

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967 3301

us and help us improve our program. But certainly, not replace our responsibility for it.

I invite you to visit our local program and urge you to study the program in your area to see for yourself the effectiveness of what is being done locally to upgrade the poverty families. I do not believe that any Congressman would vote to discontinue the present work if he knew the facts—unless the vote would be political in nature. Billy Graham has expressed the hope that the poverty program can be kept out of politics. I am confident this can be done.

In summary, the heart of the Anti-Poverty Program is the local community action organization which develops local programs for local people, run by local citizens. In simple business terms, the local community action organizations need to report to a specialized federal agency, from whom it receives its funds, which will guide it, instruct it, and help the less knowledgeable local workers coordinate all of the various programs available to it. We must work together to solve the problem of poverty which is the major problem facing the world today. At this particular time, when riots, unrest, high unemployment among the disadvantaged, high dropout rates, are before us in glaring headlines, we should do nothing to weaken the forces at work in this country to solve these fundamental issues. We should figure out ways of strengthening them.

ORTHO-VENT SHOE CO., INC.,
Los Angeles, Calif., July 7, 1967.

Congressman CARL PERKINS,
*Chairman, Education and Labor Committee,
House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN PERKINS: You will soon begin your hearings on the poverty program. For the past two years, I have been intimately involved in the development and leadership of the local Roanoke Valley poverty program and would like to give you the benefit of what experience I have had to help you evaluate this program.

Two years ago, the City of Roanoke and the counties of Roanoke and Botetourt, later added by Bedford County, got together and established a coordinated community action program for the whole Roanoke Valley. This is a non-profit corporation with a Board of Directors from all segments of our society and with a large businessman participation. Our organization is called TAP, Total Action Against Poverty in the Roanoke Valley. I am enclosing a copy of our Annual Report published last month.

I am firmly opposed to the dismantling of the Office of Economic Opportunity and in breaking up the program to be handled by other agencies of the government. I have been intimately involved in this program for nearly two years and have had experience in working with OEO and the other agencies of the government which do handle portions of the poverty programs.

Our Congressman, Dick Poff, said to me in a recent letter, "I believe the work can be more effective and money can be spent more wisely if the operation is decentralized and each segment of the total program is handled by the departments and agencies of the government which have had *experience in the particular field involved*". My reply was as follows:

No agency of the government has had any experience in solving the poverty problem except OEO.

The Labor Department has manpower training programs, but has no experience in developing special programs for the hard core poverty population.

HEW has had experience in health programs, educational programs and welfare programs, but has not had any experience in developing special programs for the poverty families. The proof of this statement is the fact that 12 years of public schooling has been available to all American people. Yet in Roanoke Valley, we still have a 40% dropout rate. Why do we have this dropout rate. The answer to this question is being sought by OEO and special programs have been developed by OEO to solve or help solve the dropout problem. Progress is being made.

HEW, for example, is experienced in dealing with conventional organizations in our community such as the welfare departments, the health department and the school boards and school systems. The key to the dropout problem is to provide in-home and neighborhood work with the families on an individual basis to motivate the parents and the child both to continue the child's education. OEO