FOCUS ON COMMUNITY ACTION

Mr. PERCY. Mr. President, the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity has now made its report to the President. The Council, appointed in March of 1967 in conformance with section 605 of the Economic Opportunity Act, has given primary attention to the problems and prospects of community action as an instrument for breaking the cycle of poverty in America. Their premise was that the community action program of the Office of Economic Opportunity is the least understood and most challenging of all the programs of the OEO.

I have studied the report with more than the usual interest because of the fact that two outstanding Illinois citizens participated in the study. Morris I. Leibman, a distinguished attorney in Chicago, served as the Council's able Chairman and John Patrick Cardinal Cody was one of the 20 members. The other members of the Council were:

Morris Abram, attorney, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, New York, N.Y.

Otto Eckstein, professor of economics, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Horace Busby, Sandy Springs, Md.

George R. Davis, senior pastor, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.

Buford Ellington, Governor of Tennessee.

Hector P. Garcia, doctor of medicine, Corpus Christi, Tex.

Sidney Marland, Jr., superintendent of schools, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Theodore McKeldin, attorney and counsellor at law, Baltimore, Md.

Albert Rains, attorney, Rains & Rains, Gadsden, Ala.

James A. Suffridge, president, Retail Clerks International Association, AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C.

Cato W. Valandra, president, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Rosebud, S. Dak.

Whitney M. Young, Jr., executive director, National Urban League, New York, N.Y.

Walter Lane, doctor of medicine, Temple Terrace, Fla.

Donald H. McGannon, president and chairman, Westinghouse Broadcasting Co., New York, N.Y.

Mrs. Robert McNamara, Washington, D.C.

Carl Sanders, attorney, Hester & Holley, Atlanta, Ga.

David Sullivan, general president, Building Services Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C.

Louie Welch, mayor of Houston.

The Council's report is excellent—short and to the point. They state their premises succinctly:

First. No economic necessity for poverty exists in America today.

Second. Poverty is a tightly interrelated and mutually reinforcing set of economic, social, and environmental circumstances that denies equality of opportunity to some Americans.

Third. Poverty is vulnerable to social action.

Their recommendations all serve to strengthen the best of community action: community involvement and citizen participation. I would like to call particular attention to their recommendation that the Nation maintain the integrity of the community action programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity for at least 6 years beyond 1968 in order to permit a full 10-year period of experience with community action programs. Surely, we cannot expect effective results from a program that has to fight for its own existence each year never knowing what its fate may be from the Congress. The Congress should show its confidence in the Office of Economic Opportunity by extending its life for a reasonable amount of time. At the same time the Office of Economic Opportunity must not continue to have its programs disrupted by delays in annual appropriations.

Congress puts roadblock after roadblock in front of the Office of Economic Opportunity and then becomes angry when the program does not function efficiently and effectively. I have faith in the community action process. I know that mistakes will be made by reason of the fact that it is an innovative, flexible, and experimental program. However, I firmly believe that the results will be forthcoming if we but give the program a chance to breathe. I hope that Senators will read the report of the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity entitled "Focus on Community Action," and that its message will guide Congress as it considers poverty legislation in the future.

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