

Much has been said about the difference between our present poverty and that of the depression years because of its lasting quality today. It is deeply entrenched. We are dealing with second and third generation poor. The young people fated to enter this poverty class are frustrated, and rightly so, for without some skillful aid and some fairly revolutionary happenings in our economy they are indeed trapped in an environment of poverty. In introducing the proposed legislation, it has been said, "For the rebel who seeks a way out of this closed circle, there is little help * * * He cannot make his protest heard or has stopped protesting."

This is a true statement in general, with the exciting exception of the civil rights protest movement. To date this group has provided the most eloquent spokesmen of the poor—Negro or white or Spanish speaking or American Indian, young or old. The issues of civil rights and economics have been joined in the protest movement. Can we hear that message and act on it?

It is a heartening sign of life, of the strength of the spirit of our youth, that hope can exist for them. For the protests are a sign of hope as much as they are a product of despair and frustration. Their call—one of impatience with rights too slowly granted—includes a concern for jobs needed now, adequate education for the jobs of the future, adequate houses and neighborhoods in which to raise the families of the future.

The Economic Opportunity Act can be one important response from the elected officials of the land to these fervent pleas from the youth of the land.

2. In considering the projects proposed for work with youth, we have welcomed the assurances of those who have designed the programs that they will be non-military in character and will remain 100 percent voluntary.

The Job Corps in particular will require every imaginative effort to meet its purposes. Its voluntary quality will be important in achieving its goals, in keeping it from the danger of having a punitive aspect, of seeming to be the place one is sent instead of to a reform school or after being rejected in the draft. It must be more than a convenient way to remove troubled young people from the headlines they may be making. To achieve its training goals, the Corps will require top personnel with experience in working with youth and with the educational qualifications needed to establish programs with relevance to the future job requirements of this country. Because of the difficulty of this task, perhaps it would be wise to specifically charge the Citizens Advisory Council with an annual review of this aspect of the program.

3. By encouraging many-faceted approaches to community problems, the program recognizes that "poverty is a web of circumstances, not the simple result of a simple condition."

The declaration of purpose of the act recognizes that "education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity" are the several problems that must be tackled if we are to fight poverty effectively. We support that multiproblem approach. Poverty is more than an economic phenomenon.

From one of our field staff comes this supporting material. "There is no poverty in the abstract, only poor people, with many problems. If programs are set up to tackle only the problems of education or of housing, or of jobs, only people who fit into those programs will benefit. If instead, or in addition, programs are aimed at the problems of poor people, working through these problems in whatever way they arise, many more can be brought along to the point where they can participate in broader programs already existing. "We have many illustrations of this principle. To select one at random: our contact with one American Indian family began when they came to our project for some emergency relief. The husband had been out of work for over a year. They were about to be dispossessed. The family had exhausted any help the Bureau of Indian Affairs could give them. They had not been in California for the 3 years necessary to get general welfare assistance. Through our caseworker, the confidence of the family was gained, emergency aid found. But as the contact deepened, other problems were revealed: with the probation department; with medical and dental needs of the children; the attitudes toward the school on the part of the parents who kept one of the older children home frequently to look after the smaller ones; alcohol, housekeeping, and so on. In other words, a typical set of problems which keep occurring with variations. It would be wonderful to report that all the problems had been solved. They aren't, but the husband does now have a job, much of the 'pressure' is off the situation, and the other needs are being tackled one by one."