

tribution to this national effort. I hope to suggest some of the unique attributes of the legal profession which offer special promise for the success of the anti-poverty programs.

In assessing the role of lawyer in the war on poverty, we must consider the historical context of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Power of Ideas

The background to President Johnson's legislative action in the United States, for the Act clearly grows out of the writings and critical perspectives of a group of visionary thinkers in the late 50's and early '60's.

Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, the growing body of practical literature of the civil rights movements, such as Charles Silberman's *The Crisis in Black and White* and Bayard Rustin's *From Politics to Protest*, and a number of sophisticated critiques of the existing welfare structure, combined to develop the consensus that eventually led to the passage of the Act.

It had become apparent that the gap between our power to eliminate between our power to eliminate poverty and our programs designed to that end had grown too great. John Kennedy said in 1962 that "Man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." In 1964 our determination in Congress was that strengthening our capacity to achieve the former required a new and greater emphasis.

Two Great Objectives

The language of the Act is specific. It seeks the elimination of poverty in the United States, and establishes ten programs and an administrative structure to operate the war on poverty. But the two great objectives of the anti-poverty program are contained in its key section, Section 202, (a) describing "Community Action Programs."

The first goal is the coordination of all programs which attempt to eliminate poverty in a community, and is emphasized by the phrase "which mobilizes and utilizes resources, public or private * * * in an attack on poverty."

Role of the Poor

The second aim is insuring that residents of the areas affected by the program will play key roles in policy-making regarding their area, and is emphasized in the language of 202(a)(1): "(A) community action program is a program which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups involved . . ."

I strongly believe that the skills of the legal profession can aid greatly in achieving both of these interdependent objectives.

In their excellent article in the *Yale Law Journal* of July 1964, Edgar and Jean Cahn point out the special advantages which a lawyer brings to any effort to improve the social and economic status of the poor. The lawyer, they note, is a respectable source of assistance and thus may receive many inquiries and complaints which ought to be referred to a social worker but end up on the lawyer's desk because he is viewed as a source of impartial assistance.

In addition, the Cahns stress the lawyer's role as an advocate as an asset which is denied other institutional representatives who see their task as one of mediating between social institutions and not one of continually seeking to defend the rights of the poor.

Case Orientation

The Cahns also point out that the lawyer is case oriented, enabling him to consider individuals, not generalized discontent, in a chaotic neighborhood. Finally, they stress the legal expertise of the lawyer as a special asset for the poor since so many of the problems of the poor have legal implications: eviction, welfare enforcement, police treatment, instalment-buying are but a few examples.

In the effort to coordinate all resources which can be mobilized in the war on poverty, the lawyer's knowledge of legislation is a special attribute, for the Act provides tools for a comprehensive effort by local communities to seek funds from every available program of federal assistance to local communities which can be secured from the federal government.

Under Section 611 of the Act, application for federal funds for programs such as school construction and hospital facilities in poor areas can receive preferential treatment if they are included as part of a total community action