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THE GUNS OR BUTTER ISSUE: TRENDS
IN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION, 1935-1976

Darrel Montero
University of Maryland, College Park

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the responses to national opinion surveys taken between 1935 and 1976 on questions related to the federal government's role in providing social welfare programs and recent survey findings on defense spending. The paper's major findings are that:

- 1) in general, the public supports the basic concept of providing aid to the needy through the government but shows less consistent support when specific spending proposals are mentioned; and
- 2) as the share of the federal budget allocated for defense spending has been decreasing, polls have shown an increasing proportion of the public expressing support for greater defense spending.

The paper concludes with observations on the balance between the public's attitudes toward spending for social welfare programs and spending for the military. The central conclusion is that it appears that the American public wants "guns" and "butter", and are likely to want some sort of balance between the two.

Observers of social institutions and processes have noted that in democratic societies only a small proportion of the public is familiar with the issues about which most policy decisions are made (Key, 1961; Truman, 1951; and Dickinson, 1930). Dickinson (1930:291) claims:

The task of government...is not to express an imaginary popular will, but to effect adjustments among the various special wills and purposes which at any given time are pressing for realizations...These special wills and purposes are reflected in the small cluster of opinions that develop within the larger uninformed and inattentive public.

Key (1961) asserts that broad popular sentiments control public policy indirectly. While the public may have no position on specific issues or questions of policy, he assumes that vague sentiments of "fairness," "justice," and "policy propriety", held by the general public, guide government officials in making day-to-day decisions. Key also argues that there is a "layer of political activists or influentials" between the general public and the government, composed usually of lobbyists or heads of pressure groups or professional organizations. This layer, he contends, deals most directly with government officials on specific policies and in turn influences and mobilizes public opinion on crucial issues.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the valuable contribution made to this paper by the late Hazel E. Skene through her compilation of the data reported here on the role of government in social welfare.

I wish to thank Charles Grantham, Tara McLaughlin, and L.K. Northwood for their valuable comments and generous assistance provided in the revision of an earlier draft of this paper.

Finally, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the following organizations for their generosity in providing me with access to their data: the American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup Poll), Louis Harris and Associates, the Roper Organization, the National Opinion Research Center, the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, the Minnesota Poll of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, N.J., and CBS News.

While we essentially agree with this view that the public is not familiar with specific details or issues involving public policy, we hold that the public does have sentiments as to whether governmental decisions are fair, just, or appropriate. In an excellent review of American public opinion from 1936 to 1970, Simon (1974) observes that in contrast to the public's ambivalent or negative attitudes toward some domestic policies, the American public manifested a stronger and more consistent approach toward most major pieces of social welfare legislation. Old-age pensions and social security have received the most widespread and consistent public opinion support among various social welfare issues. As an indication of this support, shortly before the formal passage of a program of social security in January 1936, the public was asked whether it favored government old-age pensions for needy person. Eighty-nine percent answered "yes" (American Institute of Public Opinion, in Simon, 1974).

This paper traces public opinion on some of the major social welfare issues from the mid 1930s to 1976. The topics discussed were chosen because poll data are available over extended periods of time and because they concern areas of general interest that directly affect people's day-to-day lives.

Data Sources

Glenn (1972), Hyman (1972), Massarik (1967), Cantril (1947) and others have indicated the problems, prospects, and potentialities of secondary analysis using existing public opinion poll data. Glenn (1972:140), for example has cautioned that:

For the inexperienced researcher, there are a number of pitfalls in the secondary analysis of existing data on political attitudes. For instance, he may apply statistical tests that are not appropriate to the sample design, fail to take into account the considerable systematic bias in the earlier poll data, or use national survey data for inappropriate purposes.

While we are cognizant of these methodological limitations and problems, we note that Glenn and his associates have successfully used such existing data to seek answers to a wide variety of salient topics (Glenn and Zody, 1970; Glenn, 1972).

The data for the present paper are based upon published public opinion polls from the American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup Poll), Louis Harris and Associates, the Roper Organization, the National Opinion Research Center, the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, the Minnesota Poll of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, N.J. and CBS News. The data were collected on national samples of adult populations.

A formal statement of these polling organizations' sampling techniques and procedures is found in Gallup (1976). The data are generally reliable as sample survey results. The record of response stability and accuracy on general political and social issues across several decades is remarkable. For example between 1936 and 1972 Gallup's findings regarding presidential elections reveal that the final prediction of the winner's total deviated an average of 2.4 percent from the reported popular vote. The largest deviation (6.8 percent) occurred in 1936 before improvement in sampling techniques.

For the purposes of this study, we employ the definition of public opinion set forth by Simon (1974:7), who defines it as the verbal responses that a representative sample of adults in the United States has made to various questions about national policy put to them by experts who tell us that these are the important issues of the day. We also accept the briefer working definition of Bryce (1962:50), who suggests that public opinion is "the aggregate of views men hold regarding matters that affect or interest the community."

We now turn to the essential findings of our study.

Findings

Erskine (1975:257) has noted:

A quirk of history probably robbed scientific polling of the chance to track one of the most spectacular shifts in American philosophy in recent history. When polls first appeared in 1935, the populace was six years from the stock market crash and in the lowest depths of the Depression. The early-to-rise-and-early-to-bed thrill and work ethic may well have made an

about face just before the pollsters appeared on the scene. It must have begun to dawn on people that hard work and dedication were not always insurance against unemployment and poverty at a time when there were actually not enough jobs to go around. It is tantalizing but fruitless to speculate about the old-time status of private charity in the public mind, but for the taxpayer to take on public welfare was certainly a novel concept.

What the pollsters do know, as Erskine has noted, is that by the mid-thirties people had turned to the government to help provide jobs and relieve economic hardships. In 1935, a Roper poll found that more than three-quarters of Americans thought the government "should see to it that every man who wants to work has a job." In 1938, Gallup reported that seven out of ten approved the idea that government had a responsibility "to pay the living expenses of needy people who are out of work." In 1939, Roper likewise found seven in ten saying "the government should provide for all people who have no other means of subsistence."

Although the wording of poll questions began to vary as the role of government in welfare became more universally accepted, there is no evidence of any basic subsequent changes in opinion. In January 1975, when unemployment again soared, Harris reported that eight in ten backed President Ford's proposal "to provide federal jobs for the unemployed when unemployment exceeds six percent nationally."

Paradoxically, despite such steady support for the general concept of government responsibility for those without jobs, specific public welfare programs have frequently been controversial. For example, the idea of a negative income tax has never caught on. Yet the Nixon Plan was popular because of the President's insistence that able-bodied people must work rather than accept a guaranteed income.

To examine the formula that there has been support for the general concept of a federal welfare role but disagreement over specific programs, let us examine evidence of results for each type of question, both general and specific. The specific areas we cover are questions on federal programs or proposed programs to provide unemployment benefits, to provide guaranteed work, and to provide a guarantee income.

Attitudes Toward Government Obligation to Human Needs. When queried in 1939, 1940, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1964, 1969, and 1973, approximately two-thirds of Americans supported the general notion that the government has a responsibility to provide for all people who have no means of subsistence. Sixty-nine percent supported this position in 1939, while 68 percent agreed with the statement as recently as 1973 (Table 1).

Table 1
Attitudes toward Government Obligation to Human Needs, 1939-1973

Question	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
1. Do you think our government should or should not provide for all people who have no other means of subsistence? (Roper for Fortune)			
1939: June	69%	23%	8%
2. Do you think the government should provide for all people who have no other means of obtaining a living? (Roper for Fortune)			
1940: March	65	28	7
1946: November 21	72	19	9
1947: January	73	19	8
1948: November	73	19	8
3. Now I'm going to read some things you sometimes hear people say, and ask whether, in general, you agree or disagree. The federal government has a responsibility to try to do away with poverty in this country. (Gallup)			
1964: September-October	72	20	8

Table 1 [continued]			
	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
4. Do you tend to believe or not believe in the following statements that have been made by some people? Government must see that no one is without food, clothing or shelter. (Harris)			
1964: October 5.....	68	n.a.	n.a.
5. Do you personally favor or oppose an all-out effort by the federal government to get rid of poverty in this country? (ORC)			
1969: December 15.....	73	16	11
6. Here are some statements some people have made about the way different levels of government should operate in this country. For each mark an X for whether you tend to agree or disagree. The federal government has a deep responsibility for seeing that the poor are taken care of, that no one goes hungry, and that every person achieves a minimum standard of living. (Harris)			
1973: September.....	68	27	5

These data reveal a remarkable consistency in the level of support for this general policy regarding the role of government in welfare. The range of positive responses is surprisingly small, from a low of 65 percent in a 1940 Roper survey to a high of 73 percent reported in Roper polls of 1947 and 1948 as well as an Opinion Research Center study in 1969.

It may be noted that the wording of the questions shifted slightly to reflect the concerns of the times. In the forties, the questions were asked in terms of "providing for people who have no other means of subsistence," while in the surveys taken during the sixties and in 1973, the questions dealt with "getting rid of poverty" or seeing "that no one goes hungry." The substance of the question is essentially equivalent in both periods, but it seems likely that in the forties the needy were thought of as those out of work because of temporary economic dislocations following the war, whereas in the sixties the focus was on racial minorities who had seldom shared in the nation's prosperity. It is interesting that no question of this sort was reported during the more quiescent decade of the fifties. Apparently the issue was not a very active topic of discussion during that period.

Attitudes Toward the Role of Government in Providing Unemployment Benefits. During the period from 1938 to 1974, a cross-section of the American public was asked what they felt the role of the government should be regarding provision of unemployment benefits. Clearly the questions asked during this period were not identical. They ranged from very general items to specific questions about particular proposals. For example, in January 1938 Gallup asked a cross-section of the American population: "Do you think it is the government's responsibility to pay the living expenses of needy people who are out of work?" More than two-thirds (69 percent) of the respondents surveyed replied "yes." By contrast, the support for specific proposals of financial aid for the unemployed dropped to half of that level. In September 1945 Gallup asked a representative national sample: "would you be willing to pay higher taxes to give unemployed person up to 25 dollars a week for 26 weeks if they failed to find satisfactory jobs?" Only 34 percent said "yes," while 54 percent said "no."

Public support for various unemployment proposals ranges from 21 percent of the public queried in August 1944 by Gallup concerning unemployment benefits for war workers to a high of 84 percent of those interviewed in April 1943 by NORC regarding their support of social security compensation. It is clear that the first proposal was considered by many to be a government give-away program to a specific

group--in this case war workers--while the second proposal is a broad-based contributory self-help program. The latter two factors may in part explain the differential support of these proposed programs. It is also interesting to note that a proposal to give returning soldiers unemployment payments was favored by nearly four times as many respondents as the proportion favoring payment to war workers. Clearly veterans were regarded as a special case during this period.

In sum, fully two-thirds of the public over a wide time span have supported the general concept of limited unemployment benefits, whereas there has been less public support for programs which are not broad-based nor self-help in nature.

Table 2
Attitudes toward the Role of Government in Providing Unemployment Benefits, 1938-1974

Question	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
1. Do you think it is the government's responsibility to pay the living expenses of needy people who are out of work? (Gallup)			
1938: January 9	69%	31%	n.a.
July 2	67	28	5
2. After the war, do you think the federal government should or should not provide job insurance for everyone? (Roper for Fortune)			
1942: September (Business executives only)	36	65	n.a.
3. The Social Security law also requires some workers to save money so they will get money from the government in case they lose their jobs. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea? (NORC)			
1943: April	84	8	8
4. Should the government give war workers money if they find themselves out of work when the war is over or nearly over? (Gallup)			
1944: August 18-23	21	71	8
5. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes to give unemployed persons up to twenty-five dollars a week for twenty-six weeks if they fail to find satisfactory jobs? (Gallup)			
1945: September 6	34	54	12
6. Congress is now considering a law which would give more unemployment compensation to persons without jobs so that some would get as much as \$25 a week for 26 weeks. Would you like to have your congressman vote for or against this bill? (Gallup)			
1945: September 8-13	46	40	14
7. Have you heard or read about President Truman's proposal to pay more money to unemployed workers so that some of them would get as much as twenty-five dollars a week for twenty-six weeks? If YES (82%): Do you favor or oppose President Truman's proposal? (Gallup)			
1945: October 3	30	36	34

Table 2 (continued)

	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
8. How do you feel about unemployment benefits? Should the period during which unemployed workers can collect these benefits be extended, or not? (Gallup)			
1965: February 14.....	37	50	13
9. President Ford has put forth a program both for curbing inflation and for getting the country out of the recession. Let me read you some key parts of what President Ford has proposed. For each, tell me if you favor or oppose it. Give an additional 13 weeks unemployment insurance to those who have used up their benefits. (Harris)			
1974: December 23.....	63	25	12

Attitudes Toward the Role of Government Regarding Guaranteed Work, 1935-1975. In January 1943, NORC queried a cross-section of the American public as follows: "Do you think that one of our aims should be to see that everyone in this country has a chance to get a job after the war?" A remarkable 99 percent favored this proposal (table 3). As in the case of unemployment benefits reported earlier, we witness a remarkable level of support for the general notion of full employment. This finding contrasts markedly with the results of another representative national sample queried concerning a specific work program. In August 1944 Gallup asked a sample survey: "If there are not enough jobs in private industry to go around after the war, should the WPA be started up again to give work relief to the unemployed?" Fewer than one-half (44 percent) of those interviewed supported this proposal.

Table 3
Attitudes toward the Role of Government Regarding Guaranteed Work, 1935-1975

Question	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
1. Do you think our government should or should not see to it that every man who wants to work has a job? (Roper for Fortune)			
1935: July.....	77%	20%	3%
1939: June.....	61	32	7
2. Do you think that one of our aims should be to see that everyone in this country has a chance to get a job after the war? (NORC)			
1943: January 11.....	99	1	n.a.
3. Do you think it is a function of government today to see to it that substantially full employment is maintained? (Roper for Fortune)			
1944: May (Business executives only).....	29	66	4
4. If there are not enough jobs in private industry to go around after the war, should the WPA be started up again to give work relief to the unemployed? (Gallup)			
1944: August 16.....	44	45	11

Table 3 (continued)

	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
5. Do you think it should or should not be up to the government to see to it that there are enough jobs in this country for everyone who wants to work? (NORC)			
1945: September	79	18	3
6. A nationwide cross-section was asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement: The government in Washington ought to see to it that every one who wants to work can find a job. (SRC-M)			
1956: September-November	56	27	17
1958: September-November	56	26	20
1960: September-November	58	23	19
7. A nationwide cross-section was asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement: I think the government should give a person work if he can't find another job. (McClosky, 1968:176)			
1964	47	n.a.	n.a.
8. Some people say that if there are not enough jobs for everyone who wants one, the government should somehow provide the extra jobs needed. Others say that the government should not do this. What is your opinion? (NORC/SRC-M)			
1968: January-March (Urban white opinion)	59	37	4
9. Another proposal is to guarantee enough work so that each family that has an employable wage earner would be guaranteed enough work each week to give him a wage of about \$60 a week or \$3200 a year. Would you favor or oppose such a plan? (Gallup)			
1968: May 23-28	78	18	4
1968: December 5-10	79	16	5
10. Some people have proposed that the federal government guarantee a job to every American who wants to work even if it means creating a lot of public jobs like during the depression. Would you favor or oppose such a job guarantee plan? (ORC/Gallup, Feagin, 1971)			
1969: December 15	64	26	10
11. When people can't find any jobs would you be in favor of the government putting them on the payroll and finding work for them such as helping out in hospitals or cleaning public parks or would you be against this idea? (Gallup)			
1972: June	89	8	3

Table 3 (continued)

	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
12. President Ford has proposed creating a Community Improvement Corps to provide federal jobs for the unemployed when unemployment exceeds 6% nationally. Do you favor or oppose such a federal program to give productive jobs to the unemployed? (Harris)			
1975: January 16	79	14	7

The difference between support for general principles and specific proposals does not appear to be as sharp in responses to questions dealing with guaranteed work as on questions discussed previously. With a few exceptions, the majority of those polled gave affirmative answers to both general and specific questions.

Some specific proposals, such as the Gallup question in 1968 concerning assurances to wage earners that they would have enough work to earn at least \$60 a week, were favored by more than 70 percent of those polled. Some general questions, such as that asked by McClosky in 1964, gained support from less than a majority. Still others, such as that posed in the Michigan Survey Research Center poll in 1960, earned a bare majority of support.

There appears to be little relationship between survey responses and levels of unemployment at the time of the survey. For example, the McClosky poll, which found less than majority support for a general proposition, was taken when the unemployment rate was 5.2 percent, while much higher levels of support were shown in 1968 and 1969 polls, when the unemployment rate was considerably lower--3.6 percent in 1968 and 3.5 percent in 1969.

Attitudes Toward the Role of Government in Providing a Guaranteed Income, 1965-1973. The issue of a guaranteed income is a relatively new one, at least in terms of the availability of cross-sectional poll data. One of the first questions on this topic was asked in September 1965 by Gallup: "It has been proposed that instead of relief and welfare payments, the government should guarantee every family a minimum annual income. Do you favor or oppose this idea." Fewer than one person in five (19 percent) of this national sample supported this proposal. However, when mandatory employment training or work was coupled with a guaranteed annual income, nearly eight persons in ten supported the proposal. This was shown by a Harris survey in 1969 in which people were asked whether they favored or opposed "the Nixon welfare plan, which would give every family on welfare \$1,600 a year with a provision that anyone able to work either enter a job training program or get a job." With few exceptions public support regarding a guaranteed annual income is generally lower than the other areas where government might conceivably intervene (table 4). Perhaps, these proposals fly in the face of a still firmly ingrained Protestant work ethic. It appears clear that a guaranteed income has little support unless coupled with mandatory training or employment.

Table 4
Attitudes Toward the Role of Government Regarding Providing a Guaranteed Income, 1965-1973

Question	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
1. It has been proposed that instead of relief and welfare payments, the government should guarantee every family a minimum annual income. Do you favor or oppose this idea? (Gallup)			
1965: September 16-21	19%	67%	14%

Table 4 [continued]

	Yes, Favor	No, Oppose	Depends, No Opinion
2. Our income tax system is often looked upon as a method of taking money from people to pay for the cost of the government. Some experts have come up with a plan under which the income tax system would be used to give money to poorer families. The way the plan would work is that any family whose income was below \$3000 would be given money by the federal government to raise its income to \$3000. Would you favor or oppose such a plan? (Harris) 1967: August 7	28	60	12
3. People were asked whether they favored or opposed "the Nixon welfare plan--which would give every family on welfare \$1,600 a year with a provision that anyone able to work either enter a job training program or get a job." (Harris for Life) 1969: September	79	13	8
4. People were asked whether they favored or opposed "a federally guaranteed minimum level of income, with a bottom of \$3,000 a year for a family of four." (Harris for Life) 1969: September	51	38	11
5. Some people have said that instead of providing welfare and relief payments, the federal government should guarantee every American family a minimum yearly income of about \$3,000. Would you personally favor or oppose such an income guarantee? (OR-C/Gallup; Feagin, 1971) 1969: December 15	30	61	9
6. Here's how the proposed Nixon welfare program would work for a family of four where the head of the family is willing and able to work. The least a family could receive is \$1600 a year plus food stamps. As the family earned more of their own money, welfare payments would be gradually reduced and when the family reached \$3,920, welfare payments would stop. Does this sound like a good idea or a poor idea? (Minnesota Poll) 1970: April 23 (Minnesota opinion)	57	33	10
7. I would like to read you some present or proposed government programs that affect the economic lives of individuals or business. For each, tell me whether you approve or disapprove. A guaranteed annual income plan which would assure a minimum income to a family whether anyone worked or not. (Harris) 1970: November (youth opinion nationwide)	33	60	7

Table 4 [continued]

8. If you were given enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or would you stop working? (NORC)
 1973: March (Labor force only)

Continue to work	66%
Would stop working	30
Don't know, no answer	4

It is, nonetheless, interesting to observe that some of the surveys do show a majority in favor of a guaranteed income plan. Specifically, the 1969 Harris survey which found that 79 percent favored a program tied to mandatory work also found that as many as 51 percent supported a minimum income even when not accompanied by mandatory work. Similarly, in 1970 the Minnesota Poll found that 57 percent of that state's residents approved of a minimum income plan independent of mandatory work. Minnesota, of course, has a reputation for having a somewhat more liberal populace than most other states, which may help account for the higher level of support than shown in other surveys on this question.

General findings regarding trend data on the role of government in welfare suggest that general support exists for the principle that every American should be assured a basic subsistence level, as well as being assured employment. However, when the public was queried on specific government programs in specific dollar amounts, support was less consistent, falling below a majority on some surveys.

It appears that, in general, Americans support the idea of governmental programs to assure subsistence for the needy until questions of specific spending levels or increased taxes arise. Then the support becomes much weaker, although it is not wiped out entirely.

Attitudes toward Defense Spending, 1969-1976. In light of our analysis above regarding the level of support for government intervention in various welfare programs, it is interesting to observe that a Gallup survey conducted during January and February 1976 revealed that public support for defense spending has increased to the highest point recorded over the last seven years. Twenty-two percent of those surveyed said they felt that "too little" is being allocated for defense in the budget. This represents an increase of 10 percentage points from 1974 (table 5). The sharpest change in views since 1974 has come about among those with a college background. In 1974 only 8 percent of the college group said "too little" was being spent on defense budgets while in February 1976, the figure was 24 percent. This brings the college-educated group roughly into line with those of lesser education levels on this issue.

Table 5
Attitudes toward Defense Spending, 1969-1976

Question: "There is much discussion as to the amount of money the government in Washington should spend for national defense and military purposes. How do you feel about this: Do you think we are spending too little, too much, or about the right amount?"

	January 30 - February 2, 1976				Change since 1974 in percent saying "too much"
	Too Much	Too Little	About Right	No Opinion	
NATIONAL	36%	22%	32%	10%	- 8
SEX					
Male	35	28	32	5	- 11
Female	37	17	33	13	- 5
RACE					
White	36	22	33	9	- 8
Non-white	44	19	22	15	- 1
EDUCATION					
College	38	24	33	5	- 17
High School	36	23	32	9	- 5
Grade School	33	16	31	20	- 7
REGION					
East	38	18	33	11	- 7
Midwest	42	16	34	8	- 6
South	31	28	30	11	- 5
West	35	27	31	7	- 13
AGE					
Total Under 30	49	17	27	7	- 3
18-24 years	50	14	29	7	- 3
25-29 years	49	21	24	6	+ 1
30-49 years	36	23	34	7	- 7
50 & older	27	25	34	14	- 13
INCOME					
\$20,000 & over	35	24	35	6	- 8
\$15,000-\$19,999	33	27	33	7	- 13
\$10,000-\$14,999	35	24	31	10	- 8
\$7,000-\$9,999	40	17	33	10	- 7
\$5,000-\$6,999	40	21	29	10	- 3
\$3,000-\$4,999	34	17	34	15	- 7
Under \$3,000	45	15	28	12	- 4
POLITICS					
Republican	31	23	35	11	- 6
Democrat	36	24	30	10	- 9
So. Democrat	34	26	27	13	- 5
Other Democrat	38	23	31	8	- 8
Independent	40	18	34	8	- 8

Table 5 (continued)

	Too Much	Too Little	About Right	No Opinion	Change since 1974 in percent saying "too much"
RELIGION					
Protestant	32	23	34	11	- 8
Catholic	37	22	32	9	- 9
OCCUPATION					
Professional & Business	37	23	35	5	- 11
Clerical & Sales	39	22	33	6	- 15
Manual Workers	27	21	31	11	- 15
Non-Labor Force	31	23	34	12	- 10
CITY SIZE					
1,000,000 & over	43	20	26	11	- 3
500,000-999,999	40	22	31	7	- 10
50,000-499,999	37	21	34	8	- 6
2,500-49,999	33	22	32	13	- 11
Under 2,500, Rural	31	24	36	9	- 11
Labor Union families	41	19	29	11	- 4
Non-Labor Union families	35	23	33	9	- 9
SPENDING ESTIMATE					
20-\$.29 (correct)	38	23	33	6	*
10-\$.39 (correct or near)	37	27	32	4	*
0-\$.9/40-\$.99 (too high/too low)	39	24	32	5	*

* Comparative data not available.

In assessing the current findings and trends, it is important to bear in mind that the proportion of the budget earmarked for defense has changed in recent years. The 1976 budget called for approximately \$101.1 billion for defense, or about 26 percent of the total budget, compared to a share of 33 percent in 1972. It is also important to note that earlier lower assessments regarding government spending for military purposes must be evaluated within the context of the widespread lack of support for the United States involvement in the Vietnam conflict. Therefore, these earlier reports regarding defense spending simply may have been votes against United States involvement in Vietnam rather than reflecting general opinion in support of defense spending.

As a matter of interest, only a handful of those polled actually knew what share of the federal budget went to defense spending. Seven persons in ten admitted they had no idea, and only 7 percent of those responding actually came close to the correct figure. However, the attitudes regarding defense spending of those who admitted their ignorance of the actual spending level or guessed wrong, were remarkably similar to those who knew the approximately correct figures. This appears to be an example of the workings of a general public sentiment as to the "fairness," "justice," and "propriety" of policies.

As reported in Table 5, a Gallup survey in January 1969 showed that a majority (52 percent) reported that "too much" was being spent on defense. That figure decreased fairly systematically each of the ensuing years including 1976 when just slightly more than one-third (36 percent) felt too much was being allocated for defense purposes.

Typology of "Guns" or "Butter" Proponents

"Butter" Proponents. In order to develop a useful typology of those respondents who believe that the United States is spending too much on defense, we examined the data in Table 5 to identify background variables (e.g., sex, race, education, etc.) on which there was a spread of 10 percentage points or more between those respondents showing the greatest support and those showing the least support for this position.

Out of the 11 characteristics reported in Table 5, the following demographic characteristics seemed to be related to differences in levels of support:

--**Region:** Midwesterners were more likely to feel too much was being spent on defense (42 percent), while Southerners were least likely to feel that way (31 percent).

--**Age:** Those under 30 were much more likely than other age groups to feel that the defense budget was too high.

--**Income:** Forty-five percent of those with annual incomes less than \$3,000 felt defense spending was too high, compared with only one-third of those earning \$10,000 and above.

--**Occupation:** White-collar workers and professionals were more likely to favor reductions in defense spending than their blue collar counterparts.

--**City Size:** Those living in cities of one million population or more were most likely to feel the defense budget was too high.

"Gun" Proponents [those favoring more defense spending]: Nationally, a little more than one person in five felt defense spending was too little. Those most likely to hold this view were men, those who live in the South, and persons 50 years of age or older. The other demographic characteristics showed little variation on this question.

"Guns and Butter"

We have found that one-fifth of Americans in a recent survey feel there should be more defense spending. We have also found that sizeable majorities, in general, favor some governmental involvement in welfare programs, although there is less consistency on specific programs. The conclusion we can tentatively draw is that a sizeable proportion of Americans want both guns and butter.

Results of a recent survey shed light on this matter. In February 1976, the Harris Survey asked a sample of Americans for their views on whether the welfare system should be entirely given over to the federal government, as some Democratic governors have urged, whether it should be run entirely by each state, or whether the current federal-state partnership should be maintained. Also, the survey asked whether the respondents felt the issue of the welfare system was a serious problem or not.

While 80 percent of the national sample said they felt the problem was serious, and large numbers were critical of the way the system now works, "Most of the public is against handing welfare back to the states or having it taken over by the federal government. Instead, a plurality prefers continuing to have welfare costs shared by the states and the federal government," according to the Harris poll results.

Respondents in the Harris Survey directed three major criticisms at the way welfare now works: Nine out of ten believe many persons on welfare could be working instead of receiving welfare; nearly as many feel there are too many on welfare who cheat to get money to which they are not entitled; and 64 percent feel the criteria for receiving welfare are not tough enough.

This seems to support the conclusion that, although Americans generally accept the idea of government aid for those in need, they nevertheless apparently want to keep a balance between expenditures on welfare programs and those for other purposes.

Summary and Conclusions

Employing national poll data, the results of American public opinion toward the role of government in social welfare and in defense spending has been examined. There had been considerable stability of public

opinion on the general topic of welfare; the public supports it in general, but is less supportive of specific types of welfare spending. The nature and stability of long term public opinion of the American public regarding the role of the federal government in the design, funding, and implementation of national social welfare programs is remarkable. While a majority of Americans generally support the basic principle behind social welfare, however, it is the structure of social welfare programs with which they appear to take issue. That is, people are concerned with how, how much, and to whom the benefits are distributed.

While a majority of Americans support the general concept of social welfare programs, at the same time the percentage of Americans desiring an increase in military budgets has increased to an all-time high since 1969. The data do not seem to support a "guns or butter" conclusion but rather seem to suggest the American public wants "guns and butter."

The question of national priorities has always been a primary one for policy-makers. The role of public opinion in determining the levels of spending for different purposes in a limited national budget is of course an indirect one; Congress and the executive branch must debate many issues on which the general public has little information. But, as Simon (1974:222) has pointed out:

(O)n domestic issues, particularly those of the bread and butter variety, the public is not only reasonably well informed and prepared to express an opinion, but has on many occasions led or prompted the Congress or the President toward passage of a program that might otherwise have been delayed for months or years. Welfare legislation concerning minimum wages, social security, medical programs, are examples of issues on which public opinion has preceded and prompted government action.

The issues we have considered do not all enjoy such strong public support. The information we have reviewed can be a guide to what most people would find acceptable--namely, a humane welfare system which is at the same time efficient, combined with a level of defense spending that is perceived to be not far different from that of recent years.

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