

Today, many of our city programs, such as the neighborhood conservation program, the area services program, with both of which Chairman Powell and Mr. Carey of this committee are familiar, are based on these principles.

From the point at which we had already arrived in our thinking, it was only a step to declare outright war against poverty at a city level. I made that declaration in a formal address to our city council on January 14.

As soon as President Johnson had outlined the national war against poverty, we asserted our intention of making the New York City front a part of the national front and lining up with the national army, so to speak.

Now let me say a word about the very concept of trying to abolish poverty. I know we are not going to abolish poverty the next year or the year after, or for a very long time to come. I don't know whether we can ever succeed in abolishing it entirely. But we certainly must make major and meaningful progress in that direction.

We really have got to get ahead of the problem and make headway, or we will be in a very sorry condition in many parts of our country. The urgency of this need is all mixed up with the revolution of rising expectations that has been sweeping the world for the last two decades. In this 7th decade of the 20th century, our affluent society simply cannot afford an impoverished 5th. It makes for social dynamite; besides, it costs too much.

Poverty is much more difficult to define than it is to characterize. The famous British pundit, Dr. Samuel Johnson, once characterized poverty as "a great enemy to human happiness. It certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable and others extremely difficult." That might be called a British understatement for anyone who has seen the kind of poverty that most of us have seen and which the legislation before us is trying to do something about.

In getting underway with our efforts in New York City, we decided first of all to take some rough measurements of the amount and kind of poverty that existed in our city. So we mobilized the appropriate city agencies and directed them to review all official figures, including their own, and to come up with a report on the proportions of poverty in New York. The result was a preliminary study we called the dimensions of poverty in New York City.

The figures in our study of the dimensions of poverty in New York City show that 389,000 families plus 320,000 single individuals in New York live in conditions approximating poverty. This is one of every five New Yorkers. This is exactly the same ratio as that which exists for the country as a whole. You might be interested to know