

Since the effective date of Public Law 88-452 on August 20, 1964, the community action program has operated as a new layer of local government—federally funded and for the most part federally packaged. The massive federal effort to break the cycle of poverty has been a learning experience for all concerned. The idea itself is not new but the apparatus is. Since Sidney and Beatrice Webb issued the *Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission* (1909) we have had the concept of devising a formula which would “ensure to workers by hand and by brain steady progress in health and happiness, honesty and kindliness, culture and scientific knowledge, and the spirit of adventure.” Since 1914 we have had the concept of *The Great Society*, discussed in a book by that title written by Graham Wallas.

I shall not concern myself at this time with problems of local politics as they develop at the community level. These are matters for us as citizens to resolve in the give-and-take of controversy about public policy. Rather, I wish to devote myself to fundamental issues as we have identified them in our comprehensive and in-depth study entitled *How Economic Opportunity Works in Orange County, Florida*. I have submitted a copy of this report for the record. Let me deal with our findings one by one.

I. USE OF COMMUNITY ACTION AS A POLITICAL MACHINE FOR DELIVERING THE NEGRO VOTE

Community action, as a unit of local government, involves as voters in the political control and election of the board of directors, less than one out of a hundred registered voters. This body of “interested citizens” controls the elected officials who, through an executive committee, ostensibly report to and operate by the mandate of the board of directors. This small group of 13 members on the executive committee has major decision-making powers in the receiving and spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars and the employment of a staff. This staff has been engaged more for political reasons than for substantive competence.

Our community action program has been operated—and continues to be operated—by a determined and tightfisted junta of politically ambitious individuals unrelated officially to the Democratic or Republican Parties and really unconcerned with the situation of the poor. Experience has shown that the “organization” has not been very successful in “delivering” the vote. The determination exists, however, to keep a tightfisted control of the executive committee and the staff for some future purpose.

Since by policy the War on Poverty deliberately determined to set up an organization outside the existing “community establishment,” the community action organization is a “new” elite.

In studying the situation in Orange County, I have come to the conclusion that the executive committee should by executive order include a strong and tough-minded minority of representatives from public governing boards and professional societies. In our county and under our charter and by-laws this structure would mean that out of an executive committee membership six of the thirteen members should be from governing bodies and professional societies. (In this way there would exist within the executive committee a widely representative group having channels of communication with existing agencies, but not dominated by them.) I believe that this change in structure would have highly therapeutic results and curb the natural aggression of human nature and politics which would like to handle money and people with rubber-stamp committees.

II. FRUSTRATED EXPECTATIONS

One of the problems which we have identified is the enormous expectation which has been built up in the minds of the poor. The appropriations have never been sufficient to satisfy even in a small degree the demands which have been generated. This situation creates unnecessary problems from the local community up to Washington.

It would be my suggestion that programs which are realizable within appropriations be activated and publicized. We should be fair and frank with the people by saying that these specified programs will be operated this year under sums available.

Local, regional, and national offices are overwhelmed with good and bad projects demanding funding. The fact that there just isn't enough money to do the job we lead people to believe is capable of being done. To frustrate the