



news release

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FOR RELEASE

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TO ELIMINATE POVERTY

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(A special feature of the Democratic National
Committee's All Americans Council)

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (Special) --- The War on Poverty began nearly three years ago. As the wealthiest nation in the world where four out of five Americans have what they need, we asked our Congress to act on behalf of the one out of five Americans who didn't have what they need. Under the leadership of President Johnson, America committed itself to eliminating poverty not because it was politically opportune, nor because we wanted to pacify the poor, but because it was right.

In the beginning, the immediate goals of the poverty program were not only to relieve the poor but also to involve the poor. Getting the poor involved in their own program was a new idea--previously, the method of fighting poverty was mainly the welfare check or the well-meant handout. But the trouble with a welfare check or a handout is that a man remains as poor after he spends it as before. Nothing is done to relieve his poverty.

Each program created by the Office of Economic Opportunity was meant to involve the poor in a way that would get them out of poverty quickly and finally. The job had to be done quickly because otherwise affluent America would lose interest and poverty-held America would lose hope. It had to be done finally because once a man is out of poverty it is possibly worse to slip back in than never to have gotten out at all.

Since late 1964, America has become familiar with many of the poverty programs.

HEAD START

Few communities across the land are without a Head Start class, where already over 1 million young children have discovered what it means to have a teacher interested in them as a person--not as a number in a roll-book. More than this, Head Start corrects the physical and mental defects of poor children, improves their social behavior and communication skills and involves parents in their children's education. In short, Head Start tries to do something positive about the cultural conditions in which a child grows up.

(MORE)

JOB CORPS

Job Corps has produced some of the most dramatic success stories in modern American life. In each of the 122 Centers, there are countless young men and women between 16 and 21 who only recently were out of school, out of work and out of luck. After intensive training, education and counseling in Job Corps, most of these young people emerge as totally new persons. They have a skill, they have a purpose and they have a goal.

But the gain is not limited to the Job Corps graduate themselves; instead, the whole nation gains. A 17-year-old who becomes a social and economic failure can cost \$140,000 in public funds over a lifetime. But if this person can be trained--as countless are in Job Corps--society will not only save this \$140,000 but will actually gain the added tax dollars of the once unemployable.

LEGAL SERVICES

One of the most important discoveries about the War on Poverty is the demand among the poor for justice. They want lawyers--both to defend and protect them. Right now, there are 250 Legal Service offices, defending the poor against unjust charges and protecting them from unfair merchants and Landlords. These lawyers are in city neighborhoods, in rural towns and even in remote areas, travelling like the circuit riders of an earlier day. They make the law serve the people, not threaten them.

HEALTH SERVICES

Doctors and nurses provide a similar service in more than 20,000 Health Centers. Located in areas where poor people live, these Health Centers try to provide all the services needed. Previously, the poor were shuttled around from clinic to clinic, getting fragmentary relief. But the present Health Centers are equipped to meet most of the sick person's needs--whether it is an x-ray, diagnosis, medicine or treatment.

COMMUNITY ACTION

Basic to the OEO is the Community Action agency. Already operating in more than 1,000 communities, these local agencies are self-formed and self-moving. Local people participate--businessmen, clergymen, volunteers, the young, the poor. The Federal Government provides a variety of national programs from which the community can take its pick. In addition the community can submit its own programs developed to help solve its own local problems.

That is a partial picture of the War on Poverty. Readers of this article have probably seen it in action in their community. Likely they are a part of it

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as volunteers or possibly they have benefited by it as recipients.

As in all social changes, it will take time, money and perseverance before poverty is finally overcome. But with millions of Americans volunteering and millions more offering their support, there is little doubt as to the eventual day when poverty will be eliminated. Hopefully, it is not a question of how long but how soon.