

Guaranteed employment and universal child care for a new social contract ^[1]

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Abstract

The United States is falling behind many other rich nations on a broad spectrum of measures of the quality of life. These include social mobility, inequality, education, crime, health and longevity. Polls suggest that many Americans have not only lost their optimism concerning the future, but have become angry as well. This article sets forth the elements of a new social contract, one that would deliver substantial results almost overnight and which conforms to the traditional American values of the importance of work, that everyone should have a fair opportunity for upwards mobility, and the central importance of the family. This proposal is composed of two parts: The first is guaranteed employment, and where necessary, the retraining required to enable workers to successfully enter the regular workforce. The second is universal child care to give all parents the possibility of participating in the labor force. The article discusses in depth how these measures would reverse the relative decline in quality of life in America. It also reveals how, although these measure would be costly, their payoff for the economy would far offset the costs.

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