

that the problem is simply too big and too complicated for ordinary men and their governments to deal with. We must not forget that we have also had disease, mischief, and madness with us from the beginning of time; yet we have not hesitated to commit ourselves and our resources to the treatment and elimination of those ills, and the results have been most heartening.

Surely, a nation like ours, which has contributed billions to the relief of poverty and the enhancement of economic opportunity in other lands, will not ignore its obligation to the poor and underprivileged among its own people.

Some will object to the proposed legislation on the basis that it may spawn another gigantic Federal activity. I sympathize with the concern of these people. I am a firm believer in the proposition that, wherever possible, the solution of personal and community problems should be left to individual effort and local and State initiative. However, there are some problems which cannot be effectively solved on an individual or local basis alone. In my opinion, the hard core of rural poverty which exists in this country constitutes such a problem, and I do not believe we will be able to either control or to make a lasting dent in it without the combined and cooperative efforts of our entire citizenry and every segment of government, local, State, and Federal.

The pending legislation seems to me to recognize the desirability of primary dependence upon local and State initiative. It provides that the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity shall assist and cooperate with State and local agencies in developing and financing programs aimed at alleviating the plight of both unemployed and unemployable adults, and in providing their children with the basic educational training and work experience needed to assure that they will not become a permanently lost generation. Some States, including Georgia, have established area vocational training programs to take care of the undereducation of rural inhabitants. These programs are excellent and should not be sacrificed to Federal effort. Therefore, the Congress should insist that programs, authorized by titles II and III be employed to supplement and strengthen, not to replace, the programs of private organizations and State and local governments; and appropriate safeguards should be written into the legislation to assure that this fundamental principle will not be nullified in the administration of the act. In the past, there have been instances when the specific and limited objectives of the Congress have been ignored, disregarded, and distorted by administrative personnel so as to convert soundly conceived programs into serious threats to our free enterprise economy and dual system of government. Every precaution should be taken in the pending legislation against the possibility of such administrative abuses. The final draft of this legislation should contain no language, or ambiguity, which might lead to boondoggling or to the creation of instrumentalities of unwarranted federalization.

The electric utility companies with which I am associated have long been convinced that no section of the Nation will achieve its full economic growth so long as pockets of persistent poverty continue to exist. Something must be done to encourage and assist the rural worker and his family, displaced by farm mechanization and farm consolidation, to find gainful employment in other places or in other lines of industrial and commercial activity. A dying community spreads its virus to other communities, either through the migration of displaced workers or through the excessive burdens which, in their idleness, they impose upon the general economy. The elimination of poverty, therefore, challenges not only our compassion but our enlightened self-interest as well.

During the past 20 years, our companies have spent millions of dollars on area and community development programs designed to encourage new industry and to spread it into rural areas where economic opportunity has dried up. We have sought to cooperate with local groups (public and private) in upgrading educational and vocational training, in improving health and recreational programs, and in enriching the cultural and spiritual climate of our rural areas and small towns.

These programs have demonstrated that poverty and despair, like other human ills, will yield to preventive and corrective action. They have shown that, while no attack on poverty and economic dislocation can hope to succeed without local initiative and direction, nevertheless, since the root causes of poverty are rarely local, broader based programs are necessary in most cases. Above all, the programs have demonstrated that to be successful, an attack on poverty must be persistent and sustained. In my opinion, the supplemental Federal assistance envisioned by titles II and III, if properly administered, will avoid those shortcomings.