

4016 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

and direction from federal officials. Not only has the emphasis on local community initiative and operation been given lip service but, for the most part, the federal guidelines have been so general that local planning has been mandatory. Without regard to the merits of the case for local autonomy within very broad constraints, it is clearly being emphasized in the CAP.

Traditionally, the poor have been regarded as outcasts from society. Charitable impulses have governed the provision of services to those whose resources and capabilities were inadequate. The CAP is based on the concept that the poor, who may be disadvantaged through circumstances largely beyond their personal control, are to be considered a part of society and that they are entitled to the benefits that our society can offer. Thus, they are to be encouraged to participate in programs on a basis of equality with the persons and institutions that have heretofore largely controlled their destinies. An entirely new concept of the status and role of the poor is thus suggested and promoted by the CAP.

Without exploring in detail the rationale for the concepts outlined above and without discussing fully their implications, it can nevertheless be seen that rather fundamental changes of outlook and operation are envisaged by the community action program. Novel institutional and organizational arrangements have been designed to implement these concepts and the existence of neighborhood service centers is one prominent feature of these arrangements.

ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Variety of organizational form is evident in the CAP's studied in this project. Nevertheless, there seem to be some general patterns that have been devised to carry out the basic concepts of the program. First to be considered are the community action agency aspects.

The CAA is the organization that is supposed to represent broadly the community in its dealings with the federal government on the one hand and with local groups or persons providing or receiving services on the other. The CAA is viewed as the pivotal organization in the program. The CAA operates some programs with its own staff, delegates programs to other local organizations and involves itself in a coordinating role with other programs not funded by OEO. Typically, neighborhood centers are grass roots extensions of the CAA and are operated with staff selected and paid by the CAA and within programs and concepts devised by the CAA.

Policies are generally established for CAA's by a board of directors composed of a membership which is supposed to represent all elements of the community including the poor and minority groups. Prominently represented on most CAA boards are municipal government, traditional private social service organizations, business, religious groups and spokesmen for minorities. In every few cases do the poor either in theory or in fact control the boards. The boards not only represent different community interests but they tend to establish the patterns of relationships among these interests, and these patterns tend to be pervasive throughout all local CAP activities. Thus, if there are to be close and effective relationships between a CAP activity and a city department, for instance, these relationships are generally arranged at the highest level, that is, the CAA board or executive committee.

The board not only is responsible for policy; it generally selects the CAA director and the person selected is usually a reflection of the dominant interests on the board. There are cases where weak boards and strong directors co-exist and the latter are the dominant forces. However, the relationships between the board and chief executive appear to be traditional in this type of organizational arrangement.

The CAA director has been observed to be the most important figure in the operations of the CAP. He is generally responsible for program formulation and for management of the affairs of the CAA. He also is generally instrumental in shaping the nature of the relationships with the neighborhood service centers and their programs and focus.

As previously indicated, the role and activities of neighborhood centers are shaped most significantly by officials at the CAA level. In some cases, centers are considered to be essential to the entire CAP effort and all CAP programs are funneled through centers to the neighborhoods. The centers play an important role of recruiting clients and workers for CAP programs in these cases. In other communities, CAP activities are operated independently of neighborhood centers, and centers are concerned with a limited number of programs