

OPPORTUNITY

A Publication of the New Jersey Office of Economic Opportunity

"Both the Senate and the House have now finally acted on this year's legislation . . . Tragically, the appropriation will not be nearly adequate to the need, or to the expectations the first two years have aroused. It is unlikely that new programs will be started this year, and some may have to be cut back. We will have to do the best we can, and work for a strengthened national commitment next year.

"In addition, the House version cut down severely on funds that were available for locally designed programs, in favor of national programs such as Head Start and Neighborhood Youth Corps. While these programs are of great value, I believe the original concept of the legislation—that local people know local problems best and can best solve them—must be retained and strengthened."

John C. Bullitt, Director
Office of Economic Opportunity

Sedares Is Named Assistant Director For NJOEO Manpower Development

Constantine Sedares, former manpower program director for Trenton's antipoverty agency, has been named Assistant Director for Manpower of the New Jersey Office of Economic Opportunity.

In this role, Sedares is working to assist community action agencies (local antipoverty groups) improve their manpower training efforts. He also helps develop programs, in cooperation with public and private agencies, designed to redirect the use of federal, State and other manpower development resources so New Jersey might more adequately meet the special training and employment needs of the poor.

"What is involved is not only a redirection of resources," Sedares said, "but a redirection of thinking—new perspectives to solve old problems that have not been susceptible of solution through traditional approaches."

The new manpower director has initiated and supervised the de-

velopment of two broad-scale statewide proposals, which have been submitted to Gov. Richard J. Hughes for his consideration.

The first is the three-year adult literacy training program, designed to reach some 115,000 of the State's functional illiterates — those who have not gone beyond the eighth grade in school. This program, developed by James Farmer, former CORE director, and the manpower staff of NJOEO, was recently approved by the Governor's Task Force on Adult Literacy Opportunities.

The second is the Opportunity Centers proposal that would provide comprehensive literacy, computational skills and pre-vocational training for target-area poor throughout the State. This program, which would operate through 22 locally-administered Opportunity Centers in 19 key New Jersey communities, has been sent to USOEO and the U. S. Department

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Manpower Program Offers Job Skills In Opportunity Centers

A comprehensive statewide plan to train an estimated 12,000 disadvantaged youth and adults for employment has been submitted to the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Labor by Gov. Richard J. Hughes.

The 15-month demonstration proposal, known as the New Jersey Opportunity Centers Program, would provide pre-vocational training in 22 opportunity centers in 19 key communities throughout the State, where the incidence of poverty and unemployment are the highest. It would include new approaches toward basic literacy and pre-vocational training and more effective links between existing work experience and occupational training programs.

(Work experience programs, under Title V of the antipoverty act, offer job training for unemployed heads of families on welfare rolls to help develop skills that may assist them in finding jobs.)

The proposal was developed by the New Jersey Manpower Development Coordinating Committee and the manpower staff of the New Jersey Office of Economic Opportunity. John C. Bullitt, NJOEO director, is chairman of the committee. Constantine Sedares is assistant NJOEO director for manpower.

The coordinating committee, created by the Governor last May, was charged with expanding the State's manpower development effort, particularly as it affects the disadvantaged. It is composed of representatives of all federal and state agencies that administer manpower development programs in New Jersey.

The program would cost an estimated \$5.5 million, to be financed through a number of Federal acts, including the Economic Opportunity Act, the Manpower Development

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and Training Act (MDTA) and from existing State resources.

The centers would provide recruitment, evaluation, health services, training in basic literacy, computational and job acquisition skills, motivational development, vocational training and referral to on-the-job (OJT) and institutional training programs, as well as direct job placement.

"These centers would house under one roof the multiple services needed to train the disadvantaged for employment — services which are now widely scattered and often unavailable," Bullitt explained.

The statewide opportunity centers program would be under the overall supervision of NJOEO, with the State Manpower Development Coordinating Committee serving as the policy-making body. The centers would be administered locally, however, either by local community action agencies (antipoverty agencies), by the local government or by the Division of Employment Security.

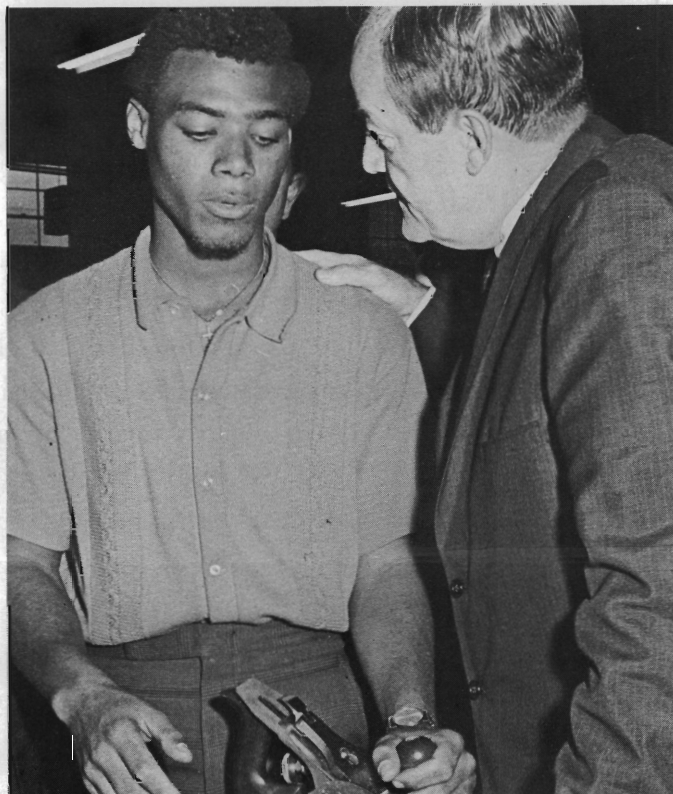
A key aspect of the program is the high degree of inter-agency coordination among relevant Federal and State agencies, channeled through the State Manpower Development Coordinating Committee. This is designed to eliminate duplication of effort and assure maximum effectiveness of the overall program.

The Opportunity Centers Program stemmed from the inadequacy of existing manpower development programs in New Jersey to raise the level of trainability and employability of significant numbers of the hard-core poor. This situation, the proposal explains, was due to two factors:

- the inability of existing work experience programs to provide the basic pre-employment training and services necessary to successfully prepare the hard-core poor for participation in intensive occupational training; and

- the lack of coordination among agencies responsible for administering various manpower development programs. This coordination is central to an integrated employment process that allows for

'STICK WITH IT' — That's the advice of Vice President Humphrey to Thomas Best of Asbury Park, an enrollee of the Howell Township evaluation center — one of three planned for the rural poor. The centers will complement the 22 opportunity centers in 19 other key cities.



logical progression from recruitment, through work experience to intensive occupational training and job placement.

Enrollees in the program would be youth and adults drawn, basically, from five groups: the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC); Work Experience programs; Nelson Amendment or other adult work experience programs (the Nelson Amendment to the antipoverty act provides comprehensive job training opportunities to chronically unemployed or underemployed adults); on-the-job programs; and persons who do not need or are not eligible for the work experience programs, but who need basic skills training and supportive services before entering on-the-job or institutional training.

The 22 centers would complement the three Evaluation Centers designed to service rural manpower programs in the northern, central and southern parts of the State. These evaluation centers are being established by NJOEO's Rural Manpower Development Program (RMDP), in cooperation with affected antipoverty agencies, the Division of Vocational Education and the Division of Employment Security.

The first RMDP evaluation center has already been opened in Howell

Township (outside Freehold) in Monmouth County, with two others slated to be dedicated soon. RMDP is a demonstration manpower program serving youths and adults from rural sections of the State.

In addition, the opportunity center being established in Trenton by the United Progress Inc. (UPI), the City's antipoverty agency, would be integrated into the statewide opportunity centers program. Both the RMDP and UPI centers would serve as laboratories to test program and service elements for the overall statewide program.

The literacy training phase of the program would be integrally linked with the comprehensive \$14.3 million Literacy Program recently proposed by the Governor's Task Force on Adult Literacy Opportunities. The centers would, in fact, serve as laboratories through which new materials, methods of instruction and approaches toward basic literacy training would be developed, implemented and tested.

The opportunity centers would be located in: Newark (3), Jersey City (2), Atlantic City, Camden, Toms River, Mt. Holly, Asbury Park, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Plainfield, Elizabeth, Orange, Salem, Phillipsburg, Bayonne, Hoboken, North Hudson, Passaic and Paterson.

Newark's Washington March: True Test Of Community Action

Last month, the poor of Newark demonstrated the true meaning of community action.

More than 1,500 persons — including businessmen, clergymen, politicians and residents of the City's ghettos — rode some 19 buses in a mammoth caravan to Washington in search of increased antipoverty funds. The expedition was organized by the United Community Corporation (UCC), Newark's antipoverty agency, but financed, primarily, with private contributions. They called it "Operation Concern" to indicate their fear that the national war on poverty, and especially the Newark effort, might be seriously threatened — perhaps foiled — if Congress failed to supply the necessary monies. Led by Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio, they carried with them the blessing of Gov. Richard J. Hughes and State OEO Director John C. Bullitt, who offered their "full support" in a telegram three days before.

In terms of money, "Operation Concern" did not succeed in getting a \$2 billion antipoverty bill. Shortly after, Congress approved a \$1.6 billion antipoverty appropriation.

But in terms of community action, it was the greatest single mobilization of the poor since the original antipoverty act was signed into law more than two years ago. For it presented Congress with tangible evidence of the power of a large, well-organized, orderly and diverse group of people united in a struggle for survival.

Sargent Shriver, U. S. OEO director, reportedly assessed the Newark cavalcade as "the most exciting thing that has happened" during his administration of the OEO.

In a recent address, Bullitt said the Newark march was indicative of a "new awareness by our affluent society of the needs and potentialities of the poor, as well as new expectations by the poor." He said the poor of Newark for the first time were involved in planning for community and individual betterment, stating: "This

is the heart of the Economic Opportunity Act: individual and community self-help to improve opportunities."

Herbert Kramer, U.S.OEO's public affairs director, added that his agency's top officials were impressed with the size, orderly demeanor and, especially, the diversity of the Newark group.

"Other delegations didn't have what you had in the Newark group," Kramer was quoted as saying. "This was tremendously effective — seeing the whole community around the conference table."

And another OEO official was said to have remarked that the Newark group probably was the first to come to Washington with urgent appeals for action, rather than with stubborn demands. This approach illustrated their attempt to enlist government support without resorting to unruly shouting matches such as that experienced by Shriver at the Spring meeting of the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty.

"This was in no sense an aggressive march," said a Newark News editorial. "It was instead a privately financed, reasoned mission. And because it was an orderly and intelligent presentation, based on demonstrable need, the Newark mission deserves to succeed."

Said the Newark Star Ledger in an editorial: "The people from Newark and other New Jersey cities have spoken, quietly, firmly and eloquently; more eloquently perhaps than if they had launched a strident, clamorous demonstration. They are little people, impoverished and concerned."

With this spirit, a small delegation of "Operation Concern" leaders met with Shriver and other top OEO officials in a 90-minute session on the morning of Sept. 26. At the conference table sat local clergymen of three faiths, businessmen, social action agency representatives, UCC officials and the Mayor, sitting alongside a militant Negro who had been arrested a year ago for a City Hall sit-in.

It was the kind of unity and cooperation that even the most optimistic would have deemed impossible two years ago, when an attempt to mobilize even a handful of impoverished Newarkers would have been unthinkable. For the first time, City Hall and citizens were uniting in the most fundamental concept of community self-help.

"Everybody loved everybody — it was the first time it ever happened," said Donald Wendell, UCC acting director. "It probably can't last, but it shows you can have unity on an issue."

As the small delegation of community leaders met with Shriver that morning, the Operation Concern buses were speeding to Washington. Arriving about two hours late, some 1,500 marchers quickly alighted and paraded, three abreast, for about a half hour in a massive but orderly picket outside the White House.

There were the aged from the Newark Senior Citizens Commission, the parents and their children from the Pre-School Council, the former relief recipients from the Blazer Youth Training Council, the teenagers from the Leaguers, a program that has been awaiting funds since December, and hundreds of others from UCC area boards and other social agencies.

They carried signs that read "We Need Funds Now,"



MARCH FOR MONEY — A steady stream of Newarkers march three abreast towards Pennsylvania Avenue in a dramatic plea for more antipoverty money.



PROGRAMS, NOT RIOTS — In a half-hour picket outside the White House, many marchers carried signs emphasizing the orderly and dignified theme of "Operation Concern."

"Give Us What You Promised," and "Programs, Not Riots" — setting the theme for the entire demonstration and emphasizing a new point: there should be a premium for racial harmony.

In size, the Newark group was particularly effective since it represented the poor and their spokesmen from just one city. By comparison, the Poverty Rights Action Center, which sponsored a similar march the following day, attracted about 1,000 persons, but from 21 different cities (including a group from CAN-DO, Jersey City's antipoverty agency).

From the White House, the marchers boarded the buses once again, this time for a trip to the Canon House Office Building, where they crowded — in two shifts — into a caucus room that comfortably accommodates about 250. The emotional effect of some 1,000 delegates filling every available seat, lining the side and center aisles and squatting along the floor, further dramatized their plea.

The delegates were greeted by the Mayor, local leaders, a steady stream of Congressmen from New Jersey, both of the State's U.S. Senators and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell of New York City, who told the group, "You people have shown today what the war on poverty has already accomplished."

It was the first time so many Jerseyans had travelled to Washington to see their Congressmen and undoubtedly the first time many of the marchers had seen their Representatives and Senators on any issue whatever.

Rep. Peter W. Rodino, Jr. (D-10), who helped coordinate the cavalcade, later observed: "There is no question that the caravan strengthened the position of those of us who want the antipoverty program to get the maximum available."

And despite the subsequent action of both Houses of Congress, the Newark Caravan was considered by many

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Fifth Year Plan at Douglass Brings Poor Girls to Campus

Of the 793 young women who entered the freshman class at Douglass College last month 20 were from economically and culturally deprived homes. They were on the campus of the women's division of the State University at New Brunswick, because of an exciting and unique plan developed last year by some of the College's faculty.

Concerned because "there was not sufficient minority representation in the student body," a handful of Douglass teachers, led by Dr. Emily Alman, a professor of sociology, created The Pilot Education Opportunity Program.

The aim of the program is to give young women from low-income homes a crack at a college education at a quality institution. It allows each participant an extra year in which to earn the required 124 credits for a bachelor's degree. Most freshmen complete their degree requirements in four years; the 20 special students may take up to five years.

"They will carry a lightened course load, at first," explains Mrs. Edward Meservey, assistant professor of history who is serving as faculty director for the program. "Instead of the usual five courses a semester, each of these girls will take three".

She explained that the educational process can be accelerated to suit individual progress. Because of limited funds, however, the program cannot be extended beyond the fifth year.

As at other colleges in the country, the admissions office at Douglass was forced to turn away thousands of qualified students. For each of the approximately 775 places in a freshman class, the director of admissions estimated that there were at least five applicants. Under these competitive circumstances, there were fewer and fewer openings for economically disadvantaged students whose test scores and school records were not apt to be as strong as those of students from more advantaged backgrounds.

"The admissions office was forced, by sheer numbers, to take only the top students who applied," Mrs. Meservey recalls. "Something had to be done to redress the balance, break up the homogeneity of the student body and give less well-prepared students, with college potential, a chance to qualify on their own terms."

At first, the faculty committee decided to establish a liaison system with guidance counsellors at high schools in New Jersey where there would be young women from poorer homes. Individual members established contacts at high schools in East Orange, Englewood, Plainfield, Princeton and Trenton. Working with the guidance counsellors, the team tried to encourage young women with college potential, but no financial means, to apply to Douglass under the new plan.

While contacts were made, the committee worked to fund the program. It obtained the necessary money from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the New Jersey State Scholarship Program and the Douglass College Scholarship Loan Program. The fourth source would be the girls themselves who, if selected, would

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as being an effective instrument in preventing further budget cuts in the antipoverty bill. In the face of strong Congressional opposition to any form of antipoverty legislation, 14 of New Jersey's 15 Representatives voted for the House version; and both New Jersey Senators voted against moves to severely limit the Senate's antipoverty bill.

At a time when support for even the most basic anti-poverty provisions was scarce, the votes of New Jersey lawmakers were considered by many as critical.

One of the Newark marchers, Donna Montgomery, an enrollee of the Blazer program, summed up the feelings of her colleagues: "I think the antipoverty program has been real helpful to the poor people of Newark," she explained, "Because once in a lifetime they finally had a chance to do something with their life, to get training for better jobs and to take care of themselves and their families. Once in a lifetime, the people began to stand up and, you know, get a chance to do something for themselves, without depending on other people. I mean if they take it away now, the people really won't care."

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work up to 10 hours a week during the school year in an on-campus job.

Sufficient funds were obtained to cover the personal expenses for each prospective student. The sum of \$1800 was allotted for each to fully match the costs of tuition, room and board, books and a simple wardrobe.

When the women applied last spring, their records were not compared with those of regular applicants. They were screened by an entirely different committee, one of whose members was the director of admissions. Like the other applicants, however, the students had to fulfill the basic State education requirements for a high school diploma in order to qualify for the pilot program. But, their overall school records and scores on the standard college application tests were given less weight than usual. Each applicant, according to Mrs. Meserve, supplied evidence that her family's income met the federal government's poverty criteria.

Mrs. Meserve reports that all 20 girls have adjusted well to college and residential campus life. "They look upon the program as a very special opportunity," she says. "I personally feel that the chances of success are high, because they are determined to do well."

John C. Bullitt, NJOEO director, supports the Douglass Opportunity Program. Recently he said: "The Pilot Education Program offers a model to other public and private colleges and universities in the State who are really concerned with the one-sidedness of their student bodies and who wish to give disadvantaged young men and women an equal opportunity to develop their talents . . ."

Tri-County Community Agency Acquires New Director, Name

The community action agency serving the poor in the counties of Cumberland, Salem and Gloucester has a new director and a new name.

Formerly known as the Southwest Regional Economic Opportunity Corporation, the agency has been renamed SCOPE, the Southwestern Citizens Organization for Poverty Elimination. Its new director is Joseph T. Wilkins who served for two years in the Inspector General's Office of the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington before being hired to lead the activities of the second largest (in terms of area) Community Action Program in New Jersey.

Wilkins has taken up his new responsibilities with energy and enthusiasm. He is impressed with the way in which the tri-county area, which serves a large number of poor families who are widely scattered over a predominantly rural area, has been organized. He intends to move "now from the community organization stage to the exciting phase of community action."

At the lowest level, SCOPE has 54 local antipoverty committees which have formed in each township or city in the three counties. Each committee has 54 members, one-half of whom are from among the poor themselves.

At the next level of organization, Area Councils have been created to direct the activities of the six major target areas in Millville, Bridgeton, Vineland, Salem, Glassboro and Woodbury. These Councils are composed of persons who also are members of the local antipoverty committees.

At the top of the pyramid is the Board of Trustees of SCOPE which is composed of 54 persons. One-third of the Board membership is made up of persons who represent local agencies and institutions. The second one-third is composed of citizens-at-large and the last third is composed of persons who represent the poor.

In order to qualify for the Board of Trustees, the citizens-at-large and the representatives of the low-income families must also be serving simultaneously on one of the six Area Councils.

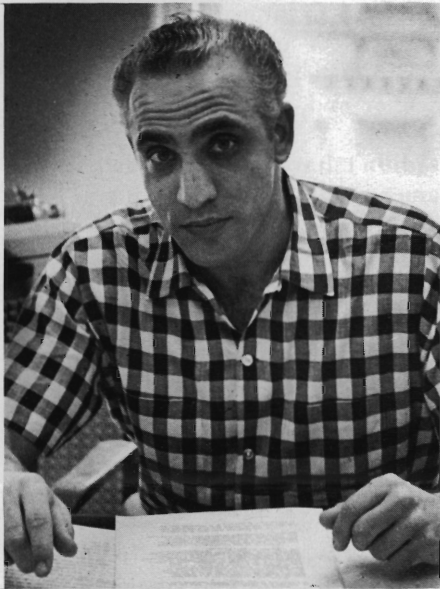
When he worked in Washington for OEO Director Shriver, Wilkins's job was to travel all over the United States investigating the activities of the community action agencies. Against this background, he praises the SCOPE Board of Trustees as "one of the best I have ever seen as far as representation and participation of the poor." He quickly points out that he was hired for his present position by a subcommittee of the Board, the majority of whose members came from low-income families.

Wilkins directs SCOPE's operations from Millville. He supervises his own staff and also the staff of the six area centers which have been created in the target areas. He is planning to use these staff members, most of whom come from poor backgrounds, and persons from the Area Councils and antipoverty committees to carry out his next phase of "community action."

He wants the representatives of the poor to appoint

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CONSTANTINE SEDARES

of Labor by the Governor. (For complete details, see opportunity centers story on page 1.)

Sedares, 34, came to NJOEO in June from United Progress, Inc., (UPI), Trenton's antipoverty agency. Before that, he was employed in the demonstration work project operated by CAN-DO (Community and Neighborhood Development Organization), the Jersey City community action agency, under a grant from the U. S. Department of Labor.

He has had considerable labor union experience. While president of the Federation of Union Representatives in New York, Sedares was active in a number of civil rights

organizations, and was coordinator for the Citizens Committee for a \$1.50 Minimum Wage in New York State, an organization headed by A. Philip Randolph.

At the same time, he served as coordinator for the Joint Committee for Equal Employment Opportunity, a group working to integrate the New York building trades unions.

Sedares has also worked as an organizer for the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

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committees and do research and study in such fields as education, health, welfare and housing, where the poor need the greatest assistance. "The poor must know the overall community conditions thoroughly so they can intelligently contribute to or intelligently criticize the local situation," Wilkins says.

He cites as an area for possible community action, the "archaic" regulations of some school boards which prevent the use of untrained persons in the classrooms. He believes that if members of the local committee or staff went to work on the members of the school board, peppering them with requests and bringing intelligent pressure to bear, perhaps some boards would relax the regulations and permit the hiring of more of the poor as classroom aides.

Another area for more intense community action, Wilkins feels, involves the migrant farm worker. He

is particularly concerned with this problem, because 75% of the migrants in New Jersey are employed in Cumberland County.

Wilkins has begun to organize these seasonal workers so they can benefit from on-going community programs and so they can indicate new programs which should be developed.

The tri-county area has been the recipient of about \$1 million in OEO grants and has had a wide variety of antipoverty programs including Head Start, Neighborhood Youth Corps, On-the-Job Training and Adult Basic Education. Wilkins is constantly watching for new programs and projects to help the people he serves. More importantly, he wishes to involve the poor themselves, wherever and whenever possible.

The Economic Opportunity act calls for the maximum feasible participation of the poor," he says, "and that I hold as crucial to the success of SCOPE's efforts . . ."

Information briefings on New Jersey's war on poverty can be arranged for citizen groups by the Public Information Office of NJ-OEO. National and State anti-poverty publications, including copies of this newsletter, are also available to the public upon request. Interested parties should address all correspondence to the Public Information Office at the address below.

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