

acts as, another operating agency on a par with the Cabinet departments—not on an organizational level above them. Its staff role is ancillary to its operating role in much the same sense as are the Presidential staff roles of the Secretaries of HUD, Labor, and the other departments.

Accordingly, OEO's problem of organizing and achieving coordination is not essentially different, either in kind or in degree of difficulty, from those of the Cabinet-level departments. Each faces the problem of trying to act as a leader or superior among equals, and each encounters—and displays in its turn—the resistance to coordination by equals which is deeply embedded in bureaucratic behavior. In all of the annals of the American government, there is no record of sustained success on the part of any of the innumerable interdepartmental coordinating committees which have been created, allowed to die, recreated, and allowed to die again.

Solution by Reorganization

The truism that only the President—personally or through presidential staff—can coordinate the Cabinet departments and independent agencies was recognized originally, as noted, when OEO was placed in the Executive Office of the President. Theoretically this design, which was vitiated when OEO was given its heavy operational load, could now be restored simply by divesting OEO of its operating responsibilities and leaving it only its staff functions as an element of the Executive Office of the President.

The programs which would be reorganized under this approach—Job Corps, CAP, and VISTA—have undoubtedly benefited from their current location. They have enjoyed the virtual full-time attention of an administrator of Cabinet rank. They have received the emphasis that comes from their identification, alone among all anti-poverty programs, with the central anti-poverty agency. Unencumbered by the traditions of any existing department or agency, they could be—and have been—freely innovative and experimental in an area where these qualities were essential.

However, it would be possible, in theory at least, to transfer the three programs from OEO without sacrificing these advantages. If assigned to existing departments, they could be organized as new agencies independent of existing bureaus and reporting directly to a Cabinet-level officer as they do now. If this close association with the established bureaucracy would appear to threaten their vitality, they could be divorced from both OEO and the regular departments in an independent Economic Opportunity Administration on the pattern of VA or SBA.

The disposition of the Community Action Program, however, does present an unusual organizational problem. The community action agency is not just another specialized community institution—like OEO, it has a central coordinating role. For this reason, it has been logical that the community action agencies and their programs should be sponsored by a Federal agency which is in a neutral and independent position among the Government departments. Yet the CAP is the operating program which has most absorbed the attention of OEO and would, most of all, have to be removed if OEO were to be freed for its role of government-wide coordination and leadership. Perhaps a solution might be found in some form of independent status for CAP separate from but attached to a reconstituted OEO in the Executive Office of the President.

But even if a reorganization scheme converting OEO to a staff agency could be agreed upon by the Congress, would that be the right solution to the whole broad problem of coordination? Is a command post for the war on poverty alone what the President really needs? The problems of coordination, as noted above, are universal: Urban programs need coordination; so do rural programs; so do economic development programs; so do manpower programs. Is the war on poverty the appropriate coordinating focus, and is the OEO the appropriate coordinating agency? Other gaps in the Executive Office of the President have been observed and other new instrumentalities proposed—a Council of Social Advisers, a Council of Natural Resources Advisers, a Council of Education (or Manpower) Advisers, a National Intergovernmental Affairs Council, to name a few. The difficulties of coordination now being experienced are, in part, the consequence of piecemeal legislation on questions of organization. One more piecemeal reorganization might make matters worse, not better.

In any event, legislative initiative is not the ideal approach to reorganizing the Executive Office of the President. The Executive Office is the President's immediate household, and it is there that he needs the maximum of flexibility in distributing duties among individuals in whom he has confidence to act in his name in various ways. A committee of Congress concerned with the problems of a