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These are difficult times for those who speak out in favor of welfare programs and show support for those receiving governmental assistance. But Betty Mandell, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, is never one to shy away from controversy, especially when that controversy centers around those citizens who depend upon programs provided by the state.

Betty has been one of the more visible social activists on the Bridgewater State College campus. Over the years she has organized a number of workshops, public hearings and demonstrations in support of those on welfare. Currently, Betty is turning her attention to the publication of *Survival News*, a welfare rights advocacy newspaper sponsored by ARMS (Advocacy for Resources for Modern Survival), a welfare rights institute at the University of Massachusetts/Boston. Betty is

convinced that those receiving welfare need a stronger voice in their community and in the state. *Survival News*, which involves welfare recipients in the writing and managing of the newspaper, was recently recognized as one of the best newsletters in the country by the influential *Journal of Social Policy*.

Betty has not limited her activism to the newspaper. She is also deeply involved in trying to advance a program called the Jericho-Project, in which welfare recipients and case workers from the State Department of Welfare meet on a regular basis to discuss the problems with the system. With grant support from Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream and the Lotus Company, Betty hopes to create a more favorable climate for the delivery of welfare services and to develop a closer relationship between recipient and social worker.

Betty's activism comes at a time when Massachusetts is deeply involved in what is commonly termed "welfare reform." Governor Weld is pushing hard to gain legislative support for a major overhaul of welfare that will limit the time that welfare clients can remain on assistance and require almost immediate participation in the workforce. Both of these initiatives are based on the view that welfare costs are too high and that welfare recipients are not doing enough to move off the welfare rolls.

Mention of the welfare reform efforts brings out the activist in Betty Mandell. She is upset with the premise that welfare recipients are living off the dole and need pressure from the government to leave public assistance. Betty cites statistics that show 70% of women (who are the bulk of the welfare recipients) remain on welfare for only a short period of time. Betty further states that it is important for mothers to stay at home with young children and not be forced to find work, especially since day care is so costly in Massachusetts. Betty's biggest pet peeves concern the myths of welfare fraud (93% of welfare fraud is confined to private sector vendors, not recipients) and the

fact that politicians will attack the entitlement programs of the poor, while leaving untouched the entitlement programs that benefit the middle class and the business community.

Betty's answer to those championing welfare reform is a single payer national health care system that provides universal care, a free or low cost day care program, and job training that leads to real employment. The combination of health care, day care and job training would go a long way toward providing a sense of security to those at the bottom income levels in our society and also offer hope of moving out of welfare. Unfortunately, Betty has been fighting the battle to enhance the opportunities of welfare recipients too long to expect that government will move quickly to provide these programs.

Betty is discouraged by attacks on welfare at both the national and state levels. Ending welfare is the latest strategy being used both by the right wing and the Clinton administration to attack low-income women and children. As Betty notes, the public mood is not favorable for welfare rights as politicians sense an issue that translates into votes. The result is that activists like Betty Mandell will have to continue their struggle to alert the public and the government to the needs of those receiving assistance. Although it is a task filled with letdowns, there is no better person to lead the charge for welfare rights and welfare respect than Betty Mandell. Betty wears the label of welfare activist with pride and her teaching and example have helped shape a generation of social workers on the Bridgewater campus and given hope to thousands of welfare recipients in Massachusetts. Now that Betty has retired from her teaching responsibilities at Bridgewater, count on her to be even more involved in representing the interests of those who depend on the welfare system.