

The \$374 a month for a family of four should be \$655 a month to keep up with soaring prices, so in reality all those **1.3 million people have taken a cut in income of \$281 every month.** And everybody who has ever been on welfare knows that even eight years earlier it was nearly impossible to live on the meager income they received.

The allotment for gas, electricity and telephone allowed in the budget is \$14 a month. Of course, most of those families have long ago given up having a phone, but, since the average electric bill in New York City is \$31 and the average gas bill is \$32, is there any wonder so many families have to do without electric lights and hot water, and must cook with sterno or kerosene when they cook at all? And is it hard to understand why, in order to survive, so many youth have gone out into the streets to take the money they need?

But, you might think, that's New York City, a city on the edge of bankruptcy. In the rest of the country things aren't so bad. An article appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* on March 27, 1980, is worth quoting from extensively. It is concerned with poverty in the United States as a whole, but zeros in on a family in Chicago:

"Mrs. Watson (who lives in Chicago) is poor. This month she will have \$175 left over from her welfare check to feed **herself and her nine children.** . . ."

Four years ago, the *Wall Street Journal* continues, "out of work because she was pregnant, she went to sleep hungry several nights a week so her children could have enough to eat. Her daughter Ruthina, now three, was born with a cleft palate and webbed fingers on her right hand. The doctor told Mrs. Watson the fetus hadn't received enough nourishment.

"For most middle-class and better-off Americans, soaring inflation at times has imposed significant changes in the way they live: a new car unbought, a



There are many myths about people living it up on welfare. But unemployed workers in Appalachia live like this.

vacation curtailed, a savings account dipped into far too often. But for the nation's poor—roughly defined as 24 million people who fall below the government's poverty level. . . the choices are much more stark. For the mid-