are still visible today.

But how did these small victories and the larger ones represented by Medicare, Medicaid, EITC, and so on look against the background of the challenge that we're here to discuss? Forty years after the Johnson administration launched the War on Poverty, Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the persistence and scope of poverty in America.

Of course, nobody knows what would have happened if we had been able to continue and expand what we started then. We do know that in the mid-'60s, we had vastly more confidence in the power of government to do good than we do today, but we didn't have the funding for a sustained period of time to put to use what we knew then.

But today we have less money, we have less public support. What we have more of today is a great deal more knowledge about what it

would take to make significant inroads on persistent and concentrated poverty. Forty years ago we were relying on a few random studies here or there that showed that one or another initiative might have the desired payoffs. Today, as we tremble in fear of allocating money to a program that will not achieve promised results, we're surrounded by insistent calls for limit public and even philanthropic funding only to what are known now as evidence-based interventions.

I think we are in grave danger of retreating to supporting only the circumscribed and isolated interventions that can be assessed by random-assignment experiments. But we know that if we're to be successful in combating persistent and concentrated poverty, we need much more powerful tools. We need an armamentarium that includes, at the last, very different housing policies; we need reforms of both individual schools and whole school districts, vastly expanded job opportunities and income supports, and support for building, in Robert Kennedy's words, the communities where children can play and adults work together and join in the pleasures and responsibilities of the place where they live.

It seems to me that we have now to prepare for new opportunities to act on what we know by harvesting and putting together in understandable terms the wealth of what we've learned in the lean times. While we recognize the difficulty of the task, we should be able to demonstrate that we now know so much about how to achieve the

outcomes that the public values, that more and more citizens can embrace an agenda that will bring us closer to the kind of America that we dreamed of but didn't achieve 40 years ago.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: Imagine the scandal that would have been created if it had been revealed contemporaneously that Dan Schorr had a romantic interest in one of his best sources. And yet, when Lee talked about the nature of that invitation, if the words of the invitation had been revealed, even Patrick Fitzgerald would have been fooled as to Dan's true intentions.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Thank you so much. There's so much there that I want us to get back to. In particular, I'm fascinated by--I'd love to go back--and Harry may raise this, about what happened with the failure of that massive jobs program which Moynihan--as you said, was always disappointed that that program did not become a centerpiece for the War on Poverty.

Thank you very much.

I want to call on Roger as our first responder. He can reveal more about Dan's true intentions, too, if he wants.

MR. WILKINS: Well, I will say that when they started OEO and there would be meetings--you go to meetings all the time in the government; you don't want to go to any more meetings. But a lot of us

fellows, married or unmarried, when we were invited to a meeting about OEO, we'd go because there was this really very smart, very good-looking woman, and we'd all want to go see her. And I wish that I had--

MR. DIONNE: There's a whole subtext going on here.

[Laughter.]

MS. : Pat is giving you the evil eye.

MR. WILKINS: She knows. She knows.

Anyway, had I known what I know now, I could have said, You guys just stop panting because there's this guy from CBS, who is so suave and smooth, she'll be swept off her feet.

[Laughter.]

MR. WILKINS: I also want to reveal that E.J. Dionne is really a physician, a surgeon. Because he worked for the New York Times when it decreed that all of the Times writers should be deprived of their typewriters--which are in essence an extension of their souls. And when that terrible finger pointed at me, I went to this young fellow in the newsroom and said, Teach me how to use one of those damned computers. And he did. My young daughter would say "not very well," but he did.

[Laughter.]

MR. WILKINS: I want to just frame what Lee and her colleagues were attacking by telling you what poverty in the inner cities looked like a few years before the War on Poverty. For a year, 1957, I was a welfare caseworker in the poverty-stricken area of Hough in

Cleveland, Ohio. I knew virtually nothing about anything. I had gone to law school, so I didn't know anything. But I had immediately a caseload of 110 of the poorest families in Cleveland. And I was supposed to visit them once every 3 months at least. These visits were like that [quick], but this was one of the few ways that the majesty and the power of the United States touched poor citizens.

The neighborhood was desolate--a few small churches, storefront churches mainly; there wasn't any community development; there were very few identifiable community leaders. So what you encountered was poverty and lethargy, and I soon figured out that my visits were not supposed to be for the purpose of really fixing anything in these families. It was to make sure they were still alive, and B, to make sure they weren't cheating--because we were a tough people and you couldn't have a man in the house and you couldn't have a new job. So I was, you know, not a helper; it wasn't the job. I was a minder.

But the terrible thing was that there was no activity, there was no hope. And this was-- in '57, the black migration from the South, from the cotton fields that no longer needed their work because of the mechanization of Southern agriculture-- they were still coming from the South, and in Cleveland there was still a good manufacturing economy. But these people were overwhelming the job-creating capacities of Cleveland, the housing-creating capacities, the educational capacities.

And nobody saw it. It wasn't in the papers. There were no crusades. There were no marches. These people were just left there. And if there had been a flood, if somehow miraculously the Ohio River or the Cuyahoga River had overflowed its banks, well, people would have looked and said, Oh, my goodness, there's poverty in Cleveland.

When Lee met me, my job was not to combat poverty. My job was to deal with racial conflict in America's cities. And very shortly after taking the job, it became clear that the urgencies of the day had turned me into the president's prime riot chaser. And I was first sent to a previously very lethargic community, Watts, in the southern part of Los Angeles, which had an explosion in the summer of 1965, which in true Hollywood fashion was transmitted to the country by live television feeds from helicopters. And so the country was riveted.

And Watts was a place where there was almost as much lethargy--had been--as I had seen in Cleveland seven or eight years before. But as a result of the riot and a result of OEO, there was hope. The first community meeting I went to in Watts, the people had these little black, red, and yellow books that the Community Action Program had put out telling people in local communities how to set up a community action agency. And virtually everybody in this meeting had one. And they said, okay, we had a problem here, it was a terrible problem, but we've got a chance to fix it, and we've got this new program and we're going to get into it.

Well, all of a sudden you could see the new energy that this program was going to put into these previously totally placid and docile communities. But you also saw right then the fault line, because Mayor Yorty didn't want a community action program in Los Angeles because the idea was to give maximum feasible participation to the poor. I haven't said that phrase in 35 years.

MR. DIONNE: It's why we held this meeting.

MR. WILKINS: Right. And that meant that the money would go around the mayor's office. Well, the mayors hated that because it was going to create power centers that they couldn't control. And it was going to create service delivery systems that they couldn't control. And it was going to create--the smart mayors knew it was going to create energy in the community that they couldn't control.

What I saw over the next few years was astonishing in terms of what these poor communities had looked like previously. Because all kinds of new leaders emerged to work in the community action program or in the health program or later certainly in the Head Start program.

It was Nixon, I think, said, Well, you can't--it's just stupid to throw money at problems. But the fact is the federal money that was directed at that lethargy really changed things, put local people to work doing constructive things in the community, gave people hope, and created a new political dynamic.

The problem was, when people started to get hope, they also became far less willing to put up with the status quo, particularly police insensitivity and, many times, brutality, so they reacted in pretty destructive ways. And then there became a separatist kind of politics that grew out of this energy that was in the cities.

I cannot now look back and try to figure out how those programs could have been redesigned on the fly so that you could retain the energy but eliminate some of the very serious strife that occurred in those years. But what I do know is that a lot of very good things happened in an awful lot of cities around this country. A lot of kids who otherwise would not have gotten decent educations got better educations because of that program. And the black communities and Hispanic communities around this country--and Native American communities, finally--began to produce kind of a better grade of leadership than they'd ever had before.

All the promise, though, went out of the program, in large measure--of course the Republicans cut it back in terrible ways when Nixon became president, but the program never really got to be what it might have been because the president declared war on poverty, but he sent the money to Vietnam.

And in one telling instance--and then I'll stop--there was at the end of the Johnson administration, the last summer of that administration, there was a Poor People's Campaign down on--poor

people were brought from all over the country, and they camped down on the Mall. It was a campaign that had been conceived, or had been announced by Martin Luther King, and he was working on the plans for it when he was killed in April. But the campaign came anyway, and it was terrible--it rained all the time they were there. They were encamped on the Mall, just about the place where the Korean War Memorial is now.

And time passed, very little happened except that the one coherent demand that the people made was that there should be an eradication of hunger in the United States. And we in the government decided that the least that could happen--they couldn't go home empty-handed, we had to listen. And this idea of better nutrition for poor people struck us as the way to do it.

Amazingly, it became a crusade that was pushed on the government by the attorney general of the United States and one of his assistant attorneys general, me. And we went around the government and we tried to sell this idea. Food stamps was a small program, we said let's do food stamps around the country for people who make less than $1 a day. Make $30 a month, you get free food stamps.

Well, we tried to sell it and tried to sell it. This is a Democratic administration. We had the hardest time. Fortunately, Sarge Shriver came in on our side and we got it into the White House and we got it to the president's prime domestic assistant, Joe Califano. Joe bought it, got us a meeting with the president. The president loved it,

said that's right and we'll do it, I'll call Wilbur Mills right now. Wilbur Mills was the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, a Democrat and old colleague of Johnson's. And Johnson put it to him. And we thought we were over the hill, Johnson talking to Mills.

I don't know what exactly the words were, but Mills said, Look, I have given you a surcharge tax for your war, I am not going to get anything else through this Congress. So just forget that money for poor people.

And that was about how the wheels started to grind more and more slowly. But the energy, the hope, and the vibrant projects that I saw in those communities and the demonstrations to little kids that their parents were doing something and could affect the way they lived, that was very powerful stuff and, in my view, very good stuff.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much.

Belle?

MS. SAWHILL: Well, it's hard to follow on two people who were there and have such interesting and moving reminiscences about a very important period in our history. I remember this period, although perhaps not as well as Lee or Roger.

I was in graduate school, and one of the things that people said to me when I was trying to think about what kind of graduate degree to get is the lawyers have lost power in Washington, the economists have

taken over because the issue is poverty, and if you want to fight poverty, if you want to have a war, you have to first count the number of poor people and you then have to figure out fancy things like income maintenance and negative income taxes that required the skills of economists. It's one of the reasons I became an economist.

I can also report that in 1968 I was teaching at Howard University when we had the riots here in Washington. The university had to close down for several weeks, and when I came back to my classes, my students were really very unable to concentrate on the usual material. And so I let them just talk about poverty and racial injustice and I also let them write their final exams on those issues. And I saved those bluebooks for about 20 years because they were so interesting, until my husband finally said, when we were moving from one house to another, you've got to throw away these big boxes full of bluebooks; what in the world could you ever do with them? And under his impassioned plea to leave more space in the attic, I did that, but I've always regretted it. I wish I still had them.

But I would like to fast-forward, if I could, to more modern times and talk a little bit about the Clinton administration in particular, since I served in the Clinton administration, and fast-forward to the ideas that really motivated our administration.

You may recall that there was a lot of discussion before Clinton took office, when he was campaigning, about the need for a new

social covenant. And this was a way of talking about what does the government owe to people who are disadvantaged, but also what do those individuals owe in return--it was trying to get the balance between government responsibility and personal responsibility right. And of course what manifested this new covenant best of all was welfare reform in 1996, which I'm sure my friend and colleague Ron Haskins will have more to say.

MR. HASKINS: Over here on the far right?

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: You picked your spot.

MS. SAWHILL: But, you know, as David Ellwood used to say, if you play by the rules you shouldn't be poor. That was his phraseology for the new covenant. And one of the rules that was put forward, quite controversially, by Clinton during his campaign and then later as president was that you should work; that's what playing by the rules means if you're an able-bodied person.

And after that, we got welfare reform--pushed by the Republicans, of course, but signed into law, of course, by the president, with some caveats. And we had work requirements. I would say that that experiment with welfare reform has been far more successful than I certainly anticipated and than I think most people anticipated. We all remember Senator Moynihan saying children would be sleeping on grates. And although I'm sure there are some children who have not been helped

and have in fact been harmed by this bill, I think that on average families have been better off--helped by a strong economy, to be sure.

Now, part of the social covenant was not just to require work, but to provide assistance to those who were playing by the rules, those who were working. So along with welfare reform came a huge expansion of the earned income tax credit in 1993, a huge expansion very little recognized by many people. It has made a big difference in people's lives, is now the largest anti-poverty program that we have in the United States. And that was accompanied by increases in Medicaid and SCHIP and childcare and other helps for the so-called working poor.

So I would say the 1990s, or the Clinton era, if you will, were really characterized by this philosophy of a new social contract between the government and the people, and particularly less-advantaged people: We want to help you, we will help you, we will make commitments to helping you, but we expect certain things in return for that.

My personal belief is that that will help to rebuild public support for the idea of doing more. Lee said a lot about the climate of opinion, and I think the climate of opinion is not very good right now, for obvious reasons, but I think that it--I'm optimistic about it in the future, and one of the reasons I'm optimistic is because I think that we are getting policy better aligned with public values than it might have been in the past. Some of you may disagree with that, but that's my view.

I would even take it a step further, would take all of this a step further, and I would do a couple of different things.

First of all, I think our measures of poverty are way too narrow. I think we ought to really be talking about the bottom, what I call the bottom one-third of the U.S. population, all of whom are struggling. It's not just those below the official poverty line.

Secondly, we need to continue to expand assistance to those who are playing by the rules by working hard to support their families.

Thirdly, I think we need to have a new conversation about the rules. What does playing by the rules mean? If there's come consensus now that it should include work amongst able-bodied adults, perhaps it should also include such things as finishing school, at least high school; perhaps it should include delaying child-bearing until you're old enough to support a child, or at least make a good effort at supporting a child; and then maybe we link some new benefits to those new kinds of responsibility.

I was down in North Carolina last week with Senator John Edwards at his poverty summit, and one of the things that he is in favor of is what are called child savings accounts. And one thing you could do would be to say if people are more responsible about their child-bearing, you say to them we want you to wait to have children until you're really ready to give that child a good start in life; but we're going to help you give that child a good start in life by giving that child a savings account,

a baby bonus, whatever you want to call it, at birth to be used in certain ways. But tied to this kind of individual responsibility.

So I will leave it at that. I was told to be brief and am trying to be so.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. I was thinking that if Belle had not been misinformed about lawyers losing power in Washington, we might be talking to Chief Justice Sawhill today.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Once again, and it's a theme, perhaps, because it interests me, Roger's account of community action versus the whole jobs-and-income approach, and that--you know, it seems to me community action, if you want to look at it negatively, was a way to create a lot of noise at low cost, and therefore be the appearance of movement. Or, it really was an effort to empower communities. I hope we can revisit that issue of what community action did and did not accomplish, versus other things that might have been done if we had wanted to put some money into them.

I want to turn to Harry, whose specialty is jobs and income.

MR. HOLZER: Thank you, E.J. I think I should say before I start, though, anything I might say about the War on Poverty you should take with a grain of salt because, unlike my much more distinguished co-panelists, I was much too young to remember any of it. Forty years ago I was probably minus-two in age or something like that.

[Laughter.]

MR. HOLZER: But I have read a couple of things, so I'll share a couple of thoughts with you.

When I think of the War on Poverty, I often distinguish between the very early programs that Lee and Roger talked about. Job Corps, Head Start, I think, have passed the test of time and the test of evaluation evidence and look relatively quite effective. Unfortunately, I think they've often been--they have been too small in their implementation to have made a really large dent in poverty. But I distinguish those early programs from the later efforts, from the later '60s and '70s, all the income maintenance and income transfer programs, which were all the rage of the '70s--welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, public housing--which I think were much larger in magnitude and did have big effects. I think a lot of those effects were positive. I think there is evidence that shows that they reduced malnutrition, they increased access to health care. These are good things.

But there were some negative sides to the whole income maintenance approach, both in terms of politics and in terms of substance. I think it did have some negative effects on incentives to work. It did probably have some negative impacts on family structure. And it did lead to a backlash that came much later.

So I think those programs were large and had a mixed record.

Now, in the 1970s and '80s, on the heels of those programs, poverty actually rose modestly, which led some commentators to say gee, we declared war on poverty and poverty actually won. And I don't really share that viewpoint that those programs were largely responsible for the increases in poverty. To me, the biggest thing that changed subsequent to 1970 is the labor market. The labor market changed quite dramatically starting in the '70s, was really picking up steam in the '80s and '90s. Very simply, growth slowed down and inequality rose very dramatically.

And the most negative effects on these labor market changes were on the employment prospects of less-skilled young men, especially unskilled African American men, many of whom left the labor market over time in response to these changes, many of whom now much less frequently engaged in marriage, and this led to the rise in single-parent--this is not the only reason that single headship of families went up, but it's certainly a major reason at the low end of the income ladder. Many of these young men turned to crime as an alternative way of generating income. And those choices, plus our nation's criminal justice response, really led to some disastrous outcomes for these young men, long-term outcomes for these young men and their communities and families.

So to me the changes in the labor market really have to be front and center in a lot of these discussions of what to do next.

Now, the '90s did bring some positive changes. Belle has talked of those. I'm sure Ron will talk more about them. Some things

certainly got better, in terms of employment rates for single moms and other things. Along other dimensions we made less progress.

But as we look ahead, and as I sort of said, I think--keeping in mind that labor market issues really have to be central, and that was one of the themes -- as Belle said, the idea of the social contract was you've got to work. And so the labor market is now front and center in any effort to combat poverty. And that, combined with what evidence we have accumulated from social experimentation and analysis of what works, all needs to be brought to the table as we think about future approaches.

So when I have my wish list of what I would like to see in future efforts to address poverty, I would throw out the following things very quickly.

Number one, I do start with skills. I do start with human capital because those skills have become so much more important in the economy and in the labor market that we have today. You know, the evidence on human capital programs for low-income folks is mixed, but there's enough evidence there of things that work--everything from pre-K programs, Head Start, and better, more intensive programs and earlier programs than Head Start--through the high school years, career academies, through community colleges, programs for out-of-school youth, like the Job Corps and the service corps. I think there's a lot there

to work with and lot there that we can invest in to improve labor market outcomes.

But it's not just people and skills that matter, it's also the quality of jobs. And this is talked about much less frequently, I think, by too many analysts. People with given skill sets can have very different outcomes in the labor market depending on what kind of jobs they get. And for people with a given skill set, there really are higher-wage jobs and lower-wage jobs. And what that means from a policy point of view, if you want to do more to connect poor people to the better jobs that exist--and we have some ideas of how to do that--but we also want to do some things to encourage more of those jobs to exist.

There are some pretty straightforward things you can do, like increase the minimum wage--and I know some of my colleagues in the economics profession might disagree with me on that. I think, on net, the effects of raising the minimum wage moderately are positive and help low-income folks in the labor market. You can make it easier for these workers to unionize; that would have some positive effects. You could do other things to support high-wage employers in their efforts to provide better opportunities to workers. So there's a whole range of things on the jobs side that I would also like to see more frequently emphasized.

I think incentives to work matter a lot.

[Flip tape.]

MR. HOLZER: --back on the table front and center. For too long and in too many of these discussions, and for so many years when we were so focused on welfare reform, young men were often a footnote, or an asterisk, in this discussion. That doesn't work anymore. For these families to improve, children need two parents, two parents actively engaged in the labor market and actively engaged in supporting them. And we need to do a lot more, I think, both on the preventative side to keep these young men engaged, but also after the fact, once so many of them have become incarcerated and have become noncustodial parents, I think we have to think very hard and find out more about what we could do to reconnect them.

And finally on my agenda is the whole set of urban issues that have been raised and that Katrina brought to the fore once again. How do we improve the access of low-income urban minorities to housing and schools and jobs that aren't in their own segregated low-income neighborhoods? And I think improving that access, there's a variety of ways of doing that and I think that should be on the agenda as well.

So that's my wish list, and again, with the labor market front and center. And I'll stop there and let you hear from the other panelists.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. He knows a lot for a guy still in his twenties, doesn't he?

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: He mentioned the work on poor young men, and I'd just like to take a moment to remember one of his colleagues who Harry did a lot of work with on this subject, Paul Offner, who, alas, left us too young but was a pioneer in this effort that Harry was involved with.

And now the gentleman to your far left, Ron Haskins.

MR. HASKINS: Despite my location over here on the far right, I begin by acknowledging that it's a great honor to be on a panel with Lee Schorr and Roger Wilkins. They truly were present at the foundation. We've not mentioned civil rights here, but in this exact same era great civil rights legislation was passed, and on that score it is unambiguous that it was a blazing, dazzling success and has changed our entire society. And both of them, but especially Roger Wilkins, played a role in that.

So now I'm going to stop pandering to the left.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: That's all you've got?

MR. HASKINS: It took everything I had. Did it seem sincere?

MR. DIONNE: We're grateful.

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: I'm going to make three points. First, in a market economy like ours, that emphasizes self-reliance and

independence, we need some kinder and gentler programs for the unfortunate among us. And on balance, then, the War on Poverty has been good for the nation.

Two. It's been good for the nation primarily because it did establish some programs that do promote the general welfare. At least three of these programs have stood, as Harry said--I'm going to quote his words--the test of time, and those programs are Medicaid, Medicare, and Head Start. Now granted, all three of these programs have very serious flaws. Medicare, for example, seems to, as far as I can tell, be a program in which we improved health care for the elderly by sending the bill to their children and grandchildren. Head Start has not produced the wonderful benefits that Harry just referred to. Even though the benefits are positive, they could and should be much better. And Medicaid, as any governor will tell you, threatens to be out of control.

So these programs are flawed, but they're nonetheless great because they bestowed upon the federal government serious responsibility for the unfortunate among us. And that in itself is a great achievement.

However, there are three problems. First, the War on Poverty--and maybe it's not completely fair to charge the beginning of the program with what happened subsequently--but the War on Poverty led to an absolute blizzard of federal programs and federal and state programs--when Republicans took over Congress in 1995, there were

some 350 means-tested programs--and also led to a dramatic increase in spending, despite the protestations of Lee Schorr. Spending increased in constant dollars from something like $60 billion to something like $375 billion on the whole sweep of these many means-tested programs.

There's nothing wrong with spending, as I'll say in just a minute, but it needs to be effective spending. And there, I think, the War on Poverty entirely lacked the mechanism for deciding what was effective spending and what we could do to improve the spending.

Let me introduce the second criticism of the War on Poverty with these words: We have created a welfare system which forces men to leave their families so that public assistance can be obtained and which has created a dependence on their fellow citizens that is degrading and distasteful to giver and receiver alike.

That was the noted conservative Robert Kennedy, speaking in 1967.

So the second flaw in these programs was that they did induce dependency, they did not emphasize work nearly enough, and the watchword of the War on Poverty seemed to be spend more, demand less.

In 1996, as both Belle and Harry have mentioned, I think we largely corrected that problem. There are still a lot of important things we can do, but we did correct the problem. As a result of that, mothers went to work by the millions, literally. For the first time since the early '70s, poverty declined very substantially. Child poverty reached its

lowest level ever in the year 2000. And even now, after four consecutive years of increases, the poverty rate among children is still about 20 percent lower than it was when the declines began in the mid-1990s, when Bill Clinton was president.

Is that what I was supposed to say?

MR. DIONNE: It's very kind of you to say it.

MR. HASKINS: And let me introduce the third point with these words: The family is the cornerstone of society. When the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged. So, unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together, all the rest--schools and playgrounds, public assistance and private concern--will never be enough to cut completely the circle of despair and deprivations. Another notorious conservative, Lyndon Baines Johnson, in 1965, as part of announcing the War on Poverty.

And this is the third failure of the War on Poverty. Despite the words, the programs did not increase our commitment to married, two-parent families. And indeed, coterminous with the beginning of the War on Poverty, our society took many steps away from the simple idea that no civilization can persist unless most of its children, nearly all its children preferably, are raised in married, two-parent families. We not only got away from that by demographic trends, but it was justified, primarily by people on the left, and we're still reaping the consequences.

And we still do not have good programs, although I think we made somewhat of a start in the welfare reform legislation of 1996.

So even despite these criticisms, I think on balance the War on Poverty forced the federal government to accept more responsibility for the unfortunate and it has led to vast increases in spending. These are both good, or potentially good. Now we should learn to use the money better to promote work and increase the share of our children reared by both of their married parents.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much.

Actually, I would note that this entire panel might be accused of being right-wing, because everybody has mentioned family so far, just about.

MS. SCHORR: That's not right-wing.

MR. DIONNE: Exactly.

Stuart, thank you for joining us.

MR. BUTLER: Thank you.

When the War on Poverty began, I was actually doing my science degree in Scotland, but not long afterwards--and not because of--I decided to switch to history and took my graduate degree in history. And that's important, I think, in terms of looking at all of this.

Also, I have a feeling of kind of déjà vu here. Almost exactly 20 years ago I was actually invited down to Austin to the LBJ Ranch for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the War on Poverty.

I don't know if Roger and Lee were there, but certainly Sargent Shriver was and Bill Moyers and many others. And it was a feeling both of nostalgia and self-criticism. In fact, I was on a panel which was entitled, "What Worked, What Failed, and Why." That sounds rather familiar to this set.

MR. DIONNE: I hope you kept your old notes. It would save you a lot of work.

MR. HASKINS: They're right there in his hand right now.

[Laughter.]

MR. BUTLER: In fact, I went back and looked through the transcription of that--which is interesting, but I won't spend a lot of time on that.

But one of the things that Bill Moyers said, actually, in introducing that panel, was he described Lyndon Johnson as seeing the Great Society, as Johnson put it, like--the legislation was like writing on a blackboard with chalk, and that, over time, some of the writing would be removed and replaced and altered as we began to learn what worked and didn't work and make modifications in that way. And I believe we have learned a number of things, as many of the panelists have said. And I say this in the spirit of being The Heritage Foundation's--I won The Heritage Foundation Lyndon Johnson Fan Club. I've always been a great admirer of Johnson, genuinely so.

MR. HASKINS: Hey, how many members are in this fan club?

MR. BUTLER: We meet in a small room, I must admit.

MR. HASKINS: Yeah. A bathroom, no doubt.

MR. BUTLER: And so the goals, the intent and so on, as we've all said, I very strongly believe.

Now, I just want to make five quick points, very shortly, some of which are overlapping what's already said, because I think it's important in terms of one's observations, in terms of thinking about the future.

The first point I'll make is that I think one of the things we learned from the first part of the War on Poverty, the first 20 years or so, was the unintended consequence of focusing as much assistance as possible on people who needed it most, that it had the impact of discouraging and producing obstacles to people who wanted to become independent and wanted to go to the workforce.

We had a number of programs, many programs, which essentially said this is available for you if you meet two conditions: don't work and don't marry anybody who works. And Isabel has mentioned that and others have mentioned it, too. But that we saw in the way the eligibility for a multitude of programs had that effect. And we've seen the results of that, the devastating effects on incentives that,

during the Clinton administration and during those reforms, we gradually tried to remove.

We've also seen it in terms of some of the modifications of the basic Great Society programs, such as the earned income tax credit, that tried to smooth the movement from welfare to work--I was a big strong supporter of that, as many people on the left were as well--the notion of work requirements and so on that have been mentioned. And I think one of the effects of that modification of the basic Great Society program has been not only to improve it, to lead to greater independence, but to restore dignity to people. That was missing in some of those early designs.

More has to be done in that regard. I think the current reauthorization of the welfare legislation, which puts such an emphasis on trying to strengthen families and actually spread the work requirements even further, is a critical step in the same direction of improving that aspect of the program.

So that's one point.

The second point I'd like to make quickly is that one big piece that we totally failed, it seems to me, to deal with refers to human capital, which is we fundamentally failed to improve the basic public school systems in this country. I think that is one of the chronic failures. Desegregation of those schools, which was absolutely essential, did not provide a magic bullet to improvement. Adding funds the schools, here

in the District and elsewhere, has not turned them around. And part of it is because we have a public school system which in large part is bureaucratized and run in the interests of producers rather than consumers, in my mind.

I was co-chair of a task force on the D.C. public schools, high schools, run by Superintendent Vance. I have two children who went to D.C. public schools. And I think we see this over and over again. We must take steps in that way to deal with the public schools. I've got all the notes here, which I typed ahead of time: maximum feasible participation--Roger Wilkins stole my line here--because I think it is an example of where we need to give real control and effective participation to parents and children. That's why I support notions like charter schools and school choice and so on, because I think it's very important to change the dynamics of the school system in that way.

I saw you checking the time, so I will--

MS. FEDER: That means you're doing fine. I was just wanting to know.

MR. BUTLER: All right. I will go on to the third point very quickly, which is the understandable move to professionalize services to the poor, which, while absolutely understandable at the time and necessary at the time, again, has had an unintended consequence over time of somewhat freezing out a lot of very creative, truly locally based approaches to dealing with issues. We see this over and over again in the

credentialism, if I can put it that way, the professionalization of so many services that, in many cases, people locally, without these credentials, were far more effective and could be far more effective at solving these problems.

It seems to me that one of the things we have to do is to open up much more to people within the community to take advantage of the opportunities to really begin to deal with some of these more chronic problems that we see in poor areas. We've seen here in the District of Columbia, for example, the Alliance for Concerned Men, which has been highly effective at dealing with gang warfare in this city. No credentials, no master's degree in criminology and so on, but very effective. One of the things that we have to do in the future, I think, is to begin to erode those restrictions for people to be more involved in dealing with these issues.

The fourth point I'll make very quickly is that economic growth rather than income redistribution is the key to generally improving the situation of lower-income people. Now, it's absolutely true that there are many people who do not have the basic necessities to prosper in a growing economy, but I think it's critically important, when we start looking at tax policy and the size of government, the scale of the tax burden, to keep in mind that we have to look at policies that will encourage economic growth and bring people up, not look at it as a redistribution opportunity.

The last point I'll make is with regard to Medicare. The politics of Medicare, and indeed, really, all social insurance programs that started in the 1930s, sort of see a coalition of middle- and even upper-income people with poor people in the same programs in order that the middle class and the upper-middle class will provide the political power to ensure that the poor get their share. That is very much the basis, if you think of the social insurance structure of Medicare.

One of the things I think we've learned, particularly recently, is that we are seeing a pattern, if we look in the future, especially, of the benefits to the middle class of America and the middle classes, particularly the baby boom generation middle class, that their political objective ultimately, I believe, is crowding out the objective of assisting the poor. I think more and more people, more of my friends on the left, are concerned that we're seeing a growth of so many of these programs, not that are helping the poor but in many respects are challenging and undermining the political support for dealing with the poor. And I think that's something we have to be very, very aware of and think very hard about some of the structures of these programs to ensure that they actually do achieve the objective, the progressive objective of ensuring that lower-income people are the ones that gain motion.

So those are some quick observations. I won't tell you which ones I actually also made in Austin 20 years ago, but there's a lot of similarity to some of the points, and I think some progress in dealing

with these points, particularly, I must admit, under the Clinton administration and under the Republican leadership which Mr. Haskins was so much involved with.

MR. DIONNE: But his old speech is available at the site of the Lyndon B. Johnson Fellow on Social Justice at The Heritage Foundation.

MR. BUTLER: Yes, indeed.

MR. DIONNE: The first thing this proves is that we--Judy and I, when we talked about this, and Harry, we realized that one session would not be enough. And, you know, we are sort of hitting a time limit.

I want to try to do something really quickly. And because I believe in maximum feasible participation, I hate not having a single question from the audience. But I just want to either, by way of a summary, it does seem to me that when you look back at the Great Society there is the general view that the Job Corps worked although it was small, that Head Start worked even if Ron's critique is it could work better, that food stamps achieved their objective, that Medicare and Medicaid worked, though health care is extremely expensive, and later everybody--you know, the earned income tax credit is probably the most popular program, at least in think tanks, ever organized by government, but probably also out there among people.

It seems to me that where we are left with some real dilemmas is uneducation--and I'm glad that Stuart raised that--that we

actually expanded access to higher education through this period, but have had some real problems, particularly at some of our inner city and rural schools.

We didn't get a crime, which is actually a big deal, I think, for poor communities, where crime--there was a crime wave in the '60s; it's now since dropped off some and that actually is a significant social accomplishment on behalf of the poor, even though more needs to be done.

We do face the increasing isolation of the poor. Now, Belle has done some excellent work trying to count the number of people living in isolated communities. Belle wrote a very hopeful--Belle is always hopeful; it's very helpful--wrote a piece arguing that if we actually focus on those communities, the total population of those communities is not so large that we couldn't deal with the problem. But we do have, as Katrina showed, a growing isolation of the poor.

And we've got this problem of family breakup, where, again, there are some modest signs of recovery, but still the rise of the single-parent household.

And the thing that never gets discussed enough--two things: One is that a lot of what we think of as the War on Poverty was simply an expansion of the welfare rolls starting in the 1960s, which was not a formal part of the War on Poverty and they may have been the side effects of other things.

And then, as Harry alluded to, the expanding inequality of income distribution after 1973 or so. And it's a paradox that the War on Poverty happened at a moment when that inequality started rising for reasons, I think, having very little to do with direct government action, and that we're still living with some of the consequences of that. And it is, as Harry would say, the changes in the labor market.

Now, who would--I want to give Lee a chance to just reply to all this. I'm curious if somebody wants to dispute any part of that account. But Lee, I'd like you to sort of respond to the discussion. Maybe I'll be like one of those politicians who doesn't keep his promises and we won't have maximum feasible participation. But Lee--

MS. SCHORR: Well, I think your summary captures very well the extraordinary thing about this panel, which is there's an enormous amount of convergence about what needs to be done. And while we haven't got an agenda on education and crime, I think so much of what we've talked about, about what we do think has worked, addresses the isolation of the poor, addresses family breakup. I think that the kinds of changes in social services that we've seen over these 40 years are absolutely oriented toward solidifying the family. I think it's wrong to say that the War on Poverty contributed to the breakup of the family. I think what happened in 1972 with the disappearance of manufacturing is what contributed to the breakup of the family.

Now, you might say if you include a welfare program that nobody supported, really--I mean, you quoted Robert Kennedy, you quoted Lyndon Johnson; they were not in support of a welfare program that required people not to be married and not to work.

MR. BUTLER: That's the consequence, though.

MS. SCHORR: They were saying you have to change--they wanted to change that. Maybe not as radically as it was changed ultimately, maybe with more safety nets, but they were all in agreement that work should count, that marriage was a good thing.

And, you know, some of what programs of Family Support Services, the family support centers that are connected to childcare, that are connected to Head Start would do are in order to support families in being able to raise their children responsibly in the way precisely that most poor people want to do, just like most middle class people want to do.

So I think that if the seven of us were allowed to draft the agenda for an anti-poverty program for the next 10 years, we wouldn't be that far apart. And I think that's quite extraordinary. And that, I think, has something to do with that we have learned so much that we could now build on, and not only build on for the mechanics of how we would structure it, but build on because it does resonate to a lot of values that we share, that you have talked about.

So I would celebrate this panel as the wave of the future. If they'd only let us take over.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Now, Belle might think that Lee--even Belle might think that Lee is being too optimistic here. I just wanted to ask Belle and Roger to respond to what Lee said.

MS. SAWHILL: Well, I thought your summary was excellent, E.J., and I think that there is a common understanding amongst the seven of us. I suspect if we got down to actually having to put the details into this broad understanding and agreement about the way forward, we'd have a lot of problems. So I don't want to just, you know, gloss over that and be totally Panglossian about this. But I think these are good debates and discussions to have.

MR. DIONNE: Roger?

MR. WILKINS: Well, you can't argue with strong families and good education and jobs. I do think that there is more optimism here than my untrained observations would warrant, because I think that we have lived through a couple of pretty strong upsurges of the economy, and the upsurges of the economy have left lots and lots of black people very poor. We had the late '90s, and they didn't raise any boats in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans, I'll tell you.

And I think the reason is--I don't think you can talk about poverty in this country as an abstract that is removed from culture. It's

not very polite to say it, but racism is a central element of American culture. It was in the culture before we had a country and it has remained strong. Clearly we have made huge progress, but it is very easy to demonize the black poor for political reasons and get a lot of strong support at the ballot box.

So it wasn't--I didn't make a mistake by saying to you that the poverty in Cleveland that I tried to serve was as invisible in this country as the poverty in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans was today. There is one thing that is common between those two things, and that is those places were full of poor black people.

Now, having said that, I don't think you can have this conversation without somebody saying what I just said. So I'm glad you invited me.

MS. : So are we.

MR. WILKINS: But I ultimately think that--it's gonna come out of me, it's gonna come out of me--I agree with Stuart.

[Laughter.]

MR. BUTLER: You've come a long way.

MR. WILKINS: I served two years on the D.C. School Board, pal.

MR. BUTLER: Well, that's why you did it. It teaches you a lot, doesn't it?

MR. WILKINS: Education is central. The stories, like in today's paper, about what D.C. schools are like physically makes you want to cry. We've got to educate these kids. If we don't educate them and send them into this economy, they're just going to get slaughtered, as generations have before. I don't think it's any mystery. Lee will tell you, we can education these kids. We have the tools, we have the knowledge. You've got to get them early, you've got to get the parents early, and you've got to invest in the schools.

And I think Stuart is right that the bureaucracies are too strong and the role of the parents is too weak. But it can be done.

Period. That's all.

MR. DIONNE: One of the things I've always liked about Stuart is he does reflect how close some conservative ideas come to the sort of old new left critique of public systems.

MR. BUTLER: Well, you know, can I maybe comment on that quickly. One of the things--I mean, when I wrote on this, now many years ago, I was fascinated by some of the debates during the 1960s between--I wouldn't distinguish between those who felt very confident in the ability of the poor, if empowered, to make sensible decisions and to improve their lives and those who had no expectation that that would be true. And that was true, I think, in both parties and continues today. So I see myself in the tradition of those who feel that, you know, low-

income people and poor people are smart people. They don't have any money.

Therefore, I'm much more open to ideas like school choice, to ideas like charter schools, to giving greater control to people directly. Because I'm confident about what the outcome will be. Not everybody is, you know, in that, and they're not willing to make those choices. I think that's a fissure, almost, in this whole discussion, which we see throughout the Great Society and beyond in terms of different attitudes.

MR. DIONNE: I just want to say these things do progress over generations. Roger's daughter has devoted her life to improving the teaching of the poor, and I think it's because she recognized that the teacher of her dad on that computer was wholly inadequate and everybody deserves a decent teacher.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: I want to just bring in this one gentleman, because you raised your hand, and then we're going to have to shut it down. We've just got to do this again. Thank you.

Sir?

QUESTION: [Off microphone, inaudible.]

So I'd like to ask you, anyone--I challenge you--this is a conspiracy of the federal government with the large rich people--I'm talking about corporations. [inaudible] conspiracy against the poor American people.

Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Ron, you're going to explain the conspiracy.

MR. HASKINS: I pass. I don't know the answer to that question.

MR. DIONNE: The one thing that the gentleman raises that we really didn't touch on, and my dean is passionate about, is, just to take one piece of what he talked about, which is the whole question of the uninsured. And it is a huge hole in the standard of living of many poor Americans. And I guess I'm going to leave it at that and say that, given Judy's passion on health care, we will reassemble at some point to address that issue all by itself.

I want to thank Lee Schorr and all the members of this panel for a very good discussion. Bless you all.

MS. SCHORR: Thank you for doing it.

[Applause.]

[END OF TAPED RECORDING.]

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