

OEO and to scatter its functions among cabinet departments and independent agencies would be to turn the "war on poverty" into a series of unrelated and potentially chaotic skirmishes. The administrative diseases of the modern nation-states are not cured by a reversion to feudalism. Thrust and creativity and energy are not promoted by assigning new and bold tasks to already pre-occupied officials in traditional agencies.

Coordinating the Great Society programs is a troublesome problem. I would only argue that it is not to be accomplished by dismantling the few coordinating and innovating mechanisms which presently exist.

I cannot refrain from one postscript. This letter is being written after a week of ghetto riots throughout the nation. Rioting is simply one of the ugly faces of poverty and discrimination. Some Congressmen seem satisfied with cries for law and order. But law and order are the effects as well as the causes of domestic tranquility. There are four basic cures for urban riots: environmental decency, education, employment, and the dignity that comes from a sense of at least a minimum income combined with a sense of equal rights and equal opportunity.

As I understand it, the administration's anti-poverty and compensatory education programs are aimed at most of these basic issues. I am convinced that the nation needs to do more—especially in guaranteeing a minimum income paid without the indignity of welfare investigations.

But it seems to me ironical in the extreme that Congress should be considering the administrative dismantling of OEO at this particular moment of national pathology.

With warm personal regards.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN K. BAILEY,

Dean, and President, American Society for Public Administration.

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION,
Washington, D.C., July 31, 1967.

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

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I have your telegram requesting my views on the question of whether the Office of Economic Opportunity should be continued as an independent agency to direct the nation's strategy against poverty.

The proposed alternative, as you point out, is to dissolve OEO and distribute its programs on a functional basis to existing Cabinet departments.

In my judgment, the dissolution of OEO at this stage in the war against poverty would seriously weaken the effectiveness of the program. It would do so, in my opinion, for the following reasons:

(1) OEO has a clearly-defined mission and a single purpose—to help the poor acquire the capability to rise out of poverty. The Executive Departments, on the other hand, pursue many goals through a multiplicity of programs. In the absence of a central poverty agency to protect and assert the high priority which the nation clearly wishes to accord to the attack on poverty, there is serious danger that the thrust of the individual anti-poverty programs administered by the Executive Departments may become diffused and weakened through accommodation to other agency objectives. While the Executive Departments have made commendable progress in reorienting their efforts to serve the needs of the submerged poor, it is far from certain that the momentum built up in the last three years could be sustained without the oversight and leadership of OEO.

(2) The present mix of programs which make up the attack on poverty is far from settled. Programs which prove to be ineffective should be phased out; other efforts which show high promise should be expanded; and new experimental efforts should be devised to fill gaps in the program as they are identified. OEO has shown that it is capable of this kind of innovation and adaptation. In my judgment, the content of the attack on poverty is more likely to evolve toward greater effectiveness if the central responsibility continued during the formative stages of the program to be lodged in an independent agency which is committed to the eradication of the causes of poverty but which is neutral as among the various functional categories of programs.

(3) A new agency established in a climate of national urgency tends to attract a staff which is characterized by freshness, vigor, imagination—and amateurism in bureaucratic matters. OEO is no exception. These qualities produced the ad-