Notes and Comments

Participation of the Poor: Section 202(a)(3)
Organizations Under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964

Mr. Andrews: Mr. Brooks, do you think in this poverty bill there is a danger of setting up what we call "political bossism" in the cities?

Mr. Brooks: I don't believe it is possible in the city of Chicago because this isn't the way we approach the problem. . . . I am saying, sir, that the poverty program is being operated under the concept that no politics may be good politics in this area.


When Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act in August, 1964, a Community Action Program was defined as, among other things, a program "which is developed, conducted and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served." Without this provision the war on urban poverty might simply have been a technical assistance program for city welfare administrators, providing them with an incentive to introduce progressive social work methods. But section 202(a)(3), paraphrased as "maximum participation of the poor," has been commonly interpreted as a mandate for federal assistance in the effort to create political organizations of the poor. The dispute between proponents of this interpretation and mayors who are uneasy about class political consciousness in the slums has in turn involved the federal government in an historically important controversy about the political role of the urban poor.

This conflict has focused on three interpretations of section 202(a)(3) which have been advanced as definitions of the poverty agency's statutory obligation to the poor.

1. Involving the Poor. This approach limits the objectives of section 202(a)(3) to participation of the poor in social service activities. A local

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community action program discharges its responsibilities if the poor share in the administration of neighborhood day-care and employment centers and thus regard these services without the antagonism the poor are supposed to feel for distant welfare bureaucracies. On the city-wide level, poor people are expected to participate in the planning activities of the community action board. There is no obligation to make local poverty programs an instrument for broader participation by the poor in city politics.

2. **Section 202(a)(3) Literalism.** A literal interpretation of the section rejects the common paraphrase, participation of the poor, and takes at face value the statutory reference to "maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served." This approach rationalizes a preference for appointing, as neighborhood representatives to the community action boards, "the steady and stable steel worker, postal clerk or fireman who is active in the affairs of the old neighborhood where he lives." The "steady and stable steel worker" may be a Caucasian remnant in a poor Negro neighborhood, but the literalists claim that neighborhood solidarity makes the steelworker a better "link" between the poor and the poverty program than a professional social worker.

3. **Political Organizations of the Poor.** A political interpretation of section 202(a)(3) demands more than humane social service centers responsive to the needs and expressed preferences of the poor. The political approach presents the poverty program as an opportunity "to revive the instruments of representative governments which lie in wreck and ruin in the fast-growing Negro slums" and presumes that the only genuinely representative politics feasible in the contemporary slum is class politics. Advocates of this interpretation expect OEO to underwrite militant slum organizations whose protest activities promise to change the traditional pattern of political withdrawal among the urban poor. Through rent strikes, demonstrations against non-enforcement of housing codes or the sale of rotten meat, and registration drives aimed at unfriendly politicians, slum organizations would make the political system respond to the interests of the poor as machine politics does not.

The demands for a political version of participation of the poor arise from skepticism about the pluralist image of an open and responsive

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3. Ibid.
PARTICIPATION OF THE POOR

American political system. Beneath the prolonged economic discrimination and educational failures, which are commonly acknowledged as the causes of poverty, the supporters of poor people's political organizations see a breakdown of the democratic process. They accept the pluralist ideal of "a political system in which all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some stage in the process of decision." But they doubt whether the interests of the poor are served by any of the existing "active and legitimate groups." The poor, they observe, lack all the important characteristics of a successful interest group—command of substantial economic and social resources, extensive interaction among members, a supply of experienced leaders, and deep commitment to a clear and conservative set of objectives. Some of these handicaps are common to any disadvantaged group setting out to play politics. But others—most notably, interaction among members and commitment to common goals—were important resources of the labor movement that are missing among the contemporary poor. The numerical strength of the poor is precisely the resource that is foreshortened when interest-group bargaining replaces voting as the focus of political analysis.

These special disadvantages provide the case for government assistance to slum neighborhood organizations with frankly political objectives. Without help from the federal government, it is argued, the poor will continue to be left out of the bargaining process; and in a system that rewards effective group politics, this exclusion is equivalent to denying the poor their right to full political participation. There was an obvious base of support for organizing the slums inside the civil rights movement. The political interpretation acquired an additional

5. Pluralism presents domestic politics as a successful process of conflict resolution among interest groups representing all the divergent attitudes within American society. An equilibrium mechanism prevents any single group or cluster of groups from dominating the others. The diversity and accessibility of these groups and the susceptibility of their leaders to internal control assures virtually everyone of representation in the bargaining process. See generally Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (1956); Truman, The Governmental Process (1952). For a typical act of worship at the altar of pluralism, see generally Lerner, America as a Civilization (1957). Cf. generally Humphrey, War on Poverty (1964); Hunter, The Slums (1964); May, The Wasted Americans: Costs of Our Welfare Dilemma (1964); Bagdikian, In the Midst of Plenty: The Poor in America (1964).


8. For the role of these factors in the unions' initial organizing period, see generally Lipset, Trow, & Coleman, Union Democracy (1956).
constituency among social work theoreticians whose dissatisfaction with bureaucratic welfare methods led them to seek a remedy for the debilitating psychology of poverty in militant poor people's organizations. Under their combined influence the political perspective on section 202(a)(3) has become the dominant of the three interpretations in public discussion of the War on Poverty.

Statutory History

The future importance of the provision for participation of the poor was not apparent to most of the task force from the Executive Office of the President and the interested congressmen who, between them, wrote the Community Action Title of the Economic Opportunity Act. The authors were mildly receptive to the idea, which originated in the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, that the poor would benefit from involvement in the formulation and administration of welfare programs. But the draftsmen's primary concern was to provide a federal incentive for cooperation among the local social service agencies, and the provision for participation might not have been included if the sponsors had recognized its potential for interfering with OEO's patronage of local welfare coalitions. Certainly, there is no evidence of thoughtful commitment to participation of the poor by either Congress or the majority of the drafting group. Section 202(a) was thrust into the Act without any attempt to accommodate the rest of the poverty program to this revolutionary concept of participation.

The bulk of the Community Action Title, with its emphasis on social service cooperation, was a response to the growth of autonomous city welfare bureaucracies which seemed never to see farther than the limits of their respective social service functions. The authors of the bill hoped to curb the trend toward separatism by creating city-wide

9. The Community Action Title is Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964; Title I provides for the Job Corps and other youth programs; Title III covers special rural programs; Title IV provides small business incentives; Title V authorizes payments for experimental job training programs for adults; Title VI governs the administration and coordination of the Act; Title VII governs the effect of anti-poverty payments on a person's rights under the Social Security Act.

10. Among the authors of the bill in the Executive Office of the President were a few staff members of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency who were particularly interested in participation of the poor. They included David L. Hackett, the director of the Committee, and Stanford L. Kravitz, then Program Coordinator for the Juvenile Delinquency Committee and now at OEO as Chief of Research and Program Development, Community Action Program.

11. Interviews with Frederick O'R. Hayes, a participant in the drafting meetings and now Director, Field Operations Division, Community Action Program, in Washington, D.C., July and Sept. 1965.
"umbrella agencies" that would impose cooperation and encourage experimentation among conservative social service functionaries. The community action ideal was a city which, with the prodding of federal funds, unifies its welfare programs and "enters into a binding agreement to pull itself up by its own bootstraps." The umbrella doctrine's vision of cooperation was generally accepted in 1964, and understandably dominated the meetings that produced the Economic Opportunity Act. Since community action's only serious political problem seemed to be the jealous independence of welfare officials, the draftsmen were particularly interested in the Ford Foundation Community Action projects, most notably Community Progress Incorporated (CPI) in New Haven. The draftsmen were convinced by CPI's success that a skillful local coordinator, with substantial outside funds and a strong mayor at his disposal, could elicit inter-agency cooperation against poverty and quicken the pace of innovation in the social services. The key drafters hoped that poverty

14. In his appearance before the House Committee on Education and Labor, Dr. Deton J. Brooks, Jr., director of the Chicago community action program, was subjected to a painful cross-examination about the role of the poor in the Chicago program. But before the questioning began, he delivered a rhapsody on the cooperation of public and private welfare agencies through the Chicago community action board. Brooks described the board as a comprehensive collection of leaders from education, politics, community service, public service, housing, labor, business, religion and civil rights. Understanding the structure of this committee is the key to understanding Chicago's ability to mobilize an entire community in the War on Poverty. The committee stands on firm bedrock of a highly interrelated citywide agency and institutional structure. Neighborhood representatives, he noted, would eventually be added "as they become active in the community action program of the city." Hearings Before the Subcommittee on the War on Poverty of the House Committee on Education and Labor, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., at 323 (1965) [hereinafter cited as Hearings].
program funds could serve the same purpose in other cities that Ford money had served in New Haven. Therefore, they agreed that to qualify for anti-poverty funds agencies would have to satisfy two requirements:

1) The local organization must represent an alliance among all the elements in the city with an interest in the War on Poverty.

2) This umbrella agency must take advantage of its broad basis to prepare a comprehensive anti-poverty program.\textsuperscript{17}

The version of the Economic Opportunity Act that emerged from the drafting group specified the social service agencies that were to participate with the local school system in a community action program. This draft would have withheld funds from a city until they were all included in the program. To obtain comprehensiveness, the authors of the bill were prepared to wait three to five years if necessary for community action in some cities.\textsuperscript{18} But Sargent Shriver and some of his associates were unwilling to sacrifice immediate action, and in addition, a few members of Congress regarded a rigid Community Action Title as a threat to the independence of local school systems.\textsuperscript{19} Instead of providing a membership requirement for local community action programs, the final version of the Act promotes social service cooperation indirectly in section 211 by giving a funding "preference to programs and projects which are components of a comprehensive community action program."\textsuperscript{20} And section 612 directs other federal agencies to favor participants in a local community action program.

Through its administration of the Community Action Title, OEO has obtained easily the inclusive institutional alliances which were not made a strict requirement of the Act. The Community Action Guide contains a list of the agencies ministering to the poor (covering education, housing, and the traditional welfare functions) that OEO expects to be represented in every umbrella program.\textsuperscript{21} Most cities have readily acquiesced in these instructions. The problem of the independent school system has turned out to be a phantom issue which has never caused OEO serious trouble.\textsuperscript{22} Community action administrators like

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with Miss Ann Oppenheimer, a participant in the drafting meetings, in Washington, D.C., June 17, 1965.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Congresswoman Edith Green of Oregon, who opposed rigid community action agencies, believed that officious social service bureaucrats interfered excessively with the administration of Benjamin Cardozo High School in Washington, D.C.; and she feared that a rigid Community Action Title would make Cardozo's troubles a national problem.


\textsuperscript{22} Interviews with Frederick O'R. Hayes, Director, Field Operations Division, Community Action Program, in Washington, D.C., July and Sept. 1965.
Ben Zimmerman in Syracuse have brought the New Haven style of institutional cooperation and innovation to strongholds of separatism.23

THE CONFLICT IN STATUTORY GOALS

When the Community Action Title was being written, the goal of involving the poor seemed compatible with the ideal of social service cooperation. The Juvenile Delinquency Program's neighborhood organizations were living amicably with the welfare agencies and the city politicians. But this false calm occurred during a latency period in the development of independent poor people's organizations which, in maturity, have been more politically assertive than seemed possible in the winter of 1964. Recognition of the potential for conflict came several months later when the protest activities of Mobilization for Youth led the New York City bureaucracy to attempt to dismember it.24 Mayors and welfare functionaries were now being identified in the press as the enemies of the organized poor; and umbrella agencies looked less like consensual alliances against poverty than alliances against the political organization of the slums. It became apparent that in the hands of an antagonistic mayor an umbrella agency was a weapon,

23. Zimmerman is proudest of convincing the school administrators to accept a city health clinic on their premises after the schools resisted for years any type of inter-agency cooperation.

24. In Strategies for Implementing Social Change (unpublished manuscript in Columbia University School of Social Work), Albert Rose has quoted the sociologist Herbert Gans on the process by which MFY and similar groups antagonize city government.

Through these programs the action agencies have encouraged and helped their clients to fight city hall and the larger power structure, and to demand changes in the allocation of public funds, the quality and distribution of public services, and the distribution of political power generally. . . . When the action agencies began to take over traditional functions of established agencies, or set up substitutes for them, or otherwise threatened powerful interests, these fought back by putting pressure on the action agencies. Since city hall and individual elements in the power structure usually participated in setting up the action agencies in the first place, and dominate their boards of trustees, they had no real difficulty in demanding a halt to political activities or to any others that stepped on influential toes. Id. at 29.

MFY had displeased New York officials as early as January 1964, when a group of 26 school principals claimed that Mobilization was spreading dissatisfaction in the Lower East Side neighborhood. (N.Y. Times, Aug. 17, 1964, p. 1, col. 4). But the city did not turn against MFY until August. Then Deputy Mayor Paul Screvane conducted a highly publicized investigation into the left-wing histories of some Mobilization employees, and several newspapers reported charges from inside the Police Department that the notorious Harlem rent strike leader, Jesse Gray, had been plotting Mobilization's own rent strike strategy. (N.Y. Times, Aug. 16, 1964, p. 78, col. 2; Id., Aug. 17, 1964, p. 1, col. 4). A few weeks later, Sen. Javits warned that Mobilization would have to curtail its social action program if it wanted to retain federal and city supports, (N.Y. Times, Sept. 1, 1964, p. 27, col. 5); within a few days, MFY's administrative director, J. E. McCarthy, had retired, claiming reasons of health.
far superior to a network of self-centered welfare bureaucracies, for consolidating his power in the local poverty program and excluding the troublesome poor. Once "involvement of the poor" became political participation of the poor, city-wide social service cooperation and the organization of the slums ceased to be compatible statutory goals.

Although few people saw the potential conflict between slum organizations and the city politicians,25 the tension now seems an inevitable product of the organizations' purposes. The poor people's groups were conceived, in part, as a corrective to the psychological devastation of bureaucratic welfare methods. As public aid agencies proliferated after the New Deal, they created an imposing network of institutions which permeate the culture of urban poverty. Today the representative victim of urban poverty is housed in massive public projects, fed and clothed with Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) funds. Welfare investigators judge his morals; case workers try to cope with his psychic maladjustments. There is no clear separation between the system's function as dispenser of the dole and its moralizing and socializing activities. Unconstrained by consistent administrative or judicial review, public aid officials are free to distribute welfare benefits as a reward for approved behaviour.26

These indignities inspired criticism of the welfare system which dismissed its accomplishments as marginal benefits, submerged in the "debilitating and demoralizing" effect of the poor person's dependent relationship to the welfare functionary.27 Welfare officials themselves

25. The members of the drafting group most likely to have been aware of the potential for political conflict were the ones associated with the Juvenile Delinquency Program (e.g., Sanford Kravitz, David Hackett). They were in a peculiarly favorable position to see concealed tendencies in the relations between poor people's organizations and city government.


27. The indictment of welfare bureaucracy fell heaviest on the system's characteristic administrative style.

Many persons who have dedicated their lives and devoted themselves, wisely or unwisely, to the task of providing some form of social service have been challenged, not on the basis of incompetence but on the basis of lack of regard for human worth and the denial of basic opportunity to vast numbers of children.

Rose, Strategies for Implementing Social Change 26, Nov. 1965 (unpublished manuscript at Columbia School of Social Work). This passage was written by a social work theorist associated with the critics of public aid bureaucracies and their case work methods. But
frequently played the part of obliging strawmen and published studies of poverty which credited their image as contemptuous overseers of the poor. A report, issued in 1962 by the Cook County Bureau of Public Aid, referred to the welfare recipient as a “child-adult” and repeated the slogan, “social uplift through social discipline,” which had been invented a year earlier by the Bureau’s director, Raymond Hilliard.28

In their search for a counterweight to a system in which the poor appeared as helpless dependents, some social work theorists turned to social action which they identified with militant slum organizations. Their hope was that these organizations, by acquiring influence for their members, would help the poor overcome the psychology of powerlessness.29 This concern with the powerlessness and dependency of the poor unavoidably led the social work theorists into city politics and to a political interpretation of section 202(a)(3). In slum neighborhoods, the city was often the local landlord30 and enforcer of morals31 as well as the source of most people’s subsistence income. To base militant social action on the resentments of people whose lives were so entangled with public subsidies and regulations was inevitably to invite the antagonism of the city government.

Even where resentments focused on private persons, the organizer was likely to be drawn into political conflict. City government may not—as some organizers seemed to believe—consist of a conspiracy against the poor, manipulated by an Establishment of ward politicians, slum lords, and welfare bureaucrats. But social action workers who promoted rent strikes soon discovered that the slums exist on the tolerance of housing inspectors and that sometimes the landlord is not unaffiliated with the mayor’s office.32


29. The result of social action of this kind is a concurrent change in the view which the poor have of themselves and in the view of the poor by the outside world. There is a softening of the destructive social reality and immediate psychological returns to the poor, although not without hostile reactions from advantaged persons and organizations with known or hidden vested interests in maintenance of the areas of poverty.


30. For the difficulties of applying a housing code, even to the city’s own buildings, see N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 23, 1966, p. 77, col. 8.

31. See generally Reich, The New Property, 73 YALE L.J. 733 (1964); Note, 36 NOTRE DAME LAW. 56 (1960).

32. A perennial subject for muckraking journalism in Chicago is the slum properties
The theoreticians were often unprepared for the enemies they acquired when their opinions of the public aid bureaucracy moved out of the professional journals and on to the picket signs. For an experienced labor or civil rights organizer there would be nothing unsettling about the political entanglements of militant social action. But social action enthusiasts came from an entirely different organizing tradition. Many of them arrived at their current welfare theories while organizing teenagers for juvenile delinquency projects which enjoyed the cooperation of city authorities. This preparation was not adequate for the political problems the social action theoreticians encountered when they obtained older constituencies in places like New York's Lower East Side.

Saul Alinsky: Rub Raw the Sores

This transformation of "involvement of the poor" into an ideology of conflict with city hall brought the social action theorists and their groups closer to Saul Alinsky. Since he organized the Back of the Yards project in Chicago thirty years ago, Alinsky has occupied the same ground that the social action groups have been approaching only recently. Many social action theorists would agree by now that aggravated resentments are the most practical basis for mass organizations in the slums. But they reached this conclusion only after experimenting with other, milder techniques for "involving the poor"—neighborhood improvement projects, for example, and several versions of cooperation with the city authorities. Alinsky, on the other hand, has never doubted the union of social therapy and militant politics. In Alinsky's catechism, a neighborhood regenerates itself only by taking its problems into its own hands and forcing concessions from the local power structure. Frustration turned to anger provides the energy for this social change.
The community organizer digs into a morass of resignation, hopelessness, and despair and works with the local people in articulating (or 'rubbing raw') their resentments... When those prominent in the status quo turn and label you an agitator, they are completely correct, for that is, in one word, your function—to agitate to the point of conflict.\textsuperscript{35}

Although Alinsky's groups are not above doing business with city hall, a perpetually antagonistic pose is one of their operating principles.\textsuperscript{30} They rely on a mood of anger which they dare not contradict with a compromising tone.

While adapting the Alinsky Method, the social action theorists have not yet developed institutional solutions to his groups' characteristic problems. The central difficulty for an Alinsky organization is to sustain an angry mood after the initial organizing issue has passed, and the members discover that even a successful protest has not brought fundamental changes to the neighborhood. After a march on city hall the group cannot return to other activities and wait for the next protest issue to come along. Protest is the organization's only business.

Besides leading to excessive expectations the Alinsky groups' reliance on sustained agitation has made it difficult for them to honor the principle of democratic control. For all their talk about "what the people want," they sometimes practice a version of "shareholder democracy" in which the members merely ratify the leaders' strategy.\textsuperscript{27} Their mass meetings are devices to aggravate neighborhood discontents and identify the organization as the appropriate outlet for their frustrations.

Some social work theorists, such as Warren Haggstrom and Richard Cloward, in their excursions into the slums, have made more of an effort to maintain democratic control. They divide the mass organiza-
tion into local groups which are small enough to practice "participatory democracy," and in the style of Quaker meetings, converse with the members until a consensus emerges from the group. But this arrangement too may degenerate into a guise for imposing the organizer's program on the less articulate and single-minded neighborhood residents.

Despite the difficulty of making organizations of the poor democratic, social action enthusiasts were able to establish their groups in the public mind as the model of "maximum participation of the poor." In the Wall Street Journal, no less than in The New Republic, the phrase began to signify a militant slum organization, asserting its members' interests against the mayor and preempting the functions of the welfare bureaucracies. By now section 202(a)(3) has been widely interpreted as a mandate for OEO to finance these militant organizations. It has become impossible for the participation provision to lie quietly within a Community Action Title prescribing institutional alliances which inevitably become the political instrument of city hall.

OEO, THE MAYORS, AND THEIR INSURGENT POOR

The mayors do not assume their new role as antagonists of the organized poor without regrets. A nostalgic attachment to New Deal political alignments remains, long after race began to count for more in urban politics than the memory of Franklin Roosevelt. No doubt, Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago is shocked by the catcalls he receives at NAACP rallies. Indeed, if the poor had made their initial political demands in Washington instead of at city hall, the mayors and their poor could probably have continued to live at peace in the shelter of the local Democratic parties. Most mayors would gladly combine with poor people's organizations to bring home a larger basket of federal welfare and education funds.

But one subject on which most mayors are inflexible is the distribution of power in the cities they govern. Even where the poor receive decent housing and abundant social services, mayors are skittish about the potential for political opposition in the slums. If the poor obtained

38. The Syracuse Community Development Association, a hybrid project administered by social work theoreticians and Alinsky veterans, practiced "participatory democracy." One SCDA worker described a meeting in the Pioneer housing project as "the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. People who aren't supposed to be articulate saying this is what they want, this is what they need. They couldn't agree on a chairman, so they chose two: one Negro and one white. It was beautiful." Interview with Phyllis Ferro, of the Syracuse Community Development Association, in Syracuse, N.Y., July 10, 1965.


40. Certainly the charade of honoring participation of the poor, which the mayors perform for Congress and OEO, would be less transparent if the mayors could display innocuous, but indigenous, organizations of the poor.
influence and patronage commensurate with their ballot strength they might disrupt longstanding allocations of power which keep many mayors in office.\textsuperscript{41}

The mayors' adjustment to the organized poor has been retarded even further by their image as conciliatory figures, above factional struggles for political power. In the mid-1950's, the "good" mayors began to be seen as high-minded representatives of "good government."\textsuperscript{42}

It seemed that the time had passed when rascally mayors, like James Curley of Boston, discharged their obligations to the poor through extortion. The enlightened mayor cleaned up the city by replacing party hacks with blue-ribbon committees and downtown slums with urban renewal high-risers.\textsuperscript{43} This hygienic view of urban politics embodied in OEO's umbrella doctrine, assumed city hall's traditional success at accommodating the poor who continued to support the local Democratic party at the polls. The mayor's real task, therefore, was to conciliate business as well as to satisfy the middle class' desire for a prosperous, well-ordered city. In return, the business community would enter an alliance with the city social service agencies and the Urban Renewal Authority to create "a better and more beautiful city for rich and poor alike." A mayor would have to be uncommonly free of self-indulgence to abandon easily this gratifying view of his role in urban affairs. Slum organizers are challenging an important source of the mayor's self-justification when they present urban renewal as euphemistic "Negro removal," and city hall judicial reform as an innovation that merely eliminates Negro jobs.

\textsuperscript{41} In the general competition of ethnic groups for a place on the Democratic ticket, the Negroes (along with the Poles) have not gained in accordance with their numbers in the city. No Negro has ever been slated by the party for one of the politically important posts—those posts in the city and county administration which control patronage. The number of Negroes elected to well-paying and prestigious judgeships has been far fewer than the Negro proportion of the total electorate would suggest. Despite tremendous population gains since 1940, the Negro group continues to elect only one state senator.  
\textit{Wilson, Negro Politics} 68 (1960).

\textsuperscript{42} Robert Dahl's description of Mayor Richard Lee, assembling a consensus for New Haven redevelopment, is the most complete single-city presentation of this shift in emphasis among urban Democratic mayors. Dahl, \textit{Who Governs} (1961).

\textsuperscript{43} Banfield and Wilson describe the task of a "machine" mayor in search of good-government appeal. "To do this, he must minimize, or at least render inconspicuous, his use of patronage and payoffs, and he must exert himself to find 'blue ribbon' candidates for important offices and 'professional' administrators for important departments and to inaugurate civic projects that will suit the 'good government' voter without costing very much. In effect, he must take political resources away from those central-city wards where the machine is strong and give them to the independent voters in the 'newspaper' wards and in the independent suburbs. . . ." Banfield & Wilson, \textit{City Politics} 123-24 (1963).
OEO's Dilemma

The conflict between the mayors and the social action groups, which undermined consensual community action, has left OEO's Community Action Program without a coherent objective. Militant social action, as the most fashionable idea in social work theory, originally had a strong appeal for OEO's top administrators, many of whom acquired a taste at the Peace Corps for voguish social service. In addition, some of the most prominent social action enthusiasts have been employed inside the Anti-Poverty agency and, particularly during the first year, have lobbied energetically for their political interpretation of the provision requiring participation of the poor. But neither of these influences on OEO has compensated for the failure of militant social action to acquire imposing political support outside the Anti-Poverty Agency. The groups with the strongest commitment to the political interpretation have been social work theorists, federal bureaucrats, and neighborhood organizers—none of whom could match the influence of city hall.

The diffuseness of the congressional mandate for participation of the poor has made OEO susceptible to political pressure from mayors who interpret the participationist sub-section to exclude support for politically involved organizations of the poor. The Anti-Poverty Agency cannot defend these organizations by invoking a statutory obligation to underwrite poor people's groups. Nor can the Agency rely on the usual politics of special interest legislation which match the power of the group served by the bill against the influence of its antagonists. Section 202(a)(3) is directed at groups that are currently outside politics, and OEO's potential constituency of urban poor counts for little beside the mayors who help elect Democratic presidents every four years.

Because of these political constraints, OEO has emphasized the reference to feasibility in administering the provision for "maximum feasible participation" of the poor. The more insistent the militant spokesmen for the poor and the weaker the city politicians, the more willing OEO has been to fund applicants outside the umbrella agencies or to urge the acceptance of dissidents on community action boards.

In general, OEO has applied three community action policies:

1) In some cities, notably Chicago, OEO has turned over the community action program to the local government and left the organized poor to contend, unassisted, with city hall umbrella agencies.

44. They included William Haddad, who has since left his job as Inspector General of OEO; Edgar S. Cahn, a special assistant to Shriver; Richard W. Boone, who has left the Community Action Program to head the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty; and Sanford L. Kravitz, chief of research and program development, Community Action Program.
2) Where political circumstances have been most favorable, OEO has funded directly neighborhood social action groups. The Syracuse University project, until it lost its grant last December, was the most prominent example of this experimental policy.

3) Elsewhere OEO has tried to mediate between the social action organizers and their antagonists in city hall and the welfare bureaucracy. The compromise policy has had its fullest expression in cities such as Philadelphia where the indigenous poor were allowed to elect representatives to community action boards, previously populated by city hall appointees.

OEO's policy of variable response has succeeded in "involving the poor" in several poverty programs, but its contribution to the political organization of the slums has been negligible. Even in the cities considered ripe for the direct funding policy, the mayors have been strong enough to force OEO to withdraw its local commitment to militant social action. And in most elections to the umbrella boards, the poor have merely ratified their established political leadership because no one has been able to compete successfully with existing political organizations in the slums.

1. Chicago: City Hall Anti-Poverty

The War on Poverty, as conducted in Chicago, is a commonplace supplementary grant program, like air pollution control, for the discretionary use of the city government and affiliated welfare agencies. Mayor Daley assumes a proprietary interest in local community action and tolerates participation of the poor only through his own political organization. By April, 1965, the city's infant community action program had created, in the central office alone, 469 "non-professional" jobs which require no special qualifications. And one of the 24 projected neighborhood "urban progress centers" had already hired 50 representatives to the local poor. In the wrong hands, this patronage could underwrite a challenge to Daley's organization or, at least, weaken its exclusive franchise as the agency for "non-professional" public employment in Chicago. No wonder, then, that aspirants to jobs as neighborhood representatives are advised to get letters of recommendation from their precinct captains who, in turn, circulate appropriate application forms.

The Chicago poverty program is administered by officials borrowed from the Cook County Department of Public Aid, which under Ray-

45. Hearings, 332.
mond Hilliard has been a stronghold of the case-work approach to social welfare. It was Hilliard and Dr. Deton J. Brooks, Jr., now director of the Chicago community action program, who in "Blackboard Curtain," a study of juvenile delinquency, originated the slogan, "social uplift through social discipline." 

Brooks keeps the program closely affiliated with the city's welfare apparatus. The neighborhood Urban Progress Centers, which Mayor Daley calls "little city halls," are described by others as emergency relief for the office shortage at the Department of Public Aid.

None of Chicago's anti-poverty funds has become seed-money for organizations of the poor that would cause any trouble for the Daley organization. The only serious challenge came from a group called the West Side Ministers Federation which requested $300,000 from OEO last spring to propagate the Alinsky method. At a meeting attended by an applauding representative from OEO, Robert Shackford, and a silent Dr. Brooks, the Reverend Lynward Stevenson, president of The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), Alinsky's most successful neighborhood group, asked a Lawndale audience: "How long are we going to stand for people planning for us as if we were children, while they sit downtown and munch their steaks and drink their champagne?"

Shackford's response was: "I've got your message. And I'll take it to Washington." But the proposal died on the desk of the OEO bureaucracy. The Agency has felt constrained to appropriate all of Chicago's anti-poverty funds through Brooks' Committee on Urban Opportunity, which in turn is satisfied with the program offered by Lawndale's "little city hall." There in a converted field house, separated from the neigh-


48. While maintaining the traditions of the Bureau of Public Aid, community action officials are also sensitive to the political consequences of their War on Poverty. Their vigilance is not limited to the credentials of the program's "non-professional" employees. A director of an Urban Progress Center wanted to add three organizers for JOIN, the local SDS project, to his advisory board last spring. But the JOIN members had previously alarmed the city by demanding the conversion of an inactive parking lot into a playground, and the director's suggestion died in Brooks' office. Interview with Chicago Community Action official, in Chicago, June 10, 1965.

49. The Lawndale Urban Progress Center calls to mind Josef K.'s working quarters in the movie version of The Trial. Several hundred typewriters and file cabinets occupy a single, enormous room. At the entrance to the office is a clerk who collects finger prints from the indigenous poor before they are interviewed for community action jobs. One young man, with a transistor radio cord hanging from his ear in mute protest, was marched to the finger print desk by his determined girl friend. When he confessed that he had forgotten his prints, he was told: "You people, can't remember anything, can you?"

PARTICIPATION OF THE POOR

neighborhood by the no man's land of Douglas Park, the poor are returned to the labyrinth of the Chicago welfare agencies.

One month after the Lawndale meeting, Dr. Brooks defended his program during an appearance before the House Education and Labor Committee. He noted that hardly anything could happen in Lawndale without the participation of the poor. "It would be awfully difficult not to get right down to the poor. The ministerial groups, again, are on [sic] there. But it would be very difficult not to get down to it." Meanwhile Mayor Daley was making a substantive concession. He announced to the press that fifty of Lawndale's residents would join the payroll as the center's representatives to the neighborhood poor.

The director of the Lawndale "little city hall," Clarence Cash, is more candid than his superiors about the prevailing attitude in Chicago toward participation of the poor. He makes clear his scepticism about the social value of participationism or any other kind of representative politics inside the poverty program.

"Nobody really represents the poor," he says. And this atomized condition which for others is the compelling reason to organize the slums is for Cash a reason to look elsewhere for good ideas. "When the poor come up with good suggestions, we'll listen. But they haven't yet." Cash sees the hand of Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation in the proposal of the West Side Ministers Federation for a separate Lawndale program and doubts that the local poor had much to do with it. "That proposal wasn't written by Negroes with an eighth grade education," he says.

"What right do the Federation ministers have to speak for the poor?" he asks. "The ward committeemen have more contact with the poor people than they do. When I go into the bars around Lawndale, I see more of the poor than the ministers see on a Sunday morning."

2. Syracuse: Direct Funding of Social Action

Until December, 1965, OEO was subsidizing both involvement of the poor and political participation in Syracuse. In an evacuated federal court building, Ben Zimmerman of the local umbrella agency (Syracuse Crusade for Opportunity) was building an alliance of existing city welfare institutions. Meanwhile, at the Community Development Center (SCDA) organizers, paid with anti-poverty funds, were sent into the

52. Interview with Peter Doole, official of Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity, in Chicago, June 10, 1965.
53. Interview with Clarence Cash, June 11, 1965.
local slums to register voters and, incidentally, to remind the poor "which politicians keep their promises."\(^{54}\)

As competitors for OEO's local community action franchise, the two groups were unavoidably suspicious and resentful of each other. Originally, SCDA-director Fred Ross had come from an Alinsky project among migrant workers in California to start autonomous community organizations in Syracuse for Zimmerman's Crusade. The two men later fell out over a voter registration drive that was losing friends for the Crusade among Syracuse Republicans.\(^{55}\) Ross and Warren Hagstrom, a social action theoretician from Syracuse University, then obtained for the University a separate research and demonstration grant from OEO to explore new approaches to participation of the poor.\(^{56}\)

Nevertheless, the Crusade and SCDA seemed capable of abrasive co-existence. Zimmerman was not the typical umbrella agent, moving up the ladder in a welfare bureaucracy; he had worked with the President's Juvenile Delinquency Program that inspired the participationist provision in the Economic Opportunity Act. Last summer he was still speaking in the tones of the early '60's about cooperating with city authorities "to involve the poor."\(^{57}\) The acrimonious poverty politics which turned some of his JD colleagues to militancy made Zimmerman wary of giving offense to city hall. "Mobilization for Youth showed how important it is to get broad support," he said. "You can't picket city hall on Monday and arrange for park equipment on Tuesday."\(^{58}\) But unlike most umbrellamen, Zimmerman was familiar and sympathetic with the ideas that motivate slum organizers. A city government with so enlightened a community action director might have been expected to provide relatively tolerant opposition for SCDA.

Syracuse's political circumstances also seemed to favor SCDA's survival. Mayor William F. Walsh was not the formidable enemy social action groups usually encounter in city hall. A Republican in a city that voted for both Kennedy and Johnson in 1964, he was poorly situated to ask the White House to withdraw federal patronage from SCDA.

But none of these advantages was sufficient to save SCDA. During its single operating year, SCDA alienated most of the city bureaucracy with "play-in's" at local parks and protests against the management of

\(^{54}\) Interview with Fred Ross, director of SCDA, in Syracuse, July 10, 1965.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.


\(^{57}\) Interview with Ben Zimmerman, in Syracuse, June 10, 1965.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
the city's public housing. SCDA also made an enemy of the influential Niagara Mohawk Power Company which saw the group's influence behind CORE's continual picketing against the corporation's employment practices. Then Mayor Walsh, already concerned about the Democratic bias of SCDA's registration drive, attended the 1964 mayors conference where he was surprised to find his colleagues in firm control of their local poverty programs. After the meeting, Walsh was less constrained in attacking SCDA, and on one occasion he fulminated against the group's "dangerous social experiment for storming city hall."

In coalition with offended bureaucrats and businessmen, Walsh intervened with OEO to order Ross and Haggstrom back under the Crusade's umbrella. In addition, the more influential big city mayors, regarding Syracuse as a test case, may have been willing to assist even a Republican city administration in order to defend their own interest in city-controlled community action.

What of OEO's suggestion that SCDA merge into the Crusade? The original split over Ross' registration campaign probably demonstrates the incompatibility of the two styles of community action in Syracuse. Social action thrives on conflict, while institutional alliances need good will in high places. And a bridge between the two would require more than Ben Zimmerman's earnest desire to "involve the poor."

3. **Representatives of the Poor on the Umbrella Boards**

In trying to accommodate the city politicians and the participationists, OEO has urged the appointment of representatives of the poor to central community action boards. This procedure honors, in theory, the statute's conflicting goals by providing a unified community action program, with representatives of the poor to protect the interests of militant slum organizations. Among the three community action strategies, it is the one OEO has pursued with the most apparent conviction.

But even in seeking a representative version of participation of the

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60. Interview with Fred Ross, director of SCDA, in Syracuse, June 10, 1965.
62. Ross and Haggstrom would apparently prefer martyrdom to another spell under the umbrella, so the question is probably academic. See Cloward & Elman, *The First Congress of the Poor*, 202 The Nation 149, Feb. 7, 1966.
63. In contrast to OEO's reluctance to fund poor people's organizations directly, the Anti-Poverty Agency has urged increased representation of the poor on the community action boards in Chicago, Philadelphia, New Haven, Cleveland, Kansas City, Mo. and Milwaukee.
poor, OEO has not been much more successful than it has been in reconciling the mayors to direct funding of poor people's organizations. Many cities have been willing to appoint only an inconsequential number of emblematic poor to the community action boards. Because political activity among the poor people is so diffuse, it is impossible to identify their qualified representatives as accurately as labor leaders or welfare agency representatives. Some mayors have exploited this confusion by appointing "representatives of the poor" who serve themselves and city hall better than they serve the poor. When the Chicago committee's distance from the poor was criticized last March, Dr. Brooks added to the board a judge and a businessman who were old friends of the Daley organization. Neither was distinguishable from the rest of the Committee except by the color of his skin.64

Dissatisfaction with appointed representatives of the poor has created a demand from slum neighborhoods for elections to the umbrella boards. With their appeal to democratic sensibilities, elections have become the most popular reform program among groups that are disaffected from local community action agencies. At least until March, 1966, OEO proselytized for elections to community action boards,65 urging in its Community Action Program Guide "the use, whenever feasible, of traditional democratic approaches and techniques such as group forum, and discussions, nominations, and balloting."66

The example of Philadelphia suggests, however, that elections are largely symbolic unless they are preceded or accompanied by an organizing effort in slum neighborhoods to interest the poor in the issues of the War on Poverty. The embarrassing voting percentages—sometimes as low as 1%67—reflect the difficulty any group, except an established city machine, has in organizing slum constituencies. The failure in Philadelphia was not the fault of the electoral mechanics, which might have facilitated the representation of neighborhood interests on the city-wide board. In twelve slum areas, residents who met a reverse income qualification68 were to elect representatives to neighborhood community action councils. Each council, in turn, was to appoint a

65. In an appearance before the House Education & Labor Committee, Sargent Shriver questioned whether OEO would continue to finance elections to the boards. Noting the small turn-out of eligible voters in most cities, he concluded that OEO was not getting its "money's worth" from the elections. N.Y. Times, March 9, 1966, p. 24, col. 3.
member to the central community action board (Philadelphia Anti-Poverty Action Committee or PAAC). The twelve representatives would not constitute a majority of the 31-member board; but it seemed that as umbrella group ratios go, the Philadelphia poor would be well represented.

Before OEO forced Philadelphia to institute the plan, PAAC had been under attack from the Citizens Emergency Committee, whose counter-umbrella sheltered most of the poverty dissidents in the city. The Emergency Committee might have been expected to provide an effective coalition of canvassing organizations for the election. Instead, the committee members were frustrated by divisions about election tactics within their home organizations and found that even among themselves they could agree on nothing except distaste for the PAAC program. Among the organizations with members on the committee, SNCC was puristically attached to direct dealings between OEO and the neighborhood poor, and would not be co-opted by an umbrella group election plan. The unions were enthusiastic about elections, but they knew hardly anyone in the neighborhoods with eligible poverty voters.69

The NAACP remained the only organization that could claim a mass following in the Philadelphia slums and certainly the only one with the capacity to mobilize voter interest in the poverty election. But NAACP President Cecil Moore had earlier made his peace with PAAC. The counsel of the Philadelphia NAACP, Isaiah Crippins, had been appointed general counsel of the Action Committee at $15,000 a year, after which Moore ceased agitating against the local poverty program and sent his picketers to Girard College.70

Once the election plan was announced the NAACP campaigned quietly and effectively for its own candidates, playing impeccably the part of a successful city machine. The Association made no effort to arouse an electorate that would hold the new board members to their representative function.71 PAAC managed a brief and uneventful election. At an early town meeting for eligible voters in the poverty election, discussion was limited to electoral mechanics and the structure of the Action Committee. All topics relating to the content of poverty programs were ruled out of order.72 The electorate responded by losing interest in poverty politics; the total attendance at the two town meet-

70. Interview with Mr. Clarence Harris, member of the Citizens Emergency Committee, in Philadelphia, July 6, 1965.
ings was approximately the same as the number of voters in the election (13,000 or 3% of the eligible voters).\textsuperscript{73}

The candidates who were elected have behaved in a manner understandable in officials with a lethargic constituency, unaware of any personal stake in the poverty program. In a straw poll, the representatives voted to call themselves “typical residents” instead of representatives of the poor.\textsuperscript{74} They showed a passing interest in a juvenile delinquency program devised by the PAAC staff, and had it amended to provide more jobs for the poor.\textsuperscript{75} But their real preoccupation has been with jobs for PAAC committeemen, in particular a plan, as yet unratified by OEO, to pay each of them $500 per year.\textsuperscript{76}

**New Organizing Strategies**

OEO’s record as a patron of social action has followed the pattern of Chicago, Syracuse, and Philadelphia wherever the agency has become involved in an effort to organize new political constituencies in the slums.\textsuperscript{77} By the end of 1965, OEO functionaries were no longer prodding mayors to tolerate opposition within the local poverty program. The Syracuse University project had lost its organizing grant; the Newark program was in danger of annexation by the city government;\textsuperscript{78} and several of the OEO officials who had lobbied most vigor-


\textsuperscript{74} Interviews with Miss Christine Allen, elected neighborhood representative to PAAC, in Philadelphia, July 3, 1965 and with Mrs. Mattie Humphrey, member of the Citizens Emergency Committee, July 4, 1965. One member of PAAC, Urban League executive director Andrew Freeman, confidently predicted that the elected poor would soon learn to behave like their social betters on the PAAC board. “Some of them are hot-heads now, trying to prove that they’re as smart as anybody else,” Mr. Freeman observed, “but they’re just like union shop stewards. In a little while they learn some sense and pretty soon the company can hire them as foreman.” Interview with Andrew Freeman, in Philadelphia, July 5, 1965.

\textsuperscript{75} Philadelphia Tribune, June 12, 1965.

\textsuperscript{76} Interview with Miss Christine Allen, elected neighborhood representative to PAAC, in Philadelphia, July 3, 1965.

\textsuperscript{77} The poverty election in the Hill Neighborhood of New Haven also illustrates the importance of community organization to the election formula for obtaining representation of the poor. The New Haven election had no property qualification, and the local social action group, the Hill Neighborhood Union had to contend with voting middle class whites whose loyalty was to the local Democratic party. The fourth ward, where the Neighborhood Association had engaged in only limited organizing activities and which contained relatively large remnants of the old white community, returned the Democratic ward chairman and an alderman as its representatives to the community action board. On the other hand, in the sixth ward, the heartland of the Neighborhood Union, two organizers defeated candidates closely affiliated with the existing leadership of the community action program (Community Progress, Incorporated). Cf. *Yale Civil Rights Newsletter* (unpublished, available from the Yale Council on Civil Rights).

\textsuperscript{78} The Newark War on Poverty began with the vital combination of a weak mayor
-participation of the poor had left the Agency. Entrenched political organizations were in control of local poverty programs, with ornamental poor scattered among the community action boards as an obeisance to the principle of participation.

Strengthened Local and Regional Offices

Although OEO seems to have disentangled itself from the organized poor for political reasons, some critics blame the program's retreat on institutional failings—in particular, the passivity of OEO's local and regional personnel. The critics see local community action hierarchies as an obstacle, created by OEO's attachment to the umbrella doctrine, that prevents the agency from financing the organization of the slums. Accordingly, their plan is to replace the mayor's community action director by a federal anti-poverty office which would dispense OEO funds. Local OEO staffs, now occupied by the mechanics of processing applications, would be greatly expanded, and some personnel might be sent directly into the slums as organizers. These invigorated local offices, the critics believe, could open a direct route to Washington for the organized poor, and, at the same time, preserve the ideal of centralized community action which presently ties OEO to the mayor's apparatus.

(Hugh J. Addonizio) and a strong poverty director (Cyril D. Tyson, a founder of Haryou) that makes it possible for local poverty programs to promote independent organizations of the poor. Moreover, Newark is one of the two large American cities with a non-white majority, as well as the one with the largest percentage of certified poor. For those with visions of the urban Negro entering the city power structure on the wings of the poverty program, Newark was the obvious test case. Through the spring and summer Tyson's United Community Corporation maintained its independence. There were elections to the program's neighborhood advisory boards, and in one of them (Local Board #3) participants in NCUP (Newark Community Union Project), the Newark SDS project, obtained a working majority. An organizer as "unco-optable" as Tom Hayden of the NCUP project could talk seriously, if cautiously, about the Newark poverty program as a route into local politics for independent, self-respecting poor people. But this experiment in elective democracy within the poverty program tainted UCC with NCUP's campaign against the Newark welfare institutions, and the city government was moved to action. In December a city council report accused the corporation of being "primarily" concerned with "political action" as well as the usual "healthy salaries and material goods." It proposed to subordinate UCC to a city commission, including the mayor, four councilmen and four appointees of the mayor (New York Times, Dec. 8, 1965, p. 61, col. 7; id., Dec. 12, 1965, p. 81, col. 1). In an attempt at coexistence, Tyson agreed to the "super-umbrella" and as an additional concession submitted a plan to the UCC membership for adding twenty-seven poor and twenty-six mayor's men simultaneously to the board. But the mayor's candidates were rejected at an open UCC meeting in February, and later several Newark politicians indicated that they would not be satisfied with the degree of control provided by the "super-umbrella" agency alone. New York Times, Feb. 19, 1966, p. 56, col. 1.

Both William Haddad and Richard Boone left OEO in late 1965.
It is not, however, OEO's attachment to centralized community action that prevents the Agency from supporting slum organizations. In Syracuse, the Anti-Poverty Agency was willing to circumvent the mayor's community action board but capitulated before the displeasure of a weak Republican mayor. And in Newark, OEO let city hall attack a politically independent poverty program although the director was prepared to uphold his responsibility to coordinate the agencies and to ensure the participation of the poor. OEO's susceptibility to political pressure is what keeps the Agency from financing militant social action, and this weakness would survive any number of institutional innovations.

The presence of OEO employees on the front lines might even increase OEO's diffidence in its relations with social action groups. In the past, when mayors have complained about the politics of a militant OEO-grantee, the Agency has been able to disown responsibility with the claim that it is the organization's intimacy with the poor rather than its politics that is OEO's statutory concern. But the Agency could not make this excuse to the Democratic National Committee if OEO's own personnel were involved in making policy for the neighborhood organization.

The critics may also overestimate field representatives' potential as progressive allies of the organized poor. After a period in office, a federal official often becomes an accessory of the city bureaucracy with which he associates. He comes to share its suspicion of any innovation that might upset the local power structure. There is no reason to expect that OEO field representatives, presently eager to organize the poor, would resist this transition from an experimental, national perspective to a conservative local point of view. The future, if any, of OEO support for militant social action is a relationship, free of intermediaries, between Washington and neighborhood 202(a)(3) organizations.

With OEO a prisoner of its political susceptibilities, neighborhood organizers need to develop more imaginative strategies for their

80. The support OEO currently gives its field representatives, on the rare occasions when they intervene publicly in local poverty politics, does not suggest that a corps of interventionist local representatives could do very much for participation of the poor. Robert Shackford, OEO's man in Chicago, announced last spring that an "ideal" community action program would include representatives from civil rights groups and the oppositionist Catholic urban affairs department. (Chicago Daily News, April 5, 1965, reprinted in Hearings, 350). The Chicago poverty program failed to respond, and the money kept coming from OEO.

81. See, e.g., Lipset, Bureaucracy and Social Change, in READER IN BUREAUCRACY 221-82 (Merton, Gray, Hockey & Selvin ed. 1952); for theoretical discussion of the problem see SELZNICK, TVA AND THE GRASS ROOTS 250-59 (1949).
dealings with the Anti-Poverty Agency and city governments. At present, organizers often treat the local political system as an obstacle to be circumvented simply by quoting section 202(a)(3). But there are divisions and weaknesses in apparently monolithic city governments which poor people's organizations could exploit to undercut the mayor's power to exclude them from local poverty appropriations. Slum organizers could follow at least three approaches toward antagonistic city governments and a diffident OEO.

1) Organizers could ally themselves with sympathetic elements in city politics whose influence on the mayor could help make a place in the city poverty program for organizations of the poor.

2) By obtaining private funds, slum organizations could establish themselves independently of the poverty program, and might become strong enough to assert an undeniable claim to a share of OEO's local appropriations.

3) If slum neighborhoods were organized around the performance of economic or social functions rather than around pure political protest, slum organizations could make opposition embarrassing for city hall (who could complain about a new butcher shop with honest scales?) without conceding the long-run objective of political influence for the poor. In addition, business co-operatives or credit unions would perform a continuing function for the neighborhood and thereby avoid the protest group's dependence on symbolic victories over city hall.

1. **Alliance with Reform Movement**

   It is understandable that neighborhood organizers have seen the local Democratic party as a machine for converting a promising federal program into a source of political patronage for the mayor. But this monolithic perspective obscures an opportunity to exploit the factionalism of urban politics.

   In almost every city, there is a self-styled reform group with some influence on city government and a participationist creed which coincides with the political interpretation of section 202(a)(3). As a group which takes its principles seriously, reformers should be attracted easily to the banner of participation of the poor. Militant organizations of the poor, in turn, could provide the long-sought popular base for the reformers' advanced social programs. Unlike most mayors, the re-

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82. For reform groups, participationism is "a normative principle inseparable from the idea of democracy itself." BANFIELD & WILSON, CITY POLITICS 258 (1963); WILSON, POLITICS AND REFORM IN AMERICAN CITIES IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT ANNUAL (Hinderaker ed. 1952); WILSON, THE AMATEUR DEMOCRAT (1962).
formers have nothing to lose in the wards which regard organizations of the poor as a vehicle for moving the Negroes next door.

New York, as a city without an overwhelmingly powerful regular party machine, is especially promising territory for an alliance between the reformers and the organized poor. When the East-Side antipoverty project, Mobilization For Youth, was under attack for left-wing associations and sloppy bookkeeping, the organization found support in the New York reform clubs. But before the significance of the reformers' sympathy for Mobilization could be ascertained, the old Democratic bosses threatened to regain city hall; and many of the Manhattan reformers forgot MFY as they entered a good government alliance with Mobilization's executioner, Paul Screvane. The eventual winner of the mayoral race, John Lindsay, endorsed maximum participation of the poor as part of his appeal for Reform Democratic support. His appointment of an advisory panel, including Cyril Tyson and Richard Boone, to plan a regenerate War on Poverty suggests that the reformers may yet become the patrons of militant social action in New York.

San Francisco provides a fuller example of the possibilities for cooperation between city reformers and organizers of the poor. Poverty elections are a "dangerous social experiment" in a city like San Francisco where the mayor is reluctant to share control of the poverty program and lacks a strong regular organization in the slums. When Mayor John Shelley came under local pressure to choose a majority of the community action board through neighborhood elections, he asked OEO to bail him out by suggesting a plan for a reduced number of elected representatives. OEO's national Community Action Director, Theodore Berry, seemed satisfied with the mayor's truncated election plan until the city's reformers convinced Congressman Philip Burton to intervene. Burton persuaded Berry to deny publicly the mayor's claim and to order San Francisco to proceed with a full-scale poverty election. A majority of the community action board are now elected neighborhood representatives who have allied themselves on most issues with reformers on the board.

The reform politicians in New York, San Francisco, and other cities will be repaying an old debt if they make an alliance with militant social action groups. Banfield and Wilson have observed that the reform movement, by replacing the patronage system with civil service and

84. Other members are Michael Harrington, William Hadded and, to speak for the beleaguered mayors, Mitchell Sviridoff of CPI.
eliminating "excess" city jobs, has denied the poor their traditional mechanism for participating in city politics. The ideological politics of the poverty program, however, offers the poor an alternative political style which could join them with the reformers in a coalition against established city politicians. The reformer who is intolerant of the Negro's interest in getting a job out of politics may nevertheless become his ally when the Negro is a member of a slum organization, protesting city hall's monopoly of the poverty program.

2. Private Funding

In most cities, the contest over participation of the poor was concluded before the social action groups could establish permanent ties to slum neighborhoods. A few entrenched organizations, however, have obtained money from the local anti-poverty program, even in cities like Chicago where the mayor seems invincible. Neighborhood organizers who can find seed-money outside the political system have a good chance of forcing the system to contribute later on.

There are several private sources of support for neighborhood social action groups. Probably, the most important is the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty, underwritten by the AFL-CIO's Industrial Unions Department. The Citizens Crusade plans to train and support one thousand community organizers and will establish a national pressure group to protect the organizations from their natural enemies in the city governments.

Funds from private foundations are also increasingly available to social action groups. Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation has subsisted almost entirely on contributions from other foundations and church groups; Mobilization For Youth has been supported at various times by the Ford, Taconic and J.M. Kaplan Foundations.

3. Functional Organizations

The neighborhood organizers' two most serious handicaps have been unremitting opposition from established city politicians and the ten-

87. BANFIELD & WILSON, op. cit. supra note 82 at 332.
dency of members in protest organizations to lose interest when the group's achievements fall short of their exaggerated expectations. These problems, unavoidable in any attempt to fill the political vacuum of the slums, could be mitigated by organizing neighborhoods around the performance of social and economic functions.\footnote{91}

Although the common interests of the members have been sufficient to sustain middle class pressure groups, organizations of the poor have needed powerful structural influences to hold the groups together. The environment of industrial factories, for example, was essential to the stability of industrial labor unions when they were being organized in the 1930's. Members met each other regularly and in fixed relationships; management provided a common focus for their discontent.\footnote{92} Neighborhood organizers, in contrast, must rely on agitation to unite the atomized, contemporary slum. But exacerbated discontents are an inferior substitute for the structural influences of the factory.\footnote{93} Shared emotions—no matter how high their pitch—do not create regular interaction, a convenient procedure for collecting dues, or a weapon as effective as the industrial strike. There is an additional danger that before the organization has significantly changed the politics of the slums, it will become the instrument of a leadership clique and lose its hold on the membership. In a protest organization, whose institutionalized togetherness occurs only at mass rallies and on the picket lines,

\footnote{91. OEO currently supports at least two functional groups which may become important slum organizations if they can maintain their independence. The Blazer Council for Youth in Newark—with grass roots origins and grass roots management—trains two hundred welfare recipients in automobile repairs, upholstery, floor polishing and scraping. In Philadelphia, the Opportunities Industrial Center, Inc., inspired by a boycott of local businesses, conducts a similar training program. The Philadelphia group, however, seems to have left its protest past behind it and neither of the organizations has yet gone into business for itself.}


\footnote{93. Cloward and Piven ask: \textit{How is the contemporary organizer to address the poor, dispersed as they are in urban slums and generally lacking in patterns of regular interaction commensurate with their common problems and interests? And once a group is drawn together, how is it to be sustained? How are continuing investments in organizing to be assured and supported? Without regular and structured interaction, a sense of common group problems and common group interests seem [sic] unlikely to develop, especially among a mobile and culturally heterogeneous poor; and even when a shared ideology does sometimes arise, it is not likely to produce widespread adherence and regular participation.}

the officers lack even the shop steward's regular contact with the members.

Reliance on agitation may ultimately reinforce the apathy the organizer sets out to dispel. The marginal concessions extracted from city officials cannot sustain the exaggerated aspirations and expectations which the organizer must stir up to overcome the initial mood of hopelessness in the community. The poor are still the poor after the rats are driven from the neighborhood school. In this way the energies of social action are used up, and the militant group, that offers no long-term functional programs, reinforces the apathy it had intended to overcome.  

Successful organizers, however, have not always had the environment of the factory at their disposal. The farmers who established enduring agricultural associations in the late nineteenth century were less like union labor than like the atomized, contemporary slum residents, who suffer from harsh credit practices and consumer disadvantages. After the failure of populism, with its demagogic style of politics, farm associations created their own "structured context" by organizing around the performance of economic functions. The Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union, for example, emphasized cooperative buying and selling, and early in its career founded the successful Farmers' Union Grain Terminal Association. Gradually, as cooperative marketing or storage facilities were established and provided the farm organizations with stable, interactive structures, it was quite natural for them to begin playing politics. Economic and political activity served the same goal. Marketing cooperatives were one way of maintaining high farm revenues; price supports were another.

Small manufacturing cooperatives and social service organizations could serve the same function in the slums that cooperative grain elevators performed on the Great Plains. They could provide the

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94. The outcome is summarized in the formula:

\[ \text{Frustration} = \frac{\text{Aspiration}}{\text{Achievement}} \]

Initial militancy increases the expectations and aspirations of the participants. But the lack of substantial reward widens the gap between expectation and achievement.


96. The American Farm Bureau Federation, though supported by a better class of farmer than the Farmers' Union, is another prototype for urban poor peoples organizations. Its special relationship with the Agriculture Department is one of the few precedents for the patronage of the organized poor by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Like the Farmers' Union, the Federation's origins were functional. Before it led the farm bloc into the 67th Congress, the Federation established a constituency in the corn belt by helping the county agents to introduce advanced agricultural methods.

97. One likely group of cooperatives would be in those retail fields, such as appliances,
interaction for which welfare theorists currently search the slums in vain. An economic or social focus would also divert organizations of the poor from the apocalyptic style that keeps aspirations and expectations soaring above achievement. So long as neighborhood organizations are not going to bring the Revolution to the slum, they are likely to benefit from a style of operations commensurate with marginal, but concrete, achievements.\textsuperscript{98}

Functional organizations would provide the poor with an excellent base for entering city politics. In the organizing stage, when they are most vulnerable, they present an innocuous front which spares them the relentless antagonism of the mayor. Although functional organizations might decide to pick political fights, unlike protest groups they would not need to be constantly embroiled with city hall in order to stay alive. They could choose the most opportune situations for using protest techniques and would stand a better chance of winning these fights.\textsuperscript{99} In addition, a community maintenance service, leading the battle against slum lords, or a credit union, taking on local businessmen, could increase the neighborhood's material stake in the success of the protest action.

Slum organizers have been understandably suspicious of diverting the neighborhood's energies into innocuous community improvement projects, whose real purpose was to take the heat off city hall. The organizers are aware that social work functionaries have sometimes used self-help groups to co-opt potential lower class leadership.\textsuperscript{100} Self-whose high mark ups are a notorious drain on slum economies. See CAPLOVITZ, \textit{The Poor Pay More} (1963). An exterminating or housing repair service could increase employment in the area and become the focus of a code enforcement program. Food co-ops, of course, already exist in many slum neighborhoods.

\textsuperscript{98.} A functional organization of the poor would demand a special combination of talents in its leaders. They would need enough of the character of the conventional slum organizer to excite the neighborhood about the cooperative. But even allowing for some government assistance, the co-op would eventually have to pay its way. The charismatic leader must be something of a bookkeeper behind the scenes. Many organizers appreciate the advantages of economic issues for focusing the resentments of a slum area. Few of them, however, relish the prospect of operating a grocery store or maintenance service. See Village Voice, Aug. 5, 1965, p. 10, col. 1.

\textsuperscript{99.} In a campaign against the provision of regular-priced, low-quality food to slum areas, for example, a food co-op would have several advantages over an ordinary protest organization. Several of its employees would be familiar with food distribution practices in the city and would know where the group was most likely to extract concessions. The co-op would have a built-in mechanism for inspecting food entering the area and could continue its surveillance easily after the popular campaign had ended. Finally the co-op, as the purveyor of worthwhile services to the area, could survive the disappointment of the members if the campaign was not immediately successful.

help's own enthusiasts have contributed to its eclipse by discoursing on community action as if the subject had nothing to do with class conflict and composing tributes to "bootstrapping" which suggest an army of high-minded poor, marching from their old-law tenements to pick the garbage from the streets.

This parody of social action has prepared the organizers for Alinsky's maxim that the only way to organize the poor in their self-interest is to pick at their wounds. But the politics of a functional organization are not defined by its decision to organize around economic or social services. An established functional group can be as tough and antagonistic as its members desire. And when the organization enters politics, its cohesion gives it some chance of success.