

STATEMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S POVERTY BOARD CONCERNING REPRESENTATION OF THE POOR ON THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL

According to the original By-Laws of the Champaign County EOC, approved on May 20, 1965, direct representatives of the poor were guaranteed seven seats on a 30 to 50 member Council. (See Article III, Sections 1(a) and 1(b), of the May 20, 1965 By-Laws.)

At the time that the EOC applied for funds to initiate the Program Development phase of its Community Action Program, 39 persons were listed as members of the Council, but only three of these persons were representatives of poverty areas. Quoting from page 18 of the Program Development application (attached to this statement):

The By-Laws of the organization state that no less than seven members of the 30-50 member Council are to be chosen from the groups to be served. At the present time, three have been chosen... Space has been reserved for a minimum of four additional poverty area representatives...

On pages 26 and 27 of this same application (attached), there appears a list of 39 persons who were at that time members of the Council. The names of the three poverty area representatives mentioned above are given as: Mr. Billie Oliver, Mrs. Mary Agnes Sayles, and Mrs. Carolyn Dixon. The passage quoted above indicates that at that time these three persons were the only poverty area representatives on the Council, since four more poverty representatives (making a total of seven) remained to be selected. Hence, it is clear that at the time of the Program Development application the persons listed as representatives of the Catholic Church (Father Richard Wilson), the Champaign-Urbana Improvement Association (Mr. Robert Harden), the North End Ministerial Association (Rev. A. G. Gregory), and the Salvation Army (Mrs. Helen Neitzel) were not considered by the Council to be poverty area representatives.

Now let us consider the sequence of events which occurred after the Program Development application had been submitted. First, the Office of Economic Opportunity approved the grant subject to a list of "Special Conditions" to be met within a specified time period. Of special note are Special Conditions 4 and 8:

Special Condition 4.

Representation of the poor on the Council and on all committees shall be approximately one-third.

Special Condition 8.

Within 60 days of the effective date of this grant, the grantee must provide evidence that approximately one-third of the members of the Council and all committees are representatives of the areas to be served...

On December 9, 1965, the Council set up a committee to revise the By-Laws to conform to the "Special Conditions". Upon recommendation of this committee, the By-Laws were amended at the Council meeting of January 13, 1966. Some of the significant changes in the By-Laws included:

- (1) The size of the Council was changed from 30-50 members to 20-40 members.
- (2) The number of seats on the Council allotted to representatives of poverty areas was changed to "no less than one-third" of the total membership of the Council.
- (3) The make-up of the seven-member Executive Committee was changed to provide for "approximately one-third" representatives of the poor.

Except for the fact that no action was taken to ensure at least one-third representation of the poor on committees other than the Executive Committee, the By-Law changes mentioned above seem to meet the requirements of Special Condition 4.

However it is the contention of the People's Poverty Board that the intent of Special Condition 8 has not even to this date been met. According to the revised By-Laws, out of a 39-member Council it would be necessary to include at least 13 representatives of poverty areas. When the question of poverty representation was raised at the September 22, 1966, Council meeting, we were told that 13 poverty representatives were at that time members of the Council. But when we asked which 13 of the Council members were now designated as poverty representatives, we were given the following list:

1. Burch Village
2. Bradley-McKinley
3. Carroll Addition
- \* 4. Champaign-Urbana Improvement Association
5. Gregory School Area
6. Homemakers Club
7. Hays School Area
- \* 8. North End Ministerial Association
9. Pesotum Area
- \* 10. Salvation Army
- \* 11. St. Mary's Church
12. Washington School Area
13. Wilbur Heights

It is the position of the People's Poverty Board that the four organizations indicated above by asterisks do not belong on this list of poverty representatives. We cite the following reasons in support of our contention:

- (1) Prior to the revision of the By-Laws, these organizations were not considered by the Council itself to be direct representatives of poor people. To change the designation of an organization in this manner--and thus seeming to increase the number of poverty representatives without actually doing so--does not

fulfill the intent of the Federal Government's Special Condition 8. Thus, using the words of our Chairman, Mr. Roy Williams, Jr., we contend that the poor people of Champaign County have been "gerrymandered" out of four seats on the Council, reducing their voice to less than one-fourth rather than "no less than one-third".

(2) According to the Community Action Program Guide, published by the Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C., religious organizations are not considered to be representatives of poverty areas, but are considered to be in the same category as labor and business groups. (See page 18, paragraph b.) Hence, as religious organizations, St. Mary's Church, the Salvation Army, and the North End Ministerial Association should be placed in the second membership category of the Council's current By-Laws, not in the third (poverty area representatives) category.

(3) Since the Champaign-Urbana Improvement Association is a voluntary agency with welfare, health, housing, education, and employment, it belongs in the first membership category instead of the third.

[(4) If one does not use the designations given above, but instead considers the CUIA and the NEMA representatives as representatives from minority groups, then, according to the Community Action Program Guide (page 18, paragraph b), these groups belong in the second membership category.]

[(5) Again, if one <sup>prefers to</sup> consider the Salvation Army as a voluntary agency concerned with welfare, etc., then it belongs in the first membership category.]

In concluding this statement, the People's Poverty Board deems it necessary to point out that we are here dealing with only one out of many instances in which the Champaign County EOC has failed to ensure the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the planning of our local anti-poverty programs. We now demand and will continue to demand a larger voice for the poor in the planning, conduct, and administration of all phases of our local War on Poverty programs until such time that we are adequately represented -- for we know that it is only with our maximum involvement that we can hope to achieve an effective program to eliminate poverty in Champaign County.

NOTE: The following three pages are copies of pages 18, 26, and 27, of the Champaign County EOC's original application for Program Development funds.

It is clear from an examination of these three pages that at the time this application was submitted the representatives on the Council from the CUIA, the NEMA, the Salvation Army, and the Catholic Church were not considered to be poverty area representatives. This is the basis for our contention that the present EOC does not satisfy the minimal requirements of the Federal Government as set forth in Special Condition 8.

#### IV Maximum involvement of the poor

The Economic Opportunity Council of Champaign County has, since its inception, sought wide participation and involvement of the poor. The By-Laws of the organization, (see ) state that no less than seven members of the 30-50 member Council are to be chosen from the groups to be served. At the present time, three have been chosen; these three poverty area representatives were amongst the first group of members to serve on the Council. All three are now serving on one of the newly-organized working committees of this Council. Space has been reserved for a minimum of four additional poverty area representatives in keeping with the intent of the Council that its membership more nearly represent the population of Champaign County.

A special sub-committee has been appointed by the Executive Committee and charged with developing criteria and methods for choosing additional members from poverty areas and from rural areas of Champaign County; This sub-committee includes a poverty area representative amongst its members, as well as other Council members who have special competence.

In addition to the direct participation of these several members from poverty areas, and the present effort to extend and expand the involvement of the poor, it should be noted that a number of members of The Economic Opportunity Council by virtue of their professional or civic activities have a generous knowledge of poverty conditions in this county. The Chairman of the Council should here be specifically mentioned as one whose background and present activity qualify him to speak in behalf of poverty problems.

It is recognized that we must provide abundant ways and means to involve the poverty-stricken in the remedies and solutions to the endemic problems of poverty. As a first step, the Economic Opportunity Council, and the Staff which it will employ, propose to seek methods of communication the individuals and groups to be served. Every effort will be made to use members of the groups to be served in volunteer and paid positions. During the six-month period of program development, we propose to extend our knowledge of local poverty conditions. Study aides from poverty areas will be employed to provide liaison and to foster communication with groups and individuals, and to furnish information in depth about the specific nature of poverty in Champaign County.

Certain building-block programs will also be undertaken. These programs, which are preliminary steps in programming for a broad community action program, will be of significant importance. It is the decision of the Economic Opportunity Council to be a working Council--it has organized itself into four major sub-committees whose concerns are as follows:

1. Educational opportunities for adults and children
2. Services to families
3. Possible neighborhood center approach
4. Work experience and skill training.

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ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

Rev. Jack Jones, Chairman	Pastor, Faith Church of the Nazarene
Father Richard Wilson	Catholic Church
Dean Bradle	Champaign Chamber of Commerce
Mayor Emmerson V. Dexter	City of Champaign
French L. Fraker	Champaign County Bar Association
Robert C. Ross	Champaign County Civil Defense
E. G. Montgomery	Champaign County Grade School Assoc.
Miss Elsie Hinrichs	Champaign County Home Economics Ext. Ser
Mrs. Geo. W. (Greta) Barlow	Champaign County League of Women Voters
Mr. Robert Harden	Champaign-Urbana Improvement Assoc.
Rev. Richard L. Harrison	Champaign-Urbana Ministerial Assoc.
Mrs. Robert (Abbie) Eckstein	County Welfare Services Committee
Harold Baker	Family Service of Champaign County
Mrs. Marcella M. Murah	Housing Authority of Champaign County
Edward T. Weaver	Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Arthur Savoie	Illinois Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Mr. Gil Martin	Illinois Youth Commission
Mrs. J. Bergen Parkhill	Junior Service League of Champaign-Urbana
Mrs. Betty Henry	Mental Health Society of Champaign County
Mrs. Helen Harland	National Association of Social Workers
Rev. A. G. Gregory	North End Ministerial Association
Mr. Billie Oliver	Poverty Area Representatives
Mrs. Mary Agnes Sayles	Poverty Area Representatives
Mrs. Carolyn Dixon	Poverty Area Representatives

Robert Turnbow

Rantoul Chamber of Commerce

Rev. Roger Compton

Rantoul Ministers and Chaplins Assoc.

C. O. Hobson

Rantoul, Village of

Mrs. Helen Neitzel

Salvation Army

John L. Franklin

Twin City Federation of Labor

William W. Froom

Unit 4 Schools, Champaign

Mrs. Nelson Leonard

United Church Women of Champaign-Urbana

O. L. Whalin

United Community Council of  
Champaign County

Dr. J. G. Coke

University of Illinois

Mrs. M. G. Snyder

Urban League of Champaign County

Mr. David Martin

Urbana Association of Commerce

Jack D. May

Urbana Board of Education

Vern Hoag

Urbana, City of

Mayor Stanley B. Weaver

Urbana, City of

Joseph E. Atkinson

Champaign County Board of Supervisors