

3744 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

The recommendations made to the Congress by the Administration redefine and strengthen those areas of the War on Poverty which experience has proven most effective. It merits your full support and I commend it to you most highly.

With all good wishes.

Sincerely,

WALKER CISLER,
Chairman of the Board.

OFFICE OF NAVAJO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY,
Fort Defiance, Ariz., August 23, 1967.

Hon. CARL D. PERKINS,
*House of Representatives,
Education and Labor,
Washington, D.C.*

SIR: Recently, the Navajo Indian people received bad news. Funding of our CAP Program was to be cut back, *not* because the extreme poverty on the Reservation did not warrant full funding, *not* because we were not doing a good job. We are to be deprived of our desperately needed share because of *other* peoples' riots in Detroit and elsewhere.

A cut in funds to the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity at this time means not only a terrible disappointment, but a set back in the first real economic and educational progress the Navajo people have made since historic times.

Programs created and implemented here under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 constituted not simply a program but a whole new era for the Navajo Indians. For over 100 years these people were subjected to programs and educational systems imposed upon them by "experts" ignorant of their needs, their ways, and deaf to their pleas. Now, the new concept of the Office of Economic Opportunity has given these people their first chance to lift up their heads in pride, the pride that comes of being self-sufficient, the pride that comes of being considered a man equal to all men, in being able to voice his own needs, use his own judgment, cope with his problems himself.

The Navajo people are deeply appreciative of this.

From the grass roots people came recommendations and requests that results in the creation of eleven programs in less than two years. These attack poverty in areas from preschool education to alcoholism treatment. The beneficiaries range from a month old baby to a 100-year-old man. This impact of the ONEO Programs have been felt by at least 50,000 people, but with a Navajo population of 120,000 and 25,000 square miles to cover, we must not stop now.

Our Home Improvement Training Program trains close to 1,000 men every 3 months in home building skills, thus giving these unskilled men their first chance to become employable. Already 100 have been placed in jobs. Because the trainees build as they learn, this has resulted in new and repaid houses for over 6,000 persons who formerly lived in conditions unfit for habitation.

Our Small Business Development Center through assisting in establishing and expanding small business on the Reservation created 128 new jobs and lifted 366 persons out of poverty.

Headstart needs no explanation, yet if it is so important in urban and other rural areas, it is far more important among the Navajo people where perhaps 80% of the children begin school with no knowledge of the English language. Over 3,000 Navajo children were given a head-start in life through our Pre-School Program.

The Local Community Development Program has penetrated even the most remote community. It has taught people to identify their problems and make their own plans for mutual self-help. As a result some communities have brought in electric power for the first time, have developed a good water supply even in this semi-desert, and have brought progress and improvement through their own initiative.

Our Alcoholism Treatment Program strikes at the heart of a serious cause of poverty. The program rehabilitates men who are not only destroying themselves but the lives of their wives and children.

This September, 100% of the school drop-outs enrolled in our Neighborhood Youth Corps Program will return to school as a result of the counseling, guidance, part-time work and vocational exposure offered by the Program.

The list of programs goes on: Migrant Workers Assistance, Legal Aid, Arts and Crafts, Navajo Culture Center, Volunteers in Service to America; each program creating a chance for a better life giving new hope. The old Navajos