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SCAN

Herbert A. Miller, Rich Man, Poor Man. New York, 1971

Although a sophisticated work in respect to showing the gulf between rich & poor in the USA, and especially interesting for the projection (using Lorenz curve & assuming same rise income for various groups in near future) that whereas in 1968 families with incomes over ~~is~~ \$15,000 got 1/3 of total income in the country, by 1985 they will get over 3/4 of it.

But then we have this utterly naive statement--the only place in the book where the matter of hereditary base of inequality comes forth:

"There is a growing body of evidence to support the view that much of our poverty is handed down from father to son, and that a large proportion of those who will be impoverished adults tomorrow are children of the poor today. For example, a study made in 1963 of families receiving Aid to Dependent Children shows that over 40 percent of the mothers or fathers of these families were raised in homes where some form of assistance had been received at some time.* Nearly half of these cases had received Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Here is another example: education, as we all know, is very important for any chance of a well-paying job, yet one-fourth of the young people 18 to 24 years old in families receiving Aid to Dependent Children did not go beyond the eighth grade.*"

xxx Still another example can be drawn from the field of education. About one-third of the youths in low-income families do not complete high school. The fathers of these school dropouts also tend to be uneducated--60 percent of the low-income families are headed by people who did not go beyond the eighth grade. The pattern is clear. Parents who are uneducated tend to have low incomes because they are not trained to do skilled work. They also have little interest in education, perhaps because they were brought up in an environment where education was not considered important. As a result, their ~~wx~~ children also lack interest in education, and they tend to become the poor of the next generation. This is part of the vicious cycle whereby poverty is handed down from one generation to the next."

It does seem than anyone who sees the problem of poverty this clearly, and sees how much it is tied to hereditary factors, might consider more how changing the hereditary factor might drastically alter the problem itself; instead, the author takes it almost as a coincidental factor that poverty is hereditary.

* J. E. Burrows & D. C. Prince, An American Dependency Challenge. Chicago, Amer. Pub. Welfare Assn., 1963. p.173; p.109.