

ORTHO-VENT SHOE CO., INC.
 Los Angeles, Calif., July 5, 1967.

Mr. ARCH BOOTH,
 Chamber of Commerce of the United States,
 Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. BOOTH : I am embarrassed at writing you another long letter, but this is another vital subject I would like to discuss with you ; namely, the Chamber's position and testimony on the poverty program.

I have read the testimony of June 9 before the Senate Sub-committee and your research publications given to me last Friday. I think it is commendable that the Chamber has attempted to research this complicated subject and help inform your members. As I pointed out in my letter of July 3, for the past two years, I have served as President of our local anti-poverty program, TAP, and have had first-hand experience with many of the points in your research. I hope it is proper for me to express to you my opinions, hoping they will be useful in preparing your coming testimony before the House Education Committee on the poverty legislation.

I am pleased that the Chamber recognizes the value of the education and development programs which have been started, and does not recommend discontinuing any of them. You have pointed out some deficiencies in the programs. Certainly no one questions that improvements can be made.

But I feel the Chamber's policy has overlooked the single most vital issue at stake here.

The most important aspect of the War on Poverty is the development of a community action organization at the local level. This has created an opportunity for businessmen to get involved at the local level with local programs to solve local needs. It is not understood that the poverty program is a local program, and that the federal government really is not involved at the local level other than to provide funds for these locally conceived activities.

It is my opinion that the National Chamber should encourage the strengthening of community action organizations and encourage increased businessman's participation at the local level. This could be a vital part of your total community development program, which I understand, the Chamber is now concentrating on. In Roanoke Valley, for example, our Community Action Program, while devoting most of its energies to the disadvantaged 25% of our population which is not productive, we are expanding our interest to coordinate all vocational training programs and promote increased business sponsored programs. The new OEO funding of the North Carolina vocational training project in cooperation with N.A.M. is an excellent example of what can be done.

It is important that the community action projects be funded and report to OEO. You have not suggested otherwise, even though the Republican sponsored "Crusade" would eliminate OEO. The community action organizations should continue to report to OEO on most of the programs which they implement and certainly all of the programs related to the poverty section of the population. This is particularly true of Headstart which was conceived by OEO and is being improved by the creative staff of OEO. It should not be relegated to the Office of Education. They previously had the opportunity to develop programs of this type, but did nothing. They do not have the staff or orientation to develop or supervise the supportive functions of a program like Headstart, particularly in-home work so vital to its success. In fact, Headstart is only partially an educational program. It gets children together, encourages group activities, feeds them, works with the parents, encourages their participation with other children and the family's participation in society and as a by-product, gives the children a little education. Its main function is to prepare these children for their educational experience. Some of the same arguments could be used in having Neighborhood Youth programs under the complete supervision of OEO.

The basic point, however, from the Chamber's point of view is that businessmen are involved in community action programs and need to be more involved. The Chamber should promote this in all messages to the business community. And in any business operation, if these community action organizations are to be funded by OEO, they need to report to OEO to make their expenditures more efficient and effective.

Rather, therefore, than reducing the scope of OEO and taking programs away from it, I would suggest enlarging it, improving its creative ability which has done such a magnificent job in helping develop programs such as Headstart, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Upward Bound, SERVE, the com-