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WAR ON
POVERTY

THE COUNTY LETTER

Circulated privately to County Information Service subscribers

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Research Foundation

1001 Connecticut Ave., N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20036

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Dear County Official: Washington, D.C. February 3, 1964

War on Poverty! All-out effort or political sloganeering?

Those close to the new president feel he means business on this. That he intends to mobilize every possible effort to bring to "America" an economic Utopia at last. Your county will be directly involved.

It will mean war on a massive scale, perhaps the largest overall sustained domestic endeavor the nation has ever embarked upon. Even in an age of widespread affluence...pockets of poverty scar the landscape, infest entire regions...drain the national vitality...waste resources.

What is this poverty? Where does it exist? What can be done?

Poverty is unemployment...not brief pauses between jobs...not insured layoffs by highly paid, highly skilled...not seasonal unemployment...but long-term unemployment, that exists long after any insured benefits have run out. Poverty is people who have no job hope.

Poverty is underemployment...where the breadwinner works, but at marginal salary or wages...where large families exist, but endure heavy burdens of illness...where other factors create submarginal existences in an age of luxury - producing apathy and hopelessness.

Poverty is the aged...alone or clustered in rooming houses...living out twilight years on inadequate pensions...or no pensions at all. People with productive, useful years still left...retired because they reach a "mandatory retirement age" created by an actuary...retired because a company needs "young blood." Some become public charges.

Poverty is the physically or mentally handicapped...incapable of working, or, more tragically...capable of working but incapable of convincing an employer of that fact...they exist on "welfare" or charity.

Poverty is all of these things and many more...Poverty is a set of paradoxes. It is children going to bed hungry at night...while the nation spends billions to store surplus agricultural commodities that go unconsumed...It is the paradox of a world power spending half of all of its public funds to defend itself and mankind...substantial sums of the balance to build the economies of 100 lands abroad.

No one seriously quarrels with these objectives...the U.S. is the world's great power...it has inherited the mantle of world leadership...we have no choice as a nation...but it raises some puzzling problems. Some claim that "charity begins at home"...that the day has come and gone when Uncle Sam can be Santa Claus to the whole world.

At any rate, these paradoxes, these policies, need re-evaluation.

Poverty is another paradox also...and in this respect it feeds upon itself. Poverty exists in many instances because the individual lacks the training...the mentality...the motivation...the emotional stability to "fend for himself." Incapable of earning sufficient income, he is also incapable of managing properly that income which he has... thus mires himself...and his family...and ultimately his community... ever deeper in a situation from which there seems no escape...no solution.

Where does this poverty exist in the affluent American society?

...IT EXISTS IN YOUR COUNTY...

One of the wealthiest counties in the nation...where mile after mile stretch the homes and mansions of the Upper Income Group...found that a turn off any major street...and a slight drive down a forsaken road, could turn up hunger, misery, disease...in the midst of plenty.

Houses without plumbing...with no heat save a kerosene stove... children without beds to sleep on...water for drinking that had to be "borrowed" from a filling station or a neighbor...and lugged a mile through snow and cold...by an adult in rags, or a hungry, truant child.

Translated into other terms, poverty means welfare, and welfare, directly or indirectly, translates itself into one-third or even one-half of the budget of many counties...in public assistance, categorical aid...and in all of the off-spring that poverty breeds and perpetuates.

Poverty is deprivation...not only of material things...not only of the vital necessities of life...poverty is emotional and intellectual deprivation too...and these are breeders of other insidious evils... crime, drug addiction...the delinquency and restlessness of youth... the brooding frustrations of all ages...a community where hope has fled.

In all of these things, the public is concerned...the public pays. Poverty is cancer on the body politic. But cancer can be cured.

There are many causes, and many suggested cures. Lack of education is a basic cause...and more education suggested as a cure. But...

Let's examine this for a moment. This past summer...saw a great nationwide effort to re-enroll the high school drop outs... the teenagers not yet ready to take on the tasks of the adult world...it received great ballyhoo and great effort...ultimately 90% of all the re-enrolled drop outs dropped out again. Why? Students of the problem, from Secretary of Labor on down...suggested the schools offered nothing to this group that they could get their hands on, were not meeting needs.

You as a county official can do a great deal here. Is the emphasis in the schools of your community only on those well-endowed... those who will go on to college? Are vocational schools or courses considered only as custodial institutions...glorified day-care for the trouble-makers...the disturbed? This is true in many localities. Modernization of vocational training is needed all across the country.

What are your vocational schools teaching? Some are giving courses in woodwork...leathercraft...when the community has a crying need for electronic technicians...blueprint readers...men to program and maintain computers...Is training in your county matched to need?

Labor Department says "in spite of increases in unemployment in a large number of the 150 major industrial centers, worker shortages continued to be widespread in a number of professional, skilled and clerical occupations." Jobs are going begging...in the midst of heavy unemployment.

Check with industry...and business leaders in your community...with employment agencies...and State Employment Service personnel. Find out what skills are in demand...what new business and industry will insist on. This will give clues as to what your vocational courses and job-retraining programs should be teaching. Abolish obsolete classes.

In heavily industrialized New Jersey...fifteen counties have started one of the boldest moves yet...community county colleges. They will serve two functions. First and most obvious...they will make college available to ever-increasing numbers of children...within commuting distances of home...at a price they can afford. But equally important in war on poverty...they will provide two years of post-high school training in difficult, technical, high-pay skills demanded by industry.

This in turn produces two benefits. It provides steady, dependable flow of trained workers for diversified manufacturing industries already in those counties...and it also serves as a major inducement to new industry to locate there. Industry follows availability of manpower. All other inducements fail...if community cannot produce this.

State of Virginia...through its college system...is carrying this one step further. State's largest technical college...being made into combination teaching-research-industry complex. University Industrial Park adjacent to campus...will attract high-level research and development industry...brought by availability of highly-trained manpower. Benefits will spread. Industry gains...so does locality...so does state. Presence of R & D industry brings defense contractors...brings work to sub-contractors...satellite communities come into being. Business gains. Employment increases...Welfare costs disappear.

Fulton County (Ga) through State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation teaches welfare recipients...particularly women...basic skills. In 1963, 397 returned to useful employment...at a savings of \$332,000...and many times as much in human dignity restored, motivation renewed.

Community Development...providing basis for job-creating business and industrial expansion...is another solution. Half a dozen federal agencies...Area Redevelopment, Community Facilities, Small Business Administration...and for non-urban areas, Rural Area Development, all concerned with this problem. It may be key to long-range solution.

Typical of such programs...is a \$23.2 million investment loan "to produce job-creating new industry and breath new economic life" into 21 Wisconsin counties...such a program announced only this week by ARA. This is only typical of massive, many-pronged federal effort.

In the President's "war on poverty" all of these programs are likely to be expanded...and even new ones launched. We'll keep you advised...No amount of federal effort, however...can make "community development" a success. Only you...as local public officials can do that.

As noted in our COUNTY LETTER of December 2, local leadership is the key to local development. Responsible business does not seek tax gimmicks, special concessions or subservient labor. Ultimately, industry requires proper "business climate"...the prime requisite of which is the availability of trained manpower.

Business climate, the long-range answer to poverty, to economic well-being, rests with you and how you run your county. Are tax laws equitable...and impartially administered? Are transportation facilities, water, sewerage available? Are there cultural facilities to attract and hold the executives...the scientists...the professional people needed by industry? Is your county the kind of place people want to live in?

The economy...and with it the hope for alleviating poverty... is replete with rosy indicators. This month's COUNTY OFFICER covers that in detail. You will receive your copy soon. But there is still room for growth. In spite of lousy statistics, the economy still has a slight limp.

The Director of the Bureau of the Budget recently noted: "The American economy, despite three years of strong expansion, is still operating significantly below its comfortable potential...both with respect to labor and capital resources." No Utopia noted yet.

Rehabilitation...another tool in war on poverty...discussed many times in the past...is now considered basic overall objective of all public welfare programs. Anything less is self-defeating. Efforts now directed at ending the "dole"...as second-and-third generations of welfare cases crowd the rolls. Emergency "crash programs" of New Deal days now out-moded. New programs must provide skills...must generate self-confidence, motivation...This alone will salvage the poverty-laden.

When the people have skills...motivation...confidence...when business has the manpower it needs...when the job and the jobless are mated...when education answers new demands...the first blow in renewed warfare against chronic, debilitating poverty will have been struck.

At the heart of it all lies the county official. In DeKalb County (Ga) his efforts produced 80 new industries in a year. In Prince George's County (Md) he is working to eliminate housing blight, clean up slums. In Tulare County (Cal) he has outlined a seven-point program for the aged. In Aroostook County (Me) he is working with federal officials to establish a sugar refinery to employ 247 and produce 2,400 more jobs in support. In every county everywhere the county official is the catalyst.

Sincerely yours,

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
Research Foundation

NACO

Bernard F. Hillenbrand

February 3, 1964

Attack on Poverty. This much-heralded idea, which has yet to be completely formulated, would be provided with \$500 million in 1965 in new obligational authority, in addition to the authority to utilize another \$500 million in existing and other proposed programs, such as the Youth Employment Act and the National Service Corps. Emphasis will be placed upon education, health, and job training.

COUNTY PLANNING AND THE WAR ON POVERTY

Program development...Title II - Urban and Rural Community Action Programs provide grants up to 90 per cent of the cost of establishing a community Action Program, this includes the cost of program development or overall planning including staffing and administrative expenses...

County Jurisdiction in Poverty Programs...since the program provides for grants to private as well as public agencies, it is imperative that counties and where appropriate counties and cities act immediately in setting up some form of coordinating procedures to cover projects in their area...to insure that the development of the program is under the jurisdiction and guidance of locally elected officials.

Illustrations of County Coordination...Summit Co., Ohio --- To insure that poverty programs in this area are based and coordinated at the local government level it has entered into an agreement with the city of Akron to establish the Summit County - Greater Akron Council... a five-member executive committee is appointed by and includes the Mayor of Akron and the Chairman of the County Board of Commissioners...The director of the action program will be appointed by the executive committee and he will preside over an eleven member Community Action Council which will represent all major interest groups in the county.

County procedures very similar to the Summit Co. approach are being developed between Atlanta and Fulton Co., Ga.; Seattle and King Co., Wash.; Nashville-Davidson Co., Tenn.; Toledo and Lucas Co., Ohio;...Middlesex and Essex Counties, New Jersey, have already proposed county-wide coordinating programs with cities in their counties...

Allegheny Co., Pa. is moving to coordinate activities and programs of its several departments. In some areas failure to do this has resulted in interdepartmental competition and unnecessary friction and trouble for elected officials...A leading official in Florida said if each welfare or educational agency acts independently..."I see the whole thing vanishing into thin air...already conflict over who runs the war may take months to settle"...the age-old problem of organization management.

October 12, 1964

Status Report

"War on Poverty." Final legislative action on the Supplemental Appropriation Bill took place October 3, 1964, the last day of the 88th Congress. Included in this bill, H.R. 12633, was \$800 million for the "Economic Opportunity Program," popularly referred to as the "War on Poverty." The measure is expected to be signed by the President prior to your receiving this Report.

The Office of Economic Opportunity, which is the administrating and coordinating agency of the program is expected to have application forms and detailed guide-line material available in approximately two weeks. The lack of an Appropriation has prevented this material being available at an earlier date. Meanwhile, the following facts about the "War on Poverty" should be of assistance in developing your own program.

Job Corps -- Provides residential centers for young men and women, 16 through 21, in a coordinated program of basic education, skill training and constructive work experience. Designed for youth lacking schooling and skills for jobs. Smaller centers will be located on public lands; larger ones will be on unused Federal facilities near cities. A voluntary program. Forty thousand will be enrolled in the first year, and 100,000 in the second.

For information write: Job Corps, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C.

Work-Training Program -- Provides full- or part-time work experience and training for youths, 16 through 21, enabling them to stay in or return to school, or increase employability. Can be carried out by agency of State, local government, or nonprofit organization. Will place youngsters in work in hospitals, settlement houses, schools, libraries, courts, parks and playgrounds.

Write: Office of Manpower, Automation and Training, Department of Labor, Washington, D. C.

Work-Study Program -- Provides part-time employment of college, university students from low-income families. On-campus jobs to include dormitory and plant maintenance, food service, clerical work, library indexing, lab assistance, and others. Off-campus employment conducted under agreement with public or nonprofit organizations, will place students as tutors, youth workers, recreation leaders, community service aides.

Write: Commissioner of Education, HEW, Washington, D. C.

Community Action Programs -- Provides financial support for local anti-poverty campaigns in urban and rural areas, on Indian reservations and among migrant workers. Possible projects in local anti-poverty programs include:

remedial reading, literacy instruction, job training, employment counseling, home-maker services, job development, vocational rehabilitation, health services, among others. Will enable communities to attack the network of problems with network of positive, varied, coordinated programs. Federal assistance depends on community's determination to (1) mobilize its own public and private resources, (2) develop programs of sufficient scope and size that promise to eliminate the causes of poverty, (3) involve the poor themselves in developing and operating the anti-poverty attacks, and (4) administer and coordinate the community action programs through public or private nonprofit agencies, or a combination of these. Federal government to pay up to 90 per cent of cost of local programs in first two years; after that assistance on 50-50 matching basis.

Write: Community Action, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C.

VISTA Volunteers (Volunteers in Service to America) -- Provides an opportunity for those, 18 and over, to join the War on Poverty. Volunteers will work with migrant laborers, on Indian reservations, in urban and rural community action programs, in slum areas, hospitals, schools and in institutions for mentally ill and retarded. Period of service one year. Volunteers will receive a living allowance and \$50 a month. Plans call for 5,000 VISTA Volunteers.

Write: VISTA Volunteers, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C.

Adult Basic Education Program -- Provides assistance to States for special programs of literacy instruction. Allotments to States is based on the number of adults 18 and over with less than a 6th grade education.

Write: Commissioner of Education, HEW, Washington, D. C.

Special Programs to Combat Poverty in Rural Areas -- Provides loans and technical aid for low income rural families up to \$2,500 for farm equipment and farm operations that promise to increase low income. There also are loans for small cooperatives and small rural businesses.

Write: Administrator, Farmers Home Administration, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Assistance for Migrant Agricultural Workers and Their Families -- Provides grants, loans, and loan guarantees to assist States and localities for special needs in housing, sanitation, education, and the day care of children.

Write: Community Action, Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C.

Employment and Investment Incentives Program -- Provides up to \$25,000 for small businesses not eligible under other loan programs. These include: retail and service enterprises involving three or fewer persons, such as luncheonettes, filling stations, drug stores, barber shops, delicatessens, beauty parlors, furniture movers, cleaning shops, etc.

Write: Nearest Field Office, Small Business Administration.

Work Experience Program -- Provides funds for projects to help unemployed fathers and other needy persons to gain work experience and job training. Directed primarily toward jobless heads of families in which there are dependent children.

Write: Commissioner, Welfare Administration, HEW, Washington, D. C.

NACO is maintaining constant contact with the Office of Economic Opportunity and will notify you through a special mailing when specific information regarding applications and guide-line material is available.

Steps to Take Now. Since the Poverty Program will provide grants to private, as well as public agencies, it is imperative that counties and where appropriate counties and cities, act immediately in setting up some form of coordinating procedure to cover projects in their area.

Unless governmental bodies set up some central coordinating system, individual private and public organizations may be competing against one another in their own interest, rather than the general community interest. In addition, existing governing units will have limited if any control of these programs. The Office of Economic Opportunity has given assurances that it will give priority status to all projects having the approval of community wide coordinating procedure.

Summit County, Ohio, has already met this problem with determined foresight. To ensure that poverty programs in their area are based and coordinated at the local government level, they have entered into an agreement with the city of Akron, to establish the Summit County-Greater Akron Council.

This Community Action Council has an eleven man governing board, set up by the Chairman of the Board of Summit County and the Mayor of Akron, and includes representatives from the University, Chamber of Commerce, Health Department, Board of Education, Labor Council, and United Fund.

Also established is a five member Executive Committee which includes the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners and the Mayor of Akron.

Whenever a private or public agency makes a request for grants under the Poverty Program, the project is first sent to one of the Advisory and Review Committees where it is edited, reviewed, and revised. These Committees are composed of voluntary professional people in selected fields such as education, health and housing. The project is then sent to the 11 member Community Action Council for coordination and final approval. Only at this stage is the project forwarded to Washington, D. C.

Summit County's method of ensuring that the program is governmentally based is only one of several solutions. During the legislative development of the bill, NACO's position was that local governments' coordination should be a basic requirement of the program. This position was rejected and such action is only voluntary. Consequently, counties must act to insure the development of the program is under their jurisdiction and guidance.

Steps for Counties to Take --

Explore the possibilities of cooperative county-city agreements for coordination.

Establish or appoint a Committee to formulate a comprehensive community action program, and require as much as possible that projects be approved by this Committee.

Set up a central information office and appoint one person to coordinate county projects.

Ask your Governor to veto all projects not approved by your area-wide council or Committee.

Begin a preliminary survey of possible projects your county may be interested in pursuing such as; conservation camps, pre-school centers, health clinics, community houses, playgrounds, adult education facilities, technical and professional assistance needed, summer youth camps, remedial classes, adult counseling and guidance services, health examinations to the children and elderly, job training, and home management classes.

Begin now on at least one specific project if you are interested in any phase of the entire program, i.e., develop your action program in stages, you may wish to start any one of the above projects.

SUB-COMMITTEE ON WELFARE

SUMMARY OF ED CAPEN'S PRESENTATION ON THE WAR ON POVERTY

MARCH 31, 1965

The War on Poverty in the United States was enacted by the Congress of the United States into a law known as the Economic Opportunity Act. The law establishes community action, initiated and administered by local community groups, and controlled by the Economic Opportunity Act Commission of the federal government. Its organization is unique. It is so organized that a certain amount of money is apportioned to each area of the country. It is the responsibility of local organizations to establish priorities and define the areas which are considered by the government criterion to be poverty areas. These are areas which, by comparison to the general community, are poverty pockets where a percentage of the population makes less than \$3,000 per year. The law visualizes the channeling of the monies available from the federal government to be placed into the hands of people within the communities themselves, organized as community action groups.

The Office of Economic Opportunity began the program by sending letters to cities and counties throughout the nation. This began in late 1964. It became readily apparent to local governments that their participation was limited. This limitation was caused by the fact that existing welfare programs, training programs, etc. were not eligible for federal funds from the Economic Opportunity Act. The act visualizes and requires that any program under this act be a new program, new facilities, etc., and administered by a local community action group.

The City of Portland and Multnomah County established a liaison organization with the Office of Economic Opportunity. Since local governments could not directly participate, and there was a need for new agencies or new programs administered by local action groups, the City of Portland and Multnomah County established a Metropolitan Steering Committee, consisting of twelve people including the Mayor of the City of Portland and the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners as ex-officio members, to serve as prime contractors and to forward proposals to the Office of Economic Opportunity. Their first responsibility was the study of poverty pockets in the area based upon census tracts.

After the study of the poverty pockets based upon census tracts, the steering committee established priorities. These priorities were the Albina area, the Buckman School area, and the East Gresham area.

In the Albina area a group organized itself and is known as the Albina Citizens Committee. This group consists of thirty-five people representative of the people in the Albina area and living in the Albina area. They make recommendations to the steering committee who pass on proposals and forwards them to the Office of Economic Opportunity for approval. Local governments do not have the authority to pass on any of the programs.

The federal government in the first year of the program shares in the expenses of the program on a 90% - 10% basis, with the federal government putting up 90% of the money. The 10% required locally is not necessarily from local governments and need not be money. It may be services or staff. Excesses over the 10% in one area may be used in another area.

After the first year, the federal sharing is reduced to 50% of the programs. For the Multnomah County area the federal government has indicated that there will be 2.5 million dollars available next year, and this would require that one-half of that amount be made available locally, either from local governments or from private sources.

It is reasonable to expect that this program will go on for a long long time. Local government can and should provide advice to the local committees from the community action groups. This advice would be by informational means. Local governments are precluded from participating directly and money cannot be given to existing programs of local government.

The steering committee is basically made up of people from Multnomah County representing education, labor, industry, with local governments represented in an ex-officio capacity. The membership of the steering committee was chosen by the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, the Mayor of the City of Portland, and the congressman representing the district.

From the standpoint of county participation, the county is very restricted in how it can participate and, from a financial standpoint, it has not yet done so. It is obvious, however, that the 50% share after the first year cannot come from private sources and must come from government sources. Local governments must get into the picture in the future. There is a need for liaison and the assumption of responsibilities in the administration of the counties responsibilities under the act within an existing department of county government. There is no need for a new department or division of government to be used solely for this purpose.