

This authority placed a particular mandate on the committee to review the activities of the Small Business Administration and the laws under which the agency operates. The SBA is a great agency, which has taken its place among the most vital governmental operations in the field of business. It is an independent agency and it is an arm of the Congress. It has a revolving fund of more than \$2.5 billion, excluding funds available for disaster loans. It is the advocate of the business community composed of approximately 5 million entrepreneurs—all of them small business.

SBA has emerged as an important force in the business life of this Nation.

Since SBA was established in 1953, we are advised that financial assistance has been made available to more than 117,000 businesses involving more than \$5 billion. Its economic opportunity loans, displaced business loans and disaster loans have assisted many additional thousands, and its procurement and management assistance programs exert a powerful influence in the competitive structure of our economic society.

Some say that SBA has fully "grown up".

Because of its size, its importance, and its impact on our business and the economy, it is incumbent upon this committee to review its programs, to assist the agency in ironing out its problems, to discuss with the agency ways and means by which programs may be improved and to keep the public spotlight on all governmental activities that relate to small business. And, yes, to also inquire into complaints that may have been made concerning the agency's work.

No agency of the size and importance of SBA can operate without some complaints and some problems, and one of the functions of this committee is to recognize complaints of the small businessman, and to utilize those complaints in connection with the review of the agency's policies.

It is this committee's desire to assist and strengthen the arm of the Small Business Administration, Mr. Administrator. This is the very purpose of these hearings. Certainly it is my desire that these hearings may be helpful and constructive.

The role of SBA is of particular significance at this time when there is such a great desire and need to stimulate the development of a healthy business sector in the poverty areas of our country. We think there is no better way to provide jobs and to assist the economically deprived than through the building and expanding of small business enterprise. We think that SBA must play an increasing role in this effort.

The agency's management assistance programs and its antipoverty lending programs under the Economic Opportunity Act are especially geared to help along these lines. The committee desires to fully document at these hearings the manner in which the Small Business Administration has utilized its programs to "zero in" on urban decay and rural underdevelopment. As we have stated in previous findings of this committee:

The committee believes that the building and strengthening of our small business community is as effective as any course of action in the economic development of our cities, small towns and rural areas, especially in areas of poverty and economic deprivation.

We want to assist the agency in this great task.