

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967 2831

STATE OF MAINE,
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR,
Augusta, July 7, 1967.

Hon. CARL D. PERKINS,
*U.S. Representative,
House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN PERKINS: I have followed with interest the press accounts of the apparently growing criticism of the Office of Economic Opportunity and the "War on Poverty". As I have already indicated in my last letter, my basic feelings on the value of the OEO and its programs to the State of Maine are spelled out in the presentation which was made for me to the Subcommittee on Rural Development of the House Committee on Agriculture on June 15 in Washington, D.C., by Clyde Bartlett, Director of the Maine Office of Economic Opportunity. Copies of this have been forwarded to you.

We have in Maine a serious poverty-based problem indicated by the fact that more than 22% of Maine families have cash incomes of less than \$3,000 a year. This poverty is predominantly rural in character. There is here, as in many other areas of the nation, no question of need. We know that poverty and all its accompanying social ills exist. With a few exceptions, we have also come to realize that both socially and economically it is not only desirable but also essential that we eliminate poverty.

The disagreement appear to center largely on the means and not the goals of the "War on Poverty". In a recent and very incisive address, Senator Edward W. Brooke said the War on Poverty has developed into an "administrative nightmare" characterized by overlapping jurisdictions, ill-defined responsibility, jurisdictional confusion and conflicting standards. I do not agree that the OEO program in Maine can be characterized in this fashion; however, I do agree that the very nature of the programs being offered and the goals of these programs produces administrative difficulties. Some of these difficulties are inescapable but they can easily be compounded by mistakes at the local, state or federal level.

First of all we have in recent years realized the futility of money alone in effectively reaching the problems of poverty. Money without heart, without personal effort, without caring for the emotional and economic degradation of thousands of American families can never penetrate the hard shell of poverty. So we have embarked gradually in all of our more progressive social welfare efforts, and most recently in the War on Poverty, on an effort that will be not a palative but a cure for poverty and its associated ills. This is a task to which we have never addressed ourselves as a nation. We have indeed not yet even fully assessed the dimensions of the problems we seek to solve. But we have finally realized that these problems are complex, emotional and involve the entire spectrum of a family's existence from health to education, from housing to social acceptance, from civil rights to job opportunities. More importantly we have come to realize that what we do in any area may be of no avail if it is not strongly reinforced by a desire within the individual for achievement, for education and for life at the highest level of which he is capable.

To reach these goals of ending some of the immediate ills of poor housing, little education, hampering physical disabilities, and lack of job skills at the same time that each individual's belief in his own abilities and possibility of achievement is nurtured and developed has required the development of new programs, new administrative standards, and new techniques to match the new goals which we have set for ourselves. In Maine, as in the rest of the nation, there have been some failures but there have also been many successes.

We have community action programs in every area of Maine. We have active and successful Head Start programs throughout the state and have recently received authorization for a limited number of year around Head Start programs. The Legal Assistance program was funded within the last year and is starting this summer on actively spotting and staffing local offices. Upward Bound is in operation at several Maine colleges giving a limited number of economically deprived students an indication of the bright promise that education holds to change their entire lives. The Neighborhood Youth Corps is operating in many areas of Maine with work positions that are benefiting the communities and helping students to stay in school. We have other active OEO programs in such areas as Adult Basic Education, Work Experience, VISTA, and the Job Corps. We are now concerned with drafting plans for a Maine Rural Youth Corps which