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# Focus

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## Antipoverty policy: Past and future

In December 1984, members of the academic community and of federal agencies concerned with social policy met in Williamsburg, Virginia, to discuss and debate the achievements, failures, and lessons of government efforts to reduce poverty in America. Sponsored by the Institute and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the conference, titled "Poverty and Policy: Retrospect and Prospects," provided a forum for analysts and policymakers to pool, interpret, and sometimes challenge research results. It also offered the opportunity to exchange ideas on the future direction of policies to improve the condition of the poor.

A series of commissioned papers covered six general areas: the effects of market income and government transfer programs on the trend in poverty over the past twenty years; the effects of demographic change and income-support programs on family structure; the roles of the civil rights, legal rights, and welfare rights movements in reducing poverty; the relative effects on low-income workers of macroeconomic events—unemployment and inflation—and of government employment programs; the results of health and education programs for the poor; and, finally, the political and budgetary realities that constrain antipoverty policies.