

3086 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

Federal funds that are flowing into Cincinnati and the programs these funds are supposed to support. We local officials are helpless. We have no way of getting this information.

(Read Father Strittmatter's letter and letter to Mr. Wichman from Lewis Evans.)

Now it is not really important what I think, but you can be certain, and a field trip would quickly convince you, that a great skepticism and a dark cloud of distrust exist in our City toward the Federally-funded programs that are supposed to be designed to assist the down-trodden, the underprivileged and the unemployed.

The drift and business-as-usual methods, the lack of coordination between programs, the reported abuses have no place in our quest for urban survival.

EVALUATION OF THE CINCINNATI COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM PREPARED FOR OEO

SUMMARY STATEMENT

With almost half a million people, Cincinnati is Ohio's second largest city and the center of a metropolitan area of 1,313,000. Originally largely settled by Germans, who gave the city an enduring tradition of solid conservatism, Cincinnati is a major industrial center with plants of many national manufacturers. Despite a high level of business prosperity, the Cincinnati area is estimated to have more than 100,000 people living in poverty. The city, located on the Ohio River in the southwestern corner of the state, has traditionally been a gateway to the North for migrants from the South, both Negroes and mountain whites from Appalachia.

The city's slums, in which many of these newcomers settle, are easy to see, but with production and employment at high levels the problems of poverty have not aroused general public concern. In 1964, however, inquiries by public and private groups, coinciding with passage of the Economic Opportunity Act, led to organization of the Community Action Commission of the Cincinnati Area as the local agency for the antipoverty campaign.

The Community Action Commission has achieved substantial results since that time:

It has created a network of Neighborhood Service Centers, using both new and established agencies, that has touched the lives of about 46,000 people—or almost half the estimated poverty population.

Participation in OEO programs by poverty families who are aware of the programs is twice as high (8 out of 10) as for the nine cities studied as a whole (4 out of 10).

For the first time, the poor themselves have been actively involved in the planning and operation of programs for their own betterment.

As a result of the neighborhood organizations inspired by the Community Action Program, the poor have begun to bring their needs directly to the attention of public authorities.

The CAC programs are believed by many informed Cincinnatians to have contributed to the absence of racial/poverty riots or civil disturbances in the Cincinnati area.

There have been some weak points in the administration of the Community Action Program:

A sense of public relations—of how and when to act to achieve a favorable public response—appears to be an urgent need. Some of the unfortunate publicity it has received seems, in retrospect, to have been avoidable. At least one effort was made by the staff to obtain Board approval and funds for a public relations program. Some of the most insightful observers urge that new efforts be made to solve this problem.

The relations of the CAC with the press have not been good. While to some extent this reflects the conservative nature of the local dailies, there is also evidence that the CAC lacks a sophisticated understanding of the nature of news and of press coverage. The result is poor communication between the agency and information media. This study shows that knowledge by community leaders is largely limited to Neighborhood Centers and Head-Start, despite an extensive and varied program. Further, awareness among poverty families of CAC programs is lower (4 out of 10) than for the entire study of nine communities. The high participation level in Cincinnati,