

Chairman PERKINS. They are eager and they want to do it and they are dedicated. They are the type of individuals that are dedicated to that community and we should make arrangements for them to participate as so-called VISTA's or whatever they may be to do something for these elderly people that are being overlooked.

Mr. PEPPER. They will bless you forever, Mr. Chairman, for your wonderful leadership of that.

President Johnson, in his January 23 message to the 90th Congress on aid for the aged, requested that the Office of Economic Opportunity "initiate and expand programs to make a wider range of volunteer activities available to older citizens." He mentioned such fields as tutors, classroom aides in Headstart, and greater participation in VISTA.

My proposal would require that some specific regulations be drawn up to encourage the community action agencies and others administering antipoverty programs to make greater use of senior citizens. I would suggest that when the current contracts come up for renewal and examination, the Office of Economic Opportunity require that the agency show that it has made an effort to hire qualified senior citizens interested in helping in the war against poverty.

By fully utilizing this segment of our population, we will make the war on poverty even more successful, first by securing the services of skilled employees, and second, by involving still another group in the total community effort to eliminate poverty.

My third amendment is related to the second, but focused on another aspect of the poverty program. It reads:

Page 76, after line 12, insert the following:

(c) Section 610 of such Act is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new sentence: "The Director shall take such action as may be necessary to insure that in carrying out programs under this Act maximum use is made of the services of persons who, by reason of having retired from regular employment, may be considered senior citizens.

And redesignate subsections (c), (d), and (e) as (d), (e) and (f).

Chairman PERKINS. Let me interrupt you.

What do you think about some language directing VISTA workers to make special efforts to provide services for senior citizens, particularly in isolated rural areas, and implementing the law to the extent that local senior citizens who are qualified may participate? Do you think that would be a good amendment?

Mr. PEPPER. Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PERKINS. The reason I say that to you, Mr. Pepper, we have reached the youngsters so well in many areas of my district but when you get out on one of these towns up the creek as I like to go up and down on occasions, many of these elderly people on public assistance will say to me, "Well, we hear all about this poverty program and we are discouraged. You know, we are supposed to get medical treatment" and the red tape is so much that under the medical program as administered by the Economic Opportunity Act they won't even go in and charge the medicine that they must buy. They pay for it out of the old age assistance check.

I ran into three cases of that kind down there in one day and they said to me, "Why can't you help us somewhere along the line?"