

# Report on OEO

## Region X Conference

The Northwest Regional Conference of the Office of Economic Opportunity was held in Seattle on January 7-9. More than 300 delegates from Oregon, Idaho, Alaska and Washington attended. The delegates were Community Action workers, members of Community Action boards of directors and interested people from the local communities served by OEO.

The theme of the conference was "Community Action: Looking ahead to unify, strengthen and consider new directions." The conference was addressed by several figures of national importance in the Community Action movement, including Mr. Bert Gallegos, the National Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Two sets of workshops were held to allow delegates to participate in developing ideas for Community Action Programs. The first sessions were rather general in their approach, working with the idea of defining the directions in which CAAs should move. The second workshops were focused on issues of special relevance to the poor: hunger, energy, consumer action, public employment and others.

At the end of the two-day conference, delegates proposed resolutions to be adopted by the group as a whole.

This four-page tabloid is a report on the conference. It was prepared by the four-person staff of the *Rural Tribune*, the monthly, bi-lingual newsletter of the Washington County Community Action Organization located in Hillsboro, Oregon. The staff of the *Rural Tribune* attended and participated in the conference. Obviously, they could not be everywhere at once, but this report attempts to record what they saw and learned during the two days.



John Finley, Region X Director  
Burt Gallegos, National Director

### John Finley Opens Conference

The Northwest Regional conference opened in the warm glow of the signing, just four days earlier, of the new Community Services Act which breathes new life into the long-suffering Community Action Agencies.

John Finley, Regional Director of OEO, greeted the assembled delegates by calling their attention to the contrasts between the



l. to r., William Russell, Cleveland Gilcrease, Larry Parachini, Dean Goldsby



Talking with Delegate Ken Thacker

### "Of One Mind"

"If we want to solve the problem of poverty in this country, the only way to do it will be for all the poor people, no, all the people, to own for themselves the farms where their food is produced. As a matter of fact, they'll probably have to own the factories and the oil refineries, too."

Ken Thacker, from Twin Falls, Idaho, is the manager of the farming and consumer cooperative which was begun by the South Central CAA. A \$10,000 grant from OEO got the project off of the ground. Initial expenses included a storefront and a stock of food which could be sold on a non-profit basis to co-op members, the purchase of 500 chickens, and the leasing of 15 acres of farm land.

"We were real lucky," says Mr. Thacker. "One of our most dedicated members is an expert poultry farmer, and he ran our 500 chickens in with his flock, and charged only for the additional feed. This meant that co-op members ate eggs almost for free. Then our neighbor next to our 15 acres was real helpful. He let us use his machinery and gave us all kinds of help."

Mr. Thacker, as co-op manager worked the 15 acres in his spare time, farming it for a 25% share of the profits. He figures that his labor was paid for at the rate of about \$4/hour. After all costs were figured, the

co-op made more than \$4,000 on the bean crop that was raised.

There are plans for expanding next year. The present co-op membership is around 150 and Ken would like to see that grow. He is also working on the idea of taking dead fish wastes from a local fish hatchery to use as fertilizer and as the fish-meal part of chicken feed. He would also like to see the land-base of the co-op expand and raise wheat to use in chicken feed and for sale in the co-op. More land would also mean that low-income farm families could farm it on shares and make some money.

Ken also talked to us about his vision of the co-op's directions in years to come. He would like to see an actual purchase of land by the cooperative. By getting an initial investment of \$100/person from 100 people, at least 100 acres of land could be bought. Grant money from OEO or Catholic charities could provide a membership-investment for destitute families. With that much land, possibilities are almost unlimited. Perhaps enough food to feed all the members could be grown. And jobs in harvest season could keep the daughters and sons of the members working.

Ken sees the major stumbling block of such a plan as being the probable lack of unity among the members. "Everybody seems to want to go in a different direction." But, as Ken said, "You have to go back to the beginning of the Christian religion. After Christ was killed, all of the apostles gathered in an upper room. And they all had different ideas about what they should do. But they stayed in that one room until, like the Bible says, 'They were of one mind.' And then they got the message."

Dell Martin





# Conference Workshops

*CAMP program an organizing model*

## Consumer Protection

The Consumer Action Project of CAMP (Central Area Motivational Project) in Seattle ran the workshop on consumer protection.

Working from the premise that "the system that we are in has broken down and is not responding to human needs," CAMP has developed a program of action, protection and education for the consumer.

The consumer in the poverty community is actually faced with the problem of survival. As inflation strikes the nation, the poor cannot "buy down" (change from steak to hamburger). Basic foods such as beans and bread have been the fastest rising, in terms of price. Increases in rents hit the poor hardest of all. Temptations increase to buy cheap and inferior goods or to take quick and easy credit terms which can vastly increase costs of an item. Fly-by-night merchants take advantage of people with limited money. Inadequate transportation means that people can't get to good buys and prevents any meaningful choice in consumption. In rural areas many people do not have the basic idea that they have a right to go to court to defend themselves against fraud. And in cities, public services can be unresponsive: garbage, street repairs and snow plowing may get little or no attention in poverty communities. Utility companies charge poverty-area consumers heavy deposits.

The Consumer Action Project has set up a Consumer Resource Center which handles complaint processing, community education, referrals and public relations. They have a speakers bureau, pamphlets, conduct workshops, do credit and debt counselling, and handle a complaint load of 30 to 60 people per month. The Center has found itself seeing a new type of person during the past year. These are the "new poor," people who suddenly find themselves in a serious economic hole and can no longer afford the middle-class luxury of being ripped-off.

The Center plays a vital role in providing consumers with a place to go with their complaints. Many of the investigations, handled by a staff of, among others, 2 legal



John Eichelberger, CAMP

interns, a person from the State Consumer Protection Office, and a graduate student in business from U of W fall into three types. Autos: Many repair companies do unauthorized repairs for fantastic prices for which the consumer may not have to pay. Collection agencies: Agencies do not have the right to harass consumers. Tenant-landlord: One of the most active areas of organizing by the Center's staff. The Center put on a skit designed to show people how to handle themselves in small claims court. The Center helps consumers to file their cases in small claims court, a tactic which is often successful simply because the merchant does not show up for the trial. Many merchants cannot believe that a consumer would actually sue them.

The most interesting part of the workshop featured

John Eichelberger from the Center. He spoke on organizing rent strikes, a tactic which is "neither illegal or legal." A rent strike is particularly effective in attacking a legal but unreasonable rent increase. The strike can be conducted to see that the tenants get what they pay for. The tenants collectively withhold their rent and thus effectively control the finances of the building.

Mr. Eichelberger recently helped a group to win a 120 unit rent strike. 90 people withheld their rent. The landlord could not evict them, since each eviction would have had to be tried on an individual basis, thus incurring fantastic court costs. The landlord was beaten on the basis of cost alone. He was losing too much money from the withheld rents and court costs to fight a unified tenant group.

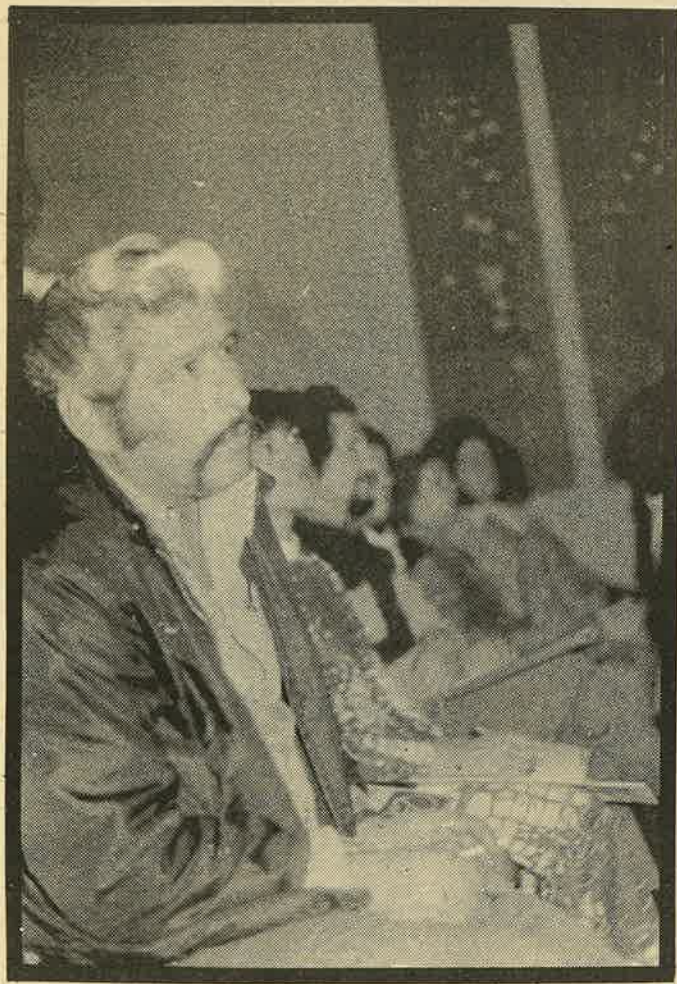
The Center presented a skit on rent strikes. The skit stressed the necessity of the tenant group standing firm and together.

Mr. Eichelberger concluded the workshop by talking of the organizer as "the vanishing man." The good organizer is a teacher who shows the people how to do things for themselves, but does not do things such as negotiating with a landlord, things which the tenants must do if they are to feel their collective power.

*Dell Martin*



CAMP member in skit



## CAA programs on the attack *Fighting Hunger*

The workshop on hunger was probably the most interesting event which I attended during the conference. The range of ideas for ways to attack hunger among the poor was astonishing. If every CAP had the staff to put these ideas into effect, and if they had access to the ideas, hunger might not be the great destroyer of people's lives which it now is. In this respect, the lack of communication between CAPs was felt very acutely. And many people in the workshop blamed the Regional Office for not putting energy into building a network through which ideas could flow between the programs in the field.

The workshop began by hearing a series of startling and depressing facts. One out of three senior citizens in the nation are suffering from malnutrition. President Ford's proposed cutbacks in food stamps would mean a loss of at least \$9 million to the people of Washington state alone.

Harold Whitehead, Chief of the Washington-Idaho field operation of OEO, spoke about OEO's efforts to combat hunger. OEO has put \$13 million into fighting hunger in America. Obviously this is not enough money to make even a dent in actual hunger if it were spent directly on buying food for the needy. The money has been used, instead, as seed funds to draw in other money from places such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or to begin programs in which the effects of the money would be multiplied. OEO money has been used to set canning projects, to begin food co-ops, or to provide transportation for food from such places as USDA stockpiles.

In New Jersey the state OEO office runs the food stamp certification program along with the welfare office. They have set up a toll-free number which people anywhere in the state can call for information on combating hunger.

On the Navajo Reservation, OEO money has set up refrigerated trucks to haul food to isolated areas. A migrant program in Sonoma County in California has built four huge greenhouses from which food is distributed to 400 low-income families.

The workshop then broke up into small groups, and ideas on how to fight hunger began to flood in.

Kititas Co., Wash., has a canning project which uses a local cannery. The program pays the cannery a certain amount per can produced, but all food is picked by low-income volunteers and volunteers also run the cannery during the time contracted for.

Joseph Co., Ore., has convinced large food stores to give them the fruits and vegetables which they cull out of their produce departments every day. The CAP then distributes the food.

The Hunger Action Service in Seattle has a grant to do organizing in the area of hunger. They have set up a coalition of more than 25 organizations from around the state which will try to influence State policy on nutrition and such issues as land use (saving small farms). They have organized co-op stores, community gardens, and are setting up a farmers market for small farmers to use to sell their produce at above wholesale price.

People pointed out that the National Guard is a good resource for hauling food and providing logistical support.

On the Snake River in Idaho, the Dept. of Fish and Game gives free fish to low income families during the salmon spawning season.

A man from Oregon told of how he went to the State Police in his area and got them to donate all elk and deer seized from poachers to be used in a seniors meals program.

These are only a fraction of the ideas expressed in the workshop. More communication between innovative programs is desperately needed in this field.

DHM



Delegates attend workshop



"Money in the pocket"

## Emergency Employment

A small panel discussion was held on Wednesday morning on "CAAs and the Emergency Employment Program." In response to skyrocketing joblessness, \$2.5 billion has been appropriated for emergency employment. One panelist described the new money, called Title VI, as an attempt "to get the most people on the job in the shortest amount of time." It will be a temporary program designed to make the maximum impact in areas of high unemployment. "We mean to get people on the job and money in their pockets to tide them over until the economy improves."

The Concentrated Employment Training Act (CETA or Title II) was designed to give people training which would lead to eventual career placement, hopefully with private business or industry. But, nationally, CETA has a very poor placement record. In fact, most CETA or Manpower Programs have spent only a fraction of their money, of-

ten because there are simply no jobs to be "developed" in the community. CETA programs have been directed to try and spend all of their funds by August; and Title II may take the same direction as the new Title VI money toward immediate job placement.

Although the lion's share of the first money will go to county governments to hire new help; school districts, town governments, and CAAs will all eventually receive money to create jobs to serve the community. The goal is to employ the poor in programs which will be of benefit to both the poverty and the larger community.

The preferred target group for Title VI money will be those people who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, people who have been unemployed for 15 weeks or more, and people who are not eligible for unemployment.

New unemployment benefits have also been established. Thirteen weeks of full

benefits have been added to the present schedule. And new groups of people are eligible — for the first time farmworkers are eligible to receive benefits.

Dell Martin



## Gallegos Speaks

Mr. Burt Gallegos gave a speech at the first day's luncheon. The following, a selection from the new Director's remarks.

This occasion is a very auspicious one for me — it is one of my earliest public appearances after having been confirmed by the Senate of the United States last December 12, as the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

And I must be very frank. I must admit that I'm relieved, just a bit.

My friends, for six months, I have felt the eyes of one hundred Senators of the United States, watching my every move, pondering my words, weighing me in the balance. Apparently all was well. I have been confirmed. I'm on my own.

Please excuse me as I say — Hallelujah!

But I am happy to say that I've been able to stand the pressures. They're pretty strong at times in the great Federal City, but they didn't get to me. No sir!

My friends, I step into the post of Director with confidence and humility.

Confident of my ability to administer the Agency — administer it totally and wholly within the law, because basically and fundamentally, I am a man of the law.

I approach my new challenge in a spirit of humility. Think of the opportunity I have — the great opportunity to lead our nation's program in helping the almost 25 million of our fellow citizens who are poor, to attain the skills, knowledge and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.

What an opportunity! What a challenge!

## Energy Workshop

Higher fuel prices cost poor people in the U.S. \$70 million more per month than last year. Money the poor don't have.

This is one of the facts brought out in the workshop on energy. Not included in the above figure, which is estimated by the FEA from rising costs and averages of consumption, are the hidden less obvious increases with which poor people are hit.

A true picture of how poor people are hurt by rising costs was given by Rose Lee, community delegate from Boise, Idaho. She said that last year she paid \$28 a ton for coal, but this year it was \$42 a ton, and since the distributor would not deliver less than a ton, and it was impossible for her to pay \$42 at once, she is forced to buy coal by the hundred pound bag at \$3.50 per hundred or \$70 per ton!

Richard Saul, OEO, emphasized that Community Action Agencies must find solutions to this situation. CAA's must become the county coordinators for fuel distribution. He recommended meetings with other agencies involved with services and local distributors to help

organize delivery toward economic feasibility for the distributor, but demanding adequate service for low-income people.

Michael Ross, Consumer Affairs Officer, Federal Energy Administration, Region X, said that poor people shouldn't look to the FEA for special consideration. He doesn't expect the FEA to set any conservation policy during this winter, with the possible exception of gas rationing. He expressed the belief that the guaranteed annual income will be the resolution to this problem and that this would be proposed in Congress in the near future.

Both Saul and Ross addressed the problem many CAPs are facing with increasing frequency in their advocacy role: Utility shut-off. Saul referred to a county-wide plan in Wisconsin, in which the Community Action office is contacted before the utility is shut off. Ross used the example of New Mexico, where, through executive order, there is a state wide plan with referral to the Human Resources Department before shut-off.

Bud Schmidt

## Conference Resolutions

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the CSA Regional Office, through their Public Information staff, distribute a monthly newsletter to all local CAPs.

That the main purpose of this newsletter be to publicize and share knowledge of successful and innovative programs developed in the field by local CAPs.

That a secondary purpose be to publicize the work being done by the Regional Office which is of value to the local CAPs.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That OEO grantees should receive annual funding. Legal action should be taken, if necessary, to insure this.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That Regional Offices should "have back" the ability to make grant actions in their regions.

The above two resolutions were arrived at by group consensus. One individual proposed the following resolution after the workshop:

### BE IT RESOLVED:

Affirmative Action should become an active policy in all CAAs, as it pertains to employment practices in the CAA and to service delivery to its clientele.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO/X Conference on Community Action re-affirms the original intent of the Economic Opportunity Act, urging that the CAAs advocate the needs of the poor, as identified by the poor, to the appropriate social and physical planning agencies and that they coordinate their efforts with all appropriate agencies.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO/X Conference on Community Action urges that funding levels proposed by the Senate Subcommittee on Education and Labor be expeditiously adopted by the Congress as funding guidelines for the new Community Services Administration.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO/X Conference on Community Action urges that the Director of the Community Services Administration emphasize and encourage Grass-roots Participation and Advocacy as the cornerstone of Community Action.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO/X Conference on Community Action formally expresses its appreciation to the leadership of NACD, the National Association of CAA Directors, CAT, and ACCS for their diligent efforts to preserve an independent role for OEO and Community Action.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Northwest Regional Community Action Council is hereby established.
2. That a four-person steering committee be formed to carry out the following organizational responsibilities:
  - a. Draw up a method to establish membership in the council.
  - b. Draw up the necessary by-laws and rules of organizational operation to insure the necessary funding, and appropriate regional conferences to develop and carry out the representative will of the membership, to include the immediate assessment of the membership.
3. That any funds remaining from the registration fees of the January 7-8-9, 1975 Regional Conference be assigned to the council and the interim steering committee.
4. That the steering committee shall be made up of the presidents of the four state CAA associations or their designees.
5. That the steering committee report back to the total regional conference in general session no later than April 30, 1975.

WHEREAS, the National legislative effort represented through the operation of the Action Committee for Community Services and Communities in Action Together is \$250,000 in debt and;

WHEREAS this National legislative effort has placed the Community Action effort on firm footing with regard to national legislation and;

WHEREAS Community Actions must continue to have a strong legislative cohability and;

WHEREAS the financial resources for the national legislative effort are derived to a great extent from the contributions of local individuals associated with Community Action agencies:

### BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT

1. By February 15, 1975 each agency will complete a special fund raising drive to obtain voluntary \$10.00 contributions to this effort.
2. By February 15, 1975 each agency here represented will complete a drive to sign up on the voluntary, \$1.50-a-month contribution plan all those who are not now participating in this manner in the national legislative effort.

Resolutions sponsored by the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Development Council, Tacoma, Washington

J. Linsey Hingand

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That State CSA Offices develop a statistical information service.

That this service concentrate on gathering data on hunger, unemployment, migrant flow and other issues of direct relevance to programs involving poverty communities.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That a chain of complaint/accountability be established within Regional CSA, so that cases of complaint, by CAA employees and board members against the functioning of State CSA Offices and Regional Offices can be dealt with clearly and competently.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the proposed food stamp regulation changes resulting in increased cost to and decreased participation by food stamp recipients be withdrawn by the Ford Administration. That an information sharing system be established on a State and Regional basis to coordinate efforts in alleviating hunger. (This could tie in with State/Region/Nutrition Center concept.)

That a Regional strategy to address the hunger issue be developed in conjunction with the State/Region/Nutrition Center concept.

That more funds within OEO be allocated to address hunger issues.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO Region X Conference on Community Action urges all Social Services grantees in Region X to consolidate and complement their efforts in an attempt to obtain higher total funding guidance, rather than competing for the limited funds presently available for human services type programs.

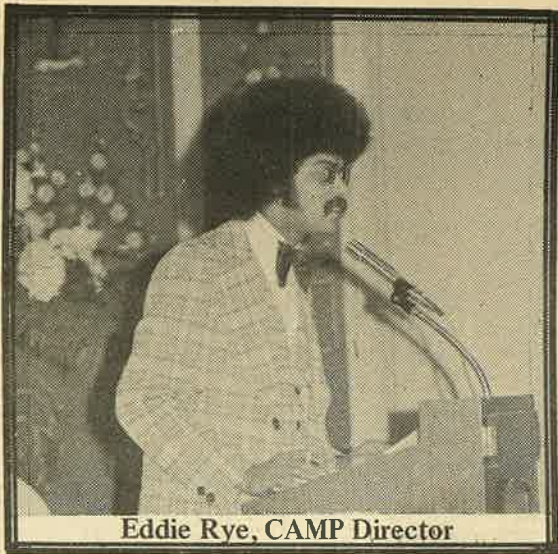
### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO/X Conference on Community Action request the Director of the Community Services Administration to support the continuation of strong, viable and responsive Regional offices.

### BE IT RESOLVED:

That the OEO/X Conference on Community Action urges a formal analysis by the OEO Staff of the various SEOO's throughout the country in an effort to clarify the role of the SEOO and to replicate successes throughout the 50 states.





Eddie Rye, CAMP Director

## Service or Advocacy?

# Community Action: New Directions

The first workshops of the conference were designed to be general in nature. The topic for discussion was: "Thinking about the Future — Where will the emphasis be?" Discussion focused on the debate between Community Action as agencies running "services" for the poor as opposed to being "advocates" for the poor, on the planning role of CAPs; on the role of the Regional Office; and on the role of the State Offices of Economic Opportunity.

The following is a brief report of one of the workshops. There were six workshops, each with 30 to 50 people in attendance.

Much of the discussion centered on the question of whether Community Action should be a service-provider or an advocate for the poor. Many people felt that the issue was mostly one of language, and that services and advocacy were somehow always mixed together.

A Native American woman from Alaska said that advocacy always seemed to suggest hostility or conflict, and, in a way, others in the group agreed with her. The attitude of the workshop seemed to be that "no one ever gave poor folks anything that they didn't fight for."

Not all public officials are friends of the poor, and struggle seems inevitable.

One man defined "service" as "making people comfortable in poverty." The function of Community Action seemed to him to be that of trying to create opportunities for people to leave poverty.

Thus the role of advocacy as organizing was brought out. "Advocacy" emerged as meaning "bringing people together to change their lives." "Service" was seen as a short-term and temporary way to help an isolated individual.

Advocacy is, then, only as effective as the power of its constituency. Political power, often decisive in advocating for the poor, is only as strong as the unity and involvement

of the community. Methods for showing this unity such as annual banquets, with friendly politicians invited as speakers, were suggested.

Providing of services began to be seen as a way of developing dependency in clients. One woman community organizer told of her experience when she began work in 1965. She began by taking people to the welfare office and bringing food to their houses. She began to feel that she was making her clients used to poverty, simply smoothing over the bumps for them.

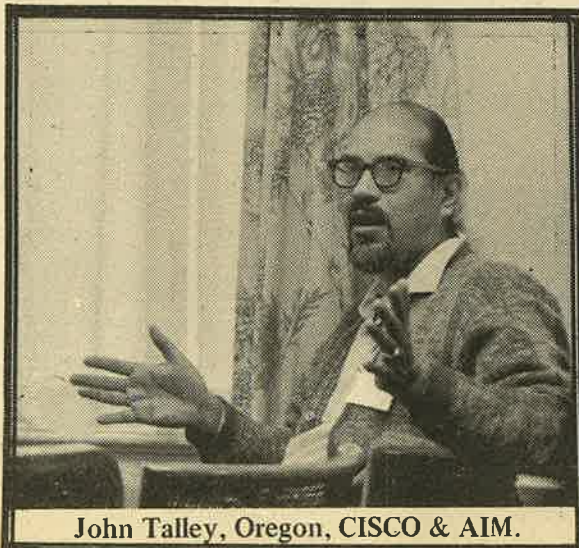
In a highlight of the workshop, a woman organizer from Seattle told why she thought that a "good organizer is a lazy person and a fast talker." When she began her job, she was assigned as a welfare aide. The first month she helped 30 people to get late checks or money that was held up. This went on for a few months, and she began to see the same faces over and over again. Finally, she brought together a group of her clients and told them that she would train them to deal with the welfare system, but that she was not going to help them again, herself. After seeing them through one more session with the welfare office, she then felt that she had a pool of people on whom she could call to help other clients having trouble.

Advocacy came to be seen most effective when it consisted of training community people to help themselves.

The workshop closed with a report from the Oregon SEO on construction of a data referral service which would give information on poverty in the state, information now widely scattered throughout various agencies.

Many people in the workshop felt that the Regional Office should take a more vigorous role in aiding communication between CAPs. Much information needs to be shared if CAPs throughout the region are to come together to solve the problems shared by the area as a whole.

DHM



John Talley, Oregon, CISCO & AIM.

## Interview with Larry Parachini On the Horizon

The following is an interview with Mr. Larry Parachini, Executive Director of Communities in Action Together. He has had much to do with leading the battle that saved OEO in Congress. This reporter's impression of Mr. Parachini was that of a man of great energy, knowledgeable in the ins and outs of federal politics. Mr. Parachini has maintained a vision of the origin of political power in those who are governed, and who sees beyond the immediate problem of saving Community Action in Congress and on to the problem of using new federal programs to serve the poor.

The funding of his program has been and continues to be from the donations of people concerned with seeing that Community Action survives. If CAP workers have often been worried about their next paycheck, Communities in Action Together has had much greater insecurities than any of us have known. In fact, their staff has often worked without pay, simply trusting in the better day to come — a day brought about by all of our efforts.

Question: What do you see as the significance of the passage of the new Community Services Agency legislation?

Parachini: Over the past two years Community Action Programs have developed both skill in dealing with and respect from Congress. The new Bill provides security to the Community Action movement. Now, because they have a legal existence again, Community Action can use the skills and energy that went into saving their program to co-ordinate the use of new bills in areas such as employment and energy to serve the poor. And they can generate new strategies to protect their programs in times of potential federal cutbacks.

Question: What is Communities in Action Together (CAT)?

Parachini: CAT is the Washington arm of the Community Action Programs and their directors. We provide support for lobbying efforts on behalf of their programs. And we coordinate the efforts of all national Community Action groups. We have been supported by voluntary donations since our founding in 1972, during the height of Nixon's illegal efforts to dismantle OEO.

The National CAP Legislative Committee sets policy for us by working with the National Association of CAP Directors. We attempt to carry out that policy by working within the federal government.

Still, I should emphasize that the key to votes in Congress is the local lobbying efforts carried out across the nation. And that energy and skill developed in local programs is what must be used in future work.



Will Russell, chairperson, Natl' CAP Legislative Comm. Larry Parachini

Question: What do you see as the future of Community Action?

Parachini: President Ford made it clear when he signed the Community Services Act that he did not want the CSA to exist as a separate, independent agency serving the poor. He said that he had signed the bill simply to end the two year quarrel between the executive and legislative branches.

You have to understand that under the compromise House-Senate bill, President Ford can draw up a plan to transfer Community Services to HEW. He can do this any time after March 15. And even though HEW has said that they do not want to administer our programs, the President has made himself clear as to how he feels. He does not need Senate approval to put us under HEW, but the Senate can block his plan by a simple majority, and it would seem that we have much more support than that.

Over the last three years, including the two-year legislative battle, we have achieved almost all of our goals, not just in Congress, but in local programs as well, using such methods as revenue sharing funds. Of course, there is much more to be done, new challenges emerge every day, and solving them is an ongoing process.

Question: Does the passage of the CSA take the steam out of the use of the Green Amendment (taking over of private CAPs by County governments)?

Parachini: We now have a three year guarantee of categorical funding. That means that at least you won't have OEO or the national program pushing for CAPs to go public just to save the programs from dying from lack of funds.

Question: How will the new, supposedly more liberal, Congress effect the CSA?

Parachini: What we have now is an "authorization" not an "appropriation." We exist but we don't have any money of our own. Community Action exists on a continuing resolution, funded at present levels until February 28. Then the new Congress will set up the actual dollars and decide which parts of the bill to fund.

For example, energy conservation projects, a few of which we had last year as demonstration projects, could really develop if they had the funds. Money could be established to come through CAPs for winterization of homes, for giving emergency fuel grants, and for pressuring public utilities to be more humane in dealing with low-income people.

Question: Do you see any new roles for CAT in the future?

Parachini: The essential fact is that Community Action Agencies and not the national administration of the CSA will have to come up with the new directions for service and advocacy for the poor. If a conflict should develop between the two parts of the anti-poverty program, then legal action might become appropriate, either legislative or judicial.

DHM

## Selling an Image

James Cossingham left no doubt that he is a successful CAP Director, at least in the sense of getting grants. When he became Executive Director of the Battle Creek, Michigan, CAA about five years ago, it had an approximate budget of \$200,000. Today, that budget is \$2.5 million! Watching him in action, it's not hard to believe that he is successful at selling his programs, locally or nationally. But a disturbing sensation remains that he could be selling shoes, insurance or salesmanship, itself, as was the case at the Seattle Conference.

About forty people attended Cossingham's presentation on public relations for CAAs on Wednesday night.

Cossingham advised the group to budget some money for promoting their agencies in the media, in order both to show that the agency is a force in the community and to let the people who need the services know that the agency is there to help.

The Battle Creek CAA has a P.R. (which Cossingham prefers to call P.I. — public information) budget of \$23,000 per year. This is less than 1% of his \$2.5 million, he pointed out. He recommends a range of tactics from posters to pencils, all embossed with the local CAA logo and address. This logo should be impressive and eye-catching and should appear on everything, stationary, envelopes, and business cards ("All CAP directors have business cards, don't they?" Cossingham asked.) He held his card up to view and said, "If I drop this somewhere, people will pick it up just to see what CAA is."

Cossingham also asked how many of the agencies represented in the room had a monthly newsletter. He said that he preferred a once-a-year insert in the Sunday supplement of the largest county newspaper. He did not make any cost comparisons of these two different communication methods. He also did not address the fact that some newsletters are a major source of information on controversial community issues of interest to minority and low-income people.

In spite of his use of "P.I." instead of "P.R.," there was very little emphasis in Cossingham's presentation of how to get relevant information directly to the Community Action constituency. His stress was on "image building." "Use unique, bright colored checks, somebody at the bank is going to notice how many there are and what kind of finances they represent." And, "If you want good, sympathetic, press coverage, don't worry about the reporter. Get to know the manager or the publisher. If he's conservative and upset by welfare programs, talk to him about self-help and education."

Cossingham's total emphasis on P.I. as a public face to present to the community at large and to the influential powers-that-be contrasts sharply with the view of some CAPs which use such a program to provide a voice for the poor. In many cases, the information services provided by Community Action are the only platform available to the poor, and can be used to provide training in media skills to the poverty constituency.

Bud Schmidt