

Poverty (1965)

LABOR'S GOAL

TO END POVERTY

IN OUR TIME





IN OUR TIME

In 1964, the United States made an historic declaration of purpose: a nationwide war would be undertaken to eradicate the age-old scourge of poverty—and in our time.

The declaration was the Economic Opportunities Act, which spelled out a new national concept wherein the root causes of poverty in every community would be sought out and destroyed.

The task would be awesome, affecting nearly one in every five Americans. But if successful, 40 million Americans would be freed from lives of grinding poverty and untold future generations saved from a similar fate.

The AFL-CIO, along with other similarly-dedicated Americans, had strongly endorsed the “war-on-poverty” legislation and upon its enactment enlisted in the struggle.

To organized labor the war on poverty was not a new battle. Poverty in all its forms—illiteracy, unemployment, low wages, disease, slums and crime—had been a cause which brought men into unions as early as the founding years of our nation.

With each generation of the nation’s growth, millions of Americans had successfully escaped poverty through their unions, achieving security and dignity, decent wages, pensions and leisure time. Union members and non-union workers also benefited from labor-supported legislation which established unemployment insurance, compensation for workers injured on the job, factory safety laws, housing, legislation, aid to education, social security, hospital-medical care, civil rights, child labor and fair labor standards laws.

Each labor-supported gain filled a need and helped to focus national attention more closely on the basic problem—poverty itself.

Now, America has taken the full step by recognizing the fact of poverty in the richest nation on earth.



TO END POVERTY

Today, the war is under way, waged by an army of experts and thousands of dedicated volunteers.

Important in all aspects of the program—nationally and locally—are the leaders and rank-and-file members of organized labor.

In the Washington headquarters of the anti-poverty war—the Office of Economic Opportunity—the Labor Advisory Council provides the government with the skilled guidance and counsel of dedicated trade union leaders, and additional leaders have been called forth to implement many segments of the national program.

Organized labor has shouldered the responsibility for making its millions of members fully aware of its multi-purposes and their role in the anti-poverty program. A national series of area conferences, sponsored by the AFL-CIO, acquainted state and local body representatives with the act's details and the methods whereby they could participate.

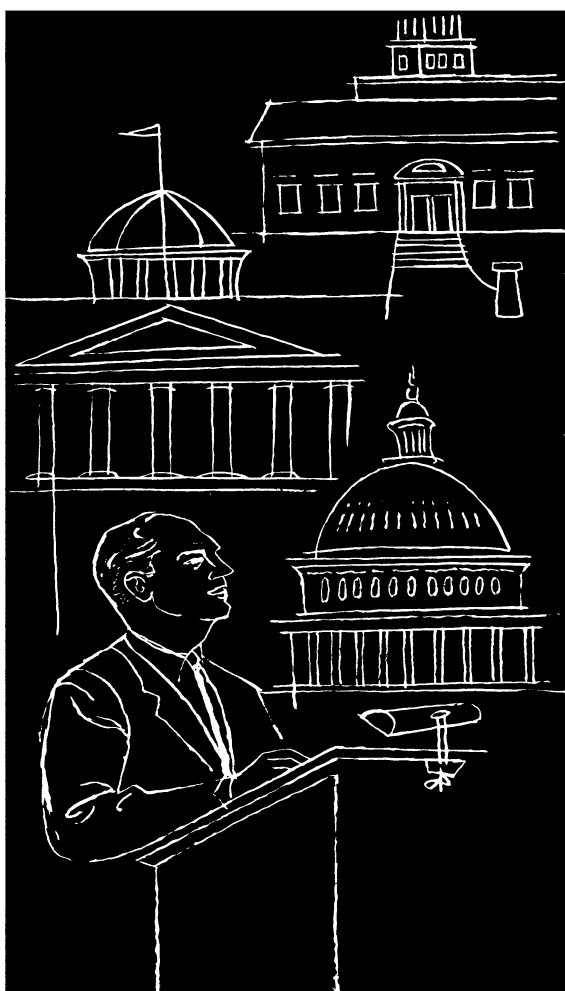
AFL-CIO President George Meany, in a series of communications, urged all state and local bodies to participate and each international union to designate a committee or representatives to assume the responsibility for their union's anti-poverty efforts.

The response from unions all over the nation was immediate and enthusiastic.

To coordinate this response, the AFL-CIO established a special office in its national headquarters through which liaison is maintained with the Office of Economic Opportunity and all AFL-CIO unions' anti-poverty activities.

Thousands of trade unionists today are serving on committees, formulating programs to uproot the poverty which scars the young, blights a neighborhood, and saps a community of its spirit and purpose.

In some localities anti-poverty programs have been initiated by labor. In one instance where skeptics held that no poverty existed, organized labor undertook surveys which proved them wrong.



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Local anti-poverty committees have found that union representatives bring with them the experience and know-how for organizing people into a common cause. Union representatives also have the advantage of day-by-day contact with the unemployed, the under-employed and the disadvantaged—many of them the people the war on poverty seeks to help.

In each of these programs, labor works with religious leaders, public-spirited laymen, welfare workers, school officials, doctors and dentists, local government officials, the poor themselves—all those who are interested in helping their fellow Americans achieve by self-help and opportunity their proper share in the nation's abundance.

In each community's war on poverty, labor participation also helps insure that the basic ideals of the program are retained and local programs carried out. Unfortunately, more than one anti-poverty committee has found its ranks infiltrated by those who seek to frustrate its objectives and defeat future anti-poverty legislation.

Having fought for nearly two centuries against poverty, organized labor in America is determined that the purposes of the Economic Opportunities Act will be carried out and expanded. To this goal, labor has enlisted the same zeal it gave to the achievement of civil rights, economic gains and social progress.

However, though the war on poverty is an historic undertaking that promises historic gains, labor will continue to seek other poverty-defeating programs, particularly expansion of the Fair Labor Standards Act to protect additional millions of Americans, raise the minimum wage to \$2 an hour, provide double time for overtime and establish a statutory work week of 35 hours. These improvements alone can create jobs for millions now jobless and reduce the impact of poverty on millions of Americans.

Also necessary to overcome poverty are higher standards of unemployment insurance; realistic state minimum wage laws; expanded public works programs and other job-creating and disaster-lessening legislation.

These legislative goals, coupled with a community-by-community war on poverty can free America from the blight of poverty in our time and make a reality of labor's philosophy to bring the most good to the most people in a democratic society.

For full information on all parts of
the anti-poverty war, contact:

- Your local or international union
- Your Central Labor Body
- Your State AFL-CIO Organization

or

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BASIC FEATURES OF AMERICA'S WAR AGAINST POVERTY

Of the many segments which make up the war against poverty, the **COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM** is the most important part of the law because it provides a broad area of initiative and funds for each community to undertake an anti-poverty campaign. Further, the act leaves to the community the responsibility and the moral obligation to stir itself to action and organize. If there is no action, this important phase of the program does not go into effect.



COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

CAP is a local committee representing all segments of the community, including organized labor and the poor themselves, which formulates an attack on local problems through positive and varied programs. Federal funds are available to finance programs of local need, which could include day care centers, health services, vocational rehabilitation, homemaker services and literacy instruction.



PROJECT HEAD-START

Provides 90 percent Federal funds for communities to organize and operate pre-school programs to develop children to their full potential. Programs improve the health and physical abilities of poor children, develop their self-confidence and increase their learning skills.

The following programs are initiated by various government agencies. In each local area, a government contract is negotiated with a non-profit organization to carry out its phase. The staff of each program works closely with the local Community Action Program Committee to coordinate over-all efforts and achieve mutual goals.



JOB CORPS

Provides away-from-home centers for young men and women, 16 through 21, in a coordinated program of basic education, skill training, and constructive work experience. Designed for youth lacking schooling and skills for meaningful employment.



NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CORPS

Provides at-home full or part-time work experience and training for youth, 16 through 21, enabling them to stay in or return to school or increase employability. Youngsters work in hospitals, settlement houses, schools, parks.



VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA

Provides an opportunity for those, 18 and over, to join the war on poverty. Volunteers (\$50 monthly and living allowance) will work with urban and rural poor community action programs, and in hospitals and mental institutions.

WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

Provides part-time work for college students from low income families. On-campus jobs to include dormitory and plant maintenance, food service and clerical work. Off-campus to include work as tutors, youth workers.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO COMBAT POVERTY IN RURAL AREAS

Provides loans and technical assistance to help very low income farm families to increase their income from farming or in other ways. Loans also assist rural families develop new opportunities for earning added income as well as to start or strengthen cooperatives serving these families.

ASSISTANCE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND FAMILIES

Provides grants, loans and loan guarantees to assist states and localities for special needs in housing, sanitation, education and the day care of children.

EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Provides loans for small businesses, including retail and service enterprises employing three or fewer persons.

WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

Provides funds for projects to help unemployed fathers and other needy persons to gain work experience and job training, principally for jobless heads of families in which there are dependent children.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Provides assistance to states for special programs of literacy instruction.