

# CEASE FIRE In The War On Poverty

A recent newsletter from the Southeast Alaska Community Action Program published the following article with regard to the dismantling of the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, D. C.

Bob Bradley, Executive Director of SEACAP, stated that the article is an effort to inform Alaskans regarding political actions that affect community action programs.

"For the past year or so, those people involved in economic opportunity or 'Great Society' programs have been anticipating with the re-election of Richard Nixon, the abandonment of these programs. Correspondingly, there has been much speculation as to the means and time by which this action would take place.

"Both the means and time are now at hand. In his 1973-74 budget statement, the President has recommended the dismantling of OEO, with its component segments either defunded, or placed under the authority of other departments. The primary segment, community action programs, would be retained only until December 31 1973. Afterward, they would have to be picked up and supported by local governments.

"The justification for this action is that OEO has had its chance to reach its objective of equalizing opportunity for low income people, but has failed. There are still poor people in our nation. So a cease fire has been declared in the War on Poverty. In Vietnam, when the United States declared its cease fire, our defense budget did not decrease but instead increased. But in the United States, when the poverty troops are being pulled out, the reciprocal will be true. Perhaps it is because we have not achieved peace with honor.

"Like the Title IV-A cutback which reduced Alaska's federal input from twenty million dollars to about two million dollars, OEO's expenditures in the state will also decrease. Currently operating under OEO in Alaska are Rural CAP, Community Enterprise Development Corporation (CEDC), Head Start, Alaska Legal Services, Greater Anchorage Area Community Action Agency, as well as other smaller projects.

"Although it is impossible to tell at this point what the level of funding will be, the amount of additional revenue sharing to local government units will probably fall short of that total currently expended through OEO in Alaska. Once again, in spite of the problems created by Alaska's remoteness and vast area, it will be ignored because of its small number of voters."

Also quoted in the newsletter were excerpts from the newspaper in Washington, D.C., THE WASHINGTON POST, as follows: "The man who is to dismantle the Office of Economic Opportunity believes that OEO has undetermined authority, challenged the family, promoted the welfare ethic, and eroded democratic safeguards."

"Howard Phillips, 32, acting director of the agency, is cheerfully looking forward to the

task."

Mr. Phillips has also charged OEO as being Marxist oriented, involved in trying to change public opinion, being too active politically, and too heavily staffed by Democrats.

"The destruction of community action agencies comes at a time when an OEO evaluation of the agencies celebrated for their effectiveness in mobilizing local resources to help the poor become self-sufficient."

"The evaluation, based on a study of 591 of the 907 agencies, found them working closely with local governments and making institutional changes of benefit to the poor."

The SEACAP newsletter stated that the President's special revenue sharing bill is slated to provide funds in place of OEO. "In theory, the intent is to provide federal money directly to local governments, to permit them to make decisions as to how the money is to be spent.

"Unfortunately for Alaska, this funding is on a per capita basis, and the bulk of the money will be going into cities which already possess the tax base to provide services. Rural communities throughout Alaska will receive funding on an insignificant level, in most cases, only a few thousand dollars per

community."

Mr. Bradley commented that the foregoing is what appears to be the demise of SEACAP, and other community action programs by December 31, 1973.

He said, "We all know what appears to be and what actually happens are sometimes two different situations."

The remainder of the newsletter, WHOOSH-GEE-EN (Pulling Together), was devoted to activities of the organization. He mentioned that the regional CAPs were mainly responsible for providing the foundation by which gifted and dedicated individuals brought to conclusion the largest and most significant

single piece of American Native legislation—the 1971 Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

Other articles in the newsletter included information on a tax information program the CAP will sponsor, Head Start, fire protection for the Southeastern villages, alcoholism news, Adult Basic Education, Longevity Bonus, job opportunities, and the fact that applications are being accepted from students who would like to be an intern in Senator Gravel's office in Washington, D.C. during the summer of 1973.