

is this: The administration bill proposes a strengthened OEO with its coordinating power improved, with its administration made more effective, and the range of national involvement in its programs broadened.

The other proposes to eliminate OEO and destroy the central command post of the war against poverty. This difference to me, at any rate, strikes at the heart of the entire effort. The reasons for OEO are very simple.

First of all, the poor are the least articulate, the least influential, the least powerful of all our national minorities. They need an independent advocate, a strong, authoritative voice to speak on their behalf.

The well-to-do whose support is absolutely essential, need a constant, coherent reminder of the reality of the problem of poverty and their responsibility in helping to solve it.

Local communities need a single, national source of information, innovation, evaluation, and encouragement as well as financing to help them sustain the momentum of their fight against hometown poverty.

The established agencies of Government, the organizations in relevant fields of education, health, social work, and justice, now welcome a unified command post which supports them in directing the thrust of their efforts toward the difficult task of helping the poor.

The Nation as a whole needs to keep its attention focused on curing poverty at a time when the distractions of affluence are almost irresistible.

Before OEO, America had the same skills, the same resources, the same strength of purpose as we do today but our Nation did not bring into being a Headstart, or an Upward Bound, or a Job Corps, or VISTA, or the neighborhood legal services, or the neighborhood health center, or local community action programs. It took the Congress and OEO to get these going and to make them work.

It is a simple matter of practical commonsense. When our Nation has determined to tackle a specific problem Congress has given the job to a single responsible authority, responsibility I might add to the Congress. A Social Security Administration. A Securities and Exchange Commission. A TVA. A Department of Transportation. A NASA.

And an OEO.

Because of this commonsense act of Congress in establishing OEO, and because of the results which it has achieved it is not surprising that an overwhelming majority of Americans have rallied behind the effort.

As a nation we may be divided on the strategies for civil rights. We may be fragmented on the issues of war and peace, between hawks and doves. We may be isolated by the generation gap. But as a nation we are united on the need for the eradication of poverty. This is largely, I believe, because you gave to the war against poverty a single voice, a central responsibility.

So, in statement after statement, resolution after resolution, involvement upon involvement, the various sects and sectors, interests and organizations, of this diverse and varied Nation have declared their support for the total war against poverty operated under OEO.

The American Medical Association through its president, Dr. Charles Hudson, the American Bar Association, through the last four