

through our representation on the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity in the persons of Mr. David Sullivan, an AFL-CIO vice president and president of the Building Service Employees International Union, and Mr. James A. Suffridge, an AFL-CIO vice president and president, Retail Clerks International Association.

In addition, a group of 18 prominent labor leaders serve on the OEO's Labor Advisory Council, which is under the chairmanship of Mr. Sullivan. This council consults regularly with Mr. Shriver on matters of mutual concern to organized labor and the war on poverty.

At the local level we estimate that there are about 3,000 AFL-CIO leaders who are currently serving on CAP boards and committees, as well as on the boards and committees of the component agencies of local community action programs.

But, in addition to this involvement in antipoverty programs, there are many unions and local central labor councils that have elected to become direct sponsors of OEO programs. We will refer to some of these later on in our testimony.

Also, in addition to all of these more or less formal relationships between organized labor and the war on poverty, there are literally dozens of instances of informal cooperation by unions and union members with antipoverty programs and agencies.

While labor's participation in the war on poverty had some central direction and some national guidelines, yet a great part of our participation was spontaneous, stemming from the interest, concern, and compassion of union leaders and just ordinary rank-and-file union members for the people who are poor.

They wanted to do something to help the poor find a way out of poverty. From the variety of activities in which they have cooperated in their local communities, we have been able to get a real sense of the meaning of the war on poverty in the ranks of organized labor. The reaction has been positive. Our members have accepted the war on poverty. Their willingness to participate in it is the best evidence of this.

I have indicated that the AFL-CIO strongly supports the war on poverty. I would like to go a step further and put the AFL-CIO on record as also supporting the present structure of the war on poverty.

Some members of this committee have introduced a bill which would drastically alter the direction and thrust of the war on poverty. In fact, they would even rename it and call it the "Opportunity Crusade." They would keep the programs, give them new names, and destroy the agency that brought them into being and enabled them to produce results. They propose to scatter the component agencies of OEO among existing departments of the Government.

This approach to the war on poverty is hard to understand. At a time when objective observers, such as the Harris poll, indicate that the war on poverty has the approval of a substantial majority of the public, it is proposed the program be decapitated. The AFL-CIO is opposed to any effort that would tamper with the existing structure of the OEO. We oppose it because:

1. Such a move would eliminate the one Federal agency that clearly speaks for the poor within the Government.
2. Antipoverty programs would lose their visibility and their forward thrust. They would be forced to compete with other lower-priority programs within existing agencies.