

time to time require administrative arrangements that provide for more initiative and flexible executive direction than can be provided by the regularly established personnel and procedures. Some of the programs during the Depression period and the Second World War were cases in point. It seems to me that the current situation, as the events in some of our major cities during the past few weeks suggest, similarly requires exceptional treatment.

While I do not pretend to have studied this particular administrative problem closely, and hence cannot express a detailed professional opinion on it, I have followed it generally and with great interest. If I were a member of Congress, I would, under the present circumstances, vote to extend and strengthen the role of the OEO, and oppose any move to abolish it or curtail its functions.

Yours sincerely,

DON K. PRICE, *Dean*.

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THE MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
Syracuse, N.Y., July 28, 1967.

HON. CARL D. PERKINS,
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor,
House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN PERKINS: This letter is in response to your telegram of July 21, 1967, on the subject of the appropriate administrative arrangements in the Executive Branch for the Anti-Poverty Programs.

I wish it were possible to set forth a series of immutable principles of public administration which could govern specific organizational dilemmas of the kind which you have posed. Alas, there are none. Like law, public administration is redolent with conflicting precedents and precepts. Traditional academic definitions of terms like "staff," "line," "span of control," "coordination," "hierarchy," "unity of command," are inherently ambiguous. Their utility is deeply contextual. Their application to a given situation is inevitably conditioned by prior assumptions of purposes to be served of existing political and administrative reality, and of the probably consequences of changing what presently exists.

Those who would scotch OEO on the grounds that it violates principles of good administration are as guilty of rationalization and speciousness as those who would defend it on the grounds of a priori administrative principles. Each side may think it is talking about principles of administration. In reality it is talking politics, even though administrative consequences are involved.

My strong preference would be to leave OEO where it is—at least for the time being. My judgment stems from the assumption that the reason OEO was placed initially in the Executive office of the President was that that is where the President and the Congress believed it belonged.

My hunch is that their appraisal of reality in 1964 was something as follows:

(1) Federal anti-poverty programs have been around in one form or another at least since the New Deal. They are lodged in a score of federal departments and agencies, notably HEW, HUD, Labor, Agriculture, Commerce, and Interior.

(2) These programs have been fragmented, and whatever their segmental successes, they have failed to accomplish the basic goal of abolishing intractable pockets of poverty in the United States.

(3) It is almost impossible for one line department or agency to accept direction and coordination by another line department or agency at the same level of command.

(4) Coordination of programs across departmental lines by informal or formal interagency committees is cumbersome at best, and, where long-standing and deep programmatic commitments exist within participating agencies, interagency committees often manufacture and exacerbate rather than temper and de-fuse administrative tensions.

(5) A total "war on poverty" needs a top staff which can operate through many traditional or stepped up programs in existing departments and agencies, but which can relate these several activities to an overarching objective.

(6) Such a top staff, for reasons suggested in (3) and (4) above, cannot