

Three years ago it would probably have been impossible for a delegation representing the poor of any State to come to Washington at the invitation of such a distinguished committee. The fact that we are here today is significant testimony to an initial area of success of anti-poverty efforts in Connecticut.

After decades of well-intentioned, but in too many cases largely ineffective, social welfare efforts, Congress, with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, at last promised the poor a voice in the decisions which would hopefully lead them out of the ghettos and their poverty. But what has happened since 1964?

Just as the impact of the war on poverty was beginning to be felt, Congress cut 1967 appropriations to less than half of the \$3.39 billion which the Office of Economic Opportunity felt was necessary to continue the momentum of the program. Congress then compounded the damage by earmarking large shares of the fiscal 1967 appropriations, thus limiting the voice of the poor in determining their own local needs. This earmarking was in direct conflict with the intent of the original legislation.

As one result of this congressional action, Waterbury had to cut back its antipoverty program by about 30 percent, and a pending application for a day care facility, the top priority item sought by the poor of Waterbury, was never funded. Agencies in other Connecticut cities suffered similar experiences.

This year the House is considering a bill which would authorize \$2.06 billion for economic opportunity amendments, still \$1½ billion less than the amount OEO said was needed 2 years ago to continue the momentum of the program.

There are those who will try to reduce the \$2.06 billion authorization and to them we of the Connecticut Poverty Council say there is need in our State to spend three, four, and five times present allocations to fight a winning fight against poverty.

There are those who will say that the financial demands of the war in Vietnam, the space program and other Federal responsibilities limit the resources we can devote to the war on poverty. To them we say that if the Federal Government does not have the resources, the State and city governments and the poor themselves certainly don't have them and the only alternative is to leave for our children as a harder task that part of the job which we do not face today.

There are those who advocate the elimination of the OEO and splitting up of its programs among other old line agencies as an economy and efficiency measure. To them we say that we are convinced that the innovations of OEO have been the stimuli which are beginning to make old line agencies produce. Without OEO and its built-in resident participation, programs run by old line agencies do not and will not reach the poor.

This past June, with the strong support of the Connecticut Poverty Council, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a Community Development Act which will provide State financial assistance to communities for a wide variety of community development programs including those of Community Action agencies. The cities of Connecticut themselves are devoting new energy and financing to solving the problems of urban blight and poverty. The city of Waterbury, for example, recently created the new position of development co-