

3. Current OEO programs would be fragmented by being departmentalized. Now it is possible to bring various elements of different departments into cooperative and productive relationships.

4. The innovative and imaginative qualities that have characterized the development of new OEO programs would be destroyed.

5. Overall direction in the war on poverty would be dissipated. The hue and cry about the administrative failures of OEO simply does not jibe with the known facts.

When the AFL-CIO testified before the Subcommittee on Poverty of the House Committee on Education and Labor on the 1965 Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act, we stated—

Let us say first that we are encouraged by the imagination and vigor that have characterized the implementation of the Act thus far. Much has been accomplished during the brief six months since funds were first appropriated by the Congress. We are not unduly dismayed by the problems that inevitably have emerged, involving the relationships of the Federal, State and local governments, and of private groups, in undertaking this novel and difficult effort. We are confident that these are 'growing pains' that will, for the most part, cure themselves.

The legislation that created OEO directed that a whole series of new programs be created without delay. This included the development of Job Corps centers providing education and training for poor young men and women between the ages of 16 and 22; local community action agencies to meet the local needs of the poor; a massive program of youth employment and work study; programs for migrants in the fields of education, housing and job training; loans to small business and small farms; a domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps; a work-experience program to get welfare families off relief; and a method of coordinating the poverty-related activities of all Federal agencies.

In the two and a half years since Congress issued this direction to OEO, it not only complied effectively, but it also managed to initiate a broad range of additional programs. It developed and put into operation such pioneering programs as Headstart, legal services for the poor, neighborhood health centers, Upward Bound, foster grandparents and medicare alert.

I don't think it is necessary to enumerate the achievements of OEO. You are all aware of them. We feel that it is an impressive record. We, therefore, urge this committee to continue the OEO as the spearhead, the central and unifying force in the war against poverty.

It may well be that one of the most enduring and useful programs that the OEO has conceived is the community action program. Here is a new force in the life of the American community bringing added urgency and vitality to bear on the problems of the poor. It is in the community action program where the poor get the chance to participate in the development and management of local antipoverty programs. It is in CAP where the poor can have a voice in shaping programs to help themselves.

The community action program is an indispensable element of the war on poverty. It has brought the war to the local community, it has given all citizens, including the poor, an opportunity to participate, it has served as the focal point for community action, it has served to identify the problems of the poor, it has served to stimulate the community conscience about the poverty in its midst.