

member for family budgetary needs; the economic importance of urban or rural residence; the proportion of the family budget allotted to food expenditures; the definition of adequate diet; and the standard of food requirements set by proportion of households at which the achievement of adequate nutrition is defined as tolerable.

Further, however, in an affluent country like the United States, a serious question arises as to whether the S.S.A. income-food relationship (3:1) is adequate. The S.S.A. uses the lowest or "economy" food plan, which was issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for "temporary or emergency use when funds are low." Even the S.S.A.'s second budget line—the near-poor—is based on the low-cost food plan of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which provided total food expenditures of only 75 cents a day per person (in an average four-person family) in 1966. Spending at this level does not guarantee an adequate diet.

Again, the assumptions about "low-cost" food plans are questionable. It is assumed, for instance, that families will, or even can spend their food money to buy the most nutritious foods. As Townsend had pointed out in his criticisms of Rowntree's approach, the poor are generally not buyer-wise and are often unable to do comparative shopping.

#### POVERTY IN RELATIVE (INCOME) TERMS

If the budget-oriented approach is concerned with "adequacy," then in its pure form the relative income approach is concerned with "inequality." The use of the latter approach means that changes in average income automatically change the definition of what an inadequate income is. Determining the composition and price of any basket of goods becomes irrelevant.

This aspect of poverty was recognized at least two centuries ago when Adam Smith, in defining "necessaries," wrote:

By necessaries I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without.<sup>9</sup>

Galbraith restated this thesis when he wrote, "People are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community . . ."<sup>10</sup>

As pointed out above, Townsend came to the conclusion that both poverty and subsistence are relative concepts which can be defined only in relation to the material and historical resources available at a particular time to the members of a particular society. By 1962, he had discarded his earlier work based on the calculation of nutritional requirements in favour of defining "necessaries" in relative terms. This led him to suggest a definition of poverty based on measuring how many households have a total income of less than 50 per cent of the average. He also suggested such non-income measures of