

Who are the Poor?

Between 40,000,000 and 50,000,000

They exist in government reports, but they are invisible.

This hiddenness of poverty is a new development. It used to be that the poor were visible. "If the middle class never did like ugliness and poverty, it was at least aware of them. 'Across the tracks' was not a very long way to go."

We have a new "segregation of poverty" in which poverty is removed from the living, emotional experience of millions upon millions of middle-class Americans.

"Clothes make the poor invisible too: America has the best-dressed poverty the world has ever known."

Total impact of the various housing programs in postwar America has been to squeeze more and more people into existing slums. During past 15 years there has been more subsidization of middle and upper income housing than there has been of housing for the poor.

Many of the poor are too old or too young to be seen. Over 8,000,000 are 65 or older; an even larger number under 18.

Statistics may be misleading because of the invisibility of the poor.

All the human beings not even found by the census-takers:

5,700,000 were probably uncounted in 1960 census; of these, majority were nonwhite. One out of every six Negro males between twenty and thirty-nine was not counted. "This vast number of people had simply disappeared from the fabric of organized society -- or, at least, from a society organized the way the census-takers thought it should be. They exist in the cities, but where and how? Such a gap in our knowledge not only frustrates planning, but causes injustice in the distribution of federal funds and the districting of Congress. One-man-one-vote requires our ability to locate the invisible man." Gavin and Hadley, Saturday Review

MIGRATION TO THE CITIES -- in itself a cause of poverty

At the present time 54% of the poor live in cities. Between 1960 and 1970, an estimated 10,000,000 farmers will have moved to the city. The majority of these migrants are the poor, the underprivileged the undereducated.

In 1910, 81% of all Negroes lived in the rural areas of the South. In 1960, 73% of Negroes were living in cities, primarily in the North. 17% of the core cities of the North were Negroes. 2/3's of adult Negroes living in Northern cities had been born in the South.

Such a population movement would have raised tremendous problems by itself -- without being reinforced by discrimination and poverty.