

The leagues have been since the programs first started to be established watching their development in their local communities and sometimes becoming involved in them in one way or another.

Their feeling apparently, as it is very clearly expressed, that they feel the great need to have a single agency which can concentrate on and, as one of the leagues said, zero in on the problems of the poor because they are peculiar problems to deal with.

We have tried maybe not successfully to deal with this problem before. Now we are trying in a different way and our leagues apparently feel this requires the concentration of one agency rather than many agencies trying to work together on this.

Mr. MEEDS. Mrs. Benson, I think it might be of importance here if you were to inform this committee as to the 2-year process that your organization has gone through in fact-gathering with respect to this program.

In other words, how does a local unit come to the conclusion which they submit to you?

Mrs. BENSON. It is actually a long, drawn out process. Actually, it has taken 4 years in two sections. Our local leagues decided in the spring of 1964 at a national convention to undertake a study of programs and policies provided by the United States to provide equality of opportunity which meant that all of the local leagues all over the country started after that convention to look into what were our policies and what are our programs.

Of course, just at this time the Economic Opportunity Act shortly thereafter was passed and the programs began to be started in various places in the country.

During that first 2-year period from 1964 to 1966 the league studied the Economic Opportunity Act and studied anything any of us could get our hands on and how it was implemented in various parts of the country and then we went through the process of consensus which means the chapters send in their positions and out of that came our position.

Since 1966 when the league arrived at this position of support for the variety of programs, they have been studying them at the local level as they have been implemented at the local level and observing them and constantly keeping up with what is going on.

Mr. MEEDS. When you say studying them at the local level, I recall as a prosecuting attorney in Snohomish County, Wash., having two league women descend on me one day and ask me questions for 2 or 3 hours about the operation.

Mrs. BENSON. It sounds like kind of an ordeal.

Mr. MEEDS. I was very happy to do it and I was surprised that any private, non-profit agency was doing this, but this is the type of study you are talking about. Is this what your members did?

Mrs. BENSON. This is part of what they do. It is a standard method of finding out either how Government operates or how a particular program is working. The members attend school board meetings, city or town council meetings or whatever it may be with great regularity.

To take a community action program in a given community, the league might be on the council itself, might be an observer at meetings, attend all of the meetings of the Community Action Agency or council, whatever it is called; it frequently observes the programs as they are