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TO THE GOVERNOR, THE LEGISLATURE, AND THE PEOPLE OF MAINE

I am pleased to have the opportunity to transmit this report to you entitled Community Action Programs and Poor People of Maine-A History. This report and analysis is the result of efforts initiated in late 1974 and carried on through 1975 involving extensive interviews with Maine citizens throughout the State. A representative number of citizens representing various interests and contacts with poverty programs were given the opportunity to express their satisfactions, points of concern, and general observations regarding the concept of community action and the past operation of specific programs aimed at helping the poor people of the State.

It is hoped that this report will enable the reader to develop a more complete understanding regarding poverty programs in Maine. By analyzing and reviewing programs as seen by both consumers and providers, we may all benefit by expanding our insights and developing increasingly more effective and efficient programs aimed at helping the low income citizens in this State.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. Wilson

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Director

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Ten years after Lyndon Johnson's declaration of a War on Poverty and almost $15 billion later, it appears that poverty is in less danger of collapsing than the Office of Economic Opportunity.

It is clear that the achievements of OEO are somewhat less than Lyndon Johnson's "total victory" over poverty manned by an agency which had the "power to strike away the barriers to full participation in our society."

The vigor and fervent hopes of those who launched the Office of Economic Opportunity seem like so much high-flown rhetoric now. But it is also true that the tools necessary to carry out that war were never made available to it in sufficient number. OEO had to compete with Vietnam, inflation, the negative effects of national political scandal, massive cutbacks and still be able to surmount poverty in a single bound.

Could OEO seriously have been expected to make spectacular inroads under such conditions? Was it ever really intended to reverse the course of human events within ten years?

The aftermath of the grand attempt has brought with it much disillusionment, a wave of cynicism and world weariness which has spurred the archenemies of the program to demand its demise. Branded a failure by Richard Nixon, OEO is being assailed in its funding, its structure, and in its very existence.

Meanwhile, the poor still suffer. Inflation eats away at their dollars and recession adds to their numbers more and more of those who were once considered "middle class". It is ironic that now, when the spectre of the Great Depression is resurrected to haunt the lives of people, that so much effort is spent in trying to destroy an agency which might be used to aid those who need it most.

Already, there are cries to bring back WPA and the other "New Deal" projects of the past. It seems sensible to use the OEO experience of ten years and its established base to deal with the rush of problems. Creating a new agency to cope with these problems would burden that agency from the start with its very

newness. OEO has passed the stage of initiation, and, battered though it may be, still offers hope and a hand to help the poor out of poverty rather than giving them a handout.

For all its shortcomings, few people fault this basic philosophy. What is faulted is the strategy which was used to implement it. While the old way of fighting poverty may be over and may take its place in history, fighting poverty is not over and new strategies will have to be devised.

The pious platitude suggested by Nixon appointees that merging OEO programs into the federal bureaucracy will eliminate the "middleman" and secure direct benefits for the poor is not a solution. It is highly doubtful that money will trickle any faster through layer upon layer of long-standing federal bureaucracy than it did under OEO. In fact, it is more likely that the poor will be left without a drop.

The effect this entire parade of events will have on Maine is uncertain. Maine can docilely follow Washington and disband its poverty agencies and their efforts to reduce poverty and provide social services for the hard core poor. Or, given the grassroots impetus which has jolted the Governor's office, it may find a better way to get to the people who need help. It may dare to be independent and develop its own homegrown poverty programs.

To do this will require that Mainers answer many of their own social questions which were previously resolved by edicts from Washington, edicts often directed toward the solving of urban not rural problems.

Is there a consensus of how Maine should move to replace federal funding? Should any programs be assumed by Maine government at the state, county or local level? Will there be revisions or cancellations of groups to make these determinations? What new goals and definition of poverty will be given by Mainers?

This survey has attempted to get a brief pulse reading on such questions and addresses itself to the experience which the State of Maine had gained from eight years of poverty program operation.

It is based on 150 interviews with those who have worked, planned, criticized, advised, benefited from and otherwise had involvement in any of the many phases of the War on Poverty in Maine.

This is not a statistical analysis of the poverty programs nor was there a great attempt to compete with or upset long existing information on income levels, economically depressed communities, the unemployed and the like. It is merely a forum in which those with direct and even indirect involvement in the program's eight years of operation can asses their experience and make recommendations on what should come next in Maine.

A wide cross section of people were chosen for personal interviews including professionals of the poverty programs, low-income community leaders and beneficiaries, community leaders, political leaders, professionals of traditional social service agencies and other persons in active or advisory roles or as interested observers.

This cross section spanned a variety of political philosophies, viewpoints from arch-conservative to radical, professions from butchers to lawyers to woodsmen to preachers.

The responses of each of these people was individually recorded as the conversation ran. A general questionnaire covering a variety of areas was used as a starting point during the interviews. Most interviews ran approximately one hour and there were approximately ten to twelve responses for each county in Maine.

Persons quoted directly in the report are not identified by name but rather by function. The information gathering and write-up of the survey was conducted by S. C. Shields of Farmingdale, whose background is primarily in journalism.

It may be criticized that insufficient time, personnel, and money were expended on this project to make it legitimate. It is to be reiterated that the value of this survey will be to record the highlights of Maine's experience with the War on Poverty and to offer some recommendations for a new anti-poverty strategy.

"People who are much too sensitive to demand of cripples that they run races ask of the poor that they get up and act just like everyone else in the society."

Michael Harrington

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MYTHS OF THE POOR IN MAINE

Myths of the Poor in Maine

There is a Maine familiar to all. It is celebrated by those who live and work here as well as those who leave only to return again and again. Advertisements on television, magazines, and radio depict Maine as an idyllic pastoral haven, free of the cares and strife of city living. Some think it is one of the last bastions of rugged individualism left in America. It is certainly a state of great natural beauty which attracts hundreds of thousands of people who are hungry for a touch of country and good living.

While this side of Maine is much beloved, there exists another, darker side. In it dwell some 200,000 native Mainers. They are poor.

In the 1960's, when the Office of Economic Opportunity first started its program to give these poor of Maine an alternative to poverty, many Maine citizens were incensed, if not shocked by the idea that there were truly poor people in the State of Maine. "Maine doesn't have any poor," they maintained. Those willing to admit that poverty might exist in some hard-core pockets of the state, denied that there were any poor "in our town." One CAP director recalled, "We'd go to towns that said they had no poor. They were amazed at the number of people who were qualified to participate."

In one sense, the people who said they saw no poverty in Maine or in their immediate neighborhoods were correct. Poverty frequently lies off the beaten track. In a rural state like Maine, it is not immediately visible and therefore often neglected. As one man puts it, "We're rural and not looked after as much as other areas."

Many passersby see the dazzling fall foliage, rugged wilderness and quaint houses and think it must be marvelous to live in such natural settling of splendor. However, hidden away under all this beauty are the undereducated, underprivileged, the aged, migrants and unskilled who exist at levels beneath those which most Americans consider necessary for human decency.

Maine is not a rich state and only 22% of its population makes over $12,000 a year. Its median income is well below the national average. Yet its citizens are loathe to admit this situation has disastrous results in human terms. An outreach worker noted, "The general community doesn't believe you when you say there is poverty in the area. They say, "People don't live that way anymore." Some even say there is no poverty in Maine anymore.

Contrary to this impression, many officials and citizens of Maine look with the greatest apprehension in the future. Said one town manager, "Most of our police officers are eligible for food stamps and FHA loans. They make about $10,000. Our former welfare

director was on food stamps. Yet these wages are considered above most of the community. We've got to create employment opportunities. John Cole not withstanding."

For those struggling to keep one step ahead of welfare, the situation becomes more critical. As a woman taxi driver noted, "You don't know from one minute to the next if your husband will be working You can't plan or save. Even if you are lucky and get unemployment compensation, it won't cover the fuel costs. The treatment you get in these towns is terrible and God help you if you get a medical problem." In Maine the growing unemployment has forced many families who are barely making it into warring camps. There are those who decide they cannot make it alone. As one director described them, "They are the working poor. Sometimes I think they are worse off than anyone. They become so desperate that they leave their families because it will be better for them. These are the wage earners."

Then there are the embittered who do without help, but end up injuring themselves in the long run. One welfare director said, "We had one man who was too proud to take food stamps. He tried to live on $12 a month. Eventually, his health failed and he was worse off than before."

There are indications that Maine's middle class is also being drawn into the fray. A state program director cited, "We run into more and more middle class families with 10-12 kids and medical costs who are eligible for food stamps. When you take into account the cost for fuel and shelter, they aren't making it. I suppose improvements in housing for needy families would help." Others concur. Said one state welfare director, "We have more and more instances where people are pressured into welfare for the sake of their children and the high cost of living. This is where the resentment comes. Thirty to forty-five percent of our cases fall in this category."

Current trends in Maine business do not help matters. Inflation and recession have added to problems as Maine industry attempts to change over into the modern business world and develop industrial diversity. A labor spokesman noted the effect. "More and more low-skill people are being dumped out of the market because shoe factories and textiles are closing down. The business changes in the state have increased the group unemployed by these industries in the past 10 year To handle the transition will mean the expansion of public service job food stamps, fuel rebates, and other programs."

Those who feel the pinch and are struggling to keep one step ahea of poverty look for scapegoats for their perilous problems. They blam the welfare "cheaters." A city health executive explained, "Only a small number of citizens are aware of the average weekly wage in this town and yet they are the first to complain about all the welfare mothers who get pregnant for money. It's a nice smokescreen." Often these people are so preoccupied with their problems they can't believe there are others worse off. Said one health nurse, "I ran into one family who had a nice house, a car, Landrover, and he was making $15,000 a year. I couldn't make him believe that he was better off than a poor family. He wouldn't hear of it."

One agency in a rural county was investigated because of local belief in large-scale cheating. A board member of the agency said, "When the fraud squad came here to investigate they found less than 1% abuse. Let's face it, people here don't want the poor to get anything. They want to punish them for being poor."

One director noted that the tall tales of abuse are often figments of people's imagination. "I have lots of people come in here and tell us about the families getting assistance who have snowmobiles out back and who drive cadillacs. When I ask them what family in particular they are talking about, they stammer around and say, 'Well, you know they're out there.'"

The myths about poverty are endless and the means to solve it are limited. No one has yet found a solution agreeable to all, for, as one welfare director put it, "If we knew what the cause of poverty was, we'd know how to take care of it."

A few beliefs are no longer as widely held as before. Few people believe that low-income people are "happy living that way." Only a few make mention of the fact that poverty is because of "wickedness and alcohol." Citizens do show greater sophistication in explaining causes of poverty then they have in the past. A large majority attribute it to "unemployment-underemployment and lack of education. I don't know which comes first," or they say, "The causes are complex. You can't lay it to any one thing."

Of course, many feel that the poor are "lazy" that they could show initiative and overcome their situation. A town bookkeeper said, "We get these big boys in there and you know they can work. The papers are full of jobs." The paper for that town had positions for cooks, waitresses, babysitting, mechanics, machine operators and so on. These positions which the young and inexperienced may qualify for do not pay a living wage, the rest are positions which call for more training and experience than "those boys" had.

Ironically, when talking about cures for laziness, many people advocated a return to W.P.A.-type programs. One man who administered programs under the W.P.A. of the 30's was asked how people felt about the programs at a time when nearly 30% of America's workforce was unemployed. "A lot of people felt those on W.P.A. could find work if they really wanted to. They intimated those on the program cheated and lied to get there or didn't deserve to be on them." He continued, "Of course you have to figure there will be a few who will take advantage no matter what. There are always a few rotten apples."

So the myth persists in present times despite the facts. A county commissioner noted, "The blatant, vicious offender is in a minority. The vast majority justly qualifies - at least in my experience."

Often times, however, it is the welfare system and not the recipients per se who come under attack. As one ADC mother expressed it, "I have gotten the feeling that you're not supposed to make any effort to improve your situation. Right now, I'm divorced with 5

kids and my ex gives no support. So I got a job, but it wasn't enough. So I went to a lawyer and he said I should never have gotten a job but should have sat back and taken ADC. Now if I go to court, there is a strong chance I will lose support because I bettered my situation."

The chief difference between welfare and OEO/CAP programs is that CAP has attempted to let the poor help themselves and improve this situation. However, the image of welfare carries negative spillovers so that some critics see CAP as giving handouts rather than a hand-up. Said one CAP work program enrollee, "It's a puzzle to me why the federal government will provide for you the rest of your life on welfare, but won't give programs to see the poor go on their own."

Often, it is the most helpless poor who are hurt, who can't get to the help offered to them. For example, over 114,592 of Maine's citizens are sixty-five years of age or older. State aid will not reach the old man in Oxford County who lives on cat food, the seventy-year-old woman who pays $65 rent on a rennovated chicken coop, or the old man in Waldo County who cuts wood by day and suffers with his minor heart attacks by night, unable to afford the proper medication.

The cases found by OEO out-reach workers are of this caliber. One daily report by such a worker in Washington County only two years ago read, "Discovered elderly couple living in a rural area in a two-room house. No water, no electricity, no food, no transportation no beds, no wood. Blind husband was cutting wood with help of wife."

Nearly 50,000 Maine poor are under eighteen. One can get a glimpse of what their view of life might be like once they reach school age. Tales are recounted by teachers and directors. "We had a 5-year-old who lived 2 miles from the coast and became terrified and hysterical when he saw the ocean for the first time on a field trip." Or those community leaders who told of the many Maine children aged five who did not know what knives, forks and spoons were and how to use them. Even the older children do not escape. A health program director recalled, "We had two teenage girls who were constantly reprimanded by teachers and parents alike for being lazy, not studying or doing their chores. A first visit to the doctor for a general physical revealed the cause: both had acute heart disease."

Those caught in-between the old and the young are without education, disabled, burdened by the sheer size of their families and unable to find work. The newspapers may list jobs for janitors, waitresses and the like, but as one man put it, "Even with two parents working in the State of Maine, a family often qualifies for food stamps." The wages from hard work are often less than what one could collect on welfare. All you need to do is split up the family. As one woman who had been on welfare and who had achieved a high position under OEO programs put it, "At some point the burden for even a working man is too much. He comes to the hard decision that his family is better off without him, that he can't provide for them even by hard work. Given a choice between watching his family starve or leaving so his wife can get state aid, most choose to help their families. They leave."

A college professor felt the situation of the poor was aggravated by "the provencialism in rural Maine. They have a life style which is perpetuated over and over, with no opportunity for them to see anything different." This entrenchment results in an attitude of hopelessness which those in human services frequently find maddening to overcome. "The people we try to motivate in our work programs have been made to feel inadequate. They have no personal confidence and get a defeated attitude."

One AFDC mother who worked through CAP to become a social worker noted, "The poor don't feel they count for much in their estimation or those of other people. They don't feel like they can change anything and are desperately afraid that what little they do have will be taken away from them."

Treatment of the poor in Maine only served to reinforce the sentiment that they are worthless. Until two or three years ago, Maine still had "Pauper Laws". These laws ranged from putting people into prison because of inability to pay debt ("debtor's prisons") to denying the right to vote to anyone who received town assistance.

Not only the laws but the attitude of people as reflected by those laws gave the poor the impression that they were something less than citizens. As one former selectman and ADC mother put it, "I've never seen a high-up official at Health & Welfare who gave a damn about people. They didn't want to find out who needed help and barely tolerated those that do come forward. It's still humiliating. The personnel will ignore you, keep you waiting, carry on private conversation, and make you feel like dirt." A woman who now helps the elderly after leaving her father's plantation in South America said, "The poor and elderly are not treated with respect. They are demeaned. They call them lazy, but I've seen an awful lot of rich who are unbelievably lazy."

A labor spokesman noted, "Some poor would rather suffer than put up with the abuse. One town manager turned down someone seeking assistance and refused to put his reasons for doing so on paper. When told this was illegal, he laughed and said, 'Well, jail me.'" Until recently the poor had no recourse in such matters.

Aside from society's attitude reflected in laws, treatment of the poor, and population myths, there are the ever present conditions with which the poor must contend. If one could outline a picture of these conditions with a few statistics, those statistics alone would show that the State of Maine has more than its share of problems:

In education:

-25% of the population in Maine twenty-five years and over has eighth grade education or less. Stated differently, one out of four people in Maine have eighth grade education or less.
-45%+ of the population has not received a high school diploma

In income:

-37% of males making under $3,000 a year had 8 or less years of schooling, whereas 32% of males making $10,000 and over had college education.
-The mean income of males with an elementary education was $4,110, whereas the mean income of a college graduate was double this amount ($9,907).
-Of those people earning less than $3,000 a year who have elementary education, 76% are females.
-48% of all families in Maine make less than $8,000 a year

In terms of employment:

-In seasonal industries such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, 61% of the people who work in these areas make less than $8,000 a year and 43% make less than $6,000 a year.
-In December 1974, Maine unemployment rate exceeded 8% after climbing from 7.2% in November. Figures were even higher for certain counties: Piscataquis had an unemployment rate of 14.3%, Oxford had an unemployment rate of 9.8%.

In terms of geography:

-About 49% of Maine is considered rural and 51% is called urban. Rural, however, means any town of less than 2,500 population.
-15% of persons in rural areas are below poverty level.
-Over 16% of persons living in rural farm environments are at poverty level compared to 13% of the people in an urban environment.

Family size:

-The average family size of the poor in Maine was 3.85 people while the State average was 3.57%.

Housing:

-Over 15% of all housing in Maine lacks some or all plumbing. Ten counties have rates much higher than this average such as Washington County where the figure climbs to 30% without plumbing in year-round housing.
-Over 80% of the counties in Maine with substandard heating equipment have in excess of 20% occupied housing units.
-In Franklin County close to one out of two (46%) occupied units do not have central heating.

In health:

-One fourth of Maine counties have only one dentist for every 4,000 people. In Waldo, this figure climbs to one dentist for every 7,625 people. At the time, the national average was one dentist per 1,700.

-Nine Maine counties have one physician in excess of 1,000 people. The goal was one doctor for every 800 people.
-2/3 of Maine hospitals (35 out of 53) surveyed in 1970 did not have an organized out-patient department and/or emergency department according to the American Hospital Association.
-Over 35% of people surveyed in the Maine Regional Medical Program had not seen a physician for 3 or more years; in over 66% of the cases, the reason for seeing a physician was for a particular problem or ailment, indicating an emphasis on crisis rather than preventive medical care.

Assistance:

-20% of Maine's population (200,000) is considered to be at or near the poverty level.
-As of November 1974, 12% of the current population (119,210) received food stamps.
-As of October 1974, 7% of the current population (77,980) get AFDC assistance. This figure includes 21,370 families and 56,610 dependents.

These figures are not biased combinations of numerical information. They represent the kind of data which is readily available in traditional federal compilations and which can be obtained from various State and local agencies.

Although this information may be familiar to those who work in the area of human services, it is not that well-known by the average taxpaying citizen.

Up until two or three years ago, when pauper laws prevented many of the poor from voting and the first stirrings of low-income organizations began, the poor had no way of making this information known. They simply had no voice.

As a group, they were so atomized that they did not know themselves how they compared to others. They were made to feel their condition was their fault and so they did not want others to know about their existence. They could neither afford the dues or the transportation to belong to unions, fraternal clubs, service organizations, and political parties. They were without leaders much less lobbies. Legislative programs were beyond them. It was a battle to gain recognition at a town meeting. Those people who spoke in their defense were considered to be kooks, radicals, outsiders, and troublemakers.

This then was the setting into which the Office of Economic Opportunity strode, armed chiefly with high ideals - into an area into which only a few inroads had been made.

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

President John F. Kennedy

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CONCEPTS

Concepts

On August 20, 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act, and began a dramatic and highly publicized program which was to become known in its many phases as the War on Poverty.

It had officially become the "policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty," and to "open the door to our prosperity for those who have been kept outside.

Maine's response to this clarion call was quick and affirmative. Governor John Reed issued an executive order creating a State Office of Economic Opportunity in December, 1964.

The administration of the State OEO office was carried on as a part-time responsibility by the Administrative Assistant to the Governor. His salary was used to get in-kind matching federal funds. While this approach got initial funding for SEOO, actual organization of the Community Action agencies (CAAM) did not begin until 1965, with the appointment of Robert Brown as SEOO Executive Director. According to him, "It was hectic getting the legislative and local support. Health and Welfare gave us support until the OEO grant came in. Without it, the agency could not have started."

Much credit must also be given to the Extension Service of the University of Maine. It's outreach efforts made the contacts and gave the needed background information which stimulated local involvement and which was to become the basis of the Community Action Programs (CAP).

Stories were generated about the fantastic sums of money available through OEO. Said an early director, "I went to one meeting where people thought we had $2-million for CAPs. We only had $50,000, but people had gotten the idea that funds were unlimited."

At the time, the concept of local initiative was considered a new thing. Everyone at the state level was quite accustomed to looking to the federal government for guidance and towns looked after themselves.

Relatively few statistics were available about the poor and procedures for dealing with their problems were determined by bureaucrats at the state level. Most towns resorted to their own personal and frequently subjective methods for giving assistance. Little outreach was done at any level and there was no direct contact with the people served.

Working in such a closed system, it was easy for many in government to conclude that Maine did not have many poor or that their needs were not great. The poor of Maine had no voice to tell government otherwise. No mechanism existed for them to affect policy decisions, participate on planning boards, or otherwise influence the forces that regulated their lives.

With the formation of thirteen Maine OEO Community Action Agencies a first step was taken to give local people a chance to voice their concerns and make their own priorities according to their needs. To bypass the danger of bureaucratic control at the state level, CAPs were funded directly by the federal government.

However, use of funds granted was to be decided by the community served. The War on Poverty was not designed to be a single, centralized program. It was meant to be a war fought on many fronts. Since there were no directives from Washington, D. C., a local board made policy determinations. To prevent domination by any one segment of the community, boards had to consist of one-third low income, one-third public officials and one-third representatives from the private sector.

An overall strategy was written into the Equal Opportunity Act passed by Congress. This passage was the only policy directive to which local boards had to conform; it read:

a) the term "community action program" means

1) which mobilizes and utilizes resources, public or private or any...geographic area...in an attack on poverty
2) which provides services, assistance, and other activities...to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty on a cause or causes of poverty
3) which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served; and
4) which is conducted, administered or coordinated by a public or private nonprofit agency (other than a political party), or combination thereof.

Within a year a furor had arisen. There was much confusion, bureaucratic squabbling, and adverse local reaction. Local officials were resentful of the consumer participation on boards and often tried to deingrate their authority. Some were livid at the tactics used by some agencies to gain responsiveness to local needs. State representatives and senators began to complain to the Governor that, "These CAPs are run by a bunch of kooks, Communists, and hippie degenerates."

What had happened? In the first place, traditional attitudes have tended to make both federal and local officials view each other with suspicion. There was little contact between CAPs and town officials because their funding sources are different.

More significantly, their philosophies differed. Local government tended to be hierarchial and largely clerical. CAPs were run by a board determined along the principles of participatory democracy and were largely service and therefore action oriented.

CAPs essentially contained the early seeds for what is now called consumer action and participation. At the time, the philosophy was new and unproven. CAPs began to innovate to find the best way to get service directly to the people, without a thick layer of bureaucracy in between. Oftentimes the community action organizers were poor people themselves who were seeking to improve themselves. Many of these people were natural leaders who had tremendous potential to help the poor, but had not yet acquired the expertise necessary to do so.

Not a few of these people heard Lyndon Johnson's call to "strike down all barriers to participation" and took them quite literally. They needed only to look around and see the local landlord who charged too much on his rents and let his tenants live in squalor, or the town manager who refused to give any assistance whatsoever because "there are no poor in my town," to conclude that there were seemingly apparent barriers who needed some striking down.

Compared to what went on nationally, Maine CAP battles appear like an exercise in moderation and reason. The Pine Tree Legal Services did ably manage to knock down some laws that most legislators agreed had been on the books for too long.

There were also more colorful forays. In York County in 1969 for example, all towns except several large ones had signed up with the local CAP for donated commodities. When approached to join the rest, one town manager said, "Over my dead body will there be donated commodities in this town." The low income people of the town organized and went to the next town meeting where it was voted 4 to 1 in favor of the food program. Once the town approved the program, the manager maintained that CAP might have gotten the food program, but "Never will CAP run it." Two months later, he reneged and asked them to run it.

Another incident occurred in Houlton when two VISTA workers who assisted the CAP in out-reach, accompanied an Indian woman who ran a foster home for Indian children. The woman had been turned down for welfare assistance by the welfare director. They came to support her and to serve as advocates on her behalf when she requested an appeal for her case. The welfare director became upset and asked the VISTAs to leave. They said they did not want to. The director then said, "If you don't leave, I'll get the police and have you thrown out." At which point the VISTAs left.

The upshot of this incident was that the town manager then had letters written to the Governor about the "CAP obstructionists who are causing trouble" and asked that the VISTAs be removed. They were.

In Franklin County in 1970 an attempt was made to establish a rural health delivery system. A great deal of money was granted throug

the CAP for this special purpose, but major difficulties occurred when the doctors in favor of the plan refused to have low income people represented on the board. According to the Green Amendment, one-third representation of low income people is a guideline which must be accepted along with all program grants. Although the doctors were in favor of the money, they were adamantly opposed to giving the poor any say so on how it was to be spent on their behalf. Eventually, desire for the program won out over vested interests and rigid attitudes, but not until the federal officials made it clear there would be no money without the correct representation on the board.

In Waldo County a group of elderly pensioners wanted to have a food program through the CAP agency. They were told that no money had been appropriated for this purpose, but that Congressmen might be able to do something if they were told that enough people wanted it. The elderly were not impressed. "They won't listen to us in Augusta. Nothing will change," they maintained. A few did begin to exercise their rights as citizens and were so encouraged by the response from their representatives that they began a large scale campaign which succeeded in getting them their donated foods. A retired colonel in the area was so incensed by this action, that he had the agency investigated for "illegal" political activities. In short order, the CAP was cleared of all charges for its brief directives on the democratic process.

Of such stuff is the chronicle of CAP confrontation in Maine. It is apparent from these examples, that the largest barriers CAP faced in dealing with poverty at the local level were attitudes of long standing which had never before been questioned much less acted upon.

The entire idea of consumer involvement in policy making, planning, evaluations and even funding was something people were simply not used to. Many felt threatened by such involvement and tried to attribute it to "outside agitators." However, CAPs were well regarded by federal officials and Congressmen who saw them a source of funding which created jobs back home while providing needed services. It became obvious that CAPs would have to be contended with on a continuing basis.

CAPs used marches on City Hall to shake up the status quo. As one town manager recalled, "The thrust was to know what your rights were and go to City Hall and demand them. - Bang on the table. - As soon as this was phased out, things were better in terms of acceptance of CAP." As his comment indicates, CAPs eventually turned to national programs to establish services. Head Start, Family Planning, Surplus Food, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Senior Citizens, and Manpower Training programs were initiated in varying degrees as determined by local need

In keeping with the directive for "Maximum feasible participation" CAPs tried to get democratic involvement of the poor in all these programs. Many schools of thought exist as to the meaning of the term "Maximum feasible participation." To this day a consensus has never been reached as to what the term actually means.

Many viewed CAPs as advocates on behalf of the poor whose duty was to make other systems, especially Government, responsive to their needs. As one director at the Diocesan Bureau noted, "The poor suffered not only from a lack of money but from powerlessness. They had no control over anything at any level. CAPs advocated for social change. They organized low-income groups for impact and they have helped to keep other agencies honest." However, this policy was not always well received. One director noted, "Many people equated advocacy with confrontation."

The demands for low-income representation on policy boards in Government were the same as those which consumers are now demanding. As a county commissioner expressed it, "CAP gave people who hadn't had an opportunity to express problems and situations a chance to communicate with Government. Various state and local agencies needed to be told they had a responsibility to be involved with their consumers for the sake of government representation."

Another school of thought saw the major function of CAPs in delivery of services. A CAP Board member felt, "I could have the wrong conception, but I have always seen CAP as a line or delivery agency and not a staff or administrative agency."

Within the agency itself, every effort was made to include low-income people on the staff, the Board, various committees and to encourage their involvement in other community activities from town government, selectmen to school board and P.T.A. One health resource director felt, "CAP is the only place in our county where people can go and they are staffed by local people. CAP does something vitally important because it is committed to person-to-person contact in the home, school, and even the church. If you review the backgrounds of most staff people, you find they were hardship people who picked themselves up and got into positions where they could do something."

Effective community action came to mean that the poor were organized and spoke with one voice for mutual need. According to one CAP director, "The poor, like most Americans, are issue oriented. They focus on specific grievances against established institutions such as school systems, welfare agencies, and government in general. When they have been left to this approach, they have presented realistic grievances and given concrete solutions to problems." In this sense, low-income participation has made CAP a viable tool to correct social ills.

Translating the conceptual to reality, however, is not as easy outside of an agency as it is within. Many people felt CAP was a tool to upend "the system." Their tactics were geared to use the system to destroy the system. However, in a few serious political confrontations aimed at those controlling public funds, persons under fire would see CAP attempts as a threat to their power base and use political means to combat the situation.

For the most part, however, CAPs and their Boards were relatively conservative and preferred to keep a low profile. Boards defined policy and federal inspectors kept tabs on finances and program development. Little public relations was done at all outside the agency since low-income out-reach workers were used to find those in need.

If anything, the biggest disputes took place at Board meetings when low-income people clashed with "the elite."

For instance, it was reported that "militant advocates" in Portland attempted to dominate their board with rhetoric, sweat and swearing. As one ex-board member noted, "Sixty percent of the time was spent in arguing about the politics of CAP - who was on board, who could be president."

Some local officials wanted complete control over "their CAA's. The agency was seductively ripe with programs, money, and jobs which were attractive when compared to often limited surroundings. Many would-be politicians and executives who had difficulty gaining acceptance or entry elsewhere, found a home for their opinions on CAP boards.

Aside from the political infighting which arose from the presence of disparate groups, there were those who refused to accept the basic premise that the poor had a right to plan and participate in the programs which affected their lives. As one ex-board member put it, "To put someone on a board because they are poor is stupid. The Government meant well, but those people are not qualified to attain the goals they want to accomplish. They ought to get somebody trained in social work who understands the problems and has knowledge of how to go about getting things."

The poor felt differently. They were ready to be heard. They felt they were the ones best qualified to talk about poverty and its solutions. One woman who started out as a low-income person under OEO programs and eventually became a program director looked back over her eight years of service and said, "I don't give a damn how sympathetic or unsympathetic people are to 'your problems.' It isn't the same as being there."

It was also said by the director of a state agency, "It's doubtful that anyone in Maine had the technical expertise necessary to solve the problems of the poor when CAP agencies were first being formed."

Furthermore, there is evidence that when the poor were given an opportunity to prove themselves, they frequently rose to the challenge

One director involved in criminal justice planning summed up his impression rather neatly, "My feeling, in particular of low-income in CAP, is that it has given them a voice and a sense of esteem and self worth."

Whatever the shortcomings of low-income participation, there is no denying the fact that in many cases CAA's gave the poor unprecedented opportunity to plan and participate in programs. While it can't be claimed that this participation automatically improved the services offered, it undoubtedly made the services more acceptable to many more people than would otherwise have been possible. Given the sheer volume of complaints on welfare alone from both within and without that system should indicate that simply doing things for people is not necessarily an effective way of helping them.

CAP advocacy led to the creation of jobs for the poor, involvement in programs at all levels reducing apathy and alienation, put the poor in policy positions and often sent them on their own to organize their own power bases.

However, with the rise of what were called the "national emphasis" programs, many CAPs left the field of controversy and innovation, sticking to national program packages which offered the flavor of acceptability to community groups. This action often gained positive visibility and respectability. Accountability was not such a problem since what local CAP could not verify, national OEO would.

An example of such national programs was Head Start. As one director put it, "Few people have ever seriously objected to giving poor children preschool education, dental care, and hot lunches. Nor were they likely to block attempts to help the helpless old of Maine to receive similar aid under Senior Citizens programs." Such programs were immensely popular with the general public and OEO hoped to generate others like them.

The tendency to follow national programs and the resistance to change locally tended to squelch the development of innovative programs geared to local need. Some contend that this was the only viable alternative and one that afforded a stable base for operation. Once a base of success and experience had been established, CAPs were able to develop a few of their own demonstration projects. Almost every CAP in Maine now has its special "showcase" project which is unlike any other in the state, and in some cases, like no other in New England.

These programs were often gotten through funding sources other than OEO. They have covered such areas as expanded child care, rural health delivery systems, alcoholism, economic development, the outmigration of the young, and winterization of homes.

Not all of the projects undertaken as demonstrations were successful. When the experiments failed, the CAPs were criticized and reminded that here was still more proof of how little they accomplished. As one social service planner commented, "CAP people understood the innovative function but community people did not understand the pilot project or demonstration concept of CAP. They thought that a program, once launched would be continual. They were not aware of what spin-off was all about."

For this reason, CAPs had difficulty in being a social laboratory Trial and error approaches were seen as failures rather than as experiments. However, the flexibility of CAPs could still be used to great advantage for solving problems of management, design, and delivery.

The concensus of all interviewed in the course of this history was that CAPs has had a significant part in changing the attitudes and approaches of public and private welfare agencies, public employment service, school systems, and local government.

Most CAPs have had programs in existence barely four years, yet already people have reached conclusions about their efforts. Some of these conclusions are negative. None of them are based on hard data, of which there is an admitted dearth. But as there is no index to measure success, there is likewise no real index to measure failure.

Even if the most detailed reassessment of the costs and budgets of specific operation were made, it will remain difficult to measure the impact of CAP on the life of a poor person. Changes in outlook, motivation, and attitude remain difficult to quantify. Factors which appear to be causes of poverty are often merely symptoms which appear in a very complicated network of relationships.

CAPS' efforts to involve the poor have found it attacked on one side for not championing advocacy of the poor strongly enough and abused by the other side for disturbing the placid world of established procedure in public and private institutions. Since the debate on the central premises of CAPs still rages on, it may be better to look at the national emphasis programs which offer somewhat better documentation, and draw some conclusions about their effectiveness in the State of Maine.

The next section will deal with these programs: Head Start, Pine Tree Legal Services, Family Planning, Native American Programs, Manpower and Job Training, Senior Citizens, Health, Housing, and VISTA.

" A system that condemns 3.5 million children to squalor in their formative years can expect 3.5 million bitter adults disrupting normal functions of society."

4

HEADSTART

Head Start

Head Start is by far the most popular anti-poverty program to come out of Community Action. It uses highly imaginative and innovative teaching techniques to prepare impoverished preschool children for primary school experience. It was believed that such a program could compensate for the background deficiencies of many poor children and bring them closer to the level of the average middle-class youngster.

More than just another preschool kindergarden program, Head Start was also a family affair. Parents were the key agents on decision making boards, assisted in classrooms, worked with their children at home and often became active in the community. As one director felt, "Head Start is the best and most successful of our programs. It provides child care with a purpose, but it's for parents as well. It gives them something even if they can't work. Parent participation has always been important."

Oftentimes, children were the only way to reach parents who looked at CAP programs as a form of welfare. A teacher aide explained why many opted for Head Start and found themselves involved, "The children got good care and this let a lot of parents work. We're not like baby-sitters who work for money; we give good child care. Head Start reaches a lot of families not otherwise reached. Many families won't ask for help for themselves but they will for their kids. It opened a lot of doors for people."

Most people of Maine found much agreement in these basic principles. As some of them say, "Children are the most untapped resources for the good of Maine." There is a firm belief that capitalizing on the potential of these youngsters is a step toward building adults with healthy outlooks who will be able to make a contribution to society. As one businessman felt, "All programs that have to do with the young and children will more than pay for themselves in the long run. Educated, happy people don't commit crimes and collect welfare as adults."

Education is considered a prime key to opening new doors. As reflected in the comment of one nurse, "If education is as important as we say it is, then we should start with young preschool children and get them up to an average level so they won't end up behinders forever. If we started there, we could lick poverty. We would have all people working to capacity."

It was to these Maine children, Head Start addressed itself. Initially, the program was largely experimental. In order to test its effectiveness and gain gradual acceptance, Head Start was at first put into operation over the summer months. The response was

so positive in most communities and the need proved so great, that generally by the following year, the program had been set up as a year-round entity.

One need only point out a few reasons for this instant initial success. Because of its experimental nature and use of open classrooms, children were highly stimulated and receptive to the care they received. The program used large amounts of money for things which were visible and widely supported. Hot lunches, attractive classrooms, medical screening, and much individual care would prompt many to react positively. One counselor felt, "Head Start is something where you can see results and see something happening." Nor were his or other responses lost on CAP staff people: "Head Start is extremely visible in the community. Everybody has an affinity for children. The nature of the program generates community support at all levels." Thus, the program frequently had the potential for forming the shining core for CAPs which had failed to get off the ground.

Head Start may have started out to educate children but it soon came to be vital to parents. It was a true building block into the total community. As one director felt, "It was a quality program that gave comprehensive service. It brought many off welfare rolls. Much of its success was in the volunteerism of parents and good relations of CAP staff in the homes themselves. Parents felt part of the program. They made decisions about the education of their child and had representatives on policy councils. This ground floor up aspect was very valuable." As a consequence, advisory boards to the program often became a nucleus of activity. There were few squabbles among the varied people on boards unless it was for more money, ideas for programmatic expansion and improved staff capability.

Nobody needed a public relations expert or a social scientist to tell them Head Start was a hit. Every aspect of the program was carefully gone over and little waste or inefficiency could be seen by most people. This satisfied a wide spectrum of people. A board chairman noted, "Head Start was well set up, well managed and had good program directors. Results at the entrance level were substantial and measureable. This satisfied the numbers-happy people as well as the human services people."

Today, Head Start is by far the largest single component of most Maine CAPs. Because it relied heavily on staff, it accounted for two-fifths of most CAP budgets. But the demand for more funds always rose and exceeded available funds as more needed components were added.

Ironically, the sharpest critics for the program were likely to be CAP directors. Many of them felt this nationally pre-packaged gem dominated the CAP agency to the exclusion of more local needs. Some felt as if they were cornered into delivery of services and

were kept busy administering Head Start's many aspects to the exclusion of other areas of concern. Others felt hampered in funding and areas of jurisdiction. A city official who contracted for Head Start services observed, "It seems unreasonable for Head Start to have to live within regions. Child care programs are expensive and this makes them harder to sell and to get additional funds." As Head Start eased more and more into school systems in Maine, the program seemed to lose its intent to help the poor in particular and was touted as a great program for everybody's children, i.e., it became middle-class oriented.

The health, nutritional and educational assistance of Head Start has reached children in Maine. These children come from deprived backgrounds and broken homes. Nearly half come from families that were or are on welfare or whose father was absent from the home. Nearly one-quarter, in addition to the burden of being poor, are handicapped to some degree. One director noted, "We have increasingly dealt with the handicapped and special education and take referrals from local schools. Last year 40% of the children enrolled were in this category; 95% of them were low income." Those identifiably handicapped may be crippled, suffering from multiple sclerosis, polio or other ailments. Some are retarded in varying degrees. Others have speech or hearing defects. Most have received inadequate health care and have poor diets which make it impossible for them to be alert and attentive in school.

The isolation of poor families in Maine is so great that social development of many of these children is drastically behind most children. One director elaborated this point, "Head Start provides a direct, needed service. We took one boy on a field trip to the ocean. The child got out of the van and began to scream hysterically. It turned out he had never seen the ocean before even though he lived only two miles from the coast. Such developmental delay is seen in many children who have limited socialization with others." One teacher spoke of a child who had never seen another child his age. Many children must be shown how to play because such instruction was missing in the home or because there were no toys. A bookkeeper pointed out that, "Some people have such large families they don't have enough time to devote to each child. They're worn out from work. Head Start gives their children the elementary things they need to know."

It must not be construed that these elementary skills are anything but just that. A Chamber of Commerce head explained that benefits of exposure to socialization by indicating that, "Some of them couldn't even handle a knife and fork. Head Start prepared them not only for school but the fundamentals of living."

Despite the great need to assist children caught in such circumstances, many parents are reluctant to allow their children to participate. One director explained, "We had one case of a family that lived in a tar-paper shack, no heat, no electricity. The children were inadequately dressed and the child in question had

head lice. The State said they would have to move in if some action wasn't taken. But the family refused Head Start because, 'We don't take welfare'."

A number of persons resented the extremes to which the attitude of independence may be carried. A town manager felt the stress on the poor to be independent and to force this posture by cutting back or refusing assistance would have dire consequences, "People will have to learn that as much as they dislike some of the poor, it is the children who will suffer. With the current stress on saving money, I expect to see a few children die because holding back assistance money is more important than helping people." Another man in health resources was frustrated in conquiring this attitude in parents of poor children, "You can't let a child suffer for the attitudes of parents who are too proud and independent to ask for help. It's no longer pride but stupidity."

Because Head Start attempts to concentrate on meeting the individual needs of each child, there is a high teacher-student ratio. Most classrooms have a professional teacher for 15-20 children. These teachers may be assisted by from one to two classroom aides who try to supplement teaching instruction. The use of such sub-professionals and in some cases volunteers may produce a ratio of one adult for every five children.

The employment of parents as aides on a volunteer or semiprofessional basis is an unique innovation of Head Start. Most of them are mothers of children who participate in the programs. It is this aspect which makes Head Start more personal than the schoolroom. As one woman noted, "It involves parents and this helps early identification of problems before it's too late. It's geared to personal involvement and outreach extends this into homes." The exposure of parents to the classroom secures their cooperation. This has beneficial spillovers into the homes where enlightened parents may gain new perspective on child rearing and cause them to become more interested in the future schooling of their children.

This carry-over has caused many of them to become more active in PTA and often spreads into other community activities as well. Such moves are the result of newfound independence and a spirit of confidence. As one low-income spokesman felt, "Head Start put the low income on in teaching positions. It definitely did good because many of those people are now working on their own. CAP was a first step. After you take that step, you're not as afraid to take others. If you're undereducated and poor, you often don't have the gall to take that step. You want to stand on your own two feet and not be dependent. In CAP, someone was there to tell you to 'help yourself' and show you how to be independent."

Once put in the position of instructing others, many parents may see some of their own educational shortcomings and seek to correct them. Desire must be strong because the obstacles are formidable. A director stressed this by saying, "Most people in our programs are unemployed or under-employed. I checked the percentage of educational background and saw most had seventh grade educations." Most parents make use of special courses in homemaking or take advantage of services in nutrition and health care.

A few have had the desire to become professionals in their own right and have gone on to use WIN, Mainstream and other job training programs to gain job skills and in some cases, college degrees.

Head Start's medical and screening component bridges the wide gaps of knowledge or resources which most poor people lack to give their children adequate medical attention. Head Start programs attempt to correct or alleviate medical problems of dental care, hearing and sight.

Those records which have been kept show that most poor are in serious need of medical help. A director of health resources center stated, "National rankings place Maine fiftieth of all the states in terms of dental care." Most Head Start children had never been to a dentist before. Every new child receives a kit containing among other things a toothbrush and toothpaste. Instruction is given on how to use these. But often what is needed is a dentist.

While CAP screening has discovered the often unseen problems of tuberculosis, heart disease, anemia, malnutrition, it was often difficult to get the necessary follow-up medical assistance. Doctors and dentists have been slow to accept any variations in their established roles. This has meant that even with Head Start, children were subject to fragmented, discontinuous health care which was only sporadically recorded. In some cases, doctors and dentists were limited in the treatments they could provide outside of a hospital or office setting.

One positive highlight has been the combined efforts in lead screening and medicaid under a program called Health Start. Primarily a screening program, it has had beneficial spillovers to other agencies. As its director noted, "Health Start received national recognition as a successful pilot, out of which came the Medicaid screen. We were the first in the State to have it and were instrumental in training other agencies in development and generating resources for operating elsewhere in the State."

However, in the area of mental health screening, the majority of Maine CAPs have not been able to make much headway. Many of the children suffer from severe psychological problems as a consequence of deprivation. The involvement of psychologists and trained social workers has been rather limited, even while most program directors are aware that the poor are more prone to mental illness and periods of deep depression.

Head Start centers offer at least one hot meal a day, usually at noon. Often there may be additional snacks and a few schools have breakfast programs. This aspect is no small consideration and is intimately tied to development. One woman commented, "I've been poor all my life, but you don't know how bad things are until you visit some of these homes where children don't know what it is to have a square meal. Sometimes Head Start was the only hot meal these children had in a day." These meals are planned by a nutritionist and parents are often given instruction in diet and food preparation so there will be carry-over in the home.

It is clear that Head Start is multi-faceted. It is geared to exposing an impoverished child to as many positive experiences as he can assimilate and to strengthening his mind and body for the challenge of entering school.

Parents have helped form ties to the community as well as their children. Initially, the situation was, as one woman put it, "At first, there were more administrators than low-income families. Now it's reversed. Head Start really is run by low-income people. They can relate better that way. The director and some of the aides have worked themselves up and into positions only the highly educated could get before."

Low income representatives were to be found in the classrooms, the board meetings, and in the administration of CAP. This afforded them contact with community officials who, for the first time, learned to listen and work with the poor. Half of the committee members in Head Start were parents of children in the program. They frequently questioned school boards who were not used to challenges of their teaching methods and structure. Said one director, "At first, it was hard to sell educators. Now they come to us. We're already registered for next year. This shows a change in climate and the success of the program. With staff and parents working together, there was a closeness which the school system couldn't help but notice. If we ever lost this involvement, we'd be just another classroom."

In Maine, initial resistance to Head Start approaches has softened. Many of the ideas generated for the poor in Head Start are now being used in elementary classrooms. The use of teacher aides, assistants and volunteer mothers has caught on in a few towns. Many school systems which clung tenaciously to traditional education methods have begun to find more ways to reach children and to experiment with new approaches.

Given the relatively good relations of people on Head Start boards, it would be hoped that this could lead to more involvement of Head Start within the school system. Although many justifiably feel that parental involvement may be lost, the current freeze on Head Start programs has kept most of them at the same point for three years. There are far too many children who have applied to join the program and have been turned down. Numerous directors felt as did one, "We always have more demand for services that we can provide." There are usually two to three times as many applications for Head Start as there are openings. Preference is given to the most needy. The program can't hope to reach all Maine children, but if it is hurt by any more cutbacks and cannot pick up local financing, it will simply die.

As one farmer put it, "The trouble with Head Start is that it's like throwing down two candy bars in a schoolyard."

There are those who interpret this remark as an indication of Head Start's failure to accomplish its purpose. It was rather surprising to hear a few individuals who admitted they were not that

familiar with the program saying, "Well, everyone knows it's a failure nationally." What these people are referring to are the scientific studies in which it was shown that the initial gains Head Start gave poor children were generally lost by the second grade. Whether this is a "failure" of Head Start or of the school system is debatable. As one lawyer viewed it, "The school system is lousy. Head Start at least prepares children to cope with the problems they will meet. There has been somewhat of a change in the school system. They're more open and less given to rigid rows and ideas. I still want mothers to come in as aides into the public schools, but the schools here aren't using it or don't want to."

The extension of Head Start programs into the elementary level can help children to maintain their advances. Schools are more receptive than they once were. One CAP teacher aide notes, "Schools now welcome Head Start where it used to be a dirty word." A low-income woman felt the changes would be too gradual, "Head Start really helped a lot of kids, but they don't get the follow-up they need into kindergarten. It has to continue its influence or it loses effect. You don't have to change the school system, just a few attitudes. Everything is geared to middle and upper-class children from tests to courses. The poor flunk not because of intelligence but because of the effects of their cultural and environmental background. It will be a long time before they change this. I'll never benefit from the programs but perhaps my kids and grandchildren will."

Studies do show that children made significant educational advancements under Head Start. IQs have gone up, along with social and physical skills. The fact that Head Start cannot correct six years of impoverishment in one year should surprise no one. The trouble is many people would like Head Start to be a panacea for social ills.

Head Start does not attempt to make miraculous transformations. Yet, it remains a fact that Head Start children are more motivated and responsive than their non-Head Start counterparts. More support is needed to see that the advantages they have gained in one brief year get continued reinforcement throughout their early school years. Such enrichment would protect these children against the slippage which some connote as failure. The preschool education under Head Start must be followed by appropriate educational experiences of good quality in subsequent years.

No matter how one looks at Head Start, it is impossible to conclude that it was a failure. It has mobilized the resources and thinking of educators and administrators to the needs of poor children. It has shaped and fitted a program package which shows what is needed to help overcome the handicaps of these children. It has been a positive challenge to outmoded school systems and to those who lacked the understanding, concern or commitment for the poor. It should be judged by the changes it has wrought rather than be skeptically viewed for not making an ideal a reality.

"Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime."

Aristotle

5

LEGAL SERVICES THE POOR & THE LAW

Legal Services - The Poor and the Law

Few of the assaults on the real sources of poverty would have been possible without the legal inroads made by Pine Tree Legal Services.

They were and are one of the few agencies to provide a full spectrum of legal services to those in Maine who are unable to afford a lawyer. Pine Tree realized fully that the poor and the law are constant companions.

Before the inception of Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc. in June, 1966, there were only the most minimal services available to those who could not afford to pay. The poor had to endure the injustice of imprisonment for debt, denial of voting rights, landlord-tenant problems, wage garnishments for unpaid debt, excessive credit terms, and abusive medical practices. Outside of a few individual lawyers, there was no place for a poor person to take his legal grievances.

Nationally, the idea of legal services for the poor came at a time when there was growing interest in criminal procedures. As seen in the landmark of Miranda vs. Arizona, safeguarding the rights of indigents became new ground to break for civil liberties.

Effective advocacy for the needs of the poor was viewed as a way of instilling dignity and responsibility in defining rights. Significantly, once legal analysis and representation were directed toward reform, many of the root causes of poverty were shaken. Where the law was vague, uncertain or complex, the efforts of Pine Tree lawyers cleared it. This frequently resulted in wide gains for the poor and resulted in some strong reactions when the legal questions were decided against traditional institutions. Yet the achievements of legal services in Maine were won gradually.

Pine Tree first opened a Portland office in the summer of 1967, after a year-long process of incorporating. Unlike many other states, such as Florida, Pine Tree had the support of the Maine Bar Association which gave the organization its initial funding. The Governor, the Attorney General, members of the Legislature, businessmen and many other citizens of Maine recognized the need for services to the poor and gave their endorsement.

The need was great and within a few months, one-man offices had been started in Bangor, Rockland, Waterville, Skowhegan, Lewiston and Machias. That year, Pine Tree accepted 1,039 cases and 83 were taken to court.

As one lawyer described this formative phase, "We didn't have much in the way of organized services. Most of our work was in service cases and routine legal problems. These were things like divorce, landlord-tenant problems, consumer grievances and welfare complaints, both state and local."

Within a short time, however, Pine Tree saw the need for law reform. It established as policy the need for a certain percentage of legal activity to be devoted to test cases. It was believed that achievements in this area would affect whole groups of people rather than just individuals. At the start of the 1970's, Pine Tree picked up momentum in this area. They brought cases to court, and they won consistently. One lawyer reminisced, "At the start, we couldn't lose a case... They fell like dominoes. Fair treatment welfare reform, residency requirements were all ripe to go. We made significant legal victories. The Courts have brought Maine law to within a generation."

Even more conservation members of the Bar agreed that "the high point was in the first years of the '70's. The experimental programs were unique. It was at that point we were doing a lot to reach the poor and raise awareness."

Pine Tree's first big law suit was against Health and Welfare for a system of maximum grants and budgets. Under this system, Health and Welfare would agree to pay an $80 maximum for a family with eight children plus $100 from other sources. If the family had over eight children, they were cut. Pine Tree took the case to court under the theory that this was a denial of equal protection under the law to larger families. They won.

One Pine Tree lawyer who joined the staff at this time pointed out, "When I first came to Maine (1970), they had debtor's prison and wage attachments. But it wasn't long before the federal court ruled unconstitutional the practice of imprisoning for debt and for failure to pay child support."

Prior to this, a system of collection existed in which suits were brought against the poor who had no means to defend themselves. Default judgements enforced collection via attached wages or the disclosure process. The latter route meant the person involved received a subpoena to appear in court to tell his assets and turn over those not exempt from law. Sometimes this could be worked out for a small fee, but more often the people under subpoena were afraid or did not understand the procedure, not having a lawyer, so they did not appear at court. They were then arrested. Federal courts ruled that this system violated due process and was in blatant violation of the Constitution.

Imprisonment for failure to pay child support or a lawyer under a divorce decree also came under attack. Often, after a divorce was granted, the man would not appear to pay support. The wife was forced to take him to court in order to get a settlement. Many men would not

appear because they couldn't pay a lawyer much less support, so the local officials would put them in jail to pressure them for payment. Although this was common practice in 19th century England, Federal court ruled that in the U.S., it denied due process.

Welfare fraud was another area of concern. One lawyer pointed out how the system worked, "Welfare fraud, which is a part of the Department of Audit, often tried to collect from the poor illegally. Those receiving ADC benefits were told to sign notes for repayment and threatened with jail sentences if they did not do so. This got a lot of money for fraud." These inequities were corrected by the Attorney General without court action. New procedures were initiated, the note was changed and recipients were allowed to see lawyers. Once put into the position of consulting with the poor, Pine Tree lawyers would comment, "For the most part, there is no actual fraud. Health and Welfare simply did not do an adequate check. We found out why one man who they accused of falsely filling out an application did so. He was blind." As far as this law was concerned, his experience with fraud led him to conclude, "There is a myth about welfare fraud. I've seen very little of it."

There were many other inroads made by Pine Tree, not the least of which was striking down laws which prevented those receiving assistance from voting.

One low-income woman who has since gone on to become a teacher aide told about how she found out about such ordinances, "I was so excited the first time I went to vote. Nothing had gone right so far. At 21 my husband had left me with three kids and I couldn't find a job--but I could vote. But when I went to the polls, carrying by kids, I was told I couldn't vote because I was on the 'pauper list'. That's all I was to them, a pauper."

Despite the large numbers of cases won on behalf of the poor, Maine enjoyed good relationships with the members of the legal profession, the legislators and others. A Pine Tree lobbyist explained one reason why this was so, "We are not a very controversial program. We sue on valid issues and we win. Our interpretation of the law has been correct." He also added, "Sometimes we feel that because we are not controversial, we are not getting at the root causes of poverty."

Other sources felt Pine Tree had been able to show tangible and definite benefits which contributed to its success. By 1973, Pine Tree had accepted 30,958 cases and took 5,897 of these cases to court. When evaluations were done, it was discovered that Maine was the only state-wide legal service of its kind in the nation. The majority of other legal organizations concentrated in a particular city or area in order to accomplish their aims.

The staff dedication was cited as further evidence. Although the average legal salary was $9,500, an extremely low fee considering what could be made at even a slightly prestigious law firm, Pine Tree usually attracted capable lawyers. One law professor spoke of a national evaluation he had been a part of, "When we conducted our survey, we discovered that the program had one of the better reputations in the

country. Pine Tree has good lawyers working for it. It is well-recognized by others. In most other states, the legal services program is either at war with the Bar, disliked or barely tolerated. The Maine Bar is solidly behind Pine Tree."

One lawyer felt that the function of watchdog for the poor, "Had accomplished something more than in terms of money for the poor. Abusive practices and oppression were prevented. It made their lives a little better and freer. It left them less disrupted."

However, there was not that much familiarity with Pine Tree outside of the circles lawyers traditionally travel. Nor was the involvement of poor on the Board considered great, although the Board, by regulation had to be half low-income. Not being versed in legal matters nor as articulate as lawyers the poor tended to concentrate their efforts on getting know-how via para-legal positions. Many became investigators or worked their way to such positions via clerical jobs.

One protest which came from low-income was when the Pine Tree Board decided to cut back the day-to-day cases on divorce and bankruptcy in favor of reform measures. Low-income representatives felt the day-to-day settlements were what they wanted most. The matter was addressed in time by allowing para-professionals to handle more and more of the routine work involved in divorce and bankruptcy proceedings.

There were also some traditional frictions. Lawyers were sometimes viewed by the poor as rich and establishment even if they were there to "help them." They were skeptical. One lawyer explained why he felt Pine Tree lawyers were caught in a double bind by saying, "The poor are hard to work for. Whenever someone gets a service for free, they don't respect it as much as when they pay somebody. Some of the clients would start up a case, then drop it flat. They don't care because it didn't cost them anything. You are still considered one of the money people and the poor can be abusive in their own kind of way."

Pine Tree did not maintain especially close ties with CAPs. Other states have generally had offices within a CAP agency to facilitate case handling, but Pine Tree chose to establish itself as a separate entity. Although referrals are given by CAP, the figure cited for both CAP and Health and Welfare referrals was 15%.

Many people became upset when legal services began to prosecute state welfare agencies for inequities. As a legislative assistant summed it up, "Many people question the philosophy of government funding suits against itself. Others see the service as OK, but Pine Tree shouldn't try to change society."

Some observers have felt that legal changes were necessary to institute attitude changes. Unless the legal precedents were available to pressure changes, poor people might have waited another 100 years. As a Pine Tree lobbyist expressed this viewpoint, "Some people feel we are on their back all the time. We feel that if you can't change the attitudes of some of these people, you change the law." The evidence of change as a result of public relations versus

change as a result of changing law, tends to support this latter tactic in Maine.

Unfortunately, the budget of Pine Tree Legal has been frozen at the same level of funding for nearly four years. From a peak of activity and twenty-five lawyers, Pine Tree has been forced to cut back the number of its offices and staff. It has not been able to keep up with either inflation or its heavy burden of cases.

Some people interviewed felt there would always be a need for legal services to the poor. Others felt the need for day-to-day cases would always be present, but that the day of victories in court would be relatively few. A private lawyer who had retired from Pine Tree because he believed this pointed out, "The War on Poverty as waged in the courts has run its course. The best that lawyers can do now is represent common, ordinary problems. From now on, poverty will be a legislative, a political battle."

Already Pine Tree has geared up to explore new areas of convern, many of which can no doubt have more political repercussions than in past. Examples mentioned included expansion into criminal law and reform, public defender programs, prisoner representation for those with grievances inside prisons, and so on.

At present, Pine Tree has also moved in the direction of representing "client" groups. Counsel is given to United Low Income, We Who Care, and other low-income groups on how to present bills which they feel represent vital needs of their interest groups. This has caused a stir among many legislators, a great many of whom are not lawyers. They maintain, "I can represent low income. I can speak for them."

This attitude finds wide support in the general public. It is reflected by the sentiments of one town manager, "I'm anti-lobby. I don't like pressure groups. People should be represented by the legislature." However, the majority of those interviewed also felt that all people were not equally represented, so that a lobby was viewed as a necessary evil. Yet when asked if the poor in particular should be represented by a lobby, responses were received such as, "The poor should have the same rights as anyone else to representation" and "The poor shouldn't be represented. A lobby is a vested interest and I'm opposed to those" to "I'm not convinced the legislative process is where the answer lies other than for funding and for establishing programs" to "I'm in favor of lobbies because industries are greatly needed in these two counties."

It was clear from such comments that many people did not actually understand what a lobby was or how it functioned. Many mixed up the concept of elected representatives with special interests. They did not appear to understand that lobbies are useful as information sources in getting both funding and programs via legislation. They tended to view lobbies negatively or strictly in terms of existing lobbies such as those provided by big business.

They also did not appear to be aware that Pine Tree frequently advised and assisted low-income groups in lobby efforts. Those who were aware that some steps had been taken in this direction were concerned about the nature of the existing lobby, "Do those groups really represent the poor? It's all too easy to exploit and abuse the poor. There are a lot of dangers present." Others were more concerned about tactics used and the level of skill shown by low-income groups, "I think a poor people's lobbyist stands out as a poor people's lobbyist." Connected with this was the fear that branding the lobby as "poor" would have deleterious rather than beneficial effects, "I don't favor a poor lobby because I do not see them as a separate class of people. It is a mistake to isolate classes of people." A few were against the idea of a poor lobby unless the poor paid for it themselves. Some felt no matter how much money the poor were able to put out, that they could never match big business or compete at that level.

It appeared that those who favored a lobby for the poor were more politically active themselves or involved in some phase of government operation. Their view might be summed up by one consultant as, "Poor people need legislative change," and the vehicle for such change was seen in a lobby. However, this lobby had certain functions. While it was agreed that "the poor have a right to the same inputs in various programs as much as other citizens," the lobby was also to be used "to show the legislative process to the low income and elderly." Most low-income people were in favor of a lobby because "the poor need to speak. If they don't speak for themselves, nobody else will." Others concur that the poor need advocacy for their goals.

Few people who favored the lobby could support the notion that legislators know best. Many of them pointed out that the part-time nature of the legislature and exceedingly small research staffs, left most legislators with insufficient knowledge on the problems of any particular group of people. Nor was the legislator's position likely to bring them into contact with many poor. As one state official pointed out, "Generally, the people making the laws are not poor and don't have real awareness of what the poor see as their problems."

The changes of the last ten years favor a stronger move in this direction. All arguments seem to be laid to rest by the remark of one county commissioner, "Ten years ago I was against lobbying, but now I believe it provides many facts related to problems that the average legislator just does not have."

It is in this last point that most people will agree with the efforts of Pine Tree and low-income groups throughout the State. However, from the variety of responses indicated, it will be an uphill battle on many fronts to act in this capacity.

This challenge will have to be met in the coming years and will call for additional support at all levels, including State government.

"The very poor are damaged in body, mind and spirit; their children are condemned to poverty—from malnutrition and poor health, to inadequate education and training, to joblessness—in short, to a future that mocks the promise of American life."

Second Annual Report
of the National Advisory Council
on Economic Opportunity, 1969

6

HEALTH

Health

It is impossible to ignore the significance of good health for any person. For the poor, it is even more crucial. They will experience poor health more than any other segment in Maine, yet will have far less chance for relief.

Health is spoken of as a key factor making it possible for poor families to take full advantage of educational and employment opportunities. Yet, it will be a long time before such aims can be realized in the State of Maine.

Adequate health care is one of the top problem areas for the poor. Statistics may often fool the layman into believing that things are progressing. In Maine, more poor live in rural areas and it is in the rural areas that the highest deficit in health care is shown. Counties such as Washington, Waldo, Franklin, Aroostook, Piscataquis, and Hancock have insufficient numbers of doctors and dentists. Although hospitals may be available for use by paying citizens, they are frequently limited in service area and many times do not afford easy access to the poor. The poor in such areas must get by with as few visits to medical sources as possible. One woman explained why, "We really need health insurance. I can't afford to take the kids to a doctor. I wait until they get really sick or I get afraid. You think to yourself, 'Well we can tough it out.' Even if I went to a doctor, I couldn't afford the drugs so the kids still don't get the care needed."

A dispropirtionate number of poor are elderly. They have neither the money nor the transportation needed for medical care. Expensive drugs which may be prescribed when a poor person gets into a doctor's office often are not bought because the prices are prohibitive.

Preventive medical attention is considered a luxury by most poor people. Generally, they wait until illness is advanced to a critical stage before seeking any kind of help. One medical director emphasized this by saying, "There is no health care for the working poor and they have to wait until the last minute." A colleague pointed out that often last-minute help is too late, "I know of one baby that died of pneumonia because the parents were afraid to take it to the hospital. They hadn't paid the bill for its delivery yet."

Frequently, the poor wish to work despite infirmities but have physical and mental health handicaps which make it difficult for them to be hired. As one disabled woman put it, "If there was any way to meet the requirements for my assistance and work too, I would. I have phlebitis, like Nixon, only he can afford to sit at home."

Although medical resources are limited, few poor are aware of programs available to them. Often medical facilities are located too far away, especially for the elderly.

Poor nutrition contributes to the deterioration of health. One medical program director stated, "There was a 24% incidence in one town of anemia. This related to a lack of iron and a diet which consisted of mashed potatoes, fried salt pork and gravy." Often poor nutrition is aggravated into illness when it is combined with poor housing. A program supervisor recalled, "I had a case where poor health was caused by lack of suitable housing. With one family in town, all the children got pneumonia because of poor housing and insufficient heat."

OEO/CAPs, in dealing with such a massive problem, were limited in the avenues they could take to remedy the situation.

Health programs require massive funding for medical services and for the expensive equipment and clinics. Other areas of interest such as housing competed for funds, making it difficult to get sufficient amounts for programs. Even when money was available, it was not clear where funds within the health area should be allocated.

Initially, there was no great emphasis on comprehensive health care at the national level. CAPs usually had a health component as part of another program or as a specialized service. Thus, there might be ear and eye screening, immunization clinics, prenatal care or nutrition courses but no overall strategy for comprehensive health care for the poor was put forward.

Not only was the expense great, but often the politics of the situation proved touchy. Doctors are an essential to any health program, yet many of them were antagonistic to health programs, fearing they would take away business. Many doctors felt they could not take time away from their practice to contribute services on the scale that was needed or necessary. One director noted why efforts in his agency failed to produce desired results, "We tried to develop advocacy in our health delivery system, but were not able. The medical profession is least inclined to accept from consumers as to what their needs are or what the poor would like to have."

In 1965, OEO encouraged the development of a four-point model for comprehensive health centers for CAPs. The model covered the following points: (1) a full range of ambulatory health services, (2) close liaison with other community services, (3) close working relationships with a hospital, preferably with a medical school affiliation, (4) participation of the indigenous population in decision making that affected the center and, where possible, their employment in subprofessional and other positions.

Only one CAP has succeeded in meeting most of these basic guidelines, and that one is Franklin County. Under the auspices of the CAP there, Rural Health A-sociates (RHA) was formed. It is the only truly comprehensive health care delivery system in the State of Maine in which CAP has played an active part. Both the poor and local

officials commented favorably. One town official felt, "A lot of those who come to us need help with health. Quite often when they are having a hard time, we call CAP because no one knows them there and because they have terrific outreach workers who know the families and problems. It's not just a job with them." Although RHA is now separate from its original funding agency, the initial problems which were encountered fulfilling each guideline were surmounted with the assistance of CAP. Today, RHA is growing and it is also attracting many capable doctors to that county.

However difficult it has been for CAP to overcome the problems of health delivery, there have been some programs of great success.

One of these is Family Planning. Nationally, there was great hesitancy to get into this area. Until a few years ago, CAPs could not promote birth control via mass media, could not dispense contraceptive devices to unmarried women or married women who did not live with their husbands. It was not until Congress stepped in to pass legislation making all poor eligible to receive information and supplies that Family Planning made much headway in Maine.

The Family Planning Program has been universally acclaimed by town managers and local welfare directors as beneficial. This may stem from concern, "Most poor have more children than the family wants or can provide for. In today's society, lack of proper food or poor health creates poverty adults who repeat the cycle," or it may stem from frustration, "It's a great program. Send us information on birth control. I'm sick and tired of people getting pregnant around here."

It is only when Family Planning workers have attempted to educate within the school system that strong reaction has been generated. One Family Planning director explained, "Schools vary greatly. In some, you can't show birth control devices, others won't let you in the door and some have had classes since 1968." One health resource director obviously rankled by this attitude of hypocrisy in his area said, "Franklin County has the highest illegitimacy rate in the nation, yet we have people in these towns who simply will not let Family Planning into their schools."

Although there is resistance in this particular area, most people rate the efficiency and effectiveness of family planning high. Most CAPs can substantiate via the numbers served, health anomalies detected, pregnancies prevented, etc. that "Family planning in particular has provided ability to control fertility which the poor never had before. Many of them can get stuck in a rut right at the beginning of their lives."

Most people working in the Family Planning Program see their value beyond that of an agency which dispenses contraceptives. For many women and children, Family Planning is the first step toward "medical attention, education and awareness of health needs." Cancer detection, prenatal care, physical checkups for mother and children, and nutrition programs are all part of most Family Planning units. Family Planning was effective in other respects. Outreach workers were highly instrumental in reaching many of those who needed help.

One director noted, "We determined when we started that we had 6,600 eligible people in our county. Over the life of our program, we have reached that many."

Greater cooperation was received from the nursing as well as medical profession who saw a need and were interested in alleviating it. A Family Planning head commented, "We had a good, close relationship with the Public Nursing group. We had good cooperation with rural physicians, although city physicians haven't participated." Such mutual assistance led to the development of childbirth classes, counseling, child development courses, venereal disease prevention and classes in reproduction.

The stress on education and preventive measures has not only caught on with agencies, but also with the poor. More of them want to introduce health education into the school system, as did one man in a rural area, "They do nothing in the school on health education and preventive measures. Hygiene courses should be required in school. They take care of you when you're dying, but little else. Health seems to be something we're not involved in at all.

Family Planning has often meant a first step toward better health. A selectman felt, "Family Planning should be the most important single program to help break the poverty cycle. Health programs have made a big change in the lives of low-income families.

At this point, however, most people seek a more comprehensive approach to meet a full range of problems instead of dealing with separate agencies for each ailment. As put by one supervisor, "It annoys me that the CAP organization, when it speaks of health, can only come up with Family Planning. I want to see a low-income health clinic here, but HMOs are at least 10 years off and we have a lot of ground to cover."

Others feel the emphasis of Family Planning will wane in time unless more effort is made to reach a wider audience. This may mean the inclusion of men, extension into consumer issues, and the inclusion of the middle class. A home economics educator felt, "The scope at present is too limited. We should get into consumer issues as well--medical cost, drugs, competency, etc. The emphasis on reproduction will lose impact and no headway is possible unless men and boys are involved. It's always been a female thing to plan families. They'd better change tactics, that's for sure."

Many Family Planning Agencies have taken this cue and departed from CAP to set up their own organizations. They have expanded their programs into the middle class via sliding scale fees. Many of the directors of such programs feel, "We won't be able to survive by staying small and identifying only with low income." Others feel hampered by CAP association, saying, "I want to get out from under. It's hard enough bucking birth control to also have to buck the CAP image. I think we're feeding their mouths."

This attitude reveals the current trend in many Family Planning Agencies to want to reach increasingly large groups of people who are not included under CAP. It is also a characteristic attitude shown

when Family Planning has reached a certain point in its programmatic growth and is ready to be spun off as an agency in its own right.

The greatest fear voiced against this trend is that the poor will be forgotten in the process of growth.

Still, there are many areas of the State where Family Planning has yet to be started. It will be in such areas that the remarks of one mother will have meaning, "CAP gave us services on things we otherwise could not have. In our case, it was health. Birth control was out of the question before. We simply couldn't afford it."

CAP achievements in health care for children in Maine are also notable. Most CAPs through Head Start provided preliminary medical examinations for children. One woman felt, "The CAP health mobile did help a lot of children. You do pay a partial fee, but if it hadn't been for them, you couldn't have gotten your kids so much as a physical." Great emphasis continues to be put on dental care. Northern Kennebec, Piscataquis, Penobscot, Sagadahoc, and Aroostook had special programs or arrangements with local agenciws to have cavities and dental adjustments made on children in their programs. Not all attempts were successful. One county commissioner said, "We could never get dental care going in the county to where it was effective. We had studies that showed the great need. One account said Maine people had bad teeth because of untreated water. Another felt clay in the water contributed to tooth decay." Others were more successful. York County had a pediatric screening mobile unit which went out to rural areas. Recently, York joined efforts with an Extension Service Health Mobile, Nutrition Research Program which tests for anemia, obesity, leukemia, cholesterol and so on. This is all part of an Expanded Child Care Health Service, one of four demonstration projects in the United States.

The State Economic Opportunity Office expanded the concept of good nutrition into established school systems via a Breakfast Program. Using seed money from federal sources, breakfasts for indigent children were given in elementary schools. Through contracts put out with the Education Department, the program grew from 1,100 to 4,000 children within the year and gained acceptance in more and more schools. The success of the program led the Maine Legislature to appropriate $160,000 to continue its efforts.

Adults have not fared as well in the types of health programs offered to them. An area of growing concern is with alcoholism. CAP initiated programs have been developed in Aroostook and Waldo counties. Using a grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the Waldo CAP started an alcoholism program in 1972. Its director commented that, "The alcohol problem is horrendous. Alcohol related arrests are high in this area. All the social service agencies in the area were glad we came into being. Low-income people can't relate to traditional 'Come to my office at 3:00 p.m.' institutions. We do a lot of outreach and home visits."

Yet despite such gains, the situation for health care still remains as one health director put it, "Our efforts for health care and education have not found funding. Out of the 5,000 families that

passed through here, in not one instance was there a case where health wasn't a factor. But we can neither find money nor staff."

Or, as one retired lawyer put it, "Health programs" Don't have any."

"I will fight no more forever."

Chief Joseph Nez Perce

7

NATIVE AMERICANS

Native Americans

Maine Indians have been in a unique position. Unlike the huge Indian nations of the southwest which have long had both historical and legal ties with the federal government, Maine Indians came under no federal jurisdiction. They were free except for the three reservations which came under the auspices of the State of Maine. The State never had much contact with the Indian people and, although a Bureau of Indian Affairs was created, initially there were no Indians running it or its programs.

CAPs, if nothing else, helped to change this pattern of white dominance by bringing the concept of self-determination to Indians who wanted to make it a reality. As one individual expressed it, "The Indians never had been given a chance to run their own programs until CAP came along. It was probably the best contribution CAP ever made."

As a result of the CAP programs, which were primarily limited to job training, one former director felt that, "Awareness of Indians was much heightened. I saw more positive attitudes, concern with developing leadership, more pride in ownership and jobs, despite the prejudice which existed outside the reservation."

This assessment was made with full knowledge of the difficulties CAP had encountered. Initial management under whites found no reception in the Indian community. When Indians were put in charge of programs, there was frequently confusion. Reservations suffered from isolation and lacked any formal infra-structure. Thus there was often no one to consult on financial matters and little business organization. One school board member looked back on the experience and noted, "I've always felt and still feel that the biggest need is administrative leadership and training. You can have the best intentions, but you need business technique to get results". Most other Indians agreed that financial management had posed great problems in getting CAPs on its feet. They also felt that it was unfair to ask Indians to become self-sufficient when little or no training was given to overcome the problems involved. Nonetheless, the significance of having even a limited job training program available did not escape them. One supervisor, when asked what he liked best about the program said, "Working".

Political development in the tribe corresponded closely with the development of the CAP for one obvious reason. In the beginning the person who was elected Tribal Governor automatically became CAP

director. CAP provided the only salaries on the reservation. "Without CAP funds the Governor would not be able to devote full-time to handling local affairs", one Indian noted. The obvious drawback to this approach was that politics became an intrinsic part of the CAP program. "It caused internal differences and prohibited program growth. Eventually after the Indian CAP funding was transferred from OEO to HEW, the Office of Native American Programs decided on separate grant programs." All Indian battles eventually got back to what one program director stated, "I haven't found anybody on the reservation who ever topped $10,000 in earnings." Such a salary was the most to which even a Tribal Governor could aspire.

The conditions which created such facts are rather grim. Most whites feel the economic situation is dangerously bad when unemployment is at 8%. Indians live with the employment situation described by one Governor, "We have 39% unemployment on the reservation plus 11% underemployment. The lack of jobs involves discrimination. It also stems from the fact that industries in which Indians could find work - shoe factories, fisheries, construction, wood-cutting - are fading in importance, relying more and more on technology when they aren't being hit by inflation."

Contributing to the problem is the inadequate education which most Indians have received. No reservation has a high school and the elementary school preparation on the reservation was insufficient. Most Indians went out into the white world for the first time only when they were old enough to go to high school. The culture shock was often greater than the lack of preparation. As one Governor noted, "When we got to high school, we didn't know what was going on. Up until then, it was all catechism and coloring". Parental ties to Indian culture were an influence as well. One woman recalled, "According to my father, the worst thing you can do to children is educate them, because then they grow up knowing what they're missing. Younger Indians say you have to get an education in order to stand up for your rights."

The new influence has gained Maine Indians greater attendance at high school and more interest is developing in entrance at the college level. Said one woman who went to the Southwest for her college degree, "Back in the 40's and 50's there were no graduates from college, now graduates come back and try to help." From 1955 to 1965 one reservation turned out two high school graduates. Today 9 outof 10 Indians attending high school on that reservation will graduate.

Yet the demands of modern industry make more and more job training necessary even for high school graduates. It was for this purpose CAP eas set up on the reservation as a limited purpose agency. Project Mainstream initiated under CAP was supposed to train Indians for jobs. Its success off the reservation was limited. One director attributed this to "training meant for work off the reservation did not include job placement. It merely raised false expectations." This resulted in efforts to establish jobs on its reservations. A basket coop was not successful in that the people involved couldn't produce enough to live on without some subsidy", was the feeling of one man whose views were shared by the rest. Now

Indians have begun to think in terms of creating jobs on the reservation. Their thinking may be summed up in the words of one woman, "There has been too much exploitation of the disadvantaged for profit's sake. The government has failed to clamp down on businesses which should pay equal wages to Indians. Trying to fight this is difficult, especially when most people would rather stay on the reservation, not have to fight the high competition or go miles away to work, or leave their families and so on."

Although federal programs could not change the economic system, they did afford the development of leadership. One Governor felt, "CAPs were instrumental in making a lot of programs and jobs come into existence. They have salaries and paid for travel expenses. The water, sewerage, housing and Mainstream are all here because CAP was here". Once this leadership discovered that Indians could submit program proposals directly to Washington, D.C., bypassing regional offices, a posture of self-sufficiency and independence would grow. The Indians received legal aide through the OEO funded Legal Services program. They received funds to improve their schools which soon became centers of activity. The most noteworthy and visible accomplishments were in the area of housing. Over fifty percent of erservation Indians lived in squalor, without heat, water and sewerage. One woman told how her family "lived in four rooms of a rat-infested, uninsulated house with no foundation. The federal program raised our standard of living considerably. Health improved 100% and morale shot right up".

Credit, which had been impossible for an Indian to get while on the reservation, was extended to more and more Indians. But it took a little persuasion. One Governor expressed concern that a local bank would take his millions in federal money for Indian programs, but would not make a car loan of a few hundred dollars to that an Indian could drive to work. "As a matter of fact," the Governor in question said, "I threatened to withdraw the money if credit was not extended". The bank relented, with no ill effects.

The achievements on the reservation are visible. They show the initiative which has brought programs into being and the organization which created operational structures that did not exist previously.

Outside the reservation, there are still grave battles to be fought in terms of recognition. This extends from the CAP level to the national scene. Some friction exists with the state OEO office and the Indians because the Indians maintain there are four operating CAPs serving their people. State OEO recognizes four separate locations, but funds them as one CAP. Basically, the problem as voiced by one director is "We should not have to fight to get a share of the money. It seems when most proposals are made, whether intentional or not, our CAPs are excluded."

At the state and national level, the problem becomes one of full political recognition. In the words of one woman, "An Indian isn't recognized. He has no voice". Although Indians do have tribal representatives in the Maine legislature, they have no vote and can only speak at certain times. They are tokens and as such, they received little respect. Many Indians who had been to hearings or present at those times when the Tribal Representative spoke were "insulted by the treatment given the Tribal Representative by other Legislators". It was felt that some members of the legislature were not as receptive to Indian proposals as was hoped.

One former Tribal Governor felt, "We are just now getting to assume leadership roles, but not enough to make real change. Tribal counselors are assuming more responsibility for the community where once they were just title bearers. Only recently have we had more say so in the Department of Indian Affairs and then only when they put in John Stevens."

It was believed that putting more Indians in control over Indian affairs was the only way that true self-sufficiency could be achieved. "Indian people should have their own representatives. What we have now is a figurehead who has to submit his bills to a man from Eastport. He can't even get up to speak. Indians should represent Indians. They know more about the problems confronting them than anyone else".

There are other signs that not enough progress has been made toward the full participation of Indians. Much anger was directed at the Departments of Indian Affairs both state and national. While it may have the name "Indian" on it, there does not appear that it makes great attempts to determine local needs. One Governor went so far as to say, "If the Department of Indian Affairs was located here, the people on this reservation would burn it down. At least programs here are made by the Indian people and they chose who will direct them."

Such militance is likely to increase, for although some progress is made, the obstacles are formidable. As one Aroostook Indian put it, "There are two kinds of poor: white poor and the Indians. The Indians are the lowest. Now that the Indians have organized, people are getting a different view."

"A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization."

Samuel Johnson

8

HOUSING

Housing

Until recently, Maine appeared to be riding on a newly peaked wave of federal programs for low-income housing. Nationally, many of these federal sallies into low rent housing have been sad failures. Maine has acted with caution in the erection of housing and, although it has created at least a few problems, its record appears much cleaner and well-received than that of the federal government.

In the period from 1969-1972, a combination of low interest loans and subsidy to local governments for housing projects was used to assist the poor. The thrust for such housing projects was usually directed toward the elderly. Having learned from federal mistakes about piling low-income families and their problems together in one building, one highly successful housing director commented, "Centralized housing projects are good for the elderly. But you can't put families into a building like this. It doesn't work out. They have children and there's no room to play, no convenient bathrooms. It's expensive to maintain and common stairwells create problems with children. The ideal for families is scattered sites. It's best to mix them in with other income people and get away from the stigma of public housing."

Most other housing authorities and projects have followed this advice with good results. However, in addition to the fact that family living calls for a different housing structure, there are a few political motives which prompted attention to the low-income elderly in housing projects rather than low-income families. A town manager confessed, "People are very sensitive when I go after low-income public housing. They're hostile so it's best to get scattered housing for families, otherwise there's resistance. Some of these people work hard and resent the poor getting things."

This resulted for some time in a watering down of some of the programs which were geared to low-income families with children. One woman in Aroostook was rapidly frustrated by her search for an apartment because no children were allowed. This is frequently the case in many rental properties. "What am I supposed to do?" she said, "Kill my son in order to find a place to live?" Another commented, "All these apartments say 'No Children'. Landlords forget that they were children once. The price they ask is outrageous. They want references, advance payments, damage deposits for a $125 apartment. A man making $89 a week can't afford that."

Nor has that much concern been shown for this plight. Many community leaders are not so concerned about housing as they are in establishing a power base. A woman who was involved on a housing authority board noted, "The Authority has done a good job in the community. We want to build more of that type housing but doubt if we can get help. The Council will not support housing for low income

but they will support it for the elderly. Housing support could get lost in the shuffle because people in power have their own pet projects."

Then there is reluctance to maintain federal housing standards which are high and frequently mean more maintenance than many local governments are willing to pay. It also may mean footing the bill for smaller, outlying towns which might have people eligible for the project. The cost and provincial battles over territory result in comments like this one from a city administrator, "We'll have to take care of everyone if we put up housing according to federal regulations. We can't tell our townspeople that they have priority over others within this area."

The low income, whose name has been liberally used in order to attract housing money, are none too satisfied with the directions taken by low-income housing, "Only rich senior citizens can afford the so-called 'low-income housing'. It doesn't really create low-income housing. It's very nice but we need family housing where you can afford to move in with children." Nor is this assessment particularly off base.

An official who was irate that some of his high rents moved into the 'low-income housing' noted, "There were transfers of houses by middle-class people to their children, and even private rentals in our town can have $10,000 in cash and still move into senior citizen housing. If this keeps up, it will weaken the town tax base." From this statement one can easily see why the poor feel it is the middle class who is "cheating" and leaving them to take the blame.

The alternatives for low-income families may be to continue on in substandard housing or to try to rent. Substandard housing means living in conditions such as, "Everytime it rains the water runs down my walls and rots the studs and sills", or "I remember when I used to shovel the snow out of my window where it had blown in through the cracks just before I went to bed." These comments take for granted that the home may or may not have floors, windows, electricity, plumbing, running water, heat sources and so on.

The alternative to rent is not much better since many areas are dominated by landlords with a monopoly on low rentals in the area. One director felt, "Renters are exploited terribly. It's a worse situation than substandard housing." As evidenced by the Pine Tree Legal battles and organization of Tenants Union, many landlords do not respond well to complaints about poor conditions and unfair rent hikes.

In a few areas such as Franklin County where one in every two homes is considered substandard, low interest loans are available. They are liberal in terms and many low-income families take advantage of them. One FmHA director explained, "Anyone with an adjusted income of $12,200 can obtain a loan and if you are under an adjusted income of $8,500, then you don't have to pay the full interest rate.

We have a lot of approved homes which the government will accept. The average costs $27,000. I don't call it a dream house. Most are 24 x 40 feet, 3 bedroom ranch for a family with 3-4 kids where the man is in his mid to early twenties. We are supposed to help those unable to obtain bank credit, usually young people who don't have any equity."

Such terms have created much negative reaction. Many people are outraged by the cost of homes, forgetting that the government does not wish to be straddled with property it cannot resell at market prices. One sheriff complained, "Housing is a farce. You get a man with a wife and two kids and they can buy a house for $80 a month and neither is working. The in-between family with both partners working can go out and it costs so much you can't afford to buy. The middle man takes it in the neck. It isn't fair at all. I got my house by hard work."

Such comments may indicate the resentment which builds up, particularly from those who are just above the guidelines or from older men who resent the fact that such programs didn't exist when they were looking for homes. The majority of those applying for low interest loans have at least one member of the family working and "every two years we review their salary scale change so they can end up paying the full amount."

Another argument is that the poor don't deserve nice surroundings because they don't know how to care for them properly. As put by one town manager, "A major problem which has not been attacked adequately is how to move a truly substandard family out of terrible housing into proper housing while changing their life style to fit a new house, i.e., without wrecking it. In their old house, the dog could make a mess anywhere he wanted to and people could spit on the floor." However, there is overwhelming evidence that once the poor own new individual homes, pride in possession yields the same results as it does with middle-class citizens. In order to keep up with eventual home repairs, the Indians have devised maintenance and upkeep programs in which training is given to occupants. In anticipation of building up home repair services in the future, men are being sent to gain skills in electrical repair, plumbing, roofing, etc. CAPs, although they could not duplicate the size and scope of federal programs, have played a large part in the move toward low-income housing. The most notable of these is the Downeast Housing Corporation which received $40,000 through a special OEO grant to set up single family rural housing units. A revolving fund was set up as front money for new housing. Its director explained, "A combination of low interest loans and subsidized construction costs cut payments by reducing the initial mortgage cost." In this way seven houses were completed in the past year and two others will soon be ready. Twenty homes are planned for construction in 1975. It was pointed out, "We're not undercutting local builders because the people we serve are normally not in the market for housing. We have a lobsterman who was caught in the change-over, a few ADC mothers who have jobs, and so on. We also hire local subcontractors for certain jobs

which puts money in the local area."

Another facet of this program is home repair. Over 300 low-income homes were repaired last year. The kind of client served was related by the director, "Right now we have an octogenarian couple, Russian immigrants who speak no English. Their home has no sewerage and water. We've put on an addition which amounts to a new home for them."

The organization now maintains funding ties through the local CAP, Coastal Economic Development Corporation, but hopes to become an independent entity. Judicious use of program money in revolving funds has allowed Downeast Housing enough profit to consider such a move. By developing programs in new housing, home repair and Project FUEL, this group has made maximum use of available financial resources, developed a carpentry crew of low-income people under manpower training and fulfilled local economic needs as well as those of the poor. Its director noted, "Right now we're doing housing and plan to get more into development. The York-Cumberland Housing group was doing development and is now getting into housing."

The York-Cumberland Housing Development Corporation, of which he spoke, was also initiated through CAP endeavors and was spun off as an independent housing authority. One city official in speaking of that area noted, "The Authority enrolled rural areas to have a full range of housing services available to them. They are building housing for elderly in Saco, Windham, Gorham, Gray and Bridgton and a few others. Family units are occupied in Biddeford and emergency housing is available for York and Cumberland except Portland. They build individual homes through FmHA which was not available before and work with Project FUEL." Housing projects done in other areas, such as Aroostook, conducted preliminary housing surveys for projects which were later funded. Some CAPs attempted to get rehabilitation housing legislation through to improve on existing structure but were not well received because emphasis was then on federal housing.

In one area, Augusta, it was particularly difficult for the poor to find decent rents at an equitable price. The result was that CAP initiated a nonprofit housing cooperative called the Southern Kennebec Valley Co-op. Started in 1970, the group grew in six months from a membership of 10-15 low-income people and welfare recipients to a membership of 85.

A number of approaches were used to build single family units. Said one supervisor, "We started by using 10 trainees from the WIN program to build homes. When that program faded, we used a work crew that consisted of people from CMVTI, OJT training programs, VA, and NYC and developed a 6-man crew of our own."

This group succeeded in constructing 40 homes in a three-year period. However, it was not without difficulty. A man involved in construction pointed out, "We sent bids out to twenty places but only got good reception from contractors outside the area. Many locals

didn't want to talk to us. They said we were working with a bunch of drunks building houses for whores. Another reason they gave for not building homes for us was that the poor wouldn't take care of the homes once they were built. It's funny, a lot of them who complained about the poor buying homes bought an identical home the same way. Only they didn't talk about themselves as getting something for nothing. Then, it was an interest subsidy."

The Co-op is anticipating the future by adding on a program of home repair. One man felt the need for CAP to develop a minimum 40-hour course on home ownership, "Until they catch on, new owners can plague a contractor with questions on how to repair things. They have interest but little experience. Before, a landlord could be called upon to do such things."

The use of scattered housing or small developments of 7 to 11 homes has reduced many of the problems experienced in large-scale public housing. It has provided positive results for the poor and remedied problems at the local level in the process. As put by one town manager, "Low-income housing was a good thing. It originated with CAP but is no longer there. It allowed people to build their own homes and move out of the rat holes they had been living in." The co-op was a visible success. There were a few benefits which some town managers hadn't anticipated. "They got it built in the first place and got people who needed housing into it. People who had poor health were no longer heard from in the town office after they moved into the project," and "They really accomplished something. They took men and trained them. Actually got down to the poor and the poor benefited. Most officials just wring their hands and say, 'What can we do?' and gobbledygook like that. I'm one of them and they're first to admit it."

This past year saw unprecedented success for most CAPs in a nationally televised home heating program called "Project FUEL". The unexpected energy crisis combined with a cold winter and rising costs hurt many poor families and the emergence of Project FUEL brought an overwhelming response. The program was intended as a combination of fuel conservation which included insulation, providing economical heat sources such as wood stoves, home repair and safety measures, and in some cases a fuel delivery system to families who could get no deliveries from local oil dealers. The program was well received at most levels. The biggest shortcomings appeared to be that it was a short-term and not long-term project.

A farmer in Aroostook pointed out that fuel was more critical than food in his county, "I liked that FUEL thing. They did a good job of insulation--was the best part of it. If they could have it again, they'd do a whale of a job. I think the poor must suffer more from cold than from lack of food. I know one family, I wonder how they can stand it."

Others have made similar arguments. One woman who ran a foster home contended, "It's harder to go cold than to go hungry. Even

credit for food is easier than for fuel. Many people would have ended up in the hospital without Project FUEL. Last winter was really hard."

The home repair was quite basic in many instances. A woman in Oxford County had an oil stove that constantly went out and in the process of fixing it workmen discovered the floor was completely saturated with oil. It would have exploded in a second had a match been accidently dropped. A new floor was put in and the leaking oil stove was replaced by a safe, wood-burning unit. Insulation, chimney repair, fixing holes in roofs and using plastic to cover windows and doors succeeded in making life warmer for many families. One housing assistant said figures gathered on the cost of project in their area yielded excellent results. "The best thing we got and are still benefiting from is that we estimate we saved $1 on fuel for every dollar spent in repair. We got this despite the fact it was mid-winter before we even started."

Despite the problems of last minute funding and organization, many CAP directors were pleased with the positive publicity as well as results for the poor. "Project FUEL was absolutely and happily reviewed. It gave us a lot of visibility and proved our ability to move quickly and well. It scored high as a demonstration project. It should have been funded again this year. We only have one-third of last year's commitment."

CAPs frequently coordinated their efforts with local officials. In Lewiston, the CAP joined forces with Civil Defense and the Red Cross to help people in that area. Many small towns used their personnel to assist CAPs in home repair. Most town managers were happy to have CAP to refer to when requests for fuel came in to the town office. However, there were some criticisms. One town manager wanted a ta-ly of exactly which homes and how many in his town were repaired. A ULI spokesman, while in favor of FUEL, felt, "It is a stop-gap measure which can't replace housing. I was really surprised to find that landlords would refuse free help from FUEL. I suppose that they were afraid that if they accepted federal money they would have to follow federal lease agreements."

Many people tended to pan the program without knowing much about it as did one town manager who assumed Project FUEL meant CAP was dispensing oil. "Let the FUEL situation be handled by local government. Keep out of our hair, " he said.

A number of approaches were used as alternatives to fuel oil. One group wrote to Great Northern to get permission for low-income people to cut wood in certain areas, "We needed some type of credit union or revolving loan type thing to bridge the time gap between checks. Oil dealers in this area won't service the poor." Another agency concentrated on home repair measures, saying, "Our survey found that many poor families are happy to live where they were as long as things were fixed up. We had no trouble finding materials. Often they were donated by a church or town. A lot still needs to

be done. There is still a lot of inadequate and substandard housing and not enough emphasis on repair and rehabilitation."

Because money was severely limited, emphasis on Project FUEL was on conservation rather than use of fuel oil. Some emergency tanks were available for weekend use by families whose oil furnace went out. Many CAPs cut wood and delivered it to home-bound elderly who had no means of getting fuel in the winter. One woman commented, "I live alone at age 79 and CAP helped so much to keep me warm this winter."

In remote areas of the State, Project FUEL was particularly useful. An Indian CAP director felt, "FUEL helped a lot because housing in this area is so bad. Some of these houses are terrible. Not one person here earns above the $5,000 mark. Most make $3,000 and some less than $1,000, so it made a real dent in their lives to put windows in a house or to fill cracks in the walls where the snow came in."

Those poor whose credit made it impossible for them to get fuel from local dealers were also reached. One low-income woman noted their sense of futility, "Even a small home takes a lot of money to maintain. The cost of materials is outrageous. Some people owed bills prior to Project FUEL and couldn't get anymore from local dealers who were hit by the energy crisis."

CAPs also made use of their training programs, using men from these programs to do carpentry, electrical repair, and other forms of work. Materials had to be supplied by those whose homes were repaired, but often outside sources, such as churches, would donate supplies. Many, however, could not participate because they could not buy the necessary supplies.

Overall, Project FUEL was well geared to the times. As one State official phrased it, "It had a lot of problems getting off but it provided a needed service which directly benefited the poor. It involved community people, not just welfare, and it helped the old as well as the working class poor. It was not restricted and there was something for everyone. It was a self-help thing that let everyone pitch in and help the neighborhood to conserve energy. Yet, it was not a direct handout. It let people pay something toward the materials or labor."

Unfortunately, the success of the program does not ensure refunding. While many CAP agencies feel Project FUEL was one of the best received of their programs, there was only so much money to buy plastic sheeting, wood-burning stoves, insulation, fuel oil and wood and dispense these among the poor. Without financial continuation of some kind for such projects or others in housing, the significance of Project FUEL will be lost.

Because the problems with fuel and housing are essentially the result of cash and employment deficiencies, there is no immediate

and popular solution for them. The symptom of poor housing will continue to manifest in comments such as, "I know people living in places you wouldn't keep a cow in. The wind blows through the house, no windows. I don't know how they would have survived." Such conditions will have to be dealt with as long as poverty exists.

"We do not count a man's years, until he has nothing else to count."

Emerson

9

THE ELDERLY – NEVER TOO LATE TO FIGHT POVERTY

The Elderly - Never Too Late To Fight Poverty

If one were to ask "Who is the poorest of the poor?", the answer would have to be Maine's elderly. It is a cruel, but frequently true state of affairs that a good many of the poor leave their poverty only for rougher times in old age.

Because they may live alone or cannot leave the security of a small apartment, many of the elderly are not seen. This results in one of their most critical problems, as one low-income woman felt, "In many instances, the elderly are just kind of forgotten."

While many citizens fear the effects of inflation, one woman could not see how the elderly were managing although she had her hands full with fifteen children. "The elderly are hurting and helpless. They can't get food or warmth. The kids can fight, but older people can't. Some are afraid to take help for fear their assistance will be cut so they sit and suffer and nobody gives a goddamn. My young kids will survive, but what happens when they get older?"

Despite the fact that Maine has a disproportionate share of elderly, many people appear to be unaware that this will have definite consequences for their area. One county commissioner said, It's amazing the number of old in this area. I don't know how they get by." The answer is simply that many of them don't.

CAPs have supported and assisted in a number of programs to aid the elderly; yet in the areas of most pressing need, such as health and housing, it has taken time to get the attention of politicians much less the legislation needed. In the first years of operation, the elderly poor could only be described as living in a constant state of anxiety. Yet they were suspicious of social programs of any kind. A social worker and ex-ADC mother explained her impressions, "The elderly fear control by the State and that the State will take away their possessions. They don't know their rights and what benefits they can claim. They can't reach much of the literature; it's so complicated. The bureaucracy often forces them to act in certain ways."

Often the avenues of escape mean that a loss of dignity is involved. In Maine, so much emphasis is put on independence, going it alone and self-pride that anyone who cannot live up to these goals is looked down upon. This emphasis results in people who would rather starve than risk censure. But the results are still inescapable according to one town welfare director, "It's a stigma in their minds. We use the senior citizen program for referral. One man scrimped and saved for medicine he needed but wouldn't use his food stamps. He tried to live on $12 a month and it affected his health."

In the end, one cannot eat pride and there must be a realization that the elderly frequently need more help than they are getting. Their income may drop by as much as 50% after retirement. The poor who live into old age have nothing at all and are joined by many former members of the middle class. As one director put it, "The elderly are a national problem. Their major need is income. Most get a maximum of $150 a month. To expect somebody to eat and pay rent on this is rather ridiculous."

Few people have argued this point and many feel that inflation has made matters that much worse, despite the new interest in talking about the elderly. An outreach worker pointed out that when most elderly get done paying their rent and heat, they are lucky to have anything left for food, "With the high cost of living I don't think they get enough to get by even with SS and SSI. The sale of dog and cat food is way up in our area. People have to eat, I guess. I know a fella here who used to eat canned cat food."

Poor diet leads to poor health and the elderly are more susceptibel than most. They live in run-down housing. Most do not have transportation or are afraid to venture out in a vehicle for more than a few miles. Medical facilities are often far away and generally they wait for a crisis to call a doctor. The whole life-style of fighting off the collectors and eking out a living is reflected in one old woman's story. "It's a problem for my husband to keep up the house. He has a heart condition and if he splits firewood, he'll be sick all night. Most of his check goes for medicine. Last year I paid $19.00 a month for his twelve different prescriptions."

Frequently adding to these problems are the combined costs of housing and fuel. Single dwellings cost much in upkeep; yet apartments frequently mean climbing steps and health conditions may prohibit this. Although many areas have gotten federal funds to build low-income housing, those who need housing most do not have enough money to get in. As a result, "low-income" housing is occupied by middle-class elderly. As one old woman put it, "An important cause of poverty here is rent. They're building a low-income home nearby and the needy are supposed to get first crack. What poor old person can afford $135 for a one bedroom apartment or $155 for two bedrooms? It seems all out of proportion. I surely don't call that helping the needy." In explaining her own situation, she said, "I don't mind living in this tacky shack. My rent went up $20 on my old place so I sold it in order to live within my means. This place used to be a hen coop. There's a flush in my bedroom and no hot water. I've got taxes on the water and sewer but I'll have them paid in twenty months, before my cataract operation. I still like the days when family took care of you."

The response to this kind of situation has not been positive until recent years. Although most people look to charitable organizations to care for a few poor and send baskets at certain times of the year, there are still some towns who flatly refuse to give assistance to any poor, including the elderly.

CAPs were instrumental in starting feeding programs where one hot meal could be gotten on a daily basis. One program director said mild concern with nutrition changed drastically when "one man died and the cause of his death was attributed to acute malnutrition. After that, we atarted a meal program and kept tabs on medication, particularly for shut-ins." Other programs were like Project Independence in Franklin County or Project See Me. in Sagadahoc. A bus system was funded and used to go out to elderly homes and take them to centers where meals were served. Most people favored such moves, as did one educator, "I would like to see more Meals-on-Wheels like the one at St. Mark's Center. We would start feeding at noon for a 100-unit elderly housing building. Still, only those living there were helped. The transportation program should be expanded." Special transportation units were often used to take the elderly to medical facilities and to see to it that regular treatment was given. Buses were also used to take groups to shopping centers where groceries and other necessities could be purchased. When greater distances became involved, as in Washington County, emphasis was put on programs such as Meals for Me.

See Me. and Project Independence buses were funded through Health and Welfare which contracted with CAPs for the service. Initial problems of door-to-door service and the high cost of transporting via this system gave impetus to CAP experiments in this area. A number of agencies expanded their services to other groups. Large buses yielded to more wieldly and economic mini-buses and established routes were set up. As a consequence of such experimentation, the Northern Kennebec CAP has its own transportation program which functions for all low-income people in the area. Some town officials would like to see sliding fees introduced so that the middle class can take advantage of individualized transportation.

One director felt this change-over would hurt individual care since many people who need help cannot get it without door-to-door service, "We do not refuse a ride if we have room. Most people feel the cost is not worth the individual service. I don't give a damn how much it costs per mile as long as those who need it get the service. It's a conflict of philosophy."

There is some justification for this since isolation of the elderly in rural areas leads to results quoted by one elderly project director, "Some of these people have not even been out of their homes for 5 years. They have no family to take care of them and no money. In a real crisis as with health, many can't get to a doctor. One 70-year-old man walked 4 miles to a doctor. It nearly killed him. When the doctor asked why he didn't get a cab, he said he couldn't afford it."

The elderly were without resources. To overcome the isolation, gain companionship and supplement income, a number of programs were introduced. Craft cooperatives were formed to allow shut-ins to earn extra income using CAP or other sources as an outlet. In cases where regular care was needed in the home, outreach workers served this

purpose or referred those needing help to Homemaker Services. Those elderly who were more active took an interest in Head Start and Foster Grandparents type activities which encouraged the participation of the elderly in the Head Start classroom.

Most notable of such projects was one launched by the Senior Citizens Corps in 1968. The National Council on Aging allotted 70 part-time positions for the elderly which were farmed out to CAPs. These elderly worked in surplus food as nutrition aides in Head Start. More significantly, they were instrumental in the development of senior citizens clubs and organizations which came to have an increasing political voice. In 1972, this program was spun off to the Extension Service where it still operates.

Generally, CAPs did not have programs set up for the elderly. They cooperated with existing sources which received funding for a food program or a medical care program. CAPs were frequently viewed by outside agency sources as a means of transporting the elderly to existing services. CAPs were also counted on to do outreach and to find elderly whose condition warranted attention.

A few CAPs, like the one in Waldo County, began to turn the attention of the elderly toward political redress. As one State official put it, "The elderly in the CAP were very instrumental in starting senior citizen action. They held meetings and got involved in activities. Now every region in the county has one. They're good for getting out information since there are no outlets--the newspaper isn't read and radios are hard to reach." In this particular agency, the senior citizens decided to support a food commodities program and used a letter-writing campaign to the legislature to get funding for it.

This trend was soon in full force in most Maine counties. The elderly began to gravitate more and more toward the creation of a lobby. They succeeded in making their needs known to those who could do the most about it. The emphasis on care for the elderly in the last gubernatorial election alone is enough to prove how this force has grown. A program director saw the accomplishment as "the elderly have joined together and have a comprehensive program and because they have one voice, they have gotten assistance. There was too much duplication of effort and too little coordination in other areas of concern. The elderly know what they want as a group."

However, there are some rumblings about whether the powerful lobby which has come into being is reaching the neediest elderly. As one director put it, "There's a fur coat crowd that's certainly taking advantage of elderly programs. I went to one meeting and there were no low-income elderly. The members talked about whether they would vacation in Europe or Bermuda." Even State agency officials commented, "I don't like this tendency to talk about the middle-income elderly. It's evident in the bureau. We serve 5% low-income elderly. They come to us and we have no staff to give them anything but piecemeal service. No one provides for this group."

Nor does there appear to be a concerted effort to include the low-income elderly in the decision-making process. The elderly have succeeded in isolating their problems from the rest of the "poor", but often it is with an attitude of contempt that has not gone unnoticed by others. As one minister expressed it, "I would hate to see more low-income housing go up the same way the present one did. Locally, it was an example of how the elderly made decisions affecting low income without consulting the low income." His area was rife with stories of middle-income elderly making use of services and gradually easing out poorer members by setting up mandatory dues, fees or planning activities beyond the means of the poor elderly.

The newly found political base may also work against the elderly. As one retired lawyer feared, "The elderly are a little too self-centered. They must be made to realize others are in a bad situation. Many politicians use this self-pity as an approach to build power for themselves. It is a failure on the part of elderly programs. They've lost sight of the fact that you have to go back to the beginning to end up with a group of elderly that is physically and mentally healthy."

Yet some elderly are not satisfied with the isolation they have from other programs and with other people who are in similar situations. A city welfare director told of some responses he had received, "Some of the elderly are furious about their separation from other groups. They see their mini-buses drive past families who need to go to the same medical center." He also pointed out, "There is no difference between social security and welfare. They're both just transfer payments. There's no need for segregation. A person may get welfare up to age 65, then change to social security and all of a sudden he's not the same?"

Unless the elderly lobby and senior citizens groups begin to include the low-income elderly in more of the planning, decision-making and even the activity phases of their programs, this segment will continue to suffer. Yet it is in their name that money will be gotten to build "low-income housing" and to run campaigns. They will be used, but not helped.

There are not really enough programs to reach the poorest poor and those programs which exist want their poorest members not to be seen, much less heard. It will not do to say that there are enough programs for the elderly. Piecemeal attempts must be coordinated because, as housing director put it, "The elderly will be more of a problem in the future because more of our population is growing old."

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

Chinese Proverb

10

MANPOWER TRAINING

Manpower Training

There are over 30,000 people currently unemployed in the State of Maine. The unemployment rate will probably reach 10% during 1975 and the conversations of many Maine citizens are laced with job talk and fears of unemployment. News sources proclaim that conditions have not been so bad since the end of World War II.

The manpower training programs of OEO and CAP fought an uphill battle in their efforts to find productive employment for the jobless and underemployed in the State. There were some victories. People in Washington County who have long known the perils of unemployment would say, "Mainstream worked beautifully with Project FUEL and housing. It was the highlight over the last eight years. I've never seen anything pull together that well. CAP hit a lot of people and everyone got out and worked." Others could point to the individual successes they had seen. "When the girl we hired came in, she couldn't meet the public and was reluctant to take on responsibility. Eight months later she was a different person. Her values have changed. That stretch of eight months did more for that family than all the donated commodities in the world."

The force of worsening economic conditions did much to weaken the fragile gains of OEO/CAP manpower programs. Since money was the backbone of income subsidy and job maintenance programs, cutbacks hampered the small gains made after four years. Other problems complicated the picture and one director commended bitterly, "The whole name of this game, and a game it is, is money. I don't really feel most people want to collect welfare. They'd rather work. But the one thing that has irritated me all along is having a training program for 2-4 months and then not being able to find the people in it any jobs."

CAP had spawned numerous programs which were arranged and rearranged to satisfy employment needs. Five manpower programs and their derivations are administered by the Department of Labor and funded wholly or partly under the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA). These include: Job Corps, Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), and Operation Mainstream. Some of these programs also derive funds from the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA).

For the sake of economy, central administration and comprehensive programming, most of these programs were recently put under one large manpower umbrella called the Concentrated Employment Training Act (CETA) which will create jobs in the public sector.

It is hoped that providing jobs will satisfy the shortcomings of endless training which led many people in the programs to believe. "Not only was the training too long, but people felt it was welfare disguised as training so they weren't as motivated.

Most people, when speaking of poverty in their area, atributed the bulk of it to unemployment, underemployment and the poor prospects for industry. Some wanted to remedy the situation by adding new industry at any cost. One county commissioner went so far as to say, "We need to pump in additional federal funds. They're closing all the mills because it's a great tax bind to pay into unemployment. I know I shouldn't say it but maybe we should subsidize business." Others felt that people should be subsidized. One agency spokesman remarked on the number of underemployed poor, "We see 1,000 people a month here who are wage earners who can't make ends meet."

The director of one city agency noted, "The fact remains that under a system of capitalism, at least 3-5% of the population will be unemployed because they lack the skills, physical and mental capacities or have other traits beyond their control that cause them not to be hired." It is to this group that CAP has addressed itself. Many people felt manpower programs for such a group would be defeated before they began, "They placed so much emphasis on the results of one demonstration program. Sure, they got some people in the work force, but business will only accept so many. People will say they want self-sufficiency but they can't get jobs. If you can't put these people to work, does the Government make their lives better by giving them training and counseling?"

Others were equally aware that manpower training could not be a magic solution. "I'm dead set against job training. It's a waste of money. There are no jobs for them when it's over."

Maine's OEO and CAP manpower and training efforts were centered on three areas: Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), and Operation Mainstream. Although a Job Corps Center had been set up in Poland Springs for the training of women and is cited nationally for having a high enrollment of 1,100 women, the center was eventually closed down after some controversy with racial overtones. While the thrust of Job Corps had more or less been as a residential training center for urban dwellers, the other programs were geared to specifically helping the poor of Maine.

While OEO/CAP programs provided counseling, high school equivalency degrees, its main advantage was that it provided an income for people who wanted to work but could not be hired. In speaking of Mainstream, one man noted, "It helped bring in dollars and trained to a limited extent. The effort was there." Mainstream was essentially a rural program that prepared people who had been unemployed for work. It operated in Washington, Aroostook and other counties and on the Indian reservations. Since rural areas had so few job offerings, the program amounted to an income maintenance operation.

This thrust is often critized by recipients and outsiders alike, but underlying it is a philosophy which led to the creation of jobs in the public sector. This point was made by one director, "Both the Labor Department and Congress will have to start recognizing that there are a number of people who will never be able to support themselves in the private sector. Those people who are 100% productive will get jobs. But we had one severely retarded man who was a janitor and did a perfect job. Now he's rotting away with nothing to do, and the money still has to come from the federal government because the local area can't pick up the tab. If you want the dream of 100% employment, you'll need public funds."

Other programs, such as the Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), were useful chiefly in shaping work habits. They dealt with the hard-core unemployed people who had been out of work for so long there was no longer any motivation. Some had problems with alcohol, criminal record, mental illness and retardation. Others were severely lacking in education. One sheriff who used the program to get high school equivalency degrees for prison inmates said, "Most people we run into here at the county jail have 3rd or 4th grade education. What can they do for work to make a decent wage? If you're brought up with poor education and see it generation for generation, it kills the ambition to go any higher. Even those who can find work are paid low wages. I don't know what the percentage is but people should be paid the minimum wage and business should not stick the poor with the worst jobs."

To correct this cycle was a formidable task. A combination of outreach, recruitment, counseling and testing, job orientation, medical and social support services, education, work experience and placement was used to prime adults, 21 and over. It had limited success, yet the program effect could not be discounted. A manpower placement officer under CETA noted, "We can get them jobs now, but oftentimes they need support in work habits. We don't have time to tie all the problems together. CAP can provide supportive services such as counseling, day care, travel assistance and dental care that keep people on jobs."

Oftentimes, people felt that the individual achievements made in the face of overwhelming odds made the programs worthwhile. One woman started out as an ADC mother. Her husband was disabled and she had to support her nine children. She went to work but could not make enough to feed the family. In telling of that time she said, "When the CAP community aide came to my door, it was at a time when I was really down. She changed my whole life." The woman is now director of the Lewiston Community Action Program. It took years to get a college degree in social work, yet she still found time to be an officer on the CAP board and was eventually recognized and elected director for that agency. Local officials are high in praise of her achievements. A town manager could only say of her struggle, "I wish that her critics of years ago could see her now."

Many agencies have handfuls of people who have made progress in careers, gone on to get college degrees and to better themselves.

Nona Thompson in Washington County is another woman who left unemployment behind after a long struggle to become Mainstream director for the Washington County CAP. She almost wasn't accepted for the position of program director because she was a woman. Today, however, not only has she succeeded in benefiting herself, but in running a successful Mainstream program she has benefited her county. As one town manager recalled, "Mainstream directly benefited our area. There is tremendous fluctuation in unemployment in Washington County. There are plenty of good people who do an excellent job. Through their efforts we revitalized 5 buildings and gave a new face-lift to the town. They accomplished 65% of their goals. This is the type of significant grassroots program we need and it is to the credit of CAP that they got Nona Thompson in."

Mainstream in other areas provided jobs to many who had been rejected elsewhere. One supervisor recalled, "We started out by clearing fire roads and cleaning cemeteries. We had guys who would never be able to work anyplace else--alcoholics, mentally retarded, crippled. But we moved on to make things for marinas and parks." Low-income peoplehave been reached by these programs and the significance has not passed them. Two low-income women, both working toward teaching degrees, put it best. "CAP has given confidence and ability to feel needed and important in the community. It certainly has given opportunity to prove what we can do and what a change we can make in our lives."

The results under the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) are not as encouraging. Most CAPs have used NYC in some form to help disadvantaged youth with paid work and training opportunities in three components. The In-School and Summer NYC components were designed to provide part-time employment, useful work experience and supportive services to students from low-income families and were administered by the public schools. The Out-of-School component gave summer employment and remedial education and was administered by CAP. The program objectives were to motivate youths between age 16-18 to return to school and to develop skills for employability.

The goal of hiring youth was at no point easily achieved. As one man pointed out, "Youth are in a position of difficult employability. The job force is tougher and they are least able to compete because they have no prior experience."

Many of NYC youth may have a juvenile record, some are unwed mothers, most are dropouts. "The people we work with are not exactly Harry High School or Susi Cheerleader", as one director put it, "A normal kid 16, 17 and 18 is not that competitive in the labor market. We even had one girl in the program because she was not good-looking enough to qualify for another job program. You either give up on these kids or you have NYC."

Most poor youth who are motivated eventually seek jobs in the military and job market. For them, NYC held little attraction. Those who remained were often embroiled in bad home situations and lacked the education to gain entry into the most basic institutions. As one Indian woman put it, "You have to have a high school diploma to wash dishes nowadays."

Entry into NYC was frequently as a last resort. "We're a dumping ground for problems other agencies can't handle," said one counselor. This is not immediately obvious to many people outside NYC. Many of them see the great amounts of money spent and the few permanent placements and say, "These manpower and training programs go to waste. They train these people 12 weeks to do a job and the next thing you know they quit and go into something else." Unfortunately, many of the so-called placements are for custodial services and token positions with no future. Once government subsidy is taken away, the job is no longer available either in business or at the local level.

In the beginning, many NYC centers did not screen effectively nor had they sufficiently developed curricula fully to suit the needs of some enrollees. This factor, combined with often insufficient staff, yielded comments such as, "They seemed to add to delinquency. They had a lot of kids working and now none have jobs or anything. I don't think they had enough direction and supervision."

Overall, the attitude of the public has followed these lines. If there are no jobs, most people feel it is senseless to train people. As one town manager saw it, "The federal people don't have answers anymore than we do. The solution is the absorption of the individual into the work force. The people we got were primarily fired or waiting for jobs. If they are lazy, have bad backgrounds or work histories, sometimes it reflects poorly on others in the work force. Still, people do better on the job after they receive training."

On the other hand, while many people clamor to get the welfare "cheaters" working, it appears that they have always been ready to work as long as support services,such as day care, were available to them. In one county, the Mainstream group consisted mostly of such people, "One-third of our enrollees are dropouts. Most are older females who got married young and had no work experience and are now on ADC. They want a job and can't get one. They need self-confidence more than anything and it helps if training is related to job opportunities, but it's not always necessary in this respect."

A number of areas were particularly interested in finding employment for women. As one city manager phrased it, "There's a lot of talk about how we need clean industries like computer manufacture. Yet, when these corporate officials come to scout the area, they see we don't have the skilled work force necessary. We need an intermediary step that offers a reasonable progression from the rigid hard-hat, 3-shift, time clock position. We need to recruit industries

that employ females. CAPs should have a learner program of their own to funnel Maine people into these slots. I hear a number of firms come up here and recruit in Massachusetts."

The new trend toward the creation of jobs in the public sector is viewed as a solution to many of the dilemmas involved in previous work programs. However, CETA officials caution, "Public employment will be here as long as unemployment increases and industry is laying off. If no one is hiring and there is no demand, there is no point in training. But the answer is not in public service employment. It is temporary."

This comment brings to light an overall shortcoming which should be given more play in the future. While programs such as Head Start made inroads into the education system, many of the CAP job training programs ran in isolation. They hired a few people with a little experience in an area and got a few good results. However, they did not cooperate and coordinate with other manpower agencies, employment services, vocational technical schools and state agencies to any degree. Nor was there much reciprocation. In the words of one AFL-CIO representative, "For the first 3 or 4 years CAP encountered a lot of resistance from existing agencies. For example, Employment Service and the Education structure didn't exactly bend over backwards to help until they realized there was publicity and money there for them."

Even CETA which has received massive federal funding to create jobs in the wake of rising unemployment will not be enough. Its director pointed out, "Our first goal is simply money income. We give them something to eat. We can't be the whole answer because the money is insufficient for the need. We are not educators and can only address ourselves to the unemployed, underemployed and economically disadvantaged. We can't get into the private sector."

Jobs in the public sector will not be sufficient to handle the massive unemployment which looms on the horizon. Long-term solutions will have to provide permanent jobs in industry or service capacities.

"Love and business and family and religion and art and patriotism are nothing but shadows of words when a man is starving."

O. Henry

11

DONATED COMMODITIES

Donated Commodities

The forerunner of Food Stamps was the USDA Donated Commodities or "surplus food" program. The program started out as a business deal between the federal government and food producers and dealers who had surpluses of their products. It made good business sense to help the economy by taking excess food surplus and redistributing it to the poor. The program, known as Surplus Food Distribution, formed one of the major services of many CAP agencies. In many areas it became a joint venture with county commissioners and towns.

Food Distribution was one of the programs which began to develop a mutual relationship between CAPs and local government. Some areas saw the value of such cooperation sooner than others. One director who had followed such a course noted, "Back in 1967-68, everyone was looking to the federal government. We went local and approached the county commissioners. They turned us down but we eventually won a food referendum. Later, this was to make the transition from Donated Commodities to Food Stamps easier. Other agencies had to go the federal route and this meant giving service town by town, so small towns often missed out."

Most county commissioners were pleased with the program and its achievements. It appeared to them to be an example of how local government could meet some of its human service problems successfully. As one commissioner commented, "Donated Commodities accomplished its purpose and was instrumental in getting county officials involved and providing needed services. We bypassed federal strongs and entanglements yet met the need of those communities which were not large enough and did not have the staff to meet the needs of many of their people." However, not all counties participated in the meeting of such goals.

Many of the poor liked the anonymity of going to a CAP rather than going into a town office where they might be known and stigmatized. CAPs used the surplus food program to provide jobs for low-income people as outreach workers and as food certifiers and distributors. Such outreach helped get food to those who needed it. CAP efforts reached 17,000 Maine citizens in 1968. By 1973, over 90,000 poor were serviced with CAP as distributors. Distribution afforded a constant contact with poor families and their problems. As one woman recalled, "I thought surplus food was successful in one regard. The girls on distribution always had a chance to talk to you and advise you about other matters. With Food Stamps, you don't have that contact. There is no one there to tell you how to buy sensibly and nutritionally."

Maine CAPs ran highly successful food programs. A board member from one of these agencies commented, "Every eligible poor family in the county was reached by the joint efforts of CAP and the commissioners." Another pointed with pride that, "The county took over the program in 1972. We could see a reason for it. We kept on the part-time help and now have ten times as much money on account. This money goes back to participating towns."

It may be said that in those counties in which commissioners took this attitude, the success of the program was high. However, some counties and towns were dead set against any involvement with CAPs. Generally, most small towns favored the move, but larger ones tended to be aloof and to want to retain their insularity. Thus, proclamations were issued such as, "Over my dead body will there be donated commodities in this town." Some county commissioners saw CAPs politically as Democratic and refused to cooperate for these reasons. Eventually, those who resisted yielded to the demand for increased service and the press of other matters.

Difficulties arose with the program itself once the CAPs had overcome the problem of organization and establishment. While legislators could maintain, "Donated commodities seemed to me to be an area where low income were receptive. The program really met a need." It must be remembered that at the time there were few palatable alternatives. Many poor felt they had to grovel before some town officials in order to receive help and others received no help because officials flatly refused any assistance because "I promised to keep the tax base down."

Prior to the CAP program, some towns had distributed food but because they had no warehousing facilities, the poor were told to take as much as they could or they would get nothing the next time. CAP agencies bought refrigeration and warehouse units to store needed commodities such as butter, frozen meat and cheese. Sometimes food received had been stored so long it had developed worms or had spoiled and so it had to be thrown out.

Items such as cornmeal, dried beans, rolled oats, and so forth were limited in their uses. Maine natives did not know how to prepare them and other foods or did not have necessary utensils and appliances with which to cook. As a consequence, many people would complain of the food the poor "wasted". It was at this point CAPs began to develop cooking and nutrition classes, as well as recipes to go along with the food.

Many poor dropped out of the program because they had illnesses or other dietary problems. One woman who got food for her family pointed out her dilemma, "I'm a diabetic and can't afford the food I should have and still have enough money for the other food necessary for the family." Donated commodities tended to produce diets high in carbohydrates and salt. There was no fresh meat or vegetables. Most items were canned or dried although supplies of butter

and cheese were regularly provided. After many years of the same diet, many were glad for the choice in selection which Food Stamps offered.

There were still problems with the stigma associated in getting food. One low-income woman recalled, "Some were so embarrassed to come in and get food. I used to feel the same way." A town manager said, "We used to open at 6 a.m. with a long line. People wanted to get in early and leave before anyone saw them. If we had opened at 5 a.m., the line would have been as long."

The very process of distributing groceries took a long time. People waited for their name to be called while checkers saw they got what had been recorded as necessary for the family, calling out each order to packers who had to mark down every item packed. This might take place at the CAP center which meant the poor had to find their own transportation or it might be on a bus which traveled to a pickup point while the poor waited in long lines, regardless of the weather.

All such problems underscored the fact that "You had to be happy with what you were given and not what you wanted," as one recipient put it.

In the meantime, there had been a change in the nation's economy and the aftermath of Viet Nam began to be felt. The federal government began to look for more effective means of distribution once surplus food was not as readily or cheaply available as before. When Nixon began his reorganization of OEO, the job of distributing food was left to the Agriculture Department and the concept of food stamps was born.

Food Stamps caught on with local government because it put money directly into the hands of local merchants and pumped up stagnating areas. It caught on with the poor because they received money directly and could spend it as they saw fit in the same places that others went to buy groceries. It satisfied those who were against "handouts" because the poor had to contribute what they could to the cost. As one low-income organization spokesman put it, "Food Stamps includes as recipients working people, as well as the hard-core poor. It gives those working some incentive and faith in the system because before, they worked and couldn't get by. Yet they saw those who got welfare were living as well as they were."

In the change-over to the Food Stamp system, many poor were not eligible for stamps or got so little aid that it didn't seem worth the time and effort involved in dealing with the bureaucracy. Their view is seen in the comment, "Now that it's gone, people wish donated commodities was back. It was a complicated system, but many who got surplus do not get Food Stamps." It was particularly hard on the elderly. A woman in one senior citizen center explained, "Commodity foods was wonderful. I live with senior citizens and it's terrible about the old who can't get out to use Food Stamps while some people

get it who don't need it." The problem of special diets has still not been addressed.

No system has yet been devised which is foolproof. The complaints about Food Stamps are rather expected as far as bureaucracy goes. The poor are concerned because standards have not been upgraded to keep up with the cost of inflation. Too much money needs to be spent to get too few groceries. The elderly are particularly hurt. The bureaucracy creates time lags. "I'll starve before they process the papers and by the time they do, the crisis has passed and I don't need the help anymore," said one woman. Another problem is that soap, toilet paper, paper towels, detergent and shampoo cannot be bought with Food Stamps. One woman was disgusted, "I can buy candy and soda pop but not shampoo, detergent and toilet paper. It reinforces the idea of not being or needing to be clean and healthy."

Although more working people and even middle-class families have had to resort to Food Stamps to help them get by bad times, resentment has grown within their ranks about those receiving Food Stamps. Thus, stories have grown about "cheaters" which are way out of proportion to the facts. A Food Stamp director noted, "Less than 5% of those applying are found to be cheating. More often, people don't know our eligibility requirements or they don't know someone's real financial situation. Personal feuds, often involving relatives, are the source of most of our complaints."

Then, there are those who don't like the idea of letting the poor buy what they want. Comments such as, "They buy beer and cigarettes, steak and lottery tickets. They really live it up." Although the poor may buy steak, Stamps cannot be used to purchase liquor, cigarettes or in gambling. Either the stores are guilty of illegal activity or the individual's own money is being used. The poor are equally irritated by the implicit sanctimoniousness of such remarks. One woman who went from struggling with ADC to struggling for a degree in psychology felt, "Most people think those on welfare are supposed to sacrifice everything. Everyone else lives on credit. Why can't the poor?" One butcher felt differently, "The poor don't go into luxuries now as much as in the past. They buy basic foods. When the program first started, they felt that they had to get rid of the Stamps right away or they would expire. Now their buying habits have changed for the better. Of course, the State government changes their schedule without notifying anyone, so it makes it hard to plan. At first, they didn't seem to understand the program. They're only allowed to buy what's edible, no beer and cigarettes. When we started off, some hadn't had steak in a long while, so they splurged, but now it's tapered off."

For CAPs, such problems are no longer within their jurisdiction. They have the satisfaction of having achieved great success at a time when there were no alternatives to this basic need. Nationally, their trial and error in a difficult area led to improvements toward a new system before it became established and entrenched at the federal level.

CAP still has involvement in food distribution in rendering assistance to Food Stamps. Office space is frequently donated for Food Stamp certification and sales. Mounting pressures on Food Stamps personnel make it increasingly difficult to reach the needy. The processing of applications has made it impossible to do outreach to verify needs and get assistance to the most helpless. Rumors about the long wait for approval, the limited scheduling for certification and bureaucratic treatment have prompted the remark, "Many senior citizens won't go through the hassle."

Federal courts have recently ruled "USDA has systematically failed to enforce the 1971 food stamp outreach amendments and lawsuits are charged against officials in 20 states for outreach failure." Many CAPs are willing to further assist in the Food Stamp process by certifying the poor in their districts. It is hoped more use will be made of existing CAP personnel toward this end.

Many low-income workers do outreach at present and have a clear idea of a family's and individual's problems. This overall perspective reduces the chance of foul play and assures that close tabs may be kept on each area on a daily basis. The occasional visits of State personnel do not allow for this type of in-depth activity which can minimize the kind of pressure Food Stamp personnel are currently experiencing.

Efforts are now being made to use CAP in cooperation with the State to do outreach and to afford the contact with local poor that the bureaucracy cannot provide. Such cooperation at the State and local level may be seen as a key to future successful operations. It appears that wherever such mutual cooperation has been tried, the benefits to the people are great. Once larger goals are mutually recognized at the local level, joint efforts provide results which no one group could successfully achieve alone.

In the transition from Donated Commodities to Food Stamps, many people who were recipients were not eligible for the new program. Some felt it was not worth the bother. One woman siad, "I still feel surplus food should be received. Many people who need food, don't get Stamps. There will probably be bread lines soon. Unless you get a $50-$60 bonus in Stamps, you really can't get food. Thirty dollars of your own can easily be eaten up in detergent, soap, toilet paper, etc." For others the transition has meant a loss of contact, "You had to give a lot of information to donated commodities, but it seemed people were more accessible. With Food Stamps you can only go at certain hours at certain locations. Transportation becomes a problem."

To aid these people and a growing number of middle-class people who also were feeling the economic pinch, a number of CAPs have initiated food co-ops. In most instances, these groups buy produce and grocery products wholesale and eliminate the markup of retailers. Despite the resentment of some retailers and the problems of distribution, these co-ops have grown. A low-income woman who assisted

in the running of one such co-op noted, "The co-op taught people to buy and buy wisely at less cost. It made them aware of each other's problems and made them see they weren't unique in their situation. We started with a group of four people who wanted food and grew to 150 members, servicing the upper middle class as well."

Co-ops, much like small businesses, have a drawback in that they frequently lack stability. Management may vary since most are run on a volunteer basis. But they do alleviate the financial pinch for a number of families.

Another aspect which has received more attention is home budgeting. A number of town managers expressed this opinion, "I gave one family enough food money for a month and the wife went out and blew it in a week on lobster and steak." As a result, many of these managers feel there ought to be instructions given on how to plan and budget. CAPs were able to assist here because they had contact with people regularly and could help them plan nutritious, economical meals and get help to relieve problems which aggravated the situation. Many problems in budgeting stem from the simple fact that there are too many necessities which have to be met when there is no income. As one director phrased it, "We've had various programs that provided a limited amount of counseling on budgeting. There are stories about those who go to town for food and give the money to a boyfriend. They are exceptions. I had a disabled husband, 9 kids and made $125 a week. We are the rule. When you talk about budgeting, you talk about making the best of a bad situation."

CAP activities in the area of donated foods, co-ops and budgeting have essentially been aimed at alleviating "bad situations". It is hoped their skill in reaching the poor can be utilized more in the future to continue such efforts.

"It is not just the poor who will benefit from change. It is in the interest of the whole nation that the deep harm of poverty be eliminated."

Donald Rumsfeld, Former Director, O E O

12

VISTA

VISTA

The Office of Economic Opportunity created what was supposed to be a "domestic Peace Corps" by establishing a program known as Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).

Over 250 such Volunteers spent one to two years in Maine working through CAP agencies in Head Start, and in drug rehabilitation programs, senior citizen centers and other service agencies. Their goal was essentially to help society fulfill its responsibilities by adding personal involvement as an added dimension to traditional social service.

Most VISTA Volunteers were young, college students, often involved in civil rights activities. Although in Maine this did not have the same impact as in the South, it is from this group that many Maine legislators recoiled, fearing a takeover of local agencies by "radicals, communist sympathizers and hippie degenerates".

At no time did VISTAs ever have such power for social destruction as is intimated by these fears. Most often, VISTAs were highly motivated, middle-class youth who had become outraged at their first exposure to poverty and were determined to buck all rules to get things "straightened out".

Few people criticized their dedicating a year or more of their lives to aid the poor. This aspect received much favorable press because it was rich in human interest stories of good things done for others and created a favorable image. However, the quixotic forays of some VISTAs into the world of local politics and workings of some social service agencies frequently caused heated controversy in the first years of operation.

Maine CAPs used a limited number of VISTAs as a manpower supplement to programs. Since VISTAs did not have the skills CAPs could most frequently use, i.e., those of nurse, electrician, plumber, etc., they usually were used as outreach workers to deliver goods or information to people. There is some question whether the practice of sending people from California to Maine to serve makes good use of the term "served". There is also a feeling that where and whenever possible, poor people should be recruited and trained for VISTA positions, despite the fact that the job may widen the horizons of some middle-class youths.

The use of VISTAs by CAPs had declined in favor of outreach by

the poor themselves. Though CAPs made use of VISTAs, it was generally because they needed more free labor than it was because of the technical achievements made by VISTAs as a group. Still, Maine's rural setting necessitates their use because in many remote areas there are only the barest of social services and VISTAs remain necessary to get essential services to the poor and to mobilize all means necessary to help them.

VISTAs continue to serve in large numbers in the State, working with United Low Income, Maine Bureau of the Elderly, and HOME, Inc.

"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order to things."

Nicholo Machiavelli

13

POVERTY IS HERE TO STAY

Poverty Is Here To Stay

With the election of Richard Nixon to the Presidency, a decision was made to return to the old order of things. The Office of Economic Opportunity was to be fed into the existing structures of federal bureaucracy in the name of economy. Whether the move was viewed as one of reorganization or of dismantling, the message was that the OEO way of fighting poverty was over. "The intention of those ambitious social programs launched in the 1960s was laudable," President Nixon said, "but the results amounted to dismal failure."

Many of the bitter and disillusioned joined the clamor for the demise of the agency in concert with long-standing opponents. Their voices appeared to be sounding a death-nell over the failure of OEO programs to eliminate poverty. It was assumed that this wave of discontent would sweep the agency out of existence. Yet, seven months after the introduction of legislation to eliminate OEO programs, the House approved the Community Services Act by a vote of 331 to 53. The OEO administration was cut, but its programs were preserved.

It was obvious that a shift in sentiment had occurred toward OEO and that there was more support for its programs than had been believed. Nationally, legislators received a massive response from mayors, town officials, governors and others, many of whom had been among the first to criticize the agency. Among them were people like Alabama's Governor George Wallace who wrote, "There is a strong support from all segments of local communities for continued Federal funding.... Many of these agencies have developed service delivery systems which are recognized as very effective for reaching low-income and disadvantaged people."

This unexpected turn of events was interpreted by one House Republican staffer who had followed OEO programs from its inception, "Community Action keeps the poor off the local official's back. Some of them provide useful services. Some are largely job creating enterprises.... They create a buffer between the local power structure and the poor. Take them away and a lot of public officials will have problems on their hands they'd prefer not to have to deal with."

In Maine, there are many indications that this perception is accurate. Although many Maine citizens feel that the results of OEO programs are inconclusive, none opted for the shutdown of Community Action Agencies. All felt OEO/CAPs served a purpose in their community. The following comment from a conservative town manager reflected

the shift in attitude, "The poor don't have anybody who will be advocates for them in the bureaucratic maze. Much as I don't care about the program, someone has to advocate them. Someone at the national level or at the local is needed to bridge the gap between top officials and the poor people. There is a need for real contact. If OEO can't do this, then there's no need for them."

Others recognized that CAP services provided assistance that municipalities need not duplicate, "There are specific functions OEO has been able to perform which city managers can't. I have a good working relationship with CAP," and, "CAPs should extend their services into municipalities. We don't have the time or staff to do those things. Youth programs and Head Start are things they should handle."

There are indications that CAPs have raised the responsiveness of towns to the needs of the poor in positive ways. The effect of this increased awareness was well phrased by one city official, "Many people didn't care, don't care and will never care about poverty. There are a certain number of people who are significantly more aware. There is more official recognition of the problems of poverty than before. CAP outreach workers dug up a lot of poverty that people chose to ignore. Various programs have been funded by the city in the past few years that never were before. For example, there was the regional health center, the work skill development center, day activity center, Head Start, Meals for Me. and United Cerebral Palsy."

Some officials realize the economic consequences for their area if CAP should leave. Maine OEO uses 1,000 outreach workers in over 13 CAP agencies throughout the State. The State would lose their jobs and the services provided in addition to $2.5 million in operating funds. An economic loss on this scale could hurt many counties at a time when local government can ill afford it. Towns are not likely to want to foot the bill for increased welfare which would result. One town planning board member in Franklin County has said, "If the Federal government can't fund CAP, sure as hell the town government can't. I don't think anyone wants to take anything away from old people or anything, but it's just a matter of what you can afford to do."

Those towns which may have funds to dedicate toward CAP do not have sufficient staff or expertise in the areas to which CAP responds. According to one town manager, "Our local CAP has a big budget which local government couldn't absorb. For instance, we run a transport and municipal bus service, but we can't run them at the level CAPs do." Or, as put by a business manager, "You can have money for a program, but if you don't have facilities and staff, you don't have impact." Many of Maine's smaller towns would be put in exactly this position if they attempted to handle CAP services within their town.

The shift in attitude is away from hostility toward more cooperation. Selectmen are now advocating, "In rural areas CAP should be more involved with municipal officers. They should have committees to help them feed into town programs. Municipal officers know where some problem areas are and can tell CAP which projects are best for their town." County commissioners with their regional perspective are calling for changes at all levels, "Local government may not be as responsive as it needs to be, but the state and federal response is atrocious all the way down the line. I recommend the coordination and communication, a setting up of an ombudsman relationship between state, federal and local. Let's face it, communications have not been good. For example, CAP and one town decided to work on a needed mutual project, but federal regulation XYZ says you can't do it unless.... We need to establish lines of responsibility and authority."

The Maine Municipal Association and other organizations have noted this plea for more sensible areas of jurisdiction which will facilitate coordination and organization.

Speaking before the annual MMA convention, its executive director said to members of the Maine Town and City Management Association, "Some of the work the Effective Government Committee has done on the future of the municipality will be very controversial. We will be presenting county home rule legislation which will allow counties to make their own budget and give them powers to perform services such as solid waste, ambulance service, etc. on a regional basis. We have not yet dealt with how we will organize for delivery. Certain services can be delegated to the county by a vote at town meetings. It will probably be the small towns who use the county."

Such changes, if and when they do occur, can have great significance for CAPs which have had relatively good relations with many county officials. As noted by a private social service director, "Local municipalities working with the county played a vital role in getting donated commodities for CAP and developing a leadership role for them. To a certain extent, CAPs have influenced county officials by working with them. I would like to see CAPs maintain advocacy and keep this balance." According to a number of local officials these mutual ties, "Have opened less antagonistic lines of communication. For example, Project FUEL and donated commodities were seen as a boon by most towns."

Changing attitudes at the local level may have been a partial result of revenue sharing. Money has come to towns to use at their own discretion, but "New Federalism" now subjects municipal officials to greater time demands, enforcement of volumes of regulations and increased participation in planning. This has led to serious consideration and use of planning boards and commissions among towns and among social service agencies. According to one official, "There were too many groups applying to towns who couldn't choose

among them. Agencies spent an ungodly amount of time going to each town to get the point across. With regional planning we've tried to set up a mechanism in between and better communication resulted. We've just begun implementation. As a regional agency we will coordinate, do evaluations and planning. We won't get into the delivery of services. Until we get to that point, I think we'll continue to see this adversary role between CAP and local charge and counter charge."

Meanwhile, inflation cuts into town budgets and eats away the gains made by revenue sharing while layoffs increase the press for social services. Between the two, all gains made locally may be undercut. While this prompts some towns to disregard social services as a nuisance, the result would be as one manager pointed out, "What you do for one sector of your community will affect the rest. You can't play crisis management with welfare."

As a result, many towns are seeking to coordinate various aspects of government services. Some functions are being farmed out to CAP. Towns in the Bangor area are negotiating for an inter-local agreement whereby a CAP social service worker will cover this area for them at less cost than they would have to pay individually.

A number of towns have already discovered what savings CAP may bring a town in the long run. One elated town bookkeeper revealed, "We have a girl from CAP here every Thursday. She does tremendous outreach work. In the first month of 1974, the town paid $1,000 in welfare. She cut it in half. Now we pay $100 or less. We refer all general assistance people to her and she tells them what they're eligible for and takes care of them."

In the rural areas of Maine, CAPs are frequently the only large scale social service agency which provides daily care for the poor. In these counties a state agent may visit a town once a month. These visits are frequently merely to certify people for Health & Welfare programs--not to seek to remedy the problems of those involved. Some small towns still flatly refuse to help the poor. In either case, low-income people realize, "If poverty programs don't continue, I don't know what the biggest portion of people in this area would do."

In functioning in such a capacity, CAP acts as a go-between and buffer between state and local, local and state. Many of the rural poor would lose contact with resources in and out of their counties. As one director put it, "A communication system would be lost. The low-income people would be isolated again--most of them without recourse to people to whom they can bring their problems."

Such remarks merely underscore what a private social service director pointed out, "Most human services have little involvement at the local level. They are rooted to state and federal funds. There were and are tremendous gaps which social service agencies and notably CAPs were forced to bridge."

The various changes at the local level have had impact in terms of the responsiveness of state agencies. Many of the contacts that the average citizen, poor and middle class alike, has with the bureaucracy are unsatisfactory. One comment to this effect was, "The Health & Welfare administrative cost alone is as much as CAP programs. What do they do with it? They get a new computer that always seems to break down. This isn't bad, but it isn't always efficient. CAPs are more flexible. Half the people don't want anything to do with Health & Welfare. They don't concern themselves with the agency unless they want to get certified, and they stay away from it otherwise."

It is difficult for state government to respond to local needs. A municipal service director pointed out, "If you are in government, there is no demand or pressure to do what has to be done; whereas if you are on the outside, you can demand accountability and responsiveness."

For this reason, CAP advocacy for the poor at the state level has brought about needed changes.

One state official felt the agency served to keep bureaucrats on their toes, "It's given us a little more competition, a different slant and approach. Government is bureaucratic and sometimes people are shaped by higher-ups. CAP is actively working on a first-hand basis, eyeball to eyeball. They are localized. Merging them with Health & Welfare would sterilize their effect and approach."

Some felt the direct, personal contact afforded by CAPs avoided a common frustration with bureaucracy, "A big difficulty in Health & Welfare is the 'My department doesn't handle this' runaround. CAP is grass roots, personal, people-to-people."

CAP action as a buffer and catalyst has led to other changes. A low-income organizational leader noted, "CAP provides a supportive base for people who need a go-between between the bureaucracy and the people. Because of this, there is greater solidarity among the poor state-wide."

This increased solidarity among the poor has led to the formation of many independent groups of low-income people. Senior Citizens, United Low Income, We Who Care, Caribou Tenants Union and other groups have become vocal advocates for the political issues which confront them. They are giving voice to their problems. Their progress has been slow but moves in a positive direction as knowledge of the political process and skill in dealing with it increases. It has also given them, as low-income representatives, exposure to leadership roles. As expressed by a labor leader, "Poor people became more professional in advocating their rights as time went on. I don't know if it helped anyone but those groups, but even that was good."

The result of this organizing did not go unnoticed by the

legislators, one of whom commented, "The awareness of poverty in political people has been raised. They attend low-income functions. The low income have a lobby in the legislature. The effect of this lobby depends on the politician, but generally low income have been recognized as a bloc of votes. Politicians try to aim that message at them, particularly the elderly."

Nor has the legislature been the only body affected by the new advocacy of the poor. Agencies which before had no one to blow the whistle on them when foul play occurred, now realized that they were being watched by a number of vocal poor and various agencies such as CAP which adopted the posture of watchdog. As such, "CAPs have helped to keep other agencies honest by virtue of their flexibility and advocacy."

The result of advocacy was increased contact between the poor and the various officials at state and local levels who provided services to them. Planning boards, citizens advisory groups, commissions now made a conscious effort to include the poor, the elderly, women, Indians and other minorities in the leadership and policy making decisions which affected their lives. As put by one director, "Awareness has been raised significantly. It's taken close to eight years to develop, but committees are no longer formed by a political elite as they once were. No longer can a small group make decisions for an entire community. It's shown that there are little guys who have as much ability as the moneyed." This was unheard of years ago.

The result of the cry for representation by the poor caused other citizens in Maine to examine the services they were getting and question the Government as well. Watergate served to reinforce the idea of citizen participation and keeping an eye on government. One CAP director told the story of a disgruntled local citizen, "She complained loudly at a council meeting about the lazy AFDC mothers. So one woman who went to CAP invited her to her house. The woman came and stayed for six hours, then went to a CAP meeting. Now she is on the school board. This woman wasn't low income, but her main problem was like that of the poor. She didn't know how to participate and wanted to be heard. You don't have to be low income to not feel good about yourself and your surroundings."

When one takes an over-view of this contribution of CAP alone, it can be seen why both national and local officials have strong feeling about preserving CAPs as an independent focus for anti-poverty activities.

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RESULTS OF THE WAR

Results of the War

Many still ask, "What has OEO accomplished? The goal was to eliminate poverty and clearly OEO has not been able to do this. A number of people did not expect OEO to accomplish this task, pointing out, "The causes of poverty are not something any program can solve. It is part of our system of capitalism. There would have to be a complete change in government or the government would have to step in to rectify matters of unemployment. The latter is what the government does, but people are still poor. Most programs are maintenance oriented. CAP has changed the perceptions of people, but in terms of relief from poverty, I don't think this has happened. Poverty is here to stay."

It may also be pointed out that the goal of eliminating poverty has not been accomplished by any agency in the United States and most of these had much more money and support than OEO. A health association director saw the causes of poverty in economic terms, "A lot of symptoms of poverty are construed as causes, but fundamentally it's Maine's historic and inordinately low wage scale. People never get a chance in the first place to get above poverty once this cycle starts. Really, the War on Poverty hasn't done a hell of a lot to change that and if they tried, the politicians screamed. They never had the tools to do the job and I don't think they were ever intended to. The best they could do was offer a palliative." It would be ludicrous to assume that an agency given fifteen billion dollars, competing with inflation, Vietnam, other governmental agencies, and now, recession, would be able to eliminate two hundred years of poverty in a decade. In those same ten years, billions of dollars were spent daily in an Asian war, the results of which are more inconclusive than that of OEO.

Not the least of CAP problems stemmed from the fact that they tried to establish a new order of things. The hazards were many. Few people in the State had the expertise in all areas of philosophy, management, financial skill and politics to come out with an unscathed agency. A labor official felt, "The problem with all programs is that people aren't trained to administer them. People had to grow with programs. In the beginning, some were inept. Those CAPs which were best were those which developed the best leadership."

The process of gaining more cooperation and internal unity took two to four years, depending on each agency. At the peak of this development, budgets were frozen by the Nixon administration while reorganization was arranged. Heretofore, CAPs had federal support and little accountability had been established. Now OEO had to produce the numbers and figures to bridge the credibility gap between the CAPs and the government at all levels. It also was forced to seek more and more money from the municipal level. This meant, as one lawyer put it, "When you talk state and local, you talk in terms of hard data. They want to measure the quality of service. They are numbers oriented groups and you do better to deal with them in these terms. If you talk to the human services oriented, you

talk less objectively. Numbers of people are usually administrative."

Right now, municipal sources feel there is also preoccupation with using revenue sharing funds to get fire stations, police equipment and motor vehicles. Given the numbers orientation of town managers it is not hard to see why they gravitate to roads, snow equipment and vehicles. All of these things can be easily measured and accounted for. No one is eager to get into the tar baby of human services which is exceedingly difficult to measure and to see concrete results. It was with great joy one manager related, "Money from revenue sharing saved the day for us. We needed the equipment and hardware. These were long overdue. We had an awful backlog. Half of our budget is in this area." However, he wouldn't consider more than 3% of his budget for human services. Nor have the past results of revenue sharing done much to dispel this pessimism. In examining the uses to which localities have put their first year's revenue sharing funds, the Senate Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee concluded only 3% of revenue sharing funds went for services to the poor. It was discovered that the suburbs, of which Maine has only a few, would be the big winners in revenue sharing.

Until recently, every town had its own methods for doing just about everything. Independence and local pride precluded uniformity and efficiency, no matter how much these might save money. An official in a large city explained, "We have a fragmented system with no centralization. Most towns focus on the State level because the greatest number of resources are here. In order to overcome this and the entrenchment of some people at the administrative level, it would take a concentrated effort by the local community with a full system of local government behind it. That includes as much political punch as they can muster."

It is not simply a problem for small towns. Effects can be felt county-wide and regionally. As put by a city official, "Some of the most difficult poverty is rural poverty. It proliferates the instability of a region and thus directly affects the urban center. I do believe there is a spill-over effect which contributes to urban problems in terms of poverty. When you have a rural class unable to find employment and no training or placement, then they seek out residence elsewhere, usually the city. Here they haven't the skills to find employment and eventually end up on our welfare rolls."

In this process of providing aid, CAP has had visibility for the poor but not necessarily visibility to the average Maine citizen, "CAP was successful in raising the awareness of low-income people but not the awareness of the general population. CAP drew many low-income people together. It is a fantastic success for them. They gave them the tools and skills to understand themselves and their situation." As felt by one low-income woman, "They said they could organize groups. I said, 'In Maine, no way' but in six months they had organized and I couldn't believe it."

Those agencies which have used some public relations tend to talk in terms of programs. Some people feel more success type stories and human interest with a mention of CAP are worth more, "CAPs claim they have public relations and community relations. Their thrust should be to provide the public via the press with constructive information on the plight of the poor. The average citizen is still cut off. It exacerbates the problem. They need to be shown that not everybody is a piker and a leech."

On the CAP side of the equation, past experiences with towns have not been conducive to better relations. CAP involvement with towns was kept to a minimum until recently when federal cutbacks prompted them to seek new funding sources at the municipal and county level.

However, the lack of perseverance or need for it until recently has resulted in a credibility gap in which neither side believes the other is genuinely concerned about existing needs of can produce results. A report put out through the New England Regional Commission stated, "The credibility gap has resulted in confusion, misunderstanding and negative relationships which are often more personality than program based. The quality and attitude of the respective administrative staffs are critical to bridging this gap."

Some social service agencies feel closer cooperation for the delivery of services is the only viable alternative for CAP, "In order for CAPs to survive, they will have to become involved in service delivery. It means less flexibility for advocacy and social change." Other maintain that advocacy role can be preserved if more time is spent using local money on current areas of concern, "Most CAPs have missed the boat. They should be constantly working themselves out of programs and plugging into the local level. It is a cross-board fertilization process. For instance, when three hospitals were involved in a merger, CAP served as advocate for low income and their needs were met in the process of merger. Now they get prenatal care and dental care as a result, and we didn't have to get special funding."

Many feel CAP would be particularly useful in connection with pilot programs for planning agencies. One town manager saw, "The function of CAP is to do experimental programs that local government simply cannot do. For example, there is no way I could do family planning without outreach. I want to see CAP continue those programs that gain approval and drop the rest. They aren't hindered by all past practices and controls local government is tied up in."

It is hoped that once more familiarity is gained about the nature and extent of each other's programs, joint involvement will occur in the use of "federal funds and other financial and human resources. Revenue sharing, the Rural Development Act, manpower programs, housing, health care, and others represent current need areas that lend themselves to joint efforts in identifying priority needs, settling local strategies, securing financing, delivering services and evaluating results."

Many people have expressed a desire to go their own way and to let CAP do the same. This course will result in stymied efforts on all sides. Those town managers who have cooperated see the problems of their towns in different perspective. These men notice, "There is growing unrest in the State that there are too many agencies overlapping and duplicating. There is a definite need for consolidation." Or, as a social services consultant saw it, "The approach cannot be one that makes separate boxes with clients, money and staff. This gives a clouded version of what the task is. Block grants to groups of people tied to plans are best. This involves a whole series of services and agencies. Integrated services lead to comprehensive rather than piecemeal efforts."

Piecemeal efforts directed at a particular group, such as the poor, have created another problem. The belief that one particular group of Maine citizens--the poor--could be singled out for special treatment without arousing deep resentment among other segments of society has not been borne out, "I raised four children on policeman's pay and we had to sweat to keep them fed and in clothes, no extras. It was a hard struggle. If you run into debt, you end up on poverty programs. A man can lose his ambition in life when he works hard and sees the man next door doing nothing and getting along better." Or put more succinctly, "I'm sensitive to the wishes of the populace. There is deep resentment when they work like hell." Such comments find much support in the State, especially by the lower middle class which hovers above most poverty guidelines.

It is no accident that programs such as Head Start and Family Planning got wide acceptance once they were introduced or opened to the middle class. They offered something for everybody. The sole basis for entrance was need. Many of the middle class are now feeling the economic pinch and are requesting sliding fee scales. It was those programs in which none but the poor participated which generated hostility from this group of people. The resentment notably for welfare had spill-over effects to other agencies, particularly CAP. Said one director, "Often the public was made aware of the great amount of money and number of programs in service to the poor. People felt this was reflected in middle-class taxes and it caused resentment."

Even the poor served by CAP expressed resentment of those who they felt were not working to better themselves. As one woman who went from AFDC to CAP and became a social worker phrased it, "There are a lot of people making under $10,000 in this State. The CAPs deal with the working poor mostly, whereas HEW takes care of AFDC. The working poor go to town and get nothing and they are the ones worst hit by inflation and recession."

Oftentimes while social service agencies bear the brunt of this resentment, people look to state and local officials for the solutions to such problems. It is often thought that cutting back on the funding of such programs will take the burden off the taxpayer. However, when this approach was used in the Great Depression, cutbacks in the level of funding merely reinforced a downward spiral of the economy, making

it more difficult to make a recovery. At the local level, the money which no longer goes to recipients will no longer go toward food, rent, clothing and will hurt local economy. Still, the press is on to cut back. Not relishing the road ahead, a city official said, "There's a backlash now toward poverty programs. With the pressure of inflation the middle class becomes more frustrated. Yet in nine years I've never seen these halls fill up with as many people as on the day we handle welfare. If that portrays anything, we have some problems ahead of us."

The executive director of a social service alliance felt that if the various agencies involved in human resources, particularly CAP, do not take the initiative toward consolidation, both State and local will revert back to old ways of doing things. As he put if, "If we're not able to pull ourself together, city councils will say, 'Why didn't you do this?' This is part of the backlash now. There is this feeling that something could have been done and wasn't. There has got to be a reality in terms of concrete results and services or else things will fall back on old forms, like city welfare."

Nor are the effects felt only at the local level. The problems of recession and inflation will be the challenges the 107th Legislature must confront. Governor Curtis in his farewell address to State legislators emphasized the great need for government to help the victims of the times--the poor, the elderly, the ill and the unemployed, "Paradoxically, the times which made them the victims, giving even greater urgency to appeals for government to do more for the sake of humanity--these same times also give rise to demands for government to do less, for the sake of our pocketbooks."

"Resolving this paradox will be the most difficult task you face."

Toward this end, CAPs can serve as catalysts, helping local government officials understand their new responsibilities and become more familiar with the needs of the poor and determining how program resources can be utilized to meet these needs. The initiatives taken by CAP in this area must be stepped up. Accountability and perseverance will go far toward softening the loud postures and adamant attitudes of many town managers.

There is justification, however, for the gloomy outlook of many agency heads about the anticipated use of revenue sharing and other programs giving local government officials more power in planning and decision making. According to a report from the New England Regional Commission, "CAA and OEO officials remain cynical about this process in meeting poverty needs, i.e., unconvinced that local government officials will consciously utilize their new roles and resources to help the poor. In addition, CAA direct federal support is beginning to erode and its existence on a long-term basis is threatened."

Here in Maine, indications are that local municipalities are moving toward greater use of social services to offset the rising cost of welfare. Officials at the Maine Municipal Association noted, "We feel a lot of municipalities are requesting more money for human services. Towns don't understand the human service area. It's very complex and poses a problem for both the consumers and the town, neither of whom know what's out there and who is the best one to do the job. They have to find a way to determine what the primary need for the community is." Indications are that CAPs and towns duplicate efforts in providing food, clothing and even furniture. However, most towns do little in the area of fuel, home winterizing and repair, emergency housing, dental work and health care. CAPs have begun to move in these areas and could ease problems for towns in such areas.

According to officials at MMA, small towns in Maine make more use of referrals than do average size towns or larger ones. Said one official, "No referrals are being made from most municipalities. Some CAP agencies, such as those in Aroostook, Lincoln, Portland and Bangor, are all moving into information referrals. CAPs should also move into training programs and begin sessions on how to run general assistance. Hopefully, we can move CAP staff and, specifically, professionals into this area."

To accomplish this will call for mutual exposure and a readiness to profit from constructive criticism. For example, the Northern Kennebec CAP held an open session in which local towns came and criticized that CAP and told what they wanted from them. The director there said, "They really ripped us apart but some of the criticisms were valid and we began to make changes. As a result, we have much more cooperation and integration. Attitudes have changed." On the other side of the coin, one municipal program director felt this feedback was needed by towns as well. "Many town managers get upset by criticism, but they need that kind of feedback--watchdog effect. However, they don't see the need for CAP to be as militant. Then, there are a lot of middle-class people on both sides who like to feel themselves as martyrs."

In order to bridge the gap further, a number of issues will have to be dealt with. For instance, common board members do not exist between CAPs and town councils. CAP board members should be given a clear idea of their role and be used to a greater extent to make positive approaches to those in the community. Such involvement should also extend into planning, be it local or regional. A city welfare director noted, "There should be better relationships between CAPs and cities, especially in planning efforts and designing direct service programs which municipalities can purchase parts or all of."

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THE ROLE OF SEOO & NEW DIRECTIONS FOR CAP

The Role of SEOO and New Directions for CAP

The State Office of Economic Opportunity (SEOO) has facilitated a number of approaches to make the process of cooperation and coordination easier. In the past, philosophies of SEOO have not always been well received by individual agencies. There was also an element of rivalry and competition for funding. It is hoped that the Governor's support to this office will be increased as a means of strengthening its role for efficient planning and coordination.

Rivalry may have gotten a few CAPs temporary funding, but lack of centralization and support has had the following consequences. "CAAs are forced to develop their own communications and delivery mechanisms through trial and error methods without the benefit of information and experience exchange with other CAAs. SEOO must play a greater role in facilitating information and experience change among CAAs, especially related to local government involvement in their activities, community relations and joint service programs. It should take initiative to provide workshops, models, case studies, technical assistance and professional development."

Even within agencies there is a tendency not to communicate the goals of various programs and their progress. One low-income woman who complained about how "there were never any low-income people in CAP who made it beyond third in line on CAP staff" was surprised to learn of low-income people serving as CAP directors, program directors and that some had gotten college degrees. In one agency, a conversation brought out a remark that "Few low-income people are involved in CAP anymore", to which a friend replied, "Well, few know about it. Most people get information about CAP by word of mouth. It's a matter of promoting the agency and we're doing zero in that area."

Most CAPs have been operating on the same budget for three years. With inflation, this has amounted to a cutback since programs can no longer function at the same level, staff raises do not occur and positions are cut back. However, the hue and cry remains to the effect that, "We have created a huge monster with payrolls and salaries and the man-in-the-street doesn't really get it. The overhead in those agencies absorbs most of the budget." What is meant by such comments is not actually criticism of the large size of CAP budgets or its staff. It was noted that in those agencies which were well received and were producing desired results, criticisms about the high salaries of top officials did not occur. The resentment may get back to the simple observation of one woman, "I can see paying people when they're producing. But if you can't do the job, I don't care to see the money spent."

The idea of good leadership and management was noted by one county commissioner who related, "At one time I really felt they should dismantle the CAP, until we changed directors and got things open and aboveboard. Now I see they help a lot of people, no question about it. Someone will always take advantage of any agency.

CAP did a lot of good. Even the State has taken some of their ideas and used them themselves."

In its eight year history, there have been only two incidents of financial scandal, both involving small sums of money which were eventually replaced by the culprits involved. Once discovered, quick dismissal came to those involved. This record is at least as good as that of local Maine banks. But the accusations and suspicions go far beyond the facts and are sometimes used by local officials as justification for denying funds to CAP. Some low-income people have been ready in their defense of CAP, "My hang-up is the accusations aimed at OEO programs that they are a racket, that the agency shifts funds --which it doesn't. There is a lack of communication. The bureaucracy doesn't try to understand. I get the feeling that some in the system don't want low income to get ahead because they wouldn't have jobs without them."

The two alternatives to consolidation are to dismantle CAPs or merge them with existing State agencies. Despite all the conflicting viewpoints as to how CAP should function, no more than 10 responses out of 150 surveyed favored either alternative. Even those who saw some kind of merger looked at it in terms of coordinating existing private, nonprofit agencies, not merging with the State. One official at MMA suggested, "A lot of acitivities could be merged with CAAs. There are too many service delivery agencies and it is appropriate to encourage the growth of a few and have the smaller ones merge. As this relates to size and scope of service, CAP comes out as one of the likely leading agencies."

Some people felt the bureaucracy had enough problems of its own without eliminating other agencies which can assist it. "Even if no CAP jobs were lost in the process of merger, Health & Welfare can't keep up with the increase in caseloads. They're so bogged down in paperwork, they can't do field work," was the comment of one board member. Others agreed, "The bureaucracy has already got more than it can handle. CAP is able to deal with a wide continuum of population without rendering state or town aid. It deals with motivation better."

Furthermore, it is CAP's separateness from such agencies which allows it to serve as watchdog, advocate, and define needs of the poor. As one director felt, "Our success hinges on independence. We don't have to bow incessantly to regulations and politicians. CAPs work best on a community basis because this allows them to hire poor to work with the poor, provide employment, training and, most important, provide upward mobility."

Working poor in Maine see CAPs and the CAP philosophy as an alternative to the State and welfare, "CAP is and isn't a service agency. It's supposed to help people to help themselves and I think it has done this. I've seen a lot of changes in four years... I've seen people become articulate. They wouldn't dare speak before but they moved into better conditions because of CAP. Attitude is the

best indicator. It changes the whole way of life."

CAP has given such people a more open alternative. A merger would mean a loss of advocacy for self-help. As one director noted, "Most of our programs are developed by the identification of needs by low-income people themselves. Our separate structure provides a system of checks and balances to the state and local scene." What this meant to many recipients was a chance to move out of poverty, "The poor saw that somebody cared about them and tried to make necessary changes. They felt they belonged and would not only get help but also get ahead."

While this point underscores the positive direction which CAPs take, the difficulty in delivering services still remains. The root problem of all poverty programs and agencies was defined best by one town manager, "We still have to find a more palatable way to give assistance."

It is felt that consideration of the ideas incorporated in this survey will allow the Governor of the State of Maine to take initiative in finding a more equitable solution to the problems voiced by its citizens. It is hoped that the poor will be included in the acts of the Governor as he fulfills his promise, "My goal is to bring a quality of life to Maine by developing a quality of purpose and equality of opportunity."