

1038 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

day. It is also to be interpreted that no vehicles and/or offices can be used to get voters to the polls. It is farther to be interpreted that no staff members will be reimbursed either in salary or compensatory time for election related activities on this day.

Due to the fact that this is a non-partisan election and in compliance with CAP Memo 50-A, each staff member may, if he so desires, be involved as a private citizen according to the dictates of personal conscience.

WRP.

STATEMENT ISSUED BY DR. CHARLES WATTS, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND
MR. WILLIAM PURSELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mr. Fred Steele's allegations against Operation Breakthrough at his press conference Tuesday morning were sensational and without foundation. It was extremely disappointing that Mr. Steele found it expedient to use Operation Breakthrough as a political football again. It is surprising that Mr. Steele can align himself with those who fear registration and voting by the poor of Durham, and who would raise a false racial issue in a matter is both non-partisan and non-racial.

Mr. Steele's allegation that Operation Breakthrough sought to register only Negro voters in its ongoing citizen education program is false. The white voters registered through our efforts will take issue with Mr. Steele on this matter. It is obvious for anyone to see that the limited resources and staff of Operation Breakthrough cannot be spread over the entire county. The citizen education efforts were concentrated within defined target areas, where extensive poverty and Negro population are unfortunately combined. These are the same target areas where Operation Breakthrough has been working all along.

Any "unhealthy division" among the city electorate is more properly laid to the inflammatory statement of Mr. Steele than to the work of Operation Breakthrough.

Mr. Steele's further allegation that Operation Breakthrough made improper use of its staff is also false. Staff members of Operation Breakthrough are authorized and encouraged by Federal regulation to be active as individual citizens in local, nonpartisan elections. Those who are so active receive no pay or compensation for these activities.

On April 28, the Executive Director of Operation Breakthrough issued an order, in line with OEO directives, prohibiting the expenditure of any Operation Breakthrough funds in support of activities on election day, and forbidding the use of agency vehicles in support of such activity.

A prompt investigation of vehicle schedules and reports by drivers and supervisors substantiated the fact that none were used.

Operation breakthrough invites Mr. Steele to make his alleged "evidence" public so that the charges may be fairly judged by all.

Mr. Pursell stated, "If the existence of accurate information which has not yet come to my attention can be fairly established, I am willing to consider it and take appropriate actions."

The Director strongly stated however that private non-paid individual participation in nonpartisan election activities is a citizen's right and privilege.

The intent of Congress as expressed in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 has been clear from the beginning. "Maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the workings of our society surely includes the proper exercise of a citizen's right to register and vote. Attacking the encouragement and support of citizens who are poor and who seek to express their concerns through voting is hardly in keeping with the established concept of American Democracy.

SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT REGARDING OPERATION BREAKTHROUGH NON-INVOLVEMENT IN PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, WILLIAM R. PURSELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OPERATION BREAKTHROUGH, MAY 28, 1967

In a 1966 amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 Congress extended the limitations on political activities contained in the Hatch Act to include the employees of Community Action Agencies. Under the Hatch Act is a specific provision in 5 U.S.C. Section 1503 permitting nonpartisan activity. It reads: