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AUTHOR Katz, Lee
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on the program authorized in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. It is noted that the intent of the legislation was to develop strategies for change at the local level by involving local populations in the planning and implementation of programs tailored to meet their social, economic, and educational needs. In Part One of this seven-part paper, the Philosophy of the Program, it is asserted that the anti-poverty program emerged out of a genuine commitment to a philosophy of man that is integral to a democratic society. Programs such as Community Action, Job Corps, Upward Bound, and Head Start are considered to have grown out of the Anti-Poverty Program and were manifestations of a democratic value system that esteems the individual and his potential for contributing to the common good. These programs were directed at aiding the victims of poverty to gain basic mastery of needed skills in order to become economically self sufficient, achieve a sense of self-identity, and to grow in consciousness of social responsibilities. Subsequent parts of the paper focus on social orientation, components of the program, analysis of the methodology used to implement the program, analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the program, suggestions for improvement, and theoretical analysis of the program components. (Author/JM)

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TITLE: ANALYSIS OF THE POVERTY PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY: Dr. J ee Katz

HOME ADDRESS: 1050 Wall Street
Apartment 4f
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

UNIVERSITY ADDRESS: (Effective September 1, 1975)
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
University of Michigan-Dearborn
4901 Evergreen Road
Dearborn, Michigan 48128

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PHILOSOPHY OF THE PROGRAM

The passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 ushered in the era of President Johnson's "Great Society." It followed on the heels of the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime Act and was aimed at substantial population of the poor who were out of the mainstream of society. The stated purpose of Public Law 88-452 was to "...eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty...by opening up to everyone the opportunity to live in decency and dignity."[1]

The intent of the legislation was to develop strategies for change at the local level by involving indigenous populations in the planning and implementation of programs tailored to meet their identified social, economic, and educational needs. It was expected that the mobilization of the inarticulate poor at the grass roots level would ultimately lead to a massive assault on the root causes of poverty. Citizen involvement and self-determination were the focal points of the legislation and were made explicit in the legislative requirements involving maximum feasible participation of the poor, coordination of community resources through citizen boards, program administration, quality control by the poor, and employment of lower income citizens in action programs.

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[1]Public Law 88-452, 88th Congress, S. 2642, August 20, 1964, p. 1.

Sociologists, Dr. Victor Gioscia and Dr. Anthony Romeo, in their testimony before the Committee on Education and Labor in the House of Representatives offered the following assumptions and hypotheses as a basis for designing action programs to break the cycle of poverty.[2]

1. In every culture there is an institution known as the family.

2. Families experience a life cycle which consists of phases.

3. The transition from one phase to the next may be understood as a series of phase-specific crises and phase-specific rewards for those who successfully accomplish these transitions.

4. Poverty interrupts the normal life cycle by preventing family members from achieving the rewards appropriate to each phase.

5. Failure to achieve phase-specific rewards results in a cumulative impoverishment of rewards which may be called a life cycle of poverty.

6. The life cycle of poverty may be broken by the intelligent introduction of money and social action programs which enable family members to renegotiate phase-specific crises and to experience phase-specific rewards.

7. A pilot program to test these hypotheses should focus on the most serious aberrations from the normal life cycle.

8. Programs which focus on early childhood, adolescence, and early family life constitute such pilot tests.

9. The variety of forms of childhood, adolescence, and early family life disorganization should be ascertained during the pilot phase of social action programs. Specific action programs for these specific forms of disorganization should be then undertaken.

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[2] Hearings Before the Subcommittee on the War on Poverty Program of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives 89th Congress. First session on the Examination of the facts which have Developed under the Administration of the Act. April 12, 13, 14, 15, 29, and 30, 1965.

10. If these pilot programs seem to be effective in breaking the life cycle of poverty, then other action programs, aimed at other phases of the life cycle of poverty should be undertaken; e.g., infancy, puberty, old age.

11. Action programs administered vertically tend to foster institutional dependency.

12. Action programs should strive for horizontal-local administration. In this way the poor will have a primary role in helping to achieve phase-specific rewards.

13. Administration should be divided into three areas of equal responsibility: action, research, and coordination.

14. Indigenous personnel should receive preference in matters of staffing in order to foster feeling of mutual responsibility and independence.

Clearly, the designers of the legislation were exposed to a philosophy that perceived poverty in the context of the multiple social forces acting upon phases of the family's life cycle. Undergirding the entire Economic Opportunity Act were the assumptions that man:

(a) Has the potential to influence his environment in positive ways.

(b) Is malleable and subject to change.

(c) Operates best in situations that involve him in meaningful ways toward self-chosen goals.

(d) Achieves a sense of dignity and self-esteem as he participates in achieving agreed upon goals.

(e) Works harmoniously in group situations designed to aid the common good.

The above assumptions, when translated at the practical level suggest the kind of community action program that was made operational through the Economic Opportunity Act.

Relationship to Goals in a Democratic Society

The anti-poverty program, in my judgment, emerged out of a genuine commitment to a philosophy of man that is integral to a democratic society. The Education Policies Commission of the National Education Association expressed these democratic values succinctly in 1948 when they proposed three enduring values which they felt should guide the education of all American children:

1. "The democratic ideal calls upon citizens to face their problems with self-reliance and initiative and to conduct their lives without necessary demands upon their fellow members of society.

2. Citizens in a democracy exhibit a concern for the general welfare, a feeling of kinship with others and a respect for the laws and social institutions which protect our rights and the rights of others.

3. Each member of a democratic society should participate fully and intelligently in the process of arriving at important decisions which affect the group of which he is a part."[3]

Programs such as Community Action, Job Corps, Upward Bound, Head Start, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Adult Education grew out of the Anti-Poverty Program and were manifestations of a democratic value system that esteems the individual and his potential for contributing to the common good. These programs were directed at aiding the victims of poverty to: gain basic mastery of needed skills in order to become

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[3]Educational Policies Commission, Education for All American Children, National Education Association, Washington, D. C. 1948

economically self-sufficient, achieve a sense of self-identity through development of his constructive talents, and to grow in his consciousness of social responsibilities by direct immediate steps to break the cycle of poverty.

Examined in the light of community development theory, many parallels could be drawn. The concept of community development is defined by R. L. Warren as a deliberate and sustained effort to strengthen the horizontal pattern of a community.[4] W. W. Biddle talks about it in terms of a process by which humans become more competent to deal with a frustrating and changing world.[5] The Economic Opportunity Act reflected precisely such efforts by: (a) making possible local initiative and locally planned action programs or "action episodes" on a sustained basis with flexible administration at the vertical level and (b) encouraging self-determination through involvement of indigenous populations in effecting their own destiny. At a subsequent stage in this report an attempt will be made to examine the practical problems that resulted from a vertical effort to encourage the horizontal pattern of community life.

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[4]Warren, Roland L. The Community in America. Chicago; Rand, McNally and Company, 1963.

[5]Biddle, Wm. W., and L. J. The Community Development Process; The Rediscovery of Local Initiative. New York; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

II. SOCIAL ORIENTATION

The Economic Opportunity Act was a response to social conditions of black powerlessness, alienation, unemployment, urban blight, and educational failure that were confronting the nation. President Johnson reported to his Task Force on the War Against Poverty that "there are millions of Americans--one fifth of our people--who have not shared in the abundance which has been granted to most of us, and on whom the gates of opportunity have been closed."[6]

In an age of advanced technology, science, and economic progress, fully nine million people were earning less than a total of $3,000 income per year. In a time of unprecedented economic prosperity, the nation was experiencing the growth of a generation for whom welfare, school failure, unemployment, poor health, and low self-esteem were an accepted pattern of living. The American dream of social and economic mobility was rapidly becoming the right of the privileged. A summary of the dimensions of poverty was revealed in a report from the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1964. The report indicated that, "In March 1965, about twelve million households comprising 34 million persons were living on cash incomes insufficient to buy goods and services vital to health--the Poor averaging, on these incomes, about seventy cents

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[6] President's Task Force on War Against Poverty, Reproduced by Michigan Welfare League, 9/30/64 (Manuscript), p. 1.

a day per person for food, and choosing among hard alternatives, which needs may be endured and which must be satisfied."[7]

The report further suggested that approximately 300,000 children who were living with foster parents, 200,000 youths, 4,800,000 residing in their own rooms and about 29,000,000 members of families of 200 more related persons were among the countless poor.[8] In addition, it made evident the fact that poverty was pervasive and attacked the white as well as the non-white, the urban as well as the rural, and cities both large and small. The network of poverty was concentrated about 50% in large metropolitan centers and the other 50% among small cities and rural areas.

Perhaps the most onorous aspect of the poverty problem in the United States was its continuity over time. Michael Harrington's Invisible Poor were producing future generations of the poor. The children of the poor would, unless trends were reversed, face permanent exclusion from those opportunities that ultimately lead toward individual self-fulfillment. Added to this was the knowledge that the need for unskilled labor in a highly complex technological society was rapidly diminishing. Succeeding generations of the poor would require even more

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[7] Dimensions of Poverty in 1964, Office of Economic Opportunity, 1965, p. 1.

[8] Ibid. p. 1.

advanced educational and technological skills than their predecessors. These factors coupled with the awareness of the disproportionate numbers of the poor among the non-white population who were subject to even greater economic handicaps left the nation bewildered and groping for possible solutions. The intent of the Economic Opportunity Act was to break that cycle of poverty so that the poor did not transmit that same legacy to the succeeding generation of youth.

The nation was gripped by the growing realization that the problems of the poor were not long to be contained within areas protected from the domain of the more affluent. The tentacles of poverty would ultimately infiltrate the social and economic fabric of society. Indeed the onset of what has since become black power, urban crisis, citizen control of the schools, and black separatism was in its infancy in 1964. The Economic Opportunity Act presaged an era of political and economic ferment and, it may even be argued, served as a vigorous force in shaping the character of the revolution that followed but a few short years later.

III. COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

The anti-poverty legislation was composed of seven different though related titles that focused on the broad spectrum of individuals from various age groups who resided in urban and rural areas and who were victims of poverty. These titles were the backdrop for the wide variety of programs that emerged on the national scene:

Title I dealt with youth programs and included three sections:

(a) The Job Corps Program designed to increase the employability of young men and young women aged 16-21 by providing them with education, vocational training, and useful work experience in urban and rural residential centers.

(b) Work Training Programs for the purpose of providing useful work experience opportunities to unemployed young men and women through participation in state and community work training programs.

(c) Work Study Programs to stimulate and promote the part time employment of students in institutions of higher education who were from low income families and needed the income to continue their education.

Title II embodied the spirit of the legislation and contained two parts:

(a) Part A. was the Community Action Program designed to provide stimulation and incentive for urban and rural communities to mobilize their resources to combat poverty through community action programs.

(b) Part B. dealt with Adult Basic Education programs for the purpose of initiating programs of instruction for individuals who attained age 18 and whose inability to read and write the English language constituted a substantial impairment to employment.

Title III was directed at combating poverty in rural areas and was composed of four separate parts all which dealt with various forms of assistance to low income rural families. Dairy farmers, migrants, and other seasonally employed persons were covered under this title.

Title [illegible] intended to provide employment and investment incentives to small business concerns and to assist in improving the managerial skills of individuals employed in such enterprises.

Title V dealt with work experience and its objective was to expand the opportunities for constructive work experience and other needed training for persons who were unable to support or care for themselves or their families.

Title VI created the administrative organization for the Economic Opportunity Act and established the Office of Economic Opportunity in the Executive Office of the President. In addition, it authorized the Director of the Office to recruit, select, and train Volunteers in Service to America, more popularly known as VISTA.

Title VII concerned the treatment of income for certain public assistance purposes and insured protection of income to participants who were recipients of funds under several of the titles of the legislation.[9]

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[9]Public Law 88-452, 88th Congress, S. 2642, August 20, 1964, p. 1-27.

All of the above titles with the exception of Title II, the Community Action Program, defined the specific program areas to be developed. The Community Action Program was left totally flexible so that programs could be tailored to meet unique community needs and priorities. As a result, a potpourri of programs exploded in rapid succession once the Community Action Program got underway. Some of these programs ended in a vortex of controversy while others such as Head Start, a program of cultural enrichment for low income pre-school youngsters, and Upward Bound, an enrichment program for high potential low achieving youth, achieved national acclaim.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE METHODOLOGY USED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM

The Community Action Program or Title II was the heart of the great social experiment in human behavior and social reform. Community Action Programs were defined as programs that:

1. Mobilize and utilize resources, public or private, of any urban or rural, or combined urban and rural, geographical area (referred to in this part as a "community"), including but not limited to a State, metropolitan area, county, city, town, multicity unit, or multicounty unit in an attack on poverty:

2. Provide services, assistance, and other activities of sufficient scope and size to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty or a cause or causes of poverty through developing employment opportunities, improving human performance, motivation, and productivity, or bettering the conditions under which people live, learn, and work;

3. Are developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served; and

4. Are conducted, administered, or coordinated by a public or private nonprofit agency (other than a political party), or a combination thereof. [10]

Community Action Agencies were formed throughout the nation in order to implement the Community Action Programs and were required to meet similar federally defined criteria:

1. Maximum feasible participation of the poor
2. Involvement of the poor in planning, policy making, and implementation of programs
3. Incorporation as a non-profit making body
4. Endorsement by a governing body
5. Representation of a specified geographic area: i.e., city, town, county, neighborhood, etc.
6. Broad representation from a cross-section of the community.

Once incorporated as a legally constituted body, these social action agencies were to function as umbrella organizations in order to mobilize the fragmented services both public and private within the community and to develop a comprehensive system of integrated services for the poor. Almost all of the programs developed under the various titles of the anti-poverty legislation were funneled through these agencies and required their endorsement and involvement in order to obtain federal funding. The aim of the program was to utilize local resources and expertise to combat poverty at the local level; thus, the Community Action Agencies

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[10] Ibid, p. 9.

were expected to link all of the separate programs into a coordinated whole. The federal government was proposing a partnership with local government by providing up to 90% funding for programs conceived by a broadly representative group of citizens at the local level.

Each social action agency was responsible for developing its own strategy for action based upon the local situation. Essentially, this was to be vertical action to promote horizontal cohesiveness. The federal government was engaging in this joint effort with local government through commitment of staff, time, and financial aid on a decreasing scale of involvement. Daniel P. Moynihan is quoted in the New York Times article, "Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding" as indicating "that the Community Action Program was 'the most notable attempt to date to mount a systematic social response' to the problem of national integration of ethnic minorities which do not participate satisfactorily in the process of government..." [11]

Local social action agencies were confronted with several immediate problems as a result of the parameters set by the federal government.

1. Should they organize as an independent governmental unit or should they combine with ongoing local agencies that were already attempting to accomplish similar tasks?

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[11] Walinsky, Alan, "Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding" New York Times, February 2, 1969, p. 2.

2. What approach should be taken to solving the prob... of the poor--an incremental approach or a comprehensive approach? The first alternative, the incremental approach, or lock-step approach as it was called, made it possible to apply for funds to implement individual programs as they were developed. These individual programs were viewed as building blocks in a pyramid approach to solving local poverty problems. The latter approach, or the comprehensive approach, involved a delay in request for funding until such time as a total sequence of programs had been designed to meet a variety of local needs.

3. What kind of structure was desirable for a Social Action Committee? Should they operate as a committee of the whole or should they rely on standing committees? How could the inarticulate poor be utilized most effectively on the committee?

4. Shoud they sub-contract with existing agencies to conduct programs for the poor or should they exercise their programs by hiring their own staff?

5. What kind of staff was necessary to mount the newly designed programs? Was it desirable to have professionally trained personnel with appropriate credentials or was it preferable to seek a new breed of personnel who were committed to innovation and were out of the mainstream of establishment?

6. Did they desire to locate the Community Action Agency in the poverty location where it would be viewed as a non-threatening

agency to serve the poor or was it better to give the Community Action program the status other agencies enjoyed by locating in a more prestigious location?

7. Should it function in a cooperative relationship to existing agencies and attempt to link to ongoing program efforts or should the committee "take on" the Establishment and use their leverage to bring about fundamental institutional changes.

All of these questions needed to be resolved once the committees were incorporated and set in motion. Many social action committees got trapped in divisiveness in attempting to resolve these fundamental issues and never fully recovered from the polarization that resulted from the disparate points of view.

For the most part, social action committees organized as autonomous governmental agencies determined to reorganize the total framework of splintered social agencies. Martin Rein conjectures that implicit to the strategy of Community Action Programs was the conviction that existing bureaucracies were dysfunctional. He states in his reassessment of community action programs that the Community Action Program analysis of bureaucracy led to a belief that a more flexible imaginative approach to meeting the needs of the poor would make for successful programs.[12]

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[12] Rein, Martin, "Community Action Programs: A Critical Reassessment" Phra- Poverty and Human Resources Abstracts, Vol. III, No. 3, May-June, 1968, p. 5.

V. ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAMS

Five years have passed since the passage of the now historic anti-poverty legislation of 1964. Since its implementation in 1965; however, it has been fraught with controversy. It has proven to be one of the most complicated national programs to administer and has often tended to polarize communities along partisan lines. An analysis of some pervasive problems involved in implementing the anti-poverty program are discussed below and are based upon observations over a period of five years as consultant for the Office of Economic Opportunity in the State of Michigan, program developer for a number of programs including Head Start, Upward Bound, and Neighborhood Youth Corps, and as a citizen participant in a Community Action Agency.

Federal-State Partnership--Fact or Fiction

Theoretically, the anti-poverty program provided the enabling legislation to forge a partnership between the federal government and the state and local community. This partnership, it was thought, would promote a creative process involving federal and local resources that would ultimately result in innovative intervention strategies. The federal government attempted to promote this point of view by assuring local communities that federal involvement would be phased out over time in order to guarantee local program control.

However, communities were not that easily persuaded of the integrity of the federal intent and many communities participated as uneasy

partners in the quest for the Great Society. They were reluctant to operate in unaccustomed ways and looked with alarm at key aspects of the anti-poverty legislation. Typical questions that were posed by community leaders in assessing the desirability of linking to the federal effort were:

(a) How much money will the government provide to support proposed programs?

(b) Who will be responsible for continuing the programs once the government withdraws from the program?

(c) Where will the staff be acquired to conduct the programs?

(d) Will the attractive governmental salaries deplete the established agencies of their staff members?

(e) How much flexibility will there be in designing the programs since the government was already proposing the broad parameters of program design?

(f) Wouldn't the Community Action Program simply add another layer of government to the already existing agencies?

(g) Why wasn't the government giving the funds to those established organizations that were already working with the poor?

(h) How would voluntary private agencies operate with public agencies?

(i) Would the 10% non-federal contribution required for local participation mean that monies would be taken from ongoing programs?

Often there were unsatisfactory answers to these questions. The government could not reassure the local community of continuity of funding nor could they assure local communities that seed monies would be sufficient to mount locally designed programs. The local government recognized full well that the incentive of federal funding implied increased expenditures at the local level. While communities wrestled with the problem of the tainted federal dollar, they also recognized that certain benefits might accrue politically and economically. They were also intensely aware of the political and social implications of denying federal funds to solve local problems in an era of social discontent. In addition, they were sophisticated enough to realize that the poverty programs were just the beginning of a long-range effort to achieve a more equitable distribution of the national wealth and non-participation at the early stages might leave them without their fair share.

Thus, the dilemma of participation or non-participation was very real and communities wrestled with these questions in serious debate. Ultimately, some communities decided to carefully guard institutional control of federal funds and integrated the Office of Economic Opportunity programs into the bureaucratic structure. Other communities reacted by organizing the Community Action Programs apart from the recognized structure of the community. Yet other communities responded in non-adaptive ways and refused to have any involvement with the government. At best, the marriage between the federal government and the local

community was a marriage of convenience with both partners inadequately prepared for the responsibilities inherent in the agreement. Perhaps, this is part of the reason why Moynihan's phrase "maximum feasible misunderstanding" is heard so frequently in reference to the program.

Planning Problems:

What began as an uncertain relationship between federal, state, and local government terminated as an untenable partnership in large part for many communities. The shift occurred in my judgment for a number of reasons:

1. The government was eager to prove itself prematurely. Thus the mobilization at the federal level to organize and orient staff was harried and frantic. Johnson, in particular, wanted visible tangible proof of the effectiveness of the Great Society legislation. Thus, careful deliberate planning was obsured by the need for evidence of success. Large scale sweeping changes that effect redistribution of the national resources was an aim not easily achieved with rapidly conceived guidelines and interpretations.
2. Local community programs proliferated with considerable ambiguity regarding objectives and priorities to be met. Competing social strategems and political action were set in motion and led to tensions over social policy. Often choices were made without the involvement and participation of affected agencies in order to meet deadlines that were imposed by the government.

3. Planning agencies were established that frequently reflected the indecisiveness and confusion regarding purpose that existed at the local level. The broad representation that was mandated in the legislation disintegrated under the stress of conflicting viewpoints. More often than not, they emerged as civil rights planning bodies that absorbed the leadership from CORE, NAACP, and other civil rights organizations. Its identity, as a result, rapidly became suspect since it was argued that a new power structure was being created that threatened the Establishment.

4. Planning was hampered by questions of local control and fundamental vs. incremental choices that had to be made. S. M. Miller states that "the choice between fundamentalism and incrementalism is a deep, profound issue in our society."[13] The incrementalist, he argued, is satisfied with small improvements that are pragmatic in nature. The fundamentalist on the other hand demands basic sweeping structural changes in institutions. The inability to resolve these fundamental issues further alienated segments of the community.

5. The involvement of the poor added another dimension to the complexity of planning efforts. Martin Rein refutes the theory

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[13]Miller, S. M.,"Criteria for Antipoverty Policies: A Paradigm for Choice,"Phra, Vol. III, No. 5, September - October, 1968, Poverty and Human Resources Abstracts, Ann Arbor, Michigan, p. 3.

of poverty that stresses the apathy of the poor. He suggests that real opportunities led to active participation.[14] Many of the poor did attempt to take an active role in the Community Action Program. However, active participation translated in the context of planning was interpreted in different ways by the professionals and the lay participants. Many of the representatives of the poor utilized the Community Action Program as sounding off platforms for pent-up grievances and frustrations but found themselves at a loss to propose new programs to deal with the identified problems. Disillusionment set in rapidly among the poor who were unfamiliar with the planning process and unaccustomed to the complex machinery involved in comprehensive efforts. They demanded immediate concrete programs on "task accomplishing" and often were the first to discredit the planning efforts.

Staff Problems

Staffing Office of Economic Opportunity programs caused further complications in launching the desired programs. Attracting high quality personnel to design and administer programs was seriously handicapped by the inability of the Office of Economic Opportunity agencies to offer assurance of long term employment. In addition, the risk element for staff personnel in programs designed to produce community

[14] Op. cit. p. 2.

disequilibrium through change was often too high for established professionals. Furthermore, very unique staff qualities were essential for Office of Economic Opportunity programs. Individuals with the skill and ability to work with a broad range of professionals and non-professionals under conditions of continued stress were needed for these programs. Where were they to be found? In practice, the kinds of professionals who were attracted to the Office of Economic Opportunity programs were (a) young professionals on the way up who viewed these programs as a professional training ground, (b) marginal professionals who were attracted by the high salary and measured this factor against their limited chances in the existing professional situation, (c) individuals who enjoyed high risk ventures and may have viewed these programs as an opportunity to obtain national visibility, (d) staff with inadequate credentials for high level establishment jobs, (e) a very few who were dedicated to the self-help philosophy of the anti-poverty program, and (f) black professionals who were attracted to the objectives of the program.

Often deliberate efforts were made to engage staff that showed promise in terms of their empathy for the problems of the poor, their attitude toward the Establishment, their concern for black people, and their interest in bringing about change. These qualities were often a necessary but not sufficient basis for achieving quality programs.

Funding Problems--Too Little, Too Late

Adam Walinsky, in his New York Times review of Moynihan's book on community action, contends that the low initial budgets spread thin for maximum publicity, without adequate planning or targeting of goals crippled the community action program. In addition he states that the great virtue of community action was that it could be done--they thought--on the cheap.[15]

My own experience with the program leads me to emphatically support Mr. Walinsky's point of view. Coupled with the inadequate funding was the inordinate amount of red tape associated with program development that left the technically uninitiated confused and floundering. The unreliable fragmentary funding was a direct outgrowth of the indecisiveness in Washington regarding its commitment to the Great Society, and the complications resulting from the Viet Nam War.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the funding program was its impact on the local poverty community. Programs that were not financed after long hours of community debate and federal involvement gave further credence to long held suspicions that once again the government was offering a false hope and a false promise. This was just one additional piece of evidence that the poor get the short end of the stick.

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[15]Op. Cit., p. 2.

Another weakness of the funding program was that it did not offer the flexibility it claimed to have. Roadblocks to funding comprehensive programs that combined components of education, employment counseling and so forth from a variety of agencies abounded. Staff representatives in Washington often made valiant efforts to maneuver multiple agency proposals through channels with little success since each agency had its own (a) legislative restrictions on allocation of funds, (b) deadline dates, and (c) contract requirements.

Most important of all was the inadequate level of funding to support programs that could really effect a change in the life style of the poor. In large measure, the opponents of the program who argued like Alinsky that the poverty program was merely a palliative to assuage the poor and keep them off the streets was not too far from what actually was happening in practice. Skeletal proposals were being designed since it was clear funding could not be achieved for the more substantive ones. The spectre of incremental versus fundamental changes was raised once again as proposals were conceived at the local level.

Communications and Coordination

As indicated earlier, planning agencies were frequently pawns in the game of power politics. The political strategy surrounding the anti-poverty program often clouded the purposes of the legislation. Who controls, who administers, who gets employed, who receives wages were issues determined in large part politically. Involved in the

power play were militant black groups who for the first time saw an opportunity for "legitimization" in a bonafide governmental agency. Why then use this new found power to form an alliance with established power groups? Many preferred to use Community Action Program funds to threaten the existing establishment--thus effecting a community climate in which coordination and communication were virtually impossible.

An illustration of the communication breakdown is visible in the local Washtenaw County Community Action Agency. Washtenaw staff representatives resisted the linkage to social, health, and welfare agencies. There were vigorous sentiments expressed that these agencies had failed to serve the poor in the past and could not be relied on to effect change in the future. Fears were prevalent that funds would be diverted by existing agencies to expand their already dysfunctional programs. Thus agency representatives who approached the local Community Action Program agency with program recommendations were turned away in numbers. This added to the already smarting relationships.

The communication gap was further accelerated within the Community Action Program Committee itself. Professionals and middle class representatives who were appointed to the local Community Action Program agency in order to achieve the recommended broadly representative committee soon found themselves to be unwelcome members. Their viewpoints and technical aid were suspect and within a period of a year and

a half almost all of the original community representatives on the Community Action Program board had resigned. Thus, the channels of communication to the broader nuclei within the community were closed.

In time growing disaffection between existing agencies and the local Community Action Program agencies led to further federal intervention and harassment from the parent authorizing bodies. Finally, the federal government intervened and transferred the control from the local Community Action Agency to the legally constituted parent body thus bringing to a close the quest for the Great Society.

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Five years of trial and error in negotiating pilot projects in the poverty areas of the United States point to some clear cut directions that are urgently needed in order to mount a massive attack on poverty.

1. First and foremost among these is the need for an adequate level of funding. The government must decide that it cannot be done "on the cheap." Billions of dollars must be poured into the deteriorating cities of the United States in order to rebuild the urban blights of this nation. Individuals who live in conditions of squalor cannot have sufficient "margin" left to think about the problems of community development. A foundation floor of adequate sustenance is necessary before any individual can be expected to think beyond his basic safety

needs. The poverty program must confront this fundamental problem of human need before any hope for success can be realized.

2. Employment must be regarded as a right not a privilege. The neighborhood youth corps programs, the job corps training programs, and the multifarious employment enterprises programs lacked essential ingredients for success. They were short term, fragmented, and poorly financed. The poverty program was severely handicapped without the potential for real impact on the life style of the impoverished. The proliferating agencies within Manpower Development Training; Health, Education and Welfare; and the Department of Labor must be united and reordered so that artificial constraints do not obstruct the development of comprehensive work programs that incorporate skill training, counseling, education, and transportation in one complete package. The poverty program was beset with the whole host of discrete legal requirements that had to be negotiated with each funding agency. Former Commissioner Howe suggested such a direction in December, 1968, when he stated:

> ...some kind of pulling together of existing programs so that they relate better to each other; so that they have more flexibility; so that they are more convenient

> for the people who use them; so that administrative problems that arise from multiple application forms, filing deadlines, and that kind of thing are simplified...[16]

Employment programs that attempt to heal gaping wounds with bandaids simply won't work. The hard core unemployed cannot be expected to gain the mastery of skills that are needed for economic mobility during some arbitrary period defined by a funding agency. Long term sustained efforts are needed in order to develop saleable skills in the labor market. The Economic Opportunity Act never attacked the broadscale issues of employment. Rather, it offered such programs as the Neighborhood Youth Corps that were, in my opinion, disguised handouts to keep youth off the streets during the long hot summer. A vigorous outreach program is needed to identify hard core unemployed, underemployed, and unemployed in every city of the United States. Once they have been identified, a career ladder of employment programs must be designed that incorporates education, training, and counseling coupled with a decent standard of living wage in the learning stages.

3. A G.I. Bill of Rights in Education is another step in the direction of a meaningful anti-poverty program. The anti-poverty program supported limited efforts in education with such programs as

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[16] Transcript of a tape-recorded conversation, on July 31, 1968, between Dr. Samuel Halperin, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and U. S. Commissioner of Education Harold Howe II.

Head Start, Upward Bound, and Compensatory Education. These efforts need to be expanded to include a total educational effort from the cradle to the grave. Educational programs that begin in day care nursery centers, properly financed and staffed, to community adult education centers in the inner city area are essential to the success of an anti-poverty effort. Unless lower income individuals can be helped to deal effectively with the explosion of knowledge in a technological age, they will never overcome the barriers to complete social and economic integration. The exponents of the inherent values of lower income life style neglect the basic human drive for acceptance in today's American dream.

4. Block grants to states based on various criteria of poverty should supplement categorical aid. The competitive aspect of categorical aid fosters too many inequities. Typically the rich communities get richer since they have the funds to employ the expert with grantsmanship skills who can design competitive proposals. In addition, it discourages joint community efforts because communities are in competition for the same federal dollar. The scramble for federal aid in the poverty program resulted in inefficient undeveloped planning efforts without appropriate kinds of coordination and communication. Ultimately it divided the community. The benefits of categorical aid should be retained

in the block grant approach. Monies should be appropriated to the States in order to solve nationally defined goals. However, the annual funding regulation should be altered in order to assure communities that funding will be possible as programs are developed.

5. The Community Action program should be retained for two reasons: (1) as a training ground in leadership for the lower income residents and (2) as a vehicle for innovative pilot programs. Beyond that, all of the anit-poverty programs should be reevaluated. Those that deal with employment, education, and housing should be consolidated and expanded into comprehensive programs administered out of a single agency in Washington.

6. Community Action Agencies should be required to maintain broad representation of community groups and organizations in order to insure a dialogue between the professional and the poor. Once the poor disengaged themselves from that dialogue, they became fair game for the professional. The professional then finds himself in a consulting role to the poor--a considerably altered relationship. He no longer functions as colleague and peer. Rather, he is regarded as <u>authority</u> with all the attendant misconceptions regarding his role.

The above recommendations are merely a partial listing of

of the changes that are required to dramatically alter the crumbling anti-poverty program. A more detailed report is needed to adequately cover such areas as follow-up programs, meaningful roles for the poor, administration at the local level, the role of the state government and the reordering at the federal level. However, none of these changes will be significant without a firm foundation of financial resources to cope with the big "community problem."

VII. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The anti-poverty program with its emphasis on participatory democracy, coalition action, broad community support, and permissive horizontal coordination was in sharp contrast to Alinsky's concept of a model for community change. He accused it of being "...a prize piece of political pornography...a huge political pork barrel, and a feeding trough for the welfare industry, surrounded by sanctimonious, hypocritical, phony, moralistic..."[16] He considered it to be faulty in conception and cynical in execution because the ingredients of force, power, militant organization, and harassment of the power structure were theoretically lacking in the quest for the Great Society.

Common to both approaches was the emphasis on the poor, the self determination of the disenfranchised, and the mobilization of the poverty population. The differences were evident in the methodological

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[16]Anderson, Patrick, Making Trouble is Alinsky's Business (monograph)

approaches involved in achieving the objectives of the Great Society. Alinsky argued that the poor must fight for their achievements. His concern regarding the goals for which they fought were not preeminent in his order of priorities. The primary objective was organizing for broad based power and harassment of the political power structure. Without the psychological dimension of goal attainment through active aggressive participation, Alinsky felt no real victory could be achieved. Basically Alinsky viewed the anti-poverty program as another form of colonialism fostering the Peace Corps mentality. In the self determination process, as defined by Alinsky, any means justifies the end. The more daring the harassment, the more controversial the strategy, the greater chance for success. Much like Cloward, he contends that strong militant organization to goad, confuse, and upset the power structure will wrest the desired objectives from the power elite. Both Alinsky and Cloward use the system against itself. Alinsky points out that if you "make them live by their own rules, you'll destroy them." Cloward used these same tactics in the welfare sit-ins and rent strikes.

In practice, the Community Action Program came closest to the Alinsky conception of community development. It actually utilized many of the Alinsky techniques in attempting to achieve fundamental change around basic human needs. It too differed from Alinsky, however, in that it often operated from a black power base. Alinsky strongly believed in the need for a black movement with white allies.

Perhaps the demise of the anti-poverty program can be traced to the use of a Biddle approach with its coordinative, permissive, horizontal emphasis in an urban setting in which minority and ethnic group frustrations were fermenting. It could be argued that the Biddle strategy inherent in the legislation provided the conditions for these frustrations to surface, thus providing fertile territory for Alinsky type tactics. Social strategists of the anti-poverty program thought they had conceived a legitimate orderly mechanism for planned social change. In fact they had created a monster far removed from their original intent. They never anticipated the explosiveness of their change strategy and found themselves unable to contend with the tactics of confrontation, political pressure, and harassment that followed.

In many respects, "the government got more that it bargained for." The community disequilibrium that resulted from controversial community action efforts along the Alinsky model was more than the community was ready to tolerate. Alinsky methods that proved successful in short "action episodes" were not as effective over time. The community reacted to these fight tactics by uniting the dispersed power blocs and repressive measures set in. By 1968 the Community Action Agency was removed from the administrative control of the citizenry and reorganized under the existing bureaucratic control.