

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I want to express our appreciation for this opportunity to present to your committee our views on the proposed 1967 amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

I am accompanied by Mr. Julius Rothman who is assistant director of our department of insurance and who in our organization the particular responsibility of following the development of the poverty program.

Chairman PERKINS. We are very delighted to have you with us this morning.

Mr. BIEMILLER. When President Meany appeared before this committee in 1964 to testify on the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, he said:

This is not a new war for us in the labor movement . . . The elimination of poverty is and always has been a primary goal of organized labor and a basic reason for its existence.

And he went on to say: “* * * we hate poverty in all its forms and for whatever reason it exists.”

I cite this to emphasize the fact that I come here as a representative of a segment of society that is deeply committed to the elimination of poverty as a fact of life in our society.

President Meany made the point that for generations the elimination of want and the improvement of the conditions of work and life have been a primary goal of American trade unions.

It is for this reason that the AFL-CIO is once again happy to lend its support to the all-important effort to make the war on poverty a success. The amendments now being proposed in H.R. 8311 seek to accomplish changes which, it seems to us, will strengthen the operation and administration of the OEO and its component programs. In general, the AFL-CIO supports them.

The results of the first two and a half years of operation of the Office of Economic Opportunity are encouraging. Sargent Shriver and his associates at OEO have shown courage and imagination in carrying forward the war on poverty.

They have carried the war to new fronts, developed better ways of fighting poverty on other fronts. They have been both praised and castigated for their efforts, yet they have continued to move forward.

The important fact is that the antipoverty effort is reaching the poor and is opening doors through which they can escape from the grinding reality of poverty.

True, not enough of the poor are being reached. Not enough doors are being opened. This is not the fault of OEO. The war against poverty is an expensive war and Congress has not been overly generous. The war against poverty requires new techniques, new methods.

There are no textbooks that spell out these techniques and methods. These must be learned the hard way—by trial and error. Despite these and other obstacles, it is our belief that the war on poverty has made a substantial impact on the poor.

Three years ago, when we testified on behalf of the Economic Opportunity Act, we supported the potential, the promise that we saw in this legislation for dealing with the problem of poverty in America.

Today, the AFL-CIO is in a position to base its testimony on hard facts which we have assembled as the result of participation in the war on poverty. We have assisted in the policymaking process