

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967 3813

Unworkable funding mechanism: The proposed amendments to the Social Security Act may put welfare departments in the awkward, if not impossible, position of requesting funds from their State legislature to finance a program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Loss of the last anti-poverty program which is administered by the States.

THE CENTRAL ISSUE

The need for prompt and effective services to a group of people whose social, health, and psychological problems and needs are predominate. Public welfare departments are equipped to respond quickly with a comprehensive range of services and skills to meet these highly individualized needs. The Labor Department is not so equipped. Public Welfare is committed primarily to serve the individual and cannot rule out all but those with a "high training potential." Labor's traditional commitment is to serve industrial needs for manpower and proceeds from the opposite end of the potential labor force spectrum. Both systems are essential and must be strengthened, not weakened, if the work experience and training program is to continue to serve its original purpose, to reduce dependency and return welfare recipients to self-support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Governors of the New England States urge upon the President and the Congress the following:

(1) *That legislative intent of Title V of the Economic Opportunity Act be clarified, and the Act amended if necessary, to assure State welfare departments primary responsibility for administering work and training programs for present and potential public assistance recipients;*

(2) *That the proposed amendments to the Social Security Act embodied in Section 204 of HR 5710 be withdrawn; and*

(3) *That Community Work and Training (Section 409 of the Social Security Act) be extended in its present form and made permanent, with added authority for welfare departments to purchase materials, supervision, and other needed services when unobtainable from other sources.*

WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 259,
Wichita, Kans., August 9, 1967.

DEAR MR. PERKINS: I am the senior member of the Wichita board of education having been elected in April 1955 and three other consecutive times having almost four years more of service before me.

I have been involved in the "War On Poverty" by serving as chairman of a program development task force and am beginning my second year as the official board of education representative to the Wichita Area Community Action Program, Inc. (WACAPI).

The clippings I have enclosed are all from the Wichita Beacon. They will indicate that we have come through some tense times in the past few days. I am distressed by the local and national reaction to the tenseness. My concern is that restrictive measures are being aimed to suppress violence with no real effort being made to understand the basic problems.

If you would check with the investigative branch of the Department of Justice or Health, Education, and Welfare you will find evidence that there is sufficient cause for discontent on the part of minority groups. Violence earlier in the year at one of our high schools was a direct result of smoldering resentment against the Wichita board of education and its complete resistance to doing anything realistic about the plight of the disadvantaged.

My distress is converted into shock when I read that attempts will be made to dismantle the Office of Economic Opportunity because it has served the interests of the poor too well. No one objected to the fact that Richard Speck was entitled to defense counsel. Why is not the Newark cab driver so entitled?

It is particularly tragic to feel that just as we are beginning to gain the insights and skills to deal with the problems of the poor that the money may be directed back to the old line agencies that have failed so miserably in the past.

As an illustration of the direction we are moving I am enclosing Training Catalog #2 developed by our most competent executive director, Jack Chapman.