

3778 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

CITY OF TAMPA,
POLICE DEPARTMENT,
Tampa, Fla., August 10, 1967.

HON. CARL D. PERKINS,
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor,
Congress of the United States,
Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN PERKINS: Reference is made to your letter of July 27th requesting an appraisal of the effectiveness of the anti-poverty efforts in our city.

You asked if we are on the right track with the various programs under the Economic Opportunity Act. This can best be answered by citing, in a general way, an overall effect of some of the programs.

Perhaps one of the most significant developments of the poverty effort is that people of different racial viewpoints have been brought together to discuss problems, and to work together to solve them.

Motivation and prevention seem to be the dominant theme by stimulating people to realize they must become involved, and to do something about problems themselves if they are to ever gain new hope, opportunity, and acceptance.

The Head Start program is considered an outstanding development because of its broadening and preventative features. Defects can be detected and corrected before a child actually enters school. Children having the advantage of this program are better prepared and have shown a decided improvement over those who do not have this additional training. It is felt by some school authorities that there should be a follow through program extending through the first grade.

Some school authorities believe that we should take a look at our school curriculum and to modify course of studies to emphasize training to prevent the drop-out, rather than directing efforts towards the drop-out. Vocational training at the junior high level has been suggested as a means of encouraging the potential drop-out to remain in school.

One of the most important contributions to the community, especially in relation to the events of last June, is the role of the Neighborhood Service Center.

Basically, there are four features that NSC offers for solving the problem of poverty:

1. The idea of self-help
2. The multi-service approach
3. Division of Welfare sponsorship
4. Community action

The primary philosophy of the center approach is that people are best helped when they are taught or inspired to help themselves. Rehabilitation is the emphasis rather than relief; although, relief is a large part of the center's program. Residents of the target area being served are hired to serve as sub-professionals. They work in their own immediate neighborhood bringing information to the needy on how the center operates, and what it has to offer. They also serve to organize the community for solving problems in housing, sanitation, crime and other problems that plague low income areas.

Each center houses different components which provide employment, on-the-job training, public welfare, social services, health and medical services, programs for the elderly, recreation, home management training and day care services.

A unique activity of the Neighborhood Center, is its involvement of the needy in the planning and supervising of the program. Elections are held yearly in each target area producing advisory committees from among low income residents to serve as advisors to the center staffs. Representatives to such committees are chosen on a population formula of one representative for every thousand persons falling under the OEO guidelines for low income level.

Representatives thus elected then choose from among their representations 20 persons to serve on the "Headquarters Advisory Committee," and four are chosen by this committee to serve on the "Tampa Economic Opportunity Council," which oversees all poverty programs in Hillsborough County.

It was through the Neighborhood Service Centers, in conjunction with the Tampa Police Department and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, that a training program in Respect For Law was formulated last fall. NSC aides, who know the problems of slum dwellers first hand, were hired out of the target areas served. Discussions were held with police officers on problems facing the poor. "Block Clubs" were organized by the aides to be used as a means of communication between the needy and the various agencies in the community.