

3. to furnish guidance and assistance to those Indians who wish to leave reservation areas and enter normal channels of American economic and social life;

4. to collaborate with the Indian people (both tribally and individually) in the development of programs leading toward full-fledged Indian responsibility for the management of their own property and affairs and gradual transfer of public service responsibilities for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the agencies which normally provide these services; and

5. to assist Indian tribes and groups, in cooperation with local and State agencies, in developing programs to attract industries to reservation areas.

In practice, BIA programs fall into four general categories: land management, welfare, relocation, and the whole range of activities prerequisite to economic viability—general education, technical training, road-building, power supply, maintenance of law and order—leading to the creation of what economists term infrastructure.

While efforts of this kind would appear to meet most Indian needs, three main difficulties have arisen over the years. The tendency has been for such programs to be conceived and administered paternalistically, creating and maintaining an attitude of dependence on the part of Indians, with attendant indifference and hostility arising at various places and times toward any thoroughgoing efforts to induce change. Secondly, incoming new administrations, or even changes of personnel within incumbent administrations frequently shifted BIA policy, so that programs which might have been making some headway were dropped, or reversed in mid-stream, leading to understandable cynicism among Indians. Finally, there has been a tacit assumption evident in the nature of many such programs that Indians should acculturate to the American norm in behavior, attitudes, and values. Coming from outside, such an assumption has apparently aroused a certain amount of antagonism. As a result of this indifference, hostility, cynicism and antagonism, combined with the general lack of improvement in living conditions, easily observed by Indians as well as outsiders, hopelessness is the rule on Indian reservations in respect to the concept of anything good coming from Governmental intervention.

This is the situation toward which the OEO approach is directed. To meet the three defects noted in previous efforts to set Indians on a viable path, OEO has attempted three innovations:

1. To ask Indians to design their own programs and to place the funds for implementation directly in Indian hands, thus defeating the dependency bred of paternalism.

2. To encourage community action in the development of self-sustaining programs, conceived, implemented, and maintained by Indians, thus defeating the insecurity bred of vacillating and disappearing programs.

3. To encourage the flowering of Indian ways and values through fostering the economic viability of reservation communities, thus defeating the antagonism bred of forced acculturation.

As in many human endeavors, new problems arose to plague these well-considered undertakings. Because of prevailing conditions on Indian reservations, the degree of sophistication required to create workable proposals for correcting the economic and other inequities of Indian life was not frequently encountered. This led to Indians making use of tribal attorneys and other outside white assistance, on the one hand, and the creation of the Three-University Consortium by OEO to extend technical assistance to Indians, on the other. Thus, in spite of the original intent, Indians found themselves receiving CAP components essentially designed by outsiders, though more influenced by Indian initiatives than past ameliorative efforts had been. In view of past experience, however, many Indians were alienated by this turn of events, and initial enthusiasm waned.

Secondly, the tribal councils which ordinarily became the community action agencies on these reservations, were not created for this purpose, as such bodies had been in urban and rural Negro and white areas. Previously powerless, because of the lack of any tax base or other revenue-raising mechanism, these tribal councils established under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 constituted the overt potential leadership of the traditional power structure of their reservations. They also represented traditional social attitudes, were familiar with previous ameliorative efforts and in a great many cases tended to make use of funds along traditional lines. That is to say, they did not often attempt to stir up meaningful community action toward the development of self-sustaining programs leading out of poverty.