

You have the commitment of 90,000 Americans who are serving today free of charge on community action agencies across the length and breadth of the land.

You have the evidence of 1 million Americans who have freely pitched in to help on a thousand different fronts as volunteers.

You have the evidence of 1,200 lawyers now serving more than 600 neighborhood legal service centers bringing justice, new opportunities for justice to the poor.

You have the evidence of 21 neighborhood health centers in being or in the process of being established.

You have the evidence of 1,050 community action agencies giving needed services to the poor people, bringing services of various departments of government to bear in a combined coordinated way.

You have the evidence of 3,300 foster grandparents who are themselves finding a new meaning to their lives and bringing compassion and a new life to young children.

This evidence has been compiled statistically and analytically. You have that record before you. I believe it is a document in which you can take pride because you made it possible.

And I believe that there is no responsible member of this committee or the Congress as a whole who is going to vote to eliminate Headstart or Foster Grandparents or any of the other prudent programs inaugurated by OEO.

Nobody is going to tell the million volunteers to go home. Nobody is going to shut up 700 neighborhood multiservice centers which are across this whole country, in rural as well as urban America.

Nobody is going to tell a thousand young men who want to be in the Job Corps that there is not going to be any Job Corps for them or tell 300,000 plus youngsters that the Neighborhood Youth Corps is going out of existence, that there won't be any work for them of that type, or to close up the law offices or the neighborhood health centers or the family planning clinics or the Upward Bound classes.

These programs which you brought into being have become a part of the fabric of American life. I believe you will see to it that they endure.

There are new Headstarts, new community action programs still to be invented. I believe you will see to it that the source of innovation is not destroyed.

It seems to me that a single basic issue faces the Congress this year in connection with the war against poverty. It is this: Will the agency you brought into being to serve the poor, to speak for the poor, to marshal America's resources on behalf of the poor, continue to do the job which you set for it?

As you begin your deliberations, you have before you two pieces of proposed legislation. Each supports a major Federal effort and expenditure on behalf of the poor. Each calls for the cooperation and involvement of all segments of our national life. Each proposes to continue with minor changes all or nearly all the innovative programs initiated by this agency which you created 2½ years ago.

The most significant differences in these two bills, one sponsored by the administration, one sponsored by some Republican members,