

would reach to the heart of our rural poverty problem and would be the first program of its kind in the nation.

In the recent hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Manpower, Employment and Poverty, OEO Director Sargent Shriver noted that the national program has experienced both "success and failure". The successes in Maine have far outweighed the programs in which there have been administrative difficulties and a low level of achievement. To expect to inaugurate a program of the magnitude of OEO and its far-reaching goals and do it with nothing but one hundred percent successes would be completely unreasonable. The question is not whether or not there have been some failures but rather whether or not we continue to accept the goal of the eradication of poverty in this country and whether or not we are continuing to improve our administrative techniques in reaching this goal.

In the latter regard I would like to make three points:

1. The very nature of the programs makes complete evaluation difficult. This is not said as a justification for inefficiency or duplication or effort, but rather to point out that statistics alone do not indicate the extent to which we have reached the goal for which we are aiming. We can say with certainty how many meals were served and how many physical defects were corrected in our Head Start programs, but how can we measure the effect that these programs will have on the future of these children and their families. We can say how many children worked what hours for what amount of money in the Neighborhood Youth Corps, but can we really measure what it means to their entire future life to be able to complete high school and graduate with their class?

2. Secondly, it is obvious to everyone nationally and in the various States that the present level of effort will alleviate but will not eradicate poverty. In Maine we are presently reaching only a fraction of those who need help with an average annual OEO assistance of about \$75 for each low income family. If we are to root out the weed of poverty, we must dig deeper.

3. Lastly, in terms of administration of the program, I have already made a series of suggestions including closer coordination between funding deadlines and the issuance of guidelines for the administration of projects; more emphasis on clear-cut interpretations and model applications; earlier funding and less excessive earmarking funds; more long-range support for programs to ease the problems of recruitment and staff development and training.

The administrative difficulties we have now would be multiplied many times over if we were to eliminate either federal or state centralized administrative control. Coordination, elimination of duplication, adequate in-service training, public information—these and many other aspects of the overall effort become almost impossible of achievement without central control at the state and national level.

I find myself in complete agreement with Senator Brooke in his recent statement when he said, in part, "Ultimately, more authority must be delegated to federal administrators working in the field, as well as to state and local officials who are concerned with the programs . . . This suggestion is not inconsistent with the proposal that ultimate authority be more centralized. Policy decisions should be made by fewer people at the top, so that standards and requirements become less diffuse, and responsibility can be fixed. But operating and implementing decisions should be made by the men and women who are on the scene and who will usually be far more familiar with specific problems and the context in which they must be combatted."

If we accept the goals of the War on Poverty, I am sure that we can as reasonable people devise and improve on the administrative means by which we will reach these goals. The recognition of shortcomings in a relatively new and vastly ambitious program does not justify either vituperative attack or the reduction or elimination of appropriations. Rather it demands considered and reasonable changes. We should be sure, however, that critics of the present OEO programs are not using an attack on administrative shortcomings which are capable of remedy as concealment of their actual but unspoken opposition to any really effective program of assistance to the families of this nation who live in poverty.

Sincerely,

KENNETH M. CURTIS,
Governor.