

may not be a new idea, but it is certainly new to be put in practice, and we haven't had a great deal of experience with it as yet, and perhaps in the future the established agencies will be geared up to this kind of thing, too, but at the present time I don't think they are, and I think it would certainly weaken the effort to increase the participation of the poor in solving their own problems.

Mr. HAWKINS. Now in respect to the earmarking of the funds and what you refer to as the possibility of drying up the versatile funds, you have indicated that you preferred a flexibility, and you opposed at least earmarking, or you indicated support for a national emphasis program, but some flexibility. Now does this in any way mean that the League supports Federal aid without any strings attached or any direction, or is it merely a reflection of the views of the League on this particular issue?

Mrs. BENSON. I am not sure I understand your question, but I think—

Mr. HAWKINS. I am merely asking whether or not this is a blanket support for Federal funds without any instruction whatsoever, whether or not you are merely saying in this regard that since the appropriations are inadequate, that you believe that more flexibility should be given if the appropriations were more adequate? Would you then feel that some of your opposition to earmarking and to giving greater emphasis to some programs would be reduced?

Mrs. BENSON. Yes, it is the latter. The funds which are presently being channeled to local communities, community action agencies, et cetera, are not channeled without any strings at all. They all have to go through a good deal of agony preparing a plan for the Office of Economic Opportunity or whatever, and there are guidelines set up, and certain restrictions, things they can and they can't do. Our feeling has to do with the importance of the local community or the people in the local community deciding what program, among all of those which are available, they need the most, or what programs they need the most, and the effect has been as we have heard from our local leagues that with so much money in last year's bill earmarked for Headstart and for other programs, this did cut out of the total pie, as it were, available; those funds which they could use to set up base centers, or what-have-you, and for this reason we are opposed to earmarking.

Mr. HAWKINS. Thank you.

Mr. Dellenback?

Mr. DELLENBACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I regret having been at another meeting which precluded my hearing Mrs. Benson's testimony directly, and hearing the earlier questions, but I would like to say as a preliminary that ever since my first session in my home State legislature, when the League of Women Voters and I worked arm in arm in an attempt to modify the Oregon constitution, I have had the highest regard for this organization with which you serve. There were some exceptionally fine members of that organization in the State of Oregon, it did a tremendous job, as we sought together to succeed in something we didn't quite succeed in, but we fought a dickens of a fight, and we got our revised constitution through the house. We got it through the body with which I was tied, and I am sure that eventually it will come in Oregon. But we are delighted to have you here today.