

implemented. These are problems arising from or involving initial misunderstandings between OEO/Washington and Indians on reservations, technical assistance, criteria for approval or disapproval of competent proposals, funding, inexperience of reservation management groups, staffing, housing, disinterest or disbelief in the value of components on the part of Indians, factionalism, nepotism, desire for approaches not within the legal competence of CAP, intra-reservation communication, and coordination between Government agencies whose joint action would have been relevant.

The second level of concern relates to basic concepts pointing toward innovative actions not presently being attempted, but which might help cut the Gordian knot of Indian poverty in such manner that self-sustaining drives toward economic viability might be stimulated among Indians to a far greater degree than appears to be the case at present. These considerations all center around ways and means of coordinating informal efforts to simultaneously motivate, train, and provide real job opportunities for Indians without requiring relocation, without offending unions, and without creating economic problems elsewhere.

Thirdly, there are questions which arise regarding the acceptance of a pluralistic society in America should flourishing Indian reservations develop—after the War on Poverty has been won—along cultural lines which materially differ from general American culture—and the impact of this upon other American ethnic and ideological minorities. Alternatively, what are the true barriers to American Indian assimilation into the “Great Society,” either through the development of ordinary viable American communities or as individuals? Could steps be taken to make assimilation attractive rather than abhorrent, as it appears to be to most American Indians today?

Each of these levels will be discussed, in turn, in the following three sections. In Section B (Improvement of Existing Programs), cross-references are given to sections in Chapter III of the full report which present data relevant to the problem areas discussed.

B. IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

1. *External Communications*

a. *Problems*

In all efforts to alter human behavior whether such efforts are looked upon as “influence processes” or as “cooperation in change”—whether arising from and affecting groups or individuals—two-way communication underlies the mutual feedback required to achieve responses approaching the outcomes desired by the stimulating party. In such communication, the goals, values, capabilities, and expectations of both parties need to be made explicit in terms both parties can understand if meaningful action is to result. In the context of relations between OEO/Washington and Indian leadership on reservations, this kind of communication has frequently been faulty or completely lacking. This problem may, in fact, be considered the master problem directly or indirectly underlying all those which follow.

At the inception of the OEO Community Action Program many Indians were “oversold” on the degree of choice and control they were to have over future CAP components. Informality and felt needs were assumed to be appropriate bases for proposals. Only later, in such manner as to dampen enthusiasm for many, did it become evident that prescribed forms and legal constraints definitely limited freedom of choice. This state of affairs undoubtedly arose quite innocently from a natural desire on the part of initial purveyors of the OEO message to arouse enthusiastic interest in their audiences, to underscore the new departure from earlier paternalistic efforts to ameliorate Indian conditions. However, in the light of subsequent events, it amounted to misrepresentation of actual Governmental capabilities and intentions, leading to a rapid drop in initially high hopes on the part of many Indians, with the result that traditionally high hopes on the part of many Indians, with the result that traditional Indian leadership tended to look upon the whole program as just one more dole to be exploited in customary fashion rather than as a true invitation toward revitalization for Indian communities and individuals.

On the other hand, at least two Indian groups were unable to make clear to OEO/Washington the time-consuming democratic processes they required before coming to any binding corporate decision on the nature and degree of involvement they wished to have with the program. Consequently, OEO demands for speed in drawing up proposals had to be met in ways considered superficial or