

CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR AN ADEQUATE CLEVELAND COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

We strongly believe that the present Council for Economic Opportunities in Cleveland does not adequately represent the people of Cleveland, particularly those who live and work in the poverty areas. We believe the Council should be expanded to include representatives from the following categories:

3 1. More labor representation. Such representatives should include Negro labor representatives, and representatives from smaller unions serving low income groups, such as laundry workers, hospital workers, meat cutters, etc.

3 2. Civil rights representation. The tragedy of the past year's civil rights conflict has resulted in large part from the refusal of public officials to communicate with legitimate civil rights representatives. There definitely should be people on the Cleveland Poverty Council who are in viable communication with civil rights groups, who understand and are sympathetic to their problems.

2 3. Inner City Church representation. While there are several clergy on the Cleveland Council, there are still large numbers of clergy who are in contact with poverty groups and whose points of view are not represented on the Council. Representatives should be chosen from such groups as the following: the Baptist Ministers Conference, the Interdenominational Alliance, the Inner City Protestant Parish, inner city churches (Negro and White), and denominational urban representatives.

7 4. Organizations and individuals within poverty areas. For too long a period have we tended to plan FOR the poor rather than WITH them. For too long have planners been out of contact with large masses of poverty residents. The Cleveland Council has a notable lack in this area. Civic leaders from poverty areas should be included on the Council; residents involved in community organizations structures from the poverty areas should be represented; there should be a larger contingent of EAST side representatives since these constitute the largest number of priority areas in the Poverty Proposal.

3 5. Social work and teaching community representation. We need a wider representation from this group, for there are significant differences in philosophy which ought to be represented. Representatives from the Western Reserve School of Applied Sciences and from the National Association of Social Workers should be included on the Cleveland Council. Teachers working in the public schools (members of the NEA or the CTU) should be included on the Council.

3 6. Representation from the Poverty Group itself. Last but not least is the need for representation from the poverty groups themselves, people on welfare, people at or below the poverty level. The best sounding programs may be formulated but which will be out of contact with reality unless such groups are heard from. We have already had sufficient experience in Cleveland to indicate the validity of this approach. Several representatives ought to be included.

While we do not have a recommendation to make regarding the total number of representatives to be added to the Cleveland Council, we are strongly in favor of the number being sufficient to include more than one representative from each major category listed above. Certainly the three positions recently added to the Cleveland Council could not possibly provide the kind of representation we feel is needed.

REV. MILAN C. BRENKUS, Temporary Chairman

Cleveland Citizens Committee for an Adequate Community Action Program