

appropriate for me as chairman of the task force to comment on the national chamber's position. The Task Force on Economic Growth and Opportunity is an independent group making independent studies. I, for example, hold no official position in the national chamber. By "independent," I mean that the task force is not bound by current or past policies of the national chamber and, conversely, the national chamber is in no way committed to task force recommendations. By "independent," I emphatically mean that the task force is determined to make scholarly and objective studies. To comment at this time on H.R. 12341 and the national chamber's testimony when the task force's study of urban problems is just underway would prejudice the study.

Furthermore, the reason the task force is launching a serious study of America's cities is because we believe that public and private policies to solve urban problems are handicapped by insufficient understanding of the root causes of these problems and of the most effective means of solving them. For several decades we have been creating and applying a galaxy of programs at all levels of government to alleviate our urban problems. Despite this, some of these problems are getting worse rather than better. It is understandable, therefore, why some people and groups seriously question legislation which they believe would essentially provide only more of the same programs. On the other hand, in the absence of more knowledge about the complexities of our urban problems, it is understandable why some people and groups seem unable to prescribe anything different. Hopefully, the task force study can throw new light on our urban problems and help everyone interested in making our cities better places in which to live and work.

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States, by sponsoring the task force, demonstrates its keen interest in helping to solve human problems. Few if any business or labor organizations have ever sponsored in-depth studies of the kind the task force is doing. Few sponsoring organizations have given such study groups the kind of autonomy enjoyed by the task force. In our current study of poverty—which has been in process for over a year and a half and which is very much a study of human problems—we have obtained contributions from literally hundreds of people in practically every walk of life and of practically all persuasions. In addition to panel discussions and field trips, we have commissioned background papers from over 35 experts representing a host of views and opinions. These papers are being printed in our reports so that any reader can see for himself how the task force reaches its conclusions and how it agrees or disagrees with the authors. We plan to follow much the same approach in our study of cities, which, again, is very much a study of human problems.

And lest there be any question about the specificity and independence of task force recommendations, let me cite but 1 of the 45 recommendations contained in the 2 reports issued to date on poverty. In our second report, "Poverty: The Sick, Disabled, and Aged," the task force recommended that a significant way to help our oldest and poorest citizens is to bring under the social security retirement program all Americans 65 years of age and over who are not now eligible for benefits. Granted, this recommendation is not new. But for us on the task force it followed from an objective consideration of the facts compiled by outside experts and analyzed by us.

The task force is happy that the U.S. Congress recently passed legislation to cover all Americans over the age of 72 with a benefit of \$35 per month for single persons and \$52.50 for couples. Hopefully, the Congress will, in time, fully implement the task force's recommendation by lowering the eligibility age to 65 and providing a higher monthly benefit. Most satisfying to the task force was that the proponents of the legislation made considerable use of the task force report during Senate debate. We would like to believe that our recommendation had an influence on the success of the measure, despite opposition by the leadership of the majority party in the Senate.

The national chamber, through this task force, is making an important contribution to helping people. The national chamber has a long record of supporting efforts to help all Americans enjoy the rewards of this great land. Since its support of the original Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the national chamber has approved legislation and programs necessary to stimulate the development of skills and human resources; necessary to help people become productive and earn good livings. The national chamber fully supported the so-called impacted areas education legislation following World War II when it was needed. The national chamber supported several parts of the National Defense Education Act. By supporting the recent income tax cut and a host of programs to promote eco-