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MULTNOMAH COUNTY CHARTER, Vol. 2, Bk. 2  
-Report of the Sub-Committee on  
Welfare

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HYPOTHESIS

REPORT  
OF THE  
SUB-COMMITTEE ON WELFARE  
TO THE  
HOME RULE CHARTER COMMITTEE  
OF  
MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

William Bruner - Chairman  
Sylvia Nemer  
Martin Fitzgerald

Welfare is a Pandora's box. It means many things, different things to many people. Various so-called welfare activities and functions are often so labeled because of the lack of a better classification or perhaps because of default.

In reviewing the various "welfare" activities of Multnomah County your committee examined the Multnomah County Welfare Board, its functions and means of operation, and heard from Mr. Clay Myers, a past member of that body now vice-chairman of the State Welfare Commission. We examined the Food Stamp Program, the Work Relief Program, and the Veterans' Assistance Program, and heard from Mr. Myers and Mr. Kramer, administrative assistant to the Board of County Commissioners. We also looked at the Metropolitan Youth Commission and discussed with Mr. Jack Frost, the Director thereof, its functions as well as its problems, programs, and potential. Finally, your sub-committee also scrutinized or made a cursory examination and appraisal of Federally oriented, organized, and directed programs now in embryo form - but developing rapidly under the aegis of a "Federal mother hen" - programs formally titled the "Economic Opportunity Act" but more commonly known as the "War on Poverty". In our review of this last broad field we heard from Mr. Ed Capen, administrative assistant to Commissioner Eccles, who seemed rather well versed thereon considering the short time he has been involved.

All these activities and a summary of pertinent remarks made by the mentioned individuals appear as a supplement to this report.

If a formal report was in order, and it does not appear that it is, the preface would, of necessity, state that welfare is a growing "giant", a youngster who appears only to have started to crawl, for it would seem that the Federal Government's participation in "welfare activities" or activities with social



consequence, is in its early stage of development with a potential so vast that it staggers the imagination. At the same time your committee noted, without exception, that the so-called welfare programs in which Multnomah County has been or is presently engaged, are limited by lack of control, funds, and perhaps direction. They appear rather to be a conglomeration of somewhat related activities that never approach a programmed function of County government. In most cases so-called County welfare activities are State welfare activities and programs over which control is nominal and local and County participation with the planning, review, and direction thereof a continually frustrating experience.

Therefore, your sub-committee has reached several conclusions and would like to make the following observations for the benefit of the committee as a whole.

A. That welfare programs are not only here to stay but will continue to expand, perhaps rapidly, in the near future. However, the role of Multnomah County with respect thereto seems unclear and will for various reasons continue to be so for some time to come.

B. Present welfare programs and those of the future should have a greater measure of local control if they are to meet with optimum success, whether this will occur with respect to programs regulated by Federal and State participation - and monies, we do not know.

C. Welfare, though a "giant" is a minor function of County Government at this time and does not warrant separate departmental status under the present or a revised organizational structure.

D. Present so-called County Welfare Activities, particularly those in which the County has any responsibility for their direction and application, could better be classed as social functions or public functions and are more in the nature of community service programs than the commonly accepted understanding of welfare.

E. It would appear that the present "welfare activities" of the County which your committee examined would function most effectively and find the most suitable relationships with other related and allied activities of County government, if they were to be placed in a division of social services under a department of public service which would also contain a division entitled community services.

F. Should such an organizational arrangement be viewed with favor by this committee, a recommendation and the warning is made: that the organizational pattern should be such that adequate provision will be made for the expanding social service activities of County and local government in the future and that this organizational structure be such that a constant stimulus be provided for the development of such "welfare activities" as might from time to time, seem necessary, advisable and/or available.

G. As an aside, your committee believes that the Veterans' Assistance activities seemed more properly a function of the State Department of Veterans' Affairs.

H. Your committee considered the placement of the present "County Welfare Activities" in a department of health, education, and welfare, or some similar organizational pattern, but concluded that the public health activities of the County are so fluid, immense, and overwhelming in comparison to those reviewed by this committee that to do so would result in an even greater minimization of County social activities, a possible lack of proper attention thereto or concern therefor, and would place the growing field of social service outside its proper



developmental pattern.

I. That your committee here makes reference to the report of the Subcommittee on Public Services, which, we understand, recommends consideration of an organizational structure similar to that mentioned here.

J. That your committee would like to take the opportunity to thank all parties who have appeared before them or who have assisted in one manner or another in its deliberations.



SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON WELFARE TO THE  
HOME RULE CHARTER COMMITTEE OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Public Welfare. Public Welfare is primarily a state function. A State Public Welfare Commission exists, created by statute, and is composed of seven members. The members are appointed by the governor and serve for a term of four years each.

The State Public Welfare Commission serves as the state agency for the administration and supervision of all public assistance programs and promulgates and enforces such rules and regulations as are necessary to insure full local compliance with the terms of federal and state laws. The state commission sets rules and regulations for a uniform public assistance program throughout the state.

A County Public Welfare Commission exists and it too is composed of seven members, three of whom are members of the governing body of the county and the remaining four members are appointed by the governing body. The appointed members serve for terms of four years each. The powers and duties of the county commission are as follows: (1) Administer public assistance in the county as authorized by law, and subject to the supervision of and rules and regulations made by the state commission. (2) Employ such persons as may be necessary for the proper administration of public assistance programs upon approval of the state commission in accordance with rules and regulations of the merit system administered by the Department of Civil Service. (3) Keep such records and accounts and make such reports as the state commission prescribes.



Work Relief Program. The State has a program known as the Work Relief Program that requires able-bodied welfare recipients to perform work in order to get welfare benefits. Several counties and the City of Portland participate in this program. Multnomah County is also a participant of this program for work in the parks and on the County Farm and in the County Fairgrounds.

The Work Relief Program is not a county policy decision, nor is it a policy decision of the County Welfare Board. It is a State determination and is a part of the Manpower Training and Development Act. The program is governed somewhat by federal rules under the Community Work and Training Program administered by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program is the outgrowth of a pre-existing surplus food distribution program. In September, 1961 the surplus food program was begun to distribute certain surplus commodities to both welfare recipients and other low income families. Some 13 or 14 surplus commodities were distributed to approximately 30,000 people per month in Multnomah County. The commodities consisted of flour, oatmeal, lard, butter, meat, powdered eggs, powdered milk, cheese, cornmeal, etc. All were not really surplus foods. Some items, not necessarily surplus, were added by the Department of Agriculture of the Federal government on the supposition that distribution of the items would have a direct effect on the surplus items themselves. For example, grain is a surplus item - canned meat was not. By increasing the consumption of meat, more grain would be needed to feed the animals that ultimately would become canned meat. Multnomah County participated in surplus food distribution until November, 1962. At this time Multnomah County became one of 25 pilot programs of food stamp distribution. Multnomah County continues to be the only food stamp program in Oregon.



The Food Stamp Program of the Department of Agriculture is programmed to supplement diets of low income families by increasing their buying power to assist in using up surplus foods in the United States. Participants in the Food Stamp Program buy food stamps at discounted rates. These stamps are exchangeable in food stores for food items. The stamps are purchased at a discount for low income families. Welfare recipients get some of their aid in stamps. The stamps are exactly the size of dollar bills, and are not bulky or hard to handle.

Veterans' Assistance. The character of this program is the assistance for resident war veterans of Multnomah County who have resided in the State of Oregon for three years and have lived in Multnomah County for one year. The aim of the program is immediate help for those veterans without the means of procuring the necessities of life. They work with veterans in providing medical services, counselling, legal aid, suitable housing, claim service, and work placement where possible. They do not duplicate other areas of welfare for they serve two groups of veterans predominately composed of single men and alcoholics not otherwise eligible for welfare from other agencies.

Metropolitan Youth Commission. In the Spring of 1960, the City of Portland and the County of Multnomah entered into an agreement to establish a Metropolitan Youth Commission of eleven members to be the overall coordinating, consulting, and activating body for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. The Commission has a full time professional Executive Director.

A Youth Advisory Council representing the twenty-two high schools in the area meets every two weeks during the school year and acts as liaison between youth and adults providing a "listening post" for knowing the real concerns of young people.



The Metropolitan Youth Commission is more concerned with prevention of delinquency than with its cure. However, the charter or the agreement between the city and the county gives the Metropolitan Youth Commission the role of prevention and control. Control is related to cure. The Oxbow Project, known as the Youth Task Force in Multnomah County, was originally seen as an action program of the Metropolitan Youth Commission for both the prevention and the control of delinquency. The commission originally conceived of the participants in the Oxbow Project as being potential drop-outs from high school. However, a compromise was necessary with the Board of County Commissioners, and the criterion was changed to one of economic need. This program is now administered under the Division of Parks and Memorials with emphasis on production rather than on the youth per se.

War on Poverty. 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 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.