

by established agencies. It has done so because it has been able to devote all of its time, energy, and resources to the achievement of a single goal, namely, the providing the poor with new opportunities to achieve their highest possibilities.

It has not been encumbered by the precedents of yesterday and the fears of those who regard new programs as a threat to old programs.

Our Nation needs the leadership that this office can provide in the years that lie just ahead.

Chairman PERKINS. Let me interrupt you to say that I don't know when we have had such a forthright and outstanding endorsement of the Office of Economic Opportunity as you are giving at this time, Dr. Flemming.

Dr. FLEMMING. Thank you, sir.

The Office is needed to operate the programs for which it now has responsibility. If the programs were shifted at this point to established agencies it would take the better part of a year to restore the momentum they now enjoy.

The Office is needed, as the editors of Look magazine expressed, "to argue the just demands of the poor from within the government." No staff agency can do this as effectively as an operating agency which is constituted in such a manner other agencies cannot ignore it.

The Office is needed to continue the process of innovation and experimentation in the war against poverty. We need an agency that, because of its single-minded purpose, will continue to explore and implement ideas such as the one that brought into being a legal service for the poor—a program which the American Bar Association has characterized as "well conceived and properly administered."

The Office is needed to point up for other agencies in the executive branch the opportunities that are open to them in the war against poverty. An agency as the Office of Economic Opportunity can do just what Secretary of Labor Wirtz says it has done when, in testifying before this committee in favor of the continuation of the Office, he asserted that the agency's innovative programs "have shaken us up * * * they have put a hair shirt on all of us * * * they have told us the truth about poverty until it hurts * * * and now it helps."

The second concern I would like to discuss with the committee is under the heading of maximum feasible participation by the poor.

The policy statement by the general board places major emphasis on this aspect of the Economic Opportunity Act. At one point the statement says:

* * * This provision for the inclusion of the poor themselves in planning and execution of programs reflects deeper ethical insight in anti-poverty efforts.

Two principles are involved which commend themselves to the Christian conscience: One is the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being regardless of his social or economic circumstances. The other is recognition that in a democratic society every person is entitled to a voice in shaping the decision and policies which affect his life.

* * * We commend the Congress for incorporating this concept in the original Economical Opportunity Act, and encourage the Office of Economic Opportunity to continue its efforts to embody the concept in actual structures and programs in the field.

We believe that substantial progress has been made by the Office of Economic Opportunity in implementing this principle.