

HAWKINS, KAREN MEDLIN, Ph.D., *Coastal Progress: Eastern North Carolina's War on Poverty, 1963-1972* (2012)
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This dissertation puts forward a new and broader understanding of the factors that contributed to greater economic opportunity and declining poverty rates during the Great Society years and beyond through a study of the nation's first rural Community Action Agency (CAA) to receive federal funds as a part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. Craven Operation Progress, Inc. (COP), located in mostly rural Eastern North Carolina, also was one of the eleven sites funded by the private non-profit North Carolina Fund, whose antipoverty programs both predated and served as models for the national War on Poverty. Aside from just the timing and source of its funding, the experiences of COP reveal a refreshingly different and far more encompassing story than has been told. In addition to focusing primarily on the fight to eradicate poverty in America's largest urban centers (many of which, like Mayor Daley's Chicago, were exceptional cases), scholarship on the War on Poverty has generally assumed that middle-class whites on CAA boards were either uninterested or unable to truly meet the needs of the poor, biracial agreement and cooperation was essentially impossible, and that confrontation and direct protest led by the poor and their liberal advocates was the primary and the most consistently effective means behind social change. "*Coastal Progress: Eastern North Carolina's War on Poverty, 1963-1972*" challenges these assumptions.

With few exceptions, scholars have not looked beyond episodic conflicts and controversies to assess the wide-ranging interactions between whites and non-whites and between the poor and non-poor in their evaluations of CAAs. The research conducted for

this study, which relies heavily on several untapped primary sources including 1960s and 1970s-era oral interviews of antipoverty workers and local citizens, records from the U.S. Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and written communications between COP and the North Carolina Fund as well as the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), confirms that moderate local leadership in combination with a biracial commitment to manpower and economic development were key to the creation of economic opportunities for poor people in Eastern North Carolina and also to making those opportunities accessible to the poor, blacks in particular.

COASTAL PROGRESS: EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA'S
WAR ON POVERTY, 1963-1972

by

Karen Medlin Hawkins

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APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1965, Eastern North Carolinians were not accustomed to attracting national news. Of course, the town of New Bern had drawn statewide recognition six years earlier after the successful restoration of Tryon Palace, the home of one of North Carolina's last Royal Governors. Yet, in general, most inhabitants of the eastern portion of the state continued to live in the environment of relative solitude and obscurity that they had enjoyed since the eighteenth century when the state's capital moved west to Raleigh.¹ Thus the pride and awe that swept Craven County when national reporters from *Look* magazine arrived to investigate antipoverty efforts being undertaken by the Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) workers in the area was not entirely surprising.²

Just a few months prior, in November 1964, Craven Operation Progress, Inc. (COP)—later renamed Coastal Progress—had become the nation's first rural Community Action Agency (CAA) to receive federal funds as part of President Lyndon Johnson's

¹ The city of New Bern, situated at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers, once served as the state capital from 1746 until the end of American Revolution. Founded in 1710 by Swiss merchants, it is the second oldest town in the state and today is the county seat of Craven County.

² Jack Star, "The Domestic Peace Corps Tackles Poverty," *Look*, April 20, 1965, p. 100-103.

War on Poverty.¹ Headquartered in New Bern, COP served the coastal counties of Jones and Pamlico, as well as Craven.² The comprehensiveness of its programs soon earned the praise of Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) director Sargent Shriver who hailed Craven Operation Progress as a model for all other antipoverty agencies.

In September 1965, the COP Board of Directors was invited to attend a national news conference in Washington, D.C. convened by Shriver to publicize the progress of America's rural CAAs. Board members were not just impressed with the positive reception they received, many of them were taken aback by how much the press already knew about their antipoverty initiatives. Board member Frank Efird was surprised by a *Chicago Tribune* reporter's familiarity with the strawberry marketing program the board had recently helped to develop to encourage crop diversification among tobacco farmers. According to black board member Catherine Berry, "You would have thought that the reporters were from Craven County." "They seemed to know so much about us," she said.³ Jim Hearn, the first executive director of Craven Operation Progress, took the attention in stride: "Thus far, Craven has been a leader not only in the South, but in the whole nation. The eyes of the nation are, indeed, on Craven County."⁴

¹ Not only was COP the first rural CAA, it was also one of the first six CAAs in the nation to receive federal funds.

² In the beginning, Craven Operation Progress also provided limited program assistance to sections of Lenoir, Carteret, and Onslow counties. By 1965, both Onslow and Carteret counties had established their own CAAs.

³ COP Board meeting minutes, September 22, 1965, folder 4974, North Carolina Fund Records (#4710), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Hereinafter cited as NCFR.

⁴ Jim Hearn, "Background History of Craven Operation Progress, Inc.," folder 4967, NCFR.



Figure 1. Sargent Shriver of the Office of Economic Opportunity signs a renewal grant for Craven Operation Progress at a press conference held in Washington, D.C. in September 1965; the six people seated to the left of Shriver are members of the Craven Operation Progress Board of Directors: (l-r) Catherine Berry, Executive Director Jim Hearn, Robert M. Whitehead, Constance Rabin, Frank Efird, and D. Livingstone Stallings. Photograph by Billy E. Barnes, courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Billy E. Barnes Collection.

This statement was not merely wishful thinking on Hearn's part. Imbedded in President Johnson's declaration of "an unconditional war on poverty" on January 8, 1964, was a forthright faith among Democrats, both liberal and moderate, that the federal government possessed an unlimited ability to cure and even prevent the most pressing forms of need in America: unemployment, improper housing, malnourishment, inadequate access to health services, lack of education, and lack of job training.⁵

⁵ "The Poor Amidst Prosperity," *Time*, October 1, 1965. In the words of *Time* magazine writers, "Underlying the antipoverty campaign is the uniquely American belief—surprisingly often correct—that evangelism, money and organization can lick just about anything, including conditions that the world has always considered inevitable." See Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996), 38-39.

Moreover, as a chief executive of a nation experiencing unprecedented economic growth and material abundance, Johnson was well aware that the War on Poverty would have to be sold to middle-class Americans as a way of benefitting all, not just the poor. Indeed, poverty in the United States had been on an especially marked decline since World War II. In his first State of the Union address, Johnson challenged the nation to recognize that even though “our gross national product reached the \$600 billion level—\$100 billion higher than when we took office,” with federal programs to bring the poor out of idleness “it easily could and it should be still \$30 billion higher today than it is.”⁶ As Johnson saw it, poverty was primarily a problem of male unemployment due to a lack of education and/or skills. With the traditional male-breadwinner family structure in mind, Johnson was confident that his War on Poverty programs could help elevate the family wage, especially within the black community where male unemployment was most stark. In the words of public policy historian Guian A. McKee, a “gendered sensibility” undergirded Johnson’s War on Poverty in the beginning. Job training and educational opportunities, then, were less geared toward gainfully employing women, particularly those with children under eighteen, outside the home. But since approximately 39 percent of working-age U.S. women participated in the labor force in 1964, Johnson’s preference in

⁶ Text of President B. Lyndon Johnson’s Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 8, 1964 [As delivered in person before a joint session], Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum website, accessed July 2, 2010, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/640108.asp>.

raising men's employment likely fit in with what most Americans believed would most effectively improve the nation's productivity and, thereby, reduce its rate of poverty.⁷

In addition to the fanfare surrounding the War on Poverty, a good public relations campaign was absolutely essential if these high hopes and lofty goals were to be fulfilled. Not only an uninterrupted flow of revenues to support the multi-million dollar antipoverty programs created under the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 but also Johnson's own credibility were on the line. In order to maintain the approval of Congress and the majority of American taxpayers, the White House and the OEO were heavily involved in sharing any evidence of success through as many national outlets as possible. In the words of public policy historian Alice O'Connor, "Nothing seemed too small or too preliminary to report."⁸ Portraying the Community Action Program (CAP)—whose requirement for the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor and racial minorities in poverty programs made them some of the most controversial features of the War on Poverty—as appealing and worthwhile undertakings was especially important.

⁷ Guian A. McKee, "This Government Is with Us": Lyndon Johnson and the Grassroots War on Poverty" in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 38-40; Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 10-11; Mitra Toosi, "A century of change: The U.S. labor force, 1950-2050," *Monthly Labor Review* (May 2002): 22, accessed June 27, 2012, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf>. A male-dominated labor force also existed in Craven County during the mid-1960s. In 1965, of the 1,845 new applications filed with the New Bern Employment Security (ESC) Office, only 257 (less than 14 percent of the total) were filed by female residents. Expectations for mothers' work outside the home, in particular, were not especially widespread at the time. See Table XVII, Bureau of Employment Security Research, *1965 Annual Report, Employment Security Local Office Operations* (Raleigh, NC: Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, 1966).

⁸ Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 169.

COP's pioneering vision and the early promise that it would reduce the sources of poverty in rural Eastern North Carolina showed both real and potential critics the goals of the War on Poverty might just be attainable.

While COP made headlines in the earliest days of the War on Poverty, its relevance on the national stage swiftly dwindled amid the eruption of riots among blacks in inner cities across the North and West in the summer of 1965. As the Johnson administration shifted the bulk of its attention and funds to the grievances of the black urban poor, the majority of rural CAAs were forced to take a back seat to the social and political turmoil of cities such as Newark, New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles. In 1967 the President's National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty published a report, appropriately entitled *The People Left Behind*, to address the "futility of attempts to solve the urban problem without comparable efforts to solve the rural problem."⁹

Since then, histories of the War on Poverty have generally placed the greatest amount of importance upon the Johnson's administration's efforts to eradicate urban poverty. Indeed, an overwhelming number of War on Poverty studies have been focused upon CAAs in America's largest urban centers, many of which, like Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago, were arguably exceptional cases.¹⁰ Without a doubt, scholars can find

⁹ *The People Left Behind: A Report by the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), vii. In the preface of the report, the authors affirmed that "most of the antipoverty effort has been aimed at urban poverty" despite the fact that "the problem of poverty in rural areas is so acute as to require immediate and special attention."

¹⁰ One major difference between Chicago's CAA and others across the country was that it was controlled and administered by politicians within city hall, namely Mayor Daley himself. According to Sargent Shriver, 74 percent of CAAs were instead "independent organizations" controlled not by local politicians but by private citizens such as ministers, social workers, educators, businessmen, and health providers.

an abundance of sources and drama in locales such as Chicago and Los Angeles. However, this urban dominance in the historiography has resulted in a narrow conception of 1960s community action in terms of both definition and outcome.¹¹ As Allen J. Matusow observed a little more than a quarter-century ago “the best-documented cases come from the biggest cities, which had special problems and were probably not representative.”¹²

Not only are accounts of how the War on Poverty worked on the local level lacking in current historical scholarship, there is a particular dearth of discussion of the effects of antipoverty programs in predominately rural areas. Such discussion is both relevant and necessary in light of the fact that in the 1960s, 30 percent of the nation’s population lived in rural areas—as did almost half of the nation’s thirty million poor; moreover, poverty was frequently most dire among rural residents.¹³ Until the widely

See David Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 128, 139.

¹¹ Examples include Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); J. David Greenstone and Paul E. Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics: Community Participation and the War on Poverty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); and Thomas F. Jackson, “The State, the Movement and the Urban Poor: The War on Poverty and Political Mobilization in the 1960s,” in *The “Underclass” Debate: Views from History*, ed. Michael B. Katz, (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1993), 403-439.

¹² Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 255.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Table 4. Population: 1790-1990, United States Urban and Rural*, U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 15, 2010, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/files/table-4.pdf>. The President’s National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty approximated the number of the rural poor at 14 million in 1967.

anticipated publication of *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* by Robert R. Korstad and James L. Leloudis in 2010, few historical works have given adequate coverage to the rural battleground of the War on Poverty since Polly Greenberg's examination into Mississippi's Child Development Group, first published in 1969. The most notable exceptions have appeared in the last five years and include Susan Youngblood Ashmore's trailblazing study of the "Black Belt" region of Alabama, and Thomas Kiffmeyer's captivating research into the experiences of student volunteers in the Appalachian Mountain region of Kentucky, both published in 2008.¹⁴ Yet, while each of these works provide important details about how the commitment to action among local people was able to advance antipoverty agendas in even the most desperate and seemingly impenetrable of environments, the question of how and why both antipoverty programs and racial equality dramatically advanced during the era of Johnson's Great Society in the most rural section of the country, the South, remains largely unaddressed.

In addition to presenting a challenge to the dominance of urban studies within the historiography of the Great Society era, this study of the War on Poverty as enacted in

¹⁴ Susan Youngblood Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and The Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, 1964-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008); Polly Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Biography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), A Story of Maximum Feasible Poor Parent Participation* (Washington, D.C.: Youth Policy Institute, 1969), Thomas Kiffmeyer, *Reformers to Radicals: The Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2008); and Robert R. Korstad and James L. Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). Although Korstad and Leloudis highlight the conditions of rural CAAs in both the Appalachian Mountains and the northeast region of North Carolina, little attention is paid by this work to the area served by Craven Operation Progress, one of the first of the North Carolina Fund's eleven sites to be identified.

Eastern North Carolina gives more attention to underappreciated factors that both led to greater economic opportunities and undermined such efforts. Until very recently, most scholars who have studied the War on Poverty have deemed President Johnson's federal antipoverty initiative a failure because it ultimately did not do enough: it relegated too much control to city and county leaders, it was diverted by the Vietnam War, it left in place many "structural problems" that fostered poverty, it was fought on the cheap, or, as former Johnson cabinet member Daniel P. Moynihan argued, it was fraught with internal divisions among government officials over strategy.¹⁵ A newer generation of scholars, however, has begun to assess the War on Poverty as at least partially victorious.

Co-edited by historians Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian and published in 2011, *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History* best reflects this new trend of scholars who are seeking to dispel what they consider the most sizeable and enduring myth of the War on Poverty: that it was a total failure. A collection of sixteen studies, which includes contributions from several up-and-coming scholars such as Wesley G. Phelps and Karen M. Tani, *The War on Poverty* takes a fresh look at the Great Society years and beyond. For one, these scholars generally find that many of the antipoverty programs funded via federal dollars were crucial in reducing poverty rates in the nation through the 1970s and, moreover, that the War on Poverty helped to ameliorate the difficulties and discomforts of poverty by expanding the nation's social safety net for

¹⁵ Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969); Greenstone and Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics*, xv, xx; Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 34-35; and Jackson, "The State, the Movement and the Urban Poor," 403-439.

millions of the low-income through programs that still exist to this day (namely Medicare/Medicaid, food stamps, and Head Start). In concurrence with co-editor Orleck's introductory assessment of the War on Poverty, each scholar also shares the view that antipoverty successes were chiefly wrought not by federal bureaucrats or local elective officials and black and white middle-class locals who sat on community action boards but by "poor people mobilizing in the name of participatory democracy and greater community control." Taking a grassroots or "bottom-up" focus, each scholar chronicles instead how communities of poor persons ranging from rural whites in Appalachia, Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, and blacks in the southern Delta to migrant Mexican farmworkers in Wisconsin and Chinese immigrants in New York "transformed themselves into effective political actors who insisted on being heard."¹⁶ Yet while one of the major strengths of the volume is the degree of attention paid to dismantling popular stereotypes of the poor as lazy and/or apathetic non-actors this attribute is also, at the same time, one of its limitations. With few exceptions, the ways that local public officials and members of the black and white middle-class also meaningfully contributed to the War on Poverty is missing from the story. While scholars who have written on the subject in the last five years have added immensely to our knowledge of the range of achievements of the War on Poverty, they have tended to limit their narratives to the growth of the poor's political participation despite inconclusive evidence that a direct

¹⁶ Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 2.

link existed between political participation and individual economic advancement.¹⁷

Regretfully, historians have yet to fully credit the change that happened outside poor people's mobilization or in areas, such as Craven County, where such mobilization was seen on a relatively small scale.

Another aspect of the War on Poverty that is generally underappreciated by scholars, a major exception being Christina Greene, is the interracial collaborations and associations that developed during the Great Society years, especially within the South.¹⁸ One reason for this neglect is a common conclusion among scholars that middle-class and upper-class whites were generally uninterested in empowering the poor, specifically the black poor, in order to maintain their own status and self-advancement.¹⁹ As Orleck recently argued, setbacks during the War on Poverty were most frequently the fault of "local authorities—mayors, city council members, governors, police chiefs—[who] had

¹⁷Countryman, *Up South*, 330; Kent B. Germany, *New Orleans after the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007). In *Up South*, Matthew Countryman interprets the War on Poverty as an essential provider (albeit imperfect and incomplete) for the enhancement of black activists' quests for electoral representation, equal employment, better pay, and a decline in poverty rates. As Countryman argues, the antipoverty movement spurred an increased sense of power among African Americans to "control their destiny and solve the problems of racial discrimination, economic inequality, and mis-education." Kent Germany's *New Orleans after the Promises* similarly describes how CAAs in New Orleans "built on local movements for black equality" while also adding to the available methods to engage in the civil rights struggle. See also Nicholas Lemann, *Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1991), 344; and William A. Kelso, *Poverty and the Underclass: Changing Perceptions of the Poor in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 266-269. As Kelso argues, "By the 1970s the poor and their allies were probably politically more powerful than at any other point in American history. At the very point in time in which the poor had become politically more influential, the decline in the overall pre-transfer poverty rate eventually leveled out and slowly began to rise again."

¹⁸ Christina Greene, "'Someday...the Colored and White Will Stand Together': The War on Poverty, Black Power Politics, and Southern Women's Interracial Alliances," in Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 159-183.

¹⁹ Kelso, *Poverty and the Underclass*, 254-269.

no intention of relinquishing their power over the poor or their control over the distribution of federal dollars.”²⁰ More local studies such as this one, however, can reveal that there were a significant number of whites in the power structure who did not fight tooth and nail against the goals of the antipoverty programs but who, out of a genuine desire to improve the living conditions in the local communities in which they lived, actually helped to keep such programs alive during the late 1960s in the face of mounting conservative criticism.²¹ Of course, this dissertation does not seek to downplay or disprove arguments from conclusions drawn from scholars’ research of other CAPs and CAAs—after all, as noted by Greene, while scholarly attention of the War on Poverty has

²⁰ Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 4. Within this edited volume, see also the essays of Rhonda Williams, Wesley G. Phelps, Susan Youngblood Ashmore, Greta de Jong, and Kent Germany.

²¹ This view was perhaps first articulated by Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. in 1965 when he criticized the War on Poverty for not including enough of the poor on community action agencies. “In many areas,” Powell argued, “the people who have kept the poor impoverished are now running the War on Poverty.” See Noel A Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 144. Among scholars, such a view is perhaps best illustrated in Susan Ashmore’s *Carry it On* (2008). Ashmore clearly lays out her argument in the introduction: “This book also offers a more complete picture of those people who stood in opposition to the civil rights movement. Familiar characters appear here, including [Selma mayor Joe] Smitherman and Alabama governor George Wallace, but the story also involves business leaders, state government bureaucrats and small-town elected officials who used their jobs and influence against the enforcement of federal civil rights laws.” See Ashmore, *Carry it On*, 13-15. Korstad and Leloudis also largely share this view in their study of 3 North Carolina Fund CAPs: “[T]he persistence of poverty amid plenty—despite the proclamations of politicians and pundits—was not truly a paradox. Poverty was instead intimately bound to relationships of power—political and economic—and for many CAP board members, rearranging those relationships was not the fight for which they had volunteered.” As a result, they argue, “CAP officials who were wary of federal intrusion into local affairs had considerable leeway to play for time and to bend new initiatives to their will, even as they complied nominally with OEO guidelines. They put ‘representatives’ of the poor and of black communities on their boards, but never in proportionate numbers. They also chose individuals whose capacity for independent expression was compromised—for instance, a black school principal who served alongside his white superintendent. In a similar fashion, CAP boards curtailed or declined federal support for programs they deemed too controversial. Summer youth employment programs, for instance, were welcomed, but only if they limited the number of participants as to minimize the impact on local wage rates.... In short, CAP leaders were constantly on the lookout for programs that threatened to make too much change too quickly.” See Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 174-175. See also John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 363-388.

largely “been both overly broad and excessively harsh,” most critiques of local antipoverty programs contain at least “some kernel of truth.”²² Instead, this dissertation importantly seeks to demonstrate that CAPs and/or CAAs, in this case COP/CPI, were not necessarily wholly defined by white opposition to economic and social progress. Aiming to build upon existing research on the War on Poverty, this dissertation has instead been written to tell a fuller story of what community action entailed and how it functioned in a local community. To borrow again from Greene, “an examination of local efforts,” particularly in the South, “yields some surprising discoveries.”²³

Thus, to be clear, Orleck and others are not wrong in arguing that power-structure types sought to prevent poor people’s empowerment in a variety of locations (especially within the Deep South states such as Mississippi where the poor were frequently black), but the narrative of the War on Poverty as it has been told remains incomplete. As this work seeks to show, power structure-types as well as middle-class locals (both white and black) in Craven County were often key in attracting federal antipoverty programs and/or in pushing for the opening up of opportunities for the poor via education, job training, employment, health care, and better housing. Many scholars have similarly concluded that a significant number of impoverished persons were uninterested in improving their individual employability through education and job training, as largely advocated by the white and black middle-class, and instead saw more hope in improving their plight by

²² Greene, ““Someday...the Colored and White Will Stand Together,”” 159-160.

²³ Ibid., 160.

engaging in group demonstrations against local elected officials and collectively demanding a better livelihood. With few exceptions, scholars have not looked beyond episodic conflicts and controversies to assess the wide-ranging interactions between whites and non-whites and between the poor and non-poor in their evaluations of CAAs.²⁴ Resistance to community action and antipoverty measures did exist at the local level but these realities may not have been as universal as scholars' arguments continue to suggest.

By the same token, while conflict and confrontational methods were often successfully used by black residents (many of who were poor) and their liberal allies in order to disrupt, if not dismantle, institutions and traditions that had impeded economic progress and/or fairness in Craven County—i.e. Jim Crow, an overabundance of “cheap labor,” and the eviction of unwed mothers and their children from the city housing project—economic progress within the Eastern North Carolina county would not have been possible without biracial negotiation and growing white accommodation to equal opportunity. These latter two developments—biracial negotiation and growing white accommodation to equal opportunity—were partially compelled by federal pressure from the OEO but were also made possible by white leaders and middle-class residents' economic self-interest in seeing the poor become financially self-sufficient. Like Rev.

²⁴ In his 2007 work *New Orleans After the Promises*, Kent B. Germany gives at least some voice to white individuals such as Eugene McManus, a priest and teacher with ties to the Louisiana Public Affairs Research Council. Referring to the plight of black citizens of Louisiana, McManus maintained that the state would not “fulfill its potential for progress as long as a substantial segment of its population is deprived of the skills and opportunities to share equally in the profits and the responsibilities of such progress.” See Germany, *New Orleans After the Promises*, 112.

Charles Edward Sharp of the county's biracial Good Neighbor Council, a significant number of moderate whites living in Craven in the 1960s had a "concern for the well-being of the larger community of which we are all a part."²⁵

In numerous ways, Craven County's experiences during the War on Poverty reveal a refreshingly different story of 1960's antipoverty efforts at the local level. It is a story of both black and white leaders agreeing to work together to decrease poverty in order to reduce the number of those on welfare, to, as they saw it, genuinely and compassionately "help people help themselves," and to make Eastern North Carolina a more attractive place for future industry and economic growth. In a 1965 interview with the *Raleigh News & Observer*, Craven County Commissioner and COP board member D. Livingstone Stallings was not afraid to describe the antipoverty program as "both humane and selfish," emphasizing that "the problem of poverty is everybody's problem."²⁶ The War on Poverty as waged in Eastern North Carolina shows that meaningful progress in reducing the numbers of the poor was possible at the local level despite setbacks at the federal level such as limited funding and internal divisions among government officials. Most interesting, both white and black leaders in Eastern Carolina had shown serious interest in tackling the poverty in their midst well before the grandest aims of Johnson's Great Society were legislated as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act, and the Voting Rights Act. The Craven County commissioners, in particular, were

²⁵ C. Edward Sharp to Louis B. Daniel, January 19, 1966, New Bern Housing Authority Minutes, 1953-1968, Housing Authority of the City of New Bern, New Bern, NC. Hereinafter cited as NBHA Minutes.

²⁶ Kate Erwin, "New Bern Working for Racial Harmony, *News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), October 3, 1965.

astounded by the increase of welfare cases which, by 1963, had risen to some fourteen hundred cases in Craven County alone and as a percentage of the county's population continued to surpass poorer counties.²⁷ As they saw it, public welfare was a "direct and tangible evidence of poverty," a drain on local resources, and not a dependable means by which the poor could become upwardly mobile. The commissioners were equally ashamed to learn that at least half of their young men could not pass the standards for military induction.²⁸ Simultaneously, several black citizens were searching for local funds to establish adult literacy courses in order to enhance the employability of other rural blacks. To those ends, a representative committee, consisting of various members of the Craven County community (including blacks from the most prominent local civil rights organization) met for the first time on December 20, 1963, to discuss submitting a community action grant proposal to the recently developed North Carolina Fund. The nonprofit Fund, whose primary sponsor was the Ford Foundation, sought to forge innovative means to cut poverty in the state; as such, the Fund would serve as a model for Johnson's design of the War on Poverty.

²⁷ "Public Assistance in North Carolina Counties," folder 5404, NCFR.

²⁸ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. 5, 7, folder 5048, NCFR.



Figure 2. President Lyndon Johnson (seated center) and North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford (seated second from far right) at a North Carolina Fund event in Rocky Mount, NC, May 1964.

By the onset of the federal War on Poverty, interracial cooperation among local citizens representing a variety of political views was already underway in Eastern North Carolina. For its part, the North Carolina Fund helped bring black and white residents full circle by providing an important early venue for discussing and strategizing about how to raise the poor out of their meager circumstances and incorporate them into mainstream society. As this study will show, confrontation and direct protest were often important but negotiation and moderate white and black leadership were at least as critical to social change in Craven County. Furthermore, the progress that was made in reducing poverty among blacks (the largest segment of the poor in the region, proportionately speaking) owed as much if not more to the achievements of the civil rights movement, local industrial development, and a biracial understanding of the widespread benefits of fighting poverty in the community than to federal initiatives under the banner of the War on Poverty.

In 1965, five out of the thirty-seven COP board members were known to be “segregationists.”²⁹ Although few of these men played a substantial role in the direction of the program—indeed, most of them attended board meetings irregularly—no more than two years later, all known “segregationists” had either lost interest in serving, broadened their views on race, or had been persuaded to step down either by other board members or by people in the community at large. Due in part to their experiences in negotiating racial matters during the civil rights movement, white board members of COP decided that, if for no other reason than to retain federal funding through the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and private funding through the North Carolina Fund, broader representation was needed both in policy planning and program participation. The records of COP explicitly confirm that not all white leaders, in the words of historian Pete Daniel, “subverted equal opportunity to serve their racist agenda.”³⁰ In fact, although some did so reluctantly, the majority of white leaders in Craven (most notably its first executive director Jim Hearn who had served on President Johnson’s Task Force on the War Against Poverty in February and March 1964) followed the civil rights guidelines of OEO. This reality conflicts with the standard narrative of the War on Poverty in the South. Much in line with this standard narrative, historian Kent Germany argues with regard to the Louisiana Delta that “one of the major reasons that [the War on Poverty] never reached the lofty goals espoused in Johnson’s rhetoric was the intense and often

²⁹ “Craven Operation Progress Board, Jan-Jul 1965,” folder 4971, NCFR.

³⁰ Back cover review of Ashmore, *Carry It On* by Pete Daniel, author of *Toxic Drift: Pesticides and Health in the Post- World War II South*.

violent opposition the antipoverty effort generated.” “In the late 1960s,” he explains,” the War on Poverty was little match for the Delta’s poverty and traditions, which engendered extreme white resistance to black advancement and racial inclusion, an economy too dependent on the land and on low wages, and an education system designed to perpetuate white privilege.” But unlike the place described by Germany, leadership in Craven did not generally, in Germany’s words, “prefer preserving white supremacy over economic innovation, quality public education, and investment in human capital.”³¹ In fact, white leaders in Craven proved to be more dedicated to bringing economic innovation, quality public education, and investment in human capital to the community than in merely preserving white supremacy. That Craven was located in one of the South’s most racially progressive states, whose governors helped establish and carry forward the North Carolina Fund and never vetoed a federal antipoverty program, is not a coincidence. Yet, knowing that OEO had yet to establish a CAA in Mississippi as late as the spring of 1966, one might be led to wonder: was Craven County, North Carolina, the true exception during the War on Poverty or were Mississippi and the Louisiana Delta?

Certainly, some county and municipal officials in Craven opposed the poverty program’s tendency to cater to and assist poor blacks, but a careful look into the records of the poverty program reveals that “white backlash” did not fully define their antipoverty efforts. The fact that elements of white racism were present did not mean that white racism was the most pervasive or influential factor in the War on Poverty. From

³¹ Kent B. Germany “Poverty Wars in the Louisiana Delta: White Resistance, Black Power, and the Poorest Place in America,” in Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 232.

COP's original inception as a North Carolina Fund community action program in April 1964, both the quantity and the quality of minority representation and participation steadily increased as both moderate and liberal blacks regularly garnered near-unanimous to unanimous approval to be seated on the board and were given roles in shaping the program's direction.

For instance, a North Carolina Fund review report of October 1966 noted the awareness within COP of the necessity of integration. In terms of racial balance, the poverty program received a six on a scale of one to seven (seven designating that most interest groups are represented), and according to one evaluation report, "Negroes play a substantial role in executive committee activities. Both negroes and whites, according to one board member, caucus before meetings to organize for specific purposes, and negroes at least, feel this has brought some specific gains."³² The board's ongoing recognition of the advantages of interracial partnerships in the fight against poverty was made particularly evident in September 1967, when its membership comprised twelve blacks and twenty whites, of whom eleven were representatives of the poor.³³

The loudest, most resistant, and most violent protests against the antipoverty programs came from the fringes of the Eastern North Carolina community, particularly the Ku Klux Klan. In 1965 alone, Klan members placed bombs beneath the cars of civil rights leaders, shot at a dwelling that housed black and white student volunteers, posted

³² "Community Action Agency Evaluation," p. 70, folder 5031, NCFR.

³³ Between 1964 and 1967, no more than two of COP's board members were drawn from local government.

bumper stickers that read “The Klan is watching you” on cars of poverty program supporters, and burned crosses in the yards of poverty program workers. In response, the COP board of directors as well as local government officials did not hesitate to publicly condemn these activities as “irresponsible” and even “despicable.”³⁴ The larger community also objected so much that a countywide Good Neighbor Council was formed that sought to foster communication, understanding, and peaceful relations between whites and blacks—in large part to prevent further Klan uprisings from derailing racial harmony as well as the progress of the antipoverty agency.³⁵ Ironically, and as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, segregationist violence and extremism seemed to attract more white supporters to the goals of black civil rights leaders and antipoverty initiatives.³⁶

Compared to the rest of the state, the Klan’s strongest following was in the rural east.³⁷ However, contrary to popular belief, pro-segregation whites at this time held minimal sway in Eastern North Carolina. By the mid-1960s, as substantiated by their

³⁴ “Anti-Poverty Workers Shot at in County,” *Sun Journal* (New Bern, NC), July 13, 1965.

³⁵ North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford officially launched the idea of the Good Neighbor Council in 1963. Many North Carolina counties and cities—including Craven County—formed councils to address and eliminate the roots of racial conflict. See David S. Coltrane, *Guidelines for the Establishment of County-Wide Good Neighbor or Human Relations Councils* (Raleigh: North Carolina Good Neighbor Council, 1965), North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁶ Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 165.

³⁷ The Klan was especially vibrant in Jones, Hyde, Beaufort and Craven counties. State Bureau of Investigation records reveal that there were at least three Klaverns in Craven County and that they frequently held outdoor rallies, often drawing crowds between 350 and 650, in the rural towns of Vanceboro, Jasper, Ernul, Dover, and Cove City. See David S. Cecelski, “Burning Memories,” *Southern Exposure: Politics & Culture of the South* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 23.

increasingly desperate and covert tactics, the Klan was losing influence while blacks were gaining leverage. When the federal War on Poverty began in Eastern North Carolina, black civil rights activists had already been effectively challenging segregationists and successfully negotiating with the white power structure for at least five years. Largely due to the leadership of the Craven County and New Bern branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), almost all local business establishments had been desegregated and teacher and pupil integration was gradually rising in public schools across the county.³⁸ Within the confines of COP itself, black influence became evident in the summer of 1965 after several white board members aimed to remove Jim Hearn from his post as executive director, partly because of his sympathies toward “forced integration.” In response, the black community and its leaders strongly expressed their desire in a sit-down meeting accompanied by Fund staff that the director be able to stay. In the end, the white COP board members backed down, without being compelled by OEO.³⁹

Based on the available evidence of antipoverty initiatives in Eastern North Carolina, it seems appropriate to investigate what other factors, aside from local opposition to racial and economic progress, might explain why the War on Poverty

³⁸ Karen Elizabeth Medlin, “Reclaiming First-Class Citizenship: The African-American Struggle and Mobilization for Political Rights in New Bern, North Carolina (1948-1979),” (M.A. thesis, North Carolina State University, 2007), 44-59; According to Craven County Schools Integration Projection Plans for 1966-1967, between the 1965-1966 school year and the 1966-1967 school year, pupil integration increased from 346 to 659 and teacher integration rose from 4 to 16. See “Craven County Schools Integration Projection Plans, 1966-1967,” folder 5006, NCFR.

³⁹ Bill Flowers, interview by John Miller, Durham, NC, February 3, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

ultimately failed to achieve all of its goals. The question of how theories of white racial backlash incorrectly blur or minimize the successes of local antipoverty action is also worth asking. Finally, and most important, one must seek the true causes of declining poverty rates in the 1960s and 1970s. Arguably, historians' focus on the presence of white opposition to black advancement in economic and political life has obscured aspects, both positive and negative, of the War on Poverty. For one, it has veiled genuine reasons, beyond those of racial fears and prejudices, why numbers of whites both inside and outside the South became concerned with the strengthening of federal bureaucracy that accompanied the War on Poverty by 1966. A North Carolina Fund poverty program in the Appalachian Mountains, which almost exclusively benefited impoverished whites, is only one example that citizens' issues with "welfare hand-outs" and "federal intrusion" into local affairs were not always centered around racial issues.⁴⁰

Although it was shaped by questions of race and episodes of white opposition, the War on Poverty in Eastern North Carolina was not, as the popular narrative goes, dominated by an established white power structure nor did federal money simply fill the pockets of middle-class antipoverty workers to the detriment of the black poor. Instead, a dedicated effort was mounted to help impoverished blacks and whites alike gain the necessary knowledge and skills to "become valuable and contributing citizens of our

⁴⁰ Watauga Avery Mitchell Yancey Community Action (WAMY), which sought to diminish poverty in the western portion of the state, was one of the seven original North Carolina Fund sites along with Craven Operation Progress (COP).

society of tomorrow.”⁴¹ In contrast to the prevalent view of CAAs as inherently susceptible to corruption, COP was at least one that did not simply utilize federal money for self-aggrandizement.⁴² Notably, when COP was selected by the North Carolina Fund as one of the first seven CAPs in the state, Johnson’s Economic Opportunity Act was several months away from being passed. In fact, when the local planning committee applied to the Fund in December 1963, no members were aware of either the federal plans or the influx of federal money that would begin in November 1964. Not until the summer of 1964 did the North Carolina Fund encourage and assist its demonstration communities to develop plans to make use of the federal funds that were likely to become available.⁴³

Within the historiography of the War on Poverty, scholars have correctly shown that poverty rates dipped dramatically during the implementation of the War on Poverty—from thirty-three million in 1965 to twenty-five million in 1970—but have frequently assumed that various programs’ goals and efforts were synonymous with these results.⁴⁴ This is not to deny that the War on Poverty reinforced changes that directly

⁴¹ Craven Operation Progress, Inc. Staff Orientation Manual, 1965, p. 38-39, folder 4992, NCFR.

⁴² As argued most recently by historian Annelise Orleck, “In many parts of the country, entrenched politicians perverted the spirit of the federal poverty program, turning it into yet another mechanism to enhance their hold on power or to line their pockets.” See Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 4.

⁴³ “Three Years of Change: Narrative History of the North Carolina Fund,” folder 1, NCFR.

⁴⁴ James T. Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 144; and Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 6. This argument is sometimes made subtly but is often reflected in scholars’ criticism of Republican presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan in scaling back programs that either originated or were expanded during the War on Poverty including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, Legal Services, and Head Start, to name a few. See Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 349; Marisa Chappell, *The*

resulted in a decline in poverty or that some of these changes took place in Eastern North Carolina. For example, although the federal War on Poverty did not open the first lines of communication between whites and blacks or begin the process of desegregation, its civil rights guidelines helped to buttress many of the goals of local black activists such as greater hiring of non-whites. As antipoverty beneficiary Ethel Sampson of New Bern recalled, “Very seldom did you see blacks working as secretaries” before the antipoverty programs began.⁴⁵ It must be acknowledged, nonetheless, that the roles of additional factors, including the cooperation of local communities and the growth of local industries, have been considerably underemphasized in the scholarship for their role in reducing poverty.

Arguably, the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in combination with changing local attitudes, which allowed blacks to push open job opportunities previously relegated to whites only, were two such factors. Moreover, these factors appear to have been more responsible for the decline in poverty than OEO directives or the distribution of government funds. As a policy analyst from the School of Government at Harvard University pondered in 1977, “given that social welfare expenditures grew from \$37 billion in [fiscal year] 1965 to almost \$140 billion in [fiscal year] 1974, compared to a 1964 poverty gap estimated at \$11 billion...it is reasonable to ask why poverty continues

War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Fred L. Block, et. al., *The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987); and Kelso, *Poverty and the Underclass*.

⁴⁵ Ethel Sampson, interview by author, New Bern, NC, August 14, 2009, transcript, in possession of author. COP’s first executive director Jim Hearn hired one of the first known black secretaries in the city of New Bern sometime between 1964 and 1965.

to exist at all.”⁴⁶ The research conducted for this study, which relies heavily on several untapped primary sources including 1960s and 1970s-era oral interviews of antipoverty workers and local citizens, records from the U.S. Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and written communications between COP and the North Carolina Fund as well as the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), confirms that negotiation and moderate white and black leadership in combination with manpower and economic development were key to the creation of economic opportunities for poor people in Eastern North Carolina and also to making those opportunities accessible to the poor, blacks in particular.

As the local civil rights movement ushered in greater white accountability and understanding of blacks’ grievances, more blacks began to secure a voice in public policy decisions and enter skilled and better-paying job fields that had been historically closed to them such as management, clerical, and local government positions. Although few Eastern North Carolina whites felt personally responsible for black poverty in 1965, a phenomenon which had primarily arisen out of decades-long segregation practices that had constrained blacks’ educational and job opportunities, the barrage of civil rights pleas and black voter registration gains of the mid-1960s presented them with both moral and pragmatic reasons to reexamine their claim of blamelessness and/or lack of responsibility to correct it. Some whites embraced racial fairness and participatory democracy out of pragmatism, to prevent “hot summers,” and others sought to avoid the legal repercussions

⁴⁶ Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., “A Decade of Policy Developments in the Income-Maintenance System,” in *A Decade of Federal Antipoverty Programs: Achievements, Failures, and Lessons*, ed. Robert H. Haveman (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 99.

of noncompliance with federal civil rights laws. And for at least a few, namely church and religious leaders, the goal was to support the “economic, social, and spiritual progress” that will “bring the most lasting good...for all our people.”⁴⁷

Another related factor in declining poverty rates in Eastern North Carolina was the broad commitment within the private sector to advance the economic standing of the poor. The cooperation of white businessmen and public leaders in and around New Bern with programs such as Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE) and Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) was particularly open; these men voluntarily hired young and low-skilled blacks for the first time. Businessmen, in particular, understood that their participation would not only help lower black unemployment rates but could also create extra purchasing power for the business community and provide themselves with workers for positions that needed to be filled. Similarly, in November 1964 a group of mostly black middle-class leaders came together to establish Craven Industries, Inc. to raise funding for a needle trade-sewing industry to employ disadvantaged citizens, especially low-income females “at a wage level [such that] they could support their families.”⁴⁸ Finally, local businessmen and middle-class leaders, both black and white, were responsible for attracting new and high value-added industry to Eastern North Carolina, starting in 1964 and extending into the 1980s and beyond. Primarily because they recognized the benefits of a higher tax base and smaller welfare

⁴⁷ COP Board meeting minutes, July 30, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

⁴⁸ “Background Information on Craven Industries,” folder 4967, NCFR. The Board of Directors of Craven Industry Investment Company started selling stock at \$10 per share.

rolls, white political leaders largely encouraged the partnerships between private businesses and COP. Private employment would increase 50.5 percent in the 1980s due to the construction of Craven Industrial Park, which would employ thousands of citizens in various industries across the region.⁴⁹ Between 1970 and 1990, the poverty rate for families in Craven County fell from approximately 20 percent to 10.5 percent, the latter of which stood right at the national average.⁵⁰ Sadly, however, both middle-class whites and blacks are essentially either left out of War on Poverty histories or are inaccurately described as supporters of the status quo. The story in Eastern North Carolina was far more complex than that. Indeed, a significant number of non-poor residents in and around Craven were not only in favor of change but also made concerted efforts to build their community's economic strength to better the lives and economic opportunities of the poor.

A final major factor that contributed to Eastern North Carolina's success in reducing poverty, which happened to be unique to the state of North Carolina, was the assistance of the North Carolina Fund. Housed in Durham, an industrial and university town located in the central portion of the state known as the Piedmont, the Fund provided

⁴⁹ "Craven Prospers in Employment," *Sun Journal*, May 31, 1993. Private job growth in Craven County during the 1980s rose from 14,048 jobs to 21,135 jobs.

⁵⁰ Table 43, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf ; Table 3, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1990, Social and Economic Characteristics*, North Carolina, Section 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991) U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp2/cp-2-35-1.pdf> ; Table C, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 175, Poverty in the United States: 1990 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991). The poverty rate for families living in Craven County in 1970 was 18.7 percent.

guidance and funneled private monies to COP so that it could enjoy greater freedom to search for new techniques to fight poverty (both before and after the Office of Economic Opportunity was established). Taking advantage of their proximity to the East and their relatively high degree of knowledge of that area, North Carolina Fund representatives and officials frequently visited New Bern—far more often than staff from the Office of Economic Opportunity were able to—in order to help moderate community issues and defuse community tensions. In its later years, though it would become more increasingly distrustful of local non-poor leaders, the North Carolina Fund would still play an important role, with the cooperation of local leaders, in funding studies to help bring more industry to Eastern North Carolina.

To summarize, the implementation of the War on Poverty in Eastern North Carolina and its effects there warrants fresh analysis. The reappraisal contained in this study is intended to reveal truths about the people and institutions that lay behind community empowerment and decreasing poverty rates. To achieve this expanded analysis, however, historians must look to the local arenas in which change actually happened. Top-down studies cannot provide the details that are necessary to explain poverty's decline. Yet novel and untapped research like that of Eastern North Carolina's War on Poverty can help to fill this void. Although Eastern North Carolinians have long lost their place in the national dialogue, it might be highly instructive to revisit how they effectively battled poverty in the 1960s and early 1970s.⁵¹

⁵¹ Besides Craven Operation Progress, there were a total of eight Community Action Agencies in Eastern North Carolina, two of which—Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development (NEED) and Choanoke Area

Of course, as will be discussed later, poverty was never completely obliterated in the area due to certain factors (some of which were largely out of the control of the poor to counteract). For instance, there were slightly fewer jobs and training opportunities available to unemployed and/or low-income women during this period, as compared to unemployed and/or low-income men. This discrepancy, which could be quite stark depending on the type of industry (i.e. carpentry), stemmed from both local and national realities: much of the poverty in Craven was related to job loss in the predominately low-income and male-dominated traditional industries like farming and, as historians like Annelise Orleck have helped to bring attention to, federal poverty policy during the War on Poverty “was bedeviled by the notion that women were secondary economic players and by the belief that the primary purpose of poverty programs was to transform poor

Development Association (CADA)—were North Carolina Fund sites. Of the Fund sites in Eastern North Carolina, Craven Operation Progress appeared to be the most successful of the three in spawning more permanent solutions in reducing poverty rates for its inhabitants. In a 2008 report, the North Carolina Justice Center found that Edgecombe (served by NEED) and Halifax, Hertford, and Northampton (served by CADA) were among eighteen counties in the state with high poverty levels (20 percent and above). None of the counties meaningfully assisted by Craven Operation Progress were on the list. In addition, as historian Lisa Hazirjian has shown, the North Carolina Fund considered NEED to be one of the worst CAAs under its supervision in terms of poor people’s inclusion in the program. See Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, “Combating NEED: Urban Conflict and the Transformations of the War on Poverty and the African American Freedom Struggle in Rocky Mount, North Carolina,” *Journal of Urban History* 34 (2008): 654. CADA, on the other hand, despite its slightly greater success in including the poor in its organization, has been unable to fully counteract the high unemployment (up to 10.3 percent in Halifax County in 2008) and poverty rates (up to 24.6 percent in Hertford County in 2008) that continues to plague the region it serves to this day. Although the national economic recession that began in December 2007 contributed to these numbers, the poverty rate in Craven County in 2008 was 15.7 percent and unemployment stood at 6.1 percent. See “Snapshot of Employment, Poverty, Income and Health Coverage in North Carolina’s Counties, 2008 and 2009,” November 2009, North Carolina Justice Center, accessed April 6, 2010, <http://74.220.215.210/~ncjustic/sites/default/files/NC%20and%20County%20Snapshot%20of%20Employment-%20Poverty-%20Income%20Data.pdf>.

men into wage-earning heads of households.”⁵² These realities did not prove as cumbersome for young women without children in and around Craven who were able to find hundreds of job and training opportunities via Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE), and COP, in general. In fact, within a few programs this group of women actually comprised the majority of participants. In 1972, 56 percent of all NYC enrollees (145 in total) were black females.⁵³ Of course, single mothers with young children rarely had the same amount of time or freedom to pursue a full-time job or career. Daycare was provided through COP but, with more demand than funding coming from either the North Carolina Fund or OEO, the program had a perpetually long waiting list. As a result, for a significant number of poor local mothers, most of whom were single, black and lived in New Bern, their primary available opportunity to provide for themselves and their families into the 1980s involved becoming a recipient of public welfare. Because welfare payments usually did not raise them above the poverty line, government aid was rarely the ideal choice for sustaining themselves and their children but, especially after federal rules and requirements for recipients became less stringent between the late 1960s to early 1970s, many times it was

⁵² Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 18-19. See also Nancy A. Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War on Poverty* (New York: Routledge, 1998); and Marissa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010).

⁵³ Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1972, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. MITCE director Royce Jordan also recalls that the program was “fair for men and women,” referring to the fact that there was practically no discrepancy between the number of jobs/job training available for men and women in Craven. See Royce Jordan, phone interview by author, March 3, 2012, transcript, in author’s possession.

the most viable one.⁵⁴ As the above discussion indicates, Craven's war on poverty was not without its drawbacks or missed opportunities. Yet, a growing local dedication among leaders to provide better education, job opportunities, and helping the disadvantaged help themselves was in the air by 1964, leading the county to see one of the fastest drops in poverty in the nation between 1969 and 1999.⁵⁵

By 1964, North Carolina's First District, comprised of nineteen eastern counties, including Craven, Jones, and Pamlico, was not only one of the poorest in the state but also one of the poorest in the nation. With a median family income of \$2,662, it ranked 430th among the nation's 435 congressional districts. Within this grim scenario, black families fared even worse; their median income was just \$1,546 and at least 30 percent of

⁵⁴ For instance, with the 1968 ruling in *King v. Smith*, filed by the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), the Supreme Court outlawed the "man-in-the-house" rule, arguing that poor children without fathers could not be denied federally funded assistance if a man (not their father) was having a relationship with and living with their biological mother. Before this court ruling, welfare agencies, those in Alabama in particular, had terminated aid to thousands of such families as described above. In a subsequent Supreme Court case, *Shapiro v. Thompson* (1969), the Court ruled unconstitutional state welfare regulations that required families to live in-state for a certain period of time before becoming eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). In response to new and less restrictive federal welfare guidelines, the North Carolina State Board of Social Services in 1970 reversed its policy prohibiting ownership of color television sets by welfare recipients and limiting the number of cars to one per family. See "Welfare Board Allows Color TV," *News & Observer*, February 26, 1970.

⁵⁵ In 1999, 9.2 percent of American families lived in poverty as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau compared to 9.9 percent in Craven County for that same year. In 1969, 10.7 percent of American families lived in poverty compared to 18.7 percent in Craven. See *Poverty: 1999*, Census 2000 Brief, Table 7. Poverty Rates of Families by Family Type and Presence of Children: 1989 and 1999, U.S. Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-19.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, United States—States and Puerto Rico GCT-P14, QT-P35, Poverty Status in 1999 of Families and Nonfamily Householders: 2000 Data Set: Census 2000 summary File 3 (SF 3), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 9, 2011, <http://factfinder.census.gov>; Table 95, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1970*, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part I, United States Summary, U.S. Census Bureau, accessed November 28, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_us1-01.pdf; Table 43, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1970*, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf.

those families earned less than \$1,000 annually.⁵⁶ Historians need to be aware of how one of the poorest regions in the nation was able to discover, much on its own, lasting ways to eradicate poverty. The example of Eastern North Carolina's implementation of the War on Poverty proves that biracial coalitions were possible, even in a region where racial oppression, inequality, and tension had long been palpable. In the same vein, historians need to be aware of how black and white citizens were able to coalesce around the issue of pervasive poverty within a community of multiple Ku Klux Klan Klaverns. This is not to say that black and whites always agreed on all issues that arose or the way that the programs should be run, but with regard to the central tenets of self-help and the need to include the community in achieving greater opportunities for others, the majority of those involved during the 1960s generally agreed. The fact should not be lost that Craven Operation Progress was only one CAA among over one thousand in the nation, but its experiences within the War on Poverty are relevant outside the time frame of the Great Society and well beyond the small towns and pastoral lands of Eastern North Carolina.

⁵⁶ Voters Handbook 1st Congressional District, folder 7575, NCFR.

CHAPTER II

409 GEORGE STREET

Introduction

At 409 George Street in New Bern, North Carolina, within distance of the tonic breezes that waft daily from the nearby Neuse and Trent Rivers, stood an unassuming two-story red brick office building with white trimmed windows that served as one of the first strongholds in what would become a national War on Poverty. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 in August of that year, critical antipoverty plans and programs for Eastern North Carolina were already well underway, many of which emanated directly from that downtown office building, which had been recently renovated and donated by the county commissioners for the use of Craven Operation Progress (COP). From the very beginning, local plans and incentives to combat the causes of poverty in the rural East did not await direction or guidance from the federal government but were spurred instead out of local needs and circumstances.

In fact, once Johnson agreed to launch the War on Poverty, his administration primarily looked to the early experiences and leadership of the original North Carolina Fund community action sites, which included COP, to find the prototype to be imitated for a nationwide crusade against poverty.¹

¹ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 116.

The region of Eastern North Carolina, thought by some at the time to be far too segregated to even be funded, nevertheless, provided a model for biracial cooperation in the fight against poverty. This chapter will outline the origins of COP, a community action program which actually predated the official launching of President Johnson's War on Poverty by almost one year. With its headquarters located at 409 George Street in downtown New Bern, COP was first awarded antipoverty funds through Governor Terry Sanford's newly-created North Carolina Fund. The nonprofit Fund, whose primary sponsor was the Ford Foundation, sought to forge innovative means to cut poverty in the state and would serve as a model for President Johnson's design for War on Poverty programs. Fund representatives were impressed early on with the imaginative leadership and the atmosphere of optimism that they witnessed in Craven County. In fact, Craven County's leadership and proposal for combating poverty was among the best they saw. According to Fund officials, "The Craven County proposal" was "an excellent demonstration of a comprehensive, community-based approach to poverty," with a "high potential for success" and the group was "strongly recommended for a major grant."¹ This chapter also explains what specific factors led black and white community leaders to come together in 1963 to begin to address the poverty in their midst. The chapter ends with the hiring of COP's first executive director, Jim Hearn, a young former government lawyer from Washington, D.C., who, unbeknownst to many in the community, was outspokenly liberal on many issues including race.

¹ "Staff Evaluation of the Craven County Proposal," folder 3406, NCFR.



Figure 3. 409 George Street, site of Craven Operation Progress, Inc., New Bern, NC, circa 1966 (Source: Still image from “Questions” film, 1966).

Poverty’s growing visibility

Perhaps the most influential catalyst that drove the issue of poverty to national importance was the 1962 publication of *The Other America*, written by future political scientist Michael Harrington. Borrowing the “culture of poverty” theory associated with anthropologist Oscar Lewis, Harrington compellingly documented “the invisible land” of economic deprivation that purportedly trapped millions generation after generation in the richest nation on earth. Indeed, Harrington is largely credited for exposing “an economic underworld” that few Americans seemed to know about, where unskilled workers, migrant farm workers, minorities, and the elderly frequently lived “pessimistic[ally],” “defeated,” and “maimed in body and spirit, existing at levels beneath those of human

decency.”² His best-seller would also play a key role in stirring both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to enact legislation for antipoverty programs that could empower the poor who, out of a “common sense of hopelessness,” were being “held back by their own pessimism.”³ While the tragic tales of *The Other America* were on the way to inspiring both federal action and the moral conscience of middle-class America, leaders in Craven County, North Carolina, were drawing the battle plans for a local war against their own not so invisible land of poverty that had developed, by the fall of 1963, into an all too noticeable and pervasive threat to the wellbeing and progress of their community.

Largely due to a historic industrial boom brought on by World War II, the building of the Eisenhower interstate highway system, and a new investment tax credit made available for U.S. firms during the Kennedy administration, poverty had been riding a sharp decline in the nation as a whole since 1945.⁴ Leading the way was the South, where per capita income grew at rates considerably above the national average.⁵ However, in many predominately rural areas, such as Craven County—home to almost sixty thousand residents—the incidence of poverty was actually progressing upward, or

² Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 2.

³ Ibid., 161.

⁴ President Johnson would follow Kennedy’s lead by signing into law the Revenue Act of 1964 which cut federal personal income taxes by approximately 20 percent (the top marginal rate, for one, fell from 91 percent to 70 percent) and lowered the top corporate income tax rate from 52 percent to 48 percent. Between 1950 and 1965, the poverty rate in the United States dropped from 30 percent to 18 percent. See Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 57-58.

⁵ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1986), 239-240.

staying stagnant, instead of moving down. Two of the primary factors in the rise of rural poverty in the post-World War II era consisted of increased mechanization and automation which displaced numerous farmers from their traditional form of labor. Between 1955 and 1965 approximately 180,000 agricultural workers were displaced across Eastern North Carolina alone.⁶ This economic transformation ushered in by enhanced agricultural technologies would make the region's monetary dependence on tobacco cultivation, a dependence which could be traced back to the early nineteenth century, no longer possible. National minimum wage laws implemented between 1950 and 1961, in particular, also reduced employment in the non-agricultural sector such as in the low-wage lumber industry that was one of the largest employers of blacks in Craven and outlying counties.⁷

In 1963, over half of the adults who lived in rural Craven County did not farm and possessed both few job skills and little education.⁸ Similar conditions were found in the nearby counties of Jones and Pamlico in the early 1960s which, like Craven, were composed of between 50 percent and 75 percent rural land. Yet in contrast to the late

⁶ "Background History of Craven Operation Progress," folder 4967, NCFR. In Jones County, farm displacement was probably exacerbated following the severe flooding of the Trent River in the summer of 1961. After learning that over 400 acres of tobacco were inundated, NC Governor Terry Sanford quickly declared Jones County a disaster area so that farmers could apply for emergency assistance from the Department of Agriculture. Of course, loans were given only to those farmers who had "reasonable prospects for success with the assistance of a loan." See David N. Henderson, letter to the editor, *News & Observer*, July 10, 1961; and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Production Emergency Loans pamphlet, box 157, folder 3, David N. Henderson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University. Hereinafter cited as Henderson papers.

⁷ Wright, *Old South, New South*, 250-252.

⁸ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p.38, folder 5048, NCFR.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an age in which one could argue that a high school diploma was unlikely to improve a laborer's status, in the mid-twentieth century a high school education was essentially a prerequisite in areas where low-skill labor jobs were diminishing. Beginning in the immediate postwar period, Eastern North Carolinians generally lagged far behind in the job market if they lacked either a basic high school education or modern industrial skills, which were equally becoming all the more important as the region shifted towards a Sunbelt economy that centered on manufacturing production. Indeed, due to a lack of skills or skills that were in low demand, only 56 percent of adults employed in Craven County in 1960 could find work fifty to fifty-two weeks per year. As many as 22 percent worked twenty-six weeks or less that year.⁹ As a result, Craven's annual average weekly earnings were just 83 percent of the state average in 1961 and remained there up to 1964.¹⁰ Rather than simply an unequal distribution of power, much of Craven's poverty in the 1960s was related to an evolving economy (namely shifts in market demands and technological developments) that led to major job loss within low-skill and male-dominated traditional industries like farming. Some of the displaced and unemployed left the region for nearby cities such as New Bern, Havelock, and Kinston or further west to Raleigh and Durham in search of better employment opportunities. Others relocated out of the state. In Jones County, which

⁹ Table 86, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35_TOC.pdf.

¹⁰ Wachovia Bank & Trust Company, Basic Statistics: Craven County, folder 5406, NCFR.

ranked ninety-ninth among the state's one hundred counties in estimated per capita personal income in 1962, the population decreased as much as 11 percent between 1960 and 1970, largely as a result of the dislocation of farm workers.¹¹

Not all whose livelihood was tied to crop growing were willing or fortunate enough to leave; substantial factors including family ties to the area, insufficient resources to move, and minimal job prospects from either deficient education or irrelevant skill-sets kept many in the East. Those who remained along the rural farmlands were commonly plagued by one or more poverty-related problems which could be both a cause and a symptom of a perpetually low income. Poor health, inadequate housing and plumbing, meager education, unemployment, high rates of infant mortality, out-of-wedlock births, juvenile delinquency, venereal disease, and tuberculosis were among the major afflictions that deteriorated the quality of life in various sections of Eastern North Carolina. Less than half of the 2,533 occupied households in Jones County, for instance, had either flush toilets or hot and cold running water in 1960.¹² But right alongside the woeful living conditions found in rural Craven and Jones counties was a growing problem of what was referred to as "blight" in certain sections of New Bern, which had

¹¹ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Planning, *Jones County School Survey*, October 1964, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC; Jones County Field Report, August 1971, folder: Jones County, County Field Reports, 1967-1968, Field Service Division, North Carolina Department of Social Services, Social Services Record Group, Old Records Center, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

¹² "Housing Census of Jones Has Interesting Figures," *The Jones County Journal*, February 1, 1962. The widespread lack of such utilities was often related to the fact that several communities in Jones County, including Maysville, did not have public water or sewage disposal as late as 1961 due to a lack of revenue. See J.R. Holden to Honorable David N. Henderson, August 9, 1961, box 157, folder 3, Henderson Papers.

only been growing as more unskilled and unemployed rural migrants came to reside in the city. In several urban pockets, as sensationalized by the local newspaper in 1962, “Rats are seen running from one filth ridden, gray wooden shack to another” and “garbage lies in bare yards.” To boot, “Dirty children in ragged clothes play around heaps of metal that still resemble automobiles and stabbings and drunken fights are common during the dark hours.”¹³

This sudden rise in poverty and its symptoms in both rural and urban settings during the postwar period would drive Craven County, according to 1959 data, to a ranking of thirty eight out of the one hundred North Carolina counties in terms of median per capita income.¹⁴ Around that time, 40 percent of its families were earning less than \$3,000 a year, which was the approximate poverty line at the time. Officials and citizen leaders in Craven could have chosen to blind their eyes to these issues in front of them by simply not looking. No later than the fall of 1963, however, several of them would take full advantage of the moment in which they lived to confront the most evident causes of poverty head on.

Inspiration for action

In October 1963, a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Craven County Commissioners arrived at the office of its intended recipient, D. Livingstone Stallings. Commissioner Stallings, newly elected as chairman in 1962, was a native of Craven

¹³ “Urban Renewal Steps are Being Taken Here Following a Study,” *Sun Journal*, June 22, 1962.

¹⁴ “A History of Craven Operation Progress,” September 2, 1966, folder 4964, NCFR.

County who was deemed by both whites and blacks as a respectable and progressive-minded member of the community.¹⁵ A business school graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he and his brother Robert—who twice served as New Bern’s mayor in 1957 and 1959—jointly owned and operated an insurance company in New Bern. Stallings quickly discovered that the sender of the letter was a non-profit organization from Durham, the North Carolina Fund. The letter addressed to him had been sent to dozens of community leaders across the state of North Carolina encouraging them to submit “a proposal for local action against the causes of poverty.”¹⁶ As Stallings continued to read the solicitation for antipoverty proposals, he surely grew excited about the opportunity for outside financial help. Only a few weeks prior, he and other county leaders had “recognized the serious problem of the increasing load of welfare dependents” for their area and began conducting research to determine what other types of assistance they could provide to the poor in order to shorten the welfare rolls, which had risen to fourteen hundred cases.¹⁷

Around the same time that Stallings began collecting data on the welfare recipients in the area, black Pleasant Hill resident Willie Dawson was in contact with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Craven County schools requesting the

¹⁵ Black voters, in particular, played a substantial role in first electing Stallings as a Craven County Commissioner. See Rev. Al Fischer, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR; L.C. Nixon, interview by John Miller, Havelock, N.C., September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

¹⁶ John Miller, “History of Formation of CAP: Craven Operation Progress,” folder 4967, NCFR.

¹⁷ Kate Blackwell, “Craven County Takes Lead in Nation’s War on Poverty,” *News & Observer*, January 17, 1965.

establishment of adult literacy classes for the poor. Dawson, who was an outspoken civil rights leader in the predominately black community where he lived, also worked as an aircraft mechanic for Cherry Point Marine Air Base located twenty miles southeast of New Bern in Havelock. Constructed between 1941 and 1943 with substantial federal money awarded by a war contract, the Cherry Point Naval Base and Naval Air Depot, which was the county's largest employer, provided never-before-seen industrial job training for blacks throughout Craven County during and after World War II. Black Americans, like Dawson, who were employed at Cherry Point not only tended to receive higher wages than the blue-collar workers of lumberyards, oil mills, and tenant farms, but they also experienced improved job security due to their advanced occupational skills and their status as federal employees.



Figure 4. Aerial view of Cherry Point Campus, Havelock, North Carolina, 1970. Photographs, Cherry Point, Box 377, Walter Beaman Jones Papers (#285), Special Collections Department, J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

Dawson first became aware of the possibilities of instituting adult literacy classes through his activism in the North Carolina Joint Council on Health and Citizenship, an all-black organization founded in 1960 by black physician Dr. Andrew Best from Greenville, who was concerned “about the very high rate of illegitimacy among Negroes in eastern North Carolina.”¹⁸ Around 1962, Dr. Best and Dawson successfully convinced Craven County public school officials, including Assistant Superintendent Ted J. Collier, to allow classes on sex education for black high school students. Eventually these classes were provided in eleven counties in the eastern half of the state. In the early fall of 1963, Dawson would re-engage Assistant Superintendent Collier about a new proposition for adult literacy classes for the black poor. Persuaded by the merits of Dawson’s proposal, Collier proceeded to contact the director of a nearby community college and a professor at East Carolina University in Greenville who both agreed to recruit thirty teachers from Craven County and train them at the university. In October, as the demands for the adult literacy program began to grow, Collier wrote a letter to North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford to inquire about obtaining state funds to operate the literacy classes throughout the county.

What Collier may have not known at the time was that, as of July 18, Governor Sanford had spawned the formation of a statewide organization—the North Carolina Fund—to attack the roots of poverty across North Carolina, like those of illiteracy that

¹⁸ John Miller, “History of the Formation of CAP: Craven Operation Progress,” folder 4967, NCFR. Incidentally, Dr. Best was appointed to the North Carolina Fund Board of Directors in February 1966.

were found in the rural east.¹⁹ After receiving Collier's letter, Sanford forwarded it to George Esser, who the governor had just named as the Fund's executive director.²⁰ When Esser replied to Collier and encouraged the pursuit of the adult literacy classes, the initial communication between the North Carolina Fund and Craven County was born.²¹ A few weeks later, Commissioner Stallings received the preliminary letter from the Fund, including its *Red Book* of objectives and policies, which summoned communities from across all one hundred counties to craft antipoverty proposals before the deadline of February 1, 1964.

The formation of the North Carolina Fund, November 1962-September 1963

Governor Sanford publically announced the formation of the North Carolina Fund on the last day in September of 1963. In front of news reporters gathered in the capital city of Raleigh, Sanford introduced his broad plans to uplift the state's poor by improvements in education, economic opportunities, living environment, and the general welfare.²² Among the chief goals of his initiative was to help the state of North Carolina compete in a growing and technology-based national economy that was rapidly dependent on a well-educated work force. Just prior to the news conference, Sanford had

¹⁹ John Wheeler, a black banker from Durham, C.A. McKnight, the editor of *The Charlotte Observer*, and Charles H. Babcock, Reynolds & Company executive from Winston-Salem, also played prominent roles in the creation of the North Carolina Fund.

²⁰ Prior to his post as the Executive Director of the North Carolina Fund, George Esser held a leading role in the Institute of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill.

²¹ John Miller, "History of the Formation of CAP: Craven Operation Progress," folder 4967, NCFR.

²² "Fund Directors Named," *News & Observer*, July 19, 1963.

underlined that his state, much like the nation as a whole, was experiencing “a time of plenty” of which “we have never enjoyed such prosperity...leisure, recreation, and the pleasures of the good life.” Total personal income was up, and as statistics compiled by U.S. Census Bureau revealed, per capita personal income in North Carolina had also risen from 55 percent of the national average in 1940 to 74 percent in 1963.²³ Yet, as Sanford clearly recognized, all was not well. Poverty had imposed severe restrictions on the lives and livelihood of approximately 450,000 North Carolinians in 1963. Most disturbing to the governor was how poverty “withers the spirit of children who neither imposed it nor deserve it” and who, without the means to break out, will tomorrow “become the parents of poverty.”²⁴

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1965*, No. 459, Personal Income—Changes in Total and Per Capita, by States: 1940 to 1963, p. 335.

²⁴ Quote from Governor Sanford on September 12, 1963 in “Three Years of Change: Narrative History of the North Carolina Fund,” folder 1, NCFR; “Gains in Jobs, Income Lift NC Consumer Buying Power,” *Rocky Mount Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), October 25, 1963.



Figure 5. Governor Terry Sanford seated at his desk in Raleigh, February 1964. Photograph by Billy E. Barnes, courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Billy E. Barnes Collection.

In his public address of September 30, Governor Sanford made it clear that the North Carolina Fund would noticeably depart from old methods of dealing with poverty. For one, his program sought more sophisticated solutions beyond those of public and private relief payments, which he and many of the board of directors of the Fund saw as insufficient short-term remedies that did not address the roots of poverty. “I have come to believe,” Sanford affirmed, “that charity and relief are not the best answers for human suffering.”²⁵ Sanford, who himself grew up relatively poor during the Great Depression in the small southeastern North Carolina town of Laurinburg, perceived “adult dependency” and “self-doubt” as intertwined problems resulting from a welfare system

²⁵ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 88; Roy Parker, Jr., “N.C. Plans \$14 Million Counterattack on Poverty,” *News & Observer*, October 1, 1963.

which, with little input from the poor themselves, had tended to trap relief recipients in poverty.²⁶ Accordingly, the North Carolina Fund was to be, as Sanford characterized it, the “first massive statewide effort in our country to find ways to break the cycle of poverty and dependency.”²⁷ To those ends, Sanford envisioned a coordinated effort of organizations, government, and education to find ways to provide greater economic opportunities, through enhanced teaching methods in reading, writing, and math, as well as programs such as youth and adult job training, that “enable[ed] the poor to become productive, self-reliant citizens.” Despite being known as the “education governor,” Sanford understood that improving schools was not enough to help the poor succeed. As he explained, “A child who goes to school with no breakfast under his belt does not have equal opportunity to learn, excel, and move toward adulthood in which he will be able to use his talents and energies and intellect in a self-respecting role in society.” In the same vein, “neither does a child have an equal chance to learn if he happens to come from a home where reading is unknown and schooling underappreciated.”²⁸

Although it was Governor Sanford’s foresight and initiative that were largely behind the creation of the North Carolina Fund, the statewide antipoverty organization was formed as a private, non-profit, and self-governing entity, which stood outside the

²⁶ Sanford, born in 1917, described his family’s finances as being on “the downside of average” when he was a boy. See John Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will: How Terry Sanford Beat a Champion of Segregation and Reshaped the South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 6; “Three Years of Change: Narrative History of the North Carolina Fund,” folder 1, NCFR.

²⁷ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 88.

²⁸ “Three Years of Change: Narrative History of the North Carolina Fund,” folder 1, NCFR

influence of the state legislature.²⁹ One of Sanford's newest aides, John Ehle, had strongly suggested to the governor that he not depend on public sources to administer the programs of the Fund for the sheer reality that private money would afford Sanford greater freedom to attempt multiple and even unconventional strategies to tackle poverty that some fiscally conservative state lawmakers might not have favored funding.³⁰ Sanford willingly agreed. Among the philanthropic institutions that Sanford and his staff originally considered, the Ford Foundation resided at the top of the list. Founded in 1936 out of the wealth procured by automobile tycoon Henry Ford, the Ford Foundation was annually donating more than four times the capital of the nation's second largest charitable organization.³¹ The Foundation was also eager to finance community-based demonstration projects aimed at developing human resources in low-income areas.

Beginning in 1961, Ford trustees agreed to establish what was referred to as the "Gray Areas" project, which provided millions of dollars to urban development programs in New Haven, Connecticut; Boston, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Oakland, California; and later, Washington, D.C.³² The target areas of these cities were found specifically "in the growing range of deteriorating real estate between central

²⁹ Sanford was also chosen to serve as the chairman of the board of the North Carolina Fund.

³⁰ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 59. Sanford would, of course, rely on the cooperation of state agencies in administering the programs of the North Carolina Fund.

³¹ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 61.

³² Peter Marris and Martin Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform: Poverty and Community Action in the United States* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company 1973), 19. Between 1961 and 1962, the Ford Foundation awarded grants to Oakland, New Haven, Philadelphia, and Boston. Washington, D.C. received grant money from the foundation in 1964.

business district and suburb, which economists are calling the gray area.” Largely as a result of post-World War II industrial decentralization, middle-class suburbanization, and the in-migration of poor blacks, whites, and Puerto Ricans, various American inner-cities suffered from above-average concentrations of juvenile delinquency, school drop outs, neighborhood blight, and underfunded and deteriorating public schools.³³ Under the Gray Areas project, job training for career advancement and various other novel programs designed by social scientists were led by members of the community themselves to demonstrate how the most acute and widespread urban problems might be solved.³⁴ The project, which could be described as an experimental combination of “institutional change, applied knowledge, and citizen participation,” would become “the basis of an evolving, eclectic approach to social reform that would eventually become known as ‘community action,’” in which a balance of power and cooperation would exist at the local level between government and non-government officials, professionals and laymen, and poor and the non-poor.³⁵ When Sanford first contacted Ford Foundation President Henry Heald in September 1962, the governor and his staff anticipated that the Foundation would view their own plans to address poverty in both urban and rural areas of North Carolina as an appropriate extension of the Gray Areas initiative.

³³ Alice O’Connor, “Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty,” *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 5 (July 1996): 605, 595.

³⁴ Marris and Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform*, 15.

³⁵ O’Connor, “Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty,” 586; Marris and Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform*, 24.

Governor Sanford first visited the Ford Foundation headquarters in New York in November 1962. Shortly following his return to Raleigh, he wrote a letter to Heald acknowledging that “we have some very old problems, as you know” but was keen to emphasize that “we have a climate here which permits new work now” and, therefore, “are in a good position to get some things done.”³⁶ In the proposal that the North Carolina Fund sent to the Ford Foundation, it was stressed that “half our students don’t finish high school” and “our relief rolls grow faster than they should.” The text also underscored how those issues, together with substandard housing, submarginal wage rates, illiteracy, and illegitimacy, bore great social costs to the state, which were manifested in “crime and juvenile delinquency,” “increasing welfare rolls,” “rising governmental costs,” and “low per capita income.” In spite of the mountain of complex problems facing the state, however, optimism remained a central theme to the North Carolina Fund proposal. Out of a belief in the innate abilities and desire of the poor to “respond to opportunity” and “realize the American Dream if given a chance,” Fund staff were confident that highly-experimental community action programs could deliver enduring economic and social change capable of elevating many of North Carolina’s least fortunate.³⁷

Heald, Sanford, and their respective staffs underwent practically a year of discussion before the Ford Foundation agreed, in July 1963, to award the North Carolina Fund with \$7 million for its five-year experiment to wage “an all-out assault on

³⁶ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 64.

³⁷ Proposal to the Ford Foundation from North Carolina Fund,” August 12, 1963, North Carolina Collection.

poverty.”³⁸ Heald certainly liked the fact that Sanford’s plan applied the full resources of a state that could realistically “provide a coordinated effort to develop human resources to the fullest.”³⁹ Yet the primary hesitation for the officials of the Ford Foundation was rooted in a concern that Jim Crow practices might “hobble their plans for new work in the South.”⁴⁰ By Sanford’s invitation, the Ford Foundation staff twice traveled throughout the state in 1963, once in January and later in July, in a multiple-day tour to assess poverty conditions as well as the nature of race relations. Their fears eventually subsided as they continued to get to know Sanford and the logistics behind the Fund’s plans to battle poverty.

As a moderate Democrat, Sanford distanced himself from the racially incendiary action and oratory that several southern governors such as George Wallace and Orval Faubus were commonly employing. Beyond his 1960 campaign mantra that North Carolina needed “massive intelligence” instead of “massive resistance,” he had praised President Kennedy in 1962 when Federal Marshals were sent in to protect James Meredith in becoming the first black American to enroll at the University of Mississippi, and Sanford would allow his own children to integrate public school in Raleigh.⁴¹ Moreover, in January 1963, as civil rights demonstrations escalated in cities throughout

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “North Carolina’s Aid Fund Gets 9.5 Million to Set Up Projects,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1963.

⁴⁰ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 82.

⁴¹ David Cooper, “Sanford Draws Good Crowds in East, West and Piedmont,” *News & Observer*, June 19, 1960; Drescher, *Triumph of Good Will*, 264.

North Carolina, Sanford spearheaded the idea of the Good Neighbor Councils to encourage communication, understanding, and peaceful relations between blacks and whites in communities statewide, with the ultimate aim of fostering “equality for all citizens.”⁴² Sanford’s more liberal views on race were reflected in the North Carolina Fund proposal through its open call for the involvement of the poor, including blacks, in the decision-making process of community action programs. The testimony of John H. Wheeler, a black banker from Durham and board member of the Fund, also went far in convincing the Ford staff that Sanford’s plans were sufficient in standing up to Jim Crow, which of course, had supplied a great deal of black poverty.⁴³ A few weeks before the Ford Foundation announced its multi-million dollar commitment, Sanford had also received good news from two of the leading private foundations in North Carolina. In a combined gift of \$2.5 million over five years, the Z. Smith Reynolds and Mary Babcock Foundations helped to supply the Fund with the local matching that the Ford grant required.⁴⁴ The North Carolina Fund was ready to be launched.

Being the first statewide antipoverty program instituted in the nation, the North Carolina Fund was undoubtedly a historic creation. “North Carolina has been put on the

⁴² David Stanton Coltrane, *Guidelines for the Establishment of County-Wide Good Neighbor of Human Relations Councils* (Raleigh: North Carolina Good Neighbor Council, 1965), North Carolina Collection; After Sanford’s idea was proposed, councils formed in dozens of cities and counties in North Carolina to address and eliminate the roots of racial conflict. In August 1965, whites and blacks in Craven County set up a Good Neighbor Council for the same purpose.

⁴³ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 82.

⁴⁴ Both the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Mary Babcock Foundation were charitable organizations founded and funded by the Reynolds tobacco family of Winston-Salem in 1936 and 1954, respectively.

map in a new way,” proclaimed a reporter from the *Durham Sun*. It was true; the Fund’s approach to ending poverty—“to call on the impoverished to help themselves rather than remain in poverty and receive public handouts”—never before had been done on such a broad scale.⁴⁵ In a motion picture that the North Carolina Fund produced to publicize its creation, the narrator reiterated that “the Fund is not a welfare system” and is most concerned with “helping people help themselves.”⁴⁶ This notion that self-help was the best way to cure poverty continued to be celebrated as a major tenet of the North Carolina Fund philosophy, which served as both a statement of purpose and a means of winning over conservatives. To a degree, Fund staff would seek to facilitate individuals who qualified for welfare assistance get in touch with their local agencies, but this approach was a lesser component of the broad and multi-pronged assault on poverty that needed to be accomplished in the state. Indeed, one of the key components of the Fund’s battle plan was based on the relatively new idea that a community’s people, including members of the poor, best understood the community’s problems and, furthermore, that local ideas could carry results in defeating poverty.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Wilson Morgan, “North Carolina Fund Puts State on the Map,” *Greensboro Record* (Greensboro, NC), November 19, 1964.

⁴⁶ *The North Carolina Fund* [videorecording] : *a new source of hope for the people of poverty ; The content of the Economic Opportunity Act*, written by Billy E. Barnes, 1964, North Carolina Collection.

⁴⁷ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 90.



Figure 6. North Carolina Fund building in downtown Durham, North Carolina, May 1966. Photograph by Billy E. Barnes, courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Billy E. Barnes Collection.

D. L. Stallings gathers local forces to compile community action proposal, December 1963

Commissioner D. Livingstone Stallings had faith that the people of Craven possessed not only the creative minds necessary to conquer their problems of poverty, but also the will. On the evening of December 20, 1963, Stallings' faith was rewarded as nearly forty local leaders enthusiastically convened at the New Bern-Craven County Chamber of Commerce building at his request. The group, which included representatives from business, industry, local government, city and county schools, churches, and civic groups, had been specially appointed to assist in studying the conditions of the poor and designing programs to lift them out of poverty, all of which

would be compiled in a proposal for the North Carolina Fund's community action grant.⁴⁸

New Bern High School Principal Bill Flowers, who was chosen to serve as the committee's chairman, insisted from the start that the group be racially integrated in spite of the customary presence of segregation in various aspects of public life. Stallings, in taking the lead in organizing a proposal committee that was representative of all geographic areas of the county, was likewise interested in involving at least a few black minds in the planning process. As a racially moderate to liberal politician, Stallings was also likely aiming to maintain his fairly broad support among local black voters.⁴⁹

Accordingly, members from the local NAACP branch and the Craven County Civic League, considered by many blacks as two of the most prominent minority organizations in the area, were invited to participate in the planning process and vote on the committee's proposal. Black Pleasant Hill resident Willie Dawson, who had inquired earlier about adult literacy classes to Assistant Superintendent of Craven County Schools Ted J. Collier, was also assigned a role in crafting the proposal to be sent to the North Carolina Fund, along with fellow black citizens John R. Hill, principal of Vanceboro

⁴⁸ In a meeting of the Craven County Board of Commissioners held on December 16, 1963, Stallings informed fellow commissioners about the North Carolina Fund project. He also received their praise to appoint a committee in order to prepare a proposal for a community action grant. See D. L. Stallings to George Esser, February 1, 1964, in Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, folder 5048, NCFR.

⁴⁹ John Miller, "History of Formation of CAP: Craven Operation Progress," folder 4967, NCFR; "A History of Craven Operation Progress," September 2, 1966, folder 4964, NCFR.

Consolidated School, and Roland Sneed, a caseworker with the Craven County Department of Welfare.⁵⁰

Working nights and weekends, and even portions of holidays, to meet the Fund's deadline, the committee lauded the eventual completion of the fifty-two page proposal as a "team effort by the entire community." Although the committee did not directly involve the poor citizens of Craven County (none sat on the original board), several of the committee members, like Dawson, Craven County welfare worker Jane Latham, and Reverend J. Murphy Smith of the biracial New Bern Ministerial Association, were selected by Stallings because of their known volunteer efforts in assisting the poor as well as their contacts in poor communities. Moreover, the proposal writing itself both required and prompted the committee to communicate with a fairly broad spectrum of the poor in order to determine the main issues needing to be addressed. After statistics on health, education, welfare, income, and employment were compiled on the poor by each sub-committee, the group unanimously agreed that "helping people help themselves," as the North Carolina Fund put it, would be a worthwhile endeavor for the sake of the future of Craven County.

The Craven proposal acknowledged that the county was not the poorest in the state but located somewhere in the "good average"—over half of its citizens had found reliable economic success and lived above the poverty line.⁵¹ Partially due to the presence

⁵⁰ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. v, vi, folder 5048, NCFR.

⁵¹ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, 1, folder 5048, NCFR.

of the Cherry Point Naval Air Base, the county was also among the state's leaders in percent of population employed in white collar occupations, with as many as 34 percent in 1960.⁵² As the *Raleigh News & Observer* accurately pointed out in November 1964, "Other counties have poorer people and more difficult problems."⁵³ Still, as understood by Assistant Superintendent of Craven County Schools Ted J. Collier, who did most of the proposal writing, "It is necessary to the survival of [the American] way of life that a solution [to poverty] be found," for "the problem will grow greater if it is neglected, because poverty breeds upon itself."⁵⁴ Collier's statement signaled that Craven County leaders did not see themselves as part of a remote community with exceptional problems but belonging to a bigger movement to defeat the ideology of communism amid the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. "Communism," Collier declared in the proposal's foreword, "flourishes best in the desperation of the disadvantaged. We must show that our nation has a concern for these people that is a reality and not a pretense, and that no political or economic system is as well equipped as ours to rescue them."⁵⁵

These views were undoubtedly reinforced by President Johnson's State of the Union Address on January 8, 1964, in which the president first announced his intention of

⁵² Selected Employment Categories, North Carolina Counties, 1960, folder 5404, NCFR.

⁵³ "Beginning the Fight," *News & Observer*, November 27, 1964; "County Breakdown on Income Listed," *News & Observer*, January 15, 1964.

⁵⁴ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. i, folder 5048, NCFR.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

declaring an unconditional war on poverty across America. Approximately two months after the nation had first mourned the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, the former vice-president turned president spoke before Congress of “a unique opportunity and obligation,” which Kennedy had always understood, to “prove the success of our system” and “to disprove those cynics and critics at home and abroad who question our purpose and our competence.” Evoking the fallen president’s memory, Johnson added: “Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John Fitzgerald Kennedy—not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right.”⁵⁶ Like President Johnson, then, one of the long-range goals of the Craven leaders was to convince the population of poverty that they could live securely and satisfactorily in a society of free enterprise, in an effort to forestall radicalism as much as to fight dependency. In an age when the international influence of the Soviet Union appeared to be growing, indifference to poverty in America could be regarded as equally inhumane and reckless.

From the perspective of the leaders of Craven County, the most humane way to help the disadvantaged was through the providing of greater job and educational

⁵⁶ President Lyndon B. Johnson, First State of the Union Address, January 8, 1964, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, accessed May 7, 2010, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3382>; In a campaign speech given in Raleigh, North Carolina on September 17, 1960, then-Senator John F. Kennedy expressed early on how “our slowed-down economy, our overcrowded schools, our poor and our unemployed, our spreading slums and our thousands of abandoned farms are visible, tangible evidence of our failure to meet [our] responsibilities [at home]. For today the Communists are determined to convince the emerging and developing nations of Asia and Africa and Latin America that only Communism will eliminate their poverty and hunger and disease—that the Communist road is the only road to a better life.” See Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy, Raleigh, North Carolina, September 17, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Historical Resources, accessed May 7, 2010, <http://www.jfklibrary.org>.

opportunities that ultimately allowed them to become self-supporting. Public welfare was generally viewed as a “direct and tangible evidence of poverty,” read the Craven County Proposal to the NC Fund, and not a dependable means by which the poor could become upwardly mobile, a view that was in line with many of the most liberal Democratic and Republican congressmen at the time.⁵⁷ Echoing a conviction shared by Governor Sanford, Collier spoke confidently and from local observation when he alleged in Craven’s proposal “that relief alone does not reach the basis of the evil” of poverty.⁵⁸ Indeed, in 1963, both welfare demand and the poverty rate for Craven County were at one of their all-time highs in the modern era; Craven’s welfare benefits, which as early as 1953 the State Board of Public Welfare deemed “liberal” and above the state average, had not effectively minimized the county’s poverty problem.⁵⁹ The problem of poverty was seemingly rooted deeper than a simple lack of income—changes in the local economy coupled with widespread deficiencies in job skills and education were more at fault, which is precisely why self-help strategies to fight poverty, like those envisioned by

⁵⁷ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. 5, folder 5048, NCFR; Davies, 42.

⁵⁸ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. i, folder 5048, NCFR.

⁵⁹ Craven County Field Reports, 1940-1945, State Board of Public Welfare, Field Services, Field Reports—Confidential Inter-Agency Inf. 1940-1954, Alamance-Jackson, North Carolina State Archives, Old Records Center. In a report on Craven County issued by the North Carolina State Board of Public Welfare for the year 1953-1954, it was said that “the county is a liberal one, in many respects, and does not require that an applicant be practically destitute before an application for assistance is considered, or continued. One ADC mother was assisted when in reality her resources could have made her ineligible.” Furthermore, public assistance for Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), for instance, increased in Craven County from an average of 90 cases in the year 1944-1945 to as high as 671 cases in November 1952. In December 1963, after ADC had transitioned into Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the number of cases still remained fairly high at 425. *Note: State Board of Public Welfare evaluation reports on Craven County between 1945 and 1954 are located in a folder labeled “Craven County Field Reports, 1940-1945.”

the staff of the North Carolina Fund, would be perceived as an exciting venture for Craven County. No such strategies had been seriously attempted in their community or any other in the state.

Committed as the Craven leaders were to the philosophy of Governor Sanford that “our economy cannot afford to have so many people fully and partially unproductive,” their proposal did not assail the poor nor did it place the blame solely on the shoulders of the disadvantaged they set out to aid. Craven leaders had grasped that poverty was often the result of complex factors and, therefore, its existence was elucidated not just in terms of bad luck resulting from a prolonged illness or injury, as the will of God, or as a result of individual character flaws and choices, like laziness or wasteful spending habits.⁶⁰ Poverty could be and was caused by some if not all of these reasons, Craven County leaders believed, but structural explanations—like increased mechanization, which unwillingly pushed the region’s tobacco farmers into economic hardship—largely informed the local battle plan.⁶¹ Another structural issue that the Craven proposal touched on, albeit in short detail, was “the minority group status of the non-white segment of the population” and its part in making the effects of poverty “doubly severe to Negroes.”⁶² In 1963, this statement was a fairly frank and honest observation for Eastern North

⁶⁰ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 54.

⁶¹ Speaking primarily of the technological changes that beset agricultural laborers, the Craven County proposal acknowledged that “the residents of Craven County have no control over this momentous economic revolution yet are forced to bow to its demands.” See Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. 38, folder 5048, NCFR.

⁶² Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, pp. 38-39, folder 5048, NCFR.

Carolinians to make. Though the proposal did not explicitly name it, there was a primary contributing factor to blacks' minority status: namely, the Jim Crow laws and customs which, after 1899, segregated the races across North Carolina in all public accommodations and institutions, ranging from streetcars, buses, water fountains, parks, and theaters to housing, schools, restaurants, waiting rooms, and even children's textbooks.⁶³

The historical roots of black poverty

Far more than any technological advances in agriculture, the heaviest and most dramatic forms of poverty yielded in Craven County after the Civil War came during the Jim Crow years. Comprising 29 percent of the residents in the county and as much as 39 percent in the county seat of New Bern, blacks had the fewest available opportunities in the 1960s in both education and the job market as a result of living years under a restrictive system of segregation that was based on a prevalent notion among whites that blacks were naturally less intelligent, less diligent, less skilled, less cultured, and often less deserving of equal consideration, notions that could be traced back to the era of slavery.⁶⁴ In 1960, as many as 14.9 percent of blacks in New Bern and 12.1 percent in Craven County were unemployed, compared to 3.3 percent and 5.4 percent of whites in New Bern and Craven, respectively; moreover, over half of blacks in Craven had less

⁶³ Richard Wormser, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 105.

⁶⁴ Table I: New Bern's African American Population (1820-1970) in Medlin, "Reclaiming First Class Citizenship," 26.

than six years of education.⁶⁵ Renowned historian of the South C. Vann Woodward makes the crucial point that Jim Crow laws, which were added to the statute books in all of the southern states below the Mason-Dixon Line by 1904, “applied to all Negroes—not merely to the rowdy, or drunken, or surly, or ignorant ones.”⁶⁶ The influential U.S. Supreme Court decision handed down in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 reasoned that segregated accommodations for the two races were not unconstitutional as long as they were in effect “separate but equal.” However, as substantiated by scores of post-1965 histories of Jim Crow’s effects in the South, “Colored” spaces were almost always of lesser quality, especially in regards to education.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Racial Composition of the Labor Force in the City of New Bern, Township Eight, and Craven County: 1960, folder 5009, NCFR; Table 3.3: Education Data For Counties By Race, 1960, 1962, Final Report Prepared by the North Carolina Fund under Process Analysis Research Grant of the Office of Economic Opportunity, 1968, North Carolina Collection.

⁶⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 107.

⁶⁷ Slavery was an important root cause of the South’s general low-level funding for black education for another reason: former slaves naturally owned very little property during Reconstruction when public schools were being built in larger numbers in the South. According to the 1874 tax returns in Georgia, for instance, blacks, who made up 46 percent of the population, paid only 2.3 percent of the property taxes. According to historian J. Mills Thornton III, this reality “produced a vigorous campaign throughout the South to expend on black schools only those school taxes actually paid by black citizens.” See J. Mills Thornton III, “Tax Policy and the Failure of Radical Reconstruction,” in *Major Problems in the History of the American South, Volume II: The New South*, eds. Paul D. Escott and David R. Goldfield (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1990), 68. See also Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration In Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 8, 39. In 1868, the year that the North Carolina constitution required that a system of free public schools be made available for the state’s citizens, separate schools for blacks and whites were also established. Yet, although public schools were provided for blacks, “when funds were apportioned those schools received far less than their fair share.” See William S. Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 419, 449. For instance, in 1960 the valuation of school property per pupil between white and blacks schools in North Carolina was determined to be \$709 and \$487, respectively. Statement of North Carolina Demonstration Leaders Presented to Governor Terry Sanford at Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, July 25, 1963, p. 5, folder: Race Relations “Troubleshooter”—Coltrane, David, 1963-1965, Box 26, Capus M. Waynick Papers (#421), Special Collections Department, J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. Hereinafter cited as Waynick Papers.

Under the Jim Crow social order, blacks were generally not allowed to engage in skilled trades, middle-class occupations, or attend the best available schools due to perceived deficiencies in capabilities and preparedness such as widespread illiteracy, a remnant of slavery, which affected 32 percent of the black voting age population in Craven County in 1900.⁶⁸ Accordingly, most blacks in Craven were limited to working for whites in jobs that were both low-paying and unskilled. In the late 1930s, with a segregated society securely intact, the chief occupations available for black males in and around New Bern included sharecropping and other laborer positions. For black females, it was domestic work. For over five hundred black women, or approximately 25 percent of New Bern's black female working population, the only available means of income involved cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and looking after the children of middle-class whites.⁶⁹

Within Craven County, the greatest discrepancy between black and white school resources and facilities were found in the rural sections. As late as 1955, as a local black citizen from Cove City described to his congressman Graham A. Barden, the "colored school that is now being used is so small and is in very bad condition that [we] use the colored church for part of the classes." The local black citizen proceeded to ask for additional public funds to supply another school building which, he promised, "the [black] citizens will highly appreciate." See C.H. Riggs to Congressman G.A. Barden, May 28, 1955, box 149, folder 6, Henderson Papers.

⁶⁸ Table 92, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1900: Vol. I, Part I (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913); According to the 1940 U.S. Census, there was only one black doctor to every 6,586 black citizens in North Carolina. See also C.C. Spaulding to Capus M. Waynick, May 30, 1947, folder: N.C. College for Negroes Correspondence, 1942-1947, box 31, Waynick Papers.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: North Carolina: Characteristics of the Population, Table 33a.-Nonwhite employed workers fourteen years and older by major occupation group and sex, for cities of 10,000 to 100,000. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940.

Black doctors, lawyers, teachers, druggists, and real estate agents practiced and could find work in the black business district of New Bern, but their numbers were few and many of them likely gained their positions prior to Jim Crow.⁷⁰ Without a doubt, blacks' exclusion from quality education and training and a full range of job opportunities prevented the majority of them from demonstrating their intelligence, talents, integrity, and above all, that domestic service and tenant farming were not necessarily their fated occupations.⁷¹ With few avenues for upward mobility, blacks also had little success in countering white prejudiced attitudes and/or economic interests that relegated their wages at rates lower than fellow white workers in the same or similar positions.⁷² Thus, black poverty in Eastern North Carolina and various other parts of the

⁷⁰ In the New Bern Voter Registration Book of 1913, the occupations of the ten "colored" voters from the fifth ward were recorded along with their age. All of the black voters had at least a middle-class occupation such as lawyer, doctor druggist, barber, or real estate agent. Most of the voters were between the ages forty-seven and sixty-one and, therefore, likely gained their positions prior to Jim Crow. See New Bern Voter Registration Book, 1913, Search Room, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁷¹ Black businessman Charles C. Spaulding, who most famously served as president of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company in Durham from 1923 to 1952, noted in the early 1940s that "training of Negroes along technical lines has been so neglected for a generation or more that it is now difficult to find a skilled tradesmen among Negroes who is under 35 years of age; in fact, there are to be found only a few under 45 years of age." See C.C. Spaulding, "The South and the Negro," *The State*, circa 1940-1945, Folder 63, NCCIC records.

⁷² Alan D. Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County* (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987), 550; On the subject of the low-pay that whites afforded to blacks during Jim Crow, white New Bern resident Genevieve Dunn candidly recalled that "We paid them terrible salaries! We did. I don't care how many servants you had, you didn't pay them much. I don't know how they existed. I really don't." See Genevieve T. Dunn, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, October 5, 1992, transcript, folder 66, New Bern Oral History Project records (#4751), Southern Historical Collection. Hereinafter cited as NBOHP. The income disparity between blacks and whites in and around New Bern was temporarily worsened during the Great Depression as federal aid under the Emergency Relief and Civil Works Administration supposedly allocated more money to a "single sewing room for white women," than all the projects for African-Americans. See Thomas W. Hanchett and M. Ruth Little, *The History and Architecture of Long Wharf and Greater Duffyfield: African American Neighborhoods in New Bern, North Carolina: A report prepared*

South was directly and most often related to an absence of freedom to participate in the nation's economic system of free market capitalism in which their race was not first and foremost judged. In other words, differentials in wages, hours, kinds of work, and conditions of work operated to keep blacks from getting ahead.⁷³ Adding to blacks' precarious economic situation had been the Great Fire of 1922 that swept through downtown New Bern, burning over one thousand buildings—one third of which were black-owned—and leaving fifteen hundred unemployed and thirty-five hundred homeless, the latter of which were predominately black.⁷⁴ Speaking on behalf of the black citizenry of the state, including those in the East, President of the North Carolina College for Negroes James E. Shepard objectively pleaded a few years before his death in 1947 that “the door of opportunity along economic lines should be open to [blacks].” Like other human beings, he emphasized, a black man deserves “the chance to acquire

for the City of New Bern Historic Preservation Commission, 1994, 21, North Carolina Collection. This latter reality was all the more disheartening for black residents I.H. Smith and Robert I. Johnson who directly appealed to chairman of the local New Deal Planning Commission to add blacks to the commission or to appoint a separate “colored advisory committee.” See I.H. Smith and R.I. Johnson to Hon. R.A. Nunn, April 2, 1935, Folder: Letters, 1935, April-June, Box 16, Romulus Armistead Nunn Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

⁷³ Guy B. Johnson, “Does the South Owe the Negro a New Deal?,” *Social Forces* 13 (October 1934), folder 72, North Carolina Commission on Interracial Cooperation records (#3823), Southern Historical Collection. Hereinafter cited as NCCIC records; Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991,) 24.

⁷⁴ Condensed Final Report Activities of the Central Relief Committee, New Bern, N.C., Fire of December 1, 1922, folder 51, NCCIC records; Although over \$124,000 was contributed by combined donations from the American National Red Cross and local citizens in order to provide relief, meals, temporary homes, clothing, blankets, medical services and job assistance to those who suffered from the fire, black families reportedly received less relief assistance, less help relocating, and fewer street, sewer, and neighborhood improvements than those of white families. See Reverend Robert I. Johnson to Mr. R.W. Miles, March 29, 1926; Two-page report by L.R. Reynolds, 1922, folder 1, NCCIC records.

economic freedom by being permitted to work anywhere his skill and training would fit him to work,” and he should not be “denied opportunity to work because of his color, nor should he be given less money for any given task than would be paid anyone else.”⁷⁵

More than any other event, the Great Depression exposed the severe economic handicaps that were placed on the South from the widespread lack of skills, development, and self-sufficiency among its black and white citizens. To proclaim the South as the “nation’s No. 1 economic problem,” as President Franklin Roosevelt did in 1938, was not an overstatement, despite its political overtones.⁷⁶ In terms of education, wages, health, purchasing power, industry, ownership of land, and housing, the South fell well behind other sections of the nation, making the Depression that much more difficult for the region to overcome.⁷⁷ “It should be apparent to any thinking person,” argued University of North Carolina sociologist Guy B. Johnson, “that the South has been so preoccupied with keeping the Negro in the ditch that she has had neither the time nor the strength to

⁷⁵ “N.C. College President Delivers Addresses at ‘Town Hall’ and Over Station WPTF of Raleigh,” source unknown, circa 1942-1947, folder 63, NCCIC records, Southern Historical Collection. In 1910, black educational and religious leader James E. Shepard founded the North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham (now known as N.C. Central University) and served as its president until his death in 1947.

⁷⁶ “National Affairs: Problem No. 1,” *Time*, July 18, 1938. By 1937, President Roosevelt was facing extreme opposition to his New Deal policies by Southern Democrats led by North Carolina Senator Josiah W. Bailey who had become frustrated with the mounting federal debt, increased government intrusion, and rising taxes with few obvious signs of economic recovery. Roosevelt adviser Clark Foreman remembers the president felt that “If the people [of the South] understand the facts...they will find their own remedies.” Thus, the *Economic Report* of 1938 became a means of maintaining Roosevelt’s popularity in the region. See David L. Carlton and Peter A. Coclanis, eds., *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression: The Report on Economic Conditions of the South with Related Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1996), 14.

⁷⁷ Carlton and Coclanis, *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression*, 45-80.

pull herself out of the ditch.”⁷⁸ Suggesting that the black citizenry “is the South’s greatest undeveloped human resource,” Johnson further contended that “the South has all to gain and nothing to lose by a policy of fairness and justice in the economic sphere.”⁷⁹

This same line of thinking was held by a group of concerned black and white citizens in New Bern—including Mayor W.C. Chadwick and his wife—who helped to charter a local subsidiary of the North Carolina Commission on Interracial Cooperation (NCCIC) between 1936 and 1942.⁸⁰ In the words of historian Morton Sosna, local CIC groups were generally “not meant to challenge segregation.” Yet, “the idea of a southern organization in which blacks would be members and be allowed to voice complaints was new.” Sosna adds that, “In the 1920s, with the Ku Klux Klan far more potent in the South than was the CIC,” meetings such as these were greeted “as giant steps forward in race relations.”⁸¹ Around the same time, the black New Bern Ministerial Alliance and the white New Bern Ministerial association also began meeting quarterly at a local church to

⁷⁸ Guy B. Johnson, “Does the South Owe the Negro a New Deal?,” *Social Forces* 13 (October 1934), folder 72, NCCIC records.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The Commission on Interracial Cooperation was originally founded in 1919 in Georgia by a group of southern religious leaders who desired to reduce racial injustices in the South. In 1921, a group of North Carolinians founded the NC Commission on Interracial Cooperation (NCCIC) as a state affiliate of the original organization. At the height of the NCCIC there were as many as 2,500 members with representatives found in all one hundred counties. In 1951 the group became part of the Southern Regional Council and, after 1955, the NCCIC was renamed the North Carolina Council on Human Relations. See Elizabeth Earnhardt, “Critical Years: The North Carolina Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1942-1949,” (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1971).

⁸¹ Morton Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 22, 24.

discuss avenues toward interracial cooperation and projects of common interest.⁸² As state director of the NCCIC L.R. Reynolds explained, the new interracial movement was based on “the growing conviction of the increasing number of influential white people in the South that we can not be fair to ourselves and be unfair to others.”⁸³ But due to the nascent feature of the interracial efforts, except for the small numbers who joined the “Great Migration” to the North for better employment and educational prospects for them or their children, the racially segregated economy in Eastern North Carolina was minimally challenged between 1900 and 1945 as a significant number of blacks chose to remain compliant with white bosses rather than risk sacrificing their paychecks.⁸⁴ An important foundation had been laid but blacks and poverty would not be easily separated.

Progress in dismantling Jim Crow, 1960-1963

Despite the economic, social, and political powerlessness that blacks throughout Craven County continued to experience, there was a new and glaring reality that may have explained why the Craven County committee did not suggest solutions for dismantling racial segregation in their proposal to the North Carolina Fund: Jim Crow was already in critical condition in December 1963. The first major blow to the system of racial exclusion came in April 1948 with the advent of the New Bern chapter of the

⁸² Two ministerial groups first came together to plan for an interracial Armistice Day celebration program. Craven County contributors to the Interracial Commission, p. 3, folder 53, NCCIC records.

⁸³ L.R. Reynolds to Mr. Frank Barfield, August 31, 1939, folder 3, NCCIC records.

⁸⁴ Table I: New Bern’s African American Population (1820-1970) in Medlin, “Reclaiming First Class Citizenship,” 26.

NAACP.⁸⁵ Like fellow black World War II veterans from across the South, those who helped to charter a NAACP branch in New Bern returned from fighting overseas with a transformed confidence to look beyond the limitations of color and begin perceiving themselves as both capable and deserving of achieving equal footing with whites. Assured by the willingness of the United States government to fight against Nazism and the ethnic persecution of Jewish peoples in Europe, most trusted that their sacrifice abroad would be rewarded with improved race relations at home. As friends and family members of Craven County blacks who served in World War II later testified, the men's stories of being stationed in places like Paris where, for the first time, they were seen as equals and "nobody looked down on them because they had a dark complexion" were inspirational in helping to engender other fellow blacks to join the local fight against racial subjugation.⁸⁶ In the boldest act to date against white locals who either condoned or enforced the mechanisms of Jim Crow, 120 would join the organization in the first year.⁸⁷ And as the New Bern NAACP branch and its subsidiary Youth Council dramatized local discriminatory practices into the 1950s and 1960s, blacks' growing expectations of being seen and treated as equals swiftly rose alongside black progress in the realms of fair employment, education, desegregation, and voting rights.

⁸⁵ Former Illinois Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell, the first black American elected to U.S. Congress as a Democrat, was invited to address the mass congregation of blacks at the charter presentation of the New Bern chapter of the NAACP at First Baptist Church on November 7, 1948. See "Negro News," *Sun Journal*, November 5, 1948.

⁸⁶ James Gavin, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, October 20, 1992, transcript, folder 75, NBOHP.

⁸⁷ Part II: Branch File, Box II, folder: New Bern, N.C. 1948-1955, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Civil rights leaders confronted black political disfranchisement first. With the help of the Craven County NAACP branch formed shortly after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the New Bern NAACP led a strident voter registration campaign between 1958 and 1960, which amounted in an almost 5 percent increase—from 19.5 percent to 24.3 percent—in the number of eligible black adults registered to vote in Craven.⁸⁸ This uptick in black voting power made it possible for the first competitive black candidate, Reverend G.J. Hill, to appear on the ballot for New Bern alderman since Reconstruction.⁸⁹ After the votes were tallied, the former president of the New Bern NAACP fell short of victory, but Reverend Hill's name on the 1959 ballot alone symbolized a growing political poise among blacks in the region. Simultaneously, although white registrars still used the literacy test to weed out those they believed were not equipped for participating in a democracy, blatant white resistance to black registration was becoming less acute as well. In contrast to the late 1940s, when reported violations of voting denial based on race abounded in several eastern counties including

⁸⁸ Barbara J. Lee, interview by author, New Bern, NC, August 8, 2006, transcript in author's possession; North Carolina Civil Rights Advisory Committee, *Voting and Voter Registration in NC, 1960* (The Committee: Washington, D.C., 1961), North Carolina Collection; Appendix I, North Carolina State Board of Elections Registration Statistics, 1967-1992 (Raleigh, NC: The Board, 1992), North Carolina Collection.

⁸⁹ In 1951, funeral director I.P. Hatch became the first black candidate to run for the board of aldermen in New Bern since disfranchisement but he would lose to the white incumbent 158 votes to 1. In contrast, Reverend G.J. Hill, who ran for alderman in the 1959 New Bern election, won his ward along with a total of 733 votes. However, due to the recently created at-large city election system, Reverend Hill was defeated by his white opponent for failing to gain a majority in the other four city wards. Since blacks represented a minority in New Bern, the at-large election system would prove to be a formidable obstacle, though not impossible to overcome, to black office-holding into the 1960s and 1970s. See Medlin, "Reclaiming First Class Citizenship," 32, 41-42.

Craven and Pamlico, such violations were drastically disappearing just a decade later.⁹⁰

By the late 1950s, even though some felt they still needed to “keep it a secret,” it was also becoming less common for teachers and other black professionals to worry about losing their jobs if white supervisors discovered they had voted. As the injustice of voting discrimination by race continued to be publicized in Craven and throughout the state—like in 1940 when a group of five blacks petitioned the North Carolina State Board of Elections after being denied registration in Moore County—it would depend less and less on “who you worked for if you got to vote.”⁹¹

In 1960, the North Carolina Civil Rights Advisory Committee held hearings in over a half-dozen of the state’s cities, including New Bern, “at which time opportunity was given for persons to file complaints of the denial of the right to register or to vote” if the denial was based on the applicant’s race, religion, or national origin.⁹² While complaints of voting discrimination originated from arguably more racially conservative counties in the east such as Greene and Bertie, none were reported to the committee from Craven. Somewhat ameliorating black struggles to gain the vote in this period had been

⁹⁰ For instance, in Vanceboro, which is located in western Craven County, three blacks who presented themselves for registration in 1948, each with at least some high school education, were required to write the entire Constitution after being asked to explain it word by word. The registrar did not find their explanations satisfactory and thus, the three applicants were refused. See “District Court Warrants Out in Vote Denials,” *The Carolinian*, October 2, 1948; “Urge Truman to End Vote Denial in N.C. Counties,” *The Carolinian*, October 23, 1948.

⁹¹ North Carolina State Board of Elections, Subject File, 1932-1942, folder: Moore County-Denial of Registration, 1940, Search Room, North Carolina State Archives; James Nelson, interview by author, Craven County NAACP meeting, St. Peter’s AME Zion Church, New Bern, NC, September 11, 2006, transcript in author’s possession.

⁹² North Carolina Civil Rights Advisory Committee, *Voting and Voter Registration in NC, 1960* (The Committee: Washington, D.C., 1961), North Carolina Collection.

the Civil Rights Act of 1957, signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as a means to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment. The first civil rights measure issued in the twentieth century, the federal act had the dual effect of providing blacks greater security to confront discriminatory measures while also compelling whites to avoid depriving blacks their voting rights through the establishment of the Civil Rights Section of the Justice Department which gave federal prosecutors the authority to obtain court injunctions against obstructions to the right to vote. Citizenship schools sponsored by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) also dramatically reduced the number of blacks in Craven who were denied the franchise. The brainchild of Charleston, South Carolina school teacher Septima Clark, the citizenship schools taught an historic number of black adults throughout the South the requirements and rights of citizenship and how to pass literacy tests in order to register. Between 1962 and 1964, adults came from all age groups—the oldest student was seventy-three—and from all parts of Craven, Jones, and Onslow counties to attend the citizenship education classes organized in New Bern, Riverdale, Pollocksville, and Jacksonville.⁹³ As one of the female volunteer teachers in New Bern expressed to her supervisor in 1963, “My pupils are very eager to grasp on to this school.”⁹⁴

⁹³ Riverdale is situated in Craven County approximately nine miles below New Bern. Pollocksville, which is about thirteen miles south of New Bern, is located in Jones County. Jacksonville, which is located in Onslow County, is a little more than thirty-five miles south of New Bern and twenty-three miles south of Pollocksville.

⁹⁴ Letter from Miss Barbara Gregg to Miss Quiring, August 12, 1963, folder 18: School Reports, 1961-1966, Records of the Citizenship Education Program, Records of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King Library and Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

By the time the voting rights campaign had begun to build momentum, the local NAACP branches were well occupied with efforts to persuade the Craven County Board of Education to observe the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* ruling, which declared racial segregation in the nation's public schools unconstitutional. The all-white Craven school board preferred for desegregation to occur on a volunteer basis as spelled out in North Carolina's Pearsall Plan, which for its moderate stance and respect for "freedom of choice," was supported by many key leaders in the state including Governor Terry Sanford.⁹⁵ For black parents who wanted to send their children to an integrated school, however, the plan required them to apply for their child's admission by approaching their school board members, some of whom were less open to integration. But for a group of black parents in Havelock, all of whom were working as military personnel at Cherry Point, such an approach landed high dividends. On April 8, 1959, rather than react in the fashion of Arkansas Governor Faubus who called on the National Guard to halt black students from entering Little Rock Central High School in 1957, the Craven board essentially yielded to the law and the black parents' applications by ordering the four

⁹⁵ Many of North Carolina's key leaders sanctioned the plan out of fear that forcing rapid desegregation would "greatly endanger public support of the schools which may finally result in the abolition of the public schools." See Nelson H. Harris, "Desegregation in North Carolina," *Journal of Negro Education* 25 (Summer 1956): 301. First drafted in 1956 by North Carolina House Speaker Thomas J. Pearsall, the Pearsall Plan shifted responsibility from the state to the local boards of education on how to act on the *Brown* decision. The plan also provided schools an option to close, by majority vote, if integration transpired at an unacceptably high level. Finally, it permitted white parents to receive state tuition aid to attend private schools of their choice if they could not be conveniently assigned to a non-integrated public school, though this fund was used on only a few occasions. With the Pearsall Plan model, school integration in North Carolina would occur gradually and on a volunteer basis between 1956 and 1964 but with little tension or violence. Furthermore, no public schools in North Carolina were closed in order to avoid integration.

white schools in Havelock to desegregate promptly.⁹⁶ As reported by the local *Sun Journal*, “This is the first time in the history of Craven county that Negro students have been allowed to attend a white school.”⁹⁷

Although it was a historic step in race relations for a predominately rural county—the Piedmont city schools of Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and Charlotte had first volunteered to desegregate in the fall of 1957—no visible signs of organized white backlash occurred. In response to a white constituent of Havelock who desired help in “blocking the reassignment of negro children from previously all-negro schools,” Congressman Graham A. Barden conceded that while he found the school board’s action “unwise, unnecessary, and unwarranted as well as ill-advised at this time or any other time,” he had no power to alter the black students’ reassignment since “the matter in no way comes under my jurisdiction.”⁹⁸

In general, whites in Craven epitomized the New South as it was described in a *Raleigh News & Observer* editorial shortly after the *Brown* decision. “The modern South, much as many of its people may dislike the law enunciated in this decision,” read the

⁹⁶ Exhibit A: Plan For Compliance With Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Adopted By the Craven County Board of Education, March 19, 1965, p. 1, folder: Hickman, Erving, et al. v. Craven County Board of Education 4/5-1967-9/25/1975, box 101, John Davis Larkins, Jr. Papers (#78), Special Collections Department, J.Y. Joyner Library. Hereinafter cited as Larkins Papers. By the summer of 1961, thirty-five black students attended previously all-white schools in Havelock, NC. See Program report for June-July 1961, folder 242, North Carolina Council on Human Relations records (#4880), Southern Historical Collection.

⁹⁷ “School Applications Approved by Board,” *Sun Journal*, August 25, 1959.

⁹⁸ Congressman Graham A. Barden to Mr. Gerald Smith, July 16, 1959, box 36, folder 216, Graham A. Barden Papers.

May 18, 1954, editorial, “is not prepared for rebellion.”⁹⁹ Save the forms of massive resistance that were primarily instigated by the legislatures of the Deep South states and a growing body of local Citizens’ Councils, most everyday southern citizens, particularly in the Upper South, would not only find gradual desegregation in the South inevitable but would eventually elect to comply with the court order, those in Craven County included.¹⁰⁰ Another fact that helps to explain the relative ease with which desegregation occurred in this Eastern North Carolina county was that the Cherry Point military base drew several thousand individuals from across the country, including those from outside the South, to work and live in Havelock (in 1960, 27 percent of Craven County residents were not native to the state of North Carolina) and, as a result, received federal funding from Public Law 874 since at least 1955 for its school system.¹⁰¹ Congressman Barden

⁹⁹ “The South Never Needed Wisdom More, Nor Fury Less,” *News & Observer*, May 18, 1954.

¹⁰⁰ Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-1964*, 2nd edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 29-30; According to a Gallup poll conducted in 1956, fifty-five percent of white southerners believed that school desegregation was an inevitable development for the South. Two years later, in a Gallup poll conducted in 1958, the results remained basically unchanged as fifty-two percent of white southerners expressed their belief that desegregation was inevitable. See Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950s*, 2nd edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 276-277. A *Washington Post* editorial also reiterated the observation in 1959 that desegregation statistics “do not tell the whole story of the change in attitude or scope of the readjustments that are taking place.” The “wall of defiance has begun to crumble,” the editorial continued. In fact “voices of moderation and realism are beginning to make themselves heard again” to the point that “strident extremists are finding fewer disciples.” See “Five Years of Desegregation,” *Washington Post*, May 17, 1959. North Carolina Governor Luther Hodges’ moderate position on integration may have also helped to set the tone for how North Carolinians chose to react to *Brown* during the late 1950s. While Governor Hodges had a “personal opposition to racial mixing in the schools,” he strove to “uphold the law and relieve tensions” by supporting voluntary integration based on the freedom-of-choice espoused in the Pearsall plan. See Governor Luther Hodges to Reverend James P. Dees, October 10, 1957, folder 2129; Janet MacDonald to Governor Luther Hodges, October 4, 1957, folder 2133, Luther Hartwell Hodges Papers (#3698), Southern Historical Collection.

¹⁰¹ Table 82, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Volume I, *Characteristics of*

would, after all, only receive a total of three letters denouncing the board's 1959 decision to allow black students to transfer to white schools. Though rarely rooted in enthusiasm, an attitude of respect for the law dominated the behavior of most whites in Craven; likewise, the closing of public schools to avoid desegregation was not seen as a viable alternative for a growing element of Craven whites. Historians Matthew Lassiter, Andrew B. Lewis, David Chappell and others have recently chronicled how the majority of whites in Upper South states, including North Carolina, Virginia, and Arkansas, generally felt and behaved the same way during the post-*Brown* years of gradual desegregation.¹⁰²

the Population, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35_TOC.pdf. Graham A. Barden to Mr. Cicero Riggs, May 26, 1955, box 149, folder 6, Henderson Papers. Public Law 874 provided federal payment to school systems with a large enrollment of pupils whose parents live and/or work on federally owned installations such as military bases. As late as 1964, Craven received \$484,200 under said law, which Craven County School Superintendent Robert L. Pugh felt was crucial for the county. "Craven County as you know is heavily involved in this federal program," he wrote Congressman Henderson in July 1964, "because of the presence in our area of a number of federal facilities, chiefly the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point. On the facility alone, we have approximately two thousand children whose parents live on and work on the air station. These people naturally come from all sections of our country and it has been the plan of the Board of Education to provide a school facility for them comparable to the high standards they have enjoyed elsewhere. Following such a plan as this involves expenditures of a large sum of money which could not be made available by Craven County without recourse to federal funds. Funds received under this law comprise a little more than fifty percent of the operating budget of the Craven County Board of Education..." See For Immediate Release from the Office of Congressman David N. Henderson, January 10, 1964, box 149, folder 6, Henderson Papers; R.L. Pugh to Honorable David N. Henderson, July 22, 1964, box 149, folder 6, Henderson Papers.

¹⁰² Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, eds., *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 1-21, 72-103; David L. Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1994), 97-121. Matthew Lassiter also highlights how urban and suburban white Southerners, namely those in Atlanta and Charlotte, were also generally against the tactics of massive resistance primarily being employed in the Deep South states. See Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 44-93, 225-275.

By the late 1950s these two realities went a long way in facilitating the New Bern and Craven NAACP in its desegregation aims. In 1960, the New Bern branch witnessed one of its proudest moments when it was conferred the Thalheimer Award, the NAACP's top award to branches for outstanding achievements, for its work in obtaining the admission of black children of the nine military families to the City of Havelock Public Schools.¹⁰³ Craven whites would have to be regularly pushed by black civil rights leaders to break with tradition and grant black children access to the same educational opportunities as white children, but school desegregation, gradual as it was, would not have been as peaceful or deliberate between 1959 and 1963 without a fraction of white compliance at the local level.

Already suffering injuries, Jim Crow was further wounded in Craven County following the events that transpired in March 1960. By that point, the New Bern city bus service had been desegregated since the early years of World War II and the city police had been actively seeking black officers to add to its force for about a month, but blacks were still being widely refused equal service in white-operated establishments on the basis of race or color.¹⁰⁴ "I think it was like everybody knew their place and tried to stay in it," recalled Barbara J. Lee, a former vice president of the New Bern NAACP Youth

¹⁰³ Gloster B. Current (Director of NAACP Branches) to Mrs. G.H. Priestly (Secretary of New Bern NAACP branch) August 26, 1960, Part III: Branch File, Box III, folder: New Bern, N.C. 1956-1965, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; "School Applications Approved by Board," *Sun Journal*, August 25, 1959.

¹⁰⁴ Capus M. Waynick, John C. Brooks, and Elise W. Pitts, eds., *North Carolina and the Negro* (Raleigh: North Carolina Mayors' Co-operating Committee, 1964), 133; "Negro Policemen Wanted" Ad, *Sun Journal*, February 4, 1960.

Council. “Our place was that we didn’t touch anything. If we wanted a hot dog, you’d stand at the far corner of Kress Department Store. You had to order your hot dog or something and take it out of the store if you wanted to eat it.”¹⁰⁵ Lee’s experiences were not limited to New Bern and could be found, at the time, in practically any southern community where blacks and whites resided. Few businesses refused black clientele altogether, as Lee noted, but black paying customers often faced unequal treatment by being barred from sitting in the establishment or being made to wait in the back of the line until all white customers had been served first.¹⁰⁶ Among those, the lunch counter was one of the least accessible places to blacks. Nevertheless, a bold new attempt to modify the South’s apartheid system was made on February 1, 1960, when four black North Carolina A&T students staged the first publicized sit-in, at a Woolworth’s lunch counter in downtown Greensboro. Within weeks, this feat produced a wave of sit-ins and other nonviolent demonstrations of civil disobedience in dozens of southern towns. As members of the New Bern NAACP branch learned of the rising protest efforts among numbers of young black activists to gain inclusion into previously denied white-operated establishments, they too were influenced to take a vow to end racial exclusion in the public accommodations of their own city.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Barbara J. Lee, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, New Bern, NC, December 9, 1992, transcript, folder 105, NBOHP.

¹⁰⁶ Reverend Willie Gray Hickman, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, December 1, 1992, transcript, folder 85, NBOHP.

¹⁰⁷ O.T. Faison, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, April 7, 1992, transcript, folder 72, NBOHP.

With the lunch counters of the S.H. Kress and Company Store and the Clark's drug store chosen as targets, the stage was set for New Bern's first sit-in. On the afternoon of March 18, led by Reverends Dr. A. Hillary Fisher, G.J. Hill, Leon C. Nixon, and funeral home director Bishop S. Rivers, twenty-nine black high school students of the local NAACP Youth Council marched downtown in unison to demand service at both establishments. When the students and their adult supervisors entered the Kress and Clark's stores, they immediately sat at the available counter stools and requested service. Alarmed at the effrontery of the black youth, both store managers promptly put up signs reading "Closed" and asked for each black demonstrator to leave. After refusing to abandon their seats, the New Bern police were called in to handle the disturbance. Following a short period of resistance, the demonstrators were arrested and escorted to the city courthouse on charges of trespassing. While sitting in the courtroom in city hall, members of the Youth Council began singing hymns, clapping, and stomping their feet with excitement from the strides they had made toward achieving equal access.¹⁰⁸

The young students had much to be excited about. Greatly due to their own initiative, they achieved an unprecedented task by openly challenging the forces of white supremacy within New Bern. Eastern North Carolina was not to be, as scholars Jack Bass and Walter De Vries argued in 1976, "bypassed by the Civil Rights Movement."¹⁰⁹ A few weeks after the March 18 demonstration, New Bern Mayor Robert L. Stallings, the

¹⁰⁸ "Big Negro Group Arrested Here on Trespass Charges," *The Sun Journal*, March 18, 1960.

¹⁰⁹ Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 242.

brother of county commissioner D. L. Stallings, presided over a special meeting of the board of aldermen to consider the formation of the community's first interracial committee, which was to "provide an opportunity for discussion of all matters concerning human relationships," to "seek understanding, on the part of the different races," and "in the event of claims of injustices [to] seek a solution of the problem."¹¹⁰ NAACP adult leaders Reverend Hill and Rivers figured prominently on the committee that came to be referred to as the New Bern Good Will Committee. Although attempts at negotiation between blacks and whites had been opened, the civil rights revolution sweeping through Craven County was far from fading.

By July, the local Youth Council added another local segregated establishment, Anderson's Drug Store, to its list of targeted businesses.¹¹¹ Carrying signs reading "The Manager SAID we don't want your BUSINESS!" and "They still won't SERVE US!", black ministers Hill, Fisher, and Shade Marshburn joined the youth group in picket lines in front of Anderson's as well as Kress' and Clark's variety stores throughout the summer of 1960. Spurred by Reverends Leon Nixon and Willie Hickman, the local NAACP branches also initiated a boycott of each store and encouraged all black citizens to participate. As James City teacher Dorothy Bryan attested, the boycott movement received support from across the black community. "I did not participate in the rallies, the marches," she said, "but if [Rev. Willie Hickman and Mr. Nixon] decided they were

¹¹⁰ New Bern Town Council Minutes, April 20, 1960, May 2, 1960, Kellenberger Room, New Bern-Craven County Public Library, New Bern, NC.

¹¹¹ "New Bern Ministers Join Students in Picket Lines," *The Carolina Times*, July 30, 1960.

going to boycott certain stores, I did not go into those stores. I can vividly remember not going into Kress's.”¹¹²

In October 1960, and after several months of waning profits, Kress' became the first previously segregated establishment in Craven to agree to serve blacks at its lunch counter.¹¹³ By 1963, as the New Bern Youth Council grew to become the second largest city chapter in the state with 219 members, several other targeted establishments like the Holiday Inn and the A&W Drive-In followed suit in accepting the demands of integration.¹¹⁴ In August of the same year, in order to avoid the racial violence that had made a national example out of Birmingham, Alabama, another interracial committee, known as the Bi-racial Committee, was appointed by New Bern's mayor Mack Lupton to peacefully and swiftly desegregate the theaters, restaurants, and hotels that remained exclusionary. A former member of the New Bern Good Will Committee, Bi-racial Committee chairman W.C. Chadwick was valuable in arranging negotiations between the Chamber of Commerce and black demonstrators that not only quickened the pace of desegregation but compelled many business establishments to provide qualified black applicants with jobs when available.¹¹⁵ As he expressed in a report delivered at the

¹¹² Emily Herring Wilson, *Memories of New Bern: An Oral History Based on Interview of New Bernians by New Bernians* (New Bern: New Bern Historical Society, 1995), 143.

¹¹³ “New Bern Has Celebration for Counter Win,” *Carolina Times*, October 22, 1960.

¹¹⁴ Dunn, which is located in Harnett County, was the largest city chapter of the NAACP in North Carolina. See Papers of the NAACP, Part 19, Youth File, Series D, 1956-1965, Youth Department File, Reel 7, Region V, Bostock Library, Duke University.

¹¹⁵ O.T. Faison, a black member of the New Bern Biracial Committee, credits W.C. Chadwick as “the person who did more for the race relations and integration here in New Bern.” Faison explained that Chadwick “was trying to work something out for all concerned.” Wilson, *Memories of New Bern*, 152.

request of the Mayors' Cooperating Committee of North Carolina, the matter of desegregation was an urgent one that could and should be achieved voluntarily through the cooperation of both races, "rather than by violence or force." "We, the citizens of New Bern," spoke Chadwick, "are a part of a great State, a great nation, and we cannot long resist a movement which is brought about by a sympathetic nation to remedy a wrong which has existed so long."¹¹⁶ Moreover, "All of our people realize that the idea of desegregation," continued Chadwick, "must come about."¹¹⁷

Whites' decisions to "become a part of the cure," however, were not solely motivated by wishes to circumvent racial tension or the loss of business profits. The civil rights demonstrations, which dramatically lay bare black discontentment under Jim Crow (unlike anything before), had also begun to soften white attitudes toward the plight and injustices felt by blacks.¹¹⁸ "When I see them march, I go on the other side of the street" remarked a prominent white banker of New Bern. Whites, he believed, needed to "Let'm

There were a few stores in downtown New Bern that had begun to hire black clerks well before the sit-in movement began, however. One of the first black employees hired to work at Clarks' Drugstore, for instance, was Theresa Howard Bryan who was placed in a "white gal's job" during World War II. See Theresa Howard Bryan, interview by Angela Hornsby-Gutting, June 26, 1999, K-0238, transcript, Southern Oral History Program (#4007), Southern Historical Collection. Hereinafter cited as SOHP.

¹¹⁶ W.C. Chadwick, "An Eastern City's Report" in *North Carolina and the Negro*, 201, 205.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 202 .

¹¹⁸ Editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* and southern moderate Harry S. Ashmore wrote in 1959 that "for every convinced white radical or cynical political opportunist who exploits the race question, there are ten thousand sober, sincere, essentially conservative white Americans who have accepted the Negroes' claim to equal rights as just." See Harry Ashmore, "Race in America: A Southern Moderate's View," in *The Search for America*, ed. Huston Smith (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 48.

have what they want.”¹¹⁹ Signs denoting “white” and “colored” spaces that used to broadly adorn the scenery of New Bern and portions of Craven County in the first half of the twentieth century were not the only vestiges of Jim Crow that were disappearing. In his groundbreaking 2006 study of white Southerners’ experiences during the civil rights movement, which included those of New Bern, Jason Sokol reveals how integration made it possible for some whites to start to “see the humanity in blacks.”¹²⁰ Needless to say, not all transformations were visible to the eye. “There were many white people who was sympathetic toward [civil rights],” remembered Reverend Hickman, but because whites often felt they “had more to lose than blacks” by taking a stand, they were afraid to “take the lead.”¹²¹ It appeared that a sizeable number of whites living in Craven would continue to view “civil rights not in terms of black liberties, but as a loss of white freedom” and a threat to constitutional government.¹²² Yet that mentality, though resilient, was gradually losing its hold. Even local whites who believed that “in a free country, forcing people to change abruptly, customs they have held for a hundred years can lead to nothing but

¹¹⁹ Mr. T.C. Fitzgerald, interview by John Miller, July 21, 1966, New Bern, NC, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹²⁰ Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 318.

¹²¹ Reverend Willie Gray Hickman, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, December 1, 1992, transcript, folder 85, NBOHP.

¹²² Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 216; Shortly after President John F. Kennedy proposed that Congress consider civil rights legislation to address several forms of racial discrimination including public accommodations, a little over a dozen white New Bern residents hastened their congressman, David N. Henderson, to vote against it. One constituent pleaded that Congressman Henderson “do all possible to defeat the so-called ‘civil rights’ legislation” which the constituent believed threatened “our very form of constitutional government.” See I.I. Blandford to Congressman David N. Henderson, June 12, 1963, box 344, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

bitterness” knew and could admit, in the words of white New Bern resident W.J. Edwards, that “segregation is not morally right.”¹²³ The harsh words and actions of die-hard segregationists like Atlanta’s Lester Maddox naturally made headlines, but in the early 1960s a growing number of everyday whites in Craven and throughout the South were found in the quieter camp of the “southern moderate” who, as outlined by *Charlotte Observer* editor C.A. McKnight, believed in either the “inevitability” or “essential rightness” of desegregation, who held “great respect for the traditions of the American democracy,” and who “would not be averse to seeing limited school integration.”¹²⁴

National president of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and advisor to the NAACP Floyd B. McKissick, who visited New Bern at least once in 1963 to support the ongoing civil rights demonstrations, responded to one of Chadwick’s solicitations for advice by reminding him that “Desegregation can be compared to a child learning how to walk, the first steps are the most difficult, after which steps those that follow are less difficult and then the process becomes a habit.”¹²⁵ In August 1963, after raising \$1,400 to take four buses to attend the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that would attract 250,000 civil rights supporters, members of the New Bern NAACP might not have

¹²³ Mr. W.J. Edwards to Congressman David N. Henderson, July 30, 1963, box 344, folder 6, Henderson Papers.

¹²⁴ C.A. McKnight, “The Troubled South: Search for a Middle Ground,” *Collier’s*, June 22, 1956, 28-29; Julius Duscha, “Why Silent South Cannot Speak Out,” *Washington Post*, March 10, 1960; K. Lenihan, “Birmingham: A Sociological Perspective,” June 1963, 19, box 25, folder: Race Relations “Troubleshooter”—Brooks, John, miscellany, Waynick Papers.

¹²⁵ Floyd B. McKissick to Mr. W.C. Chadwick, September 20, 1963, folder 7159, Floyd B. McKissick Papers (#4930), Southern Historical Collection. Hereinafter cited as McKissick Papers.

been able to claim that desegregation had quite become a habit and knew there were still civil rights battles left to wage, but they could leave for the nation's capitol assured that Jim Crow's reign in their community had been effectively cut back.¹²⁶ A few weeks later on September 9, city leadership in New Bern passed a resolution that called upon all of its citizens to assume a cooperative attitude to bring about desegregation in public accommodations, business establishments, and recreational facilities.¹²⁷

Local plans to break the “cycle of poverty”

It was within this atmosphere of mounting black expectations and pressure that were leading to fairer race relations that the Craven County proposal to the North Carolina Fund was compiled. It was not especially remarkable, therefore, that Craven's proposal would reflect the antipoverty ideas of Willie Dawson and the other two black members of the Craven County committee, such as the inclusion of adult literacy classes that were deeply needed in the black community. Nor was it unforeseen in this atmosphere for whites on the proposal committee to look beyond the removal of racial discrimination and exploitation, both of which were in decline, as solutions to the heavy

¹²⁶ Rev. Leon C. Nixon to Mr. G.B. Current, Director of NAACP Branches, Summer 1963, Part III: Branch File, Box III, Folder: New Bern, N.C. 1956-1965, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. The civil rights battles still left to wage in New Bern included the “admission of Negroes to ‘private’ organizations which are in fact quasi-public professional groups whose decisions affect all citizens of the city, black and white” including the Civitan Club and Chamber of Commerce, “less discrimination against Negroes in local government employment,” the “drawing up of a desegregation plan” for New Bern city schools, and the hiring of blacks on an equal employment basis. See Miss Deloris Gibbs (Chairman of the Negotiation Committee of the New Bern NAACP Youth Council), “Statement of New Bern, North Carolina Demonstration Leaders Presented to Mayor Mac L. Lupton,” 1963, folder: Race Relations “Troubleshooter”—New Bern, 1963, Box 27, Waynick Papers.

¹²⁷ W.C. Chadwick to General Capus Waynick, September 12, 1963; New Bern Resolution, September 9, 1963, box 27, folder: Race Relations “Troubleshooter”—New Bern, 1963, Waynick Papers.

state of black poverty in their area. An acknowledgment of blacks' enduring "minority group status," which stemmed from disadvantages in jobs skills, education, wealth, and political power, did not alter the white committee members' broader understanding that blacks bore at least partial responsibility for improving those disadvantages. The central premise behind Craven's antipoverty plans was that the less-than-full participants in the life of the community, black and white included, were trapped in a cycle of poverty that could only be broken through the mutual cooperation and partnership between the community and the poor themselves. Borrowing from a North Carolina Fund report entitled, "The Dimensions of Poverty," the Craven proposal committee defined poverty as "a downward-circling spiral, whose parts continually feed back upon each other" and "as a cycle, in that it is transmitted from generation to generation." Thus, "inadequate education, for example, is certainly a cause of poverty; it is also an obvious result."¹²⁸

With this understanding in mind, the Craven proposal outlined that antipoverty efforts should primarily be "remedial, rehabilitative, and educational" in order that the poor "may leave their present circumstances of want and become valuable and contributing citizens of tomorrow."¹²⁹ Besides adult literacy classes, the county's plans to combat poverty included a pre-school readiness class, rural environmental sanitation, employment opportunities for youth, out-of-school cultural enrichment for elementary students, vocational training for young adults, and increased psychological and

¹²⁸ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. 9, folder 5048, NCFR.

¹²⁹ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. 39, folder 5048, NCFR.

counseling services in the schools and local welfare department.¹³⁰ As these plans reflected, Craven leaders believed that the problem of poverty could be solved without political restructuring and without tampering with the capitalistic system, such as through wealth redistribution. Such plans clearly rested on a faith in the local economy. “Craven County is not without the resources to dispel a one-crop economy” read the proposal. “There is a vast potential for development in the areas of recreation, fishing, conservation of natural resources, light industry, food processing, and diversification of new crops.”¹³¹

The original antipoverty planners in Craven were likewise devoted to a faith in the potential resolve of the poor. Notwithstanding the poor’s observed “social outlook of resentment,” common feelings of “despair,” frequent acts of “defiance,” and “pitiful posture of fragile pride,” Craven’s leaders trusted that the less fortunate among them would embrace most forms of assistance and opportunities that they were given out of an inherent human desire to change their lives for the better.¹³² If asked, most of the Craven committee members would divulge that they believed that a segment of poor citizens would always exist no matter the magnitude or regularity of assistance provided. After all, wealth accumulation and economic self-sufficiency in a free market economy would continue to depend in part on personal choices and responsibility. Still, this reality did not prevent the committee members from expecting that the majority of the poor could help bring themselves out of deprivation. Nor did it preclude them from making plans

¹³⁰ “Background History of Craven Operation Progress,” folder 4967, NCFR.

¹³¹ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, pp. 38-39, folder 5048, NCFR.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 8.

accordingly. Fortunately for the poor, and as will be discussed further in Chapter III, there was both plenty of room and plenty of encouragement for economic advancement to be found in Eastern North Carolina.

In late January of 1964, as acting committee chairman Bill Flowers was in the midst of putting the final touches on Craven's proposal to the North Carolina Fund, he took a few moments to compose a letter to Fund director George Esser to be included in the proposal's opening pages. "Whether or not we are one of the ten chosen communities," wrote Flowers, "the value of this study has been worth the effort." Confident was Flowers that even if Craven was not selected, many of the committee's ideas for tackling poverty "will be activated" at least "to the extent that volunteer workers and limited funds may allow." Above all, Flowers used the letter to express his gratitude to Esser and the Fund for causing "us to focus attention on the problems of poverty in this community."¹³³ This latter point was indisputable. Although leaders in Craven County had been engaged in means of alleviating poverty before the Fund was officially launched, the Fund's call for proposals stimulated a greater effort to concentrate attention on unifying community resources to tackle poverty which had never been unified. For decades, local Protestant and Catholic churches had been providing goods and counseling services for poor children and their families, civic and service clubs such as the local Salvation Army had supplied clothing, toys, books, food, and entertainment to the less fortunate, and the welfare department offered a boarding home for children in addition to

¹³³ W.L. Flowers to George Esser, January 31, 1964 in Original Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, folder 5048, NCFR.

work relief, medical care, and minimal job placement for the unemployed, disabled, and elderly.¹³⁴ In addition, home demonstration clubs had been in operation in rural areas as well as Craven Terrace, the then-all-black federal housing project in New Bern, since at least the late 1950s.¹³⁵ Thus, there may have been some truth to the claim in the proposal that “without the benefits of the programs, services, and activities in operation now and for some time past, the picture of poverty would be much more depressing than it is.”¹³⁶

The existence of poverty in Craven did not indicate that its leadership had been unaware or apathetic to the needs of the poor; however, owing to a lack of coordination and resources, efforts to curb poverty had been fragmented and less than fully effective. Days before the Craven proposal was mailed to meet the Fund’s February 1, 1964, deadline, Craven committee member Ted Collier predicted that from the start there would be critics and detractors of their antipoverty plans who, out of either indifference or cynicism, would resent “what they will call a waste of good money and energy.” The same arguments, he lamented, “have been used against all undertakings designed to alleviate the ills plaguing humanity.” It remained to be seen to what degree Collier’s prediction would be proven correct. But as he said, “The best answers will be results” and with a wide range of support from members of the local power structure—who pledged to

¹³⁴ Helping to coordinate the means by which the local churches gave food and clothing to the needy was the New Bern-based Religious Community Service. See Genevieve T. Dunn, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, October 5, 1992, transcript, folder 66, NBOHP.

¹³⁵ “Negro News,” *Sun Journal*, May 6, 1959.

¹³⁶ Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, folder 5048, NCFR.

promote the program with “unflagging determination and perseverance”— Craven’s first coordinated campaign against poverty was off to a promising start.¹³⁷

President Johnson forms Task Force on the War Against Poverty, February 1964

On the same day that community action proposals were due to the North Carolina Fund, President Johnson carried the domestic agenda of the late President Kennedy a step further in establishing the President’s Task Force on the War Against Poverty and appointing Peace Corps Director and Kennedy’s brother-in-law R. Sargent Shriver as its head. Partly owing to a slow-moving economy and rising rates of unemployment between 1961 and 1962, legislative attempts to reduce the number of the nation’s poor had figured prominently in Kennedy’s vision of a “New Frontier” for America. Other than the creation of the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime (PCJD), the signing of the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, and his approval of a public welfare amendment bill to fight “prolonged dependency,” Kennedy had also been working—in the last few months of his life—with his Council of Economic Advisors’ chairman Walter Heller on designing a broader and more concerted approach towards defeating the roots of poverty in localities nationwide.¹³⁸ Kennedy’s vice-president and successor, a proud “Roosevelt New Dealer” who believed strongly in the

¹³⁷ T. J. Collier, Craven County Proposal to North Carolina Fund, January 31, 1964, p. i, folder 5048, NCFR

¹³⁸ As Kennedy perceived it, the public welfare amendment bill embodied “a new approach—stressing services in addition to support, rehabilitation instead of relief, and training for useful work instead of prolonged dependency.” See John F. Kennedy, Statement by the President upon Approving the Public Welfare Amendments Bill, July 26, 1962, Public Papers of the Presidents, The American Presidency Project, accessed September 12, 2010, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8788>.

capacity of government to solve most problems, happily accepted the helm of a federal antipoverty effort. Given that Kennedy never publicly announced his broader strategy against poverty, Johnson would have the freedom to enlarge its scope and present it to the nation as his own.¹³⁹

In drafting the Economic Opportunity Act, Johnson's Task Force on the War Against Poverty nonetheless relied on the poverty knowledge and experiences of former Kennedy aides who served in relevant realms such as the PCJD and the Manpower program. Between February and August of 1964, task force director Shriver also summoned representatives to Washington, D.C. from the nation's forerunners in antipoverty community action including Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin's Mobilization for Youth program in New York City as well as the Ford-funded "Gray Areas" projects and the North Carolina Fund. Governor Sanford, who incidentally had been a potential candidate for Shriver's job for launching "a very imaginative program," and his Fund Director George Esser were expressly invited to offer their ideas and know-how on eliminating poverty to legislators on Capitol Hill in addition to the War on Poverty task force.¹⁴⁰ As highlighted by historians Robert Korstad and James Leloudis in

¹³⁹ Carl M. Brauer, "Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty," *Journal of American History* 69 (June 1982): 113-115.

¹⁴⁰ Amid Governor Sanford's statement before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor in April 1964, Congressman Phillip M. Landrum of Georgia expressed a categorical awareness "of the experience, advantages, and help we had from the study which you had conducted, you and your associates in North Carolina. It was of tremendous value to us to know something of your efforts and your findings when we drafted [the Economic Opportunity Act]. So, as one who has become really enthusiastic about this, I am glad to pay my respects to you and your associates for the part you played in developing this bill to this point." See Economic Opportunity Act of 1964: *Hearings before the Subcommittee on the War on Poverty Program*, 88th Cong. 993-994 (April 17, 1964) (Statement of Hon. Terry Sanford, Governor of the State of North Carolina).

To Right These Wrongs, “the two North Carolinians placed great emphasis on community action and the involvement of the poor,” a direction toward which Shriver and many members of the task force were leaning in particular.¹⁴¹ Due to the North Carolina Fund’s subsequent agreement to pilot community action projects to be used on a federal level, it would come as little surprise that community action would become a centerpiece of Johnson’s War on Poverty. In the appropriate words of a *Business Week* editor at the time, the Fund had become an “advance guard of the War on Poverty.”¹⁴²

One of the more useful resources that Esser shared with the task force was a summary of each of the grant proposals the North Carolina Fund received, including an inventory of each community’s ideas to combat poverty.¹⁴³ Only expecting to receive between twenty and thirty proposals, Esser and the staff of the Fund were overwhelmed when a total of fifty-one proposals representing sixty-six of the state’s one hundred counties arrived at their office in Durham.¹⁴⁴ Clearly the Fund had not been in a position to predict how its call for antipoverty proposals would inspire communities across North Carolina to view and assess their poverty problems and the underprivileged in new and constructive ways, such helping them move up the economic ladder, for one. With such a

¹⁴¹ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 166; Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 20, 41, 72-81.

¹⁴² “Advance Guard in the War on Poverty,” *Business Week*, May 30, 1964.

¹⁴³ George Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund: 1963-1970: An Oral History*, with Rah Bickley (Charleston, SC: Booksurge, 2007), 67-68.

¹⁴⁴ Billy E. Barnes, “The North Carolina Fund: A Progress Report,” *Popular Government* 30 (June 1964): 2.

“splendid degree of interest” in the Fund, the screening and selection process for Esser and his staff promised to be a “formidable” undertaking. But out of a desire to display a “vote of confidence” for the antipoverty solutions that each locality had proposed, Esser felt strongly that the Fund “owed each participating community a personal visit.” The on-site trips also presented an opportunity to “size up the local leadership” and to “ask questions left unanswered” by the written proposals.¹⁴⁵



Figure 7. North Carolina Fund Executive Director George H. Esser, Jr. at a Fund staff meeting in Southern Pines, North Carolina, February 1964. Photograph by Billy E. Barnes, courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Billy E. Barnes Collection.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 3.

North Carolina Fund review team appraise Craven County proposal and leadership

The Craven County committee was paid a visit from the Fund on February 19, 1964. After meeting with the community leaders in the eastern cities of Goldsboro and Kinston earlier in the day, Fund board of director members C.A. McKnight and James Gray along with the Fund staff team of William Koch, Jr., William Darity, and Billy Barnes arrived at the Governor Tryon Hotel in New Bern at around seven thirty in the evening.¹⁴⁶ Following greetings and introductions, the meeting opened with the testimony of County Commissioner D. Livingstone Stallings who, it was reported, compellingly showcased the proposal's "strong support" from the county government.¹⁴⁷ As they gathered further details, asked questions, and became more acquainted with "the people behind the proposal," the Fund representatives were impressed early on with the imaginative leadership and the atmosphere of optimism that they witnessed in Craven County.¹⁴⁸ "This group, with its turnout of 38 people, was an outstanding one," read the Fund's on-site evaluation report. "The leadership was young and dynamic. The representatives from all phases of community life—educators, politicians, welfare people, and others of both races—not only came to the meeting but seemed to feel free to stand up and speak their minds." There was just "'something different' about the New Bern

¹⁴⁶ Area II Travel Itinerary, February 19-21, 1964, folder 3399, NCFR. C.A. McKnight was then the editor of the *Charlotte Observer* and James Gray was president of Old Salem, Inc. out of Winston-Salem, NC.

¹⁴⁷ Staff Evaluation of the Craven County Proposal, folder 3406, NCFR. On February 4, 1964, just prior to the first Fund visit, the New Bern board of aldermen also passed a resolution endorsing the North Carolina Fund. New Bern Town Council Minutes, February 4, 1960, Kellenberger Room, New Bern-Craven County Public Library.

¹⁴⁸ "Suggested Introductory Statement by Board Member," folder 3399, NCFR.

meeting,” continued the report, which “included the presence of two high school students who had come just because they had heard about the activities of the North Carolina Fund, and were interested in what was going on.” What left the largest impression on the Fund representatives that night, besides Craven’s “fine proposal,” was that “this group seemed to be solidly behind its leadership. And everyone—male and female, Negro and white—seemed to have a splendid morale, the like of which was evident no where in the south east area with the possible exception of Carteret County.”¹⁴⁹

Around February 28, the Fund held a board meeting for an initial review of the proposal sites which they had visited. During that time it became even more obvious that Craven County, especially when compared to other proposal sites in Eastern North Carolina, was “at the top of the heap.” While other proposal sites in the eastern half of the state including Carteret, New Hanover, and Bertie counties received positive feedback, Craven’s “spark of enthusiasm” and a “good understanding of local problems” was observed in few places elsewhere.¹⁵⁰ In Kinston, for instance, located a short distance of thirty-five miles from New Bern in neighboring Lenoir County, Fund members met “an old line, hard core of leadership,” which “although they may not be actually out to realize personal gain from participation in the Fund did not appear to be genuinely interested in the type of thing we are trying to do to break the poverty cycle.” Of the blacks present at the Fund meeting in Kinston, only one spoke and, moreover, he showed no signs that “he

¹⁴⁹ Report on On-Site Visit: New Bern (Craven County), folder 3400, NCFR. Carteret County is located in Eastern North Carolina just below Craven.

¹⁵⁰ “Staff Evaluation of the Craven County Proposal,” folder 3406, NCFR.

had much to do with the planning of the proposal.” There was, in short, a lack of “understanding in the poverty condition in their county” and a deficient “spirit of cooperation among themselves.” Based on these observations, the Fund rightfully concluded that the Kinston proposal was “a very poor bet.”¹⁵¹

Ostensibly, what Kinston lacked Craven County had in abundance. As reiterated in the Fund staff evaluations of late February, the Craven proposal was marked by its thoroughness, its plans for coordination of local departments and resources, and its presentation of creative ideas on how to fight the surrounding problems of poverty such as the “post-primary year” for children who did not perform adequately through the first three grades to be given a chance to catch up to classmates by enrolling in an unstructured class, the “exploration of vocational opportunities” in which children beginning in sixth grade could move toward selecting and preparing for an appropriate future occupation, and a job-finding program for young teenagers and adults. The Fund team was further impressed by plans to broaden the North Carolina Council on Health and Citizenship programs aimed at black youth, of which Willie Dawson was a part, throughout the Craven County school system.¹⁵² The Fund also affirmed its satisfaction that there “was a clear possibility for the involvement of the target group themselves,” as well as a “valid and effective leadership” among “the Negro leadership present.”¹⁵³ It

¹⁵¹ Report on On-Site Visit: Kinston (Lenoir County), folder 3400, NCFR.

¹⁵² “Staff Evaluation of the Craven County Proposal,” folder 3406, NCFR.

¹⁵³ In the North Carolina Fund’s *Red Book*, at least one of which was mailed to each group of major

followed then that “the Craven County proposal” would be regarded as “an excellent demonstration of a comprehensive, community-based approach to poverty,” which “has high potential for success” and “is strongly recommended for a major grant.”¹⁵⁴ When it came time for the Fund’s ranking of submitted proposals, Craven received a unanimous vote of “yes” to join the top fifteen sites.¹⁵⁵

Governor Sanford announces first seven North Carolina Fund community action programs, April 1964

In mid-April, the Fund’s board of directors met in Asheville to make their final selection of the eleven communities to be awarded grant funding. It was also agreed that seven projects were to be announced on April 20 followed by the remaining four a few months later. As scheduled, Esser and Fund board members accompanied Governor Sanford to the state capitol press room to name the first seven community action project winners; among those communities to make the cut was Craven County.¹⁵⁶ Following Sanford’s pronouncement, Esser took the floor to express how “North Carolina’s communities have surprised people all over the nation by reacting as they have to the

leaders in all one hundred counties of North Carolina, it was stated that “If we are to have significant results, each community must seek to understand life as do those living under conditions of poverty, and plan its program to take these facts into consideration.” In other words, antipoverty programs could not be carried out solely by “community agencies, civic leaders, and informed consultants.” See Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 91.

¹⁵⁴ “Staff Evaluation of the Craven County Proposal,” folder 3406, NCFR.

¹⁵⁵ Hand-written list of proposal sites, folder 3406, NCFR.

¹⁵⁶ Barnes, “The North Carolina Fund: A Progress Report,” 4. The other community sites chosen on April 20 were Durham County, Forsyth County, Mecklenburg County, Nash-Edgecombe Counties, Richmond, Robeson, and Scotland Counties, and Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, and Yancey Counties. Community Projects Selected by the North Carolina Fund, April 20, 1964, folder 3407, NCFR.

Fund's call to action." "Acting only on the prospect of getting a few fundamental dollars for their communities," he added, "leaders in 66 out of the state's 100 counties have met and talked and planned ways to give a better chance to those of our citizens in the cycle of poverty." As for the initial group of seven projects, it was apparent to Esser that they represented "the kind of cross-section of communities that is essential if we are to find and demonstrate ways to open up opportunity, and help people throw off frustration and despair."¹⁵⁷

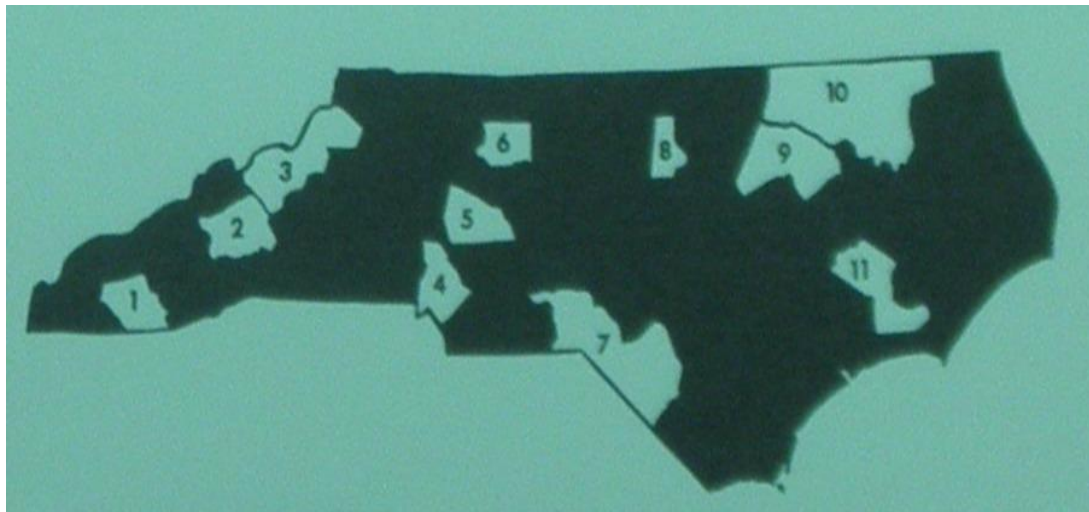


Figure 8. Location of eleven North Carolina Fund Community Action Programs, 1964. Number eleven is Craven County. (Source: Folder 673, North Carolina Council on Human Relations, Southern Historical Collection.)

Such a cross-section had not resulted by accident. Among the criteria that had factored in the selection process was the Fund's belief that the communities selected needed to be "well spread over the entire state," with a good balance between rural and

¹⁵⁷ Statement by George Esser at announcement of initial Fund projects, April 20, 1964, folder 5, NCFR.

urban areas as well as large cities and small towns.¹⁵⁸ The Fund understood especially well that it was just as vital to tackle rural poverty as it was to tackle urban poverty given, that “as poverty and lack of opportunity push more and more people from the land, the problems of all cities are increased by the congregation of the unskilled, by unemployment, and the delinquency attendant upon ignorance and frustration.”¹⁵⁹ Other standards that informed the selection process included whether the proposal was feasible, whether it involved the target group itself, and whether the community’s plans could be carried on after Fund support was withdrawn. Knowing that their community action projects would be utilized as national models if the Economic Opportunity Act passed, the North Carolina Fund did not merely award grants based on the severity of the problem of poverty but looked to areas where they were confident that their efforts and resources could achieve maximum results.

Even though Craven County fit each of these above criteria, Esser admitted years later that “we were almost writing eastern North Carolina off in our thinking, despite its great need, because we knew that Ford would insist on the involvement of both races wherever we worked, and eastern North Carolina was deeply segregated.”¹⁶⁰ His willingness to give Craven a try ultimately won out over his original fear. It probably did not hurt that during the initial on-site visit of New Bern, one of his black staffers, William

¹⁵⁸ Barnes, “The North Carolina Fund: A Progress Report,” 4.

¹⁵⁹ Editorial: “Seed Bed of Poverty,” *News & Observer*, December 17, 1963; Statement by George Esser, April 20, 1964, folder 5, NCFR.

¹⁶⁰ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 27.

Darity, who had just recently become the first non-white student to receive a doctoral degree from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health, became without any uproar or visible difficulty the first black guest to stay overnight at the Governor Tryon Hotel.¹⁶¹

Craven Operation Progress (COP) is born, June 1964

Once Bill Flowers received the letter from Fund board member C.A. McKnight confirming Craven's grantee status, events surrounding the county's campaign to fight poverty moved at a dizzying pace. Along with the six other recently-named community action projects, Craven County was immediately made eligible for three experimental programs including a pre-school nursery program and a reading-writing-arithmetic curriculum sponsored by the State Board of Education, in addition to the North Carolina Volunteers program, in which college student volunteers from across the state were assigned to assist the Fund's antipoverty programs during the summer.¹⁶² Shortly thereafter, on May 7, Flowers, Stallings, and Ted Collier drove to Rocky Mount, North Carolina, where President Johnson flew in by helicopter to learn of the area's economic problems and to discuss with Governor Sanford the solutions that the Fund planned to implement.¹⁶³ Later in the month, the Fund staff team of Darity, William Koch and Jack Mansfield visited New Bern to instruct Craven's board members on the Fund's

¹⁶¹ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 94; B.S. Rivers, interview by John Miller, transcript, New Bern, NC, January 19, 1966, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹⁶² "Statement by George Esser," April 20, 1964, folder 5, NCFR.

¹⁶³ Nora Kennel, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 25, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR; "The President and the Fund," *Popular Government* 30 (June 1964): 6.

procedures and on June 30, 1964 the articles of incorporation for “Craven Operation Progress” (COP), as the local antipoverty program had been newly entitled, were completed. The North Carolina Secretary of State quickly certified that COP was found to conform to the law on July 1 and six days later the new community action program received an \$11,075 organizational grant from the Fund to begin planning its assault on poverty.¹⁶⁴ At a board of directors meeting led by D.L. Stallings on July 8, the COP board was finalized for the time being by adding thirteen local leaders including four at-large representatives from the black community: Sneed, Dawson, and Hill from the Craven proposal committee, and former New Bern NAACP president Robert M. Whitehead. To cap off COP’s swift progression between April and July, a delegation of policy planners from Washington, D.C. arrived the next day for breakfast at the Governor Tryon Hotel to observe the work already being done by volunteers in COP.¹⁶⁵ Still, there remained one last order of business for Craven’s emergent community action program: an executive director had not yet been named.

¹⁶⁴ Recommended Organizational Administrative Grants for Eleven Approved Comprehensive Community Projects, 1964, folder 5001, NCFR.

¹⁶⁵ Craven Operation Progress (COP) board meeting minutes, July 8, 1964, folder 4965, NCFR.



Figure 9. North Carolina Fund staff members on an on-site visit to Craven Operation Progress, New Bern, NC, 1964, from left to right: James Gray, William Koch, Jr., and William Darity. Photograph by Billy E. Barnes, courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Billy E. Barnes Collection.

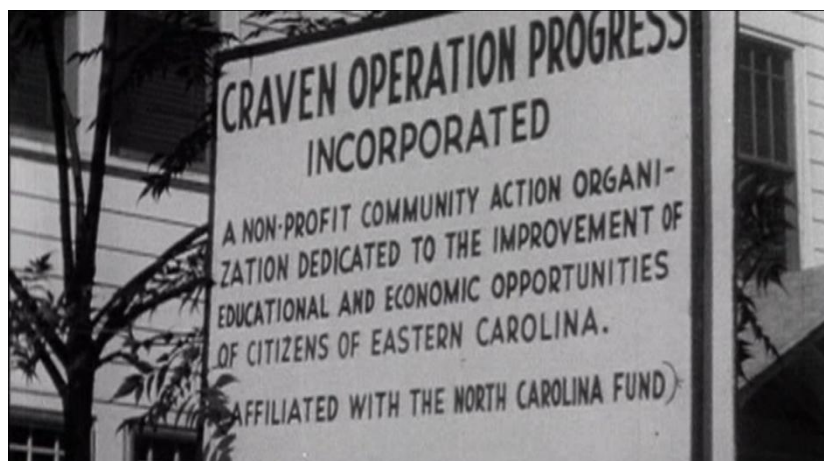


Figure 10. Sign designating location of Craven Operation Progress building, 1964. Still image from *Change Comes Knocking: The Story of the North Carolina Fund*, 2008.

COP hires its first executive director

The staff of the North Carolina Fund recommended a bright and articulate thirty-two- year-old former government legal assistant named James Hearn as their top

choice.¹⁶⁶ Originally from Massachusetts, Hearn held several graduate degrees including a degree in law from New York Law School. Following his employment as a legal assistant for the Housing and Home Finance Agency, he volunteered as a special assistant to the Democratic Campaign Committee between 1961 and 1962 and worked as a paid administrator in India for the humanitarian organization CARE, Inc. until November 1963.¹⁶⁷ For the purposes of the North Carolina Fund, Hearn's true relevance lay in his recent service as a staff consultant on the President's Task Force on the War Against Poverty in the area of management and administration of the proposed Job Corps program. The board members of Craven Operation Progress were naturally intrigued by his credentials. Also, in part to avoid controversy in selecting between two top local contenders for the position, Stallings and others were also interested in hiring a director from outside of the area.¹⁶⁸ At a board meeting on July 13, a motion was made by Commissioner Stallings, seconded by Robert M. Whitehead, to appoint a committee to visit Washington, D.C. to "investigate Mr. Hearn."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 112.

¹⁶⁷ Hearn also held graduate degrees in anthropology, history, and economics from the University of New Mexico, Oxford University, and the University of London, respectively. See James J. Hearn, North Carolina Fund Application for Employment, folder 4983, NCFR.

¹⁶⁸ Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress, p. 2, folder 5024, NCFR.

¹⁶⁹ COP board meeting minutes, July 13, 1964, folder 4965, NCFR.



Figure 11. James J. Hearn, First Executive Director of Craven Operation Progress, August 1964-October 1965. Courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Hearn was actually vacationing in North Carolina with his wife, COP board members Stallings and Frank Efird would learn. And, conveniently for them, Hearn agreed to meet the two men at his vacation spot. Hearn's interview was apparently impressive. He discussed in great detail his experience as a government lawyer, which communicated a broad knowledge on financial law and how to obtain funds that Stallings and Efird found especially appealing. Hearn also showed much confidence that the war on poverty would be more than an empty slogan for the people of Eastern North Carolina, understanding that when Craven's people were prepared major industries would be willing to build new plants in the county to bring investment that could bring stable prosperity to the region.¹⁷⁰ Subsequently, following board approval, Hearn was officially hired as the Craven Operation Progress Project Director on August 4. The Fund also

¹⁷⁰ James K. Batten, "Confident Poverty Fighter," *Charlotte Observer*, April 5, 1965.

provided the new director with two young Community Action Technicians (CAT) to assist the start of COP.¹⁷¹

Conclusion

Shortly after arriving in New Bern, Hearn moved in next-door to COP board member Robert M. Whitehead in a predominately black neighborhood.¹⁷² An unmistakable liberal on issues of race, Hearn believed strongly that segregation was a primary reason behind black poverty in the way it erected barriers to black economic mobility. In his application to the North Carolina Fund, when asked, “are you willing to work with people of different ethnic backgrounds?” he pithily responded, “I was brought up to believe and practice the single belief that all men are created equal.”¹⁷³ And he certainly did not water down his philosophy while in Craven County. North Carolina Fund staff were indeed wary that Hearn had “qualities that might not make him the most easily acceptable person in a southern community.”¹⁷⁴ Yet despite being an outsider from Washington who was openly liberal about race relations, Hearn was largely welcomed by COP and a substantial portion of the broader community from the start because of their corresponding interests in reducing poverty in the area. Things would soon change when Craven became part of a Washington-run War on Poverty.

¹⁷¹ David Entin, “North Carolina County Paces Nation in Community Action Against Poverty,” *The County Officer*, February 1965, p. 13.

¹⁷² Mrs. Grady McCotter, interview by John Miller, July 26, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

¹⁷³ James J. Hearn, North Carolina Fund Application for Employment, folder 4983, NCFR.

¹⁷⁴ “Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress,” p. 2-3, folder 5024, NCFR.

CHAPTER III

COMMITTED TO PROGRESS

Introduction

Soon after executive director Jim Hearn applied for and received federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) funds for Craven Operation Progress (COP), community action began to take a decidedly aggressive turn in Craven County, especially as it related to race relations. Hearn's assertiveness in pushing for rapid change was fueled by several factors, including his general distrust of local whites as incapable and unwilling to make efforts to open up economic opportunity to all and his desire to take advantage of the vast amount of federal money made available for the War on Poverty. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, Craven County leaders' commitment to progress and greater well-being for all in 1964 and 1965, which was manifested in their broad accommodation to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, courage to stand up to the regeneration of the local Ku Klux Klan, and their efforts to attract higher-paying industries to the area, explains a good deal behind their decision to stay on with COP despite the controversy Hearn was creating in the local community. Their commitment to community progress also underlay their willingness to broaden representation for local blacks and the poor.

The launching of the federal War on Poverty, August 1964

When President Johnson signed the \$947 million Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) on August 20, 1964, he pledged at once a new day of opportunity for the nation's

thirty million poor and a new and expansive domestic role for the federal government.¹ For the first time in the nation's history, the leadership in Washington, D.C. attempted to eradicate the central causes of poverty in American communities from countryside to ghetto. As Johnson announced at the White House bill-signing ceremony, the War on Poverty would not simply ameliorate poverty's effects or make poverty more comfortable for the poor to withstand. Partially borrowing from the philosophy of the North Carolina Fund, the goal of the federally-funded antipoverty programs was instead to "break the cycle of poverty" by helping the poor lift themselves out of "the ruts of poverty" so that they may join the majority of Americans in sharing in the nation's prosperity. "We are not content to accept the endless growth of relief rolls or welfare rolls," the president proclaimed just before signing the bill. "We want to offer the forgotten fifth of our people opportunity and not doles." As Johnson promised that day, "The days of the dole in our country are numbered."² As reflected above, an anti-welfare sentiment greatly informed the president's War on Poverty. Believing that the "crumbling black family [was] at the center of America's economic and social problems," Johnson and his antipoverty coalition openly condemned the welfare system, namely Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which primarily provided cash assistance to single black mothers, as being the biggest threat to the male-breadwinner family structure and ideal. In line with Patrick Moynihan's controversial report on the "crisis" of the black family, released in

¹ At the time the War on Poverty began, the poverty line was set at a \$3,000 annual income for a family of four.

² Marjorie Hunter, "Johnson Signs Bill to Fight Poverty; Pledges New Era," *New York Times*, August 21, 1964.

August 1964, Johnson and fellow antipoverty liberals were convinced that black disadvantage could be most effectively reversed only when the black family structure (a.k.a. a two-parent household) could be stabilized, and that the black family structure could be stabilized only when black men were given adequate opportunities to support their families.³

President Johnson's bid to make "taxpayers out of taxeaters" was a highly attractive segment of his antipoverty agenda, especially among the fiscally conservative congressmen within the Southern Democratic ranks whose constituents most ardently spoke out in favor of the American tradition of self-reliance and who were vehemently opposed to single, nonwhite, stay-at-home mothers who, in the words of Senator Russell Long of Louisiana, mooched off the hard-working citizens who "work by the sweat of their brow to make an honest living."⁴ Ironically, though, as many scholars have pointed out, Johnson's bill did relatively little (outside providing increased funding for daycare programs) to help female welfare recipients find employment in order to become self-sufficient. Instead, many of the federal antipoverty programs, such as Job Corps, not only provided fewer slots for female participants than males but often emphasized a woman's primary role as wife, homemaker and mother.⁵ "Putting able-bodied men to work,"

³ Chappell, *The War on Welfare*, 50-53.

⁴ Marjorie Hunter, "Johnson Signs Bill to Fight Poverty; Pledges New Era," *New York Times*, August 21, 1964; Chappell, *The War on Welfare*, 52.

⁵ Jennifer Mittelstadt, *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 139-141; Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 73-75; Chappell, *The War on Welfare*, 40-47; Kathleen Laughlin, *Women's Work and Public Policy: A History of*

argues Marisa Chappell, “was the main goal of the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty.”⁶ As the thinking went at the time, black women’s welfare would rise with the tide of the creation of black male breadwinners.

While the bill received a degree of bipartisan support—twenty-two Republicans in the House and ten in the Senate voted in its favor—the largest support group, behind the mostly liberal Democrats in the Northern states, were Southern Democrats. In the House alone, sixty out of one hundred Southern representatives voted for the measure.⁷ For supporters like Senator James Fulbright of Arkansas, the bill was “not merely another program of charity which only temporarily release the symptoms of poverty” but was also one whose “purpose is to educate” in order to abate “cultural and material privation in America.” Above all, Senator Fulbright remarked, the bill “is a chance for those who carp about welfare costs to strike at the conditions which necessitate them.”⁸ In addition to the billions of dollars that would be saved in welfare spending, Georgia Congressman Phil Landrum also found much to praise in Johnson’s bill, particularly its color-blind nature. “Any assistance it may provide toward eliminating the plight of poverty affecting Americans of all races,” he declared, “is a source of pride for me.”⁹

the Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, 1945-1970 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 115-117.

⁶ Chappell, *The War on Welfare*, 40.

⁷ John C. Donovan, *The Politics of Poverty*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1973), 36.

⁸ Senator Fulbright (AK), “Economic Opportunity Act of 1964,” *Congressional Record* 110: 13 (July 23, 1964), 16761, 16764.

⁹ Marjorie Hunter, “Landrum Defies GOP on Poverty,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1964; Susan Youngblood Ashmore, “Southern Accents: The Politics of Race and the Economic Opportunity Act of

There were naturally a few quid pro quos involved for such a high degree of Southern support for a bill that promised to further the aims of Johnson's Great Society, a major component of which was the Civil Rights Act of 1964.¹⁰ Led by states' rights champion Richard Russell of Georgia, Southern senators successfully pushed for an amendment authorizing governors to veto the Job Corps or the Community Action Program. Similarly, Southern congressmen inserted a section in the bill that required all Job Corps enrollees and VISTA volunteers to take a loyalty oath swearing that they did not advocate overthrowing the government.¹¹ In exchange for the votes of several North Carolina Democratic representatives, the Johnson Administration had to promise that an antipoverty post would not be given to Adam Yarmolinsky, a former official in the Kennedy Defense Department who had declared segregated facilities off-limits to military personnel and who had attended several meetings of the Young Communist League when he was a young man.¹² Eager to achieve a major legislative victory, the Johnson White House was inclined to agree to these seemingly minor demands for fear

1964" in *History & Hope in the Heart of Dixie: Scholarship, Activism, and Wayne Flynt in the Modern South*, eds. Gordon E. Harvey, Richard D. Starnes, and Glenn Feldman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 40, 46.

¹⁰ As Congressman Howard Smith of Virginia warned his fellow representatives, "the members from the South who are going to vote for this [Economic Opportunity] bill—and I know there a lot who are going to vote for it—that they are voting to implement the civil rights bill that they opposed and voted against" Ashmore, "Southern Accents," 45. Among the Democratic Congressmen from North Carolina, six out of the seven who supported the EOA had voted against the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964 a month earlier. NC Congressman Basil L. Whitener, who supported the EOA, did not vote on the CRA of 1964. See "How House Cast Votes on Rights Bill," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1964.

¹¹ Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 129-131.

¹² Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 132-133; "Flawed Poverty Bill," *New York Times*, August 13, 1964.

that any stalling in Congress might defeat the antipoverty bill altogether. Seven of the eleven North Carolina members of the U.S. House of Representatives voted in support of the Economic Opportunity Act.¹³

And with swiftness the bill did move. Only six months separated the antipoverty bill's enactment from the first meeting of Johnson's War on Poverty Task Force.

Professor of Government and Legal Studies John C. Donovan contended at the time that no single piece of domestic legislation of "similar importance and scope moved so rapidly and easily through the congress in a quarter of a century." "One would have to go back to FDR's one hundred days in 1933, that classic time of executive dominance over congress," he emphasized, "to find a clear precedent."¹⁴ In addition to influencing the speed at which the Economic Opportunity Act was presented before Congress, the executive branch likewise determined the bulk of the bill's language, as most of the antipoverty ideas came directly from officials within Johnson's administration, including Johnson himself. In the words of War on Poverty task force member James L. Sundquist, the War on Poverty was without a doubt "the administration's war."¹⁵ The cruelties of poverty were a particular soft spot for Johnson, who had personally escaped poverty as a

¹³ All seven of the supporters from North Carolina were Democrats. The four who voted against the bill included Republicans James T. Broyhill and Charles R. Jonas and Democrats Alton A. Lennon and Ralph J. Scott. In the U.S. Senate, the EOA received unanimous support from North Carolina's Senators, Democrats Sam J. Ervin and Everett B. Jordan. See "Economic Opportunity Act of 1964," *Congressional Record* 110: 14 (August 8, 1964), 18634; "Senate Rejects Three Restrictive Poverty Bill Amendments; Cuts One Program; Adopts 'States Rights' Rider; Passes Bill, 61-34." *Congressional Record* 110: 13(July 24, 1964), 1566-1567.

¹⁴ Donovan, *The Politics of Poverty*, 37.

¹⁵ James L. Sundquist, "Origins of the War on Poverty," in *On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience*, ed. James L. Sundquist (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 29.

young man and who, during the deepening of the Great Depression, had taught the destitute children of Mexican-American migrant workers in rural Texas and served as a state director of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's National Youth Administration (NYA). President Johnson understood better than most members of his administration that if a man was poor, "the consequences were that he had little education, that he received inadequate medical care and substandard nutrition, that he lived in crowded and unsanitary conditions" and "had no real chance to train for a decent job," making escape from poverty near impossible.¹⁶

As a result of his past experiences both as a poverty insider and as an enthusiastic supporter of Roosevelt's New Deal agenda, Johnson would understandably envision a bold set of government-led reform programs to eliminate permanently the core causes of a lack of income, as he understood it. Centered primarily on enhanced educational opportunities for the underprivileged, Johnson's War on Poverty was to be "a war not only on economic deprivation but on the tragic waste of human resources."¹⁷ This belief in the nation's need for expansive antipoverty programs would only be bolstered in the weeks just prior to Johnson's signing of the Economic Opportunity Act into law. Within that period—between July 18 and August 17, 1964—eight sizeable riots initiated by black males flared in major urban areas of the North and Northeast, including Harlem,

¹⁶ Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 73.

¹⁷ Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 75; Vice President Herbert Humphrey recalled that Johnson "was a nut on education. He felt that education was the greatest thing he could give to the people; he just believed in it, just like some people believe in miracle cures." See Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 196.

Rochester, Philadelphia, Jersey City, and Dixmoor, Illinois. While most of the riots were triggered by alleged cases of police brutality, the “emotional tension which sought release upon the slightest provocation” appeared to be fed by overcrowding, lack of sound educational, recreation, and health facilities, little or no family stability, high unemployment due to both racial discrimination and low skills, and other dimensions of an impoverished lifestyle.¹⁸ In a private telephone conversation with Texas Congressman George H. Mahon in late July, an irritated President Johnson pledged that his poverty bill would “stop these damn riots.” Complaining to the congressman about young boys sitting around pool halls with nothing to do and with no work ethic, Johnson discussed his plan to “put 150,000 of them to work in 90 days times on useful, hard-working projects,” in order to “teach them some discipline and when to get up, and how to work all day.” Johnson boasted that in two years “I’ll have them trained, where they can at least drive a truck instead of sitting around a pool room.”¹⁹ When making his remarks to the nation at the signing of the Economic Opportunity Act on August 20, Johnson was speaking from an honest belief that “[i]n helping others, all of us will really be helping ourselves.” For the president, it was an unmistakable truth that “every dollar spent will result in savings to the country and especially to the local taxpayers in the cost of crime, welfare, of

¹⁸ Peter Kihss, “Harlem Riots Spread Over 3 Decades,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1964.

¹⁹ President Johnson and George Mahon, telephone conversation, July 29, 1964, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, accessed on May 21, 2010, <http://www.whitehousetapes.net/clips/1964_0729_waronpoverty/>

health, and of police protection.”²⁰ Yet, despite the obvious—and intentional—ways that the War on Poverty fell in line with the trajectory of the civil rights movement and its chief goals of greater employment and advancement opportunities for black Americans, Johnson and his administration made every effort in the beginning, in the words of scholar David Zarefsky, “to portray economic deprivation and race as two distinct fates.”²¹

Although the federal role was not spelled out especially clearly in the beginning, it was widely understood that the War on Poverty was to be a coordinated effort between federal and local entities. The federal government would supply the vast amount of the money needed to administer War on Poverty programs at the local level, but the antipoverty effort was *not* to be “completely centralized in Washington.”²² Johnson told the House of Representatives in March 1964 that poverty cannot “be conquered by government alone,” and called on the cooperation of private individuals and local businesses to continue to offer economic opportunities to those in need.²³ In public,

²⁰ Lyndon Baines Johnson, “Remarks on Signing the Economic Opportunity Act” (August 20, 1964) in *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives*, eds. Michael W. Flamm and David Steigerwald (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 83-84.

²¹ Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, 103; Gareth Davies adds that “The War on Poverty would come to be viewed by liberals as an arm of the civil rights struggle, but in 1964 this was manifestly not the case. Committed individualists in a time of great optimism, they favored the color-blind approach that both philosophical conviction and political expediency demanded.” See Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 45.

²² Richard H. Leach, “The Federal Role in the War on Poverty Program,” in *Anti-Poverty Programs*, ed. Robinson O. Everett (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1966), 20-22.

²³ President Lyndon B. Johnson, Message from the President of the United States Relative to Poverty,

Johnson revealed what appeared to be a genuine trust in local communities to being able to help solve the problem of poverty. Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, who was soon to become Johnson's vice president, agreed that "government alone cannot solve the problem" of poverty. "In the final analysis," Humphrey remarked, "it is the union of government, private industry, and free labor which gets the job done."²⁴ Similarly, Office of Economic Opportunity director Sargent Shriver praised the draft bill authorizing the War on Poverty precisely for "the extent of its reliance on local leadership and initiative."²⁵

Of the major components of the Economic Opportunity Act, none was more closely related to the belief "that local citizens best understand their own problems, and know best how to deal with those problems" than the Community Action Program (CAP). Summarizing the proposed trajectory of community action, Johnson affirmed that "[t]hese are not plans prepared in Washington and imposed upon hundreds of different situations." Instead, "these plans will be local plans."²⁶ By design, a community action program was to be a voluntary effort to mobilize the total resources of a local community—including the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor—to come up

and a Draft of a Bill to Mobilize the Human and Financial Resources of the Nation to Combat Poverty in the United States, March 16, 1964, House of Representatives, Eighty-Eighth Congress, Second session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964).

²⁴ Richard H. Leach, "The Federal Role in the War on Poverty Program" in Everett, *Anti-Poverty Programs*, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁶ Johnson, Message from the President of the United States Relative to Poverty, and a Draft of a Bill to Mobilize the Human and Financial Resources of the Nation to Combat Poverty in the United States, March 16, 1964, House of Representatives.

with innovative antipoverty program ideas, better administer existing programs and, if necessary, effect needed social reform towards the elimination of poverty.²⁷ As spelled out in the OEO Community Action Workbook, the War on Poverty was not to be another paternalistic or charitable program but was based instead on the notion that “one of the major problems of the poor is that they are not in a position to influence the policies, procedures, and objectives of the organizations responsible for their welfare.”²⁸ Just prior to the passage of the EOA, the House Committee on Education and Labor emphasized the limits of the role of the federal government by defining its purpose thus: “to give counsel and help, *when requested*, and to make available substantial assistance in meeting the costs of those programs.”²⁹ As originally laid out by the Johnson administration, the federal government was not to exceed its supportive role.³⁰ But the War on Poverty would go far beyond this early notion by eventually forging direct links between a national poverty office and local groups with varying compositions and notions of what a real war on poverty should look like.

Other key components of the Economic Opportunity bill, including Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), VISTA, and even the administrative arm of the Office of Economic Opportunity that was designed to prevent a series of uncoordinated efforts, also promised to coordinate with local people and ideas. And while Americans had never before

²⁷ Donovan, *The Politics of Poverty*, 40.

²⁸ Charles E. Silberman, “The Mixed-Up War on Poverty,” *Fortune*, August 1965, 158.

²⁹ Leach, “The Federal Role,” in Everett, *Anti-Poverty Programs*, 24.

³⁰ O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 164.

witnessed such an ambitious amount of legislation that would involve the federal government in the economic, social, and education spheres of the nation, the War on Poverty was at least presented, if not wholly envisioned, as a predominately hometown fight. As the *Providence Journal* and various other newspapers across the nation observed, the War on Poverty was placing “most of the responsibility for initiating and operating programs on the state and local governments” rather than “building any big, new federal bureaucracy.”³¹ Both due to Americans’ general fondness for local autonomy and their appeal to causes that they believe to be moral, urgent, and in the interest of the nation, Sargent Shriver would be able to boast to Congress that “One of the most important and exciting things about the war on poverty is that all of America is joining in. Religious groups, professional groups, labor groups, civic and patriotic groups are all rallying to the call.”³² Though for varying reasons, conservatives and liberals alike could be found in support of major tenets of a national fight to increase economic opportunity.

COP applies for OEO funds

Shortly after the EOA passed both houses of Congress, leaders at the North Carolina Fund required each of its eleven community action programs to apply for federal money from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in order to keep receiving Fund money.³³ Financial considerations supplied a good deal of motivation.

³¹ “The Bill To Fight Poverty,” *Providence Journal*, July 21, 1964, reprinted in *Congressional Record* 110: 13 (July 23, 1964), p. 16760.

³² Charles E. Silberman, “The Mixed-Up War on Poverty,” *Fortune*, August 1965, 156.

³³ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 93.

“No board member [of the Fund],” reasoned Executive Director George Esser, “could conscientiously spend private dollars for experimental programs when public dollars were available for the same purposes.”³⁴ As stipulated in Title II of the new antipoverty bill, federal funds would pay up to 90 percent of the expenses of any government-sponsored community action agency in the first two years and up to 50 percent in the succeeding years. Jim Hearn quickly applied for CAP status on behalf of COP in October 1964, making the application from Craven County the first rural proposal in the nation to be sent to the OEO. It would also be the first rural county to be awarded federal money under the War on Poverty. In the following month, OEO announced COP (now encompassing Craven, Jones, and Pamlico counties, as well as portions of the outlying counties of Lenoir, Carteret, and Onslow) as a recipient of a one-year federal CAP grant worth \$125,270 towards which Craven County contributed approximately \$40,000. Craven County’s public welfare departments also received an additional \$240,000 from OEO to provide job training for approximately 240 unemployed heads of households.³⁵ As a North Carolina Fund site, Craven Operation Progress certainly had “several legs up actually in this process,” explained North Carolina Fund Research Director Michael Brooks. In fact, New Bern was one the first communities in the nation to receive an OEO grant, largely “because they were sort of ready, they were off and running and had been

³⁴ George H. Esser, Jr., “The Role of a State-Wide Foundation in the War on Poverty,” in Everett, *Anti-Poverty Programs*, 96.

³⁵ Office of Economic Opportunity, For Release AMs, Wednesday, November 25, 1964, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers; “Plans Go to Washington Craven War on Poverty, *Sun Journal*, October 7, 1964; Roy Parker, Jr., “Craven Co. Chosen in Poverty War,” *News & Observer*, November 25, 1964.

working for a while.”³⁶ For Governor Sanford, early federal grants like those awarded to Craven were “indicative that our state is ready to participate in President Johnson’s war against poverty.”³⁷ Accordingly, as the *Raleigh News & Observer* editorialized, “Those who have taken on the job in Craven County will be watched with keen interest throughout the state.”³⁸

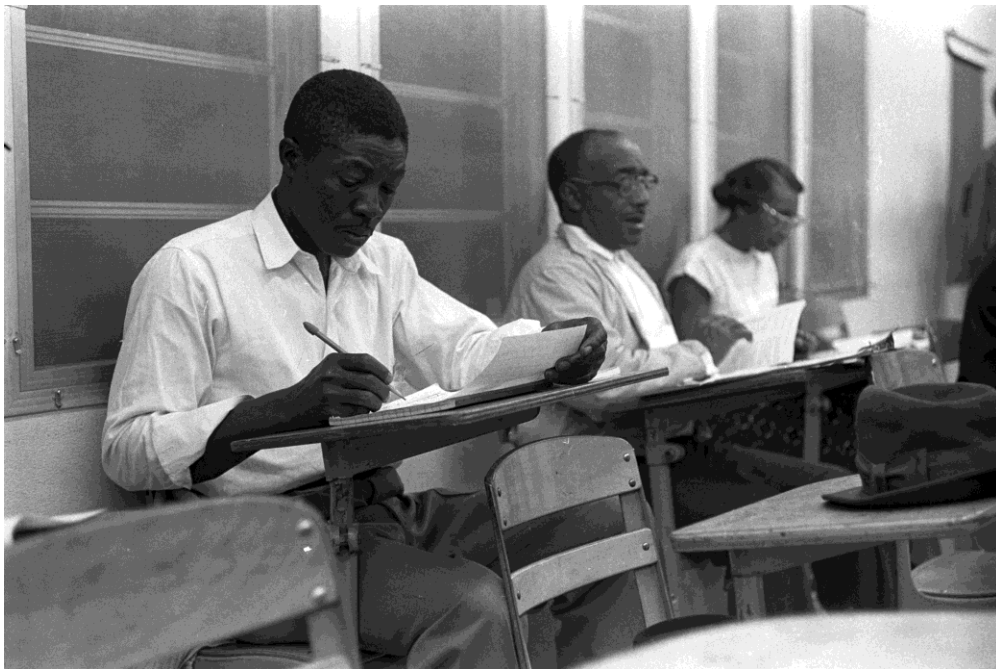


Figure 12. Three older blacks participating in adult literacy classes in Craven County, North Carolina, November 1964. Photograph by Billy E. Barnes, courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Billy E. Barnes Collection.

³⁶ Michael P. Brooks, interview by Rebecca Cereese, transcript in possession of James L. Leloudis. Manpower Training, for instance, which was the last program implemented in Craven County before Jim Hearn applied for an OEO grant had been in full operation for at least one week prior to the awarding of federal money.

³⁷ Roy Parker, Jr., “Craven Co. Chosen in Poverty War,” *News & Observer*, November 25, 1964.

³⁸ “Beginning the Fight,” *News & Observer*, November 27, 1964.

In a letter to OEO director Sargent Shriver, Craven Operation Progress board chairman Larry B. Pate, a self-employed farmer and wealthy landowner originally from Lenoir County, voiced his appreciation for the “programs funded by your office for our county [which] will substantially contribute to permanently improving the lives of many of our most disadvantaged citizens.” Speaking on behalf of himself and the other COP members, Pate “hoped that these efforts will eventually enable people living in poverty to become contributing citizens to our community rather than a burden to our society and our economy.” The recognition that poverty jeopardized the well being of the entire community, including those of the middle- and upper-classes, also underlay New Bern’s concurrent urban renewal plans. “Concern over the conditions that exist in residential neighborhood need not originate solely from a humanitarian impulse to improve the lot of slum dwellers,” read a September 1964 “Neighborhood Analysis” report compiled by the New Bern Planning Board and city aldermen. “[Slum dwellers] place a disproportionately high demand on the city for such services as police protection, fire protection and welfare payments.” What was worse, the report continued, slum areas furnished “a medium in which crime can flourish and through which disease and fire can spread easily,” which constituted “a hazard to surrounding areas and to any individual who passes through them [and] if conditions are bad enough, shoppers will avoid this trip as often as possible or forsake the central business district altogether for an outlying shopping area.” Thus, because “such areas benefit no one,” the existence of “blight and blighted areas in the city

should be of paramount concern to every citizen.” “It is not only morally good to eliminate and control blight, it is economically sound,” the report concluded.³⁹

Pate’s letter to Shriver also underscored how locals in COP saw their efforts to combat poverty as morally right, especially now that they seemingly had the resources to do so. “It would indeed be a shame,” Pate insisted, “if our prosperous county were to allow the paradox of poverty amidst plenty to continue,” seeing that “the programs that your office has approved represent a real beginning” of a “deadly assault upon the cruel enemy.” In closing, Pate assured Shriver that “The money you are entrusting will be wisely spent,” stressing that “every dollar” will be accounted for and “most effectively utilized to accomplish the noble aims of the War on Poverty.”⁴⁰ On behalf of the Craven County Commissioners, D. L. Stallings sent a similar letter to Shriver, vowing that he and his fellow commissioners would do “everything in [their] powers to ensure the successful implementation” of the Community Action Program.⁴¹ From their letters, Pate and Stallings communicated a clear awareness of OEO’s high hopes for Craven Operation Progress as a model among rural CAAs.

³⁹ *Neighborhood Analysis: New Bern, North Carolina*. Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Community Planning, September 1964, 4-6, North Carolina Digital Collections, accessed June 23, 2010, <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm4/index.php>.

⁴⁰ Larry B. Pate to Sargent Shriver, November 27, 1964, folder 5047, NCFR.

⁴¹ D. Livingstone Stallings to Sargent Shriver, September 29, 1964, folder 5047, NCFR.

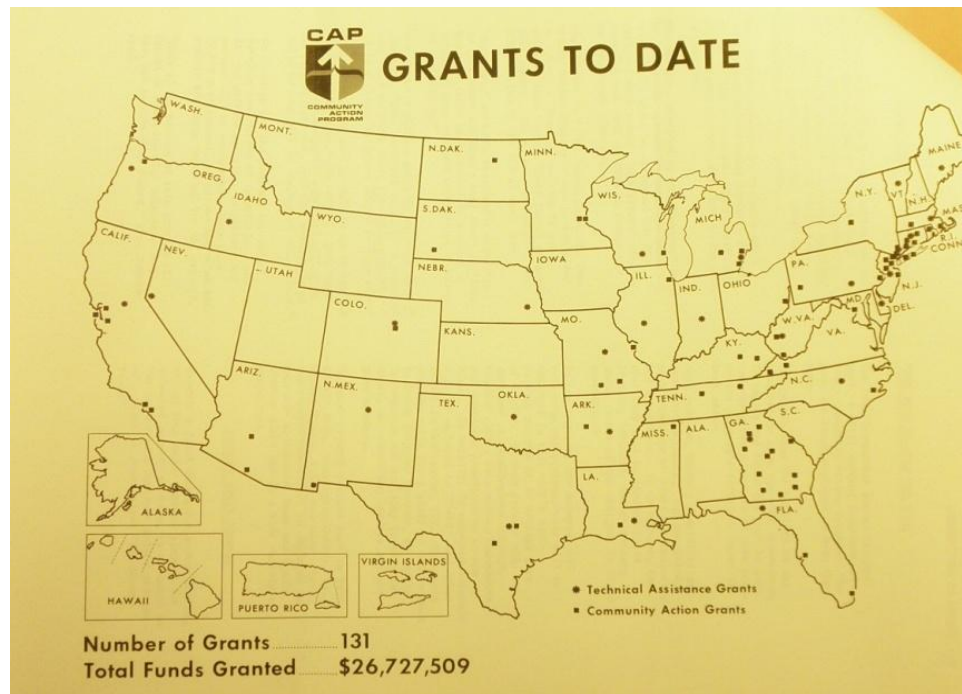


Figure 13. Community Action and Technical Assistance Grants issued by Office of Economic Opportunity as of early 1965. *Communities in Action* vol. 1, no. 1, box 149, folder 5, David Newton Henderson papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

Eastern North Carolinians get behind antipoverty ideas of self-help

Eastern North Carolinians, in general—not just those inside Craven Operation Progress—similarly saw much promise in the early stages of the War on Poverty.⁴² The novel idea of community action, as understood by local people, was seen to be particularly praiseworthy. An editorial in the conservative-leaning *Kinston Daily Free Press* optimistically predicted that if a community action agency will be a “self-help

⁴² One major exception was the editorial staff at *Havelock Progress* who openly criticized the fact that Craven was “spotlighted in Eastern Carolina as the first Tar Heel county to enter the new era of Pride in Poverty,” citing that the county was far better off than most of the counties in the eastern half of the state in terms of median income, median years of education, number of school drop-outs, and number of unemployed. “Politics, pure and simple,” the newspaper argued, “singled out Craven for this great honor and ignored lesser, more deserving, more needy counties.” See “Oh Great Society, How Wondrous Thou Art!,” *Havelock Progress* (Havelock, NC), December 3, 1964.

program in which education plays a major role it can be beneficial.” There was one sizeable caveat, however, as the *Free Press* maintained: “If it is just another handout, it is unlikely to bring about a major reduction in the ‘pockets of poverty’ that need to be erased from this area and other parts of the country.”⁴³ This estimation of community action was also shared by Congressman David N. Henderson, who represented Craven and the other eastern counties of the second congressional district. Joining with six other Democratic congressmen from North Carolina, Henderson enthusiastically voted in support of community action and all other major aspects of the Economic Opportunity Act from a belief that the use of enhanced education and job training to improve the economic status of the poor was a noble goal.⁴⁴ WRAL-TV executive director Jesse Helms, whose largest and most loyal viewership between 1960 and 1972 was found in Eastern North Carolina, underscored on a March 1964 *Viewpoint* airing that the “plight of the unfortunate members of society is one that ought forever to be high on the active agenda of the people of any nation founded on Christian principles” and, thus, few citizens “are likely to complain about any program, either private or governmental, designed to assist the truly unfortunate.” Yet, Helms would surmise that a war on poverty

⁴³ “Economic Opportunities and Self-Help,” *Kinston Daily Free Press* (Kinston, NC), November 6, 1964. A Pamlico County attorney and county judge similarly supported the War on Poverty with “great deal of enthusiasm” for its potential to “provide productive occupations for young people.” Speaking specifically about the Pamlico County Board of Education’s application for a summer NYC program, he added that “this is a constructive approach toward really doing something about so-called ‘problem youth.’” After all, “Unless wholesome ways are found to use the resulting leisure time [from a lack of employment], our society will pay dearly.” See Bernard B. Mellowell to Honorable Sargent Shriver, December 11, 1964, folder 5092, NCFR.

⁴⁴ David N. Henderson to Mrs. J.N. May, August 16, 1966, box 401, folder 1, Henderson Papers.

could not be genuinely won without first acknowledging the “difference between those who can’t work, and those who won’t work,” perhaps making a reference to single stay-at-home black mothers on AFDC.⁴⁵ Many residents of the eastern half of the state agreed with Helms’ presumption that the problem of poverty could, in fact, be “an individual problem, and often an isolated one.”⁴⁶ Indeed, into the mid-to-late 1960s a majority of black and white North Carolinians alike believed that poverty resulted from a multitude of factors including a lack of education and job training as well as individual issues such as laziness, old age, ill health, or a disability. According to an Oliver Quayle poll conducted for the use of the North Carolina Fund, a majority of each race desired to see most tax dollars spent on either education or new industry rather than on forms of public assistance.⁴⁷

In terms of methods in addressing poverty, seemingly little had changed in the public mind of North Carolina since the New Deal era, when the vast majority of the state’s leaders and citizens also agreed that public welfare was to be a last resort for the impoverished, at least among the able-bodied and non-elderly. In the 1930s, North Carolina ranked near the bottom, if not last, in the nation in Works Progress Administration (WPA) spending, Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)

⁴⁵ Jesse Helms, WRAL-TV *Viewpoint* #812, March 11, 1964, North Carolina Collection.

⁴⁶ Jesse Helms, WRAL-TV *Viewpoint* #863, May 21, 1964, North Carolina Collection; “Oh Great Society How Great Thou Art!” *Havelock Progress*, November 3, 1964.

⁴⁷ Oliver Quayle, *North Carolina Fund Poll* Part III: Public Spending, Welfare, and Poverty, Table I (Durham, N.C.: North Carolina Fund, 1968), North Carolina Collection. Polling was conducted in April 1967 among 660 North Carolinians from across the state.

grants, and Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) payments.⁴⁸ By early 1940, savings in tax dollars that would have been spent on relief helped the state maintain its industrial supremacy among fellow southern states while keeping the number of unemployed and/or on work relief to less than 10 percent of the state's population. This turn away from relief preserved the highly-held value of individual self-reliance to which a majority throughout North Carolina seemingly ascribed, including in the East where capable adults were expected to work and contribute to the betterment of themselves, their families, and society.⁴⁹

The espousal of self-sufficiency and individual responsibility that still resonated in the 1960s was not embraced merely by middle-class or upper-class whites who had little or no experience with deep-seated poverty. With the arrival of Craven Operation Progress, some of the most vocal supporters of the poverty program for its potential to broaden the permanent ways out of poverty not achieved by welfare were black citizens such as black COP member John R. Hill, principal of Vanceboro Consolidated School principal, who believed that the creation of Craven Operation Progress was “one of the best things that has ever happened to the county” in providing blacks with the opportunity to find jobs “to support themselves.”⁵⁰ Funeral home director Oscar Dove of New Bern, who had no formal association with COP, agreed that greater education and job training

⁴⁸ Douglas Carl Abrams, *Conservative Constraints: North Carolina and the New Deal* (Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 1992), 157.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 253-255.

⁵⁰ John R. Hill, interview by John Miller, Vanceboro, NC, July 28, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

programs would be most helpful in increasing the economic prospects available to blacks, prospects that, during the 1960s, were still basically limited to low-skilled positions or forms of public assistance.⁵¹ When North Carolina A&T University graduate and Craven County native James Gavin was hired by the all-white firm of Stephens and Caudelli Architects in March 1963, he claimed to have become the first “black white-collar worker” in downtown New Bern. As a result of his own employment as well as the growing influence of the local civil rights movement, Gavin would soon notice a more positive attitude among white downtown employers in hiring black workers, but change that went beyond token measures was still a fairly slow process in the fall of 1964.⁵²

Local commitment to economic development

To be sure, Craven County residents’ generally widespread faith in the early stages of the War on Poverty and its capacity to meaningfully curtail poverty through better education and job training received a boost by the ongoing industrial expansion and economic development in the area. Between January 1963 and August 1964, Eastern North Carolina as a whole experienced a historic industrial surge that brought at least twelve thousand new jobs and a \$42 million increase in take-home pay, resulting in the pumping of over \$190 million in additional investment in the region’s economy.⁵³ By far, the largest new industry to arrive in 1964 was Texasgulf, Inc. of New York whose

⁵¹ Oscar Dove, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 26, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

⁵² James Gavin, interview by John Miller, James City, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

⁵³ “Industrialists Look to Eastern North Carolina,” *Sun Journal*, July 9, 1964.

fertilizer-producing plant was strategically located in the small town of Aurora in nearby Beaufort County, where some of the world's richest sources of phosphate rock were found. Only about thirty miles from the heart of New Bern, Texasgulf would provide hundreds of better-paying jobs for local people, particularly ex-farmers and other semi-skilled workers, in various counties of Eastern North Carolina, including Craven.⁵⁴

Paving the way for Eastern North Carolina's post-1963 industrial boom had been the celebrated arrival of the DuPont Dacron plant in Kinston, which began operation in March 1953. The E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company traveled more than twenty thousand miles and visited approximately ninety possible sites before it selected Kinston as the preferred location for the world's first Dacron polyester fiber plant. Soon thereafter, the *Raleigh News & Observer* lauded it as the beginning of a new trend that would likely see many other industries locate in the eastern half of the state. "It was inevitable that Eastern North Carolina should attract industry," reasoned an editorial. Indeed, "that so large a plant should have been secured...will serve as an example to both large and small plants in other industries." The Kinston plant was also instrumental in providing needed and well sought-after jobs for a local economy that was rapidly losing farm labor. Like Texasgulf, DuPont was in close proximity to the heart of New Bern, and many of its two thousand employees commuted from Craven and other neighboring counties.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Joe A. Mobley, *Pamlico County: A Brief History* (Raleigh, NC: NC Division of Archives and History, 1991), 128.

⁵⁵ William S. Powell, *Annals of Progress: The Story of Lenoir County and Kinston, North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1963), 95-96; DuPont would remain a large

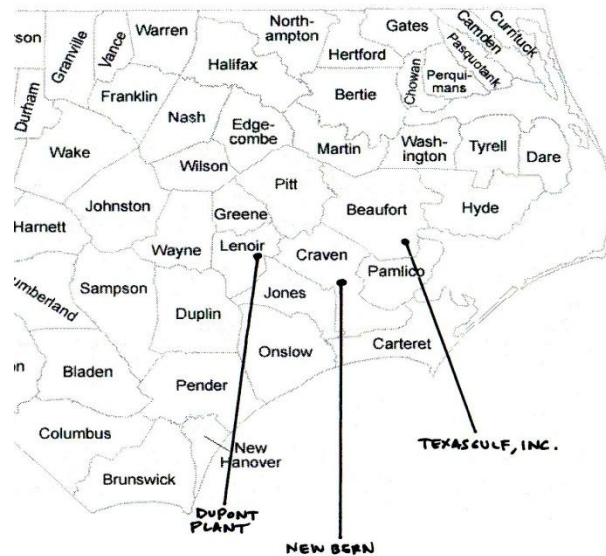


Figure 14. Map of Eastern North Carolina: approximate location of DuPont plant and Texasgulf, Inc. in relation to New Bern, 1964.

For industrialists, the area east of the state capital was attractive for several reasons including the large supply of labor and inexpensive land for plants made possible by the continued mechanization of farming. Northern industrialists especially found the relatively low taxes of the area and reasonable electricity rates (both of which had been steadily declining since World War II) especially marketable. That the region was located in a state with low union participation rates, which meant substantially fewer work stoppages and loss of man-hours, also appealed to businesses seeking maximum productivity.⁵⁶

employer of Eastern North Carolinians until the company officially closed its doors in Kinston in the early 2000s.

⁵⁶ In 1964, over half of the 3,655 work stoppages in the U.S. that led to 22,900 man-days idle occurred in heavily-unionized states including New York (with 420 stoppages), Pennsylvania (with 388), and Ohio

Since at least 1940, a high priority for the self-proclaimed “on-the-go” city of New Bern had been attracting industry and new businesses.⁵⁷ The city’s 1964 urban renewal plan was one the latest attempts to attract additional industry. After all, as New Bern’s “neighborhood analysis” report stated, “Blighted areas are a reflection of the civic pride of the community” for creating a distinct impression in the minds of those who visited the city and “could influence the decision of businessmen and industrialists who are considering the city as a potential location for their business operations or industrial plants.” “Is a community which areas as this the type of community in which I want to locate my business and settle my family?” entrepreneurs must ask themselves, the report maintained.⁵⁸ As economic historian Gavin Wright points out, state and local-level industrial recruitment in the South grew to levels that outpaced the national average because of the introduction of the national minimum wage and decline in traditional low-wage jobs in agriculture, both of which reduced the “regional wage differential” between the South and the rest of the nation while simultaneously reducing the incentive among

(with 340). In comparison, there were only 18 work stoppages and 15 man-days idle in North Carolina in 1964. See U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1965*, No. 341 Work Stoppages By States: 1962 to 1964, 251.

⁵⁷ Gertrude Carraway, “New Bern, North Carolina Industrially: A Modern City with Historic Traditions,” (New Bern: Owen G. Dunn Printing, 1940), Eastern North Carolina Digital Library, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, accessed November 8, 2010, <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/historyfiction/fullview.aspx?id=can>.

⁵⁸ *Neighborhood Analysis: New Bern, North Carolina*. Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Community Planning, September 1964, 5. North Carolina Digital Collections. Although New Bern’s urban redevelopment plans involved re-housing families who lived in the slums to “a suitable environment,” its plans would be put on halt for approximately three years due to protests by members of the black civil rights community who were fearful that urban renewal would create unanticipated hardship for the predominately black population who lived in the “slum areas.” See B.S. Rivers, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, January 19, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

Southern leaders to turn away federal grants and higher-paying jobs.⁵⁹ Following its successful bid to obtain federal grants to build Cherry Point Naval Air Base during World War II, Craven County continued to be among the leaders in Eastern North Carolina in this process of attracting outside capital, most of which came from private sources. It was during the early to mid-1960s that its concessions and cooperation were most successful in securing commercial interest.

In August 1964, with the help of county commission chairman D. Livingstone Stallings, Craven County Schools Superintendent Robert Pugh, and New Bern Chamber of Commerce manager Olin A. Wright—all of whom were serving on the COP board at the time—Stanley Power Tools Company of New Britain, Connecticut, a nationally leading manufacturer of hand tools, agreed to open a plant in New Bern that employed one hundred at the outset with plans to eventually hire up to one thousand.⁶⁰ Stallings' brother, Robert (who had been recently appointed by Governor Sanford as director of NC Department of Conservation and Development), also played a key role in securing the industry. With the opening of the Stanley tool plant, the area's number of manufacturing firms, which then employed just over two thousand local residents, grew to more than

⁵⁹ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolution in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 257.

⁶⁰ "Eastern North Carolina Attracts Solid Industry," *Sun Journal*, July 8, 1964; "Group Which Worked to Get Stanley Plant," *Sun Journal*, January 30, 1964. In addition to congratulating the local Chamber of Commerce, Congressman David N. Henderson touted the efforts of the North Carolina State Department of Conservation and Development in bringing in Stanley Power Tools which he believed "will prove profitable to the industry and the people" of Craven County. See "Henderson Telegraphs," *Sun Journal*, December 5, 1963.

sixty-five.⁶¹ Around that same time, the New Bern Shipyard announced a million dollar expansion that was based, according to the general manager and vice president of the shipyard, on an “economic outlook for increased boatbuilding in and around New Bern” that was “better than it has been in the last twenty years.”⁶² Rounding out the latest business ventures for the city was the building of a new television station, WNBE of New Bern, which promised to hire many local people, and the expansion of the Montgomery Ward store in July 1964 that was to triple its number of employees.⁶³



Figure 15. Special Industrial Edition of *Sun Journal* in celebration of the completed construction of plant for Stanley Works, June 25, 1964.

⁶¹ “Eastern North Carolina Attracts Solid Industry,” *Sun Journal*, July 8, 1964.

⁶² “Industrialists Look to Eastern North Carolina,” *Sun Journal*, July 9, 1964.

⁶³ “New Bern’s Television Station Now Under Construction,” *Sun Journal*, March 29, 1963.

Researchers at the University of North Carolina business school boldly predicted during the summer of 1964 that the industrial growth rate in Eastern North Carolina would be the “growingest [sic] in the state” through the year 1970 and would even outperform the Piedmont, which had been a leading industrial stronghold in the South since World War II.⁶⁴ Yet several glaring issues would give businessmen pause before they committed to operating their companies out of the eastern part of the state. Perhaps the most noticeable weakness of eastern North Carolina was its limited pool of well-educated and semi-skilled workers, which often fell short of industrialists’ desire for a plentiful supply of labor that was trainable. Most industrialists who hailed from outside the state also desired to locate in communities where there was little to no racial unrest and where relations between the races were mostly amicable. This latter desire was made difficult to attain in eastern North Carolina with the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan which had revived itself in the region—particularly in the northeastern counties of Martin, Halifax, and Warren counties— just shortly after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Both progress in black voter registration and greater racial integration in the local public schools likewise invigorated numerous rural whites to band together under the name of the organization. The Klan “thrives on tension,” observed then-North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) Director Walter Anderson, and it “enjoys its greatest

⁶⁴ “Industrialists Look to Eastern North Carolina,” *Sun Journal*, July 9, 1964.

success where there is either mixing or anticipated mixing of the races.”⁶⁵ The rebirth of the Klan not only countered North Carolina’s general climate of acceptance of the civil rights movement but also hampered continued economic development where it was arguably needed the most. In the years immediately following the *Brown* decision, a “creeping realism” began to permeate the South as the moderating influence of business leaders reached new heights: Attempts to build a modern industrial society while still allowing for or defending the continuation of racial discrimination would not work. Virginia Governor J. Lindsay Almond, Jr.’s support of Massive Resistance and Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus’ role in the Little Rock crisis are just two examples of how efforts to prevent public school integration proved to be highly detrimental in enticing industry.⁶⁶ C.A. McKnight, editor of the *Charlotte Observer* and future board member of the North Carolina Fund, detected in 1956 that “thoughtful businessmen are beginning to ask themselves,” can the South offer new industry “the prospect of a stable labor market and easy community relations when anger, hatred, and irresponsibility may erupt into mob violence?”⁶⁷

Without question, if Eastern North Carolina was to fully join the burgeoning economy of the modern South, the Klan and its small yet vociferous number of adherents

⁶⁵ Oliver Williams, “Rebirth of Klan Counters Moderate Action in State,” *News & Observer*, August 23, 1964.

⁶⁶ Robert E. Baker, “South Is Developing A ‘Creeping Realism,’” *Washington Post*, October 4, 1959; Wright, *Old South, New South*, 266-267; “Business in Dixie: Many Southerners Say Racial Tension Slows Area’s Economic Gains,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 26, 1961.

⁶⁷ C.A. McKnight, “The Troubled South: Search for a Middle Ground,” *Collier’s*, June 22, 1956, p. 30.

would have to be destabilized and the majority of the community would have to be inspired to collectively stand up against its possible return. But beyond just distancing themselves from the violent tactics of the Klan, white Eastern North Carolinians who had not yet done so would have to learn to accommodate to desegregation themselves.

Arkansas Gazette editor Harry S. Ashmore predicted in 1959 that “[g]radually white leaders will recognize that the South cannot expect to remain rooted where it is” as they come to recognize “that the arbitrary limits of segregation deny to Negroes the means of realizing their individual potential.”⁶⁸ “The South as a whole,” he observed, “draws no benefit from the existence of a mass of workers forced by necessity to hire out for substandard wages, unable to put much back into the economy, and costly in terms of social services. It was economic factors like these,” Ashmore concluded, “not moral ones, that led Booker T. Washington to warn that the white man could throw the Negro in the ditch, but couldn’t keep him there without getting in with him.”⁶⁹ In a recent study, historian Joseph Crespino identified such a reality as far south as Mississippi where “[s]ome form of strategic accommodation [to black equality and civil rights laws] was the necessary precondition for white leaders to continue any number of political initiatives that were important to them”—including attracting outside industry in the postwar period.⁷⁰ Even as the most racially conservative region in the state, Eastern North

⁶⁸ Harry Ashmore, “Race in America: A Southern Moderate’s View,” in Smith, *The Search for America*, 49.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁰ Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 11.

Carolina was no Mississippi, yet self-interest proved to be just as decisive in ushering in monumental changes in racial policies there as in the lynching capital of the South. To borrow the words of scholars Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, businessmen's choice of progress over tradition became an important "entering wedge for much of the greater changes that have since taken place in southern life and race relations."⁷¹ While few Craven whites who were willing to accommodate to racial fairness were completely free of attitudes of white supremacy, their decision to open opportunities to blacks was not made simply to maintain white privilege but to improve the economic health of their community, which many had realized could not be accomplished while blacks were being denied equal opportunity to education, job training, and employment.

One of the greatest opportunities for Eastern North Carolinians to exhibit their willingness to accommodate to social change presented itself when President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which legally forbade all enduring practices of racial discrimination in public places and employment. A few days after the bill's passage on July 2, North Carolina Governor Sanford offered comments that reflected his confidence that the new law would be respected by the people of his state. Despite being the most revolutionary and far-reaching act in the nation's history to attempt to eradicate Jim Crow practices, Governor Sanford had no doubts that "the citizens of North Carolina will obey the law," noting the "good climate of tolerance and understanding which exists here," a

⁷¹ Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, eds., *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982), 5.

feeling also shared by North Carolina NAACP president Kelly M. Alexander who predicted little trouble in the law's implementation.⁷² By and large, Sanford cheered the president's determination to completely remove all remaining "barriers which has imposed some indignities upon the Negro minority which served no good purpose" and "which prevented the kind of cooperation between the two races essential not only for maintaining of order, but for an economically strong state." Sanford did, however, see an inherent limitation in the law. Along with his words of praise, the governor counseled that black citizens should recognize that the federal statute could not accomplish either "the economic advance they seek" or the reduction of the "economic disparity they suffer now" without "the good will of employers."⁷³ Yet, while Sanford believed racial progress could not be accomplished "by force or legal rights alone," he did not weaken his appeal that North Carolinians must honor the law which, he suggested, would bring the South one step closer in fulfilling America's promise of freedom for all races.⁷⁴

Congressman David N. Henderson, who joined with both Republican and Democrat representatives from North Carolina in voting against the bill, solidly disagreed

⁷² Statement by Governor Terry Sanford, July 7, 1964, Raleigh, NC, transcript, box 27, folder: Race Relations "Troubleshooter"--Miscellany, Waynick Papers. Predicting almost universal compliance, Dr. T. Franklin Williams, chairman of the North Carolina Human Relations Council, similarly did not "foresee any problems" in enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in North Carolina nor did he see any need for testing the law in the state. Sanford's "racial troubleshooter," Capus M. Waynick expressed his being impressed "with the readiness of a great many businessmen to obey the law." See Associated Press, "North Carolina Reacts Calmly to Rights Law," July 3, 1964.

⁷³ "A Suggestion for Governor Sanford," box 27, folder: Race Relations "Troubleshooter"--Miscellany, Waynick Papers.

⁷⁴ Statement by Governor Terry Sanford, July 7, 1964, Raleigh, NC, transcript, box 27, folder: Race Relations "Troubleshooter"--Miscellany, Waynick Papers.

not only with Sanford's impression of the merits behind the new civil rights law but also in its potential to achieve the goal of racial equality.⁷⁵ In line with the predictions of the majority of his contemporary southern congressmen, Henderson doubted that the bill would be well-received among white citizens both for its overreliance on federal force and its lack of reliance on voluntary good will. As understood by Henderson, "the true goal of the 'Civil Rights' is personal, social acceptance of Negroes by whites as equals. This cannot be brought about by legislation; or court decree; by Executive Order or Federal bayonets." "It will occur," Henderson maintained, "only when persons of good will of both races voluntarily determine in their own hearts that it should be so." With that justification in mind, Henderson promised his Eastern North Carolina constituency in a January 1964 newsletter that he would "oppose and vote against the bill in its entirety" not "because I oppose equal rights for all, but because I oppose the concept of using Federal force to ram down the throats of our citizens social customs with which they disagree."⁷⁶

The "social custom" of racial segregation, however, clearly did not hold the same prominence it once had in his congressional district for, despite Henderson's reservations, the vast majority of whites did not fight the law, including the substantial number who did not agree that civil rights included dictating a person's choice of associates. After all, according to a white male New Bern resident writing to Henderson in 1963, "when I was

⁷⁵ "How House Cast Votes on Rights Bill," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1964.

⁷⁶ "Washington Report from Your Congressman David N. Henderson," January 23, 1964, box 301, folder 3, Henderson Papers.

a child a Negro would not even go into a drug store, whereas today they come and go almost as they please.” The constituent acknowledged that “integration is simply going to take time” but that “each generation is becoming more tolerant toward Negroes...” Indeed, as expressed by a white woman living in New Bern, few whites in and around New Bern had any issue “if a person opens his doors to all people on his or her own free will.”⁷⁷



Figure 16. Congressman David N. Henderson, 1964. Box 398, Photographs, 1964, David Newton Henderson papers, Special Collections, Duke University.

⁷⁷ W.J. Edwards to Hon. David N. Henderson, July 30, 1963, box 344, folder 6, Henderson Papers. Mrs. David Thomason to Congressman David Henderson, June 17, 1963, box 344, folder 5, Henderson Papers. Another constituent from New Bern who wrote Henderson in regards to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 expressed his belief that “the colored people should have a good living and decent home to live in, and [that] integration in public conveyances and government-owned buildings is alright,” but, like many other white residents, he opposed the force with which the federal government compelled private establishments to open its doors to black clientele. “To tell a man that owns a restaurant or hotel he has to serve them to me is against every principle of freedom that was wrote into our Constitution.” Perhaps most interestingly, though, the constituent reflected a confidence that whites were willing to accept blacks as equals. “When the colored race educates itself to the point, that their social consciousness is on par with the white race they will automatically be welcomed and accepted as an equal,” he argued before lamenting that he had a difficult time convincing his hired black brickmasons to come out to work “five full days a week” and earn more money instead of the “average of three days” that they would agree to work. J.L. Lysterly, Sr. to Congressman David Henderson, July 1963, box 344, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

In fact, for some white business owners who had not already desegregated, there actually seemed to be a preference for being legally forced to change one's policies. Such was the case for the Northern owners of a bowling alley in New Bern who apologized to a black patron after refusing him access around 1963, explaining they had no power to override the preferences of some of their clientele.⁷⁸ Lest they lose federal funding, local officials were perhaps the most accommodating to the new legislation. In response to the civil rights act's push for greater integration of public schools, New Bern city schools quickly finished its ongoing plans to desegregate on July 14, less than two weeks after the official authorization of the bill. On that date eight black youths—four elementary and four high school students—desegregated three previously all-white schools in Craven's county seat.⁷⁹ Two of the black high school students would face frequent name-calling, shoving in the hallways, and other forms of racial prejudice from their white peers, but at least for high school student Gwendolyn Bryan and elementary students Michael Rivers Morgan and Stephanye Kenyear, they were pleasantly surprised to find either white students who instantly befriended them or white teachers who believed in them as much as their black teachers had.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Leander Morgan, interview by Chris Stewart, New Bern, NC, August 3, 1993, box MT8, listening tape, Behind the Veil Oral History Project, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University; Claude Sitton, "Civil Rights Act: How South Responds," *New York Times*, July 12, 1964.

⁷⁹ On that same day, according to city of New Bern Board of Education minutes, as many as eleven white youths were given approval to transfer to previously all-black schools. See City of New Bern Board of Education Minutes, July 14, 1964, Kellenberger Room, New Bern-Craven County Public Library.

⁸⁰ "Display details New Bern school integration," *Sun Journal*, February 23, 2010.

Among mainstream white adults in Craven County, what known defiance there was to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was essentially limited to the behavior of L. John Moore, owner and operator of Moore's BBQ in New Bern. Among local non-white residents, Moore was not only known as a "black folks' hater" but was also considered to be one of the cruelest types of white businessmen for his willingness to hire black employees as his cooks while refusing to serve blacks as his equals.⁸¹ On July 13, 1964, not long after displaying signs warning that he would not serve interstate travelers, Moore denied service to two local black patrons who sought to eat in the main dining room of his restaurant. For years, Moore had allowed blacks to order food to-go only from the walk-up window, a practice he continued without any shame in spite of the reality of Title II of the new bill. In a letter that thanked North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin for opposing the civil rights act, Moore explained that since his business was neither part of a chain nor shipped across state lines, he did not believe "the federal government has any right to regulate us" and, thus, he continued to operate on a segregated basis.⁸² But leading the charge to prevent Moore's exemption from the law were incidentally the patrons to whom he denied service: Reverend Willie Hickman and Robert Whitehead of the local NAACP (both future COP board members).⁸³ With the help of local attorney

⁸¹ Julia Hooks and Malissa Brimage, interview by Angela Hornsby-Gutting, July 23, 1999, transcript, K-0237, SOHP.

⁸² L. J. Moore to Sam Ervin, June 13, 1964, Sam J. Ervin Papers (#3847A), Southern Historical Collection; "New Bern Restaurant Named in U.S. Suit," *News & Observer*, July 28, 1966.

⁸³ Willie Hickman, interview by Rhonda Mawhood, New Bern, NC, August 4, 1993, listening tape, Box MT8, *Behind the Veil*.

Reginald Frazier and NAACP attorney Julius Chambers, a legal suit was filed on November 10, 1964, by New Bern NAACP President Rev. E.W. Wooten, Hickman, Whitehead, and seven other black plaintiffs from New Bern. Pointing to the substantial number of Moore's products that came out-of-state, the district judge would ultimately rule in favor of the plaintiffs and fine Moore \$5,000 which, in turn, compelled him to relocate his business several miles away where it was finally integrated in 1967.⁸⁴ And while Moore had attested that a strong white client base was the source of his financial success before the civil rights act, Arlestus Attmore, a black history teacher at J.T. Barber High School in New Bern, found it ironic that "little did [Moore] know that the blacks were spending more money than the whites with him...so when he moved back in town and allowed everybody to come and have a meal, he did better off."⁸⁵

Trouble caused by the Klan, 1965

With the cost of suppression higher than most whites were willing to pay to defy the federal law, it did not take a police state to enforce the act among the general

⁸⁴ *E.W. Wooten et al. v. John Moore*, box 167, John Davis Larkins, Jr. Papers.

⁸⁵ Mr. Arlestus Attmore, interview by Chris Stewart, New Bern, NC, August, 1993, transcript, box MT7, *Behind the Veil*; Minor challenges to the philosophy behind the civil rights act were more prevalent but, according to the historical record, were still few and far between. The largest of such challenges occurred in October 1964 when a group of thirty-six white Craven citizens, most of whom lived in the rural communities of Bridgeton, Vanceboro, Ernul and James City, wrote Congressman Henderson over their concerns about a book called "To Hold and To Keep." According to a rumor the petitioners had heard, the book was being assigned to third graders in the state's public schools in order to "teach our children integration and race mixing." Afraid for the "welfare of our children," the signers of the petition asked the congressman to do all he could to keep the book out of the school system. It turned out that either the book title they mentioned was incorrect or it did not exist at all, yet Henderson assured his constituents that "should a textbook promoting integration under another title be authorized for use in our schools" and brought to his attention, he would "again contact the Department of Public Instruction." See Undersigned citizens of Craven County to Congressman David N. Henderson, October 23, 1964; Congressman Henderson response to undersigned citizens of Craven County, November 1964, box 149, folder 6, Henderson Papers.

population in Eastern North Carolina.⁸⁶ A far different situation lurked outside the mainstream body of citizens, however, where desperate and violent opposition to all new advancements on behalf of black citizens was on the rise. In fact, following the 1964 civil rights act, white supremacists and other racial extremists below the Mason-Dixon line joined the Ku Klux Klan or one of its affiliates in historic numbers. As observed by Charles L. Weltner, the only congressman from the Deep South who voted for the act, “The Civil Rights Act of 1964 did not ‘solve’ the race problem” nor did it “mean the end of racial injustice or racial strife.”⁸⁷ Partially because of the greater degree of compliance at both the state and local level, North Carolina would lead the South by 1965 with twelve thousand due-paying members in the United Klans of America.⁸⁸ The Klan was especially active in the counties of Eastern North Carolina including Jones and Craven. State Bureau of Investigation records reveal that there were at least three Klaverns in Craven County at the time, which frequently held outdoor rallies—drawing crowds ranging from 350 to 650 persons—in the rural towns of Vanceboro, Jasper, Ernul, Dover, and Cove City.⁸⁹

On the evening of January 25, 1965, Klan activity even spread into the city limits of New Bern. Two explosions occurred right outside St. Peter’s AME Zion Church where a local NAACP meeting was being held. Advertised in the local *Sun Journal* and drawing

⁸⁶ “Law of the Land,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1964.

⁸⁷ Charles Longstreet Weltner, *Southerner* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1966), 85.

⁸⁸ Russell Clay, “Tar Heels Reject State’s Label of No. 1 for Klan,” *News & Observer*, October 24, 1965.

⁸⁹ Cecelski, “Burning Memories,” 23.

close to 250 civil rights activists from Craven, Carteret, Jones, Pamlico, and Onslow counties, the meeting was put forth to discuss school integration efforts as well as the implementation of the 1964 civil rights bill. No individuals were injured in the blasts, as only two automobiles parked outside the church were damaged, one belonging to the Jones County NAACP president and the other to NAACP attorney Julius Chambers. Approximately an hour later that night, another explosion was set off at nearby Oscar's Mortuary, where again, only minimal damage occurred. Owner Oscar Dove, who was a known black integrationist leader as well as a member of the New Bern Bi-Racial Committee, informed authorities that this was not the first incident of its kind. He indicated that in July 1964 a cross was burned in front of his establishment and that on several occasions bottles had been thrown through his front window.⁹⁰ More bewildered than he was fearful, Dove was compelled to ask, "If they want something why don't they come to me?" The three white males who were arrested in connection with the crimes later admitted to setting off each of the bombs at both the church and the mortuary. Before leaving the suspects' homes in Vanceboro, federal agents seized Klan robes, minutes of secret Klan meetings, and Klan application forms.⁹¹ News reports quoted

⁹⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation report, February 9, 1965, RE: Edward Earl Fillingame, Laurie Latham Fillingame, Raymond Duguid Mills, folder: New Bern bombing, Governor Dan K. Moore Papers, Search Room, North Carolina State Archives. Hereinafter cited as Moore Papers.

⁹¹ "Mortuary, Two Cars Damaged as Racists Bomb New Bern," *The Carolinian* (Raleigh, N.C.), January 30, 1965; "FBI Seizes 3 Carolina Whites In Bombings Near Negro Rally," *New York Times*, January 30, 1965.

citizens as being “shocked” and in disbelief that such an act of violence could happen in their town or be perpetuated by someone who lived there.⁹²

White supremacists’ frustrations in Craven would not be merely limited to black gains emanating from the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Adding to their sense of vulnerability was the steady expansion of Craven Operation Progress (COP), which represented yet another arena in which both black influence and interracial dealings were emergent. At a COP board meeting held just a few days prior to the New Bern bombings, black board member Robert Whitehead’s motion to approve the \$1.25/hour minimum wage for the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) program was accepted, despite opposition from several white conservatives on the board. For both inside and outside observers, the most significant aspect of Whitehead’s feat was not that black youth were a majority of NYC participants in Eastern North Carolina but that the wage was higher than many paying jobs in the area for low-skilled workers.⁹³ The nature of NYC would promise to provide temporary work-related assistance to more of the area’s black citizens than its white ones.⁹⁴ By the end of January, COP had also welcomed the *Look* magazine team who came to spotlight VISTA and anti-poverty workers in and around New Bern. These workers included a male and female college student from Oregon and California respectively, one of whom was signing up black and white children for preschool

⁹² Kate Erwin, “New Bern Working for Racial Harmony,” *News & Observer*, October 3, 1965.

⁹³ At the date of Craven Operation Progress’ proposal to the Department of Labor for funding for a Neighborhood Youth Corps, the North Carolina state minimum wage was at \$.085/hour. See COP Proposal for Neighborhood Youth Corps, December 11, 1964, folder 5083, NCFR.

⁹⁴ COP board meeting minutes, January 20, 1965, folder 4965, NCFR.

readiness classes in Craven while the other worked with the county sanitarian in testing water supplies and inspecting sanitary facilities.⁹⁵

Drawing attention to Klan reactions has the potential to exaggerate the degree of white resistance as doing so obscures the diversity of white feelings as well as the broad civil obedience that existed within the greater white community. Nonetheless, even as the larger community was seemingly going along with many of the new changes during the mid-1960s, the year of 1965 was off to a rocky start for Craven Operation Progress as rising Klan activity contributed to feelings of uneasiness among the organization's advocates. As COP board member Bill Flowers explained, one major issue to deal with was heightened apprehension among racist white citizens that COP "will be an all-Negro program." Early in the year, executive director Jim Hearn made sure to stress to a Raleigh *News & Observer* reporter that Craven's antipoverty effort is about "helping people as they want to be helped—not by handouts, but by training them for jobs and teaching them skills so that they can get themselves out of the cycle."⁹⁶ Dr. W.A. Browne, head of the Craven County Health Department and member of the COP board, also spoke from a defensive position that "this isn't a giveaway program. It's self-improvement."⁹⁷ The emphasis on "opportunity through self-effort" was not just an empty phrase to assuage

⁹⁵ "The Domestic Peace Corps Tackles Poverty," *Look*, April 20, 1965.

⁹⁶ Kate Blackwell, "Craven County Takes Lead in Nation's War on Poverty," *News & Observer*, January 17, 1965.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

critics, however, nor was it simply the official motto that adorned the letterheads of the antipoverty agency.

Hearn's assumptions about local people

Being a newcomer to Eastern North Carolina, Craven Operation Progress' executive director at first appeared sensitive to the need of building community trust in the supposed benefits of a new and still fairly unknown operation, which became an even more crucial task after the Klan bombings that shook New Bern. However, save the local airing of a television special on Craven antipoverty efforts in December 1964, which was primarily pushed by Hearn's two Community Action Technicians (CATs), little publicity had been made about the programs Hearn so deeply desired to succeed. A North Carolina Volunteer assigned to Craven, who helped to complete forty-six environmental sanitation surveys in the area, wrote in a summer 1964 report that "local cooperation has been good, but it has been slow," which he attributed to the fact that "both the N.C. Fund and the Volunteer program are virtually unknown to the public of Craven County." But on a positive note, "Reception has been excellent when the program is explained," the volunteer added.⁹⁸ As the above suggests, publicity efforts had been minimal in the months prior to Hearn's hiring but were not noticeably improved when the former CARE administrator took the lead. "We realize that your overall picture of Craven's attack on poverty is somewhat vague," Hearn would tell a group of incoming staff members in early 1965, noting how "programs have been designed and approved with considerable

⁹⁸ Craven County-Team 5 Reports, July 6-10, 1964, folder 1290, NCFR.

rapidity and limited publicity.” Yet, as he assured them, their understanding of the programs and how to help the disadvantaged help themselves will increase “as you become involved in your job, work under the leadership of present staff members, and exhibit a desire to learn and grow.”⁹⁹

Hearn’s incoming assumption that most Southerners, specifically the white non-poor, would spurn progress and social change explains a good deal about why he chose to limit publicizing the happenings of COP. At a VISTA training session sponsored by the North Carolina Fund at Camp New Hope in Chapel Hill, an event that attracted local and national reporters, Hearn warned the group, “Remember you’re another string from Washington, and a lot of people in these places you’ll be working don’t like Washington.” Hearn proceeded to emphasize to the young volunteers that “every place you go you’ll wonder and fret why people running the show don’t do it as quickly as you would. Maybe they aren’t as excited about it as you. Maybe they have their doubts about changing their community. You will have to use every bit of tact at your command.”¹⁰⁰ For Hearn, however, tact tended to mean limiting antipoverty activities to behind the scenes and largely outside of the view of the greater community. Instead, Hearn’s greatest priority from the start was “direct contact with people who are recipients of the action of this program to make them active participants.” Those who are recipients,

⁹⁹ “Poverty Story on Television Station,” *Sun Journal*, December 12, 1964; James J. Hearn to staff member, March 3, 1965, Craven Operation Progress, Inc. Staff Orientation Manual, 1965, folder 4992, NCFR.

¹⁰⁰ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 122; Marjorie Hunter, “Young and Old Drawn to Vista: First Volunteers in Fight Against Poverty Begin Training,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1965.

Hearn maintained, “should be given a voice in the administration.”¹⁰¹ This priority to give voice to the poor began early on and would remain throughout his tenure as head of COP.

Because of the want of knowledge among many of those not involved in the local antipoverty program, Hearn was still selling himself and the program to skeptical individuals in the community into February 1965, reportedly keeping him and his staff busy explaining the benefits of COP after the fact to those who argued that Craven ““is not really poor”” and that the last thing needed is ““money pumped in from Washington with strings attached.”” Yet even though “not everyone is getting up to cheer us on,” Hearn was pleased to remark that “no one has come in to attack me and I’ve been here for six months.”¹⁰² Indeed, the executive director was known to speak fairly well of Craven in the media, but in ways that reflected favorably on his leadership and the general substance behind the War on Poverty. For instance, when Hearn boasted to the VISTAs assigned to New Bern in January 1965 that “Craven has made more progress than any other community in the nation,” it seemed he believed that much of the credit for the coming together of the community to seek social and economic progress lay with himself and/or the promise of federal funds.¹⁰³ After all, as he discussed in an interview with a *Durham Herald* reporter, he saw Craven as a largely retrograde population in which the people “are having to change their way of life” in order to meet the integration

¹⁰¹ “People Will Help Themselves If Given Means, EIC Is Told,” *The Daily Advance* (Elizabeth City, NC), 1965.

¹⁰² “Attack on Economic Ills,” *Durham Herald* (Durham, NC), February 7, 1965.

¹⁰³ “Peace Corps Group Arrives Here For Limited Durations,” *Sun Journal*, January 19, 1965.

requirements of the OEO. Based on Hearn's testimony, the newspaper affirmed that "Craven's 'Operation Progress' is leading the way" in the War on Poverty, "showing the problems can be solved, and quietly." "They're working together—both races—and letting the chips fall," the *Herald* quoted Hearn as saying, before he concluded that "[t]hese people have done more than any other in the South."¹⁰⁴

While it was true that local blacks and whites were communicating and coalescing on issues of mutual interest at a high rate in early 1965, the degree to which this progress in Craven was attributable to the War on Poverty was indeed overemphasized by Hearn. Arriving in New Bern for the first time in August 1964, Hearn was largely unaware of how the pressures of the black freedom movement and the subsequent Civil Rights Act of 1964 led to black and white leaders addressing one another on a more equal basis. The racial cooperation that Hearn observed in 1965 did not happen overnight and could not have been possible without past practice of cooperation or without civil rights leaders pushing whites to see how their own economic interests could be advanced by giving in to those central to blacks. Although federal funds certainly helped in motivating many to cooperate, they alone do not explain interracial agreement. Since the New Deal, white conservative Southerners have been known to deny federal funds when the requirements to obtain them contradicted with their principles or their perceptions of the interests of their constituents.

It is equally important to note that even though civil rights demonstrations certainly influenced whites in Craven to make concessions to black demands for equality,

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Wilson, "Craven Showing Way In," *Durham Herald*, March 7, 1965.

most of the demonstrations, which were rare, were followed by carefully thought-out negotiations between blacks and the “power structure.” In fact, as most local black civil rights leaders would acknowledge, negotiation was an important means by which civil rights achievements in desegregation and greater black employment were made in New Bern.¹⁰⁵ And negotiation was accomplished by many of the same men and women who would later join the COP board including NAACP leader Robert M. Whitehead, mayor Mack Lupton, Reverend L. D. Munn of the city’s ministerial alliance, Craven County public welfare department director Constance Rabin, and chamber of commerce director Olin Wright, to name a few.

The tactic of negotiation would, thus, continue to function as a chief means by which whites and blacks settled issues and expanded black participation and inclusion during the War on Poverty. Writing in the journal of *Law and Contemporary Problems*, John Wheeler of the North Carolina Fund noted that “the prospect of new federal payrolls in poor counties of the South can produce sharp changes in local custom and traditional attitudes of race,” but, in communities like Craven, Wheeler’s observation explains only part of the story.¹⁰⁶ Simultaneously, changes in local custom and traditional attitudes of race spurred largely by earlier experiences during the civil rights movement also made the prospect of federal money more attractive to whites as well as much easier to attain.

¹⁰⁵ Kate Erwin, “New Bern Working for Racial Harmony, *News & Observer*, October 3, 1965.

¹⁰⁶ John H. Wheeler, “Civil Rights Groups—Their Impact Upon the War on Poverty,” *Law & Contemporary Problems* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1966): 157.

This development of bi-racial cooperation had also been assisted by blacks' rising political stock since at least May 1964 with the founding of the Combined Civic Organizations of New Bern and Craven County (CCO). The CCO eventually combined the local NAACP branches of New Bern, Vanceboro, and Havelock, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), and other black civic groups to increase latent voter registration in the black community in hopes of electing James Gavin to the Craven County School Board.¹⁰⁷ Craven County Commissioner D.L. Stallings was perhaps the most powerful local politician who depended on black votes. Prior to the formation of this group which Robert M. Whitehead would lead, black civil rights leaders in New Bern and Craven County had been divided over many central issues that slowed the registration effort. Division over style, pacing, and methods were particularly strong between the New Bern and Craven County NAACP branches, founded in 1948 and 1954, respectively. In April 1964, New Bern NAACP leader Leon C. Nixon and several other blacks calling themselves the "Civil Rights Committee" wrote NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins to announce that "due to the lack of help" from the national NAACP branch on six unanswered complaints about local infighting they "will have to call on other national Civil Rights organizations to assist us."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ James Gavin, interview by John Miller, James City, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

¹⁰⁸ Rev. Leon C. Nixon to Mr. Roy Wilkins, April 30, 1964, Part III: Branch File, Box III, folder: New Bern, N.C. 1956-1965, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

The “Civil Rights Committee” would quickly branch off from the NAACP by gaining sponsorship by the SCLC, whose convention had impressed the group on their trip to Georgia a year earlier.¹⁰⁹ While the Craven SCLC was known to be more confrontational than the NAACP, and thereby the last group to agree to join the new joint civil rights organization, the decision to combine forces caused immediate gains for black voting strength, particularly in the November 1964 presidential election.¹¹⁰ Moreover, the observation made in 1952 by NAACP Director of Public Relations Henry Lee Moon that “longstanding resistance to Negro voting in the Black belt counties of eastern North Carolina” had created “a certain amount of apathy among Negroes in that section of the state,” would hold far less traction in 1964 and onward, especially in New Bern and especially after the Voting Rights Act of 1965.¹¹¹ Not only had previous obstacles to black voting such as the poll tax been removed but both black interest and black initiative were also growing as best evidenced by Joseph Edwards’ run for alderman in the May 1965 city election. As only the third black citizen in New Bern to aspire to city political office in the twentieth century—the first two ran in 1951 and 1959—Edwards was only about 200 votes short of election. Sizeable support in the heavily black-populated wards

¹⁰⁹ Ethel Sampson, interview by author, New Bern, NC, September 12, 2006, transcript in author’s possession.

¹¹⁰ James Gavin, interview by Dr. Joseph F. Patterson, October 15, 1992, transcript, folder 75, NBOHP; Medlin, 64-65.

¹¹¹ Henry Lee Moon to Mr. White, August 20, 1952, Papers of the NAACP, Bostock Library, Duke University.

made it possible for him to beat out two white challengers including incumbent R.B. Bratcher.¹¹²

Hearn's distrust is shared by OEO

Even though gradual racial progress was occurring prior to Hearn's arrival, Hearn was not alone, among non-natives, in suspecting that whites in Craven Operation Progress were averse to following the civil rights guidelines of the War on Poverty. By March of 1965, it was evident that the Office of Economic Opportunity shared a similar notion. Following a telephone conversation with a representative from OEO, COP board member Whitehead would inform Hearn that OEO planned to make certain that Craven carried out its CAP and other programs in "strict conformity with the law." Whitehead explained that he was also told that there is "so much invested in Craven that it makes logical sense to test the law." In a memo sent to George Esser over the matter, North Carolina Fund staffer Bill Koch added that "Jim gets the impression that this means the schools as well, and that the plan for integration next year will be given rigorous examination."¹¹³ That OEO sought accountability and compliance from COP was fully understandable. COP had recently expanded to almost \$1,500,000 in OEO-approved programs, of which approximately \$600,000 in federal funds was slated for the first Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) program to be administered in the state based on local plans to employ 817 youths from Craven, Jones, and Pamlico at a cost of \$1,293.69

¹¹² "Two Aldermen Defeated and Two Returned," *Sun Journal*, May 5, 1965.

¹¹³ Memo: Bill Koch to George Esser, April 2, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR.

per enrollee.¹¹⁴ However, OEO's promise for strong surveillance appeared distrustful of local happenings related to integration in the schools.

Following the December 1964 filing of a suit by black parents against the Craven County Board of Education for its continued use of race in school assignments, the county board began plans on February 1, 1965, to comply fully with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) desegregation guidelines. Before the district court judge's ruling, the board enlarged "the scope of its plan for inviting application for changes" by agreeing to remove all district lines, making sure no child, due to his or her race, was refused to attend a school of his choice, and desegregating employment and assignment practices of the Board of Education for all personnel in order that "qualifications for the particular job will be the determining factor." Since agreeing to desegregate on a small scale in 1959, four of Craven's twelve all-white schools were desegregated, but the desegregated schools were limited at that time to the military district of Havelock. In order to speed up the reach of integration, the board set a maximum of three years for the new plans to be fully implemented to the point that "all evidence of a dual system are eventually eliminated."¹¹⁵ Chairman Stallings and the Craven County Board of Commissioners endorsed the action taken by the county school

¹¹⁴ COP Board meeting minutes, March 24, 1965, folder 4964, NCFR; COP Proposal for Neighborhood Youth Corps, January 7, 1965, folder 5084, NCFR; COP Board meeting minutes, April 21, 1965, folder 4973, NCFR; "Operation of Youth Project is Next Month," *Sun Journal*, March 8, 1965.

¹¹⁵ "Sweeping Changes Made for Schools of County Beginning Coming Fall," *Sun Journal*, April 3, 1965; Exhibit A: Plan For Compliance With Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Adopted By the Craven County Board of Education, March 19, 1965, p. 2, 7, box 101, folder: Hickman, Erving, et al. v. Craven County Board of Education 4/5-1967-9/25/1975, Larkins Papers.

board to be in a position to sign the civil rights pledge required by the federal government. By March, the Craven Board of Education was then ready to allow parents of both races not just to ask for reassignment, as had been the policy in the past, but to *choose* the school in their residential area that they wanted their children to attend with full access to bus transportation. As stipulated in the Craven “Freedom of Choice” form, parents were free to choose “either the nearest formerly Negro school or the nearest formerly white school”; by July, each of the 179 black students who requested reassignment was accepted and at least four black teachers were sent to previously all-white schools.¹¹⁶ In contrast to assumptions within OEO, HEW would find nothing to disapprove of in Craven’s plans to meet civil rights guidelines. In May 1965, after becoming the first of the state’s 170 school units to gain the approval from the federal Office of Education for its desegregation plans, Craven was awarded \$500,000 in federal funds for the upcoming fiscal year.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ “Craven Boards Will Sign Rights Pledge,” *News & Observer*, February 2, 1965; Plaintiffs’ Opposition to Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss and Brief, 2, box 101, folder: Hickman, Erving, et al. v. Craven County Board of Education 4/5-1967-9/25/1975, Larkins Papers; Craven “Freedom of Choice” form, box 101, folder: Hickman, Erving, et al. v. Craven County Board of Education 4/5-1967-9/25/1975, Larkins Papers.

¹¹⁷ Francis Keppel to Hon. David N. Henderson, May 3, 1965; R.L. Pugh to Honorable David N. Henderson, May 8, 1965, box 149, folder 6, Henderson Papers; “Craven Plan is Approved,” *News & Observer*, April 28, 1965.

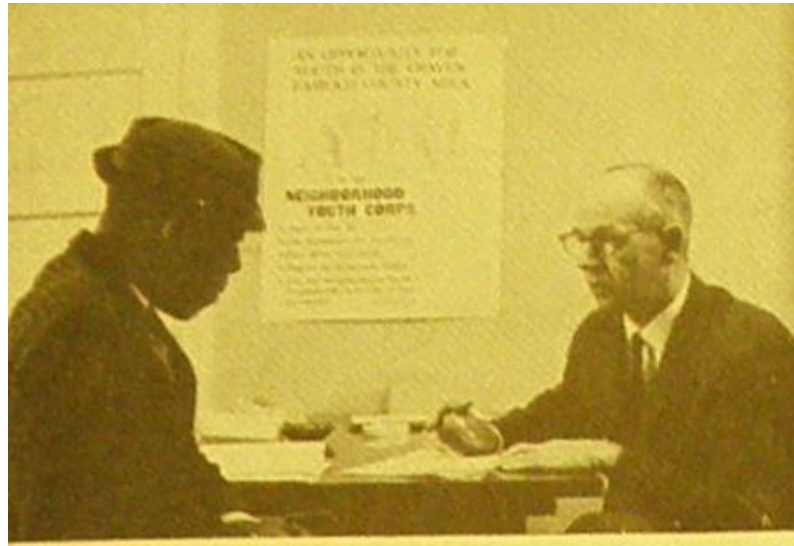


Figure 17. Colonel Wilbur F. Evans, on right, assists in signing up the first Neighborhood Youth Corps enrollee in North Carolina, 1965. *Blueprint for Opportunity* 1 (June 1965), box 149, folder 4, David Newton Henderson papers, Special Collections, Duke University.

Lack of publicity breeds local skepticism of War on Poverty

Despite the vast amount of federal money being pumped into both COP and the county schools in 1965, some of which promised to indirectly boost several sectors of the local economy, tensions between white conservative members of the community and COP were beginning to brew. Although Craven's heftier compliance with civil rights law played a role, tensions appeared to derive more from a lack of understanding of the goals of the programs, several of which had just recently hired a full-time staff. Cognizant of the fact that "no results will be seen overnight," Hearn argued in a variety of ways that COP was "not a miracle program, but an idea that requires hard work."¹¹⁸ Yet, as seen above, little effort was made on his part to communicate the various components of that "idea" to conservatives or to persuade them of the benefit to themselves and the

¹¹⁸ "People Will Help Themselves If Given Means, EIC Is Told," *The Daily Advance*, 1965.

community of getting on board. At a COP board meeting held on April 21, 1965, North Carolina Fund Executive Director George Esser made a special visit to New Bern to express his concerns over the relationship between the antipoverty program and the Craven community. After remarking that COP “represents an effort to adjust successfully to complicated problems thrust upon us by rapid change,” Esser voiced his uneasiness over the fact that “local support is not up to par.” Board member Bill Flowers seconded Esser’s concern by noting his observations of misunderstanding in the community in regards to the purposes of Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), specifically the negative reactions to the \$1.25 minimum wage. However, judging from the NYC advisory board that was voted on at the April 21 meeting, support was at least rather high among many of the leaders of the community. The eleven member board was comprised of representatives from all facets of the local population: the New Bern City Manager, local SCLC chairman Rev. Leon Nixon, Father Thomas Hadden of the New Bern NAACP, a member of the Pamlico County Board of Education, an area attorney, Craven County Commissioner Grover Lancaster, Rev. Al Fisher of the all-white Centenary Methodist Church, two members of the poor, and one black and one white high school student from New Bern.¹¹⁹ That several of the aforementioned were elected or appointed officials suggests that there was little if any anticipation that accepting the invitation to serve in the local War on Poverty could result in public contempt. Some of the advisory board

¹¹⁹ According to Hearn, the NYC advisory committee “will have the final decision as to whether the youths employed are up to the standards set” and represents “our first endeavor in putting recipients of programs in policy-making decisions.” See COP Board meeting minutes, April 21, 1965, folder 4973, NCFR.

members may have joined primarily for the sake of influencing the direction of NYC in their own interests or most likely toward their perception of what was best for the community. But regardless of the reason why one joined, his image and reputation among the public would largely hinge—for good or for bad—on the public’s assessment of that program.

Arguably, as long as its leaders appeared to be in favor of the goals and programs of COP, a good many uninformed Eastern North Carolinians in and around Craven may have been willing to give the anti-poverty program the benefit of the doubt. Of course, this would not include the growing number who, regardless of the degree of sponsorship by community leaders, would remain skeptical of the merit in COP and unimpressed by the amount of federal funds bestowed until shown real results in poverty reduction or Craven’s economic betterment. As Vice President Hubert Humphrey reminded Hearn in a letter sent in early April, “Craven County can be very proud of the progress it has made in a short time...the cooperation which has been shown is certainly to be commended,” but the “major task is yet before the community—implementing the programs.”¹²⁰ Interestingly, Humphrey’s advice basically paralleled that from a *News & Observer* editorial just days after Craven Operation Progress was awarded its initial CAP grant in November 1964: “No swift improvements in Craven county or anywhere else are going to come as a result of federal grants to combat poverty.” Without a doubt, the editorial

¹²⁰ Herbert Humphrey to Jim Hearn, April 2, 1965, folder 5044, NCFR.

continued, “The federal grants are greatly needed, but once in hand they become the least important element in this ambitious program.”¹²¹

“Maximum feasible participation” and the COP board, May 1965

At the same time that new programs—Neighborhood Youth Corps, Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE) and Adult Basic Education Recruitment (ABER)—were being fully implemented, representation on the COP board was also nearing full realization of OEO’s requirement of “maximum feasible participation,” which would begin in earnest in May. Guiding the board’s agreement to increase membership from twenty-seven to thirty-seven were Esser, who had first suggested broader representation at the April 21 meeting, but more importantly board members Whitehead, Frank Efird, Mrs. Philip Kennel, and Bill Flowers who were appointed by Stallings to study how it could be best accomplished while staying in line with OEO regulations.¹²² Responding to a comment that the board was already too large, Board Chairman Larry B. Pate argued at the May 26 meeting that COP had no alternative but to involve recipient groups and more minorities (they were currently zero and four, respectively) in decision-making so to keep receiving federal funds, which had effectively become the lifeblood of the programs.¹²³

Based on the suggestions from Esser, the committee appointed by Stallings recommended that the board add three minority organizations and increase the number of

¹²¹ “Beginning the Fight,” *News & Observer*, November 27, 1964.

¹²² COP Board meeting minutes, April 21, 1965, folder 4973, NCFR.

¹²³ COP Board meeting minutes, May 26, 1965, folder 4973, NCFR.

at-large members to seven including one non-public school representative, four non-whites (most of whom would be low-income), and two independent low-income rural whites. Each local agency, including the schools, would be limited to only one member on the board. Moreover, it was proposed that the five-person executive board, or steering committee, include at least one minority, one member of the poor, and one at-large member. The final suggestion was that all board members, except for the original nine and their successors, which included Commissioner Stallings and New Bern Mayor Mack Lupton, would serve staggered one-year appointments. With a minimum of discussion, all of the suggested changes to the board were carried out and plans were made to re-write the COP Articles of Incorporation. The apparent ease with which the board agreed to expand—in spite of the presence of three fairly powerful segregationists—gave credence to recent comments made by John Wheeler of the North Carolina Fund board of directors who, following his on-site visit, felt COP had “progressed more than any other community in the state.”¹²⁴

During the subsequent COP board meeting of June 10, plans to enlarge the board faced a slow-down after Whitehead requested that four non-white civic groups be added to the list of approved organizations, instead of the number of three originally agreed upon. Although he agreed to reduce the number of non-white at-large members, he stressed that the organizations be allowed to name their own representatives since he “did not believe this Board of Directors could know the community leaders in the minority

¹²⁴ Ibid; The three segregationists who were present included New Bern lawyer David S. Henderson, New Bern Director of Public Works Cedric Boyd, and New Bern City Schools Superintendent Harry J. McDonald.

groups.” Such a request was “not a personal matter,” Whitehead tried to assure local whites but predicated instead on his wanting to “protect the 2 million dollars we have coming into this county.” Nonetheless, the controversial nature of the suggestion was made obvious as vibrant discussion ensued over whether the board should be allowed input over the specific members selected by the non-white organizations. Pate interceded by warning the group of what he saw as increasing “resentment in this county toward these programs,” in part because some saw them as catering to black interests first. Whitehead’s follow-up comment that black organizations both inside and outside Craven County were proud of the programs, but wary that they would continue to be run properly prompted white board member and local businessman Robert Monte to offer a rhetorical question as to whether the program was intended to help primarily blacks or the entire community. Monte proceeded to answer his own question, stating that he “strongly objected to anyone who would say that we are not trying to better the whole community.”¹²⁵ At meeting’s end, disagreements over technicalities and philosophy would leave the issue of the board membership far from settled.

Controversy also colored the debate that evening over the hiring of the local director of Head Start, which ended with Roland Sneed calling for the program to be abandoned all together and at least two white members calling for Hearn’s resignation.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ COP Board meeting minutes, June 10, 1965, folder 4973, NCFR.

¹²⁶ A new member on the board, Mr. C.B. Beasley of Beasley-Kelso Insurance and Real-Estate Company, would argue that the board members “were acting like a group of children” and had wasted far too much time discussing Head Start but had “solved absolutely nothing.” Beasley further commented that in order to prevent the disagreements between members of the board and Hearn that either the board of directors should be replaced or they should “put confidence in the man directing the programs, or replace him.” Dr.

The strongest factions arose as school officials who supported Clinton LeGette—a white elementary school principal familiar with the educational facilities—convinced the board to override Hearn’s high recommendation for a white female assistant professor in child development from the University of Tennessee.¹²⁷ In a vote of fifteen to four, the board opted in favor of Principal LeGette, who Hearn suspected not only would have trouble “handl[ing] the program” but who also “had said detrimental things” about him “personally, and against the program.” What exactly those “detrimental things” were is unknown. But Hearn’s outspoken opposition to hiring the school principal at least led Monte to quip that he thought the director “was supposed to be capable of working with anyone and everyone, or so they were told when he was hired.” In part because he felt his power as director had been abdicated—after all, Hearn reasoned that the schools lost their right to choose a director since they had recently agreed to turn Head Start over to COP after discovering that they were not going “to have control over the project”—Hearn sought immediate counsel from the North Carolina Fund through phone calls placed to both Koch and Esser. Following their conversations, Esser convinced Pate to organize a special meeting of COP at which every major issue including that of board membership

H.E. Aiken of the Craven County Medical Society somewhat agreed that if the disharmony between Hearn and the school officials could not be resolved, “big changes” should be made starting “right at the top.” See *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ LeGette Appointed as Poverty Leader,” *Sun Journal*, May 20, 1965. Legette, who was a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, received both his bachelor degrees in Social Studies and English and his master’s degree in Education Administration from East Carolina University.

could be smoothed out in the presence of all concerned.¹²⁸ A dinner meeting was scheduled shortly thereafter at Berne Restaurant off Highway 70 in New Bern.

Just prior to the June 15 dinner meeting held at Berne Restaurant, Whitehead phoned Durham representatives of CORE, and possibly Floyd B. McKissick himself, in preparation for a demonstration in case negotiations fell through. What unfolded next was neither truly planned nor expected. But before proceeding into those events, it is important to clarify the general nature behind Robert Whitehead's tactics which cannot be simply classified as those of an either accommodationist or a radical.¹²⁹ A long-time leader in the New Bern NAACP and current head of the Combined Civic Organizations of New Bern and Craven County, Whitehead had refused to acquiesce completely to the wishes of the white power structure at least as many times as he had refused the wishes of Leon Nixon and his SCLC followers, while avoiding to burn bridges with either party. His position as a manager at Cherry Point military base, which garnered him both financial independence from whites and a middle-class status that white community leaders tended to respect and share in common, helps to explain a good portion of his ability to maneuver between the parameters of white and black interests and find middle ground between the two. Yet perhaps more than any other local black leader, Whitehead was a skilled practitioner of the art of diplomacy and understood that to effect change in New Bern was to rely on a careful mixture of negotiation and demonstrations, which

¹²⁸ "Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress," July 9, 1965, 7, folder 5024, NCFR.

¹²⁹ Whitehead was named President of the New Bern-Craven County NAACP for 1954-1955 during which time the branch boasted 190 memberships. See Part II: Branch File, Box II, Folder: New Bern, N.C. 1948-1955, NAACP Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

varied depending on the context. But he would ultimately maintain that “issues were resolved by negro negotiations and not by demonstrations.”¹³⁰ A few exceptions notwithstanding, his general cordiality and ability to resolve racial issues and make demands on behalf of the black community without arousing hostility earned him high regard in both the black and white community.¹³¹ He, therefore, aptly described himself a “civic leader” rather than a “civil rights leader” as he regularly spoke about the “good of the community” rather than black interests alone.¹³² During committee talks held back in April and May, Whitehead was one of the strongest proponents of adding poor whites to the COP board.

Whitehead’s presence on the COP board challenges a common argument among historians that middle-class blacks on community action agencies were not independent-minded, rarely concerned themselves about the interests of the poor, and served merely as a rubber-stamp for white aims and purposes.¹³³ Instead of being an obstacle to change in

¹³⁰ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, January 20, 1966 transcript, folder 7089, NCFR; Claretta Wordlaw, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 14, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹³¹ Even pro-segregationists such as City of New Bern Board of Education Superintendent H.J. McDonald respected Whitehead. Speaking of Whitehead, McDonald found that “he handles himself very well—he’s no fool by any means.” McDonald also believed Whitehead and his followers were “sensible in their outlook” for their belief in the “slow revolution doctrine” whereas McDonald described Craven SCLC President Leon Nixon as someone who cannot be trusted and who “jumps up and down” far too much when it came to civil rights. See H.J. McDonald, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR; A.D. Ward, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR; T.C. Fitzgerald, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹³² Kate Erwin, “New Bern Working for Racial Harmony, *News & Observer*, October 3, 1965.

¹³³ Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, “Negotiating Poverty: Economic Insecurity and the Politics of Working- Class Life in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, 1929-1969” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2003), 512.

Craven, Whitehead was one of its indispensable ingredients. In contrast to Nixon, Whitehead typically preferred to refrain from holding demonstrations while negotiations with whites were underway or likely. Indeed, Whitehead's decision to call in outsiders to New Bern was made without an awareness that Hearn, Pate and Stallings had been conferring with North Carolina Fund Director George Esser and his assistant Bill Koch up to a few hours before the scheduled dinner meeting over means to compromise with black requests for expanded representation.¹³⁴ Recent contact with OEO's Southeastern District Director and staff at both the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, all of whom assured Whitehead that his position and understanding of the issue of board representation was correct, further convinced him that local whites were not interested in following the Economic Opportunity Act, a stand from which he would not easily budge. Just a few days earlier, he had called off a picket line in front of Pate's home and COP headquarters only after one of the CORE organizers dissuaded such action because of the dangers in involving persons who had no prior training in nonviolent techniques.¹³⁵

Conclusion

Whitehead did not learn until he entered the Berne restaurant's dining room that white board members were seeking primarily to negotiate that evening. This realization came a little too late. Whether Whitehead personally invited them to the restaurant is not

¹³⁴ "Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress," July 9, 1965, 12, folder 5024, NCFR.

¹³⁵ The Combined Civic Organizations of New Bern and Craven County Regarding Craven Operation Progress, Inc, Board Composition and Employment Criteria for the Employment of the Project Director-Level Positions, p. 4, folder 4971, NCFR.

known, but, in addition to a group of interested local black citizens, a team of approximately ten CORE members arrived at the meeting time of 5:30 pm wearing buttons with the organization's name and remained standing in the presence of the board members who were finding seats, all of which gave the look of a demonstration.¹³⁶ Not only were whites on the board, Koch and Esser, surprised at the sight of the civil rights activists but so were the restaurant's owner and the few Klansmen who reportedly were eating there that evening. Soon, police were called to the scene and several whites in COP whispered to one another their intentions of walking out. Sensing the volatile and potentially explosive atmosphere, Esser persuaded Pate and Whitehead to reconvene the meeting for the following morning in a private setting and under less hostile circumstances.¹³⁷ But as Chapter IV will discuss, Hearn's primary loyalty to Washington at the expense of local people would continue to delay the realization of maximum feasible participation since few whites on the board trusted him. This delay, of course, was only temporary. Chapter IV will also address the simultaneous growth in biracial interest for peace and community progress that continued to increase in spite of growing white conservative opposition of COP both inside and outside the organization.

¹³⁶ David R. Schmitt, Report on New Bern, Summer 1965, folder 7157, McKissick Papers.

¹³⁷ Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress, July 9, 1965, 12-13, folder 5024, NCFR.

CHAPTER IV

WASHINGTON'S WAY

Introduction

Today's historians of the War on Poverty, most of whose mentors can be traced back to the "New Left" that came into being during the civil rights movement, have generally agreed that there was little common ground to be found between whites and blacks during the War on Poverty, particularly in smaller Southern communities. As has been argued passionately by Susan Ashmore, George Lipsitz, and others, white southern racism was so paramount during the mid-1960s as to be one of the primary reasons preventing full success (i.e. fully integrated programs, equitable biracial staff, widespread representation of the poor, and true economic freedom for the underprivileged) in community action projects in that region. As compelling as these arguments have been over the years, they are notably incomplete. One reason for their incomplete nature is that, in these histories, whites—specifically conservative to moderate middle-class leaders—are generally assumed to be and thereby classified as the antagonists of the story. This assumption often derives from a heavy reliance on the testimony of those individuals, many of whom were found in the poor populations, whom historians have understandably tended to sympathize with most. But this assumption can mean that the dynamic set of motivations and incentives that compelled whites' behavior are glossed

over.¹ Thus, as historian David Farber has recently pointed out about 1960's United States history in general, "Few, if any, middle-class white people, let alone conservatives, play important roles in these historical accounts of American history."²

Racism and disregard for the interests of the poor certainly colored the thoughts and actions of a number of whites within CAAs in the South, including North Carolina, but they did not always get to define the direction of community action. In fact, partially because of OEO guidelines for funding, not only did racism and insensitivities to the unfortunate have a rather small space to maneuver within Craven Operation Progress (COP), but there were also plenty of earnest and committed locals on the board who saw an integrated antipoverty effort as a positive development if it could be managed gradually, fairly quietly, and without stirring up white resistance or black militancy. Interestingly though, as this chapter will show, a preference for moderation and gradualism was not a recipe for obstructionism. Because of their broader understanding of the community's preference for moderation, it was not surprising that many whites on the COP board would grow wary of an executive directorship possessed by Jim Hearn, who seemed to have little to no problem stirring up local controversy. As Larry Pate and Stallings would later claim to George Esser, Hearn "threatened several times to have thousands of Negroes on the New Bern streets" if certain demands of Hearn's were not

¹ Irwin Unger, "The 'New Left' and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography," *American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (July 1967): 1262-1263.

² David Farber and Jeff Roche, eds., *The Conservative Sixties* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 2.

met such as setting the wage rate for NYC enrollees at \$1.25.³ This dynamic between Hearn and the board raises an important question: Would Hearn's tendency to try to please federal bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. rather than working with the COP board or seeking to persuade the majority of the local white citizens of the benefits of his vision for an antipoverty program be an effective way to fight the War on Poverty at the local level?

The long but deliberate road to broader local representation

Immediately following the Berne Restaurant incident, there was increased talk among several whites on the board about removing Hearn as director. Even Stallings, who had put much faith in him in the beginning, had reached a breaking point. That breaking point, however, was partially rooted in a likely misreading of Hearn's actual participation—which seemed to be none—in engineering the CORE “demonstration” as an attempt to arouse racial conflict. In a meeting with Koch several days before the dinner meeting, Stallings and Pate had already expressed a desire for someone “reasonable” who “could work with the agencies.” They likewise complained that both Hearn and COP had become targets of criticism from “all over the community,” which they surely feared had increased as word spread of the presence of CORE in New Bern. As Pate and Stallings clarified to North Carolina Fund representatives, Hearn's frequent visits to black churches, his invitations to blacks to his home, his push for quick and immediate integration in places where desegregation was occurring slowly but steadily,

³Larry B. Pate, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

and his refusal to make friends among key leaders in the community gave off an appearance that he was either interested in the black community's needs first and foremost or in "stirring up racial antagonisms." Other charges the two men had brought against the executive director were that Hearn was "arbitrary in his administrative and management practices," made "unreasonable demands" upon the agencies for administrative control of the program, and was "often tactless," all of which "was destroying staff morale" in the program.⁴ The latter complaints issued by Pate and Stallings may have been magnified beyond their intent because of their obvious frustration, but they were certainly not baseless. A North Carolina Fund review of COP completed by staffer Morris Cohen as far back as October 1964 cited impressions "that Jim is not easy to work with; he certainly is difficult to listen to, if only because he talks so fast and doesn't do much listening himself."⁵ That Hearn might have been involved in the CORE incident only added fuel to a rapidly engulfing fire.

Salisbury, North Carolina, native Frank Efird remained one of the few white board members who was willing to defend Hearn publically. A housing contractor in his early thirties, Efird made the 230-mile move to New Bern in 1964 to build a retirement community in the River Bend area. From COP board minutes and interviews conducted by the North Carolina Fund, his views on racial and economic issues appear to have been fairly liberal and largely in line with those of Hearn, who Efird described as "a good

⁴ "Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress," July 9, 1965, 10, folder 5024, NCFR.

⁵ Morris H. Cohen, North Carolina Fund Field Visit, October 20, 1964, folder 5037, NCFR.

man.” In part because he judged that too many local citizens were in his opinion “very provincial in their thinking,” Efird believed that the aggressive administrative methods Hearn employed were the only ones by which “you could get an anti-poverty program started in New Bern.” He also admired Hearn’s “tough hide” because “you could tell him he was wrong, criticize him, spit in his face,” but he “would come right back for more.”⁶ Outside Frank Efird, however, consistent support for Hearn on the board was essentially limited to black members Whitehead and Sneed.

Not surprisingly, in one of the board sessions that followed the last one attempted at Berne Restaurant, the meeting evolved into a scene in which conservative school officials and Hearn began hurling charges of wrongdoing at one another. The anger of the school officials was particularly palpable as they continued to maintain that Hearn had personally invited CORE to the board meeting. Since no fruitful compromise on either the issue of board representation or the new Head Start director was reached, yet another meeting had to be scheduled for the following morning. However, to the delight of most involved, two developments would increase the chances of a calmer and more productive meeting the third time around. Although the nature and substance of the dialogue was purportedly unbecoming, the air had finally been cleared between Hearn and the school officials who for too long had left much unsaid (leading to an incessant mounting of tension between the two). In addition, a separate set of negotiations between five white COP board members and five members of black civic organizations, including Nixon of

⁶ Frank Efird, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, April 14, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

the SCLC, exposed commonalities and similar interests and, thus, prepared the way for a lasting and workable compromise.

On June 17, and with Esser's supportive presence, the entire COP board of directors and representatives of the local black organizations sat down at the table together and over the course of two-and-a-half hours made concessions and arrangements that all agreed upon. Whites officially agreed to allow the four non-white organizations that were to be added to the board the license to choose their own representatives. In turn, Hearn and black representatives gave sanction to Craven school principal LeGette to direct Head Start but with the added appointment of black principal Leander "Lee" Morgan, who had been Whitehead's choice, as assistant director. Before the meeting was adjourned, Esser was even able to sway Pate and Stallings to stop pressing, at least temporarily, for the removal of Hearn, reasoning that local blacks would see it as a slight and "a sign of bad faith."⁷

But once more, calm soon drifted into chaos and the enactment of promises made was postponed. On June 19, just two days after the successful resolution was reached among Hearn, the board, and black community leaders, Floyd McKissick and the CORE delegation from Durham came to Father Julian Hall in New Bern to discuss issues related to schools, jobs, and alleged police brutality. But "upon arrival," one CORE member recalled, "we learned that the plans [for a march] had been radically altered during the time of our absence." Nonetheless, against the wishes of Whitehead, who stressed that

⁷ "Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress," July 9, 1965, p. 11-15, folder 5024, NCFR.

important negotiations with COP had been settled, McKissick and Leon Nixon of the SCLC convinced approximately one hundred of the attendees to march spontaneously in silence to the county courthouse.⁸ Even though the demonstration was supposedly not motivated by specific problems with COP, Stallings and other whites on the board felt betrayed and some were quick to suspect Hearn's participation. In fact, in a telephone conference requested by Stallings, Stallings told Esser he could not promise that a motion to dismiss Hearn would not be offered at the upcoming board meeting of June 23.⁹

No such motion was actually made but following the sixteen-to-one board approval to provide room for both the non-white organizations and at-large members, board member Robert Monte read the following motion: "In the event of passage of these amended by-laws at this meeting, the directors that are to be selected by civic groups should be persons of integrity, honesty and persons whom the community can look on with confidence and pride." Clearly influenced by the recent demonstrations, Monte continued by asserting that the board should have "the right to investigate and to refuse any person sponsored that has a criminal or communist record or background at the regular August meeting. This rule should also hold true for any future members of the board up for election." No discussion would follow, but Whitehead was clearly not pleased with Monte's resolution. Perhaps Whitehead did not want to detract from the peaceful and somewhat buoyant tone of the meeting. Besides the board's near unanimous approval for the additional slots for poor white and black representatives, the meeting had

⁸ David R. Schmitt, Report on New Bern, Summer 1965, folder 7157, McKissick Papers.

⁹ "Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress," July 9, 1965, 16, folder 5024, NCFR.

been highlighted by snippets of encouraging news including a report that 225 children had signed up for project Head Start in less than a week and 66 teachers and staff had just been hired.¹⁰

Either way, instead of bringing up his disagreements with the board, Whitehead felt compelled to contact Esser, who agreed to a meeting with him and three other black leaders from Craven at the Fund office in Durham on June 28, 1965. In addition to Bill Koch, two black Fund staffers, James McDonald and John Wheeler, would also be present. According to a confidential Fund report, Whitehead explained that Monte's resolution was seen as "a move on the part of the present board membership to delay representation by the Negro community even further," specifically "to block membership to any Negro who had been involved with the police following civil rights activity." He reasoned that any person who was qualified to vote in Craven should be qualified to serve on the board of directors of a poverty program. Whitehead was equally apprehensive that the board might still be continuing its efforts to remove Hearn as executive director even though Whitehead had recently informed Stallings that such a move would be regarded as "an affront to the Negro community."¹¹ In answer to these concerns, Esser promised that he would "keep a careful watch on the situation" and continue "to seek mediation before any official action might be taken by the board" in regards to Hearn.¹²

¹⁰ COP Board meeting minutes, June 23, 1965, folder 4973, NCFR; "Registration for Head Start Begins," *Sun Journal*, June 21, 1965.

¹¹ Memo: Bill Koch to George Esser, June 24, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR.

¹² "Confidential: Summary Report on Craven Operation Progress," July 9, 1965, p. 17-18, folder 5024, NCFR.

Emboldened by the assurances provided during his meeting with Fund officials, Whitehead decided to take action after a delegation of white COP board members, which most likely included Stallings, sought out Whitehead and other black leaders to negotiate for Hearn's removal.¹³ On June 30, 1965,—as Stallings joined with the thousands of flag-raising ceremonies held at the White House and antipoverty centers across the country in celebration of the beginning of Head Start—Whitehead was busy composing a letter to COP leadership that clearly affirmed the black community's decision to stand behind Hearn.¹⁴ One of the primary purposes of the letter was to “vigorously deny that there have ever been any affiliations, encouragement or suggestions from Mr. Hearn to any of the Civic or Civil Rights Organizations or any other Civil Rights activity.” “We assure anyone concerned,” Whitehead added, “that any demonstrations or other types of Civil Rights Actions have been organized, sponsored, and initiated by the Combined Civic Organizations of New Bern and Craven County,” which had been “organized and active long before O.E.O. of 1964 and/or the North Carolina Fund were established.” In closing, the letter looked to establish the fact that most in the black community were pleased that “the director is trying to follow the guidelines of O.E.O. and instruction of the North Carolina Fund” as evidenced by “programs developed and administered [that are] designed to help the total poverty elements of our county.” Thus, as Whitehead concluded, “if a Board of Director of a community Action Program [is] permitted to

¹³ Ibid., p.18, folder 5024, NCFR.

¹⁴ “‘Head Start’ Ceremony Will Be Held Here,” *Sun Journal*, June 29, 1965.

discharge their director at will without JUST cause, we question the benefits the poor of the total communities will receive from the programs.”¹⁵

Around the same time, while requesting advice from C. T. Vivian in the SCLC Atlanta office, since Craven was “now involved in an intensive employment program,” Leon Nixon bemoaned that even though “we have one of the best poverty programs in the country,” it appeared to him that “we might [lose] it because of the board of directors. They do not want to follow the guideline of Washington, D.C.,” implying that white board members who were opposed to Hearn’s style were intentionally snubbing the OEO guidelines of “maximum feasible participation.”¹⁶ This observation, of course, was solely Nixon’s opinion as it related to COP. To the contrary, most whites were well aware that they would have to expand the board in a fair manner or lose the program. Above all, Nixon’s letter, as well as Whitehead’s, underestimated the determination of Stallings, Collier, Pugh, Pate, and other leading white board members to preserve COP even when some of their chief demands were not met, namely the removal of Hearn. But the will and resolve of these men, none of whom received direct financial payment to serve on the board, would be tested in a rather dramatic fashion following a near tragedy on July 9, 1965.

¹⁵ Robert M. Whitehead to “whom it may concern,” June 30, 1965, folder 5047, NCFR.

¹⁶ L.C. Nixon to C.T. Vivian, June 25, 1965, box 52, folder 12, Subgroup II, Series V, Subseries 2, Records of Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King Library and Archives.

A catalyst to greater community support of COP

At approximately 2:00 am on the morning of July 9, one or more local Klan members found their way inside the locked gate that led up to the two-story cabin where ten North Carolina Fund Volunteers—seven white and three black—were staying for the summer. Located within ten miles of New Bern near the remote community of Bridgeton, the cabin was the property of former board member Bill Flowers, who had recently resigned from both the New Bern school system and the COP board to work for the North Carolina Fund in Durham. Described by Whitehead as “fair a man as ever lived in Craven County,” Flowers had offered his home to the integrated group of volunteers as a living space while he was away. This team of volunteers first arrived in Craven in mid-June.¹⁷

Accompanying the college students was their volunteer team director, twenty-six-year-old Duke Divinity School student Franklin Ingram, who stayed with his wife in a separate room in the residence. Before arriving in Craven, Ingram had a long and impressive record of working with the poor, beginning with his work in the summer of 1961 as a counselor for at-risk adolescent boys in Dobbs Ferry, New York, and soon progressing into mission trips, including to Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras, where he served as a volunteer carpenter. While an undergraduate student at Duke University, he had also participated in multiple civil rights demonstrations and negotiations between 1960 and 1963 that led to the eventual desegregation of Durham businesses and theaters. Perhaps Ingram’s proudest moment was his joint effort with fellow Duke undergraduates

¹⁷ Bill Flowers, interview by John Miller, Durham, NC, February 3, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

in pushing the university to admit blacks as both students and faculty. For Ingram, the chance to work for the North Carolina Fund promised not only a sizeable part-time salary for a graduate student but also an opportunity for him to carry out his life's passion for social justice.¹⁸ His passion, however, would be challenged while in Craven.

On that morning of July 9, as the Klansmen came within ten feet of the cabin's front door, at least one of them fired a total of five shots from a twenty-five-caliber pistol into the house, three of which went through the upstairs windows. Ingram, who was still awake and talking with two of the volunteers in the second-floor meeting room, yelled to the young women in the adjacent bedroom, as shot blasts rang out, to drop down and lie flat on the floor. Once the shooting ceased and it was determined that no one was hurt, Ingram immediately contacted the FBI, the Craven County Sheriff's Department, and Jim Hearn each by CB radio, there being no phone in the house. As daylight approached, Ingram's next move was to find the nearest pay telephone, from which he called his supervisor, Jack Mansfield of the North Carolina Fund. But before Mansfield arrived in Craven County, Ingram had been the target of yet another gunman.

While driving toward New Bern in the early morning hours, Ingram and North Carolina Fund Director of Public Information Leon Cepetanos were shot at by a man who was standing outside his trailer home carrying a rifle. Neither man in the car was wounded as they drove on to the county Sheriff's office to report the incident. The two Fund employees would identify a forty-two-year-old former Marine Corps military policeman as the shooter who, it was later verified, was heavily intoxicated when

¹⁸ Franklin Ingram, interview by author, Cary, NC, November 5, 2010, transcript in author's possession.

Ingram's car had passed his home. The shooter's home was sited only about one mile from Flowers' cabin. Except for the fact that the North Carolina Volunteer team was targeted in both cases, there appeared to be no connections between the two shootings. In terms of timing and physical location, that one shooting followed another so closely could suggest that residents in and around the Broad Creek section had only recently picked up on the location of the group's living quarters or the type of car that Ingram drove. It likewise suggests that frustration over the presence of the integrated group had been rising in certain sectors of Craven despite much of their early work revolving around seemingly unpretentious work like the building of outhouses and other rural environmental sanitation projects, including fly and rodent control. During the previous summer of 1964, all seven of the North Carolina Volunteers assigned to Craven, three of whom were black, had found the Craven community to be either "actively cooperative," "approving/receptive" or "indifferent"—but none described it as "hostile" or "not accepting."¹⁹ In comparison, the atmosphere during the summer of 1965 certainly appeared to be far more hostile, at least within rural areas. Ingram claimed that earlier in the month Ku Klux Klan literature had been tacked onto a North Carolina Volunteer sign designating a community barbeque.²⁰ Generally unsympathetic with integration efforts themselves and perhaps upset by the thought of the negative publicity that was surely to come to Craven following the FBI investigation, even Craven County Sheriff Charlie

¹⁹ Report on the North Carolina Volunteers: Summer Program 1964, 86 (in possession of Mr. Franklin Ingram).

²⁰ "North Carolina Fund Body Raps Violence in Craven," *News & Observer*, July 12, 1965; "Violence in Craven," *Greensboro Daily News*, July 15, 1965.

Berry and his white deputies were initially unfriendly to Cepetanos and Ingram when they came to arrest the man who shot at them, reportedly asking the question, “Why are you here? We ain’t got no poverty in Craven County.”²¹

North Carolina Fund executive director George Esser expressed “deep concern and sorrow for the inexplicable acts of violence” to news outlets that carried the story of the North Carolina Volunteers’ confrontations with violence in Craven.²² In spite of the frightful scare, however, the college volunteers would stay surprisingly calm following the shootings. Many of them would naturally feel a degree of anger and vulnerability but not a single volunteer voiced a desire to leave Craven County and, according to Jack Mansfield, even their parents “did not indicate extreme alarm at this incident.” Ingram, who described the group as “energetic” and extremely motivated—one of the students was a Morehead Scholar at UNC-Chapel Hill—believed that their spirit was a manifestation of an idealistic yet deep-seated belief that “they could change the whole face of the world.”²³ During their short time in Craven, several of the volunteers had already engaged—though at a minimal level—in the process of stimulating local poor citizens to help themselves and in recruiting local volunteers to form organizations in order to carry on projects; such activities tended to feed the students’ sense of purpose.

²¹ Memo: Jack P. Mansfield to George Esser and Board of Directors, Subject: New Bern Volunteer Team Incident, July 9, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR; “Man Arrested for Shooting at Craven Poverty Workers,” *News & Observer*, July 11, 1965; “North Carolina Fund Body Raps Violence in Craven,” *News & Observer*, July 12, 1965; Bill Flowers, interview by John Miller, Durham, NC, February 3, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

²² “Poverty Workers Routed by Shots,” *Sun Journal*, July 10, 1965.

²³ Franklin Ingram, interview by author, Cary, NC, November 5, 2010, transcript in author’s possession.

One of the white male volunteers, for instance, was proud to have begun to sign up residents in the James City area for homemaking and adult education classes in the same way that two black female volunteers felt a sense of accomplishment in starting up Mother's Clubs and a Teen Club for residents of the Duffyfield neighborhood in New Bern.²⁴ Because of their observable longing to continue the work they had started, several of the volunteers were given permission by the Fund, on the morning of the shooting, to continue their scheduled day's work to construct a privy for a recreational area in the black community of Pembroke.²⁵

Assisting the students' calm was a realization gathered from their team director that the shootings were likely not intended to wound or kill anyone. As Franklin Ingram testified, the shots served more as a scare tactic than an actual attempt at murder.²⁶ "They may have just been shooting in the air, wanting to scare people. Rednecks do that," North Carolina Fund staffer Billy Barnes would also recall. "They have six beers, and they want to go out and scare somebody. If there's a bunch of black kids living with white kids and they're mixed gender and race, that's reason enough to drive there and try to scare the liver out of them. So, you drive there and just make some noises and try to scare them." Strengthening this theory was the fact that, even during one of the heights of Klan resurgence in Craven, "no one was hurt all summer." Nonetheless, rather than take a

²⁴ Report on James City, August 25, 1965; Final Report on Work Done in Duffyfield, August 26, 1965, folder 1604, NCFR.

²⁵ Memo: Jack P. Mansfield to George Esser and Board of Directors, Subject: New Bern Volunteer Team Incident, July 9, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR.

²⁶ Franklin Ingram, interview by author, Cary, NC, November 5, 2010, transcript in possession of author.

chance with the students' safety, the Fund suggested that they all move out of the secluded woods of Broad Creek and into the Governor Tryon Hotel in downtown New Bern. None of the students protested and obligingly packed their belongings. Interestingly, one of the reasons Flowers had offered his cabin for the volunteers was exactly because of its relatively secluded location, which he believed would prevent them from attracting as much attention as if they lived in a hotel or a church in town. But, as Barnes noted, "it didn't work out that way."²⁷ Helping the students pack was board member Willie Dawson, who had learned about the shootings only by reading about it in the local *Sun Journal*, two days after the fact. For reasons unknown, Hearn did not relay any information about the shootings to the COP board members. As a result, according to the Fund, only Dawson, New Bern City Manager Ed Welch, and D. L. Stallings took the initiative to contact the group to see if they were safe or needed any assistance. Among these, Stallings made the biggest impact. Speaking directly with the volunteers, he not only apologized for the incidents that occurred but assured them that the people in Craven would "try to compensate for this and to make some correction of the conditions."²⁸ For Stallings, one of the surest ways to accomplish this objective was to enlighten the public of the background of the North Carolina Volunteers and their purpose. Leading this campaign would be Stallings himself.

²⁷ Oral History Interview by Billy E. Barnes, November 6, 2003, transcript, Interview O-0038, SOHP.

²⁸ Memo: Jack P. Mansfield to George Esser and Board of Directors, Subject: New Bern Volunteer Team Incident, July 9, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR.

At a meeting of the COP Volunteer Advisory Committee held on July 12, which included Ingram and his wife, Capetanos, Dawson, Lee Morgan, and several black and white local ministers, one of the unanimous agreements reached by the committee was that “virtually nothing was known in the community about the programs that were in operation,” leading each committee member to vow to do more reaching out in the future. As Ingram lamented, Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) Assistant Director Neal Evans had just received a “Klan’s Watching You” sticker on his car that very day. Swift action to publicize the programs was becoming all the more necessary. Reverend Al Fisher deemed the North Carolina Volunteer program to be the “poorest job of selling to the community” he had ever seen, because no one was “trying to sell us as a non-civil rights group.” Reverend Richard L. Newby, leader of a local black congregation, concurred that if a group is seen as “civil righters” they can be “branded as outsiders,” and, thus, “we need [larger] community participation.” The COP board “should have sold the community,” claimed Morgan, particularly in the white areas.²⁹ Indeed, the more the Craven community learned about the Volunteers through direct contact or observation of the programs they were assisting, the more they tended to be won over.

A day or two after the shooting, the local Police Captain and his patrolmen tailed the Volunteers to a restaurant near the hotel, for no obvious reason. Once the police car parked, Ingram walked outside and spent about an hour talking to the men. The Captain was said to have been “extremely impolite” and indicated that “he had no use for the

²⁹ Advisory Committee Meeting, New Bern, July 12, 1965, folder 1602, NCFR.

group.” After explaining the program to the point that they better understood its purpose, Ingram apparently helped to change their attitudes. By the end of the conversation, the police team assured Ingram of their help and cooperation and drove away.³⁰ Even greater success in improving the image of the program would come following the statement issued by the COP Board of Directors. On the third day after the incidents, Stallings gathered the COP Board of Directors together to agree to sign a statement that not only condemned the behavior of the violent extremists but also reflected their support of the work being done by the North Carolina Volunteer program. The statement, signed by all members of the board, was published the next day in the *Sun Journal*. The volunteers “have been and will be very fruitful here in Craven County,” the group asserted.³¹ Also led by Stallings, the Craven County Board of Commissioners approved of a similar resolution that same evening that admonished “these dastardly deeds of violence,” while serving to assure the public that “such irresponsible acts are not characteristic of our fine citizenship, who are law-abiding, God-fearing people, with a strong sense of our responsibility to maintain law and order, and to protect the rights of our citizens, and those that come within our borders from time to time.”³² Although many Craven whites “were just not ready to accept” the interracial living arrangements of the Volunteers, far

³⁰ Memo: Jack P. Mansfield to George Esser and Board of Directors, Subject: New Bern Volunteer Team Incident, July 9, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR.

³¹ “Poverty Workers Termed Fruitful in Craven County,” *Greensboro Record*, July 14, 1965.

³² Copy of Resolution Adopted by Board of Commissioners For Craven County-Special Called Meeting on Monday Evening, July 12, 1965, folder 5020, NCFR.

more came out strongly against the ways the youngsters were targeted, including those who had never taken an active public stance before.³³

On July 16, Jack Mansfield of the North Carolina Fund wrote a letter thanking Stallings for his concern and the assistance given to himself and the Volunteers, confident that “out of this will come considerable change in the attitude of the Craven community.”³⁴ Mansfield appeared to be right. According to a later report by Mansfield, both signed documents had a major impact upon the community. “We have had a number of comments by people that we have been dealing with and working within the community who up to this time had ‘accepted us,’” he later wrote, “but had not really felt very strongly about us.” But after the COP board and the Craven County Commissioners made such strong statements against the “cowardly acts,” Mansfield observed far more citizens with an open mind and a willingness to support both the Volunteers and COP.³⁵ Though it was far from their intention, activity by extremists actually helped to spur moderates and those on the fence to support, at least privately or among friends and acquaintances, efforts to bring about equal opportunity in Craven. The letter signed by the COP Board was especially helpful in bringing the community to see that the North Carolina Volunteers were not “outsiders” but hard-working youth who came from small

³³ Larry B. Pate, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR; Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 16, 1966, , transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

³⁴ Jack Mansfield to D. L. Stallings, July 16, 1965, folder 1602, NCFR.

³⁵ Memo: Jack P. Mansfield to George Esser and Board of Directors, Subject: New Bern Volunteer Team Incident, July 9, 1965, folder 5040, NCFR.

North Carolina towns much like New Bern and who had agreed to contribute “their time and energies” unselfishly to cure the roots of poverty in communities across the state.

When Governor Dan K. Moore learned about the Craven shootings, he assertively declared that “this kind of action will not be tolerated in North Carolina.” No less could be said about the majority of Craven County.³⁶

³⁶ “Governor Condemns Incident,” *News & Observer*, July 13, 1965. Governor Moore, a conservative Democrat, was not as supportive of the North Carolina Fund as his predecessor, Terry Sanford, but his support grew overtime especially following his wife’s invitation to sit on the North Carolina Fund board of directors. According to a March 1966 article published in *Pageant* magazine, “The Tarheel state has had the kind of intelligent political leadership that makes it difficult for any hate group to thrive,” adding that the state’s spiritual leaders as well as “the bulk of the population have no use for the Klan’s negative, destructive attitudes.” Ethel Ryan, “How North Carolina Ripped the Sheets Off Its Ku Klux Klan,” *Pageant*, March 1966, 134-135.

STATEMENT BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CRAVEN OPERATION PROGRESS, INC.
July 12, 1965

The two unfortunate events which occurred in Craven County this weekend, relating to the North Carolina Volunteers, caused the Board of Directors of Craven Operation Progress, Inc. to deem it advisable to make a statement.

The North Carolina Volunteers Program is sponsored by the North Carolina Fund, which has its office in Durham, North Carolina. The Executive Director of the North Carolina Fund is George H. Esser, Jr., who was with the Institute of Government for many years.

The Board of Directors of the North Carolina Fund is made up of some of the most prominent people in North Carolina. They are:

Wallace Murchison, President Attorney Wilmington, North Carolina	C. A. McKnight Editor, The Charlotte Observer Charlotte, North Carolina
Mrs. Dan K. Moore Governor's Mansion Raleigh, North Carolina	Hargrove Bowles, Jr. Businessman Greensboro, North Carolina
Dr. Hollis Edens Exec. Director, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation Former President of Duke University Winston-Salem, North Carolina	J. Gerald Cowan Businessman Asheville, North Carolina
John H. Wheeler, Treasurer President, Mechanics and Farmers Bank Durham, North Carolina	Mrs. H. Frank Forsyth Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Thomas J. Pearsall Attorney and Businessman Rocky Mount, North Carolina	James A. Gray President, Old Salem, Inc. Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Terry Sanford Governor of North Carolina, 1960-1964 Fayetteville, North Carolina	Mrs. E. C. Parker Albemarle, North Carolina

The Volunteers are college students who have agreed to contribute their time and energies in various communities of the state — trying to get at the grass roots of poverty.

The Reverend Jack P. Mansfield, a Methodist minister, is the Director of Special Projects for the North Carolina Fund, and the North Carolina Volunteers come under his direct supervision. Mr. Mansfield's assistant is Mrs. Marjorie Calloway, who was Miss Marjorie Bryan, a daughter of Robert Bryan, of Goldsboro, a successful businessman, who was recently re-appointed to the State Board of Conservation and Development by Governor Moore.

The opening session of the North Carolina Volunteers held in Durham prior to their assuming their duties for the Summer was addressed by Mrs. Dan K. Moore, who expressed her pride in their work, and stated that both she and Governor Moore would be watching their progress with a great deal of interest.

There are twenty-one teams in the North Carolina Volunteers, and Craven County was fortunate enough to procure the services of one team, consisting of three young white men, four young white women, and three young negro women. They came to the New Bern area in mid-June. Both races are represented because poverty affects people of all races. The team Directors and Chaperones are The Reverend and Mrs. Franklin Ingram, of Durham, North Carolina. Mr. Ingram is a Methodist minister, doing graduate work at Duke University. Mrs. Ingram is a School Teacher in the Durham School System.

Bishop Paul N. Garber, Resident Bishop of the Methodist Church of the Raleigh area, has endorsed the work of Mr. Mansfield and Mr. Ingram with the Volunteers.

This Board of Directors recognized that the Volunteers could render a real community service here in Craven County, and when the services of a team were offered by the North Carolina Fund, such offer was accepted.

These ten young people work six days a week with local citizens, under the direct supervision of local agency officials, striking at the root causes of poverty. The Volunteers' job assignments here are as follows:

Hedy Howell, of Burnsville, and Haywood Rankin, of Gastonia, work in a Village near New Bern. Miss Howell conducts a reading club for small children and also works with a mothers' club, teaching nutrition, sewing, and cooking skills. Mr. Rankin works in the same village supervising recreation for the youngsters and organizing community improvement efforts such as clean-up campaigns.

Peggy Hudson, of Forest City, Ann Jones, of Chapel Hill, Phyllis Roberson, of Rutherfordton, and Naomi Myers, of Mt. Gilead, all work in the Duffy Field section of New Bern. Miss Jones works at tutoring teenagers who are potential dropouts. Miss Roberson supervises a teen club. Miss Myers works with a mothers' club, teaching homemaking skills. Miss Hudson teaches arts and crafts in a recreation program.

Sandra Johnson, of Lillington, daughter of Superior Court Judge, William A. Johnson, Lloyd Reese, of Raleigh, and Doris Johnson, of Wilmington, work in the South Front Street area of New Bern.

Sandra Johnson works with a mothers' club. Mr. Reese is leading teenagers in a neighborhood clean-up campaign. Doris Johnson operates a program teaching reading and arts and crafts to small children.

The tenth volunteer, Dan McCurry, of Candler, works with Mr. A. D. Harris, head of environmental sanitation work in Craven County, encouraging residents to improve their water supplies, sanitation facilities, and conditions of yards and streets.

All of these are currently enrolled in North Carolina colleges, with the exception of Ann Jones, whose father, Claibourne Jones, was today named Vice Chancellor of the University of North Carolina. As stated above, her home is Chapel Hill, North Carolina, but she is attending college in Virginia.

These young people receive no pay for their services, but do receive a small educational grant at the end of the Summer to assist them in furthering their education. Each team receives from the North Carolina Fund an allowance for meals which are prepared by the wife of the Team Director. There is no allowance for housing. The North Carolina Fund requires that the local community receiving the services of the team provide their housing. We were very fortunate in having provided for their use, without charge, a large two-story summer home, located at Broad Creek. This same facility was provided for the North Carolina Volunteers who spent last Summer in Craven County.

The North Carolina Fund, through its Executive Committee, has condemned the cowardly attacks by person or persons upon the Craven County team. We join in the condemnation of the misguided individual or individuals who participated in these attacks. These young people are working hard at unfamiliar tasks in an effort to help people who find it very difficult to help themselves. Their efforts have been and will be very fruitful here in Craven County. We are confident that all of the citizens of Craven County who understand the program and its purposes will endorse the efforts of these young people and what they are seeking to achieve, and we, as members of the Board of Directors of Craven Operation Progress, Inc., urge all citizens of Craven County to support and encourage these boys and girls in their unselfish work.

New Bern City Schools, James W. Allen
Craven County Dental Society,
Lewis P. Bratton, D.D.S.
New Bern Civic Council, Cedric M. Boyd
Craven County Health Department,
Dr. W. A. Browne
Craven County Schools, T. J. Collier
Member at large (Labor), Willie F. Dawson
Member at large (Industry), J. Frank Efford
Member at large (Minorities), John R. Hill
County Farm Extension Chairman, A. T. Jackson
New Bern City Schools, H. J. MacDonald
Member at large (Agricultural Production),
Larry B. Palo

Mayor, City of New Bern, Mack L. Lupton
Member at large (Agricultural Processing),
Robert R. Monte
Craven County Bar Association,
David S. Henderson
Craven County Welfare Department,
Constance F. S. Rabin
Craven County Welfare Department,
Roland H. Sneed
Chairman, Craven County Board of
Commissioners, D. L. Stallings
Member at large (Minorities), R. M. Whitehead
Member at large (Business), Harry B. Wright
New Bern-Craven County Chamber of
Commerce, Olin A. Wright
Craven County Schools, Robert L. Pugh

(Pursuant to the Charter and By-Laws of Craven Operation Progress, Inc., the Board of Directors is presently composed of the following:

- A. Chairman of the Craven County Board of County Commissioners, or his designee from the Board of Commissioners.
Mayor of the City of New Bern, or his designee from the Board of Aldermen.
Superintendent of the Craven County Schools.
Superintendent of the New Bern City Schools
Director of Public Welfare for Craven County.
Manager of the New Bern office of the Employment Security Commission.
- B. A representative from each of the following organizations:
New Bern Civic Council
Craven County Mental Health Association.
New Bern Ministerial Association.
Craven County Medical Society.
Craven County Dental Society.
Craven County Bar Association.
- C. Members at large representing all important elements of the community, including:
Industry.
Agriculture:
Business.
Labor.
Religions.
Minorities.

Figure 18. Statement by the Board of Directors of Craven Operation Progress, Inc. *Sun Journal*, July 13, 1965.

While on the surface it might seem counterintuitive, integration efforts both inside and outside COP ran fairly smooth in Craven and its environs after the Klan-inspired violence. On July 15, 1965, the Reverend Thomas Hadden, only about twenty-five-years-old at the time, became the first black priest to take over a formerly all-white Catholic parish in New Bern when St. Joseph's, where Hadden had been the priest since 1962, merged with St. Paul's. Several weeks later Hadden, also a youth adviser to the local NAACP branch, reported that while a few local white Catholics protested his appointment community reaction was overall "very good," citing no noticeable decline in attendance. Successful in proving to white congregants that his skin color made no difference in how he performed his duties, Hadden would continue to serve as St. Joseph's Catholic priest for approximately ten more years.³⁷ Moreover, in early 1965, Jones was one of only two counties in the state with signs above the welfare building restrooms designating race. But in July, the signs were uneventfully removed by the Jones County sheriff, as the Jones County Board of Commissioners unanimously agreed it should be done. Of course, both Jones and Craven were home to CAAs that depended on OEO approval of the degree to which they complied with civil rights laws and afforded racial equality to their citizens, but leaders in both counties had the full choice to relinquish federal funds for their antipoverty programs in favor of past racial practices.

³⁷ "Negro Priest Takes Over All-White Parish," *News & Observer*, July 27, 1965. As Father Hadden acknowledged in an interview by the North Carolina Fund in 1966, twenty-seven out of the 800 white Catholics in the area drew up a petition to condemn Hadden's appointment, which they gave to the local bishop. The local bishop, however, ignored it and allowed Hadden to continue in his new post. See Father Thomas B. Hadden, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR. See also Amanda James, "Hadden Led Sacred Heart from 1973-'83," *News & Observer*, October 9, 2012.

Within COP, not only were integrative measures reaching a high mark in July, especially in regards to staff employment, but so was local black influence.³⁸ The timing of both of these advancements was not solely motivated by OEO guidelines, however, but was rooted instead in a mixture of local circumstances and thoughtful encouragement from the North Carolina Fund. This reality was especially evident during the last week of July at a meeting George Esser called at the Governor Tryon Hotel to determine whether Jim Hearn would retain his job. In addition to Esser and COP board members, those attending the meeting included North Carolina Fund Board of Directors Wallace Murchison and John Wheeler as well as Cliff Campbell, a black representative from the Ford Foundation. Pate and Stallings continued to make clear their strong demand for Hearn's termination as executive director, a demand that was not lessened by the ongoing demonstration, led by Nixon and the SCLC, who supported Hearn, right outside of the hotel. Robert Whitehead, who had earlier received Nixon's word that demonstrations would not be used unless the negotiations failed, stayed remarkably calm despite his frustration over the outside distractions and gave a balanced argument on behalf of the black community that Hearn should remain at his post. It was perhaps the first time that Whitehead had spoken to the entire COP board face-to-face about his support of Hearn.

Pate and Stallings give up campaign to remove Hearn

The Fund board members and Campbell naturally sided with Whitehead, and together, as a group, they would convince Pate and Stallings to officially give up on their

³⁸ At least 40 percent of the COP staff was black at this time.

campaign to remove Hearn.³⁹ According to Bill Flowers, the result of the meeting represented the first time that powerful Craven whites had backed down to black demands.⁴⁰ This was not exactly true, of course, as records from previous civil rights negotiations show, but it was certainly a sizeable victory for black interests, which had been boosted by the presence of the North Carolina Fund. To their credit, Pate and Stallings preferred to work with Hearn rather than to quit or let go of the program altogether. With the issue of Hearn's foreseeable future out of the way, room was left for addressing other agenda items left to be tackled, most notably the expansion of the COP board of directors, which was still unsettled.

COP board officially expands representation, July 1965

On July 30, 1965, and after a nearly two-month delay, the COP board agreed to formally expand its representation. Two days earlier, Harold Bailin of the OEO had been a guest at the regularly-scheduled board meeting, where he reminded COP directors to clear up their disagreements over representation so as to continue to receive War on Poverty funding, which as of July 23 the House had approved to double from \$750,000 to \$1.5 billion.⁴¹ Fortunately, the task that lay ahead did not require COP board members to

³⁹ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 16, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

⁴⁰ Bill Flowers, interview by John Miller, Durham, NC, February 3, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

⁴¹ COP Board meeting minutes, July 28, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR; Arnold B. Sawislak, "House Vote Doubles Antipoverty Outlay," *Washington Post*, July 23, 1965. According to David Zarefsky, the approximately \$750 million appropriated for the first year was not spent until halfway into the year and thus, "the projected increase really was no increase at all." See Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*, 89.

have to start from scratch. In addition to rescinding Monte's motion of June 23, the board approved the addition of four black low-income residents chosen by Frank Efir's committee, which included Elizabeth Evans, a welfare recipient with seven dependents; church janitor David Whitfield; housewife Catherine Berry; and Jarrat Brown, a laborer. The three white low-income residents added were Donna Kethcum, who was on disability income; tenant farmer Otis Ipock; and Edith Holton. Lastly, representatives from three of the non-white organizations were hand-picked by the organizations themselves, which included Bishop S. Rivers of the New Bern Civic League, Reverend Willie G. Hickman of the Craven County Civic League, and Claretta Wordlaw of the NAACP, but as agreed upon earlier in the meeting, their appointment would be contingent on the approval of the board of directors. The fourth non-white organization, the SCLC, had nominated Leon Nixon but he was quickly rejected by the board by a twelve-to-one vote. As Stallings reasoned, "Despite all the good things that were expected to come from the poverty program, Mr. Nixon had displayed a disfavorable attitude" by leading a demonstration march. Stallings moved that the SCLC resubmit another name from their organization. Monte seconded the motion.⁴²

As reflected in the twelve-to-one vote against Nixon's addition to the board, whites were not alone in generally perceiving Nixon as too divisive. Since the summer of 1963, Nixon had lost support among black civil rights leaders and participants, most notably the youth of New Bern NAACP, due to, and according to local black youth and

⁴² COP board meeting minutes, July 30, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

NAACP commando Ronald W. Stewart, “his dominating procedures, his stubborn attitude and his refusal to allow the officers of the youth Council to preside over their meetings and make their own decisions.” Nixon also regularly consulted no one, Stewart charged, and “openly accused every Negro in the community of being an Uncle Tom if he or she disagreed with his procedures,” which eventually led him to form his own SCLC Civil Rights Committee in 1964.⁴³ Moreover, at Whitehead’s urging, Nixon had been recently dropped from the Combined Civic Organizations of Craven County and New Bern after demonstrating outside the Governor Tryon Hotel a few days prior. One of the most controversial actions Nixon would later take was his staging of a march on the day of the funeral for a revered local civil rights leader, C.C. Sparrow, which upset most blacks in the community, including Father Hadden, who had recently chosen to leave the SCLC.⁴⁴ Although Nixon claimed to attract a large following during the 1960s, the truth was that most local blacks found him both untrustworthy and primarily interested in protest for his own self-promotion.

Instead of simply being afraid of “employing blacks they didn’t know and couldn’t control,” white leaders in COP sought to have a say in the appointment of the non-white organizations partially because they believed the SCLC might appoint Nixon, who both the black and white communities found unacceptable and almost impossible to

⁴³ Ronald W. Stewart to F.B. McKissick, May 10, 1964, folder 7159, McKissick Papers.

⁴⁴ Besides Leon Nixon’s tendency to get “carried away with his own eloquence,” Father Hadden found him to be an undependable leader, despite some of his accomplishments in the area of black voting registration. See Father Thomas B. Hatin (Hadden), interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

work with.⁴⁵ In fact, all of the new black members of the board could be described as strong-willed, outspoken, and determined to fight on behalf of fairness for other blacks. All of them had been and continued to be involved in the local civil rights movement. Claretta Wordlaw, who served as the secretary for the local NAACP, was among the most outspoken and strong-willed. Born in New Bern circa 1930 and raised in nearby Greenville, Wordlaw was always a leader since she was a young girl. “I was just bossy,” she recalled years later. In addition to teaching her dad how to read the Bible, she claimed to have been one of the few to have had the audacity to throw things back at white children who used to throw things out of the school bus at her and other black children walking home from school. She had always taken the attitude that she was “just as good as whites,” if not better. After all, she asserted, blacks had “started from nothing” but had been able to “make something out of themselves” despite that fact. Not long after moving back to New Bern to live with her aunt following her mother’s passing, Wordlaw met her husband whom she would have one son with before he also passed away. Her husband’s death landed her in financial difficulty. With a \$152 monthly check from the veteran’s administration as her only income, she was only able to afford to rent an apartment at Craven Terrace, one of New Bern’s two public housing units, where she moved to with her young son in 1949. Over time, life grew increasingly difficult for her and her son due to the fact that she had never finished high school which severely limited her economic opportunities. No later than 1965, however, she would decide to re-enroll at Jones County High where she eventually received her high school diploma in June 1966 at age thirty-

⁴⁵ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 144-146.

six. While working towards her diploma, she applied for part-time work at a local grocery store but was refused consideration by the white manager. Judging the manager's decision to have been made without just cause, she was encouraged by the local NAACP to file suit against him. Action was still pending in February 1966.⁴⁶

Wordlaw clearly could not be described as an "Uncle Tom" nor was she willing to accommodate to white prejudices. She, like the other black civil rights supporters named to the COP board in July 1965, was willing to engage in protest and to use the law to fight against any remnants of racial discrimination. Yet, unlike Nixon, they were willing to work with whites and saw benefits from doing so. Nixon, on the other hand, saw no benefits from negotiating with whites, believing that whites would never truly "make improvements for the Negro possible" without force.⁴⁷ For many whites on the board, a role in leading economic and social progress for the whole community was frequently more motivation than a craving for control. Craven County Schools Superintendent Robert L. Pugh perhaps most clearly voiced such a view. A contributor to the NC Commission on Interracial Cooperation since the 1940s, Pugh was among several leading whites who were vocally supportive of a new era of change in Craven. His embrace of the racial and economic changes in his home county were at least partially rooted in his identity as someone who "knew something of the meaning of poverty" being born, as he

⁴⁶ Claretta Wordlaw, interview by Sonya Ramsey, New Bern, NC, August 4, 1993, listening tape, box MT8, *Behind the Veil*; Claretta Wordlaw, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 14, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR. Wordlaw's leadership skills and activism eventually led Sargent Shriver to appoint her by February 1966 to the Community Representatives Advisory Council for OEO.

⁴⁷ L.C. Nixon, interview by John Miller, Havelock, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

put it, “not only on the other side of the railroad tracks” of New Bern “but almost on the tracks” themselves.⁴⁸

Just prior to the closing of the July 30 meeting, Pugh was granted permission to speak upon on a matter which for several months had caused him and “a great many other citizens of the community tremendous concern,” namely that Craven’s progressive steps into “the new era” might be sabotaged by those seeking to “tear down or destroy the harmonious relationships between both races that are necessary to the total welfare of our people.” For Pugh, it was not enough that a great deal had been learned about local poverty. The more vital lesson learned over the last several years was the value and importance of “living together in peace and harmony.” Without naming specific persons or groups to which he was referring, Pugh devoted most of his speech to praising the progress made in school desegregation and programs of “mutual interest” within COP. Above all, he heralded the fact that the Craven County school plan for August 1965 would soon lead to a completely desegregated school system, which “can and will be taken without the necessity of any undue or outside influence.” Also citing the addition of “good men and good women” to the COP board, which presented a “wonderful opportunity” to move forward “in more harmonious relationships” and in “creating better living conditions” for “all our people,” Pugh asked that blacks and whites “present a united front” and “work together” to secure “economic, social, and spiritual progress” of the entire community. Since he believed that local citizens “have a spirit of common interest in the welfare of all of our people,” Pugh suggested that “we plead not only with

⁴⁸ COP board meeting minutes, July 30, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

the members of the Board of Directors, but with people of good will throughout the area to rise up in one thunderous voice in opposition to any element or influence that is going to be detrimental to the welfare of all,” likely referring to both the Ku Klux Klan and self-proclaimed militants such as Leon Nixon. However, Pugh’s speech was not meant to condemn all episodes of dissent but to reflect his belief that, “We will make progress together or we will not make progress at all.” The first to concur with Pugh’s remarks was Whitehead followed by Pate who, after Monte personally welcomed the new members to the board, expressed “his appreciation for the attitude displayed in working out the problems.”⁴⁹ If nothing else, the eventual agreement with which the board not only expanded but welcomed broader representation challenges historians’ claims that whites and blacks could not find common ground in small Southern communities and that white prejudice or racism prevented successes early on in the War on Poverty. Furthermore, as encapsulated by Whitehead’s approval for Pugh’s speech, white southern support for community harmony was not necessarily a veiled attempt to maintain the status quo. Indeed, voluntary cooperation could be highly conducive to some forms of change.

The expansion of the number of decision-makers within COP to include both members of the poor as well as a more proportionate number of black citizens was a momentous development in local cooperation. It was likewise an important step towards success for Craven’s war on poverty which required support and assistance from the whole community. In growing to a total of thirty-seven members in July 1965, the board

⁴⁹ COP Board meeting minutes, July 30, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

became a more representative body by incorporating more voices from neighborhoods and groups not yet fully heard while mitigating the power and influence of each of the individual members who served when the board previously stood at twenty-six. The inclusion of the poor—black and white alike—was arguably more revolutionary than the addition of black representatives from local civil rights organizations, the latter of whom were financially stable and had kept direct contact with the power structure for years. The same could not be said of the poor. According to an OEO-sponsored North Carolina Fund study of 11,600 families in thirty-one low-income neighborhoods in the state, which included 356 housing units in New Bern and 340 in Craven County—between 93 and 98 percent of the members of the households tracked in 1965 did not belong to any type of community organization (or labor union) whether agricultural, fraternal, civic, racial, or political in nature.⁵⁰ The poor's deficient participation in the democratic process, which carried over into the act of voting, stemmed from at least one if not several causes from being uninformed, having a lack of interest, time, or money to join, and possessing feelings of minimal influence or sense of belonging in organizations that were often led by middle-class and upper-class residents of their community. It was not all that surprising, therefore, that for decades the poor had been practically unheard if not unseen among the middle-class in Craven since, for various reasons, few of them expressed their desires and needs on a consistent basis to those in power or those with influence. Indeed,

⁵⁰ *North Carolina's Present and Future Poor: A Study Based on Interviews with 11,600 Families in 31 Low-Income Neighborhoods* (Durham, NC: North Carolina Fund, 1968), 16. The study was funded by the OEO in 1965.

many of the poor who were added to the board in July, such as white tenant farmer Otis Ipock, had not yet heard of COP and had to be recruited by current board members themselves.

But the same North Carolina Fund study showed promising signs of the potential of the poor to positively affect their own circumstances if given the opportunity.

According to the findings, only 10 percent of the respondents were receiving public welfare at the time they were interviewed while the vast majority claimed to work forty hours per week or more and that they would be willing to take advantage of educational and job training opportunities if they became available, reflecting both a sense of work ethic and aspirations for self-improvement.⁵¹ Coupled with the compassionate notion of self-help that lay at the heart of the local antipoverty effort, the poor in Craven had one of the greatest occasions to date to make a better life for themselves and their families. After all, to truly espouse self-help strategies was to trust that the poor, with only a modest degree of outside assistance, had the ability and the desire to help themselves and take personal control of their circumstances in the long-term. Under this mindset, rather than simply engage the poor as clients as typified by their treatment by employees of the local welfare department, Hearn engaged program directors to hire the poor as partners in fighting poverty.

⁵¹ The percentages were 78 percent and 59 percent, respectively. Of that sample, 80 percent said they had received no job training at all in their lives. See *Ibid.*, 45-47, 53.

The growing influence of the poor

Indeed, the influence of the poor in Craven County in 1965 would outmatch that of many more populated communities in the nation, including urban centers in the North. No later than April, twenty-two poor people from Craven, most of whom were black women, were employed in COP as day care attendants, home management aids, and health aids, which actually outperformed fifty CAAs at the time, such as those centered in New Rochelle, New York, where seven members of the poor were hired strictly as bus matrons, and Cleveland, Ohio, where eighteen poor persons were hired as teaching assistants.⁵² For bearing a good deal of responsibility for their own uplift, the poor would have to be regularly pushed and persuaded to expect benefits from the programs of COP. “The peons down the road don’t come to the centers to get help,” board member Willie Dawson told the *News & Observer* in January 1965, “You got to go to them.”⁵³ This statement held particularly true for whites in rural areas who lived up to twenty-five miles away from COP headquarters in New Bern and who had already associated the War on Poverty as a set of programs intended primarily for blacks.

Serious efforts to organize the poor in and around Craven were first taken in August 1965. Leading the struggle were COP board member Robert Whitehead and the North Carolina Volunteers assigned to New Bern, all of whom sought to translate grievances among the poor into positive action. The first target they rallied against was

⁵² Jobs for the Poor in Community Action Programs, *Examination of the War on Poverty Program*, April 30, 1965 (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 611.

⁵³ Kate Blackwell, “Craven County Takes Lead in Nation’s War on Poverty,” *News & Observer*, January 17, 1965.

New Bern's public housing director, I.I. Blanford, who regularly engaged in arbitrary and questionable practices since at least 1962, such as raising tenants' rental rates based on the occupations of their dependents and imposing either "penalty rents" or evicting women who had additional offspring out of wedlock.⁵⁴ Blanford, who had implored Rep. David N. Henderson to "do all possible to defeat the so-called 'civil rights' legislation" in 1963, was also seen by both Whitehead and the volunteers as racially prejudiced, as partly evidenced by the fact that he was still maintaining two segregated public housing apartment complexes—Trent Court for whites and Craven Terrace for blacks.⁵⁵ Black and white tenants also complained that there were no public telephones, no sidewalk lights outside of the buildings, a growing infestation of rats and roaches, delays in painting and repair work due to an inadequate number of staff, and that, during the winter months, Blanford primarily answered their requests to turn up the heat by encouraging them to put on more clothes and keep doors and windows closed.

One of the worst offenses for which Blanford was solely responsible was the raising of rent—to rates that were almost double—for families at both Craven Terrace and Trent Court who had children enrolled in the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC)

⁵⁴ "Statement by Mr. Silvester D. Midget (New Bern)," folder 1604, NCFR.

⁵⁵ I.I. Blanford to Congressman David N. Henderson, June 12, 1963, box 344, folder 5, Henderson Papers. Both public housing projects were built in New Bern between 1941 and 1942. Blanford and the Housing Authority of the city of New Bern formally resolved to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (by "admitting families to all its low-rent housing projects without regard to race, color or national origin") at a meeting held on August 2, 1965. "It is understood by the Local Authority," read the resolution, that compliance was "made for the purpose of obtaining Federal Funds" from the Public Housing Administration. See "Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern Held on August 2, 1965;" "Resolution No. 192: Resolution Approving Statement of Local Authority as to Compliance Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," NBHA Minutes.

where they were earning \$1.25/hour. This practice of Blanford's was not only deemed unethical but was also specifically forbidden by the Economic Opportunity Act, leading Whitehead, Bishop S. Rivers, and two other local black civil rights leaders to personally present a letter to Blanford and each housing authority member on August 2 to request that the policy of disparate rates be immediately terminated.⁵⁶ In addition to promising to meet soon to discuss each of the complaints, Blanford and the commissioners unanimously agreed to amend the lease allowing the earnings of children under nineteen years of age as an "allowable deduction from net family income" and authorizing the thirty day rental period to begin on the tenth of the month for those tenants whose income partially or fully derived from public welfare sources (which were not made available until the tenth of the month). Both of these resolutions were to become effective immediately.⁵⁷ The news of these victories, however, did not halt outside criticism of Blanford and the housing authority. Just a few days later, North Carolina Volunteer Lloyd F. Reese, who had surveyed the tenants' complaints and compiled a report for the North Carolina Fund, went as far as writing OEO representative Harold Bailin in regards

⁵⁶ Report of Lloyd F. Reese, folder 5076, NCFR; Robert M. Whitehead to I.I. Blanford, August 2, 1965, folder 5037, NCFR. "Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern Held on August 2, 1965," NBHA Minutes. As read the lease for Craven Terrace and Trent Court, "The tenant agrees...to promptly notify the Landlord whenever there is a change: (I) in family make-up; (II) of job; (III) of family income—regardless of source or whether an increase or decrease and, it is hereby distinctly agreed that his failure to so report any and all such changes shall be considered a violation of, and shall automatically cancel this Lease. The Tenant further agrees to immediately pay any retroactive rent which has accrued because of his failure to have promptly reported increased family income." See Text of Tenant Lease, NBHA Minutes.

⁵⁷ "Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern Held on August 2, 1965," NBHA Minutes; "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern, September 8, 1965," NBHA Minutes.

to Blanford. After outlining his argument that Blanford did not understand the poor and had “exploited them as much as any slum lord,” Reese asked that Bailin get involved in helping to permanently remove Blanford as executive director of New Bern Housing Authority.⁵⁸

Outside pro-segregationist Cedric Boyd of the city public works department and a number of top administrators at the Bank of New Bern where he served as president, Blanford appeared to have few allies in New Bern.⁵⁹ Even fewer appeared willing to defend or protect many of Blanford’s policies as director of the housing authority. This attitude held true both inside and outside local government. For Craven County Welfare Department head Constance Rabin, who was simultaneously serving on the COP board, Blanford’s method of raising the rent on families whose salaries improved had particularly negative after effects in her own department. “When anyone’s salary was raised, the Housing Authority would also raise the rent,” Rabin lamented to Whitehead during a July board meeting. Consequently, when “the rents were raised, they also had to raise the welfare.”⁶⁰ A September 1964 “Neighborhood Analysis” prepared for the city of New Bern by the board of aldermen and the New Bern planning board with the help of the North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development (which was then

⁵⁸ Lloyd F. Reese to Harold Bailin, August 4, 1965, folder 5076, NCFR.

⁵⁹ In a 1966 interview by the North Carolina Fund, former COP board member Bill Flowers describes Cedric Boyd as “a former friend” but a “determined segregationist.” Flowers explains that the two eventually parted ways due to their differences of opinions concerning “the race question” See Bill Flowers, interview by John Miller, Durham, NC, February 3, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

⁶⁰ COP Board meeting minutes, July 30, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

headed by D. L. Stallings' brother Robert) similarly observed the problems Blanford was creating for the community. Speaking of the problem of blight, the analysis argued that "such areas benefit no one, except perhaps the landlord who rents substandard property to tenants who can afford nothing better," adding that "the profit such a landlord is able to realize by exacting low rents...and turning none of it back into the improvement of the property—therefore paying little tax—is paid for by the entire community in terms of high taxes, loss of business, and loss of revenue-producing property in these blighted areas."⁶¹

Nonetheless, even though local people who were familiar with his practices rarely sympathized with Blanford, he was neither elected by the people nor appointed by either the mayor or the aldermen. He was selected instead by an independent housing board comprised of five local residents, appointed by the Mayor, but over which the city of New Bern held no real jurisdiction.⁶² Due to the housing board's tendency to defend Blanford, he was not only able to remain in power with little fear of being removed but his policies of raising the rent and evicting families whose unwed mothers bore additional children were also kept secret to many of the non-poor community, most of whom were white and a sizeable portion of whom would most likely have been appalled to hear of them.

⁶¹ *Neighborhood Analysis: New Bern, North Carolina*. Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Community Planning, September 1964, 5-6, North Carolina Digital Collections, accessed April 24, 2010, <http://www.digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/p249901coll22&CISOTR=60975&REC=1>.

⁶² The New Bern Housing Authority Board included Harry Lipman, Louis B. Daniel, Charles H. Ashford, D.C. McCotter, Jr. and, G.C. Honeycutt.

The larger white community was also kept in the dark by the silence of the poor themselves who had never truly organized to speak out against Blanford. For most tenants living in the New Bern housing projects, rent ranged between 20 and 40 percent of their income—only a handful paid as high as 50 percent—and, thus, despite its obvious drawbacks, it was the one of the most affordable and stable living arrangements for the poor. Not surprisingly, many chose not to protest for fear of possibly being evicted while others may have felt grateful for the housing provided or may have not been directly affected by Blanford's practices. The poor's silence, however, officially ended on August 23. At the urging of Whitehead, Lloyd Reese, a VISTA volunteer, and a half-dozen local civil rights leaders including Nixon, Bishop S. Rivers, and at least 150 residents—twelve from Trent Court and the remainder from Craven Terrace—attended a meeting scheduled for that evening at Craven Terrace to discuss organizing against Blanford in order to attain better living conditions. Neither the public housing conditions found in Craven County nor the growing protests against them were particularly unique to the area. By the mid-1960s, low-income residents and civil rights leaders came together to confront housing project landlords in numerous communities across the nation, including many in North Carolina. In Durham, for instance, low-income black families went as far as proposing to organize a rent strike and agreeing to live in makeshift tents if they were evicted.⁶³ In response to the tenants' frustrations in New Bern, Blanford would agree to amend several of the city's controversial housing authority

⁶³ See Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 124-137.

practices, but he maintained that proper care of the premises and surroundings was primarily the responsibility of the tenant and left unchanged sections of the lease that allowed for the eviction of female tenants who had additional children out of wedlock.⁶⁴

While the arrival of the North Carolina Volunteers, VISTA workers, and Craven Operation Progress itself clearly provided a safer environment for the poor to come together to protest unfair living conditions, other factors, including the victories won by the civil rights movement and enhanced economic opportunities available in new or expanded industries in and around Craven also bolstered confidence behind such action. Partly due to Blanford's administrative procedures but also because of additional and higher-paying jobs for semi-skilled workers like those available at the Stanley and Texasgulf plants that arrived by 1964, the occupancy of both projects in August 1965 was at 56 percent; approximately 86 percent of the 361 apartments at the all-black Craven Terrace and only 33 percent of the 218 units of the all-white Trent Court were occupied.⁶⁵ The knowledge that, if evicted, there was not a waiting list of potential tenants to replace

⁶⁴ "Executive Director's Comments Relative to Formal Complaints Filed by the Combined Civic Organization of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina, During the 2 August 1965 Meeting," NBHA Minutes. "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern, September 8, 1965," NBHA Minutes; David L. Ward, Jr. to R.M. Whitehead, September 13, 1965, NBHA Minutes.

⁶⁵ Report of Lloyd F. Reese, folder 5076, NCFR. "Vacancy loss continues to be our major problem and principal worry," read the New Bern Housing Authority Minutes from 1964, citing the recent establishment of Stanley Power Tools in New Bern as one cause. In addition to "local business conditions [which] are considered to be good," the minutes also noted the fact that "many new residences have been constructed in the suburbs" several of which were being occupied by families "which should be in our housing but who seem to prefer less desirable single unit housing which generally provides spacious individual play area and better control of their children, more privacy in their personal affairs and freedom from inquiry into their personal finances and family matters." See New Bern Housing Authority Minutes, 1953-1968, Housing Authority of the City of New Bern, New Bern, NC.

them may have inspired a good degree of participation. Blanford clearly had no issue evicting a family here and there but a lack of tenants to fill the public housing units he oversaw would lead to his loss of all funding and income from the Federal Housing Authority (FHA). Out of the significant number who came to the August 23 meeting was the birth of what became the Craven Terrace-Trent Court Improvement Organization, which, as will be discussed in Chapter V, led to meaningful improvements in the livelihood of public housing residents beginning in the early months of 1966 following a lawsuit won against Blanford himself.

R E S I D E N T S O F T H E H O U S I N G P R O J E C T S

ARE YOU TIRED OF RATS AND ROACHES ?

DOES YOUR APARTMENT NEED REPAIR ?

DO YOUR CHILDREN NEED A PLAYGROUND?

* * * * * C O M E T O T H E M E E T I N G * * * * *

CRAVEN TERRACE CENTER BUILDING

8:00 P. M.

Monday, August 23, 1965

COMBINED CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS OF
NEW BERN AND CRAVEN COUNTY
Mr. R. M. Whitehead, Chairman

PRESIDING ELDER OF NEW BERN
DISTRICT, AME ZION CHURCH
Dr. J. A. Babington-Johnson

Lloyd Reese
THE NORTH CAROLINA VOLUNTEER

Michael Russell
VISTA

Figure 19. Advertisement for meeting of residents of housing projects, August 23, 1965. Folder 1604, North Carolina Fund Records.

Promoting Good Neighborly Relations in a Post-Watts Nation

Even as other factors played a part, the War on Poverty in Craven was clearly helping to raise the expectations of the poor at a historic pace, especially among the black poor who were generally closest to COP headquarters and its outreach and programs. It was also becoming clear that the more expectations rose, the more the poor demanded to participate in bettering their life conditions and confronting those obstacles in their path. This new reality was not just evident in Craven but could be seen in communities across the nation where it was met with varying degrees of acceptance from the general population. But while the poor's early participation had basically been nonviolent, the week-long riots that erupted in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles beginning on August 11 proved that the poor might also participate in destructive ways if desperate enough. The Watts riots, which began just five days after President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, in response to the brutality that came out of the Selma march, left as many as thirty-five dead and over \$40 million in property damage.⁶⁶ Most of those who joined in the riot were young black males who lived in a one-parent home in a racially segregated ghetto where the annual income stood right at or just above the official poverty line.⁶⁷ Both because of and in spite of the new civil rights legislation—which raised expectations at the same time that it failed to meet their needs of a life of full dignity—the young rioters felt a strong sense of isolation from white Los Angeles

⁶⁶ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, "There's Still Hell to Pay in Watts," *Life*, July 15, 1966.

⁶⁷ Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 59.

residents at large as well as from the ongoing antipoverty measures that they believed had not adequately reached them. Negative feelings toward the white community also carried over into views of the mostly-white local police force.⁶⁸ By August 1965, Watts had thus become a tinder box where a rumor of police brutality was sufficient to spark a series of violent attacks and looting that aimed to “get Whitey.” The riots also reflected that a seemingly growing segment of young blacks did not feel represented by moderate civil rights leaders who pushed for nonviolent techniques and compromise with the white community to achieve racial parity. As captured by *Life* magazine reporters, when a black minister protested the beating of a white couple on the street in Watts, he was told by a black youth, “Look, Reverend, you preach on Sunday—we’re preaching today.”⁶⁹

The aftershocks of Watts reverberated from coast to coast as the majority of whites and blacks alike were disturbed by the scenes of chaos that they saw on the nightly television news broadcasts. As figuratively argued by historian Michael W. Flamm, destruction and fire damage was not limited to the neighborhood boundaries of Watts or even the city limits of Los Angeles: “The optimistic vision of a Great Society built on material prosperity and racial harmony also lay in ashes.”⁷⁰ In the months immediately following the riot, its meaning would be contested across the county as Americans either accepted or rejected the explanation of the McCone Commission that Johnson had requested to study the sources of the unrest. Led by Los Angeles businessmen and ex-

⁶⁸ “Interview by a policeman assigned to the Watts Area,” *National Review*, September 7, 1965.

⁶⁹ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, “There’s Still Hell to Pay in Watts,” *Life*, July 15, 1966.

⁷⁰ Flamm, *Law and Order*, 58.

CIA director John McCone, the commission found little fault with police procedures before or during the riot and instead blamed unemployment coupled with false expectations raised by the War on Poverty and media attention given to lawless violence elsewhere in the nation.⁷¹ Liberals, who generally believed social conditions were at fault for the behavior of the rioters, generally agreed with the commission that the solution to the problem of riots was increased War on Poverty funds in job training and education. Conservatives, on the other hand, often blamed moral failure, a declining respect for authority, and poor choices of individuals and thereby questioned whether increased War on Poverty funds would unintentionally reward “bad behavior.”⁷² Despite these differences, both conservatives and liberals could agree that America had an urgent ghetto problem. Eastern North Carolina Congressman David Henderson reflected these dual beliefs in a letter to his constituents shortly after the riots. “There can be no doubt that crime and poverty go hand in hand; that broken family life, slums, unemployment, lack of education and many other factors contribute to crime,” he wrote, assuring his readers that “we are working at many levels of government in many types of programs to alleviate these things.” However, in the meantime, “we must enforce our laws and hold each individual responsible for his own conduct.”⁷³

⁷¹ Alfred Friendly, “Official Watts Riot Report Pulls No Punches,” *Washington Post*, December 13, 1965; “The McWhat Report,” *Newsweek*, December 20, 1965.

⁷² Flamm, *Law and Order*, 62-65.

⁷³ “Washington Report from Your Congressman David N. Henderson,” September 1, 1965, box 301, folder 4, Henderson Papers.

President Johnson, who felt personally betrayed by the riots after all the legislation that he had authorized on behalf of black Americans, spoke vehemently against the hateful and violent behavior that enflamed the riots.⁷⁴ Like McCone, Johnson also believed that the rioters were a minority faction that was hardly representative of blacks or the poor and, thus, he saved few words in his condemnation, understanding that the majority of Americans had little sympathy for what had transpired in Watts. But even after declaring that “We must not let anger drown understanding” and comparing a black rioter with a Molotov cocktail to a Klansmen with a sheet on his face, Johnson remained convinced that more poverty funds would help to quell the riots.⁷⁵ As Johnson expressed to advisers, if young blacks continued to engage in “unwise actions out of frustration, impatience, and anger” it would only “make it more difficult to pass Great Society legislation and threaten the gains we’d already made.”⁷⁶ Before the riots, Watts had received little funding for the War on Poverty but this would change almost overnight. However, as historian David Carter explains, Johnson was careful to continue to speak tough against rioters to the public while he quietly sent money to fund antipoverty programs in Los Angeles.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, in contrast to Johnson’s wishes, many American citizens who learned of Johnson’s approach began to see the War on Poverty not as an

⁷⁴ Flamm, *Law and Order*, 64-65.

⁷⁵ Editorial: “Anger and Understanding,” *Washington Post*, August 18, 1965.

⁷⁶ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, 223.

⁷⁷ David C. Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement: Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1965-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 61; Robert E. Thompson, “Poverty Aide Gives Watts Priority,” *Washington Post*, September 13, 1965.

“anti-riot bill” as it had originally been marketed. Rather, for a significant number of American observers, the War on Poverty appeared to actually condone riots by seeking to satisfy the rioters.⁷⁸ Moreover, given that the new antipoverty money was being especially appropriated to the black poor it officially put to death the colorblind approach to ending poverty which had helped to maintain a fairly high degree of white support. According to national polling taken sometime in August 1965, when asked how President Johnson was managing the War on Poverty, 20 percent answered “poor,” 38 percent responded “fairly good” while only 28 percent said “very good.”⁷⁹ Johnson’s handling of Watts demonstrated that his administration believed, as suggested by the 1964 Moynihan report on the black family, that black poverty was unique and would have to be given special preference and attention.

This shift in poverty policy was surprising to most outside the White House. In a controversial address on June 4 to the graduating class at Howard University, Johnson had first mentioned his administration’s dedication to bring about not just equal opportunity but equal results:

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race, and then say “You are free to compete with all the others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates... This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil

⁷⁸ “Riots and Poverty,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1964.

⁷⁹ ORC Public Opinion Index, Aug, 1965. Retrieved Apr-26-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
http://libproxy.uncg.edu:4859/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.⁸⁰

Yet the notions behind this speech had largely lain dormant and were not made effectual until the crisis surrounding Watts. Following Watts, the connection between the War on Poverty and the civil rights struggle became inseparable and practically one in the same, which differed drastically with the beginning of the War on Poverty, when the poster child of poverty was a white citizen of Appalachia. The chief problem of such a connection was that the civil rights movement was in the process of taking a radical turn away from both nonviolence and white cooperation, as best reflected by the actions of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which, under Stokely Carmichael's leadership, had fallen further outside of the mainstream.⁸¹ The Johnson administration's seeming shift away from equal opportunity likewise stood in opposition to the intent of the authors of the Economic Opportunity Act who had, in Gareth Davies' words, "explicitly repudiated notions of racial targeting" in favor of a philosophy "predicated on the notion that all the poor needed was individual opportunity," which was a philosophy generally shared by most Americans.⁸²

Since it came across that the War on Poverty was rewarding the lawless poor at the expense of the law-abiding poor, which directly challenged most Americans' sense of

⁸⁰ Tom Wickers, "Johnson Pledges to Help Negroes to Full Equality," *New York Times*, June 5, 1965.

⁸¹ Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 381-390.

⁸² Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, 47, 68.

fairness and justice, sympathy for the Great Society agenda began to fall in most regions in the nation, including North Carolina. The North Carolina Fund sought to combat sagging sympathy by pleading with local community leaders to maintain their commitment to ending poverty, which included giving the poor an equal voice. At the annual convention of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, held in Asheville and likely attended by Craven County's D. L. Stallings, North Carolina Fund Executive Director George Esser addressed the crowd with a speech entitled "The Challenge to Counties," which primarily pushed for even greater participation of the poor within local CAAs. "The Los Angeles riots offer fresh evidence that, whether we who are *not* poor like it or not, the poor *are* going to participate in American life," Esser began. "The question is, how will they participate? Destructively or constructively?" Esser believed the answer was obvious: it depended on whether antipoverty leaders upheld the Economic Opportunity Act, which "provides, indeed requires, that the poor be involved in our planning for the future."⁸³

Craven County and its environs would avoid a Watts-like riot for various reasons, not least of which was Jim Hearn's commitment to involving the poor on the board and in employing them in paid positions within Craven Operation Progress. Yet other factors outside of Hearn's control may have played an even more important role, since only a minority of the poor were employed by COP or sat on its board. Unlike Los Angeles, the nation's largest city at the time, no city in Craven County had enough residents nor the

⁸³ George Esser, "The Challenge to Counties," 58th Annual Convention of North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, Asheville, NC, August 23, 1965, folder 4994, NCFR.

amount of influence within the Democratic Party to attract the same attention from the federal government. By the same token, the sprawling nature and vast size of Los Angeles made it much easier for those of the white middle-class to be unaware of the deep pockets of black poverty that were miles away from the major businesses and political buildings. On the other hand, in New Bern, which was Craven's largest town, the city hall, the county courthouse, and many of the major businesses were within walking distance of the two public housing projects and the vast majority of black neighborhoods. In addition, despite factional disputes, the black civil rights leadership in and around Craven County, namely Robert Whitehead and Leon Nixon, was not fully out of touch with the youth or the poverty-stricken, as was the case in Los Angeles, because of their close vicinity to the poor, their having far fewer to reach or in need (in comparison to a city with over one million residents), and their multi-year work within the local black voter registration movement, which kept them in constant contact with the poor who were the least likely to be registered. Finally, as will be discussed further in Chapter V, how the poor in Craven viewed themselves and their life in poverty also likely contributed to a calmer atmosphere than that in the ghettos of Watts. A white NC Volunteer who spent the summer of 1965 working among the black poor in New Bern described them, most of whom had not graduated from high school, as having "accepted their 'fate' even though they are far from happy with it." Even more revealing for her was her observation that they "don't believe that life can be different for them or that there's anything they can do to change what they don't like."⁸⁴ Several of the other middle-class

⁸⁴ "Report of Work Done in the New South Front Street Area (Pollock Street) in New Bern, NC," by

volunteers who came to Craven that summer, both black and white, made similar remarks about the attitudes that some of the poor had toward their conditions including observations that many low-income people that they met, perhaps either out of pride or satisfaction with their lifestyle, refused to be labeled as poor or lacking any necessity. It is important to keep in mind, as historians Korstad and Leloudis have given attention to in their history of the North Carolina Fund, that these middle-class student volunteers, both black and white, often came with their own preconceived notions of what led to poverty which colored their perceptions of the poor as not truly interested in improving their lot.⁸⁵ Yet even those who believed that poverty was less a problem of attitude than a lack of power and/or resources acknowledged that many of the poor, in the words of then controversial Durham community organizer Howard Fuller, had lacked an adequate amount of “dignity” and a “feeling that they can play a part in deciding things about their lives.”⁸⁶ Of course, far from all poor persons were afflicted by such defeatist attitudes as described above but, as suggested by the surviving sources that chronicled and described the area’s poor, such attitudes appear to have existed in at least somewhat substantial numbers in and around Craven.

New Bern and outlying areas may have avoided the type of riots that surfaced some twenty-five hundred miles to the west, but the Watts riots were surely on the mind

Sandra Johnson, NC Volunteer, August 25, 1965 in Craven Operation Progress, Inc., North Carolina Fund Volunteers Reports, Summer 1965, Community Development Program (in possession of Mr. Franklin Ingram).

⁸⁵ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 137.

⁸⁶ Greene, *Our Separate Ways*, 137.

of both blacks and whites who agreed to serve on the newly formed Craven County Good Neighbor Council. One of Governor Sanford's most celebrated initiatives of 1963, Good Neighbor Councils had been formed in dozens of cities and counties in North Carolina to address and eliminate the roots of racial conflict in hopes of building more equitable and integrated communities. Heading the statewide program was Sanford's special consultant, David S. Coltrane, who first spoke to D. L. Stallings earlier in 1965 about putting together a local council as part of a means for Craven County to prepare for integration in the upcoming fall semester.⁸⁷ However, Stallings' support for the idea of a council in Craven was probably informed more by past events of racial trouble rather than unforeseen ones, the former of which included the KKK-inspired bombing of a black church and mortuary in January and the shooting at North Carolina Volunteers and their director in July. Adding to the list were recent cross burnings at several black and white homes and a successful attempt to set fire to the chicken houses of former mayor of Vanceboro and current COP Director of Manpower Royce Jordan on August 9.⁸⁸ Stallings' confidence in the potential good of a Good Neighbor Council was rooted in the fact that, by the mid-1960s, white public opinion in Craven was clearly on the side of peaceful change and progress, both racial and economic. Even whites who claimed to be in favor of segregation, including COP board member Cedric Boyd, were not willing to support the violent means by which extremists sought to preserve it, a reality that was

⁸⁷ Rev. Al Fischer, interview by John Miller, September 29, 1966, New Bern, NC, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

⁸⁸ "Fingerprints May Lead to Arsonist," *Sun Journal*, August 10, 1965.

best reflected by the number of white leaders who openly condemned the KKK following the NC Volunteer incident in July.

Historians who study the 1960s, however, have generally been unimpressed by white Southerners' refusal to turn a blind eye to the Klan and other racist extremists. In his study of Mississippi, Joseph Crespino argues, for example, that "opposition to white extremists burning black churches was a thin plank on which to build the moral and religious condemnation of white supremacy."⁸⁹ Crespino and others may be correct in arguing that opposition to the Klan was not a particularly valiant stand for Southern whites to take. To be sure, self-avowed white supremacists in Craven County could also be opposed to forms of extremism. Nonetheless, whites' open condemnation of the violent means to preserve forms of white supremacy during the 1960s was an important historical development worth paying attention to. In addition to building a greater consensus among community members that helped to prevent future violent uprisings, it was an important step towards the eventual demise of racial inequality itself. After all, Jim Crow had enjoyed a long stay in the South largely due to entrenched laws and other forms of physical force, but as the force began to dwindle, so went the arguments to maintain it.

In addition to Stallings, the idea of a Good Neighbor Council was widely supported by a wide cadre of local black and white leaders, many of who had worked together on biracial groups as far back as 1957, such as Whitehead, Bishop S. Rivers, and white ministers Charles Edward Sharp, Al Fisher, and John Murphy Smith. As many as

⁸⁹ Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 145.

thirty-three residents from across the county were asked by Stallings to join, including New Bern Board of Education member Genevieve Dunn, black architect and civil rights activist James Gavin, and white saleswoman Janet Latham. With hope-filled anticipation, the Craven County Good Neighbor Council had its first meeting on August 20, 1965. Reverend Al Fisher and Ed Sharp were appointed as the two chairmen of the group.⁹⁰ As the new co-chairman described the council, it was as made up of “plain people” who had joined to help eradicate extremism on both ends of the civil rights debate. “They’re not crusaders,” expounded Reverend Sharp, “Some of them might not even have been in favor of the civil rights law, but they know we have to live with it.” Moreover, their moderate positions on civil rights and race relations gave them the ability, in the words of Sharp, “to try to bring pressures on those who are extremists in the county.” Indeed, most of the council members had realized that racial division was impeding progress for the county and had decided to take a stand for peaceful change. “We’re living in a new day,” asserted co-chairman Reverend Fisher, who also served on the local advisory board of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. “We’ve got to bring the county to realize its future is at stake. We can’t turn back the clock.”⁹¹

For many who joined the council, the co-chairmen included, COP was believed to be the main force that incited the recent racial violence, whether intentional or not. Therefore, most agreed that COP’s success would continue to be questioned as long as it

⁹⁰ Robert Whitehead and D. L. Stallings were soon appointed members of the state Good Neighbor Council that was headed by NC Governor Dan Moore, Governor Terry Sanford’s predecessor.

⁹¹ Kate Erwin, “New Bern Working for Racial Harmony, *News & Observer*, October 3, 1965.

was seen primarily as an “integration program.” But such a belief did not influence them to disparage COP or seek to see it disappear. Instead, their utmost desire to keep Craven from erupting in violence actually tended to invigorate or at least maintain their support of the local War on Poverty, specifically the efforts of COP. During a subsequent meeting of the Good Neighbor Council, it was agreed by all those present to call on churches, civic groups, PTAs, and the local news media, the latter of which was blamed for perpetuating negative and unfair portrayals of COP, to assist in “bring[ing] an attitude of brotherhood to Craven County.” The biracial group also demanded greater protection of local citizens by the local law enforcement. Over the subsequent years, the council would become one of the most vocal supporters of the goals behind COP. In a prepared statement shared with the press, the Good Neighbor Council made clear their position that “the future development of this area is dependent upon a sane handling of the problems which are before us” which, above all, would depend on the degree to which “the citizens of our county will see that peace prevails among our people.”⁹² Time would tell that the longing for “peace” did not entail ignoring local racial problems. It involved confronting them head-on. The heightened potential for uncontrollable racial turmoil coupled with a growing commitment among locals to community progress and growth led to one of the highest levels of communication and consensus ever seen between the two races in Craven.

The Good Neighbor Council and its encouragement of “brotherhood” among Eastern North Carolinians could not have come at a more opportune time. On August 27,

⁹² Ibid.

most Craven County schools were officially desegregated as dozens of black children entered previously white schools for the first time. In preparation for that day, Governor Dan Moore had ordered members of the State Highway Patrol and the State Bureau of Investigation into the county. Perhaps because of the known presence of such lawmen, desegregation occurred without any violence or major incidences, even in rural areas such as Bridgeton where the Klan was most popular. Only four black students failed to report for classes. Concerned by the number of unusual-looking cars parked outside the elementary school in Ernul, the father of three of them chose his children's safety over "trouble."⁹³ Overall, though, as the *News & Observer* described it, the scene in Craven was mostly positive. In several instances, "White children greeted Negro children at buses and escorted them to their classrooms past alerted Highway Patrol and SBI men," the paper reported.⁹⁴

The increase in blatant local criticism of COP also provided a need for a mediatory group such as the Good Neighbor Council. As late as July 1965, many volunteers such as those in the Head Start program came from among "the best families in town," and according to a North Carolina Fund review, there had been "no editorial attacks in local papers or impassioned arguments by representatives of substantial community groups against the program."⁹⁵ Yet, in part because of the embarrassment that cascaded over Craven following the shooting of the North Carolina Volunteers, a

⁹³ "Pupils Integrate in Carolina Area," *New York Times*, August 28, 1965.

⁹⁴ Kate Erwin, "New Bern Working for Racial Harmony," *News & Observer*, October 3, 1965.

⁹⁵ Confidential: Report on Craven Operation Progress: Tentative Staff Conclusions, July 9, 1965, folder 5022, NCFR.

growing number of residents would speak out against the local CAA by August while questioning its motives and benefit to the community. The vast majority of the complaints came from Craven's white citizens. One such citizen was New Bern attorney Laurence A. Stith, who wrote to inform Congressman David Henderson that "there are many, many people in this area who are thoroughly out of sympathy and somewhat disgusted with the local so-called Poverty Program." Particularly troublesome was executive director Jim Hearn. Not only were Hearn and other administrators "drawing very high salaries in the amount of \$15,000 a year," but the executive director appeared to be primarily "using the program as a vehicle to foster the promotion of integration." Evidence for this latter charge, Stith stressed, was largely based on his observation that there was "a very definite alliance" between Hearn and "CORE, NAACP and Negro organizations." But Hearn was not the only one to face criticism in the letter. In disapproval of the way in which COP endorsed social equality of the races, Stith also called out COP Manpower Director Royce Jordan for having "his superior, a colored man, in his home," likely speaking of James McDonald of the North Carolina Fund. For many of the reasons listed above, "There seems to be more racial unrest in the county with the advent and development of this program than there has ever been before," the letter continued, citing "the Ku Klux Klan [which] has been burning crosses." Claiming to have several friends on the COP board, Stith felt sure that "many who supported this program, including yourself, were expecting that other things would be accomplished and

that the administration of the program would not fall into the hands of people who were using it for matters other than its announced purpose.”⁹⁶

Local criticism grows louder

Criticisms of COP were also being made in the public arena. The editorial staff of the major local newspapers—specifically the *Sun Journal*, the *New Bern Mirror*, and *Havelock Progress*—had been fairly distrustful of the CAA for several months but not until August were there enough vocal critics in Craven to publish in their viewpoint sections. The local editors had been especially critical of the amount of money that Hearn and COP employees were being paid, but they were even more critical of the way that their county leaders had accepted the designation as a poverty-ridden community and, thereby, welcomed the expansive arm of the federal government into local affairs. Many of these same themes were passionately assailed against by New Bern resident Raymond Hopkins whose letter to the editor of the *Sun Journal* was printed on September 11. The letter began by praising the “character, strength, and backbone” of Charles Kimbrell as the sole member of the New Bern board of aldermen to vote down the continuation of the Neighborhood Youth Corps program in New Bern. The writer proceeded to question whether the other four aldermen were acting in “our city’s best interest” by going along “with this rotten great society, its throat-cramming, its threats, and its appeasement measures.” Hopkins was proud to say that “Craven County and the city of New Bern long endured the natural circumstances of our area before Shriver, LBJ, or any such thing as

⁹⁶ Laurence A. Stith to Congressman David N. Henderson, August 3, 1965, box 149, folder 4, Henderson Papers.

the Poverty Program was ever heard of.” “We had industrious people and lazy people, the employed and the unemployed,” he explained, contending that “for the most part, those in an unemployed status were there out of a matter of pure choice” since it “was so much easier for them to reach their hands down in the mail boxes once a month and withdraw their relief or welfare checks.” Beyond his perception that the national War on Poverty effort was filled with “monetary waste, wreckless conduct, down-graded morals, promotion of riots, unruly demonstrations, and civil disobedience,” he found the proposal of “our current administration” to “take from the ‘haves’ and give to the ‘have-nots’” unjust and destructive, to say the least, as well as in disharmony with his rights as an individual as spelled out under the Declaration of Independence. For Hopkins, who placed himself in the category of those who “have something because they worked and strived for it,” poverty would continue “as long as free hand-outs are made available to them—out of the pockets of we, the hard-working, striving class.” The poor would naturally “continue to sit back and survive on the fruits of our labor,” he concluded.⁹⁷

Despite their obvious biases, not all of the harsh criticisms that some Craven residents leveled at the ongoing War on Poverty, those racial in nature excluded, were wholly unfair, irrelevant, or even limited to the happenings in Eastern North Carolina. Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., out of concern that little War on Poverty funding was trickling down to help the poor, was among the most prominent figures on the national scene to vocally oppose the comfortable salaries that executive directors of

⁹⁷ Letter to the editor: “The Poverty Program,” *Sun Journal*, September 11, 1965.

CAAs were being paid.⁹⁸ At the same time, major news publications were increasingly featuring troubling stories of scandal, confusion, red tape, waste, bureaucratic in-fighting, and class and racial friction that simultaneously challenged the effectiveness of the federal War on Poverty and the vision of the OEO. One year and three days after the Economic Opportunity Act was passed on August 20, 1964, the *U.S. News & World Report* printed a five-page article entitled “Poverty War Out of Hand?” that, in addition to detailing disturbing reports of recent violence among enrollees at seven Job Corps centers, told of complaints of wasteful procedures at OEO and poor communication between OEO and local CAAs.⁹⁹ *Fortune* magazine ran a similar story that same month that discussed complaints that OEO’s insistence of maximum feasible participation of the poor was leading to amplified class hostility and a disregard for the authority of elected officials. Such hostility was especially palpable in large cities such as Chicago where it was being encouraged by radical community organizers like Saul D. Alinsky. The article was also critical that “whatever it may do for the poor, the war on poverty is the best thing that’s happened to social workers since the New Deal was established.”¹⁰⁰ Writing in the first volume of *Public Interest*, which was founded primarily by former radicals who had become disillusioned with post-New Deal politics and federal largesse,

⁹⁸ Eve Edstrom, “Powell Attacks Salaries of Poverty War Chiefs,” *Washington Post*, April 13, 1965; J. Alfred Cannon, M.D. “The Antipoverty Program: For Whom? By Whom?,” *Examination of the War on Poverty Program*, April 30, 1965, p. 842-854.

⁹⁹ “Poverty War Out of Hand?,” *U.S. News & World Report*, August 23, 1965.

¹⁰⁰ Charles E. Silberman, “The Mixed-Up War on Poverty,” *Fortune* 72, August 1965, 157-161; Lois Wille, “‘Nothing Happens—Our People Are Getting Restless’—TWO Wants to Know: Will We Share in Poverty Funds?,” *Chicago Daily News*, April 7, 1965.

sociologist Nathan Glazer added to the growing War on Poverty criticisms by voicing his doubts of OEO's assumption that "the best way to improve services is by attack from the outside, rather than reform from the inside." When local governments protest that federal money is being used to attack it and its services, Glazer clarified, "the Federal administrator will have to explain: but that is the only way to get you to do your job." Using government funds for "controlled revolution," he concluded, will likely turn out to be "too demanding for both Federal administrators and local community-action organizers."¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, Americans in general had not yet fully made up their minds about the War on Poverty. According to national polling conducted between August 2 and September 3, 1965, the number of Americans who believed that Johnson's War on Poverty would help "wipe out poverty in this country" stood at 48 percent, compared to 37 percent who believed it "won't help much," which was a significant boost for the Johnson administration over earlier polling. In July 1964, the same group found that only 34 percent of the nation believed the federal effort would help end poverty while 36 percent believed it would not.¹⁰² Based on the fact that approval numbers for the War on Poverty would drop off significantly by early 1966, the relatively favorable results garnered from the August-September 1965 polling implies that Americans were just

¹⁰¹ Nathan Glazer, "Paradoxes of American Poverty," *Public Interest* 1 (Autumn 1965): 80.

¹⁰² ORC Public Opinion Index, Aug, 1965. Retrieved Apr-26-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://libproxy.uncg.edu:4859/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html; ORC Public Opinion Index, Jul, 1964. Retrieved Apr-26-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://libproxy.uncg.edu:4859/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

learning of the issues surrounding the War on Poverty and were giving the programs—most of which had been highly touted in the media up to that point—the benefit of the doubt at such an early stage. Those same poll numbers also suggest that those who responded may still have had a general fondness for the work being done to curb poverty through their own local CAA, despite reports of malfeasance elsewhere.

Opposition was not as pervasive as it appeared?

Tales of corruption and tension, both violent and non-violent, were on the increase during the War on Poverty and are not to be taken lightly. Nevertheless, as the experiences of COP reveals, the problems spotlighted in national news outlets were mostly sensational stories not found across the board in 1965 and were most likely issues for a minority of CAAs. Of course, few local CAAs avoided all forms or semblances of controversy or criticism, COP included. Addressing the National Conference on Social Welfare in 1965, Shriver proudly remarked that “I said to Congress that if our activities did not stir up a community, then Congress should investigate it.”¹⁰³ When a diverse range of people from a community come together there are naturally bound to be disagreements and conflict over philosophy and methods. During the 1960s, this reality was especially true with regard to different views on the proper role and function of the OEO. But likely owing to Craven’s fairly tight-knit community, locals’ early commitment to quell poverty, and immature efforts to organize and/or revolutionize the poor, COP did not face the same degree of issues or in-fighting found in the headlines of

¹⁰³ Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, 125.

the *Chicago Daily News* or the *Los Angeles Times*. Thus, despite more vociferous criticism from a minority of citizens, Stallings and most other local leaders, including Congressman Henderson, continued to support COP because of both their personal investment and their conviction that a break to the uneducated and untrained was also a break for Craven County.¹⁰⁴

The whites who felt strongly enough to complain to their congressman or write to their local editor could neither claim to have spoken for the majority of the community nor to have changed the course of COP or the structure of its programs.¹⁰⁵ As observed by Kathleen Orringer, elected as the first female to the New Bern board of aldermen in 1957, not enough of those who support COP have “stood up to be counted,” likely

¹⁰⁴ Kate Erwin, “New Bern Working for Racial Harmony,” *News & Observer*, October 3, 1965.

¹⁰⁵ This statement appears to hold true even with Hearn’s decision to remove NYC Assistant Director Neal Evans on August 6, 1965. On the evening of July 30, 1965, the twenty-three-year-old Evans of Asheville, who arrived in New Bern in February of that year, held an all-night interracial party of males and females at his apartment. He was suspended on August 2 pending an investigation of his activity and conduct. As both Hearn and NYC Director W.F. Evans agreed, the type of activity, which was never fully disclosed, was labeled as “unbecoming” and “not in accordance with the policies of Craven Operation Progress,” specifically the rule which states that no employee “shall take the liberty of conducting himself in such a way as will bring disfavor to the organization or the community.” That Hearn, who lived beside Robert M. Whitehead, frequently visited black churches, had black members of the board and the community over to his home, and generally supported the notion of social equality between blacks and whites without a concern for how conservative whites felt about it seems to suggest that the party must have been more than an innocent intermingling of the sexes. The lack of information that Hearn gave in describing the event at Evans’ apartment and the quickness with which he supported his termination suggests a possible orgy. After being removed from his post, Evans was given a chance to come before the COP board to make his case. His lawyer, local black attorney Reginald Frazier, promised an immediate appeal. By August 9, however, Evans had agreed to drop the appeal, partially as a result of a plea by his father. Despite the work he had done for black youth in Craven, no uproar over Evans’ removal was made by the black community. Neither did the North Carolina Fund choose to defend him. See “Youth Corps Aide under Suspension,” *Durham Herald*, August 3, 1965; Youth Corps Ouster Won’t Be Protested,” *Durham Herald*, August 10, 1965.

making the opposition appear larger than it was.¹⁰⁶ Those in Craven who did not voice public opposition to COP likely understood that higher salaries were necessary in attracting qualified and motivated people to serve in the antipoverty program.¹⁰⁷ Others, namely the several hundred who volunteered or were employed by COP, likely understood that the programs were working with poor people to help them to become self-sustaining rather than merely giving them welfare checks. On the same token, they recognized, as understood by executive director Jim Hearn, that the poor do not lack education and skills “because they are lazy” but because “they didn’t need the education to work in tobacco.”¹⁰⁸ Finally, others understood that integration was not the main reason to have a poverty program in Craven but that it was a reality that they could not avoid while pushing for goals of economic growth and community progress. By August 1965, COP had also achieved several accomplishments that local leaders, in particular, saw as positive signs that COP was mostly on the right track in leading toward greater prosperity for all in Craven.

Hearn’s weaknesses dilute his strengths

The last day in August had marked the end of a productive first year for COP as a federally-funded CAA. Between February 1 and August 31, 1965, COP received just over \$1,700,000 from public and private sources, leading to the establishment of a multifaceted program that was attacking the sources of poverty from all sides. Each of the six

¹⁰⁶ Mrs. Catherine (Kathleen) Orringer, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 23, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹⁰⁷ “Readers write to the editor,” *Sun Journal*, November 6, 1965.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Wilson, “Craven Showing Way In,” *Durham Herald*, February 7, 1965.

titles of the Economic Opportunity Act had been implemented and, as a result of CAP funding, the programs of existing agencies begun solely under the North Carolina Fund had expanded by 300 percent.¹⁰⁹ For COP Board chairman Larry B. Pate, the greatest cause for pride was the strides that had been made in the development of human and economic resources. Pate was likewise pleased by the degree of participation of local people who had been employed from all economic, social, and educational backgrounds. Between August 1964 and August 1965, the COP staff grew from just Hearn and his two Community Action Technicians (CAT) to 197 people, almost three-fourths of whom were residents of the county and as many as one-third who were minorities. Yet the rather hefty staff payroll of approximately \$355,000, which was larger than almost all of the private business payrolls in Craven except for those of its top industrial employers, did not exceed 20 percent of the overall budget for the first year of the grant.¹¹⁰

In the minds of those involved in COP, the major highlights of its first fiscal year had less to do with its payroll and more to do with the implementation of the programs themselves. These included one hundred farmers joining the Strawberry Marketing Cooperative, the establishment of a day-care center to supervise children of working mothers in low-income neighborhoods while also providing employment for said mothers as aides, the installation of fifty new privies through the Rural Environmental Sanitation Program, the establishment of a Home Management Aid program to train ten low-income

¹⁰⁹ First Year Progress Report for Craven Operation Progress, Inc., 1964-1965, Craven Staff Manual, 1965, folder 4992, NCFR.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

women as instructors for neighborhood groups on topics such as money management and nutrition, and the work of the North Carolina Volunteers to help secure a fire truck for the Pembroke community and begin sanitation work in the Duffyfield neighborhood.¹¹¹ Other accomplishments were related to the securing of funds from OEO, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the North Carolina Fund to begin the operation of the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) for youths between sixteen and twenty-one, the Work Experience program for unemployed fathers, Manpower Improvement through Community Effort (MITCE) to provide industrial training for low-income and unemployed heads of household, Head Start for the culturally disadvantaged, and a small business development center to provide loans for rising entrepreneurs. In July, COP also received more than \$800,000 in federal grants for the Adult Basic Education Recruitment (ABER) program for a six-county area that included Craven, Jones, and Pamlico. It was the first program of its type in the nation, whose goal was to employ the aid of twelve VISTA workers to recruit at least five thousand eligible individuals for the twenty-five-week course who were in need of basic skills such as reading, writing, and language arts.¹¹² COP had discovered in their research included in the grant proposal that 89 percent of the unskilled in Craven alone could not meet minimum requirements for state

¹¹¹ Day Care Center Proposal, folder 5069, NCFR; COP board meeting minutes, August 25, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

¹¹² "Adult Education Plan Given Grant," *News & Observer*, July 20, 1965.

and federal job training programs, making the ABER program a key first step to the success of the entire community action program.¹¹³

Table 1. Six-county area served by Adult Basic Education via Craven Operation Progress, 1965. Adult Basic Education Recruitment Program, an Amendment to: Craven Operation Progress, Inc. Community Action Proposal, January 15, 1965, Folder 5063, North Carolina Fund Records.

County	Number of Adults 25 years and older who had not completed eighth grade	Percentage of population
Craven	9,636	35.6%
Jones	2, 407	47.8%
Pamlico	2,134	43.9%
Carteret	5,446	34.6%
Lenoir	12,176	45.4%
Onslow	6,567	22.8%

By August 1965, 346 children signed up for Head Start, and, as Hearn boasted to the COP board, the NYC had added \$588,000 of wages into the pockets of low-income youth in Craven and a neighboring county. In addition to NYC, Hearn touted the potential benefits that the “multiplying effect” would have through other programs such as the Strawberry Marketing Cooperative and Small Business Development Center in increasing the flow of money into the county. But, in part because many of the programs funded under the EOA had just recently been implemented, Craven Operation Progress’

¹¹³ Proposal to OEO for Adult Basic Education, January 15, 1965, folder 5063, NCFR.

in-house progress report of August discussed little about the numbers of those helped or how specific individuals had landed full-time jobs and were moving out of poverty. Nonetheless, before September, Hearn sent in a second CAP proposal on behalf of COP that would increase the number of programs from six to fourteen. The proposal, which included applications for dental services for school children, a Federal Credit Union, and a Community Development project for ten target areas was quickly approved by OEO without any delay. Southeast representative Harold Bailin deemed COP's proposal "magnificent," especially its health component that had been selected as a prototype to be encouraged all across the nation.¹¹⁴ Accompanying the administrative growth of COP and the additional programs funded under the EOA was talk of combining COP with Jones and Pamlico counties following a new OEO rule that no CAA that served an area of less than fifty thousand would be given federal money.¹¹⁵ The influence of Craven Operation Progress looked as if it was only to expand.

Yet the quick growth in the number of COP programs, much of which was driven by Hearn with minimal board input, did not lead to a simultaneous growth in either community support or board approval of Hearn as executive director. Around mid-August, Hearn received a letter from North Carolina Fund employee Wallace Murchison praising Hearn for the accomplishments of COP in its first year as a CAA. Murchison was quick to tell him, however, that there was at least one major issue that still needed to

¹¹⁴ COP board meeting minutes, July 30, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

¹¹⁵ COP board meeting minutes, September 14, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

be addressed. “It is clear that your relationship with the board and the community is in need of improvement,” Murchison wrote, adding that “This is just as much a part of your job as obtaining grants from O.E.O. or employing competent staff.” On a copy of the letter sent to George Esser, Murchison wrote a note in the margins to his supervisor. “I don’t think Hearn is free of all blame for the troubles and I want him to assume some responsibility for board relationship, etc. Do you agree or not?”¹¹⁶ There is no record of Esser’s reply, yet the North Carolina Fund director may have agreed in some measure with Murchison’s assessment. Years later, Esser expressed regret that “recruitment for project directors was not handled as well as it should have been.” As it related to COP, Esser wished that Fund staffer Bill Koch had not encouraged Jim Hearn “to take actions with respect to staff and programs that challenged the New Bern community from the very beginning.” “There was goodwill in part of New Bern,” remembered Esser. In particular, speaking of D.L. Stallings, “The chairman of the Board of County Commissioners there was really a good man.”¹¹⁷ But, as is commonly said, hindsight is always twenty-twenty. In 1965, Esser would defend Hearn despite the wishes of D. L. Stallings, Larry Pate, Ted Collier, and other leading board members of COP that Hearn

¹¹⁶ Wallace C. Murchison to James J. Hearn, August 10, 1965, folder 5046, NCFR.

¹¹⁷ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 112.

be removed.¹¹⁸ Esser was, after all, the main figure who convinced the COP board not to fire Hearn but to attempt to strengthen their relationship with him.¹¹⁹

The Fund's position on Hearn was not unreasonable. For one, Esser and his staff believed Hearn's dismissal would be interpreted as punishment for having attempted to carry out a program in compliance with the law. "The effect of such an action upon the local Negro community, upon the community at large, upon North Carolina and its relationship with the Office of Economic Opportunity," read a confidential Fund report, "would clearly be deleterious to the total anti-poverty program in this state."¹²⁰ Plus, with ten other Fund sites to keep tabs on, Esser could not possibly see how Hearn was administering COP on a daily basis or how his actions continued to supply tension between himself and the majority of the board. For the same reason, Esser did not fully understand or was not willing to see that an aggressive style, though perhaps encouraged by Koch, seemed a naturally occurring aspect of Hearn's personality. Without a doubt, Hearn's forceful push of integration explained a good deal of how he was able to rub many whites inside COP the wrong way. But his forcefulness over non-racial issues, such as deadlines for projects, and his tendency towards other uncompromising positions were at least as troublesome. In a 1966 interview with North Carolina Fund staffer John Miller, COP board member Nora Kennel described Hearn as "pushy" and "always throwing

¹¹⁸ Robert Pugh and T. J. Collier, interview by John Miller, New Bern, N.C., December 2, 1965, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹¹⁹ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 153-154.

¹²⁰ Confidential: Report on Craven Operation Progress, July 9, 1965, folder 5024, NCFR; Confidential: Report on Craven Operation Progress: Tentative Staff Conclusions, July 9, 1965, folder 5024, NCFR.

deadlines at the board members” like something that needed to be sent to D.C. by the day after tomorrow. She explained further that Hearn came across as trying to “teach people about civil rights,” knowing that most whites in Craven preferred gradualism in race relations. Moreover, Hearn seemed to believe there was only one way of promoting the antipoverty program, as Kennel put it, “Washington’s way.”¹²¹ Local businessman and COP board member Harry Wright offered a similar testimony for the North Carolina Fund. After applauding Hearn for his ability to get the amount of OEO funding for COP, Wright complained that Hearn rarely listened or took criticism well. He was “an exceptionally intelligent man,” but “You could not tell Hearn that he was wrong,” Wright said. This held true even if “you could prove it to him.”¹²² These testimonies were not unsupported. North Carolina Fund staffer John Miller agreed in a written report that Hearn “demanded rather than requested,” often gave “ultimatums,” and “involved the board on as few a number of the decisions and negotiations as he could.” In doing so, Miller reasoned that the board knew “little of the day to day operations of COP” and had “little knowledge of programs they were approving.”¹²³

Few whites on the board who criticized Hearn’s administrative tactics were doing so merely to discredit his directorship in hopes of ultimately avoiding racial integration. The ones who bent down to that level were in the minority and, arguably, held minimal impact in the direction of the antipoverty programs. In fact, most of the few outspoken

¹²¹ Nora Kennel, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 25, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹²² Harry Wright, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, June 1, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

¹²³ John Miller, “Staff-Board Policies: Craven Operation Progress,” folder 5026, NCFR.

segregationists on the COP board, including local attorney David Henderson, New Bern Director of Public Works Cedric Boyd, and Mayor Mack Lupton, were regularly absent from board meetings and, therefore, missed out on multiple opportunities to vote on board policy.¹²⁴ Even with this fact in mind, most whites on the board seemed to have had less of a problem with integration itself than the manner in which it was being pushed.¹²⁵ As Robert Whitehead understood and acknowledged, whites in Craven had generally learned to accept greater civil rights for blacks and some degree of federal intervention in local affairs. Most saw these changes “as inevitable and are willing to go along rather than fight it tooth and nail,” he observed, adding that the thinking of the county was conservative but “not the ultra-conservative die-hard segregationist type, which exist in other areas in the South.”¹²⁶

Hearn’s white supporters, including those who shared his views on race, were also willing to concede that his administrative tactics and his view of the local whites who he had to work with might be causing unnecessary trouble. In a one-on-one conversation with Craven Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE) director Royce Jordan in mid-September, Hearn complained of “being tired of defending

¹²⁴ Attendance of Board Meetings, folder 4971, NCFR; Craven Operation Progress Board Composition, January 1965-July 1965, folder 4971, NCFR. As Mayor Lupton told John Miller of the North Carolina Fund, he did not attend COP board meetings because he was both too busy with his fish business and mayoral duties and he believed the program was “too controversial.” See Mack Lupton, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹²⁵ Nora Kennel, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 25, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹²⁶ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 16, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

Manpower in Craven” after receiving a complaint that a black field supervisor had been unprofessional when addressing a white female behind the desk of a local firm. Hearn’s attempt to address the situation, however, actually made the bookkeeper more upset. After his efforts to get her to overlook the mistake made by the Manpower supervisor, Hearn apparently asked her in a stern tone “Have you ever fought for your country? Negroes have, have you?” Jordan was even more concerned, however, by Hearn’s comment to him that “New Bern being a small rural southern community had to be treated as such.” Hearn implied “that I would have to instruct my people to keep this in mind at all times when they were in public,” Jordan wrote in a field report to the North Carolina Fund. “This caused me to wonder if we are to work in one way behind doors and another in public. I think the progress that has been made by Manpower in Craven County speaks for itself.” Feeling that “We have as of this date, had to hide nothing,” Jordan did not “believe any useful purpose would be served by changing our methods.” Indeed, “small incidents and small mistakes are going to be made.” “Mr. Hearn does not have to defend Manpower in Craven County,” Jordan concluded.¹²⁷

Any effort to deal with these issues related to Hearn were temporarily put on hold as COP prepared for a press conference in Washington, D.C. scheduled for September 20, 1965. Hosted by Sargent Shriver of the OEO, the press conference was designed to give much-needed national exposure to little-publicized antipoverty programs in rural areas. An antipoverty group from Mississippi and New Mexico were also present. Except

¹²⁷ Royce Jordan, Report on Conversation with James J. Hearn, September 17, 1965, folder 4979, NCFR.

for a *Chicago Tribune* reporter who asked how much money it cost the federal government to pay their way, Craven was generally well accepted by the press.¹²⁸ Many of the national reporters seemed impressed by their initiative and the ingenuity of their programs. Shriver also sang high praise for COP as “one of the most successful anti-poverty in the nation in spite of difficulties from external sources,” speaking primarily of the Klan.¹²⁹ Hearn, who was joined by board members D. L. Stallings, Frank Efir, Constance Rabin, Robert Whitehead, and Catherine Berry, was appreciative of the praise, adding that COP would remain dedicated to providing jobs so that Craven County would not contribute to the migration of rural poor to the ghettos of Northern cities.¹³⁰ But the political correctness of the OEO publicity show evidently did not satisfy reporters. Perhaps seeking a juicy story on race relations in a small southern community, several reporters would push Whitehead to expand upon the recent trouble with the Klan.

In a private dialogue with reporters, Whitehead told of twelve incidents of beatings, homes being fired at, bombs set off, and automobile windows smashed in the black community of Vanceboro by the KKK, making the case that blacks there need “more adequate police protection” from Klan harassment. In fact, Whitehead would blame lack of police protection for the recent arrest of twenty-one black youths for firing guns and attempting to scare citizens around the area late on a Saturday evening. Several

¹²⁸ Roy Parker, Jr., “Craven’s Poverty Program Sparks Lively Press Meet,” *News & Observer*, September 21, 1965.

¹²⁹ COP Board meeting minutes, September 22, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR; James K. Batten, “Shriver Praises Craven County Poverty Fighters,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 21, 1965.

¹³⁰ Roy Parker, Jr., “Craven’s Poverty Program Sparks Lively Press Meet,” *News & Observer*, September 21, 1965.

of them, according to Whitehead, had been to the police station earlier in the evening asking for protection for themselves and their families. “We regret that the Negro citizens of Vanceboro had to pick up arms to protect themselves and their families, but we would like to question in public what other course they had to follow,” Whitehead told the press, also noting that at least four KKK rallies had been held in Vanceboro in six weeks.¹³¹ But instead of intending for his comments to the press to raise controversy over COP, he hoped that they would be used to bring extra praise toward the poverty program. Klan activity, Whitehead made sure to stress, did have a good effect “in bringing to bear upon all the decent thinking people how detrimental this Klan activity is to the total community.” What is more, Whitehead emphasized, the antipoverty program “has done much to bring together the races” and in his opinion, the number of blacks and the poor on the board proved that “we have followed the guidelines of the Office of Economic Opportunity better than any other program in the country.”¹³² Whitehead’s latter contention is difficult to substantiate but he was certainly correct to say that COP had followed OEO guidelines very well. In September 1964, four blacks and seventeen whites made up the board of directors. Exactly a year later, the thirty-seven-member board would include twelve blacks as well as seven representatives of the poor. COP’s five-person executive committee then also included black representatives Bishop S. Rivers and Catherine Berry.

¹³¹ Roy Parker, Jr. “Vanceboro Negro Tells of Incidents,” *News & Observer*, September 21, 1965.

¹³² Ibid.

Despite Whitehead's intentions of portraying the majority of the Craven people in a good light, he was met by an unexpected amount of criticism after he returned home to New Bern and his comments at the press conference were published. At a COP board meeting held on September 22, which Whitehead did not arrive at until the very end, assistant superintendent of New Bern schools James W. Allen remarked to the group that if Whitehead "can't be relied upon to stick to the subject and not choose a national press conference to present some of his personal views," that he be left back in New Bern the next time a similar trip was planned. Fellow board member Robert Monte had also conveyed his thought that it was unfortunate that the race issue was injected, especially in a setting where reporters who "have nothing else to do but stir up people" would make what "they could of it."¹³³ Not surprisingly, Craven County Sheriff Charlie Berry took Whitehead's comments the worst, particularly his critique to the press that the Klan had not been properly dealt with by local authorities. A few days later, and perhaps afraid for his personal job security, the sheriff likely helped in digging up records of Whitehead's past criminal behavior which the *New Bern Mirror* editor, who had little sympathy for COP, caught wind of and ran with. In an editorial entitled, "He Should Know," that appeared in the *Mirror* in October 1965, Whitehead was blasted for his supposed hypocrisy in condemning lawlessness in Craven. As the editorial read, Whitehead "learned some of it [lawlessness] firsthand on October 24, 1938 when along with Henry and George Whitehead he pulled an armed robbery of a service station in Pitt County" for

¹³³ COP board meeting minutes, September 22, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

which “he served six years before he was paroled.”¹³⁴ It mattered little that Whitehead had committed the crime over twenty-five years ago at sixteen years of age. Neither did it matter much that he had committed no crimes since. That Whitehead merely had a record at all was enough to be used as a rallying cry among a minority of whites, led by Sherriff Berry, who called on Governor Moore to remove Whitehead from his post on the Craven Good Neighbor Council. This minority cadre of white citizens also asked for Whitehead to step down from serving on COP.¹³⁵ His detractor’s efforts to delegitimize him, however, did not equate with success. Governor Moore kept him on the Good Neighbor Council. He was also allowed to remain on the COP board as far more citizens in Craven, both black and white, saw him as both a strong and conciliatory leader during local crises.

As the campaign against Whitehead demonstrated, the agenda of extreme conservatives to fight against the avenues of racial and social changes, more times than not, came up short in Craven County. Many of these same avenues were attached to other important community goals such as economic growth. Despite making their presence known through boisterous rhetoric, extreme conservatives’ lack of success suggests that moderates and the minority of liberals together far outnumbered them, especially within prominent positions. The closest that extremists came to realizing their agenda, though due to little of their own effort, was in early October with the somewhat sudden

¹³⁴ Editorial: “He Should Know,” *The New Bern Mirror*, October 15, 1965.

¹³⁵ Arthur Johnsey, “Craven Negro Leader Causing Stir,” *Greensboro Daily News*, October 24, 1965.

resignation of Hearn as executive director of COP.¹³⁶ On that day, Hearn announced that he was leaving for a promotional job offer he had accepted to head an adult literacy program in Mississippi, a position for which the OEO had drafted him.¹³⁷ That he had grown weary over his lack of getting along with the community, which had even led to threatening phone calls to his home, surely contributed to his decision.¹³⁸ His finding Eastern North Carolina to be not progressive enough may have contributed as well but, ironically, he would leave the area to work in a state where, given studies like John Dittmer's *Local People*, he would arguably face more conservative resistance. But as he had done in Craven County, Hearn could take greater risks as an outsider and quickly leave town if need be.

The reaction among COP board members to Hearn's resignation was a mixture of relief and disappointment, as reflected in a series of interviews the North Carolina Fund conducted in the months just following Hearn's departure. Most of those interviewed felt the same way as COP board chairman Larry Pate who believed "Jim was working for Washington" and, thus, was never really interested in working with key leaders in Craven County. "When the economic opportunity act passed," Pate disclosed in his interview with Fund research associate John Miller, "this changed the entire concept of [COP] and

¹³⁶ After announcing to the board on October 6 his decision to leave COP for a job in Mississippi, Hearn would formally submit his resignation as executive director of COP on October 14, 1965.

¹³⁷ "James Hearne[sic] Resigns Post As Poverty Program Head," *Sun Journal*, October 8, 1965; Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 154.

¹³⁸ Tom Nolan, "State Poverty Operation Gets Varied Reaction," *The Greensboro Record*, October 8, 1965.

no one knew what to expect then.”¹³⁹ Craven County Welfare Department head and fellow board member Constance Rabin agreed, telling Miller that she and Stallings “are sorry we got involved in this mess,” even though she came across as though “she would have involved herself in an anti-poverty program, no matter what the circumstances.” Rabin believed it was “ridiculous” to establish a new antipoverty agency and then hire “an outsider who is totally alien to the area and its people.” According to her, resentment toward COP first began to escalate among local people because, in her words, “as soon as they opened up over there, the place was swarming with negroes.”¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Hearn had done most of his recruiting in the black areas of New Bern for both personal and logistic reasons. In addition to his view that black poverty was more entrenched and difficult to overcome, the black poor were the largest and closest target group to COP headquarters. For these reasons, a growing number in Craven would see COP “as more of a civil rights organization than as an anti-poverty program,” asserted Reverend Al Fisher. Plus, by openly “flaunting” his intentions to spear civil rights efforts, which had the potential of increasing unwanted racial tension, Fischer claimed Hearn lost support among numbers of the community who were sympathetic with COP.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Larry B. Pate, interview by John Miller, New Bern, N.C., January 18, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹⁴⁰ Constance Rabin, interview by John Miller, New Bern, N.C., December 9, 1965, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹⁴¹ Rev. Al Fischer, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

New Bern Schools Superintendent Robert Pugh and his assistant superintendent Ted Collier went even further by implying that Hearn had an obsession with pushing civil rights issues. According to both men, Hearn once confronted Stallings with an ultimatum that “either the [COP] board of directors gives me what I want or I’ll see that this town turns into another Selma.”¹⁴² Other complaints gathered about Hearn from the COP board could be summarized by Cedric Boyd, who criticized Hearn for spending money because it was “simply available” and “rushing the program.”¹⁴³ Not everyone on the board was happy to see Hearn leave, however. Black domestic worker Elizabeth Evans, a representative of the poor who was also a member of Nixon’s SCLC group, believed Hearn “ran the program the way it should be run,” saying she felt he was trying to help “all the poor people” but was hindered because “the Board members wouldn’t go along with him.” Evans also thought Hearn “really cared about the Negro,” noting that he was “well liked by all the Negroes in Craven County.”¹⁴⁴ Willie Hickman, a black representative from the Craven County Civic League, found it unfortunate that the relations between Hearn and the majority of the board were “not amicable,” which he believed, like Evans, was because “Hearn was doing the job the way OEO wanted it to be

¹⁴² Robert Pugh and T. J. Collier, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, December 2, 1965, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹⁴³ Cedric Boyd, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Evans, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 23, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

done.”¹⁴⁵ Most other blacks on the COP board, Whitehead included, were in agreement with the majority of these latter two testimonies.

Although there is a good measure of truth in most of the interviews, at least one thing is missing which helps to fill in the gaps in explaining not only why Hearn did not get along with the majority of the board but also why some segments of the community viewed COP in a negative light. What is primarily missing is a discussion of Hearn’s own overall perception of the white community and the ways that they should be dealt with, which, in the end, became a self-fulfilling prophecy. By the time he resigned, Hearn had a narrow and firmly established view that whites in Eastern North Carolina, particularly those who for a variety of reasons disagreed with “forced” measures of integration, were naturally resentful, prejudiced, and largely incapable of treating blacks fairly or changing their racial customs without coercion. Of course, Hearn did not mention these views in public when he was still in control of the program such as at a national Community Action Conference in Washington, D.C. where he told Sargent Shriver and other national War on Poverty chiefs present that Craven County would not have “been first in the nation or received as many new programs as it has” without “the dedicated efforts of local citizens” in wanting to help the underprivileged.¹⁴⁶ Only after his decision to resign did Hearn’s unfavorable views of the community surface for all to see. According to North Carolina Fund research associate John Miller, who interviewed Hearn soon after he

¹⁴⁵ Rev. Willie Gray Hickman, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, May 13, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

¹⁴⁶ “Leadership of Unit Praised at Session,” *Sun Journal*, March 20, 1965.

had announced his resignation, the former executive director “would not admit any problem failures or shortcomings for the simple reason that he saw himself as The Program” but, he was willing to share his opinion that the COP board members were “never quite sure about the federal government” and were “immediately suspicious to its intentions, especially with regard to integrated programs.” Moreover, because few poor whites had yet to participate in COP programs, Hearn regarded “the whites as being afraid to participate” mostly because, in his mind, they saw “themselves as ‘above’ the negroes.”¹⁴⁷



Figure 20. Craven Operation Progress dinner meeting, New Bern, NC, April 1965. From left to right: Executive Director Jim Hearn (standing), Hearn’s wife, North Carolina Fund Manpower Director James McDonald, unknown, Billy Barnes Collection, Courtesy of North Carolina Collection.

Right around the time that Hearn resigned, such views would inform a rather unflattering portrayal of Craven County in the *Washington Daily News* that made no

¹⁴⁷ Jim Hearn, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, New Bern, NC, October 19, 1965, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

mention of the area's moderating influences. "The white southerners hate pretty powerfully," the newspaper quoted Hearn, speaking about his experiences as a poverty director in the Coastal Plain region. "Here they hate Lyndon Johnson, and they hate him far worse than they hate you and me. He's a Southerner himself, and to them he's a turncoat. It's understandable to them for me to be what I am. I'm an outsider and it's almost natural." Hate may have been a strong word. Arguably, more Craven whites were unhappy or upset with Hearn's leadership style than what he stood for. In the interview with the *Washington Daily News*, Hearn went on to mention that "When I first got here, everyone told me that Negroes would never work but 90 percent of our projects are supported by Negroes. Now we can't reach the poor whites because they think the program is dominated by Negroes."¹⁴⁸ That literally "everyone" in Craven told him that black people would not work was clearly an exaggeration. There is little doubt that Hearn heard such prejudiced talk from segments of the white community who strongly believed that blacks in the area were stereotypically lazy. Yet such an attitude did not represent the main sentiment among the substantial number who either joined or supported the poverty program—especially local white businessmen who, as will be discussed in chapters V and VI, would voluntarily hire historic numbers of black workers at reasonable to good wages from 1966 onward. Due to his choice to focus his attention on the words and behavior of the critics of COP, Hearn's unfavorable views of Craven would only get worse by the end of his directorship.

¹⁴⁸ Tom Nolan, "Poverty War Can Get Hot: Threats, Cross Burnings Plague Tidewater Country," *Washington Daily News*, October 1965.

But Hearn's distrust of the white community, which led him to treat Craven as a "small rural town," would ironically feed the beast of criticism and distrust, as little publicity was made of the program and its benefits. His assumption that many whites did not trust Washington ultimately became a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹⁴⁹ As discussed above, there were certainly deep-seated prejudices and traditional views of race that butted up against Hearn's plans and vision but they were not as formidable as Hearn described them. For whatever reason, he chose to overlook the fact that many whites in Craven still approved of the program and saw the potential good that could come out of it, including not only businessmen but other community leaders such as Stallings, Frank Efird, Robert Pugh, Larry Pate, Reverend Al Fisher, and others. Hearn also overlooked or chose to forget the developments that had been made in Craven on the race relations front. By the time Hearn left New Bern, there was not a single store in New Bern without at least one black clerk; in 1960, it was hard to find any.¹⁵⁰ Such progress, much of which occurred prior to the War on Poverty, could not have happened in the community that Hearn saw and described. "As a lifelong resident of this county," Craven MITCE director Royce Jordan, a racially liberal white man who regularly invited blacks into his home, remarked at a COP board meeting in the fall of 1965, "I have been surprised that the racial aspect of our program, which is a total opportunity program, has been so well received as it has

¹⁴⁹ A.D. Ward, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR

¹⁵⁰ Tom Nolan, "Poverty War Has 2 Fronts," *Washington Daily News*, October 13, 1965.

by both races without any real friction.” “Prejudice,” Jordan argued counter to Hearn’s perception, “has not hampered our progress.”¹⁵¹

Conclusion

Notwithstanding Hearn’s weaknesses in the area of public relations and cooperation with locals, the Hearn era could still be characterized as successful on several fronts. Since poverty rates did not have time to significantly dip during the short time that Hearn was director, his success was predicated primarily on bringing in historic amounts of money. According to the North Carolina Fund, Hearn “took advantage of the money available from the OEO perhaps more than any other rural CAP in the country.”¹⁵² Federal money helped to jumpstart several innovative and successful programs to combat the sources of poverty in Eastern North Carolina in ways never seen before, namely Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE), the Strawberry Marketing Cooperative, the Mobile Dental Unit, and Adult Basic Education Recruitment (ABER), each of which will be discussed in later chapters. Hearn was also justified in feeling proud that the COP board membership involved most sectors of the population of New Bern and Craven County under his directorship.¹⁵³ Finally, with Hearn as the head of Craven’s antipoverty effort, COP enjoyed a good deal of autonomy from OEO, which rarely felt compelled to intervene in local affairs. A North Carolina Fund report clarifies that in the CAA’s first year, “COP encountered no serious difficulties with OEO in

¹⁵¹ “Readers write to the editor,” *Sun Journal*, November 6, 1965.

¹⁵² North Carolina Fund Process Analysis Report, Part II, 12, North Carolina Collection.

¹⁵³ Jim Hearn, interview by John Miller, New Bern, N.C., October 19, 1965, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

meeting guidelines or in obtaining program grants. Relations between the two probably couldn't be any better" with both "placing unbounded trust in the other," in part because Hearn had made contacts in OEO while serving on the Task Force and that "Hearn saw his reference group as the federal government."¹⁵⁴ If poverty could have been cured alone by being awarded vast amounts of federal funds, involving all sectors of the community in the planning process, and following OEO demands, Craven may have been able to obliterate poverty completely. Yet, there were many issues left to deal with before an efficient antipoverty effort could be found, including new problems that arose because of Hearn's tight relationship with Washington, D.C. and subsequent poor relationship with the local community. Among those issues was the low participation rate of the poor, especially among the rural white poor who had come to believe, based on appearances, that the Johnson administration had created the War on Poverty at the exclusion of them, serving instead as an extension of the civil rights movement and nothing more. COP's choice of businessman and current board member Robert Monte as the new executive director—who proudly called himself Hearn's "loyal opposition"—reflected the seriousness with which its leaders would seek to improve its image in the community in hopes of reaching a greater number of the white poor.

¹⁵⁴ John Miller, "Craven Operation Progress: Autonomy from OEO, NCF, and Local Agencies," p. 1-3, folder 4967, NCFR.

CHAPTER V

“CRAVEN OPERATION STANDSTILL”

Introduction

Moderate businessman Robert R. Monte was not the Fund’s first choice for COP’s next executive director. Fund director George Esser was happy about the relationship that he and the staff had developed with Hearn. Of the eleven Community Action Programs (CAPs) the Fund was helping to supervise, few if any of the executive directors agreed more than Hearn with the importance placed by the Fund upon the poor’s participation in community action as well as the perceived need for rapid social change in local communities through the democratic process.¹ Yet a desire to keep the antipoverty agency moving forward without interruption—along with strong recommendations by Craven County Commissioner D. L. Stallings and COP chairman Larry B. Pate—compelled Esser and his staff to reluctantly agree to Monte. As Esser’s newly appointed Deputy Director Tom Hartmann reminded him in a memo, “Stallings and Pate have it within their power to destroy COP.”² But while those in Durham accepted Monte as COP’s new leader on the surface, a general distrust of Monte’s viewpoints on the War on Poverty and his ability to effectively lead and coordinate the

¹ Nevertheless, as Esser acknowledged in 1965, “In most cases the project directors were committed intellectually to finding good opportunities for the black people on their staffs.” See Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 139.

² Tom Hartmann to George Esser, memorandum, October 15, 1965, folder 313, NCFR.

programs in reaching the poor to the Fund's satisfaction would remain within the Fund leadership. Unfortunately for Monte, his critics while head of COP would not be limited to the North Carolina Fund.

In addition to George Esser and his staff, Monte would also draw heavy criticism from officials in the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the U.S. Department of Labor, and a handful of COP staff hired to direct seemingly non-controversial programs such as Adult Basic Education Recruitment (ABER). One female staff of the ABER program would go as far as to describe COP under Monte as "Craven Operation Standstill."¹ But mounting criticism, and the strained relations that followed—which stemmed from various sources, including Monte's aim to better cooperate with and accede to the wishes of the COP board of directors, his desire to avoid upsetting or offending the broader community, and his approach of not pushing the growth of the antipoverty agency as fast as Hearn—were not entirely the fault of Monte. Factoring into these strained relations between himself and those listed above was the fact that the North Carolina Fund was undergoing a radical shift in objectives in 1966, and federal officials were seemingly starting to make more arbitrary administrative decisions. Nonetheless, despite the criticisms from those who had different beliefs in the proper methodology of running an antipoverty agency than he, some of COP's greatest successes were accomplished during Monte's tenure (October 1965 to October 1966), particularly within the Manpower training program. Monte's skill in gaining wider support among Craven's

¹ Thomas Wallace, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, January 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

white community was especially critical in assisting the progress of COP to better reach the poor, as were developments generally unrelated to Monte, including a greater local black voter influence following the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the fact that most of COP's programs began to run at full or near full potential for the first time.

The reasons for placing faith in Monte

Pate and Stallings first made their positive feelings about Monte known to the North Carolina Fund in a meeting with Tom Hartmann on October 12. The reasons the two COP leaders gave in defense of their choice for executive director indicated their practical understanding that the need to improve the image of COP in the white community would have to be balanced along with the need to maintain the financial support of the North Carolina Fund as well as OEO. As noted in chapters III and IV, COP leadership was mostly willing to cooperate with the early antipoverty philosophy of both entities and, thus, was not compelled to stretch themselves too much to meet the guidelines of either as it related to the participation of the poor or minorities. However, COP leadership also knew that it would not be difficult for the operation to lose the trust of the Fund or OEO if more attention was paid to the white poor at the expense of the black poor. Nor would it be difficult for COP to lose the trust and support of the black community which, in addition to being the largest beneficiary of the antipoverty programs, was becoming an ever more important political force within Craven. Keeping these realities in mind, Pate and Stallings outlined to Hartmann how Monte's strengths would benefit everyone connected with COP. Along with his status as a respected businessman, they greatly touted Monte's interest in involving poor whites (which Hearn

was far less interested in), his desire in getting “better press” for COP, and his ability to gain the support of COP staff and better coordinate the antipoverty programs of the Community Action Program (CAP). Just as important, Pate and Stallings promised that Monte who, despite being fiscally conservative, was known to be fair in race relations and would have the unanimous support of local blacks.

In Hartmann’s subsequent interview with Monte later that same day, which Stallings and Pate sat in on, Monte was asked several direct questions about his views of poverty and how he would approach the authority of the executive directorship. For Hartmann, Monte’s answers were of mixed quality. As a memo to Esser revealed, he was particularly dissatisfied with Monte’s understanding of the importance of involving the poor in planning operations. In Hartmann’s opinion, Monte did not voice opposition to involving the poor at the policy level but appeared primarily concerned about increasing the vocational education opportunities in the area and helping to develop local employment opportunities. Hartmann also seemed unconvinced that Monte was aware that his so-called “bluntness and rigidity” would have to be avoided in his relationships with officials in Washington, D.C., even though Monte said he understood. Hartmann was perhaps most satisfied by Monte’s answer to the final question he asked him, which concerned whether Monte had “a full appreciation of the reality of Negro power in Craven County” and if would he “be able to handle this reality.” After replying in the affirmative, Monte agreed with Pate and Stallings, both of whom had chimed in, that one of Jim Hearn’s greatest contributions had been helping to convince the white community in Craven of these circumstances. After the interview, Hartmann reported to Esser that it

seemed that “we had no alternative at this point” but to accept Monte and pay him the executive director’s salary. “Pate and Stallings made it all too clear to me that Monte was their choice,” and thus “I must support Monte’s selection because of the realities of the situation.” “On the other hand,” Hartmann continued, “no matter what Monte does or does not do, Negro power and the reality of COP exists.” Moreover, said Hartmann, “I believe that Stallings and Pate are committed to the future of COP and if Monte fails to continue the programs, either by inaction or a change of thrust, we will have every right to enter the picture again.”²

Before George Esser would take any action on the appointment of COP’s next executive director, however, he wanted to hear how local blacks would take the news if Robert Monte was selected. As Esser would discover during a lengthy conversation with Robert Whitehead, Pate and Stallings were not alone in their spirited support of Monte. Indeed, Whitehead told Esser rather emphatically that, in the opinion of himself, fellow black members of the COP board of directors, and the leaders of the other black organizations in the county, “Mr. Monte would have the support and respect of the Negro community as the Executive Director.”³ As Whitehead elucidated, while Monte was “relatively conservative in his political views, he is a liberal in terms of race relations.” According to Whitehead, who had recently spoken to Monte’s employees at his rendering plant, Monte had the reputation of being “a fair and just employer” and was paying wages

² Tom Hartmann to George Esser, memorandum, October 15, 1965, folder 313, NCFR.

³ Esser to Esser’s Desk, memorandum, October 27, 1965, folder 5037, NCFR.

“as high as any paid Negro labor in Craven County.” Even though Monte was “a man of pronounced opinions,” Whitehead added that he is “willing to discuss problems, to change his mind when convinced, and to admit when he is wrong.”

Most likely for these same reasons, COP staff members informed Whitehead that they would have no issues with working under Monte and actually preferred him to other candidates. Last of all, Whitehead himself expressed the view that the hiring of a moderate like Monte could strengthen and improve the effectiveness of COP by garnering more approval for the operation’s programs among both the business and low-income white communities, the latter of which had expressed almost no interest at all in the local anti-poverty agency.⁴ In praising Monte in this way, Whitehead reflected the same understanding held by Pate and Stallings; that broadening its base of public support was essential to COP’s survival. Indeed, even though most black members of COP had disagreed strongly with whites on the board about whether or not Hearn should have been asked to resign as executive director, their shared support for Monte as Hearn’s replacement reflected a cooperative and bi-racial vision for COP in going forward.

After concluding that “any man who had the support of all elements of the community and who had the technical skills and understanding of the program,” was highly suitable for the position, Esser determined that Monte “should receive the agreement of The North Carolina Fund.” This decision, however, did not prevent Esser from reserving the right to get involved if Monte did not live up to the Fund’s expectations. In addition, it was expected that Monte “would not attempt at the same time

⁴ Ibid.

to manage his business but would spend full time on the affairs of Craven Operation Progress.” Esser’s decision to hire Monte was also contingent on the agreement Esser had reached with Whitehead and Stallings that, even though Monte would technically maintain the responsibility of hiring his own assistant, COP’s Deputy Director should be a qualified black resident who had the confidence of the board’s black members.⁵ Esser would still feel a need to validate his judgment in endorsing Monte, which he was able to do with a quick phone call to OEO officials. The final remaining task was a meeting of the COP board of directors during which they would vote on Monte.

At the regularly scheduled COP board meeting on October 14 (which included Hearn who had officially resigned at the beginning of the proceedings), Stallings notified all present that he and board chairman Pate had received the blessings of George Esser, the North Carolina Fund, and the OEO to nominate Robert Monte for executive director. Stallings then went on to say that, with the exception of two or three people, Monte had the greatest knowledge of the programs and that this was one of many reasons he was absolutely sure that Monte would make an excellent executive director. After Monte temporarily left the room at Stallings’ request, in fewer than five minutes, the board unanimously approved his appointment. Monte was given time to thank the board for their approval, after which Whitehead suggested that he would need an assistant and asked him to consider black public school principal Lee R. Morgan, a thirty-something transplant from Washington, D.C. who held a bachelor’s degree from Howard University. Incidentally, Morgan’s wife, Barbara Rivers Morgan, was the daughter of Bishop S.

⁵ Esser to Esser’s Desk, memorandum, October 27, 1965, folder 5037, NCFR.

Rivers, one of the most respected civil rights leaders in the area. Monte, who was already aware of Morgan's credentials as well as his connections, promised to give Whitehead's recommendation considerable thought.

Work left to be done from Hearn era

Seeking to take advantage of the fresh start embodied by the end of the Hearn era, board member Constance Rabin took the floor in the meeting's closing moments to politely remind fellow directors of their great responsibility to "sell these programs to the community." "We should all try to work a little harder in interpreting these programs to the people," she told them. Rabin became rather fervent, however, in calling on naysayers—although it was not clear whether she was directing her admonishment to the audience, the board, or both—to realize that merely criticizing instead of "picking out the best parts" of the programs only "hurts the image of COP." She also prompted them not to forget that "the agencies are trying to do something they had not been able to do in the past because of the lack of money."⁶

Rabin was perfectly right. On the day that Hearn resigned, evidence abounded that interpretation of COP's programs to the people in and around Craven could be greatly improved. Efforts to reach poor whites were especially crucial, as this population, generally speaking, appeared to be not only largely apathetic but physically and mentally resistant at times, largely as a result of a limited knowledge of COP and its programs. In October 1965, the boards of most if not all of the North Carolina Fund's eleven CAPs

⁶ COP board meeting minutes, October 15, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

included one or more representatives of the poor, including the COP board, which had had three low-income whites and four low-income blacks for approximately three months. Yet, for the white poor, inclusion had not led to regular involvement.⁷ For example, Otis Ipock, a white rural tenant farmer, had never once attended a board meeting and had not even known that he had ever been named to the board. As Ipock told John Miller of the North Carolina Fund in a one-on-one interview, he did not have “anything to do with the organization” and his only knowledge of COP came from the three times that the Craven Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE) program contacted him at his home in 1965. Moreover, it was during this interview with Miller in October 1966 that Ipock claimed to have first heard that he had even been recommended to join the COP board. According to Miller, Ipock had “no idea what [COP] is doing or what is happening with it” and showed little concern that he had missed the opportunity to participate on the board.⁸

Through little fault of his own, Ipock was aptly dropped from the board of directors under Monte’s tenure for failure to attend any meetings. He would not be the only poor white representative to be dismissed from the COP board for lack of attendance, however. The other two poor white representatives, Mrs. Ketchum and Mrs. Holton, were also dismissed because they had attended no more than two board meetings between them from July to October 1965. That none of the original poor white

⁷ “CAPs involve the Poor Through Representation, Employment, Neighborhood Organization,” *Blueprint for Opportunity* 2, October 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁸ Otis Ipock, interview by John Miller, Craven County, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

representatives on the board had demonstrated any sustained interest in COP, and at least one had never agreed to serve at all, reflected more than Hearn's indifference to genuine involvement of poor whites within the anti-poverty program. These conditions also seemed to indicate a widespread opinion within the poor white community that COP offered them little if any benefit and that their input would probably not make a positive difference in their lives.

The vast majority of poor whites would not participate in COP for a variety of reasons, not least of which was a lack of reliable transportation from the rural county to COP headquarters in New Bern. Transportation issues may have explained, at least in part, why the two female poor white representatives attended so few COP board meetings. Poor whites had decent participation rates in the rural strawberry marketing cooperative, for instance, in part because the program allowed them to stay in the vicinity of their own homes. Even so, taking into account the fact that whites at the Trent Court housing project were far less involved than their black counterparts at nearby Craven Terrace, other factors, such as ignorance of COP programs and philosophy, distrust of government programs, satisfaction with or acceptance of their circumstances, racial prejudices, and a general feeling of exclusion, better explain the behavior of poor whites in Eastern North Carolina toward the War on Poverty.⁹ Many poor whites' dislike for or disinterest in COP was based upon more than one of these factors.

⁹ Liz Williamson, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, June 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR. Ignorance of COP and its programs may have been one of the most crucial reasons why white participation in Craven was low in comparison to that of blacks. A North Carolina Fund survey of low-income families in the area conducted between July and December 1965 found that only one-fifth of the over 200

The reports completed by Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) workers who recruited poor people for Adult Basic Education (ABER) during the summer of 1965 are fairly illustrative of the varying viewpoints of poor whites in Eastern North Carolina. VISTA workers assigned to Jones County, most of whom were white college-age out-of-staters, reported to their supervisor that participation was frustratingly low, in part because “there seems to be the idea that we are civil rights workers.” But even after the volunteers dispelled this notion, the problem of “getting the people to realize their need for this basic education” still remained because “there is a certain suspicion towards us offering something for nothing.” One of the VISTA volunteers placed in Pamlico County, who reportedly signed up thirteen adults for classes, similarly testified that “Many despise Craven Operation Progress, Inc” and noted that the people he met were “lukewarm at best toward education.” He also commented that he thought it might have been “unwise for VISTA to adopt a policy of sending volunteers away from their home areas,” since, in his view, some of the poor had a tendency to be wary of outsiders. Although VISTA workers were far more successful in recruiting within Craven County, they still encountered a measure of distrust from poor whites. One of the two VISTA workers there, who signed up as many as ninety-five of the 110 she interviewed, described how she had felt resented before she was able to explain that “we have come here to help all that need help regardless of race.” The other VISTA worker from Craven

respondents in Craven, where the majority of poor whites resided, were familiar with COP compared to two-fifths of respondents in New Bern, where a sizeable portion of the black community in Craven lived. See North Carolina Fund Survey of Low Income Families in North Carolina, Characteristics of Individuals in Areas Served by Craven County Community Action Program, Report no. 3e, August 1967, North Carolina Collection.

found that, even though “Most of the county is not aware that Basic Adult Education classes exist,” many of the poor were receptive to the idea. Yet, after perceiving what he observed as the “social stigma” that surrounded COP because it predominately assisted blacks, he felt the key to greater participation by the white poor was finding a proper balance between pushing too hard and not pushing hard enough.

While issues of race colored the decisions of poor whites throughout Eastern North Carolina, the VISTA volunteers in Onslow County were the only ones to give considerable attention to how fears over integration within the classroom were a major problem. As one of them explained in their report, “Some of the people I have talked to are very strongly against the Negro and say they don’t want to attend classes because they might have to sit next to a Negro.” Other poor whites in nearby counties, including those who feared that the VISTAs were civil rights workers, probably felt the same way but either did not express it in such terms to the VISTAs or were not contacted about the adult basic education classes. In general, the VISTAs found the black poor to be the most receptive to adult education, followed by some white poor who were already recipients of welfare and who had been told that their local welfare department head supported the ABER program.¹⁰

Taking into consideration that these VISTA reports supply one-sided perspectives, the attitudes of poor whites that they describe are unsurprising as well as realistic. It was not unexpected, for instance, for poor whites to feel that COP programs

¹⁰ VISTA reports: Adult Basic Education Recruitment Program, folder 5062, NCFR.

catered to blacks; they could conclude as much by simple observation. Undoubtedly, blacks made up a majority of participants in most COP programs, both as a result of Jim Hearn's special campaigning in the black communities and a comparably higher degree of black poverty, that in turn fostered greater enthusiasm. In addition, some of the eligibility requirements of programs such as the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) program, which were specifically designed by the U.S Department of Labor, also prevented whites from enjoying equal access to the program. For example, a youth from a *nonfarm* family of seven persons or more, whose annual family income was not in excess of \$5,090, was eligible for NYC while a youth in a *farm* family of the same size would only be eligible if the annual family income did not exceed \$3,560. The same eligibility rules held true for a *nonfarm* family of three whose annual income could not exceed \$2,440 and a farm family of the same size whose income could not exceed \$1,710.¹¹ Whether or not these rules were intentionally designed by the Department of Labor to give preference to youth in urban areas, most of whom were black, is of limited importance. In Craven County, where the vast majority of nonfarm families were white, the end result was that many more black youth were eligible for NYC.

Feelings of racial animosity or racial superiority towards blacks notwithstanding, the reactions of poor whites in and around Craven were not surprising in light of the fact that many of the nation's CAAs, including most of those sponsored by the North Carolina Fund, had difficulty attracting white participation. Sargent Shriver acknowledged this

¹¹ "Youth Corps Program Set For April 1," *Sun Journal*, March 24, 1966.

problem before Congress in April 1965. “A statistic frequently overlooked in this war against poverty,” he affirmed, “is that 80 percent of the poor people in America are not Negroes.”¹² Numerous demographic and social variables explain the nationwide gap between white and black participation in the War on Poverty, however, one cannot overlook the degree to which the black civil rights movement informed President Johnson’s evolving vision of the Economic Opportunity Act and which population he believed it could most help. Between his June 1965 address to the graduating class of Howard University in Washington, D.C. and the onslaught of riots in the low-income Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts two months later, it became apparent that Johnson believed that America’s black population, many of whom had suffered for decades under the restrictive policies of Jim Crow, would not only benefit most from the federal antipoverty effort but were also most deserving of such assistance. As a strong supporter of both the Johnson administration and the War on Poverty, COP executive director Jim Hearn certainly shared Johnson’s convictions, and had therefore tended to favor black participation over white with regard to COP. The poor whites in Eastern North Carolina who would have benefited from COP programs but opted out because of issues related to race could have chosen to overlook the ratio of black-to-white participation but, understandably, they did not want to participate in programs that they believed were not truly intended for them or designed with them in mind.

¹² Opening Statement by Sargent Shriver, *Examination of the War on Poverty Program*, April 12, 1965, p. 23.

The low level of poor white participation in COP had become an undeniable problem by October 1965, but there was another area that COP board member Constance Rabin thought could be improved by an enhanced effort on the part of herself and fellow board of directors to interpret the programs to the community. Until this time, the local forces in favor of COP had been greater than those against it—most white businessmen, in particular, understood the boost that COP brought to the local economy—but concern remained that this balance could shift if Craven’s white middle- and upper-classes did not stay well informed about the programs and their progress.¹³ As COP Chairman Larry Pate observed, support from the community at-large had fallen off considerably as a result of how Hearn ran the organization. “In the beginning we all were really interested in this program [and] what it could mean to our poor people,” Pate told the North Carolina Fund’s John Miller. “We wanted to help people help themselves.” Yet, as Pate saw it, Hearn “turned out to be a missionary for civil rights” and the program “got off to a bad start as he rubbed people the wrong way.” After Hearn “threatened several times to have thousands of Negroes on the New Bern streets,” Pate recalled that “People who had been with us since the beginning backed off and began to criticize what we were trying to do.” “I was disappointed in George Esser,” Pate also disclosed to Miller. “We talked with

¹³ W. Ted Kennedy, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 27, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

him about Hearn but he said we couldn't fire him. Somehow we couldn't get through to George that Hearn was hindering racial understanding rather than helping."¹⁴

Mrs. Grady McCotter, chair of the New Bern Planning Board, was one of the middle-class white citizens who, besides having doubts about COP, still "had a bad taste in their mouth" from the Hearn era. Although she saw COP as necessary, especially for blacks, she believed that when Hearn took over "the program went too fast" and that not enough emphasis was placed on education and job training. She also resented that some of the black NYC enrollees had reportedly "waved their paychecks in the faces of some of the city employees" and had not been appropriately reprimanded by their supervisors. In part because of her lack of faith that COP could be redirected, McCotter did not think it would be productive to consider coordinating the activities of the city planning board with the goals of COP.¹⁵ A similar lack of faith informed the decision of the Cove City town council who, believing that NYC was not well liked in their community, voted in September 1965 against accepting a contract with the Department of Labor for a local beautification project. Cove City Mayor D.M. Grady, who was greatly outnumbered, found the decision especially unfortunate because, in his view, the community needed the work and the federal government was willing to pay for it.¹⁶

¹⁴ Larry B. Pate, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹⁵ Mrs. Grady McCotter, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

¹⁶ "New Bern Council Turns Down Job By Youth Corps," *Salisbury Post* (Salisbury, NC), September 29, 1965.

COP efforts to rebuild support that had been lost would not be achieved overnight. In fact, such efforts would face an uphill battle with a less-than-sympathetic group of local newspaper editors whose negative opinions had not softened in spite of Hearn's resignation. J. Gaskill McDaniel, who ran the *New Bern Mirror*, came to believe that COP was "corrupt, dishonest, disgraceful, and a big waste of money" and wrote editorials accordingly, while the editors at the *Sun Journal* relegated material given to them by the COP staff to a section titled "Negro News."¹⁷ COP also had to compete with leading commentary from WRAL-TV executive director Jesse Helms whose growing number of negative portrayals of President Johnson's Great Society programs, generally speaking, helped to influence viewers in Eastern North Carolina who were less than fully familiar with COP or its merits. In his *Viewpoint* editorial on October 29, 1965, for example, Helms would share his understanding of the "progress" of the War on Poverty: "A year ago, your money was being spent at the rate of \$245,000 per minute," he satirized. "Now that Lyndon Johnson has shifted gears, it's being dished out at the rate of \$266,000 per minute."¹⁸ Hoping to counter the criticism coming from conservatives both inside and outside Craven, North Carolina Fund staffer Billy Barnes was assigned to produce an educational film, "Questions," that was to be shown to COP board of directors, local civic clubs, church groups, and other community members to underscore

¹⁷ J. Gaskill McDaniel, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 20, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR. One example was a story sent by NC Volunteer Director Franklin Ingram to the *Sun Journal* with the names of the incoming North Carolina Volunteers and what type of work they would be involved in. See "Negro News," *Sun Journal*, June 26, 1965.

¹⁸ WRAL-TV *Viewpoint* #1217, October 29, 1965, North Carolina Collection.

the purpose of the anti-poverty program and what had been accomplished.¹⁹ Filming began soon after Hearn resigned and would be completed by 1966. Some of the most pertinent issues the film sought to address revolved around race and the involvement of the federal government in anti-poverty programs. In the narrator's words, those who watched the film would either be informed or reminded that "poverty is not limited in Craven to one race," that COP consisted of "local people solving local problems," and that "if Craven doesn't use this money to fight its problems, some other community will be glad to have it."²⁰



Figure 21. Robert Monte (on right) leading a COP board meeting, circa 1966. Still image from "Questions" 1966, produced by Billy E. Barnes, North Carolina Collection.

¹⁹ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 146.

²⁰ North Carolina Fund, "Questions" film, 1966, North Carolina Collection.

Improving the Image of COP

To say that unsettled issues remained or that work was still to be done when Robert Monte officially took over as COP's next executive director on October 20, 1965, would be an understatement. However, a confident Monte promised to tackle the challenges before him quite differently than Hearn, but without any "radical changes" in the operation of COP.²¹ If, as the North Carolina Fund claimed, Hearn had seen his reference group as the federal government, Monte would see his reference group as the local agencies, board members, and the community at-large. Of these groups, the COP board of directors was perhaps the most enthusiastic about the hiring of Monte. Although the board had been pleased with the funding progress made during Hearn's tenure, many agency-oriented board members felt that they had not been sufficiently consulted or involved in decision-making due to Hearn's tendency to supply the board and local agencies only with what he considered to be essential information. This past operating procedure was changed immediately with Monte's arrival. In line with the board leadership's desire for "someone opposite from Hearn," Monte began to regularly consult with the directors and to ask for their input before he made any major or final decisions.²² Monte would also depart from Hearn's precedent by engaging heavily in the public relations side of COP. For one, he showed respect and openly courted the local media rather than continuing to alienate them and helped to create the position for COP's first

²¹ "Readers write to the editor," *Sun Journal*, November 6, 1965.

²² A. Donald Bourgeois, Howard I. Buchbinder, and Tom I. Davis, Review of Craven Operation Progress, April 6, 7, 8, 1966, folder 5027, NCFR; John Miller, "Craven Operation Progress: Autonomy from OEO, NCF, and Local Agencies," p. 2-3, folder 4967, NCFR.

Public Information Officer.²³ Monte also made strong efforts to attract whites into the programs, especially through NYC, and regularly attended local civic club meetings in which he answered questions, emphasized that most poverty programs were administered by local organizations instead of the federal government, and encouraged the public to visit COP headquarters to see first-hand what the programs were accomplishing.²⁴ A month into his new position, Monte sent out thirty thousand letters inviting community people to take a tour of COP during office hours to learn more about its programs.²⁵ All of these actions were in line with one of the primary reasons that Monte was hired, which was to improve the image of COP among the community, especially among whites who believed it was first a civil rights organization and second an anti-poverty program. Also in line with this goal was Monte's plan to enlist the community itself in changing COP from a "Poverty Program" into what he referred to as an "Education Program" that would focus even more intently on improving the employability of the local poor, both black and white. Like most Americans at the time, Monte took the conservative-to-moderate position that the habits and attitudes of the poor helped to explain why they were poor

²³ Gloria Lowe, interview by John Miller, May 12, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR; Carl Wheeler, interview by John Miller, May 12, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR. COP board member Mrs. Nora Kennel believed that one reason that J. Gaskill McDaniel, editor of the *New Bern Mirror*, was particularly hostile towards COP in the beginning was because Jim Hearn made no effort to acquaint himself with McDaniel and acted as if "his newspaper didn't even exist." See Mrs. Nora Kennel, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 25, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

²⁴ In a January 10, 1966, letter written to Colonel W.F. Evans, who was then the director of the local NYC program, Monte told him "I also urge you and your staff to *exert* equal effort in securing additional qualified white enrollees into the program. Hunger and need does not differentiate between races." Robert Monte to Col. W.F. Evans, January 10, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR; "Poverty Head is Speaker At Local Meeting," *Sun Journal*, December 9, 1965.

²⁵ Robert R. Monte, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, November 18, 1965, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

and in the minority and that, in order for true poverty reduction to occur, these habits and attitudes would have to be transformed to a greater degree than those of the larger society.

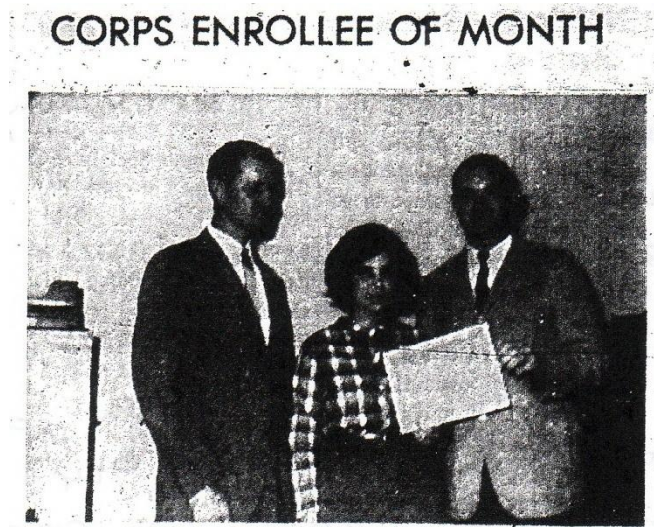


Figure 22. Miss Patricia Giles of Oriental in Pamlico County, center, was one of several NYC Corps enrollees of the month which the *Sun Journal* began to publish after Monte took over as executive director. “Corps Enrollee of Month,” *Sun Journal*, May 25, 1966.

Most of the new changes Monte sought to implement as head of COP derived from his less-than-liberal views of the purposes of the War on Poverty, which he uniquely preferred to call the “War on Ignorance.” Monte also placed a considerable amount of responsibility on the poor to take advantage of opportunities of self-uplift. “We are not going to eradicate poverty and ignorance in Craven County,” Monte told the New Bern Rotary Club in one of his first public appearances, “but we’re going to give these people a chance to get out if they want to take it.”²⁶ The bulk of these views, which

²⁶ “Poverty Head is Speaker At Local Meeting,” *Sun Journal*, December 9, 1965.

Monte wrote down soon after he was hired, were shared with the North Carolina Fund's Tom Hartmann. These notes, which Hartmann would send on to George Esser, mainly provided fodder for the Fund to dedicate special attention, in Hartmann's words, to "developing Monte along our own lines."²⁷ One of the politically incorrect beliefs Monte jotted down was that "the great society is not one big class—it means only that everyone has the opportunity to reach, by working and earning it himself, whatever goals he desires...It is a modern version of the 'Horatio Alger' success story."²⁸ Although the North Carolina Fund continued to advocate improvement to the livelihoods of the poor through education, by late 1965, Esser and leaders were also beginning to believe that the poor could benefit by engagement in demonstrations and other confrontations with the power structure as well as with any other entity (such as the local housing authority or the local employer) that the poor felt were exploiting them or treating them unfairly. Historians Korstad and Leloudis phrased the shift this way: "As the Fund and its community partners set about their work in earnest, the issue of justice pressed heavily upon them, eventually demanding that they reconsider the assumptions, tactics, and alliances that they brought to bear on the 'monstrous problem' of poverty."²⁹ In other words, the Fund no longer saw local power structures as necessarily reliable partners in ending poverty and no longer saw the poor as mostly capable of overcoming poverty through their own motivation and/or changes in habits. It is no surprise, then, that the

²⁷ Tom Hartmann to Irene Burnett, memorandum, October 21, 1965, folder 5038, NCFR.

²⁸ Tom Hartmann to George Esser, memorandum, October 20, 1965, folder 5038, NCFR.

²⁹ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 107.

Fund was less impressed by Monte's emphasis on the importance of programs to promote better dress and personal appearance, improved speech, and dependability as enhancements to one's ability to gain employment. The Fund probably found little to criticize in Monte's desire to raise the rates of participation among the white poor whose "pride or prejudice," Monte wrote, had made them reluctant to participate despite their needs to "be educated out of ignorance." Still, the Fund found his central push for more vocational education and manpower training for the poor, while important, to be less than adequate.³⁰

The role that Monte's background would play

Monte's background in private industry and the military, in comparison's to Hearn's background in government and charitable work, explains much about Monte's more conservative trajectory as executive director of COP. Monte's perspective as a businessman, in particular, informed his view that in order to escape poverty the poor must be made employable. The fact that Monte had lived in New Bern for at least thirteen years, whereas Hearn had been new to the area in August 1964, also helps to explain Monte's decision to run the antipoverty program less aggressively. Born in Westchester County, New York, in 1921, Robert Monte enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942, served in several campaigns in the South Pacific, and attained the rank of Captain. After his discharge, Monte graduated from the University of Delaware and next worked his way up to president of the Joseph B. Beste Company, followed by employment and the eventual

³⁰ Notes of Bob Monte, folder 5038, NCFR; Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 19-20.

presidency of the Milltown Realty Company (both of which were located in Wilmington, Delaware). Looking for an opportunity to earn more money and escape the brutal winters of the “Diamond State,” in 1952 Monte left Wilmington with his wife and two children for the historic coastal town of New Bern, North Carolina. As a former resident of Delaware, Monte was part of the influx of white Northerners to New Bern who were in search of a warmer climate and less crowded atmosphere, beginning in the 1950s. Due in part to this influx, Craven County as a whole saw a 20 percent increase in its population between 1950 and 1960 even with a minus 13 rate of net migration for the non-white population during the same period.³¹

Just prior to this move, Monte received a diploma from the Fort Belvoir Engineering School in Fairfax, Virginia, that would help him to start up the business known as Craven Rendering Company. Soon after Monte and his family settled in New Bern, his background of leadership and national service seemed to stimulate him to become involved in his new community, which he did by joining numerous organizations including the Eastern Carolina Yacht Club, the New Bern Golf and Country Club, the New Bern Elks Club, the First Presbyterian Church, the local Boy Scout troop, and the New Bern 4-H clubs.³² Prior to his COP board appointment in 1965, Monte also socialized with Craven’s leading citizens through his memberships in the local Chamber of Commerce and the Craven Industrial Development Company. During his time on the

³¹ Population Trends in North Carolina Counties, folder 5404, NCFR.

³² Biographical Data on Staff Director, Robert R. Monte, folder 4975, NCFR.

COP board of directors, Monte's business savvy and the respect he earned in the community landed him positions on the COP executive committee as well as the twelve-member committee of the Small Business Administration program, the latter of which strove to create more local jobs by helping small businessmen to apply for loans under the EOA, providing management counseling to applicants, surveying business needs, and suggesting how businessmen might meet those needs.³³

As clear as it was that Bob Monte had his own interpretation of the War on Poverty apart from the North Carolina Fund and was more interested in pleasing the power structure than Hearn had been, Monte was arguably a far more complex and serious individual than the Fund staff typically portrayed him to be in their reports and internal memos. After recruiting a temporary replacement to run his rendering company, Monte immediately went to work gathering information about COP from Hearn, particularly in the areas of future programs, projects, and plans, in addition to reviewing all existing programs with program directors to learn what might have to be done to more efficiently and effectively reach the poor.³⁴ Arguably, the seriousness with which Monte assumed the job of executive director in the very beginning was indicative of his passion to help improve the community, given that his decision to accept the position was probably not based upon the \$15,000 he stood to earn. (Monte's combined \$25,000 annual earnings as head of both Craven Rendering and Monte Enterprises, Inc., the latter

³³ "New Bern Site of SBA Office For This Area," *Sun Journal*, June 29, 1965.

³⁴ Notes of Bob Monte, folder 5038, NCFR.

of which designed models of historic sites, already well exceeded this respectable salary). Early on in his administration of COP, Monte also showed a willingness and open-mindedness to expand the scope and number of programs offered. Within the first month of his tenure as executive director, not only did he approve a merger of COP with the CAAs of Jones and Pamlico counties, he likewise approved the addition of a federal credit union after reassessing his earlier belief that the costs outweighed its benefits.³⁵

As the head of COP, Monte experimented with a multitude of innovative ideas of his own. One was the establishment of a state-run vocational high school in the Craven area. Although this idea was ultimately discouraged by the Chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education, Dr. W.D. Herring, who argued that the state board believed in “comprehensive high schools—schools that offer every student every opportunity to develop all of his talents,” Monte would not be dissuaded from experimenting with future ways to grow COP.³⁶ Neither would he be completely dissuaded from endorsing either the addition or the renewal of programs when doing so conflicted with the wishes of elements of the power structure. His support of NYC, which will be discussed later in this chapter, was one illustrative example. Monte’s general open-mindedness, which was a result of his desire to lead COP into a more successful era, also characterized his dealings with the black community, first made apparent in his hiring of black school principal Lee Morgan as Deputy Director (at first urged by Robert

³⁵ COP Board meeting minutes, November 1, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

³⁶ Robert R. Monte to Dr. Dallas Herring, December 15, 1965; W.D. Herring to Congressman David N. Henderson, December 3, 1965, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

Whitehead). Monte would have preferred to hire someone of his own choosing, but he had come to understand, as a result of both his time as a board member and additional reminders from D. L. Stallings and the North Carolina Fund, that COP could not operate smoothly or effectively without the support of Craven's leading black citizens. Monte must have also been aware that his job security as executive director would likely be in jeopardy with the North Carolina Fund if he did not agree to Morgan's appointment. Therefore, with the support of Robert Whitehead and members of the Combined Civic Organization of New Bern and Craven County, Monte agreed on December 6, 1965, to officially bring Morgan in to assist him in his administrative responsibilities.

Monte's ability to be flexible did not prevent him from making tough decisions, however. In January 1966, only three months into his directorship, Monte ordered a couple of VISTA volunteers out of Craven Terrace where they had led demonstrations against New Bern Housing Authority Director I.I. Blanford, who remained unwilling to upgrade the housing projects' buildings and grounds to the satisfaction of the tenants or to revoke his policy of evicting women who bore additional children out of wedlock.³⁷ Monte's order was based not on a desire to protect Blanford but on a need to maintain a positive image of COP, whose by-laws prevented employees and affiliates from participating in demonstrations. North Carolina Fund staff members would disapprove of this action, but Monte's position on demonstrations was not made precariously nor was it substantially out of line with the current thinking of the War on Poverty leadership. A

³⁷ "The Craven Terrace-Trent Court Improvement Organization Craven Terrace New Bern, North Carolina," January 24, 1966, NBHA minutes.

month earlier, in December 1965, OEO director Sargent Shriver had made headlines over a Chicago speech in which he openly called on the poor to agree to work with the establishment. During the speech, as approximately two hundred supporters of the Woodlawn Organization protested outside with signs that read “The War on Poverty is a Big Fraud,” Shriver clarified that “maximum feasible participation” meant that the poor would be significant participants but not that they would run the anti-poverty programs. Just as no one should “prejudge the poor and say they don’t have any ideas,” Shriver asserted, neither should one “prejudge the establishment.” After denying that he was buckling under pressure from city mayors (e.g. Richard Daley) in making his comments, Shriver reassured his audience that OEO would not give up on pushing for the poor’s participation in community action agencies.³⁸ Indeed, Shriver would continue to withhold funds for CAAs in several cities including Los Angeles, Cleveland, Memphis, San Antonio, Mobile, Atlanta, St. Louis, and Albany, due to what he considered a lack of participation by the poor.³⁹ Shriver had clearly realized the necessity of a balanced approach to the War on Poverty in which OEO policies would alienate neither the poor nor the majority of middle-class taxpayers. Similar to Shriver, Monte understood in order for COP to survive, both the community and the local officials who accepted the funds and programs must generally be in favor of the organization. For Monte, the primary way that COP would become better accepted and poverty would be most effectively overcome

³⁸ “Shriver Defends Program,” *New York Times*, December 7, 1965.

³⁹ Joint Senate-House Republican Leadership, *The War on Poverty: An American Tragedy* (Washington, D.C.: Republican National Committee, 1966), 39.

would not be through increased demonstrations but through increased and better-paying job opportunities for the poor.

Manpower begins to attract community support, January 1966

By January 1966, the growing success of the Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE) program would reveal that Craven County residents—black and white as well as poor and non-poor—were just as supportive as Monte of a job-focused antipoverty initiative. MITCE, an experimental program developed and supervised by the North Carolina Fund, promised to reach at least five thousand unemployed rural persons in its first year, including adults from farm families earning less than \$1,200 a year. The ways that MITCE intended to reach this population included on-the-job training, direct job placement, employment counseling, vocational guidance, and all other means approved by the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) of 1962 to secure steady employment or enhance future employability.⁴⁰ Most of the funding for the demonstration phase of MITCE was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor under the Office of Manpower, Automation, and Training (OMAT) and was originally limited to the area of three North Carolina Fund CAPs in Eastern North Carolina, one of which was COP.⁴¹ As outlined by the North Carolina Fund, one of the key purposes of MITCE was to validate that on-the-job training is “a realistic and

⁴⁰ “Excerpt from: A Rural Manpower Program in North Carolina” in National Association for Community Development, *Community Programs on Employment and Manpower* (Washington, D.C.: NACD, April 1966), 253.

⁴¹ The other two CAPs that received funding for MITCE under its demonstration phase were Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development (NEED) and Tri-County Community Action (TCCA), which included Richmond, Scotland and Robeson counties.

desirable training device in rural areas” and is “the most efficient way of meeting the needs of the small employers who exist in these areas,” in hopes that similar projects could be funded in rural communities across the state and throughout the nation.⁴²

Prior to the War on Poverty, programs funded under the MDTA had been essentially limited to the unemployed who lived in urban centers where large private employers with nationwide operations, which were the most willing and able to efficiently train vast numbers of potential employees, were relatively abundant. Yet, even during the War on Poverty, as concluded in August 1965 by the National Association for Community Development (NACD), an organization of CAP officials whose board of directors included the North Carolina Fund’s George Esser, “a comprehensive manpower development and employment program was the critical component lacking in a majority of community action endeavors,” many of which were rurally based. In addition, “forty percent of those persons eligible for training under the [MDTA] are farm workers earning less than \$1,200 per year,” the NACD reported, “but only two percent of the trainees under the act come from this group.”⁴³ The approval given to the North Carolina Fund in August 1965 to administer manpower programs under MITCE was an important step towards beginning to fill in the economic opportunity gap between rural and urban areas.

The North Carolina Fund and the Department of Labor encouraged the expansion of manpower in North Carolina’s predominately rural communities, such as Craven, for

⁴² Ibid., 246.

⁴³ National Association for Community Development, *Community Programs on Employment and Manpower*, p. iii, 152, 158.

many of the same reasons that MITCE had been so readily accepted in Craven by employers, potential employees, and community leaders. By the mid-1960s, at the same time that service-type jobs were on a historic rise, the nation's number of skilled and semi-skilled manufacturing jobs was also growing exponentially due to new consumer demands and technological advances that boosted efficient plant production. As a result, unskilled workers, who would represent less than 10 percent of the manufacturing production worker total in 1965, would become even further marginalized in the American economy.⁴⁴ This trend was especially prominent in the South where since at least 1950 industrial growth was occurring far more quickly than the national rate.⁴⁵ Although highly skilled and value-added industry generally brought improved wages and elevated tax revenues to the region, its natural preference for workers with skilled experience and at least a high-school diploma (if not an advanced degree) also tended to upset the livelihoods of the low skilled and undereducated. Craven County officials and business leaders, who had jumped on the bandwagon of industrial development years before, were sensitive to the reality that their ability to continue to attract industry that bettered the lives of their own residents would be hamstrung by large numbers of low and

⁴⁴ Charles E. Silberman, "The Comeback of the Blue-Collar Worker," *Fortune*, February 1965, 216. Much of this manufacturing growth occurred in spite of continued technological change and automation in the nation. In fact, the introduction of advanced machines could require more workers and open up new jobs since the machines were able to accomplish tasks not done before by men. See Charles E. Silberman, "The Real News About Automation," *Fortune*, January 1965, 124-125, 222, 227.

⁴⁵ "Agriculture to Industry Changes Discussed," *News & Observer*, May 7, 1965; Alan Batchelder, "The Special Case of the Negro," *American Economic Review* 55, no. 1 (March 1, 1965): 535.

unskilled locals who possessed minimal education.⁴⁶ The hiring practices of the Stanley Tools Company, which opened a plant in New Bern in the summer of 1964, were a case-in-point.

The growing need for job training skills

A study compiled by the North Carolina Bureau of Employment Security Research between May and November 1965 found that more than 97 percent of the Stanley Company's 187 workers in New Bern had completed high school; of this group, approximately 40 percent (mostly accountants, machinists, and tool and die makers) had training beyond the high school level. Faced with a sizeable farm-based population in Craven where less than 50 percent of its adults had obtained a high school diploma, Stanley would predictably have to look elsewhere for much of its workforce.⁴⁷ No data was gathered on race but, based on blacks' lack of access to industrial employment in the area and across the South due to a combination of educational deficiencies and white employer prejudices, it can be confidently assumed that few if any local blacks were hired. According to black COP board member Elizabeth Evans, of the black workers Stanley did hire, at least up to 1966, practically all were from outside the county.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁶ In 1960, 16.2 percent of employed persons in Craven County worked in manufacturing. At the time, Craven was ranked eighty-four out of one hundred counties in the state in terms of percentage of manufacturing employment. See Selected Employment Categories, NC Counties, 1960, folder 5404, NCFR.

⁴⁷ The number who lacked a high school education was not limited to older populations. In 1960, as many as 28 percent of the sixteen to seventeen year-olds in Craven County were not enrolled in school. See Selected Data on High School Drop-Outs in NC Counties, folder 5404, NCFR.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Evans, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 23, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

state study observed “no major emphasis” on hiring those with the “most experience” but did mention that more than 45 percent of the workers hired were not local and many traveled from out of the state or were transferred from the home office in Connecticut.⁴⁹ Clearly, Stanley’s requirements for a more advanced employee could not then be fulfilled in the county where it was located. Although these requirements did not prevent several dozen white locals from finding employment at Stanley, non-locals would still make up almost half of the company’s work force during its first eighteen months of operation. These and other findings resulted in the following conclusion by the NC Bureau of Employment Security Research: “Since Stanley Power Tools is a type of industry completely new to the New Bern area and experienced workers are generally not readily available in any appreciable number, a youthful and trainable labor supply is even more important.”⁵⁰ Thus, though on different levels, white and black locals alike were at a disadvantage in gaining access to the type of higher-paying jobs they were seeking. As previously mentioned, poverty in Craven was largely due to a changing economy that required a more educated and skilled worker.

Since 1962, in order to avoid situations in which future industrial employers, such as Stanley Power Tools, would be forced to search outside the county for employees, Craven County had helped to operate an industrial education center supported by the state board of education. The school, which was originally a subsidiary of Lenoir Community

⁴⁹ North Carolina Bureau of Employment Security Research, *Staffing a New Plant in a Small Labor Area* (Raleigh, NC: The Bureau, November 1965), ii, 14, 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

College, had since attracted several hundred high school graduates from across Eastern North Carolina for a total of twelve classes offered; however, as the number of students began to grow in 1964 and 1965, Craven County board of education officials, local businessmen, and black and white civic leaders including COP board member Willie Dawson sought to establish a self-supporting center that would be given preference to Craven residents. On June 6, 1965, the state legislature gave Craven County permission to open such a center under the Technical Community Industrial Center Act.⁵¹ The establishment of the county-wide Industrial Education Center (IEC) was certainly a move in the right direction in terms of enhancing locals' chances of taking advantage of the growing number of skilled and semi-skilled jobs in the area. However, the introduction of a more targeted approach, like MITCE, in which on-the-job training and counseling were designed to match the unemployed with employers' needs, would prove far more effective than industrial education classes alone in producing a genuinely efficient local labor market. As understood by both Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz and the President's Council of Economic Advisers, some of the most seriously unemployed, most notably younger workers and minorities who had been left out of the general educational and employment opportunity patterns, were in need of preparation and training measures aimed directly at them.⁵²

⁵¹ "Training For County Youth Available," *Sun Journal*, June 15, 1966.

⁵² Excerpts from the Annual Report of the Council of Economic Advisers, January 1965 and Address by Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz, November 3, 1965 in National Association for Community Development, *Community Programs on Employment and Manpower*, 177-178, 197.

MITCE in Craven would operate with exactly these needs in mind. At least six field representatives, several of whom were Eastern North Carolinians, were assigned to conduct door-to-door surveys in target areas of heavy unemployment, underemployment, and high incidence of poverty to discover the reasons for individuals' unemployment or lack of income as well as their families' employment needs. For North Carolina Fund MITCE director James C. McDonald, "one of the great strengths of this staff is its heterogeneous nature" according to "race, sex, age, educational levels, and social-economic backgrounds." "[T]hese trainees have the ability and interest, and were given the technical information," McDonald added in an internal memo, "to provide a needed and successful service in Craven County."⁵³

These field representatives' ultimate goal was to persuade the unemployed individuals to begin the screening and testing process that would presumably match them with an obliging local employer either through direct job placement or on-the-job training. If individuals could not be matched with an employer, because they were underage, lacked experience, or had educational deficiencies, or health issues, MITCE staff could refer them to NYC, Adult Basic Education classes, institutional training at the Craven IEC, the local health or welfare departments, or counseling provided by MITCE. As for the able-bodied, a Craven MITCE background paper noted that "Manpower realizes that the type of severely indigent and culturally deprived person is not always readily employable." In addition to lacking experience and basic educational skills, the

⁵³ James C. McDonald to Irene Burnett, memorandum, April 16, 1965, folder 5037, NCFR.

paper went on to observe that “more often than not, they do not understand the responsibilities that go along with a job” such as the importance of being on time, coming regularly to work, and dressing and behaving professionally.⁵⁴ Craven MITCE counselor Ken Williams agreed. “Many of these people have never known anything except poverty and joblessness. So they don’t expect anything better.” Because they are “so used to living as they do, without the routine of a job,” if they “are not counseled before they are given a job, they won’t do well in it.”⁵⁵ For these reasons, counselors also promised to “stay in contact with the employer after the client has been put to work” to straighten out any issues that might arise between employer and employee/trainee.⁵⁶

Craven businessmen on board with MITCE

In addition to the efforts of the field representatives and counselors, two training supervisors within MITCE each contacted at least one new local employer per week to learn about their labor needs and any immediate opportunities for placement of unemployed persons in jobs or on-the-job training. Sometimes a local employer would agree to sign a contract with Craven MITCE for direct placement but employers more often preferred the lower-risk option of on-the-job training, which also functioned as a trial period. Moreover, the training supervisors informed the employers that agreeing to contract with MITCE meant not only that they would be in charge of the requirements

⁵⁴ Stephen Vaughn, Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort background paper, folder 5525, NCFR.

⁵⁵ “News From the North Carolina Fund: Manpower Series—First Article,” p. 3, folder 623, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

⁵⁶ Vaughn, Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort background paper, folder 5525, NCFR.

and the number of weeks of the training but also that they would receive a certain amount of reimbursement to defray the costs of training. These offers of reimbursement were crucial in winning over employers to MITCE. Because many business owners in Craven County ran small operations of twenty-five workers or less, few could afford either the time or the money expense of training new workers, which placed inexperienced young persons at a particular disadvantage in finding employment. Yet employers may have been won over just as much, if not more, by the fact that MITCE supervisors pre-screened the potential trainees, thereby weeding out those not genuinely committed to a five-day work week or prepared for the jobs in which they might be placed. Several employers who agreed to contract with MITCE, such as mechanic foreman Jack Jones of Johnson Automotive in New Bern, had expressed frustration over their past experiences of recruiting in poorer sections of the county and being disappointed with the unreliable workers they found. Jones later reported complete satisfaction with one of his new employees, a former tenant farmer discovered through MITCE. "He's doing a fine job. He is going to make a fine mechanic. He has an interest in the job, and that's what really counts," said Jones, adding that "I think the Manpower program is a good thing."⁵⁷

Jack Jones was one of a growing number of businessmen in Craven who found that MITCE suited their needs and preferences, as seen by training supervisor field reports between October 1965 and January 1966. Even those who were not hiring at the time expressed approval of the manpower program. "I was surprised and pleased with the

⁵⁷ News From the North Carolina Fund: Manpower Series—First Article," p. 5, folder 623, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

reception I got,” Dave Sasser wrote after interviewing potential employers in Havelock. “All of the businessmen I contacted were overwhelmingly in favor of the program.”⁵⁸ MITCE supervisor Charlie Boyd received the same type of positive feedback from local businessmen, many of whom agreed to a manpower contract for trainees. One of those employers told Boyd that “matching men with jobs were the right move” while another affirmed that “this program is great for the employees and employer.”⁵⁹ Boyd and other Craven MITCE representatives heard similar statements from many more businessmen in terms of how the manpower program helped both employer and employee and, in turn, the overall community. Clearly, the North Carolina Fund understood in forming MITCE that there was “a shortage of good labor in some areas of the state.”⁶⁰ This shortage was so severe in Craven that some employers, for example the head of the Waco Sales Company, signed a contract for trainees for reasons other than reimbursement. The Waco president admitted that the reimbursement helped but that his ultimate interest had been in securing two qualified and pre-screened workers.⁶¹ Another example was the manager of Belk’s Department Store in New Bern who was in such need of reliable workers that he was willing to hire a MITCE client even after the man, who was black, had failed pre-qualifying tests because he was, in the manager’s view, prompt, neatly dressed, and

⁵⁸ Report by Dave Sasser, November 11, 1965, folder 5512, NCFR.

⁵⁹ Report by Charlie Boyd, October 28, 1965; Report by Charlie Boyd, November 16, 1965, folder 5503, NCFR.

⁶⁰ Vaughn, Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort background paper, folder 5525, NCFR.

⁶¹ Report by Charlie Boyd, November 1, 1965, folder 5503, NCFR.

courteous.⁶² Between September 1965 and January 1966, fourteen contracts were activated with a variety of local employers for thirty on-the-job training enrollees, both black and white. These fourteen employers—whose job openings were almost always of a higher status and on an improved wage scale than the trainees had previously held—included Charles Jennett Brick Masonry, Commodore Boats, Precision Machine Works, Inc., Tryon Palace, Craven Lumber, Carnival Candy, Johnson Automotive, and W. R. Poole Construction.⁶³

The positive reception that Craven MITCE received from local businessmen so early in its demonstration phase was rather remarkable given that many of these businessmen, most of whom were small businessmen and politically conservative, had made it clear in the past that they were not strongly in favor or were even directly opposed to COP and the War on Poverty. Although many of the employers contacted by MITCE never had anyone explain the manpower concept to them before, almost all who needed workers became open to the idea, including an employer at New Bern's WNBE radio station who had originally told Charlie Boyd that he wanted "nothing to do with any affiliate of the poverty program."⁶⁴ This apparent disconnect did not necessarily mean, however, that these businessmen were behaving as hypocrites. Their dislike for COP was based in part on of a lack of knowledge of the programs as well as a sense that

⁶² Report by Charlie Boyd, January 12, 1965, folder 5503, NCFR.

⁶³ Institutional Placements, folder 5194, NCFR; Training Adviser to MITCE staff, memorandum, January 3, 1966, folder 5195, NCFR.

⁶⁴ Report by Charlie Boyd, November 19, 1965, folder 5503, NCFR.

either manpower was a “give-away program,” overly wasteful of tax payer money, or interested primarily in bestowing preferences upon blacks, or all three. These men certainly participated largely out of their own financial self-interest; however the program’s philosophy that with a new job the unemployed who “had once been a drag on the local economy” could become “useful, tax-paying citizen[s]” also fit their worldview.⁶⁵ Many advocated the program from a similar belief to Robert Monte’s that “There is dignity and satisfaction for every person that does a job or performs a service that is done well—both to the employee and employer.”⁶⁶

Businessmen who may have originally believed that funding for the program was excessive became convinced that this was not so; moreover, they saw its tangible results first-hand. In addition, many of these businessmen, particularly those affiliated with larger and well-respected employers such as Belk’s, Tryon Palace, and Commodore Boats, had long been expected to contribute to the well-being of their community by volunteering their time or money including becoming involved in a civic group or donating to the local Red Cross.⁶⁷ Because of the direct assistance manpower brought them and their feeling that by participating in it they were helping to alleviate the local unemployment problem, conservative businessmen could and did widely support MITCE in spite of its origins as a government-backed program. But MITCE did not just match employees with the interests and needs of employer. It also served the interests of the

⁶⁵ Vaughn, Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort background paper, folder 5525, NCFR.

⁶⁶ Notes of Bob Monte, folder 5038, NCFR.

⁶⁷ Theodore Levitt, “The Dangers of Social Responsibility,” *Harvard Business Review* 36, no. 5 (September-October 1958): 41-50.

poor and unemployed, most of who desired the benefits of steady employment. MITCE reduced some of the ways, both intentional and unintentional, that employers discriminated in their hiring processes; these included preferring to hire kin (at least within family-operated establishments) and relying on word of mouth and current employee recommendations. These and other methods had tended to exclude job applicants who were not of employers' race and social class. Whether or not Craven employers—most of whom were white—understood the changes that were happening around them, MITCE offered them never-before-seen incentives to be more open to training or hiring those they might not have considered or those they might have feared giving a chance to before, most notably blacks. “Many fears disappear when you get to know a person,” Sarah Herbin of the North Carolina Good Neighbor Council once told a group of Wake County Democratic Women in 1964. “And the best way to get to know a person is to work with him.”⁶⁸

Biracial beliefs in a conventional path to economic freedom

For years black residents in and around New Bern had sought well-paying jobs like those held by middle-class whites; since at least 1960 black civil rights leaders had been engaged in concerted efforts to garner such jobs for their community. One of the later attempts by civil rights leaders to persuade white business owners to hire came in June 1965 in the form of a letter from member organizations of the Combined Civic Organization of Craven County and New Bern addressed to the thirty-one largest employers in the area. “On June 15, 1965,” the letter read, “Craven County employers

⁶⁸ “Speaker Discusses North Carolina Good Neighbor Council,” *News & Observer*, May 1, 1964.

offer little more equal opportunity employment than they did one year ago” (before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). The letter writers went on to remind the business owners that Title VII of the 1964 bill would go into effect on July 2, 1965 and to ask “therefore, to help now...to hire now. This is our opportunity, as responsible citizens of Craven County, to secure to our people today the benefits of equal opportunity employment and to secure to our children tomorrow a better community in which to live.” While the letter suggested that business owners contact Father Thomas P. Hadden if “you are having trouble finding qualified Negro applicants,” there was no discussion or charges issued within the letter that qualified blacks had been regularly denied employment.⁶⁹ Of course, racial prejudice still prevented a number of white employers from hiring blacks in jobs that were traditionally held by whites or for jobs that would primarily serve white clientele. Arguably, however, an equally strong, if not stronger, reason that blacks were not being hired was due to a lack of work-related skills or basic education such as a high school diploma. Of the low-income in Craven who were surveyed by the North Carolina Fund between July and December 1965, three times as many whites as blacks had finished high school.⁷⁰ In fact, along with the lack of encouragement and incentive within white society in the past for black upward mobility, the lack of proper education and work training that blacks inherited from the segregation

⁶⁹ Letter sent to thirty-one of the largest businesses in New Bern, June 15, 1965, folder 7159, McKissick Papers.

⁷⁰ North Carolina Fund Survey of Low Income Families in North Carolina, *Characteristics of Individuals Served by the Craven County Community Action Program*, Report no. 3e, August 1967, 23, North Carolina Collection.

era explains a great deal about why North Carolina NAACP leader Kelly M. Alexander complained to Governor Dan Moore in 1965 that the average income of blacks in North Carolina was just 43 percent of the average for whites' income.⁷¹

One growing area of the southern economy that was particularly promising in terms of enhancing the opportunities for higher wages and upward mobility for the region's black citizens was industry. However, largely due to its emphasis on skilled labor, for which educated and trainable employees were essential, it was among the hardest for blacks to enter. As early as 1953 the Southern Regional Council had begun to argue that "Full use of Negro workers in industry is the challenge that now faces the South."⁷² Yet more than ten years later liberal and moderate southern leaders were still making similar assertions. In a speech given in the mid-1960s, North Carolina Good Neighbor Council Director David S. Coltrane complained that while "Jobs are the fulcrum on which Negro progress rests...The Negro, generally speaking, has not seen an opportunity for himself in industry." Coltrane placed the largest share of blame for this situation on remnants of white prejudice. Along with the regrettable reality that blacks "lack training and skills" due to longstanding denial of vocational and technical training, he pointed out that "The better educated Negroes have been turned down by industry so frequently in the past that they became uninterested in even applying for such jobs."⁷³

⁷¹ Kelly M. Alexander to Dan K. Moore, circa 1965, box 71, folder: Segregation (a-e), Moore Papers.

⁷² "Negro Gains in Family Income," in Southern Regional Council, *Changing Patterns in the New South* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Council, 1955), 42.

⁷³ Talk by D.S. Coltrane, Textile Employment Forum, Charlotte, NC, January 12-13, 1967, folder 557, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

As late as 1966, despite some progress over the previous five years, blacks comprised only 9 percent of the more than one hundred thousand North Carolinians who were employed in the state's textile industry, for instance.⁷⁴ Obviously, greater employment for blacks in skilled industries would not be accomplished solely by the removal of purposeful racial prejudice. Though far from extinct, white employer discrimination against black employees, which was primarily based on race, was on a marked decline. In fact, by the mid-1960s, as evidenced by the significant number of blacks hired by well-paying white employers under MITCE, white opportunity and self-determination were becoming less and less dependent upon black oppression and/or exploitation. Instead, stricter federal equal employment legislation, a growing sense of responsibility among whites, and new opportunities in training qualified blacks on-the-job meant that more white employers were beginning to see their own survival, if not progress, through their support of greater black economic opportunity. Few whites, in other words, condemned equal opportunity practices anymore.⁷⁵ Moreover, the businessmen who gave blacks equal chances to compete with whites for jobs would, by the mid-1960s, receive little condemnation from the greater white community. As one

⁷⁴ Office of Research and Reports, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1966 Employment Survey in the Textile Industry of the Carolina, Table 2: Negro Employment in the Textile Industry in North and South Carolina, 1966, p. 8, folder 557, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Delton argues quite persuasively that businessmen, including southerners many of who were Christian, were not "immune to the moral appeals of the civil rights movement" and neither were they immune to considering the social costs of black employment in the wake of the Watts riot, which influenced many more to "invest in training unqualified, or 'disadvantaged' blacks." See Delton, *Racial Integration in Corporate America*, 84, 58.

Southern congressman stated, “The realistic Southerner needs no humanitarian impulse nor any democratic idealism in order to recognize poverty among Negroes is the chief cause of the Southern gap” nor, moreover, that “The South can never attain equality as long as one-fifth of her people live in poverty.”⁷⁶ Indeed, a black individual in Craven County who was steadily employed with decent pay would become not only a reliable city and county taxpayer but also a more active consumer of the county’s products and services. While, as Gavin Wright argues, increased southern industrialization during the pre-World War II years resulted in greater wage differentials between blacks and whites, by the 1960s the opposite was becoming true. In Wright’s words, “the ‘Southern economy’ came to look less and less southern over time.”⁷⁷

If racial prejudice was on the decline and was beginning to play a smaller role in preventing black entry into jobs, the implication, particularly among whites, was that blacks would be partly responsible for their own uplift.⁷⁸ Along with employers who

⁷⁶ Weltner, *Southerner*, 169-172.

⁷⁷ Wright, *Old South, New South*, 194, 257, 268-269.

⁷⁸ There is ample evidence that a historic decline in white employer racial prejudices was occurring state-wide. Several industries, perhaps most notably Burlington Industries and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, were making significant progress in hiring black workers for more respectable positions at their plants across North Carolina. T. Franklin Williams, chairman of the NC Council on Human Relations, recognized this progress in 1965 by commenting that “today’s climate in North Carolina, of compliance with civil rights law and leadership in the war on poverty, is resulting in rapidly increasing receptivity to the ideas and suggestions about how best to accomplish these tasks.” “For example,” Williams continued, “at the state Good Neighbor Council meeting in Winston-Salem on January 5, the one hundred or so leaders present gave close attention to descriptions of how a variety of North Carolina companies and state agencies have begun to place Negroes in formerly all-white jobs.” Williams summarized the situation with the statement that “many North Carolinians are ready to move forward into new relationships, are ready to help build a society which encourages full development of each individual, a society with patterns of community living which favor the free association of all kinds of people.” See “The Good Neighbor Council,” *Popular Government* 30 (November 1964): 7, folder 584, NC Council on Human Relations

were being persuaded to relax prejudices and other discriminatory hiring practices, blacks would need to take advantage of opportunities to improve their education and skill levels. Although segregation remained the most obvious reason for the disparity between blacks' and whites' economic status, its removal was not destined to lead to black progress and prosperity. After all, businessmen still reserved the right to discriminate based on their employment needs. Therefore, when white leaders like COP board chairman Larry Pate argued that "I am afraid that most of the OEO people think that the program exists to force integration. Of course, mixing of the races is a by-product, but we do not think it is the most important," they were right to believe that integration alone would not cure poverty, black or white.⁷⁹ Leon Sullivan, who helped found the Opportunities Industrialization Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1964, understood this reality from personal experience. "Integration without preparation is frustration," was one of his famous mottos.⁸⁰ Sullivan discovered that in Philadelphia, which had never experienced the harshness of the Jim Crow system that was prevalent in the South, "when opportunities opened up, I began to find it difficult to find black men and women to fill the jobs in business and industry." "These jobs were a new world to us," he explained."

Records; T. Franklin Williams, "Scope of the Future," NC Council on Human Relations Annual Meeting, January 23, 1965, folder 207, NC Council on Human Relations Records.

⁷⁹ A. Donald Bourgeois, Howard I. Buchbinder, and Tom I. Davis, Review of Craven Operation Progress, April 6, 7, 8, 1966, folder 5027, NCFR.

⁸⁰ *Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare*, 89th Cong. 524 (1966) (statement of Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, Chairman of the Opportunities Industrialization Center, Philadelphia, PA).

Indeed, “Our world had been more of a ‘servicing’ world that required little education and few skills.”⁸¹

Local blacks throughout Craven, both the poor and the middle-class, were just as willing to recognize the necessity for greater training and education for black advancement. Black school principal and COP board member John R. Hill lamented, for instance, the case of seven former NYC enrollees, all high school graduates, who remained unemployed and unable to find jobs because of their low skills as well as the lack of industry in the area.⁸² Fellow COP board member David Whitfield, a fifty-seven-year-old janitor at New Bern’s Christ Episcopal Church, concurred that higher-paying jobs were of paramount importance for blacks and added his belief that COP and the poor would be better served by putting at least as much emphasis on education as on neighborhood organizing.⁸³ Catherine Berry, a housewife and president of the James City PTA, who like Whitfield had been appointed to the COP board in August 1965 to represent the black poor, agreed with Hill and Whitfield that “the major need of local Negroes is for job training to enable them to gain better employment,” since it was difficult “for a Negro to get a job in Craven County.” Despite Berry’s belief that “a White is always hired before an equally well-qualified Negro,” she admitted that MITCE was

⁸¹ “‘Black Capitalism at Work: What’s Happening in Philadelphia—An Exclusive Interview,’” *U.S. News & World Report*, February 17, 1969.

⁸² John R. Hill, interview by John Miller, Vanceboro, NC, July 28, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

⁸³ David Whitfield, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 28, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

attempting to reverse this trend.⁸⁴ New Bern mortician Oscar Dove also concluded that since “Craven Negroes have never had many job opportunities open to them” that the “best thing COP could do [is] to provide increased education and job training.”⁸⁵

These views within the black community, both inside and outside of COP, not only agreed with those of white leaders like D. L. Stallings and Olin Wright who wanted to bring more industry and job training to Craven County but also with what most local whites believed would be only fair. Many whites in New Bern and Craven were willing to admit that “Negroes have been the victims of discrimination” and “have not had equal opportunity” but also believed that “any man, black or white, will usually get the respect from his fellow man as he merits.” In other words, if blacks did not take full advantage of the heightened opportunities within their neighborhoods to enhance their employability, whites would continue to hold on to another widely held belief, namely that “A good many more Negroes simply do not try to better themselves and do not try to earn the respect of white people and even their own race.”⁸⁶ In line with their fairly high participation rates in COP programs, many blacks in and around Craven would step forward and heed the call.

⁸⁴ Catherine Berry, interview by John Miller, James City, NC, April 15, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

⁸⁵ Oscar Dove, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 26, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

⁸⁶ David N. Henderson to W.J. Edwards, August 8, 1963, box 344, folder 6, Henderson Papers; W.J. Edwards to Hon. David N. Henderson, July 30, 1963, box 344, folder 6, Henderson Papers.

Mounting issues within NYC program

The new emphasis on manpower, which was appreciated by blacks and whites alike, contributed substantially to improving COP's image in the Craven community from October 1965 through February 1966; however, mounting issues surrounding the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) program looked as if they might counteract this progress. The NYC program had endured its share of detractors in Eastern North Carolina since its first funding by the U.S. Department of Labor in January 1965, but by January 1966, the number of naysayers seemed to be growing, particularly in the white community.⁸⁷ The whites who opposed the program were not necessarily disturbed by the fact that almost 70 percent of the NYC enrollees were black, although the disproportionate numbers of blacks in the program did trouble many of them.⁸⁸ Other issues, however, added to this concern or played at least an equal role. Aside from the federally mandated \$1.25 minimum wage for NYC enrollees, which was above the prevailing wage for several sectors of both private and public employment in Craven, NYC jobs were limited by law to public agencies such as the Craven County Welfare Department, Craven County Hospital, and Pamlico Board of Education, where responsibilities typically were small in nature ranging from raking leaves to helping mail

⁸⁷ There were local blacks who also had issues with NYC. Most of the complaints were centered around charges that manual jobs outweighed clerical jobs for black enrollees.

⁸⁸ In January 1966, NYC employed 225 blacks and seventy-seven whites in Craven County, sixty-five blacks and fifty-one whites in Pamlico County and eighty-eight blacks and fifty-nine whites in Jones County. NYC Correspondence Reports, folder 5086, NCFR.

letters.⁸⁹ Sometimes, out of a desire to keep troubled youth in school and off the streets, public agency heads would agree to hire enrollees where there was little work to be done.⁹⁰ Not surprisingly, when enrollees were seen sitting down for long periods or “goofing off” with fellow enrollees when not on an official break, outspoken citizens would complain to the local NYC director and/or the public agencies themselves who hired them. Adding to the problem was the fact that the young enrollees, who had to be between sixteen and twenty-one years of age, were often not supervised on a consistent basis due to insufficient staff. In fact, in response to these latter two issues, in early 1966 the City of New Bern reduced its employment of NYC enrollees by almost half, from fifty-two to twenty-seven.⁹¹ Criticism would also compel the New Bern Board of Aldermen to begin to consider whether they even wanted to renew their contract with NYC after its expiration date of February 11, 1966.⁹²

Until the New Bern aldermen decided whether or not to renew their contract with NYC, they put off signing a new equal opportunity assurance agreement as required by

⁸⁹ “Neal Evans is Speaker for Local Rotary,” *Sun Journal*, May 5, 1965. By 1966, NYC enrollees had also been working for the City of Dover, the City of New Bern, City of New Bern Schools, the U.S. Forest Service, the Craven County Health Department, Craven County Board of Education, Craven County Government, Jones County Government, the Pamlico Board of Education, Cherry Point Naval Air Base, and Craven Operation Progress. See “Local Corps Given Total of 262 Jobs,” *Sun Journal*, April 21, 1965; “Unskilled, Untrained Youths Can Get \$1.25,” *Havelock Progress*, April 22, 1965. Many of the enrollees’ job responsibilities were indeed quite small but for those who worked in the X-ray lab at Craven County Hospital or served as teacher aides in the county public schools, for instance, the job responsibilities were considerably larger.

⁹⁰ As stipulated by the U.S. Department of Labor, youth were not to be accepted by public agencies if they had quit school or work to join the NYC program.

⁹¹ Edgar Welch, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, June 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

⁹² “Board Members Will Consider NYC Contracts,” *Sun Journal*, January 17, 1966.

the Department of Labor for all participating agencies; the agreement essentially required that agencies not treat NYC enrollees differently on the basis of race in terms of both the use of facilities and the type of work to be done. The aldermen's delay in signing the agreement, which had been due on January 3, 1966, was clearly a matter of concern for COP executive director Robert Monte. Just prior to the regularly scheduled aldermen meeting on January 18, Monte announced a deadline of forty-eight hours for their final decision, citing the fact that the aldermen had known since "before Christmas" that their contract with NYC would expire in February. Monte's concern only grew after the board, which claimed it needed more time to study the costs and benefits of NYC, decided on January 18 to table the vote until their next meeting on February 2. Because the aldermen did not vote on the matter within 48 hours as he demanded (a demand that Monte did not see as a "pressure move" as described by the aldermen), Monte told the local press that he felt that their refusal left him no choice but to halt the program in the city. All NYC enrollees were subsequently withdrawn from the city workforce.⁹³ New Bern City Manager Edgar E. Welch, who had lent his assistance for Craven County's original community action proposal to the North Carolina Fund in 1964, agreed that both he and the aldermen had known about the expiration of NYC even before November but stressed that they "didn't receive the actual contract and the new Equal Opportunity Assurance until just a few days prior to the [January] meeting." Monte was confident, however, that

⁹³ "Aldermen Fail to Vote on the Youth Corps," *Sun Journal*, January 19, 1966.

he could reinstate the program if the city signed the assurance even if it was late.⁹⁴ But on February 2, 1966, the board of aldermen again tabled a vote on NYC, this time citing the absence of one of its five members.⁹⁵

Although all of the other participating agencies in Craven County—including the county hospital, county health and welfare departments, county board of education, and county commissioners—had signed the assurance statement, the New Bern aldermen were not the only public organization that was feeling wary about continuing the NYC program. Nor were they the only group that delayed signing the statement. The New Bern City Schools, which had hired approximately eighteen NYC enrollees since the fall of 1965, deliberated renewing its NYC contract in January and February 1966. Like the aldermen, school representatives had also not signed the equal opportunity assurance and had recently lost their NYC enrollees.⁹⁶ In February, a Raleigh reporter picked up on the story, interviewed some of the individuals involved, and wrote an article that was published in the *News & Observer*; both New Bern boards, the article stated, “have withdrawn from the Craven County Neighborhood Youth Corps because of a requirement for equal opportunity practices.”⁹⁷ Other media outlets both inside and outside the state echoed this conclusion that the refusal to sign was based on a decision to maintain racial prejudice. Among those was the *Virginian-Pilot*, which ran an article entitled “Boards

⁹⁴ “Monte Denies Charges Made by Aldermen,” *Sun Journal*, January 21, 1966.

⁹⁵ “Youth Corps Contract is Tabled Again,” *Sun Journal*, February 2, 1966.

⁹⁶ “Monte Denies Charges Made by Aldermen,” *Sun Journal*, January 21, 1966.

⁹⁷ Kate Erwin, “Youth Corps Turned Down By New Bern,” *News & Observer*, February 13, 1966.

Balk at ‘Equality.’”⁹⁸ But only the New Bern City Schools would admit to refusing to renew their contract with the NYC because of the assurance statement itself. For New Bern Schools Superintendent Harry J. McDonald, who was admittedly against integration for its supposed potential to negatively effect the educational level of whites, the signing of “an additional compliance statement is the bone of contention” because signing had not been required in the past program. As McDonald told the *News & Observer* in early February, he had referred the assurance statement to the school board’s attorneys after “we were unable to interpret the meaning.”⁹⁹ Although McDonald’s explanation for not signing was most likely motivated by racial prejudices, the same could not be said of the Board of Aldermen. They had delayed their renewal of the NYC program, City Manager Welch maintained, not because of the new assurance statement but instead because of the growing numbers of people in the community who had spoken out against NYC as not “a good thing” due to its controversial \$1.25 minimum wage requirement and that some of the enrollees “aren’t good workers.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, whether there really were a substantial number of enrollees who were not “good workers” cannot be substantiated and mattered less to the New Bern aldermen than the impression among them that a sizeable number of the public believed it to be true.

⁹⁸ “New Bern Cuts Ties with Youth Corps,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, February 13, 1966; “Boards Balk at Equality,” *Virginian-Pilot*, February 13, 1966.

⁹⁹ Harry J. McDonald, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹⁰⁰ Kate Erwin, “Youth Corps Turned Down By New Bern,” *News & Observer*, February 13, 1966; Kate Erwin, “Craven Poverty Plan Enters Second Stage,” *News & Observer*, February 20, 1966.

Much to their dismay, the aldermen's decision on whether to renew with NYC was only made more difficult following a city hall meeting held on February 15. As the city's elected officials either discovered or were reminded, New Bern citizens were anything but unanimous over the matter of NYC. In fact, both black and white were willing to speak out in favor of its continuance. Among the more than two dozen who came to the city hall meeting to request that the aldermen reconsider the contract with NYC, several were members of the Craven County Good Neighbor Council including vice-president C.C. Sparrow and former New Bern mayor Dale T. Milns. In addition to Monte's assistant director Lee Morgan, several members of the COP board of directors were also present to endorse NYC, including Claretta Wordlaw and Robert Whitehead.

Perhaps one of the most hard-hitting speeches that evening came from Dale Milns who, despite describing himself as a "political conservative," was "concerned" with the flippant way with which the board seemed to be dismissing NYC. In his opinion, the program had "considerable merit" despite its mistakes. Milns also spoke well of the county's antipoverty efforts in general by describing them as a "bold experiment" whose "story cannot be told in finality in one short year." He proceeded to warn the aldermen that their failure to participate in NYC would erode the program altogether in Craven, Jones, and Pamlico counties. "It is not fair to damn the whole thing because some parts of it did not work out," he declared, before asserting that if the board failed to re-contract with NYC that they "should come up with a better suggestion." Whitehead, who spoke soon after Milns, concurred that the benefits of the NYC program overshadowed its

weaknesses and cited the fact that there had been fewer high school dropouts since the program began in the Craven area.¹⁰¹

As Milns, Whitehead, and other NYC supporters understood the program, it did not just provide part-time or full-time employment opportunities for at-risk youth but also taught professional skills such as punctuality, respect for authority, proper dress, and personal responsibility. In addition to these professional attributes that could help NYC enrollees land a job, many were also given remedial education and counseling; together, these benefits better enabled them to return to or remain in school and would also, as local NYC director Colonel W.F. Evans put it, “orient them to the world of work.”¹⁰² For these exact reasons, the New Bern Employment Security Commission had first agreed to cooperate with the NYC program in November 1964 by rendering placement services for the youth who had completed their training and would need assistance in finding employment.¹⁰³ Whites and blacks who preferred to keep NYC knew that the jobs to which enrollees were assigned not only did not displace current employees but instead frequently contributed to the community’s benefit through higher wages, better public services, and reducing the numbers of unemployed youths on the streets. In support of the NYC advocates’ assertions, COP Deputy Director Lee Morgan estimated that approximately \$2,000 in local revenue had been lost because the city of New Bern and its

¹⁰¹ “Aldermen Hear Request For Youth Program,” *Sun Journal*, February 16, 1966.

¹⁰² Kate Erwin, “Craven Poverty Plan Enters Second Stage,” *News & Observer*, February 20, 1966; “VD On The Rise in Lenoir, NYC Members Are Informed,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, June 17, 1966.

¹⁰³ B.F. Gillikin to James J. Hearn, November 4, 1964 in Neighborhood Youth Corps Master Proposal to U.S. Department of Labor from Craven Operation Progress, Inc., January 7, 1965, folder 5084, NCFR.

city schools had not complied with the NYC requirements.¹⁰⁴ This testimony provided the opportunity for the aldermen to reconsider their decision to let the program expire. There again, the aldermen would have to weigh this most recent testimony with that which they had heard or continued to hear from other influential citizens such as City of New Bern Public Works Director Cedric Boyd, who claimed to have observed first-hand how NYC's guaranteed minimum wage of \$1.25, which was slightly above the pay rate for his own employees, was leading to "idleness" among the enrollees, for whom he did not have enough work, and low morale among his full-time staff.¹⁰⁵ Even more moderate figures such as Belk's Department Store manager W. Ted Kennedy, who accepted COP as "a fact of life" and realized the economic benefits it offered to his business, said that NYC had not been proven to provide consistently useful job training for those hired by the city.¹⁰⁶

After hearing testimony in favor of NYC at the February 15 city hall meeting, New Bern aldermen Paul Cox attempted to explain to the crowd, a large number of which were black citizens, that the board of aldermen's intentions had been misunderstood. Referring to the *News & Observer* article of February 13 that had stated the aldermen were delaying the renewal of their board's contract with NYC because of its equal opportunity assurance pledge, Cox asserted that "This was just as far from the truth as it can be." Fellow alderman Tommy Davis agreed, emphasizing that "Prior to the night that

¹⁰⁴ Kate Erwin, "Youth Corps Turned Down By New Bern," *News & Observer*, February 13, 1966.

¹⁰⁵ Cedric Boyd, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹⁰⁶ W. Ted Kennedy, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 27, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

the contract was brought up, we had only one report as to whether the program was constructive or detrimental to the youths employed and the city” and also that nobody from COP had been available to answer the board’s questions. After promising to revisit its contract with NYC again in March, the board then unanimously adopted a resolution—in order to assure those present of their sincerity of purpose—that fully denied the implications of the *N&O* article.¹⁰⁷

A follow-up story in the *News & Observer* on February 18 would also amend its earlier assumption about the board of aldermen by explaining that the board had felt no rush to comply with the equal opportunity requirement. As one of the aldermen informed the *N&O* reporter, their belief had been that “signing the assurance, before considering to re-contract with NYC” would have been “premature.”¹⁰⁸ This attempt by the aldermen to deny all wrongdoing on the basis of race demonstrated that, even in a conservative region such as Eastern North Carolina, to be seen as opposed to equality opportunity had become stigmatizing for white leaders by the mid-1960s.¹⁰⁹ The aldermen’s apparent willingness to spend more time studying the program’s record also gave credence to an

¹⁰⁷ “Aldermen Hear Request For Youth Program,” *Sun Journal*, February 16, 1966.

¹⁰⁸ “Youth Corps Appeal Heard at New Bern,” *Sun Journal*, February 17, 1966; “New Bern Board Gives Reasons For Tabling Youth Corps Action,” *News & Observer*, February 18, 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Comments made by black New Bern attorney Reginald Frazier about the NYC controversy were the exact type that the white aldermen feared and hoped to convince the black community were not true. As Frazier wrote in an op-ed piece published in the *News & Observer*, he wondered what reason other than racial discrimination the New Bern aldermen and city schools could have been using for such a “callous refusal” to renew their contracts with NYC. Frazier also argued quite provocatively that both the board of aldermen and city school board had “missed the opportunity to change [their] racial image and prove to the world that New Bern is a progressive eastern city, aware, and concerned about racial relations and the elimination of the bitter poverty which has caused it to stand still for over 100 years.” See Reginald Frazier, letter to the editor, *News & Observer*, February 25, 1966.

N&O editorial entitled “Survival is Success,” which argued that even in the face of “some local governmental officials [who] are overtly hostile” (which most likely referred to New Bern Schools Superintendent Harry J. McDonald), that “efforts to discourage these programs have been sorely felt.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, even if conservatives, “hostile” or otherwise, would be able to convince the New Bern board of aldermen to let their contract with NYC expire, most of the major public agencies in the county, including COP itself which was then employing around eleven enrollees, continued to support the program.¹¹¹

Progress, the moderate way

To be on board with a particular antipoverty program, however, did not necessarily mean one could avoid being seen, by all of the program’s proponents, as an adversary of progress or the poor. In fact, when there was wide disagreement over methods or style, ironically, a program supporter could face as much hostility and marginalization from a fellow supporter as an outspoken opponent of the program would have received. This possibility perhaps came closest to creating a disastrous result for the Adult Basic Education Recruitment (ABER) program due to the relationship among Bob Monte, the director of the Craven Industrial Education Center (IEC), and several of the local ABER staff. At the same time that the city of New Bern first began contemplating its renewal contract with NYC, controversy was also afoot within ABER over who should be given primary teaching responsibilities—the twelve VISTA workers assigned

¹¹⁰ “Survival is Success,” *News & Observer*, February 22, 1966.

¹¹¹ “Craven Receives \$566, 300 Grant,” *News & Observer*, March 4, 1966.

to the six-county area or the Craven IEC staff of college graduates—and how quickly the program should be expanded to reach more of the county’s uneducated and illiterate citizens. Monte had made it clear on multiple occasions that he wanted to see the expansion of the ABER program (after all, he saw education as central to his vision of a “War on Ignorance”), but his aversion to “the shot gun approach” would not be welcomed by Sandra Fisher, the director of the program.¹¹²

Fisher, a young special education teacher with a master’s degree from the University of Michigan, had been hired by Jim Hearn in August 1965 to take on the administrative responsibilities of ABER. As a staff member of the North Carolina Fund described her, she was a “hard worker” and passionate about her job but had a tendency to be “rather impulsive.”¹¹³ Because of her desire to simultaneously expand both the number of classes and the teaching role of the VISTA volunteers, she interpreted Monte’s slow and steady method of attack, in which he sought to test out the idea of using more volunteer teachers before fully implementing it, not only as evidence of his lack of interest in helping the poor but also as proof that his objective was centered around “slowly killing the program.”¹¹⁴ Based on her feelings that she could “no longer operate

¹¹² Minutes from meeting held between Sandra Fisher, Tom Wallace, Robert R. Monte, Thuman Brock, Preston Kennedy, L.R. Morgan, January 28, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR; Kate Erwin, “Craven Poverty Plan Enters Second Stage,” *News & Observer*, February 20, 1966.

¹¹³ Sandra Fisher, interview by John Miller, February 16, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

professionally through the organization,” in late January 1966 Fisher resigned effective March 10.¹¹⁵

Fisher’s frustration over the pace of ABER first arose shortly after state funding ran out for the Craven IEC, which had partnered with COP to provide teachers for the basic education classes. Because Thurman Brock, the Craven IEC director, made it clear that his current staff, which was then teaching around seven hundred, could not handle the growing number of adult students without more funding, Fisher pushed the idea to use as many VISTA workers to teach the classes as possible instead of continuing to rely mainly on Brock’s staff. Before this disagreement, the VISTAs had only been recruiting the “functionally illiterate” and assigning those who were interested to classes. Monte, who was wary over the fact that, in contrast to the Craven IEC staff, few of the VISTAs had degrees in education or even much teaching experience, expressed to Sandra Fisher that he did not want to start an expansive program of volunteer-led classes until VISTAs had been shown to be successful teachers. Brock, who naturally had less confidence in the VISTA workers than in his own staff, agreed with Monte; he would remain most interested in using the volunteers as recruiters, the precise issue that caused Fisher to submit her letter of resignation.¹¹⁶

In spite of the prospect of Fisher’s departure, Monte and Brock were determined to continue the program. After receiving a promise from the state that additional money

¹¹⁵ COP board meeting minutes, February 3, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR.

¹¹⁶ Minutes from meeting held between Sandra Fisher, Tom Wallace, Robert R. Monte, Thurman Brock, Preston Kennedy, L.R. Morgan, January 28, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR.

would be made available by February 3, Brock agreed to ten more classes, but of these no more than two would be taught by volunteer teachers on an experimental basis. While interest in ABER was growing in several counties in Eastern North Carolina, most notably Craven, there appeared to be a problem with consistent attendance among current enrollees. In light of this problem, Brock clearly did not want to stretch his staff too thin for additional classes that were not at full enrollment nor did he want to potentially jeopardize the quality of the classes by allowing unproven VISTAs to teach them. “I would also like to point out,” Brock wrote Monte on January 31, “that we are not only interested in reaching a maximum number of citizens in need of elementary level education but that we also wish to maintain quality and a degree of success with the small number with which we are now working.” “We still have too many drop-outs,” Brock reminded Monte, “even though our classes are provided free of cost and are located within the communities in which these people live.”¹¹⁷ Despite Brock’s observation, Sandra Fisher was not convinced that the dozen additional classes would be sufficient to meet local need and cited the fact that more than two thousand local applicants were still on waiting lists.¹¹⁸ Fisher was right that twelve classes of twenty-five students each would not empty the waiting lists. Nonetheless, in the opinions of Monte and Brock, these classes would at least be a start in the right direction. Even so, Fisher remained opposed to any negotiations that involved numerical limits on the program and refused to

¹¹⁷ Thurman Brock to Robert R. Monte, January 31, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

¹¹⁸ Tom Wallace, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR; “Problems Seen Here Yesterday in Poverty War,” *Sun Journal*, February 4, 1966.

withdraw her letter of resignation, even after Preston Kennedy of the North Carolina Fund asked her to do so on January 28.¹¹⁹ Fisher's resignation would spell trouble for the immediate futures of both ABER and COP. Not only did it lead directly to the resignation of her assistant director Tom Wallace, a graduate of North Carolina College in Durham (now known as North Carolina Central University), it also resulted in the decision by OEO officials in early February to demand that all twelve VISTA workers, including the three who sought to remain in the area after Fisher's resignation, immediately be pulled out of Craven and the other five participating counties.

In the aftermath of the Fisher's resignations and OEO's insistence that VISTAs be removed from COP target areas, several COP board members, white and black, expressed worry that the recent events involving the ABER program could give off the appearance that local leadership did not care about adult education or the alleviation of poverty and that this perception could damage COP's future relations with OEO. At the COP board meeting on February 3, one of the VISTA workers in attendance probably added to these worries by revealing that he had been told by his supervisor that the reason he and the other VISTAs were being ordered out of the area was because "there was not enough support from the community."¹²⁰ In hopes of convincing OEO of COP's undiminished commitment to adult education and the alleviation of poverty, Monte, COP deputy director Lee Morgan, and Tom Wallace (who had actually withdrawn his resignation

¹¹⁹ Minutes from meeting held between Sandra Fisher, Tom Wallace, Robert R. Monte, Thurman Brock, Preston Kennedy, L.R. Morgan, January 28, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR.

¹²⁰ COP board meeting minutes, February 3, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR.

after being asked by the Fund to replace Fisher as acting director of ABER), each wrote letters to the project officer of VISTA in which they requested that the volunteers stay.¹²¹ “These Volunteers have done very constructive work in our community” Monte wrote to Glen Blackburn, in an attempt to assure him that “the misunderstanding within this Community and program...has been resolved.” Promising a “continued but more effective utilization of Volunteers in Service to America,” including future work assignments in the Community Development program, Monte asked for “a thirty day moratorium on your decision to withdraw Volunteers from this area.”¹²² As a beleaguered Monte later told the press, “We want these people desperately and are trying to keep them here.”¹²³

Most if not all of the COP board of directors agreed with Tom Wallace that Craven County’s nine thousand illiterate adults in Craven would have to be reached “before any of the Craven Operation Progress programs can work” and also agreed that Monte’s approach of cooperating with Thurman Brock and initiating volunteer-led classes on an experimental basis was essentially sound. At the board meeting on February 3, Robert Pugh reminded fellow board members that the Craven IEC, because it was funded by the State Board of Education, was bound to follow regulations—including the one that insisted that class instructors must have a bachelor of arts degree. Moreover, Pugh explained, the IEC-led classes were “part of a very orderly process” that would reap

¹²¹ Preston Kennedy, Field Report, February 4, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

¹²² Robert R. Monte to Glen Blackburn, February 2, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

¹²³ “Problems Seen Here Yesterday in Poverty War,” *Sun Journal*, February 4, 1966.

benefits in the end. Pugh, who was still serving as the superintendent of Craven County schools, felt that a major reason not to begin more volunteer-led classes was that they often had mixed results in comparison to those with paid, trained instructors. Referring to the fact that the classes meet for a total of twenty-four nights, he reasoned that, “Very often volunteer teachers will start off with much enthusiasm, but after a few weeks some of this enthusiasm is lost.” COP board chairman Larry Pate, who had tried to convince Fisher that her resignation was a mistake, agreed that “we should not jump the gun” and “blow the whole program.” Even Robert Whitehead, who at first had questioned Monte’s logic in continuing to push for a limited ABER program when the goal, as Whitehead saw it, was to reach as many of the twenty-five thousand (as possible) in the six-county area, temporarily gave Monte’s judgment the benefit of the doubt.¹²⁴ In an interview with OEO administrators around March, he disclosed that he, Whitehead, had “changed his attitude” in recent months with regard to his original belief that “Monte was working for the power structure.”¹²⁵

This series of events revealed that those who did not push for rapid expansion or revolutionary new methods were not necessarily, as their critics assumed, uninterested in effectively serving the poor. For one thing, the jobs of both Monte and Thurman Brock depended on exactly this type of commitment. By the middle of March 1966, Tom Wallace reported that he was receiving considerable cooperation from Monte and

¹²⁴ COP board meeting minutes, February 3, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR.

¹²⁵ Ray Jacobson to Ed May, memorandum, March 16, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of OEO.

concluded that Monte was not “out to get” either him or the ABER program. This conclusion was quite a turnaround from the opinion he and Fisher had shared earlier, namely that Monte never wanted to use the VISTA workers and secretly wanted to run the ABER program into oblivion. John Miller of the North Carolina Fund, who had been following the dynamics of the ABER controversy since January, arrived at a similar conclusion. “Actually, Monte never was out to sabotage the operation of the program as Sandra Fisher had charged.”¹²⁶ Instead, despite his ability to be critical of Monte, Miller appeared to place most of the blame for the issues within ABER on Fisher.¹²⁷ As Miller reflected, “this entire matter turned out to be a point-of-no-return personality clash” between Fisher and Monte and, in the end, “The basic and over-riding object of helping the poorly-educated of Craven County got lost in the thoughts of Miss Fisher at the expense of her desire to have her own way completely.”¹²⁸

The removal of the VISTA workers, which proceeded in spite of the requests by Monte, Morgan, and Wallace, would impede the progress of the ABER program only briefly. With assurances from the North Carolina Fund that the Craven IEC would continue to receive enough funds and teaching staff to meet local need, by March 1966 the program grew to more than fifty classes in basic education and high school

¹²⁶ Tom Wallace, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹²⁷ For instance, just a few weeks later, John Miller would criticize Monte for being insecure, impulsive at times, and for tending to side with the COP board over COP staff during a controversy. See Maggie Blow, interview by John Miller, May 11, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

¹²⁸ Sandra Fisher, interview by John Miller, February 16, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

equivalency that served slightly more than one thousand individuals in Craven, Jones, and Pamlico counties alone.¹²⁹ However, although the removal of the VISTA workers did not lead to the dissolution of the ABER program, OEO's refusal to reinstate the volunteers did have the potential to jeopardize a pending Community Development program in which COP planned to rely heavily on VISTA recruitment and facilitation of neighborhood organizing among the poor. Monte would have to wait to resolve this issue later.

City of New Bern decides whether to renew NYC contract

Meanwhile, whether the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) program would be renewed in the City of New Bern remained unsolved. After granting themselves more time for consideration and after meetings with several groups, including the Craven County Good Neighbor Council and the Craven County Commissioners, the New Bern aldermen at last became willing to set a definitive date to vote upon the NYC contract for March 22. Perhaps New Bern mayor Mack Lupton, who was motivated by both the urging of the county commissioners and his desire to win federal funds for an urban renewal project and a new city water system, was the most interested in convincing the majority of the aldermen to keep the NYC program.¹³⁰ However, another influential situation had risen to prominence by the March 16 meeting, a day after the aldermen had agreed to take their vote on March 22, that trumped all previous arguments in support of

¹²⁹ Tom Wallace, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹³⁰ Bill Flowers to George Esser, Tom Hartmann, Jim McDonald, Preston Kennedy, memorandum, March 9, 1966, folder 5037, NCFR.

NYC.¹³¹ This situation had to do with matching funds required from the county.

Reverend J.A. Babington-Johnson, a black member of the Good Neighbor Council, was among the few privy to the weight that concern over the NYC contract's clause about local matching was exerting upon negotiations between the aldermen and the council. As the reverend witnessed, one of the main stumbling blocks in convincing the board to renew its one-year contract with NYC was concern that the city's current local matching requirement of 10 percent, which according to the original Economic Opportunity Act was set to expire on August 20, 1966, could be raised to as much as 50 percent during the 1967 fiscal year beginning on July 1, 1966.¹³²

Concerns about local matching came to a head after a local radio broadcast of March 16 during which the host played a tape of his interview with Bob Monte. When asked about the NYC requirements for local matching, Monte had stated his belief that the level would remain at 10 percent for at least the next four years. However, after playing the interview, the radio host gave his own commentary on the subject, which challenged Monte's answer. Congress had passed legislation, the host argued authoritatively, that would require local communities to contribute matching fund levels

¹³¹ John Miller, Report on New Bern Board of Aldermen Meeting, March 22, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR. Former New Bern Mayor and Good Neighbor Council member W.C. Chadwick, one of eight citizens who spoke before the board of aldermen on March 22 in support of the NYC program, emphasized that NYC had not only paid more than \$527, 000 to NYC employees and enrollees and that these paychecks had provided a boost to local employers, but also that the city's participation in NYC had thus far required only in-kind assistance. However, despite his impressive use of statistics and the respect he garnered in the city, Chadwick's argument was overcome by those concerns about the possible increase in local matching funds.

¹³² Rev. J.A. Babington-Johnson, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 28, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

of 50 percent starting on July 1, 1966, arguing that this was “the law of the land.” The host concluded that, “Station WHIT is neither for or against the program, but believes that those citizens of New Bern who do have definite feelings on this matter should make them known to members of the Board of Aldermen by contacting them and by attending their March 22 meeting.”¹³³

This radio broadcast not only damaged the credibility of both Monte and COP but also alerted New Bern citizens to the prospect of raised levels of local matching that some feared might require a tax increase. The board of aldermen, which probably had not raised the issue of local matching in the past either because of uncertainty about whether an increase would definitely happen or because of a reluctance to worry the community unnecessarily, now found itself unable to ignore this concern on the part of its constituents. In any case, at the March 22 meeting, the board of aldermen was presented with two petitions, signed by more than 350 local residents, that asked for the NYC program to be dropped by the city.¹³⁴ Many, if not most of the signees, had heard the rumor of a future increase in local matching funds and were, presumably not in favor of raised taxes to cover this expense. In hopes of resolving this confusion, the aldermen

¹³³ Tom Wallace, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹³⁴ New Bern Board of Aldermen Meeting, report by John Miller, March 22, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR. One of the petitions read: “We, the undersigned citizens or taxpayers of New Bern feel that it is not in the best interest of our city’s present and future to renew the Youth Corps contract proposed by Craven Operation Progress. We believe that the so-called anti-poverty program has done far more harm than good in our community. We are convinced that it has failed to benefit those of the white and Negro races who need most a helping hand, and that, to the contrary, it has had an unwholesome influence on those reaping temporary gain from its funds. Therefore, we respectfully ask members of New Bern’s Board of Aldermen to vote against renewal of the Youth Corps contract.” See also L.R. Morgan to Robert R. Monte, March 30, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

called upon attorney A.D. Ward, who presented a letter from NYC official Mike Lorenzo to Bob Monte, which had led him to deduce that the federal government's current matching fund ratio of ninety/ten would end on August 20, 1966. According to the North Carolina Fund's John Miller, who was present at the city hall meeting, Ward's testimony was so convincing that "advocates of the NYC were thus clearly hindered in that they had nothing in writing that would negate [his] contention."¹³⁵

Because no one in attendance at the March 22 meeting knew exactly what changes would or might be made to local matching levels after August 20, the majority of the board of aldermen felt that they had no other choice but to reject the renewal of the NYC contract.¹³⁶ Paul Cox, the most liberal of the New Bern alderman, cast the sole vote for extension. The four aldermen who voted to end NYC in the city felt that the uncertainty over local matching had become an unacceptable additional political liability for a program that they already believed the community viewed as problem-ridden and therefore not cost-effective.¹³⁷ It will never be known, however, whether the voice of the

¹³⁵ John Miller, Report on New Bern Board of Aldermen Meeting, March 22, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹³⁶ "NYC Contract is Rejected By Aldermen," *Sun Journal*, March 23, 1966. Incidentally, both houses of Congress would vote in October 1966 to require a 20 percent local contribution toward community action programs that became effective on July 1, 1967. Joseph A. Loftus, "Congress Passes Poverty Program With New Curbs," *New York Times*, October 21, 1966.

¹³⁷ New Bern was only one of dozens of American communities that were divided over the NYC and/or Job Corps program. Both the high costs associated with training and supervising each enrollee and scandals related to irresponsible and unreliable participants, some of whom were members of a families that lived above the poverty threshold, were being weighed against the program's achievements: for example, reported reductions, albeit sometimes small ones, in the number of high school drop-outs and local crime rates. See Louis Cassels, "Job Corps Centers: 'Good' & 'Horrid,'" *United Press International*, December 2, 1965; John Carmody, "The Youth Corps: Credits, Debits," *Washington Post*, February 11, 1966.

majority was actually heard in this matter. John Miller of the North Carolina Fund seemed to believe that the outcome did not necessarily mean that the majority of the people of New Bern were against the NYC. “But it did indicate,” Miller reported, “that those who were for it did not make their opinions known and were not as well represented as those who were opposed to the program.”¹³⁸ City Manager Edgar Welch, who agreed that a vocal minority had swayed the vote, felt that the aldermen mostly listened to their friends. “It just happened that the friends of the aldermen were not for the NYC,” said Welch.¹³⁹ Several prominent citizens, including New Bern businessmen Harry Vatz, would voice opposition to the aldermen’s decision after the fact; however, their support for NYC appeared to come too late because, as Welch argued, not enough of them spoke out in its favor before the vote. Many supporters including Vatz, then president of the New Bern Merchants Association, had been urged by D. L. Stallings to attend the March 22 meeting, but Vatz was unable to do so because of prior commitments.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ John Miller, Report on New Bern Board of Aldermen Meeting, March 22, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹³⁹ Edgar Welch, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, June 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

¹⁴⁰ Besides Vatz, many other local businessmen were supportive of NYC primarily for economic reasons. They not only saw the program, which added thousands of dollars in the pockets of hundreds of youth, as a potential economic boost to their own businesses but as a way to keep youth out of trouble and off public assistance. See Harry Vatz, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, April 15, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR; T.C. Fitzgerald, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR; Harry Wright, interview by John Miler, New Bern, NC, June 1, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

Community support for NYC largely prevails

Despite the loss of the City of New Bern and the New Bern City Schools, which were the only major public agencies that did not renew their contracts with NYC, local NYC director Colonel Evans was not particularly upset about the city's decision. One reason, which he shared with the New Bern aldermen at the March 22 meeting, was that he preferred to work only with fully cooperative agencies. Moreover, Evans was confident not only that the overall community would continue to stay on board with NYC but also that the enrollees dropped from the city's program would quickly find openings elsewhere. His confidence turned out to be well founded: on March 24, just two days after the city of New Bern dropped out of the NYC program, sponsoring agencies in Craven, Jones, and Pamlico counties announced that 350 new jobs for high school drop-outs would be available on April 1, in addition to approximately 200 more that would become available over the summer. After this announcement, Evans proudly declared that "Sponsoring agencies in this area, feel a responsibility to today's young people who have dropped out of school for economic reasons, home problems or because classroom work has become meaningless to them."¹⁴¹ Again he was correct. In addition to hiring youth for necessary jobs, public agency staff felt that they were doing their part to contribute to the community by helping school drop-outs stay in school and ready themselves for employment rather than roaming the streets and becoming welfare cases.

¹⁴¹ "Youth Corps Program Set for April 1," *Sun Journal*, March 24, 1966. Other Eastern North Carolina communities, including Pasquotank County, also found the NYC program to be a positive one for the enrollees as well as the public. "Youth Corps Program Here Said Successful," *The Daily Advance*, September 17, 1966.

The fact that D. L. Stallings, who also ran an insurance company in New Bern, admitted during a March 1966 COP board meeting that he and other citizens had not “done enough in the past to provide employment opportunities for youth and male heads of families” was certainly a positive sign that attitudes toward the community’s responsibility to the poor were changing.¹⁴² Although Evans did not specifically predict it, program proponents also continued to make their case before the board until the New Bern aldermen were convinced to reinstate the NYC program and did so in 1967.¹⁴³ Despite NYC’s problems, many Eastern North Carolinian residents, black and white, honored the program’s past successes and favored its potential over its nonexistence.

Conclusion

Community support of COP was not as strong as it could have been, but Monte’s style of handling the administration of COP had certainly helped to build it up from where it had stood under Hearn’s leadership. It is unclear whether poor white participation had yet to substantially improve due to Monte’s leadership, but sizeable evidence reveals that middle-class white support did. COP board member Reverend L. D. Munn estimated that during the tumultuous summer of 1965, when Hearn was still COP’s executive director, about 90 percent of the white community had disapproved of COP; by April 1966, Munn estimated that the split between proponents and opponents for COP

¹⁴² John Miller, Report on COP Board Meeting, March 23, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹⁴³ “City Aldermen Hear Petitions Tuesday Night,” *Sun Journal*, June 21, 1967.

was fifty-fifty.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, early that spring two New Bern ministers urged their mostly all-white congregations for the first time to support COP.¹⁴⁵ With certain exceptions, such as Sandra Fisher's resignation, Monte's efforts in the areas of public relations, cooperation and dialogue with board members as well as local agency heads, increased delegation of authority to COP staff, and innovative approaches to program development all helped to improve insider morale and thereby improved program effectiveness.

Surprisingly, little of this progress was mentioned in a North Carolina Fund-requested review of COP that was conducted in April 1966.¹⁴⁶ When the Fund hired three outsiders to evaluate the performance of COP, a procedure similar to the handling of reviews for the other ten CAPs receiving Fund financial assistance, it was more than likely expecting an impartial assessment. However, the biases of the program reviewers (a newspaper publisher from Selma, North Carolina, and the Deputy General Manager and the Staff Training Specialist of the St. Louis Human Development Corporation or HDC) were not only obvious but arguably prevented a thorough examination of either COP leadership or the execution of its program. In addition to their recommendation that none of the agencies that had contracts with COP, such as the county department of welfare, should have voting representation on the COP board of directors, the reviewers

¹⁴⁴ Rev. L. D. Munn, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, April 15, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR; Harry Vatz, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, April 15, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

¹⁴⁵ Kate Erwin, "Craven Poverty Plan Enters Second Stage," *News & Observer*, February 20, 1966.

¹⁴⁶ George Esser would first propose six and twelve month reviews of each CAP under North Carolina Fund supervision in the spring of 1965. Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 140.

found it problematic that Monte “functions in the role of avoiding conflict” and suggested, based on Monte’s personal observation that some poor would choose not to accept help, that he did not have “an understanding of the principles underlying the War on Poverty.”¹⁴⁷

In part because the reviewers spent only three days in the area and in part because of their belief that Monte’s philosophy did not match with OEO philosophy, much of the content of their review was inaccurate. For example, their claim that “program development is not innovative” was made in spite of the fact that Monte had enthusiastically supported several new ideas, including a wildlife management program, and was in the process of starting others, including an intra-staff newsletter, the latter of which would soon receive recognition and praise from OEO in the form of a request for one thousand copies to send to rural CAAs across the nation.¹⁴⁸ In addition, the reviewers’ overreliance on their observation that a few local television, radio, and newspaper heads were distrustful of COP, caused them to wrongly conclude that “Mr. Monte does not understand the importance of a ‘good image’ outside the COP framework” and that the “staff does not realize what a good public relations program can mean to them in [terms of positive] attitudes from the general community.” Verifiable

¹⁴⁷ A. Donald Bourgeois, Howard I. Buchbinder, and Tom I. Davis, Review of Craven Operation Progress, April 6, 7, 8, 1966, folder 5027, NCFR.

¹⁴⁸ “Poverty Paper Is Distributed to Other Areas,” *Sun Journal*, May 26, 1966; By March 1966, Monte also had the idea for a grant for LIFE (Low-Income Family Environment) that would buy up shell houses already in Craven and refurbish them with the labor of Title V recipients or Manpower trainees who did not have decent housing and might be the first ones to purchase them. See Tom Hartmann to George Esser, memorandum, March 29, 1966, folder 5038, NCFR.

refutations of these statements include actions by Monte that were, in some cases, being undertaken for the first time in the CAA's history; his announcements to the *Sun Journal* of the dates and times of COP meetings, his hire of a public relations officer in January (who helped to get a high number of stories about the poverty program published in the *Sun Journal*), his early organization of a series of speaking engagements with local civic groups led by staff from both COP and the North Carolina Fund, and his leadership of a tour in March of at least forty local people that was intended to show them how these programs were successfully helping both the black and white poor.¹⁴⁹ A final, major flaw in the review was the complaint that "attendance at board meetings is poor," a condition that was in fact intermittent, dependent on a multitude of variables, and had been corrected in March with a new COP by-law that forbade any board member to miss three meetings in a row without a valid excuse.¹⁵⁰ These new requirements would not begin until June 1, 1966; however, no mention was made by the reviewers that the issue of board attendance had been addressed.

Despite their inclusion of some positive remarks about the COP staff's sincerity and dedication to the programs, the review team ultimately concluded that "Mr. Monte is operating in a very unsatisfactory manner" and recommended that "ongoing evaluative

¹⁴⁹ "Poverty Tour Is Held Here," *Sun Journal*, March 3, 1966.

¹⁵⁰ COP Board meeting minutes, March 23, 1966, Folder 4975, NCFR; The three reviewers also criticized what they saw as a "segregated staffing pattern" at the day care centers; this condition was contradicted in a report made by Monte to the North Carolina Fund's James McDonald which stated that the daycare program was administered by a black woman and had a biracial staff. The day care centers did tend to be segregated by neighborhood in terms of the racial makeup of the attending children but this reflected local preferences and issues of proximity rather than a deliberate policy of Monte's. See Robert R. Monte to James C. McDonald, May 8, 1966, folder 5025, NCFR.

procedures of the CAP Director” be undertaken by the North Carolina Fund. One of the reviewers, A. Donald Bourgeois of the St. Louis HDC, went so far as to include, for the Fund staff’s eyes only, a limerick of his own composition:

There once was a fellow named Jim Hearn
Who went to a town called New Bern
In his heart he was right
But he gave them a fright
And the program made a full U-turn
Along came a fellow named Monte
Who began to act sua sponte
In his heart he cared not
And the program was shot
To hell like Inferno by Dante.¹⁵¹

Biases clearly seemed to plague the review process of COP but Monte’s performance had not been flawless. For example, the reviewers were probably right that Monte could have relinquished more routine paperwork to his staff, which would have allowed him to remain focused on more important executive tasks. The reviewers were also not incorrect to think that giving the poor the opportunity to democratically elect their representatives to the COP board could enhance COP’s ability to understand their needs and circumstances, even though, according to reports from other CAAs, turnouts for such elections tended to be rather low.¹⁵² In general, however, the April review presented a limited view of reality and obscured the ways that both the COP board of directors and the larger community were in greater support of COP programs as well as Monte’s

¹⁵¹ A. Donald Bourgeois to Jim McDonald, April 19, 1966, folder 5041, NCFR.

¹⁵² Matasow, *The Unraveling of America*, 256.

administration of them. For example, 75 percent of the twenty-four COP board respondents to an anonymous questionnaire issued around April 15 expressed a desire to continue serving on the COP board.¹⁵³ In addition, despite COP's political liability in certain voting sectors, all of the incumbent Craven County commissioners won their primary races in May 1966 including COP's greatest champion D. L. Stallings who, with Robert Whitehead's help, was able to beat off separate attempts by both SCLC leader Leon Nixon and conservative whites in a newly formed chapter of the John Birch Society to unseat him. As COP board chairman Larry Pate described the importance of this feat, "The future of Craven Operation Progress depends on whether or not Livingstone Stallings is re-elected as county commissioner. He has held us together...and I am afraid that if Stallings is defeated in May, there will be an effort on the part of rank conservatives to put us out of business."¹⁵⁴ Monte's preference for the middle ground and a steady yet deliberate pace for COP expansion probably helped keep Stallings in power and COP in business. However, Monte's job would be made more difficult during the second half of 1966 when both the OEO and the North Carolina Fund began to turn away from their original insistence on local control of programs and local strategies to fight poverty.

¹⁵³ Questionnaire for Board Members: Craven Operation Progress, April 15, 1966, folder 4972, NCFR.

¹⁵⁴ A.D. Ward, interview by John Miller, transcript, New Bern, NC, July 22, 1966, folder 7093, NCFR; A. Donald Bourgeois, Howard I. Buchbinder, and Tom I. Davis, Review of Craven Operation Progress, April 6, 7, 8, 1966, folder 5027, NCFR.

CHAPTER VI

RISING INTERVENTION FROM OUTSIDE

Introduction

Partially influenced by the conclusions of the North Carolina Fund-requested review of COP that was conducted in April 1966, Fund staff assigned to the Craven area would begin to deliberately “run things around Monte” until Monte’s eventual resignation in September.¹ Monte might have been able to cope with this increased intervention on the state level, however, had it not been for the simultaneous increase in federal intervention. By 1966, federal officials within both the OEO and the Department of Labor had begun to conclude, similarly to Fund staff, that local control of community action would never allow the types of social and institutional change they believed were necessary to meet the true needs of the poor. From their perspective in Washington, too many businessmen, elected officials, and other power structure-types were serving on local boards; moreover, these men were either incapable or unwilling to make the kinds of decisions that would enhance the poor’s political influence or economic standing.

¹ Pat Wallace, “Community Support Conference,” June 15, 1966, Craven County, folder 7090, NCFR.

Eventually, save for the rare instances in which the poor made up a majority of a CAA board, local community action experiments began to be seen as a roadblock to the War on Poverty's goals of improving opportunities and justice for indigent populations (especially in the South where many of the hard-core poor were black). But, as this chapter sets out to demonstrate, the attitude on the part of national War on Poverty officials and the Fund was both misinformed and misguided as it related to COP. Above all, local people on the COP board were deeply interested in attaining the justice that the poor were also keen to attain, namely in the form of access to better-paying jobs.

Monte fears he will be fired

Fearing that the COP board had "no alternative but to fire me" based on his negative performance review in April 1966, on May 3 Bob Monte expressed his strong concerns about the review process in a letter to North Carolina Fund executive director George Esser. Evaluating a CAA based only on its philosophy and methodology was both short-sighted, Monte wrote, and less useful than an evaluation based on how that CAA had positively affected the lives of the poor, especially in regard to employment.¹ According to Monte, the COP staff had reached no fewer than three thousand local people and, most crucially, the agency was providing jobs, higher incomes, and basic skill education to hundreds of the unemployed and undereducated through the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) and Manpower Improvement Through Community Improvement (MITCE) programs alone. In addition to the 480 privies built for rural

¹ George Esser to Robert Monte, May 9, 1966, folder 5029, NCFR; Robert R. Monte to Committee on Evaluation, July 14, 1966, folder 5029, NCFR.

families under the rural environmental sanitation project, which had been accomplished with the help of sixty-six of the poor and unemployed themselves, COP's emphasis on self-help among the poor had also motivated at least seventeen individuals who lacked the capital to set up small businesses to apply for loans from the Small Business Development Center and through a marketing cooperative had encouraged several dozen farmers to plant more than fifty acres of strawberries (a more profitable crop) in place of tobacco.²

Several of these programs continued to receive national attention while Monte was executive director. OEO director Sargent Shriver visited Craven farms himself, in May 1966, to taste the strawberries that more than sixty farmers had planted, grown, and sold under the Neuse Trent program.³ This program was also cited before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty, during the War on Poverty hearings, held in June 1966, as proof of community action at work.⁴ A chart displayed in the conference room of the COP building that read "Citizens Served Thru Craven Operation Progress as of 2/28/1966" showed the following totals:⁵

² Kate Erwin, "Craven Poverty Plan Enters Second Stage," *News & Observer*, February 20, 1966; "Strawberries Boost Income For Producers," *Sun Journal*, December 7, 1965.

³ Roy Parker, Jr., "Shriver Tastes Anti-Poverty," *News & Observer*, May 27, 1966.

⁴ *Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare*, 89th Cong. 163-164 (1966) (Community Action at Work—How Community Action Agencies Are Working In America's Urban and Rural Areas).

⁵ Colonel W.F. Evans, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 24, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

Community Development	1,003
Small Business	313+
Adult Basic Education	707
Neighborhood Youth Corps	913
Federal Credit Union	38
Health (Public Education and Health Nurse)	55,000 (based on TV, newspaper, radio)
Welfare	481
Agriculture	89
Rural Environmental Sanitation	3,208

Monte's contention that both he and COP had been subjected to an inadequate review in April was only one of the frustrations he expressed to Esser in his May 3 letter. In addition, he accused the Fund's technical assistance staff of overstepping its bounds and attempting to undermine local control by telling COP staff to ignore his decisions and those of the board of directors.⁶ Although he did not cite specific examples, one of the recent incidents Monte was most probably referring to had occurred when Fund technical staff encouraged Deputy Director Lee Morgan to continue to assert himself independently of Monte; this advice came soon after Morgan had been verbally reprimanded by Monte over the printing of a paid political advertisement in the *Sun Journal* in advance of a local primary election. However, the real issue at hand in this instance was not that the advertisement, which publicized free transportation of registered voters to the polls, was signed and authorized by Morgan and the director of COP's Community Development program without Monte's approval. Instead, Monte—who believed that “everyone should register and vote”—was troubled that he had not been

⁶ George Esser to Robert Monte, May 9, 1966, folder 5029, NCFR.

informed of the voter registration drive organized under the auspices of the Community Development program. Had he been informed, Monte contended, he would have wanted to make sure that it was not at all partisan in nature.⁷

Adding to these tensions was the fact that Monte and Morgan had been at odds off and on since at least February. In Monte's opinion, Morgan continued to avoid his primary responsibilities.⁸ For Morgan, Monte's hiring of twenty-nine-year-old New Bern native and 1963 UNC-Chapel Hill graduate Ralph Jacobs as his administrative assistant was an intentional move to circumvent his authority as Deputy Director.⁹ While the two men had patched up some of their issues by March after Monte gave Morgan full

⁷ "Robert Monte Halts Use of Name in Drive," *Sun Journal*, April 30, 1966. "I fully recognize that one of the needs of our country is political participation by a broader base of our population and I fully endorse and support the ends of voter registration," Monte would write Morgan on April 30, 1966. "However, I feel that your conduct...was a circumvention of my authority and responsibility as Chief Executive Officer of this Corporation" which, Monte added, was in defiance of his April 15 letter to Morgan that asked that "all matters of policy would only be decided after consultation with me." After warning Morgan that "Further disregard of the organizational policies of this Corporation" might "result in my recommending to the Board of Directors that you either be suspended or dismissed from your duties," Monte made sure to reiterate that "I am fully supportive of the concept of voter registration but do feel that I should be consulted about involving the Corporation in delicate political matters." See Robert R. Monte to Mr. L.R. Morgan, April 30, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR. Incidentally, Harold Bailin of OEO also found Morgan's decision to sign COP's name to the political ad for free transportation to the polls as "politically impractical" since OEO was losing popularity in Congress. "OEO cannot play politics," Bailin told a group of Community Action Technicians (CATs) assigned to Craven. See Pat Wallace, CAT conference, Rocky Mount, May 11-13, folder 7091, NCFR. Monte clearly wanted to avoid the kind of negative publicity that temporarily plagued Durham's Operation Breakthrough after its executive director discovered that nine antipoverty agency staff used agency vehicles to transport approximately 75 black Durham residents to three precincts to either register as Democrats or attend a Democratic precinct meeting. See *Durham Morning Herald*, May 13, 1966.

⁸ In January 1966, Morgan first complained that he had an insignificant role at COP. With a degree of prodding by the North Carolina Fund, Monte would agree to write up a job descriptions for Morgan so that he would be aware of all his responsibilities. See Preston Kennedy, Field Report, January 12, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

⁹ Robert R. Monte to Mr. L.R. Morgan, April 15, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR; "Man Given Craven Post," *Sun Journal*, February 13, 1966.

responsibility for four programs, including Community Development and ABER, their disagreement about the *Sun Journal* ad reopened old wounds not yet healed.¹⁰ Well aware of the history of tension between Monte and Morgan, North Carolina Fund staff would nonetheless push Morgan to generally act the way he saw fit regardless of Monte's wishes.¹¹

Because Monte had consciously been trying to implement COP's programs to the satisfaction of the community at-large while also attempting to reach as many of the poor as effectively as possible, he did not understand why the Fund staff believed that his style of executive leadership should be challenged. Although George Esser agreed with Monte that "it is clearly against Fund policy for people on the technical assistant staff to tell members of local staffs to ignore decisions of local CAP directors and their boards," his assurance that the Fund's main purpose to provide advice and counsel should be "duly considered as helpful techniques in coping with various problems of community action"

¹⁰ Tom Wallace, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 22, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR; A. Donald Bourgeois, Howard I. Buchbinder, and Tom I. Davis, Review of Craven Operation Progress, April 6, 7, 8, 1966, folder 5027, NCFR.

¹¹ Pat Wallace, CAT conference, Rocky Mount, May 11-13, folder 7091, NCFR; Brief Summary of Mr. Monte's position on the North Carolina Fund as stated to the Governor on October 13, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers. James McDonald, Arch Foster, and Royce Jordan were among the North Carolina Fund staff who took Morgan's side on the issue of the voter registration drive. According to North Carolina Fund staffer Pat Wallace, James McDonald, in particular, tried to force Monte "to prepare a statement and press release stating that because Lee Morgan had approved the action, [Monte] approved of it, because Morgan spoke for him." Monte would not agree to this pressure from McDonald, however. Monte would also claim in an October 1966 petition to NC Governor Dan K. Moore that North Carolina Fund representatives Jordan and McDonald also would defend Morgan after Morgan "expended without authorization Craven Operation Progress Federally derived funds for Democratic Primary Voter registration purposes" in May 1966 "in deliberate circumvention and without the knowledge of Craven Operation Progress's Executive Director" even though COP "had been instructed by the Federal Government not to expend monies in the area of voter registration."

would comfort COP's executive director only temporarily.¹² (Incidentally, Esser also told Monte that he, Esser, had not inferred from the review that "there were any problems that did not have solutions" or that would lead to Monte's firing.) Despite Esser's assurances, the Fund staff assigned to the Craven area continued to deliberately "run things around Monte" until Monte's eventual resignation in September.¹³

Expanding opportunities for the poor

Because OEO and the North Carolina Fund together provided around 90 percent of the total costs for COP resources and staff salaries, by 1966, both organizations were enjoying a decent amount of influence over how local people in Craven administered the antipoverty efforts. The Fund's role in convincing the COP board of directors not to fire Jim Hearn during the summer of 1965 is one obvious example. In addition, ever since their operational budgets were made available, both OEO and the Fund had openly challenged the attitudes and understandings of a number of local people through their joint insistence upon wide participation by minorities and the poor in community action programs. Both organizations would step up the intensity of their intervention in local community action, however, during the second half of Monte's term as executive director. Although Monte's refusal to expand the scope of the programs as quickly as Hearn had was a significant factor, the impatience of officials in both OEO and the Fund with Monte was a more significant factor. This impatience was due to their belief that

¹² George Esser to Robert Monte, May 9, 1966, folder 5029, NCFR.

¹³ Pat Wallace, "Community Support Conference," June 15, 1966, Craven County, folder 7090, NCFR.

Monte's lack of support for demonstrations among the poor and his chief focus on education-based initiatives was limiting COP's ability to empower the poor on all fronts. For example, in March 1966, OEO had approved Monte's plans to combine COP with the CAAs of Jones and Pamlico Counties into one all-encompassing CAA, which became known as Coastal Progress, Inc. (CPI); however, federal officials rejected Monte's original name, "Coastal Educational Cooperative, Inc.," because of objections to the word "educational," which they felt was too limiting and specific.¹⁴

Nonetheless, neither Monte's belief in the centrality of education in empowering the poor nor his slow and steady approach were the foremost reasons that the poor were not participating to the degree that OEO and the Fund had hoped.¹⁵ Although less than a majority of the local poor were taking part in COP programs in mid-1966, the waiting

¹⁴ The by-laws of Coastal Progress, Inc. (CPI) was officially approved by OEO in March 1966. CPI was set up to organize paperwork and write proposals on behalf of other three agencies that would remain intact. COP (which served an area of approximately 79,000 residents), Jones Economic Development Corporation (which served an area of approximately 11,000), and Pamlico Operation Progress (which served an area of approximately 9,000) would each maintain their own executive director and each board would also remain in charge of running its own programs. The head of COP and Coastal Progress would be the same person, however. At a board meeting of CPI on March 16, 1966, Monte officially became the head of CPI, Larry Pate was named president, and black civil rights leader C.B. Chadwick, Sr. and J.D. Jenkins, both of Jones County, were named first and second vice-president, respectively. See COP Board meeting minutes, January 3, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR; COP Board meeting minutes, March 16, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR.

¹⁵ By June 1966, OEO director Sargent Shriver was openly critical of the vast number of poor across the nation who he claimed had not been reached by the War on Poverty. As he argued before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty, "in a mere 20 months the program has...affected the lives of 4 million impoverished Americans in the slums of 800 urban and rural communities." But, in spite of this beginning," Shriver lamented, "we have today reached only: 30 percent of the children of the poor; 15 percent of the youth in the slums; 2 percent of the illiterate; and a scant 5 percent of the aged." Thus, Shriver added, "Our request for fiscal year 1967 is 17 percent above the last fiscal appropriation." Indeed, "The \$1.7 billion for the coming fiscal year will keep this program moving forward. True it is a budget for troubled times. And under other circumstances would have been larger." See *Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare*, 89th Cong. 43-44 (1966) (statement of Sargent Shriver, Director, Office of Economic Opportunity).

lists for the ABER program alone indicated that the numbers of program participants had grown significantly between the Hearn and Monte eras. In spite of this positive development, however, there was considerable proof that factors outside the immediate control of Monte or his staff were influencing the poor's wanting participation rates. Based on data compiled from both black and white poor who were contacted by COP staff, less than full participation was due to issues of motivation, low self-esteem, drug addiction, family responsibilities, and a personal assessment of one's needs which could often trump the incentives of the programs presented. The latter factor, notwithstanding others such as racial prejudice among segments of the white poor, appeared to be the most common determinant whether poor people to participate in a COP-supported program such as on-the-job training. Nonetheless, even though less than ideal participation rates were largely beyond their control, OEO would place blame almost entirely on Monte and CAA leaders in other parts of the nation.

Even staff of COP programs that were successfully adapting to the wishes and needs of the poor, most particularly the Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort (MITCE) experimental program, regularly found it difficult to convince the poor (almost all of whom were contacted in person) to get involved in the novel opportunity that had literally come knocking on their front doors. In reference to the MITCE programs sponsored by the North Carolina Fund, George Esser explained that "they did much the same thing as [the Employment Security Commission]" but "were more flexible and could be tailored to the job-seekers better than the bureaucratically

entrenched ESC,” which had been set up to meet the needs of employers.¹⁶ In contrast to the local ESC, whose staff had tended to screen out individuals based on the specifications of employers, as, indeed, ESC staffs throughout the country were doing, MITCE placed more emphasis on matching employers to low-income or unemployed individuals. In effect, the poor were engaged more as partners in fighting poverty than merely as clients of antipoverty services.

Continued success of manpower efforts

By July 1966, there was plentiful statistical and anecdotal evidence that the MITCE program had begun to successfully match low-income Craven County residents with open jobs or skill training that fit their work preferences and long-term career goals. Only a month after the entire COP board of directors endorsed the local Manpower program on June 22, 1966, Craven’s biracial Manpower staff had contacted and/or interviewed more than 1,690 families in target areas and placed more than five dozen rural and urban heads of households with local employers for on-the-job training or direct job placement through contracts they had secured with twenty-two local employers, which had risen from fourteen since January.¹⁷ Some of the heads of household were placed within COP as recruiters for Adult Basic Education or as Home Management

¹⁶ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 131; Judith Russell, *Economics, Bureaucracy and Race: How Keynesians Misguided the War on Poverty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 44, 48.

¹⁷ COP Board meeting minutes, June 22, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR; MITCE also received full support from the COP board because of their observation that, based on the program’s emphasis on self-help, personal responsibility, and tangible results for the poor, the program had played a tremendous role in improving the image of COP. See Robert L. Pugh, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 20, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

aides, but the majority had contracted with private companies.¹⁸ By late July, local MITCE staff had also helped to place at least fifty-one individuals who lacked the skills for on-the-job training in the field of their choice in institutional training at the Pitt, Pamlico or Craven County Industrial Education Centers, each of which was supported by the ESC and the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges.¹⁹ Most of these low-skilled workers were sent to the Craven IEC, which by this point, was fully operational and boasted 1,952 enrolled students in more than 137 classes that corresponded to area employment opportunities including carpentry, secretarial training, and machinist training. In addition, the Craven IEC planned to add college-level instruction for would-be nurses' aides, welders, and auto mechanics.²⁰

According to the monthly reports sent by MITCE to OMAT in 1966, most of the poor who agreed to participate in Craven MITCE were low-income black residents without high school diplomas. A report from March, for example, showed that of the 367 people in and around Craven who had been contacted by local Manpower staff (and who were found to qualify for the program), 297 were black and at least 80 percent of the entire group had less than a high school education. The reports from 1966 also show that very few of the Craven residents contacted by MITCE were on any type of welfare. In fact, almost all were employed at the time as domestics or as seasonal workers such as

¹⁸ On-the-Job-Training and Direct Placement chart, folder 5194, NCFR.

¹⁹ Progress Report: Craven, July 30, 1966, folder 5194, NCFR.

²⁰ Employment Security Commission Conference, August 31, 1965, folder 5353, NCFR; "Training For County Youth Available," *Sun Journal*, June 15, 1966.

farm laborers, tobacco stemmers, and tenant farmers. Due to the low-skilled and temporary nature of these jobs, it was not surprising that almost all claimed to be earning less than \$1,200 per year, which was less than half of the official poverty income of approximately \$3,000. However, virtually all of the low-income residents who were either immediately matched with jobs or placed in on-the-job training began to work consistently between thirty and forty hours per week for earnings at or above the minimum wage.²¹

Naturally, these MITCE participants were very enthusiastic about and grateful for the program and were especially pleased with the local staff. In late July 1966, numerous trainees and hires, many of whom were black, wrote glowing letters of support about program staff, including MITCE director Ruth Dial Roberts, who had been indispensable not only in finding them employment or signing them up for industrial education but also in instilling self-confidence in them and optimism about their future.²² Because of its role in helping them gain a greater sense of purpose, enjoy financial security, better support their families, learn new skills, and contribute to the well-being of their community,

²¹ Statistical Chart, March 30, 1966, folder 5195, NCFR; Statistical Information, Craven County, April 20, 1966, folder 5194, NCFR.

²² Roberts replaced Craven native Royce Jordan as MITCE director after he was hired as a field representative for the North Carolina Fund in early 1966. Local MITCE staff, some of who hailed from outside Eastern North Carolina, had to be approved by the North Carolina Fund. In addition to their normal day-to-day duties of interviewing and contacting the low-income, they were expected to be engaged in trying to expand the overall program and in finding out the most serious deterrents to employment encountered by field workers. See Memorandum: George Esser to Board Members of Craven Operation Progress, Inc., Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development, Inc. and Tri-County Community Action, Inc., October 24, 1965, folder 4974, NCFR.

several participants believed MITCE to be the best program ever begun in the state.²³

Black participants, in particular, some of whom had never been judged on their own merits, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work either alongside or directly under whites in jobs that had been previously closed to them. One black female nurse aide trainee at Craven County Hospital, whose only previous work experience had been as a farm laborer earning \$.50/hour, told MITCE director Roberts that even though “this was the first time that I have had white instructors,” she “found them to be very kind” and inspiring, emphasizing that they “showed great interest in their work.”²⁴

In his recent study of the interdependent relationship between liberalism and black power in North Carolina, Devin Fergus downplays the manpower programs widely supported by Eastern North Carolina white conservatives during the 1960s. As he argues, their efforts went no farther than “training workers for the area’s labor-intensive low-wage textile industry” and that they did little to “ameliorate the overarching problems manifested in substandard housing, chronic unemployment, and daily struggles with basic services as garbage collection and police protection.”²⁵ Although Fergus correctly states that the possession of a job was not a universal ticket out of poverty and its harmful effects, he misses the fact that the type of jobs that the Fund-supervised MITCE program

²³ Eva Jones Canday to Directors and Staff Members of MITCE, July 20, 1966, folder 5301, NCFR; Mrs. Elnoria Jones to Mrs. Ruth Dial Roberts, July 21, 1966; Bertha A. Dawson to MITCE staff, July 19, 1966; William Nathaniel Butler to Manpower staff, July 18, 1966; Mr. Carl Davis to Mrs. Ruth Dial Robert, July 19, 1966; Hazel Smith to Mrs. Roberts, July 20, 1966; James Lee to MITCE staff, July 20, 1966, folder 5300, NCFR.

²⁴ Enda Henderson to Mrs. Ruth D. Roberts, July 20, 1966, folder 5300, NCFR.

²⁵ Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics*, 16, 19-20.

matched with low-income residents of Eastern North Carolina were not low-wage jobs but rather high-skilled and well-paid positions that, aside from helping to lift workers and their families out of poverty for the first time in their lives, also provided new opportunities for upward mobility.

Fergus and other scholars of the War on Poverty have also failed to give proper attention to the fact that low-income blacks in Eastern North Carolina (and elsewhere) were primarily interested in employment and finding higher wages with the understanding that better wages would give them the best potential of moving out of the slum areas where poverty-related problems such as substandard housing and lack of civic amenities such as garbage collection were most prevalent.²⁶ Indeed, although these and other improvements that poor black communities in Craven pushed for such as recreational opportunities and road repair were sorely needed, such initiatives often did not directly address the sources of a low-income.²⁷ Black leaders on the national scene saw the same inadequacies. Speaking of his constituency in Harlem, New York, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell publicly declared in January 1966 that “We do not need any more experimental or demonstration projects.” “All we need, are jobs. That’s

²⁶ NC Volunteer Anne Jones, who worked in the black community of Duffyfield, reported in the Summer of 1965 that “I have talked to men and women in Duffyfield who, when asked for the greatest problem in the area, answer ‘I want a job.’ They think, for a minute, that we are there to offer work” but when they found out the volunteers were not there to provide jobs, “the eagerness soon leaves their faces.” See Anne Jones, Report, Summer 1965, Duffyfield, New Bern, NC in North Carolina Fund Volunteers Reports, Summer 1965, Community Development Program (in possession of Mr. Franklin Ingram).

²⁷ John Miller, Report of CAT conference, June 17, 1966, folder 7092, NCFR.

all. Jobs.”²⁸ Of course, Powell did not mean any type of job; he was referring to jobs that would allow individuals to become self-sufficient and improve their quality of life, like those available within the MITCE program. This sentiment, shared by many fellow black congressmen at the time, was not short-lived but carried on throughout the 1970s. Citing the disproportionately high unemployment rate among blacks in 1970, Rep. John Conyers, Jr. of Michigan argued that the prime goal of the Labor Department should be putting “everybody in this country to work” by establishing enough programs to train the unskilled and retrain those whose skills were no longer relevant to the new jobs of that era.²⁹

Eager for both higher-paying and higher-skilled jobs, members of the black community in and around Craven remained among the most vocal supporters of local manpower efforts to bring better days in the present and immediate future. Referring to the MITCE program, COP board member Robert Whitehead warned that if the whites “don’t move along with us, they’re going to be in a position they never dreamed possible.” When more industry began to move into the county, Whitehead predicted, “the Negroes might be qualified for jobs while [whites’] children might not be.”³⁰ Whitehead and most black observers understood at the time that MITCE represented a local revolution, albeit one based on conventional values of work ethic and self-sufficiency.

²⁸ Joint House-Senate Republican Leadership, *The War on Poverty: An American Tragedy*, 54.

²⁹ Godfrey Sperling Jr., “Nixon and black Americans—two views,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1970.

³⁰ Tom Nolan, “Poverty War Can Get Hot: Threats, Cross Burnings Plague Tidewater County,” *Washington Daily News*, October 1965.

Due to the nature and wage scales of the available jobs or the prejudices of employers, job training and industrial education had not been available to blacks and the poor in general, particularly in heavily agricultural regions like Eastern North Carolina. A North Carolina Fund survey of more than eleven thousand low-income residents across the state reported that 80 percent of poor adults had never received any type of job training at all. If this survey was truly representative, job training and education sponsored by the MITCE program could greatly increase the employability and earning power of most low-skilled and undereducated residents; as they learned more about the MITCE program, the poor were becoming acutely aware of this possibility.³¹

Many of the poor already recognized the correlation between full-time, secure, high-skill jobs and better lives. As expected, then, Craven's participating businessmen continued to find the low-income MITCE enrollees whom they agreed to hire directly or place in on-the-job training to be generally dependable, capable, and willing to prove their value. Much of this mutual satisfaction was attributed to the Craven MITCE staff, which consistently heeded the advice given by James McDonald of the North Carolina Fund to "sell the program to the employer" by letting him or her "know the experience and background of the employee" but not to promise "anything you can't back up—be

³¹ While 80 percent of poor individuals in the sample claimed to have not received any type of job training during their lives, approximately 59 percent said they would be willing to take advantage of educational/job training opportunities if available. See *North Carolina's Present and Future Poor: A Study Based on Interviews with 11,600 Families in 31 Low-Income Neighborhoods* (Durham, NC: North Carolina Fund, 1968), 46-47.

honest.”³² Eventually, as a result of the wide success of matching employers with dependable and capable employees, growing numbers of on-the-job trainees were given full-time positions. On average, fewer than 20 percent of the Craven MITCE on-the-job participants were dropped from the program; of these, even fewer quit because they disliked the job requirements or the employer. The local man who quit his training as a chain saw operator at Craven Lumber within two weeks because he “felt it offered no real skill” was far from typical. It was much more likely for workers to be dismissed because they were deemed unreliable or lacked the ability to learn the trade or follow directions; for example, one local man training as an electrician was let go because, according to his employer, he had an “alcoholic problem” and “did not work steadily.”³³

But, again, just to be clear, those deemed undependable, and subsequently dropped from the on-the-job training portion of the MITCE programs, were in the minority. Accordingly, almost all of the employers who participated in the MITCE program in the summer of 1966 said that they would continue to cooperate with the program in order to not only correct the labor shortage issue but also for their own

³² Minutes: Training Workshop for Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort, March 29-31, 1965, New Bern, NC, folder 5354, NCFR.

³³ What makes on-the-job training so ideal for a place like Craven County was the fact that it is adaptable to an economy of small employers with specialized needs and that there is little delay between sign-up and placement. It did not mean, however, that all those employed in on-the-job training would adjust to employer demands nor that those employed would be satisfied by all of the employment opportunities available among those businessmen who were willing to cooperate. Nevertheless, such cases as these appeared to be rare. See Statistical Chart, March 30, 1966, folder 5195, NCFR.

economic well-being and the well-being of the community.³⁴ As New Bern businessmen Thomas Boyd Hadder wrote to the MITCE director in July 1966, “Employers and businessmen, when they understand the program, are willing to take time to help upgrade and train these people so that they will become self-supporting and good citizens.”³⁵ Melvin Grady of Grady’s Moving and Storage also applauded the program as an opportunity “given to the man who might otherwise go un-noticed and un-employed.”³⁶

The tightening labor market of the mid-1960s, in which there were more jobs needing to be filled than potential employees to fill them, played a major role in loosening standards of employability.³⁷ Indeed, most of the businesses contacted by Manpower who did not accept either a Manpower client or an on-the-job contract, claimed to like the sound of the program but considered themselves too small to add extra personnel. An extremely small minority of the businessmen who did not participate responded that they were “antagonistic toward the Manpower program” or did not want “to take part in a government program”; even fewer indicated that they would only accept trainees who were white.³⁸ There were far more white employers such as Mr. Whitford of the Carnival Candy Company in Vanceboro who would keep his black hires despite

³⁴ Gertrude S. Carraway to Mrs. Ruth D. Roberts, July 16, 1966; Mr. C.E. Neal to MITCE staff, July 19, 1966; R.T. Willis to Mrs. Ruth D. Roberts, July 27, 1966; Charles C. Jennett to MITCE staff, July 21, 1966; Edward Weigl to Mrs. Ruth D. Roberts, July 26, 1966, folder 5299, NCFR.

³⁵ Thomas Boyd Hadder to Mrs. Ruth Dial Roberts, July 20, 1966, folder 5299, NCFR.

³⁶ Melvin W. Grady to North Carolina Fund, July 23, 1966, folder 5299, NCFR.

³⁷ Sar A. Levitan, “Work Relief: Social Welfare Style,” in *Hearings Before Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty*, 89th Cong. 665 (1966).

³⁸ Survey: Reasons why employers would not accept a Manpower client or an O.J.T. contract, May 9, 1966, folder 5525, NCFR.

threats by local KKK members.³⁹ These examples show that, by the summer of 1966, Manpower was no longer considered an experimental program and had largely proven its value to the larger community. By this time, similar successes had been noted in other MITCE programs sponsored by the North Carolina Fund within the vicinity of the CAPs of Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development (NEED) and Tri-County Community Action (TCCA).⁴⁰ Due in part to the successes of MITCE across Eastern North Carolina, whose reports the U.S. Labor Department's OMAT was collecting on a monthly basis, job training would become a much bigger part of the War on Poverty budget, comprising 46 percent of its total in 1966, and would thereby fall more in line with Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz's long-held belief that "The most direct answer to poverty is jobs."⁴¹

The complexity behind fighting poverty

But despite the growing participation in MITCE, and the fact that it continued to be among the preferred programs among the poor and the businessmen alike, in 1966 a far greater number of the low-income and unemployed in Eastern North Carolina were not taking full advantage of the opportunity, oftentimes out of choice. As the Manpower staff acknowledged by July 1966, the program could benefit from more training openings

³⁹ Carnival Candy Company, Inc., folder 6038, NCFR

⁴⁰ "I think it's one of the finest programs that any state has going," said Jesse Capel of Capel Rugs in Troy who participated in the MITCE program through Tri-County. "I have talked to people in other parts of the country about what we are doing about the labor shortage, and they have been impressed." See Sandra Heagy Meyer, "Manpower Program Recruits Workers in Tri County Area," *Richmond County Journal* (Rockingham, NC), April 19, 1966.

⁴¹ Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*, 96-97; Russell, *Economics, Bureaucracy, and Race*, 55-62.

“especially for our numerous female heads of households,” but, as they saw it, high turnover was a more significant problem.⁴² Openings almost always outnumbered the numbers of potential workers who were willing and available to fill them.⁴³ A Craven report from June 30 revealed that of the more than 2,100 county residents who had been contacted by the MITCE staff, 637 were deemed qualified for institutional or on-the-job training but only 184 had actually enrolled in either. The 400-plus persons who chose not to enroll, all of whom were either unemployed or underemployed at the time, listed reasons that included “obtained employment on their own;” “age (too old);” “handicapped;” and likely unaware of, uninterested in, or unable to drive to the free daycare program sponsored by COP “no one to look after family.” “Not interested” and “other” rounded out the negative responses, the latter of which likely included people with transportation issues.

The majority of these reasons, of course, were clearly not contingent upon choice. However, “not interested” was by far the most popular single response after “age.” To boot, of the 184 who enrolled in either on-the-job or institutional training, 64 dropped out, only some of whom claimed to have found employment.⁴⁴ Other monthly reports in

⁴² One of the primary reasons for the lack of job training opportunities for female heads of households was the male-dominated local job market in Craven County, a situation that was not unique to the area. Throughout the 1960s, a majority of American women (approximately 60%) did not work and were not counted as part of the national labor force. See Mitra Toosi, “A century of change: The U.S. labor force, 1950-2050,” *Monthly Labor Review* (May 2002): 22, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf>.

⁴³ Report from Manpower Program, folder 5525, NCFR.

⁴⁴ Of those sixty-four who dropped out of training, thirty-four dropped out of on-the-job training, eighteen dropped out of institutional training, and thirteen dropped out of on-the-job training that had just followed institutional training. See Statistical Chart, Project Area: Craven, June 30, 1966, folder 5195, NCFR.

1966 showed similar figures. MITCE staff, however, would not immediately give up on these individuals. Those who were terminated from training, regardless of whether they were fired or had quit, were typically followed up with counseling or were referred to another COP-sponsored program such as adult basic education or the health department. Even so, the counseling phase, which was also begun before contracts were made with employers, saw a sizeable number of drop-outs as well. A March 30, 1966, report showed that 175 of the 367 being counseled (or almost half) dropped out or were terminated.⁴⁵

As these numbers suggest, the poor did not always take advantage of opportunities made available to them—especially if the poor thought that the benefits of participation would not outweigh their current employment situation or might involve risks that they believed they could not afford at that particular point in their lives. Of course, it was to be expected for a portion of on-the-job trainees to withdraw. After all, this aspect of the program was largely designed to serve as a trial period for both employee and employer. Manpower field workers, counselors, and trainers also acknowledged “the existence of ‘Blue Monday’ persons—people that simply will not work out.”⁴⁶ For example, according to an April 1966 team report, one individual who qualified for on-the-job training not only missed his first employer interview (because he had been in jail) but also showed up intoxicated for the second one.⁴⁷ In spite of this awareness, however, local MITCE staff continued to express astonishment that hundreds

⁴⁵ Statistical Chart, March 30, 1966, folder 5195, NCFR.

⁴⁶ Vaughn, Manpower Improvement Through Community Effort background paper, folder 5525, NCFR.

⁴⁷ Kelly Adams, Team Report, April 25-29, 1966, folder 5499, NCFR.

of unemployed and underemployed who they contacted would not even take the first step to give training a chance. “We have been unsuccessful in trying to get them to leave the farm,” counselor James K. Adams lamented in an April 1966 report about several low-income individuals who refused training because of outstanding debts, despite the training allowance they would have received.⁴⁸

MITCE records also show that a significant number of the poor were unwilling to participate in the program without guarantees of instant matches with job openings. These decisions were somewhat logical: many of the underemployed poor could barely make ends meet in their current positions and, therefore, could not afford to quit, possibly offend their employers, and enroll in training that might not secure them the jobs they desired. Middle-aged and older individuals with children were the least likely to risk job or career changes. Black workers of all ages, because of experiences with prejudiced white employers, also tended to fear that training would not necessarily lead to the jobs they would be trained for.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ James K. Adams, Team Report, April 12-15, 1966, folder 5499, NCFR.

⁴⁹ According to former COP board member Bill Flowers, New Bern Shipyards and General Wholesale Building Supply were at least two local companies that had been refusing to hire blacks in skilled positions in 1966. See Bill Flowers to George Esser, Tom Hartmann, Jim McDonald, Preston Kennedy, March 9, 1966, folder 5037, NCFR. Sarah Herbin, a black employment services representative for the North Carolina Good Neighbor Council, told a group Wake County Democratic Women that factors that kept blacks from competing with whites included a lack of resources, educational opportunities, and motivation. “Negroes feel they can’t find employment,” Herbin told the female group, most of whom were white. “The doors have been closed so long that motivation is crushed. Creativity and ambition have been stifled. There’s the additional problem of parents who discourage their children.” Moreover, “Negro young people see only white faces going to and from downtown business offices. There’s not a brown face in the crowd. This situation projects itself to young folks in the community and has a damaging effect. The only brown faces they see are those wearing the green uniforms of maintenance men.” Herbin concluded that “we must encourage management and employers to hire on the basis of merit until we get to the place we can accept

Placement Coordinator Lessie Stram found that this skeptical mentality caused some poor to insist on a guarantee of a higher-paying job before they would enroll in training.⁵⁰ Stram also discovered that although it was best “to let [the poor] know that they have to want our help and be willing to sacrifice in order to better themselves,” some still did not seem to understand that “by sacrificing now they will profit from it later.”⁵¹ Most of the poor who were contacted by MITCE probably understood the amount of sacrifice that was needed but, as mentioned, did not always believe that the effort was worth what might be lost if they did not find new jobs that paid better than the ones they already had. Prolonged periods of poverty and repeated disappointments also probably influenced many of the poor to distrust those who claimed to be there to help and to be wary of the supposed paybacks they might derive from new opportunities.⁵² For others, poverty had created a lifestyle to which, despite its stresses, many had grown accustomed and for whom it felt predictable and therefore relatively safe. The following excerpt,

or reject a person on the basis of his individual qualities.” See “Speaker Discusses North Carolina Good Neighbor Council,” *News & Observer*, May 1, 1964.

⁵⁰ New York City Department of Welfare Commissioner Mitchell I. Ginsberg and Director of Program Development and Training at Community Progress, Inc. (New Haven, CT) Bernard Shiffman would write about this seemingly widespread issue in manpower programs in 1966. As they argued, “While there are individual exceptions, there is evidence to indicate how difficult it is to motivate [the poor] to involve themselves in the training unless they have already secured a job. Even when it is part of employment they tend to be impatient with the training aspects and want to ‘get on with the job.’” See Mitchell I. Ginsberg and Bernard Shiffman, “Manpower and Training Problems in Combating Poverty,” *Law & Contemporary Problems* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1966): 176.

⁵¹ Lessie Stram, Field Report, November 17, 1965, folder 5515, NCFR.

⁵² Within the black community, in particular, there was a marked distrust of fellow blacks who were making fairly high salaries in COP. Mostly based on appearances, the black poor often assumed that blacks had agreed to work for COP to help themselves rather than for a concern for the poor. See W. Judson King letter to North Carolina Fund, October 1966, folder 5029, NCFR.

which illustrates these ambiguities, comes from a report Stram delivered to his supervisor about a particularly unsuccessful outcome:

By appointment, I met a client of mine who has been considering entering the carpentry class....My client and his wife have discussed this over the week-end and have decided that he will not enter the carpentry training class. They have a daughter in college, (her last year) and a son in high school; this plus their living expenses are more than the small allowance will take care of. I asked my client if he had considered the future and what this training would mean to both him and his family in getting a better job. He stated he had thought on both sides of the problem, and he feels he should stay where he is [working part-time at the mill], rather than take the training. He thanked me for my time and effort in trying to help him better himself.⁵³

Despite numerous targeted plans and uncountable man-hours spent in trying to educate the poor about available job training opportunities and persuade them to enroll, less-than-ideal participation rates persisted throughout the life of the MITCE program.⁵⁴ Was the program's philosophy or execution essentially flawed? The available evidence suggests that the answer is most likely no. In fact, as partially gleaned from 1960's interviews of both black and white poor residents, MITCE remained one of the most popular programs

⁵³ Report by Lessie Stram, November 23, 1965, folder 5515, NCFR. Stram reported on a similar case a month earlier: "A lady with whom I have been working with for some months now is employed, part-time, at Craven County Hospital. All along she has been very interested in training in some area so she can be self-supporting...Today when I talked with her, she stated, due to a big transportation problem, and since she will get a small check [from the Social Security Administration] until her son is out of school, she has decided not to train through our program. I explained the advantages to her that this training would have; she would earn as she learned; she would learn a trade or skill; she would be better able to support herself when she stops getting this Social Security check. However, this had no effect on her and she did not change her mind. I feel that my counselor should see this client and make one last try for I truly believe if she can see how much she will benefit by training, she will take it." See Report by Lessie Stram, October 27, 1965, folder 5515, NCFR.

⁵⁴ However, based on MITCE data from 1967 and onward, skepticism would gradually begin to disappear as more of the low-income learned of the successful efforts of their friends, relatives, and neighbors in using training to acquire a better job.

within Craven Operation Progress among those who enrolled. Yet even a program that provided one of the surest avenues yet offered for the types of jobs the poor wanted could not by itself overcome intended beneficiaries' doubts, skepticisms, or diminished initiative after years of disappointment or unfair treatment. Neither could such programs overcome a belief among some low-income residents—most of whom were rural, were used to doing without certain luxuries, and lived in proximity to other low-income residents—that they were not desperately in need as defined by the North Carolina Fund and OEO.

As the 1965 North Carolina Fund survey of the state's poor residents discussed earlier revealed, slightly more than 50 percent of the more than eleven thousand polled expressed an interest in job training and education in order to improve their incomes and their way of life; however, almost 30 percent said they would not be willing to take advantage of either. Some of these 30 percent may have been distrustful of all government-funded programs. Yet the same survey showed another surprising yet similar result: as many as 41 percent of the poor would not move elsewhere to get "a good job" and, of those, 28 percent claimed they would not move regardless of the potential salary.⁵⁵ These numbers do not mean, however, that most of the low-income residents of Craven County did not desire the same things as the mainstream culture such as financial security and a fulfilling lives for themselves and their families, including the ability to move beyond subsistence living and purchase consumer products that would bring them

⁵⁵ *North Carolina's Present and Future Poor: A Study Based on Interviews with 11,600 Families in 31 Low-Income Neighborhoods* (Durham, NC: North Carolina Fund, 1968), 46-47, 49, 50.

pleasure, enjoyment, and comfort. With this largely being the case, some might find it somewhat puzzling that only a minority of the poor joined a program that was designed with these desires of theirs in mind. Historian Thomas Kiffmeyer has given quite a bit of detail to this phenomenon among rural people in the Appalachian Mountain region. As spoken by a white antipoverty worker in Kentucky whom Kiffmeyer quoted, “When the [War on Poverty] is aimed at a certain group of people [there] is an isolation that causes them to feel the stigma of this sense of poverty. I doubt that they there are very many here who are in the same, or as poor a circumstance, as I was at a boy. But we never thought of it as poverty. I think it has a lot to do with the mental attitude...But I believe that if somebody had stuck me in a little group and said ‘You are here because you’re poor’ it would have hurt me perhaps beyond recovery.” Kiffmeyer concludes that the poor’s “resentment of reform efforts that labeled them as poor,” helps to explain the “[the War on Poverty’s] immediate failure” in the Appalachian area, adding that “many Appalachian residents saw the War on Poverty as just another in a century-long tradition of reform that ultimately saw them as objects, as tools to fulfill someone else’s agenda.”

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Perhaps another reluctance of a significant portion of poor people in Craven County to participate in anti-poverty job training programs can be better understood if it is considered against the diminished expectations that can and do develop after years or

⁵⁶ Thomas Kiffmeyer, “Looking Back to the City in the Hills: The Council of the Southern Mountains and a Longer View of the War on Poverty in the Appalachian South, 1913-1970” in Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*, 376-377. See also Kiffmeyer, *Reformers to Radicals*.

even decades of insufficient income, as well as habits and actions that could appear self-defeating to the middle-class observer. In such cases, a poverty-induced mindset could very well prevent the poor from taking the initiative to seek help, accepting help when it was offered, or being willing to make sacrifices to achieve goals in which they had little or no faith. Moreover, not until one sees an issue with how one is currently living can there be any change. Franklin Ingram, who was Craven's volunteer team director during the Klan-inspired shootings in the summer of 1965, recalled that the poor he encountered often lacked confidence and had little hope, especially the undereducated. "Their world is very small," he added, after acknowledging that a good number of poor people never took advantage of the opportunities they were offered.⁵⁷ North Carolina Volunteers who were assigned to work among the poor in Craven during the summer tended to agree. "I am convinced that all of the money and programs we can apply to the problems of poverty," a white female volunteer reported, "will never be really effective without a real understanding of the people of poverty and their view of themselves and their problems." Another female volunteer, who worked in the predominately black neighborhood of Duffyfield, would similarly argue that "though prejudice was certainly a factor [in black poverty], I believe ignorance was a cause as well."⁵⁸ In short, whether or not certain attitudes and/or behaviors among the poor were leading causes of poverty or

⁵⁷ Franklin Ingram, interview by author, Cary, NC, November 5, 2010, transcript of interview in author's possession.

⁵⁸ Sandra Johnson, Report on Work Done in the New South Front Street Area (Pollock St.) in New Bern, N.C., August 25, 1965; Anne Jones, Report, Summer 1965, Duffy field, New Bern, NC, in Craven Operation Progress, Inc., North Carolina Fund Volunteers Reports, Summer 1965 (in possession of Mr. Franklin Ingram).

developed because of poverty, they did appear to influence the choices made by poor people in Eastern North Carolina when faced with opportunities that seemed to promise a better livelihood. Often, it would take considerable time for these attitudes to change.

This reluctance to participate in job-training programs was not limited to Eastern North Carolina. Opportunities Industrial Center (OIC) founder and director Leon Sullivan quickly discovered that “almost all of [the trainees] were coming to OIC with a poor opinion of themselves” and even that many of the unemployed and undereducated black youth “had been brainwashed into inferiority.”⁵⁹ Although social scientists who have studied poverty in America since the 1960s have generally discounted “the culture of poverty” thesis that underpinned both the North Carolina Fund and the War on Poverty, arguing that it is merely a way to “blame the victim,” since 2010, the thesis has experienced resurgence as fewer scholars are completely rejecting the notion that “attitudes and behavior patterns [may have] kept people poor.”⁶⁰ Most historians who have studied the War on Poverty agree with liberal critics at the time, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., that the anti-poverty programs, which never amounted to more than 1.5

⁵⁹ Leon H. Sullivan, *Build, Brother, Build* (Philadelphia, PA: Macrae Smith, 1969), 98.

⁶⁰ Following Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s controversial 1965 report on the self-perpetuating behaviors that, he argued, were creating a crisis among the black family in the growing number of unmarried mothers and welfare dependents, social scientists have been wary of the “culture of poverty” theory and have instead placed most of the blame of poverty on the larger society or economic system itself. Yet, as mentioned above, there has been growing numbers of scholars who have begun to reexamine this thesis and whether it should be fully discounted. See Mario Luis Small, David J. Harding, and Michèle Lamont, “Reconsidering Culture and Poverty,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629 (May 2010): 6-27; Patricia Cohen, “‘Culture of Poverty’ Makes a Comeback,” *New York Times*, October 17, 2010; Robert Rector, “Liberals Reexamining the Culture of Poverty? Guess Again,” *National Review*, October 18, 2010.

percent of the national budget between 1965 and 1970, were inadequately funded.⁶¹

Depending on the location, such as a large city like Watts with significant black youth unemployment, they might be correct. But at least in Craven, seeing how many available job-training slots were left unfilled, lack of money was not necessarily the primary issue faced in attempts to reduce poverty.

This discussion of the Craven MITCE program demonstrates that fighting poverty in the 1960s in Eastern North Carolina was a complicated endeavor that was not dependent simply upon opportunity expansion or the depth of passion that may or may not have been present among COP staff and leadership, including COP executive director Robert Monte. Instead, the success of these antipoverty initiatives depended at least in part upon the trust and goodwill of the poor, neither of which could be fully won overnight or, sometimes, at all.⁶² By July 1966, Monte was also seeing first-hand that the problem of less-than-ideal participation rates was not limited to the local Manpower program. For example, late that month black COP board member Catherine Berry urged Monte to meet with her and members of her community in Brice's Creek about their concerns that COP programs were not reaching people in need. After this meeting, Monte "checked into the reasons for the Brice's Creek area being neglected," and found, as he

⁶¹ Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*, 191, 260; Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty*, 147.

⁶² A former black maid who worked as a neighborhood worker for Charlotte's CAP (Charlotte Area Fund) explained that with the poor: "Some of them have had unpleasant experiences with people offering help. So you just have to keep going back, and get them to trust you...A lot of them are afraid to go to agencies for help. A person may have had one bad experience, and not want to go back." See "Neighborhood Workers Builds Confidence," *Blueprint for Opportunity* 2, October 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

would later write to Berry, “that this is not completely true...Many persons were contacted concerning the Adult Basic Education classes and were expected to enroll,” Monte explained, “however, no one ever attended.” He also informed Berry that childcare and transportation would be provided only if people signed up. Monte added that “the Rural Environmental Sanitation Program made a survey of your area and residents were told to apply at the Craven County Health Department for privies if they so desired. Our records indicated that only two persons requested privies.” Therefore, “Two privies were installed.”⁶³

Monte’s matter-of-factness in his letter to Berry could be seen as a demonstration of insensitivity toward the poor’s circumstances. However, Monte understood at least as well as the majority of COP leadership and staff that the poor, largely due to their distrust, hopelessness, lack of access to information, busy work schedules, or transportation issues, would have to be directly contacted by COP staff, possibly multiple times, in order to actually benefit from the assistance available through the antipoverty programs. As executive director, Monte also considered it fair for the poor to be granted some concessions in certain situations so that they could have a say in COP program development and implementation. For example, in April, Monte had overseen and supported the codification of new by-laws for Coastal Progress, Inc. (CPI), which were endorsed by OEO, that included that “1/3 of this board shall consist of low-income individuals” who would be elected democratically by members of the poor communities

⁶³ Robert R. Monte to Mrs. Catherine Berry, August 4, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR.

themselves.⁶⁴ In order to improve attendance, Monte had also persuaded the COP board to approve of the use of transportation funds by the poor members of the board so that they could attend board meetings regularly, had suggested that staff members help transport them, and had gained OEO approval for funding a Home Management program for the Jones County CAA, (a new affiliate of Coastal Progress) that would use peer education models to help low-income families assist each other in improving their living standards.⁶⁵ These actions notwithstanding, Monte continued to believe that the poor would have to take partial responsibility for their situation and take the initiative to seek available help. Monte, like most liberals and conservatives alike understood, knew that true change ultimately rested with the poor.⁶⁶

Consensus-seeking decision-making

Monte similarly believed, as did most of the COP board of directors, that demands made by poor residents and their advocates should be met with some degree of community approval. By the spring of 1966, several young volunteers from VISTA and

⁶⁴ The new Coastal Progress by-laws codified in April also stated that minority representation “shall be proportionate to the percentage of population of the minority in Craven County.” See COP Board meeting minutes, April 7, 1966; COP Board meeting minutes, March 16, 1966, Folder 4975, NCFR. The new COP by-law of April 1966 that stated that 1/3 of the board was to consist of members of the poor who were democratically selected was approved well prior to essentially identical guidelines issued by OEO, that were to go into effect on March 1, 1967. Prior to January 1967, OEO had merely required that CAAs provide the “maximum feasible participation” or the poor without “stipulating mathematically what that meant.” See Joseph A. Luftus, “Poverty Unit Sets Ballot Guidelines,” *Washington Post*, January 17, 1967. By March 1967, OEO would report that only 5 percent of local agencies, most of which were in the Northeast, were “delinquent in compliance.” See Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, 132.

⁶⁵ COP Board meeting minutes, March 23, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR; Jack Rider, “Personal Paragraphs,” *Trenton-Jones Journal*, July 7, 1966.

⁶⁶ Mitchell I. Ginsberg and Bernard Shiffman, “Manpower and Training Problems in Combating Poverty,” *Law & Contemporary Problems* 31 (Winter 1966): 160.

the North Carolina Fund's group of Community Action Technicians (CATs) who had been assigned to Craven County that year were encouraging the poor to use confrontational techniques with public officials in order to achieve better living conditions.⁶⁷ One of these volunteers, CAT organizer Marv Zommick, had allied himself with Leon Nixon of the SCLC, who continued to frustrate many COP board members by regularly picketing past COP headquarters instead of meeting to discuss his grievances. Nixon's demonstration on March 19, which occurred within minutes of the funeral of black Good Neighbor Council member Charles C. Sparrow, angered many local blacks because Sparrow had been so well respected in the black community and had worked so hard to establish interracial harmony in New Bern.⁶⁸ Nixon led another demonstration in June, consisting of a small picket (of approximately ten persons) in front of Rivers Funeral Home in an attempt to win, as North Carolina Fund staffers put it, "a personality battle" against the funeral home's owner Bishop S. Rivers (also a COP board member and revered civil rights leader), who Nixon believed was "trying to break the unity of the Negro community."⁶⁹ These actions were as unpopular with the majority of blacks and whites in Craven as they were with black leaders outside the county. Among these was

⁶⁷ "We had problems with the placement of Community Action Technicians (CATS) in some of the project areas that spring [of 1966], notably in the Tri-County and Craven County areas," Esser recalled. See Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 190.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Evans, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 23, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

⁶⁹ Arch Foster and Robert Blow, Field Report, COP, June 21-23, 1966, folder 5037, NCFR.

Floyd McKissick of the NAACP, who reportedly called Nixon “corrupt and ineffective.”⁷⁰

But Monte’s problems with Zommick were not limited to his association with Nixon. According to Monte, Zommick had falsely raised the hopes of the black poor he was working with in the Harlowe neighborhood by oversimplifying various issues and by overpromising results, especially with regard to the installation of an adequate drainage system for the area, which required state approval.⁷¹ Zommick’s imprudent style had prompted Community Development Director Maggie Blow, her assistant Jim Massie, and Robert Whitehead, all three of whom were immensely interested in organizing the black poor, to complain about Zommick’s work in Harlowe. Eventually, former Craven MITCE director Royce Jordan, who had been working as a field representative for the North Carolina Fund since early 1966, was able to convince Monte not to fire Zommick (based on a letter of request from Harlowe residents). Monte did insist, however, that if Zommick was going to stay he would have to stop participating in Nixon’s demonstrations. Monte was also persuaded by Jordan’s announcement that Blow, Massie, and Whitehead recently agreed that COP should sponsor Zommick’s work in Harlowe.⁷²

Yet, largely based on Zommick’s past liability, Monte felt that COP should be allowed to screen the eight VISTA volunteers he had requested from OEO as part of a

⁷⁰ CAT Conference, Rocky Mount, May 11-13, folder 7091, NCFR.

⁷¹ Liz Williamson, interview by John Miller, June 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

⁷² Royce Jordan, Field Report, June 20-25, 1966, folder 5037, NCFR.

new Community Development program proposal, in order to prevent an explosive situation from developing between the poor and the larger community. He even suggested that he, Lee Morgan, and possibly James Massie of Community Development should go to Washington themselves to conduct such interviews. At the COP board meeting on March 22, most of the board seemed to agree with Constance Rabin that it was important for volunteers to be oriented to the community and to the situation they would be facing.⁷³ Clearly, the Craven community preferred gradual methods of change over accelerated ones, and thoughtful negotiations to public demonstrations. Monte understood this well.

Even though it was often a slow process, negotiation was preferred over demonstrations, but not simply in hopes of wearing down the poor by delaying their requests. Neither was negotiation necessarily a dead-end road. In fact, earlier negotiations with the New Bern Civic League, which was headed by Bishop S. Rivers, was critical to the appointment of Grover C. Fields, black principal of J.T. Barber High School, to the New Bern Housing Authority in January 1966. Fields became the first black to hold such a position.⁷⁴ Co-Chairman Rev. Al Fisher of the Craven Good Neighbor Council had also

⁷³ COP Board meeting minutes, March 23, 1966, folder 4975, NCFR; John Miller, Report on COP Board meeting, March 23, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR.

⁷⁴ Mack Lupton, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR; B.S. Rivers, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, January 19, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR; J.S. Tucker to Mr. Julius LeVonne Chambers, May 26, 1966, folder: U.S. District Court Cases, Richardson, Norma, et al. v. Housing Authority of New Bern, Case 678, Larkins Papers; As understood by Whitehead, who first wrote New Bern Housing Authority Director I.I. Blanford back in August 1965 asking that his seemingly neglectful and harsh policies toward Craven Terrace residents be modified, Blanford would not have to be removed from his post but more liberal members would need to be appointed to the housing authority to help to sway him from his hard-line positions. See Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, transcript, February, 16, 1966, folder 7090, NCFR.

been facilitating negotiations between the New Bern Housing Authority and residents of Craven Terrace public housing project since at least January, following action taken by I.I. Blanford between November and December 1965. During that two-month period, Blanford had ordered the evictions of at least eight black women receiving AFDC because they had given birth to more out-of-wedlock children after moving into their apartments.⁷⁵ These women certainly preferred the process of negotiation as an improvement over the situation described by COP board member and Craven Terrace resident Claretta Wordlaw, who claimed that in December 1965 she and five other female residents had been refused a meeting by Blanford because “he was too busy.”⁷⁶ Yet, after about a month, the process was apparently not moving quickly enough, which influenced Whitehead to talk the group of women into filing suit in federal district court.

As expected, this move by Whitehead and the female tenants alienated members of the city housing authority, including Blanford, who temporarily withdrew from all negotiations. Back in September 1965, Blanford had agreed, by request of Whitehead, to set aside one apartment in each of the two city housing projects for the operation of a day

⁷⁵ Since at least 1960, the lease drawn up by the New Bern Housing Authority stated that tenants had to disclose to the landlord whether they had any additional out-of-wedlock children and then leave within thirty days or they could face eviction of themselves, children, and their property. See Brief in Support of Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss, Mrs. E.G. Adams to Josephine McKinnon, November 22, 1965, box 120, folder : U.S. District Court Cases, Richardson, Norma et al. v. Housing Authority of New Bern, Case 678, Larkins Papers. According to Blanford’s affidavit, only a few of the eight women ordered to vacate their apartments actually acquiesced and voluntarily moved out. He added that “the [New Bern] Housing Authority has never physically ejected any tenant.” See I.I. Blanford, Text of Affidavit, Civil Action No. 678: Norma Richardson et. al. v. Housing Authority of the City of New Bern, NBHA minutes.

⁷⁶ Claretta Wordlaw, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 14, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

care center. Moreover, Attorney David L. Ward had written to Whitehead on behalf of Blanford and the housing authority members expressing their “desire to provide illegitimate children with a decent place to live” and to ask for “further suggestions as to how we might handle this matter in order to be fair and at the same time keep the decency and respect of our tenants who are not subject to the illegitimacy problem.”⁷⁷ The filing of the suit also frustrated Reverend Fisher of the local Good Neighbor Council, who had believed that the parties were on the verge of reaching a fair agreement. Among the recommendations agreed upon by the Council was a lowering of the rental rates at Craven Terrace and Trent Court and an upgrade of the overall maintenance of the two housing projects, both of which the Council thought were reasonable and likely to be approved by Blanford from a desire to “provide an example of decent and clean and attractive living.”⁷⁸ Although Rev. Fisher conceded the right of blacks to believe that “things have moved too slowly,” he also made clear his convictions that the Good Neighbor Council must remain a county-wide group that “deals with all the people in the

⁷⁷ David L. Ward, Jr. to Mr. R.M. Whitehead, September 13, 1965, NBHA minutes.

⁷⁸ Moreover, the local Good Neighbor Council was willing to concede to the New Bern Housing Authority’s policy regarding “continued tenancy of women with a recurrent history of bearing illegitimate children,” which its members agreed “seems reasonable when all factors are considered.” As Rev. Sharp wrote to city housing authority member Louis B. Daniel, “Social evils exist which promote this behavior [of having children out of wedlock] and these evils cross all racial and ethnic lines and seem not to be peculiar to our local situation. While we recognize a humanitarian concern for these women and their children, their adverse influence on the greater number of people living in the projects must be considered and given precedence. The complex social, moral and economic situations that foster continued illegitimacy are considered beyond the scope and purpose of the Good Neighbor Council.” See C. Edward Sharp to Louis B. Daniel, January 19, 1966, NBHA minutes.

community” and that it could not retain its effectiveness if it became a civil rights organization that solely argued on behalf of blacks.⁷⁹

Norma Richardson et al. v. Housing Authority of City of New Bern was filed on March 7, 1966. NAACP attorney Julius Chambers of Charlotte represented the plaintiffs who, in addition to seeking the removal of clauses from the lease that required tenants to vacate the premises if they had additional children out of wedlock, sought relief from having to move to “substandard, unsanitary, and unsafe, crowded living conditions.”⁸⁰ As Chambers argued, not only had the women been evicted without proper due process but eviction on the grounds of additional out-of-wedlock children born during the terms of their leases was merely a “punishment” that violated “the intent of social welfare legislation” and the women’s right to equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment.⁸¹ On March 18, U.S. District Judge John D. Larkins, Jr. ordered that New Bern Housing Authority cease “from evicting plaintiffs and members of their class for having illegitimate children” and “without just or reasonable cause.” During the time that temporary restraining order was effective, approximately one year, the New Bern Housing Authority agreed to conform to the 1967 policies of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which officially ended their policy of evicting tenants who bore additional out-of-wedlock children while living in Craven Terrace apartments.

⁷⁹ Reverend Al Fisher, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

⁸⁰ “Negroes File Suit Here in Federal Court,” *Sun Journal*, March 8, 1966.

⁸¹ Brief for the Plaintiffs on Their Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order, box 120, folder: U.S. District Court Cases, Richardson, Norma et al. v. Housing Authority of New Bern, Case 678, Larkins Papers.

Judge Larkins also directed the plaintiffs and defendants to confer with one another in order to settle amongst themselves any remaining issues.⁸² By March 1968, following further negotiations, both parties would agree that all matters under controversy had been resolved and, thus, the case was dismissed.⁸³

Monte had believed Blanford to be vulnerable well before this lawsuit. In fact, soon after the suit was filed in March, Monte was quick to openly predict that the Craven Terrace group would win.⁸⁴ Monte not only predicted this outcome but seemed to prefer it. While he had criticized the VISTA-led demonstrations against Blanford just a few months prior, Monte expressed no problems at all with the tenants' decision to take Blanford and the housing authority members to court. In addition to the likelihood that Monte found Blanford's willingness to evict single and low-income mothers and their

⁸² The two parties met on at least four occasions between March 1966 and January 1967. See I.I. Blanford to All Commissioners, memorandum, April 1, 1966, NBHA minutes; "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern," June 21, 1966, NBHA minutes; Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern," November 22, 1966, NBHA minutes; Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern," January 10, 1967, NBHA minutes.

⁸³ Because they had agreed with officials of the housing authority that the case should be dismissed, the plaintiffs were awarded only their court costs. Judge John D. Larkins, Jr., Consent Order, May 13, 1968, box 120, folder : U.S. District Court Cases, Richardson, Norma et al. v. Housing Authority of New Bern, Case 678, Larkins Papers. Just before the final negotiations were settled between the two parties, I.I. Blanford retired as executive director of the city housing authority after 22 years, effective July 31, 1967. See "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern Held on July 5, 1967," NBHA minutes.

⁸⁴ The decision made by blacks at Craven Terrace to sue Blanford and the housing authority, however, may have led to the faction that developed by June 1966 between whites at Trent Court and blacks at Craven Terrace who had been working together on joint projects in the past. According to CAT supervisor Liz Williamson, New Bern Housing Authority Director I.I. Blanford was feared more by whites at Trent Court and whites were not as organized and interested in updating housing problems as were blacks. As blacks in Craven Terrace would claim in the suit against the New Bern Housing Authority, conditions at Trent Court were superior to those within their own apartment buildings. See Liz Williamson, interview by John Miller, June 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

children without a fair trial inappropriate and insensitive, he knew that resolving tenants' disputes in the courts would significantly lower the possibility of future protests that he, Monte, would have to deal with. Nonetheless, as previously discussed, although Monte's interest in seeing the poor be treated fairly and justly was sincere (if not for his own desire to avoid conflict), he believed that any expansion of programs assisting them should be, on the whole, approved by members of the community and/or any cooperating agencies. Monte's unwillingness to budge from this belief was most apparent during COP board discussions about adding Legal Services, a program designed to provide free legal assistance to the poor, to the list of programs sponsored by COP.

The first full discussion about possibly adding Legal Services occurred at the June 22 COP board meeting, just before three new at-large members of the poor were added. Seth Williams of Pembroke, Daniel Spruill of Pleasant Hill, and Beatrice Simmons of Pollock Street, all of whom were black, were the first COP board appointees selected by representatives of the low-income community councils that were organized through Community Development.⁸⁵ Previously, before Monte approved the establishment of the Community Development program, poor representatives had been appointed only by middle-class members of the board of directors (a standard practice for many CAAs who were first getting their feet wet in the concept of "maximum feasible participation"). The new method of selection was established within COP after the North Carolina Fund's April 1966 review of COP, which recommended that the board of directors no longer

⁸⁵ The Duffyfield neighborhood council was at least organization of low-income persons which had been formed both prior to the establishment of Community Development and the War on Poverty.

hand-pick representatives of the poor but instead allow the poor themselves to decide who they thought best represented their interests. The COP board of directors' willingness to agree to let the poor elect their own representatives suggests that they were interested in expanding community action efforts and in continuing to receive the blessings, financially speaking, of the North Carolina Fund and the OEO.

The same willingness could be inferred from the COP board's consideration of Legal Services (a national emphasis program being encouraged by OEO). After Monte's administrative assistant Ralph Jacobs presented the proposal he had written, with the help of a UNC-Chapel Hill law student and a licensed lawyer in Orange County, Robert Whitehead and poor black representative Claretta Wordlaw were among the first to ask the executive committee, which included black representatives of the poor Elizabeth Evans and the newly appointed Daniel Spruill, to study the proposal so that the board could vote on it and then send to OEO before the June 30 deadline.⁸⁶ No objection was made to this request. Indeed, based on Jacob's presentation there was little ground for objection; for one, the three lawyers who would be hired via Legal Services to assist the poor would not be competing with local lawyers and would focus upon non-criminal

⁸⁶ According to Claretta Wordlaw, she and a group of local poor residents first addressed COP executive director Jim Hearn to discuss adding a Legal Services program in Craven County during the summer of 1965. "The result of that discussion," she explained to Congressman David N. Henderson, was "two letters were written to the Craven County Bar Association for advice" in August 1965 and March 1966, respectively. Based on what Wordlaw described as a tepid response from the local bar association, she concluded that the association had no real interest in the program, and thus, "the citizen[s] encouraged the writing of the Proposal for Legal Services." See Claretta Wordlaw to Honorable David N. Henderson, August 6, 1966, folder: Legislative Correspondence, Civil Rights Act of 1964, 1966, Walter Beamon Jones Papers, Special Collections, J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University. Hereinafter cited as Jones Papers.

matters such as divorce settlements and paternity suits. Best of all, the program would only require just over \$7,000 in local matching funds.⁸⁷

In spite of these auspicious conditions, after conferring with a delegation from the Craven County Bar Association, the COP executive committee decided that the “proposed program on Legal Services should be delayed for further study until a more acceptable proposal could be developed.”⁸⁸ With Monte’s encouragement, the executive committee had met with the county bar association on June 27 in hopes of receiving its approval for the Legal Services proposal, but instead, they were informed that Jacob’s proposal violated both North Carolina state laws and the canon of ethics of the North Carolina State Bar. The county bar was particularly concerned that the proposal, as written, would induce attorneys hired by COP to “serve two masters.” As congressman and former Duplin County lawyer David N. Henderson later explained in a letter to Claretta Wordlaw, which he forwarded to NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins, if COP “should employ a full-time salaried attorney, his primary loyalty would be to the corporate employer—not to individual low-income people referred to him.”⁸⁹ In addition, the county bar argued that if persons were allowed free counsel, the program had the potential to incite litigation.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ COP board meeting minutes, June 22, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

⁸⁸ COP board meeting minutes, July 5, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

⁸⁹ Congressman David N. Henderson to Mrs. Claretta Wordlaw, August 9, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁹⁰ One of the portions of the proposal that the bar found most troubling was an example given to show the need for a Legal Services program in Craven County: “The purchaser of a refrigerator on retail installment

Aside from finding fault with the Legal Services proposal's inconsistency with the law and state bar canon of ethics, members of the county bar were also personally offended by some of the proposal's stated assumptions, which they claimed were "gross exaggerations."⁹¹ In the words of Solicitor of the Craven County Recorder's Court Robert G. Bowers, the document had been drawn up by individuals who had "little or no knowledge or understanding of the law" and had slandered "the whole Craven County bar" for asserting that "indigents are forced to do without legal services" and "people are denied access to legal services merely because of the inability to pay." As Bowers told Monte, "Every lawyer in New Bern has spent countless hours counseling, assisting, and actively trying cases in courts for impoverished persons, without charging fees or being reimbursed for expenses."⁹² Bowers also insisted that members of the county bar had "attempted to furnish fair and reasonable representation to all people without regard to race, color, creed, or financial circumstances."⁹³

Bowers' claims cannot be proven or disproven. However, as COP Board member Bishop S. Rivers observed, this was not the main issue for himself and fellow black board

terms bought a stove from the same vendor on like terms before she made final payment on the refrigerator. After several payments were made on the stove, one was missed. The vendor repossessed both stove and refrigerator." See Original Legal Services Proposal, folder 5078, NCFR. As Robert G. Bowers wrote Monte in response to this specific example, "Can you see any intelligent business man selling an appliance on credit if he knew that the buyer was going to be encouraged to either bring suit against him or to avoid payment?" See Robert G. Bowers to Robert R. Monte, July 6, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

⁹¹ Craven County Bar Association's Consideration of Legal Services Proposal, June 27, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR.

⁹² Robert G. Bowers to Robert R. Monte, July 6, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

⁹³ Robert G. Bowers to Congressman David N. Henderson, August 11, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

members Whitehead and Wordlaw, who were especially supportive of the Legal Services program. “I feel that if one of the local lawyers helped me for free he would not do as well as if he were paid,” Rivers reasoned with a conservative white COP Board member.⁹⁴ For their part, most of the members of the county bar, who seemed primarily bothered that they had not been consulted at all about the Legal Services proposal, were seemingly most concerned about maintaining the integrity of the law profession, which was the mission of all local, state, and national bar associations. After supposedly receiving confirmation from the district bar, the state bar, and the state attorney general that their objections had been correct, the Craven County bar provided Monte with a statement that promised its members would do all they could towards the “restraining of any activities under such program” if the Legal Services proposal was sent to OEO as proposed.⁹⁵ Representative Henderson, who agreed with the county attorneys that the proposal violated what “the legal profession considers to be high standards of legal practice,” warned Monte that he would do the same if the program was established and operated without the consent and the cooperation of the Craven County Bar Association.

Outside intervention on the rise

These negative reactions from the county bar and Rep. Henderson convinced Monte, himself no legal expert, that the original Legal Services proposal would have to

⁹⁴ COP board meeting minutes, July 28, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

⁹⁵ Craven County Bar Association’s Consideration of Legal Services Proposal, June 27, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR. North Carolina State Bar Secretary Edward L. Cannon’s letter to Congressman Walter B. Jones confirmed the state bar’s disapproval of the Legal Services program for its attempts to “take over the courts and the legal profession of our state.” See Edward L. Cannon to Honorable Walter Jones, October 4, 1966, folder: Legislative Correspondence, Civil Rights Act of 1964, 1966, Jones Papers.

be scrapped. In order to ensure that such a program could be undertaken legally, and in accordance with known standards of the law profession, he decided to ask the Craven County Bar to construct its own proposal for the COP board to consider. As Monte specifically told North Carolina Fund Field Representative Royce Jordan, he would not push the legal aid program from his office unless it had the approval of the county bar.⁹⁶ Fund staff, including Jordan, were dismayed by this action and believed that Monte was surrendering Legal Services to a hostile bar that would write a weak, ineffective proposal. “Although [Monte] seems to want this proposal,” Jordan wrote in a field report for July 27-28, “he still wants it to conform in every way to the wishes of the local bar association.” Jordan thought that Monte might be secretly trying to defeat the proposal altogether, an opinion that was shared by OEO representative Bob Burns.⁹⁷

The Fund’s disagreement with Monte over his handling of the Legal Services proposal capped a string of events—including Monte’s imposition of restrictions on ABER volunteers, which had influenced OEO to recall all VISTAs in February, and his reprimand of Lee Morgan over the voter registration advertisement in April—that had led Fund staff to believe that there was a necessity of increasing their involvement in the local affairs of COP. From the perspective of Fund representative Royce Jordan, COP “has added nothing new to its program” and “has slowed down on everything.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Royce Jordan, Field Report, July 27-28, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

⁹⁷ Royce Jordan, Field Report, July 27-28, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR; Royce Jordan, Field Report, July 5, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

⁹⁸ Pat Wallace, Community Support Conference, June 15, 1966, Craven County, folder 7090, NCFR.

Although the first half of this statement was untrue—Community Development, Federal Credit Union, ABER, MITCE, and NYC were among those programs either added or expanded within eight months of Monte’s hiring—Monte was undoubtedly running the program at a much slower pace than the Fund had preferred when Hearn was in charge. Even before the Legal Services conflict, the Fund’s strategy had been to “run things around Monte,” “get rid of [Ralph] Jacobs” who the Fund had believed was placed in charge of too many responsibilities, and “try to get [Lee] Morgan to assume some responsibility.”⁹⁹ Therefore, Jordan and other Fund staff were not impressed on June 22 when at the request of COP Board member T. J. Collier, the COP board of directors unanimously stated its confidence in Monte and his administration of COP.¹⁰⁰ As John Miller detailed in a North Carolina Fund report, “As relations between the Fund and COP worsened,” due to disagreements over the means of implementing the programs, “COP’s autonomy from the Fund actually decreased because the latter felt a duty to more closely scrutinize and attempt to influence activities taking place within the COP organization.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ COP board meeting minutes, June 22, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

¹⁰¹ John Miller, “Craven Operation Progress: Autonomy from OEO, NCF, and Local Agencies,” p.1-3, folder 4967, NCFR.



Figure 23. Craven County native and North Carolina Fund Field Representative Royce Jordan, circa 1966. Photo courtesy of Royce Jordan.



Figure 24. North Carolina Fund Field Representative James McDonald, circa 1965, New Bern, NC. Billy Barnes Collection.

Two related factors help to explain the greater intervention of the North Carolina Fund in the direction of COP by the summer of 1966: both a growth in the number of liberal Fund staff who were interested in the “conflict model” of change and George Esser’s largely hands-off approach as executive director. Esser himself stated:

I did not anticipate or intend all of the confrontations with which we were faced, because this simply is not my style. On the other hand, I recognized that I was director of a staff which did become very emotionally involved as the advocate of the poor North Carolinian, and particularly the poor black North Carolinian. I also gave the staff freedom to hire who they wanted. Increasingly, the attitude of the staff toward the community action agencies was one of prodding, one of advocacy, or confrontation, of encouraging the poor in these communities to confront the system, and while I personally did not encourage the conflict model, I defended it, and I was increasingly willing to interpret to the state at large the problem of poor people in the community.¹⁰²

As explained in this quotation, the views of several Fund staff hired by Esser by 1966 about fairness and the best means of influencing positive change in the lives of the poor differed, at times quite widely, from the views held by the majority of people who lived in the communities to which the Fund’s efforts were directed. Specifically, several Fund staff acted from a point of view, sometimes valid and sometimes not, that most of the poor and/or minorities were victims of decisions purposely made by whites and the middle-class to keep them disadvantaged. This point of view meant that advancement for the poor and true solutions to their problems could not be achieved through negotiations with the people and institutions they deemed were responsible for their poverty. As a result, when newly hired Fund staff pushed for democratic participation and local self-

¹⁰² Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 174.

determination they were more interested in initiatives that directly benefitted poor. In short, the belief that local power and influence was a zero-sum game in which one person's gain was another's loss led many Fund staff to advocate for the civil rights and preferences of the poor over the civil rights and preferences of members of the wider community.

Fund staffers Sarah Herbin and Howard Fuller, both black, were two especially striking examples of the activist type that Esser was starting to employ. On a visit to Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development (NEED) in Rocky Mount in June 1966, Herbin supposedly told the Project Director of NEED, R.I. Gould, that "the true function of a Project Director and his staff was to organize the poor to enable them to demand their rights from the Board of Directors." "The poor must know how to protest to the Board," Herbin informed Gould, in order "to force the Board to do the will of the poor." As Gould recalled, Herbin went on to state that "white middle class values" were largely irrelevant because "the poor did not desire to be improved individually but only collectively." The black poor in particular "do not want to move into the mainstream," she explained, "because it is too polluted." If NEED was not willing to accept these premises, Herbin also told Gould, the organization should "get out of the N.C. Fund."¹⁰³

Howard Fuller, a black Northerner who had been first hired as the Community Development Coordinator for Operation Breakthrough, Inc. (OBI) in Durham, also saw

¹⁰³ "Political Activity and the North Carolina Fund: An Historical Prospectus," compiled by Robert I. Gould, June 20, 1966, 10-11, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers. In a June 1990 interview, Sarah Herbin discusses how several black members of the North Carolina Fund staff, namely Howard Fuller, Kwame (James) McDonald, and to some degree herself, espoused Black Power while working for the Fund. See Sarah Herbin, interview by William Link (Kathy Hoke), June 5, 1990, Civil Rights Greensboro, accessed July 14, 2010, <http://library.uncg.edu/dp/crg/oralHistItem.aspx?i=525>.

mainstream society as the root cause of poverty and believed that in order to see meaningful change the black poor, in particular, had to confront their “oppressors” rather than involve them in the community action planning process. “I just want to see you get mad at something” he proclaimed to a group of poor blacks in Northeastern North Carolina in July 1966. “It’s time you realize that the white man, he doesn’t make a distinction between the drunks and the people who are sober. He really doesn’t make a distinction between the rich n*ggers and the poor n*ggers, all y’all n*ggers, when he get down to it...”¹⁰⁴

Herbin, Fuller, and other Fund staff such as John Salter and James McDonald (the latter of whom was in close contact with COP), were correct in believing that conservative whites had acted and continued to act as roadblocks to black economic progress; however, their cynical outlook towards American society had arguably resulted from extending the behaviors of a minority to the whole.¹⁰⁵ Whether Herbin and Fuller purposely decided to evoke negative stereotypes of whites as a way of provoking an emotionally charged response from the poor or in an attempt to shame moderate whites into embracing immediate change is not known. Nor is it known whether their uses of

¹⁰⁴ Text of Howard Fuller speech, The People’s Conference on Poverty, Woodland, NC, July 30, 1966, folder 4932, NCFR.

¹⁰⁵ In his memoirs, Esser writes that Fund staffer John Salter, in particular, “had been involved in very negative instruction of the CATs based on his complete frustration with American society and discrimination in American society,” which convinced Esser to uphold James McDonald’s decision to fire him based on “action which were counter to Jim’s instructions and which were in fact doing damage to the Fund’s program in the state.” Although McDonald had come to the conclusion that Salter would have to be fired, McDonald, who was a strong advocate for Black Power, was also engaged in fairly aggressive techniques himself and would, by early 1967, come to the conclusion, as Esser remembered, that he “could no longer work in a basically white institution.” See Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 195-196, 226-227.

disparaging rhetoric were simply based upon a mental oversight on their part. The answer made little difference. In any case, Fund staff like Fuller and Herbin supported high-pressure tactics and increased militancy among the poor that often made mutual cooperation between the poor and the non-poor more difficult by its tendency to alienate those North Carolinians, most of whom were white and middle-class, who were genuinely interested in helping to reduce poverty and even starting to show sympathy for ideas of granting the poor greater participation in society and being more responsive to their special needs. Many would recoil from being portrayed as inherently incapable of doing any of these things.

Activist Fund staff were far more successful in influencing the mindset and outlook of Esser himself, who claimed that Fuller was the one most responsible for convincing him that “the more local your situation, the more difficult it was to get change.”¹⁰⁶ “One of the several naïve hopes with which we entered the Fund experience,” Esser would recall years later, “was the idea that a spirit of community dedication and cooperation, backed by some grant monies, might bring about a willingness to admit the poor, especially the Negro poor, to the community decision-making process. Now, of course, we know that it is not in the nature of human beings,” Esser contended, “to share power willingly. Representation on school boards, welfare boards, city councils and housing authority boards is not likely to be welcomed simply because it is right or because it is fair.” No later than mid-1966, Esser had adopted Fuller’s position that

¹⁰⁶ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 130, 171.

change would only occur if the poor educated and mobilized themselves to demand it.¹⁰⁷

Esser no longer believed that taking controversial positions and moving away from community consensus were damaging the Fund's work in the state but instead that they were a primary means to propel it forward. The Fund was also supporting a more activist approach because since at least January 1966, as noted by Esser in his memoirs, "we ended up getting funded more by OEO than by the foundations," including the Ford Foundation, a circumstance that inevitably "changed the goals and nature of the Fund."¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

As a result of this switch to a firmer and more narrow focus on the problems of poverty, Esser became even more willing than he had been in October 1965, when Monte was first hired, to support the involvement of the Fund staff if he and staff members felt that Monte was not acting in accordance with the Fund's philosophy.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, the longer Monte continued to seek widespread community support for COP's antipoverty

¹⁰⁷ Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 289.

¹⁰⁸ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 170. The North Carolina Fund received one of its first OEO grants in 1965 to "finance in-depth research surveys to evaluate and improve current anti-poverty programs." The first study, which focused on the eleven North Carolina Fund CAPs, examined "local leadership, the types of problems which concern the communities and the ways residents deal with these problems." The second study was "a systematic measure of the types and level of needs facing [North Carolina's low-income] families" as a means of "guiding for the planning of new programs to counter poverty." Although the two studies would be limited to North Carolina, OEO director Sargent Shriver stated that "the knowledge gained would be applicable to community action organizations throughout the country." See Office of Economic Opportunity, press release, North Carolina Fund (research), box 149, folder 4, Henderson Papers.

¹⁰⁹ Fund field representative Royce Jordan told an OEO administrator around March 1966 that because, in his view, "the North Carolina is stronger now than they were," they "wouldn't support Monte if he were being considered [for the job of executive director] now." In fact, Jordan predicted that "no COP applications to the Fund will be approved, regardless of how good a project because of their lack of faith in Monte." See Ray Jacobson to Ed May, memorandum, March 16, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of OEO.

projects, the more willing Esser became to question Monte's motives. As early as March 1966, Fund staffer John Miller, who was among the Fund's more politically moderate staff members, tried to convince Esser that "it is apparent that Bob Monte is sincerely trying his best as Director. He is willing to work with the Fund but has not been getting the cooperation from Fund personnel that he should." Monte had several ideas for new programs and, Miller added, "he works closely with his board and staff members, and, in general, I think he is trying to do a good job."¹¹⁰ Other Fund staffers obviously disagreed and were quick to forget how Monte had often cooperated with the organization's priorities in the past. For example, although it was less important to him than enhancing local opportunities for job training and education, Monte pushed Community Development—a favorite program of both the North Carolina Fund and OEO, which encouraged the poor to coordinate resources in order to organize around voter registration, the building of community centers, and matters having to do with recreation, health, sanitation, housing, employment, and education. Nonetheless, despite its close proximity to COP, Fund personnel could not always see past their perceptions of Monte; they became less and less willing to be patient in seeing changes for the poor. For his part, Monte still saw the private organization as needed and remained grateful, at least up to the summer of 1966, for the technical advice, staff training, funding, and other resources provided by the Fund.¹¹¹ By the summer of 1966, however, Monte would no

¹¹⁰ Mr. Robert Monte, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 22-23, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

¹¹¹ Robert R. Monte to James C. McDonald, May 8, 1966, folder 5025, NCFR.

longer hold these views. Largely out of frustration with the Fund's increased intervention and shift in goals, not to mention that of the OEO, Monte would subsequently step down as executive director in October.

CHAPTER VII

DEFENDING LOCAL CONTROL

Introduction

Conflict between COP/CPI and its outside funding agencies would increase significantly by the middle of 1966 but was in no way limited to the Monte era and would continue well into the executive directorship of his successor, James L. Godwin, formerly a Title V coordinator for the Craven County Welfare Department, who would oversee the local CAA into the early 1970s. But while Monte would trace his problems to the increased intervention of both the Fund and OEO, Godwin's problems were primarily centered around OEO's dramatic shift away from local ideas. Far more so than Monte, Godwin would witness a trend in which OEO began funding fewer and fewer projects originating from local ideas and instead pushed national emphasis programs, such as Head Start, Legal Services, and Upward Bound that were designed by federal bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.¹ This new trend primarily frustrated Godwin because it made his job as executive director much more difficult as the poor's demands on the programs continued to grow.

¹ Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 265-266.

While congressional cuts to OEO's budget in 1967 were relevant, the federal campaign to standardize the types of programs within the nation's CAAs was more in response to other factors, including growing congressional disapproval for the radical and/or violent direction of some local community action groups, such as Richard Boone's Citizen's Crusade Against Poverty (CCAP), and a continuing belief within OEO that national emphasis programs were more effective in reaching those most in need than were programs conceived by local people, most of whom were not poor themselves.¹ OEO director Sargent Shriver and most OEO officials had always believed to some degree that local institutions were culpable in the existence of poverty and, therefore, needed altering.² But especially following the summer riots in Detroit and Newark in

¹ Congress, by the way, was largely responsible for earmarking a sizeable fraction of Community Action Program (CAP) funds for national emphasis programs. In December 1967, Congress would cut OEO funding by \$15 million which was less than 1% of the previous fiscal year's budget. See "Voting Today Sets Stage for Adjournment: Conferees Put Poverty Fund at \$1.7 billion," *Washington Post*, December 15, 1967; "OEO in Decline," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1966; "Cities Are Told of Poverty Cuts," *New York Times*, November 23, 1966; Arlen J. Large, "Deep Discontents: The OEO Struggle," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1967; Donovan, *The Politics of Poverty*, 71. Exceptions to the rule that OEO began to diminish funding local initiatives was when they were run primarily by members of the black poor, both in rural and urban areas, which the OEO funded in part, as a *New York Times* feature story on a Syracuse CAA put it, "for the purpose of training the Negro poor on how to conduct sit-ins and protest meetings against government agencies, federal, state, and local." See "OEO Allots Half Million for Alabama Programs," *Washington Post*, July 14, 1966; Nicholas von Hoffman, "Manna from OEO Falls on Mississippi," *Washington Post*, October 13, 1966; "OEO Project Seen Boosting Chicago Crime," *Washington Post*, July 2, 1968; Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, 91.

² Speaking to Congress in April 1965, Shriver argued that "poverty is not just an individual affair. It is also a condition, a relationship to society, and to all the institutions which comprise society. Poverty is need. It is lack of opportunity. But it is also helplessness to cope with hostile or uncaring or exploitative institutions...And it is vulnerability to injustice." See *Examination of the War on Poverty Program: Hearings Before the Committee on Education and Labor*, 89th Cong. 17 (1965) (statement by R. Sargent Shriver, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity). "[T]here are millions of Americans who want to work and who don't," Shriver also told CBS News correspondent Daniel Schorr," but "are not able to work today through bad education or through the wrong race, they have got the wrong color..." See R. Sargent Shriver, interview on CBS News' "Face the Nation," July 24, 1966 in CBS News, *Face the Nation: The collected transcripts from the CBS radio and television broadcasts*, Volume 9, 1966 (New York, NY: Holt Information Systems, 1966), 198.

1967, this view that the poor were primarily victims of society only grew, as evidenced by OEO's willingness to discuss the idea of heightened welfare payments to individuals and families and even a guaranteed income.³ Now, with additional pressure from Congress, OEO was not only less compelled but less able to fund local initiatives.⁴ Finally, and also because of the riots of 1967, COP/CPI, like most other rural CAAs, was given a back seat to urban poverty and urban concerns.⁵

Regardless of the source, as a *Wall Street Journal* writer reported in late 1967, "Each time the OEO or Congress decides a Community Action group should undertake a new Washington-devised project, it tends to cut down the funds available for activities conceived locally." "Sure, we need Head Start here," the *Journal* quoted an antipoverty worker in San Francisco, "but not at the expense of our other programs."⁶ Congressman Walter B. Jones, a conservative Democrat who represented Craven County in the U.S. House during the late 1960s, once remarked to James Godwin that even Shriver desired more local control of CAAs. Depending on the context and his audience, however, Shriver argued for more local control both to support the interests of indigenous poor people and for the inclusion of more city elites. Seemingly, then, Shriver's vocal defense of the latter was primarily done to sustain necessary middle-class support for the War on

³ Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty*, 148.

⁴ Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, 89, 101; R. Sargent Shriver, "New Weapons in Fighting Poverty," *Public Welfare* 24 (January 1966): 9-14.

⁵ Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty*, 146, 183.

⁶ "Poverty War: Tightening the Strings," *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 1967.

Poverty. The direction that his agency took with regard to COP/CPI revealed more than words alone that Shriver's priorities for local control rested with the poor, which was often at the expense of CAAs that were not run by the poor. Policies emanating from either federal offices in Washington, D.C. and/or the Fund headquarters in Durham that aimed to downplay either local control or local ideas, however, were not so overawing as to keep those within COP/CPI, most notably Monte and Godwin, from attempting to fight back against them.

The compromise over the legal aid proposal

When the Craven County Bar Association presented the final draft of its legal services proposal to the COP board on August 31, Monte hoped to show the North Carolina Fund that, contrary to their notions about him and in spite of his support of the Craven County Bar Association in the matter of Legal Services, he was still interested in expanding COP's programs so that they would more effectively reach the poor. Monte's ability to do so did not go unchallenged, however. A few days before the presentation, thirty-one-year-old black civil rights activist James Gavin, who had recently replaced an aging Robert Whitehead as head of the Combined Civic League of New Bern and Craven County, addressed the COP board and presented it with a petition in favor of the establishment of Legal Services that had been signed by several hundred of Craven County's poor. It began with a strong declaration: "Too often we have been the unwary victims of legal services extended to companies and individuals who are able, by the mere fact that they possess more money than we do, to intimidate us.... We are frightened, made afraid, and overawed when faced with the legal process operating in this

county.” After arguing that the Legal Services program would be in accordance with their basic constitutional rights, the petition asked the board members, “who are supposed to be voicing the needs of the poor,” to approve the Legal Services proposal “as originally presented [which would] raise the level of confidence we have entrusted in you instead of lowering it.”⁷

Although this plea did not lack passion or sincerity, it did lack an understanding of the reality at hand. As COP board member and local attorney David S. Henderson (no relation to Congressman David N. Henderson) reminded the board on August 31, and as a letter from OEO director Sargent Shriver confirmed, any Legal Services program would have to conform to the standards and canon of ethics of the state bar in which it operated; moreover, such a program should have the cooperation of the local bar association as well.⁸ Therefore, if Monte wanted to add a legal aid program, the county bar would have to give final approval to the proposal and also play a dominant role in writing the application itself. Ralph Jacobs, while vigorously disputing the contention that the original proposal he had co-written was “irresponsibly submitted as obviously illegal,” also acknowledged that there had been “points of legality about the proposal which were honest and legitimate differences of opinion among the licensed attorneys in North Carolina.”⁹

⁷ COP board meeting minutes, July 28, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

⁸ COP board meeting minutes, August 31, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

⁹ COP board meeting minutes, July 28, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

Considering the county bar's outrage over the original legal services proposal, it came as little surprise that the new proposal was markedly different. One major change, based on local attorneys' belief that the \$71,000 of federal funds requested in the original proposal was not needed, was a plan for legal services to be supported only by private donations. OEO would then have no role at all in the program and there would be no need to bring in additional lawyers from outside the area. In addition, the new proposal eliminated "arbitrary" income guidelines on the grounds that most recipients "should be able to pay a portion of the fee"; instead a committee of three local lawyers would determine whose need for near-free legal counsel was genuine. Whitehead, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the original proposal, was the first to object. Quite rightly, he recognized that a legal services program enacted according to these criteria would be taken out of the hands of COP and placed primarily under the control of the Craven bar association.¹⁰ Whitehead also criticized the fact that, though the proposal would allow poor to select their own lawyers, there was no provision for allowing the poor to serve on a legal services advisory board or to take any meaningful part in determining the program's policies.¹¹

Most COP board members, however, were more in agreement with the basic position of fellow board member and Craven County Welfare Department Director Constance Rabin. Noting that many welfare recipients used their welfare checks to cover

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

finances and attorneys' fees, Rabin stated her support for a small fee to be required by the poor based on the premise that "people appreciated something more when they had something invested in it." Rabin was in favor of the program and wanted to see it established as quickly as possible so that she could inform the poor of its existence. She also felt that it should be held in the hands of the county bar association, believing that the poor would be treated fairly until demonstrated otherwise.

Shortly after Rabin's remarks, the board voted twelve to three to accept the local bar's proposal and to allow it to control the legal services program. According to Whitehead, who was not pleased with Monte for giving in to the county bar over what Whitehead perceived were the rights and needs of the poor, John R. Hill and Willie Dawson were the only blacks on the COP board who had cast favorable votes.¹² But Whitehead and the other black board members who had voted against it were not the only ones to disapprove of the decisions Monte had made that eventually resulted in the transfer of the legal aid program to the county bar association. Whitehead would claim that about five white COP board members confided in him after the August 31 meeting that they "did not think the proposal was much good either," a set of confessions that

¹² In addition to believing that Craven County School Board Superintendent Robert Pugh had asked black principal John R. Hill to vote for the Legal Services proposal, Whitehead argued that Willie Dawson "enjoys the favor of the whites" and that he likely thought it was a good proposal. See Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR. Yet, interestingly, Dawson would state in an earlier interview by John Miller that he "regards only himself and Mr. Whitehead as being real Negro 'leaders' in Craven County and New Bern," regarding the "other Negro COP board members [such as B.S. Rivers and Hill] as providing little leadership and acting only as a 'rubber stamp' for decisions reached by the white COP board members." See Willie Dawson, interview by John Miller, January 16, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

compelled him to ask them why they had voted for it. “That’s the trouble with so many whites in this community, they’re afraid to speak up,” Whitehead concluded.¹³

Clearly, the legal services proposal was not considered ideal by everyone. However, as Monte and other supporters saw it, even a potentially flawed program was more likely to improve the poor’s access to and standing within the legal process than no program at all. In the past, local lawyers had helped the poor inconsistently, and without relying on advertising. Now, at least, poor people who could not afford legal counsel or assumed that lawyers would only offer it at high prices would have access to a system that would provide legal aid for a minimal fee. In the end, blacks and whites on the COP board (though they had disagreed over the two proposals) had at least been able to agree that the poor could benefit from and were deserving of affordable legal aid.

The fight to keep Colonel Evans: COP vs. the U.S. Department of Labor

During the same August 31 board meeting that the Legal Services proposal was accepted, Larry Pate announced that he was resigning as COP board chairman (due to his wife’s recent illness), and Monte caught the group up on the pending investigations launched by the U.S. Department of Labor into the administrative activities of NYC director W.F. Evans.¹⁴ Federal officials had extended the program for two weeks while

¹³ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

¹⁴ “I feel that [COP] is a worthy organization and appreciate the honor of serving as Chairman of the Board,” Pate told the COP board of directors on August 31 before recommending board member Reverend Larry Munn as his replacement. Fellow board member Robert Pugh thanked Pate for performing his duty with “the utmost fairness to all,” adding that he had known the strong relationship between the Pates and that Pate would not resign unless it was “an absolute necessity.” See COP board meeting minutes, August 31, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

investigations were being concluded; however, Monte was confident that the program would be approved for another year because the NYC program had remained fairly popular within COP and the community. Rabin, for one, commented on the recent “good work” done by the NYC enrollees working in her department, two of whom had obtained permanent jobs and one of whom had just entered college.¹⁵

Many NYC participants, most of whom were black, were supportive of the program as well. A radio public service announcement organized by COP Public Information Officer Tillie Knowles that ran from March 23 to April 23, 1966, quoted the praises of several enrollees who recounted their positive experiences and said they did not know what they would be doing if not for the NYC. As one enrollee stated, “It’s hard for people my age to find jobs if they haven’t worked before or haven’t been trained for anything.” A female high school drop-out, now employed as a stenographer and receptionist for the Craven County Health Department, echoed that “It didn’t take me long to find out how much I need to finish high school...I have learned a lot about working and what is expected by people in the business world, [and] would not have learned this except for the Youth Corps. That’s why I am going back to school.”¹⁶ A NYC report from February confirmed the satisfaction of most enrollees. Only 24 of the 476 enrolled in Craven County had left the program because they did not like the work/program; the vast majority who left went on to gain permanent employment, join

¹⁵ COP board meeting minutes, August 31, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

¹⁶ Text of Public Service Announcement-Neighborhood Youth Corps, March 23-April 23, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

the military, pursue higher education (as the program had intended), moved from the area or became ineligible.¹⁷

Despite this positive feedback, in July NYC officials from the U.S. Department of Labor suddenly demanded that W.F. Evans, a former U.S. Marine lieutenant colonel and veteran of World War II and the Korean War, be removed as director of the Craven County NYC programs because of “administrative, personnel, fiscal, and civil rights problems.”¹⁸ NYC officials were perhaps most upset that there were still unfilled positions in the Craven area even after Evans had reduced the number of work experience positions in order to avoid accumulating unutilized monies again (which occurred during NYC’s first six months of operation in the Craven area). That the persistence of unfilled positions were due to many factors unrelated to Evans, including revised income criteria issued by the Department of Labor by January 1966, not enough eligible males to fill positions, and the requirement that enrollees must attend some form of remedial education, was not acknowledged by NYC officials.¹⁹ If action was not taken to remove Evans, NYC official Mike Lorenzo warned Monte over the telephone, federal funds for COP’s NYC program would be terminated.²⁰ In addition to the fact that Lorenzo’s ultimatum was delivered without any specific examples of wrongdoing on Evans’ part,

¹⁷ Neighborhood Youth Corps report: Craven County, February 28, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

¹⁸ William T. Davies to Congressman David N. Henderson, September 1, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

¹⁹ Robert R. Monte to Claretta Wordlaw, July 26, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

²⁰ Robert R. Monte to W. Willard Wirtz, September 12, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

Monte was stunned because he had personally investigated both local and federal complaints about Evans that began more than eight months earlier and found no evidence that he believed would warrant firing Evans.

Monte could also not be completely sure that the federal complaints against Evans were valid. In November 1965, for instance, Monte was told by federal NYC officials who had visited Craven County to conduct a review of the local NYC program, a copy of which was promised to Monte but never received, that their investigation showed that Colonel Evans was in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The probable source of this accusation was Beverly French, a field supervisor in Craven's NYC program, who had believed that Evans was "at heart a segregationist" after he reportedly said to her that he would be opposed to having a black person over to his house and that he supposedly had assigned more black than white enrollees to arduous jobs, such as grass cutting in the summer.²¹ Not wanting to see COP downgraded from allegations of civil rights non-compliance, soon after being informed of the NYC officials' complaints, Monte directed Evans to "immediately proceed with all practical speed the implementation of changes necessary to correct any and all areas of possible discrimination."²²

Two days later, Evans sent a letter to Lorenzo that included a detailed list of the types of jobs assigned to blacks and whites in Craven, Jones, and Pamlico county NYC programs as of January 1966. As Evans wrote Lorenzo, "The alleged unequal distribution

²¹ Beverly French, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 17, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

²² Robert Monte to Col. W.F. Evans, January 10, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

does not appear evident, except for the total number of white and non-white being served in Craven County,” adding that a “special campaign is being under taken to secure more white.” Although Beverly French’s accusation of personal racism might have been correct, the statistics sent to Lorenzo showed no indication that such an attitude had negatively effected Evans’ work as NYC director. Blacks and whites in all three counties had been assigned to custodial and landscaping duties and, for several skilled indoor-jobs, blacks often enjoyed rates higher than whites. For example, more blacks served as nurses, clerical aides, library assistants, hospital tech assistants, messenger drivers, and teacher aides than did whites. There were a couple of positions in which there was either one or no whites assigned at all such as park development and housekeeping but this was far from the norm. Moreover, the racial discrepancy within these positions were not necessarily due to Evans’ personal bias but may have been due to low numbers of white enrollees and/or the preference of the enrollee.²³ In contrast to the charges brought against Evans for being in violation of the federal civil rights act, blacks in all three counties were enjoying the full range of jobs accessible through NYC; they were neither limited to any job category nor were they excluded from any available positions.

Monte had continued to keep tabs on Evans, however. In response to a signed letter from a small group of local blacks complaining about NYC activities under Evans’ leadership, which COP board member Claretta Wordlaw presented to the board in June 1966, Monte had set up a local committee a month later whose task was to meet with the

²³ W.F. Evans to Mike Lorenzo, January 12, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

petitioners and determine the basis of their complaints.²⁴ The committee included Wordlaw, who Monte asked to assume the role of chair, as well as Tom Wallace, Ruth Becton of the NYC staff, and Monte's administrative assistant Ralph Jacobs. Only a few of the petitioners attended the July 21 committee meeting, but their number included prominent black leaders such as New Bern NAACP Vice President William Vails and Duffyfield Community Development organizer Johnny Floyd. Vails, by far, was the most outspoken against Evans, but his primary complaint was that he had heard second-hand of a black enrollee at Cherry Point being more harshly reprimanded for taking a break than white enrollees had been; in addition, he thought that more counseling should be given to the NYC enrollees.²⁵ Floyd told the committee that he had signed the petition after hearing that only about forty-seven NYC enrollees had been accepted for the approximately eighty job openings at Cherry Point. As Monte would later explain to Wordlaw, however, the reason Evans approved half of the job openings at Cherry Point was because only that number were in the "skilled and semi-skilled areas of work." The others, which were mostly "common laboring jobs," did not comply with NYC's preference for jobs that provided "a potential for future employment in the competitive labor market." Moreover, "our experience has been," Monte added, that "the common

²⁴ COP board meeting minutes, June 22, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

²⁵ Vails would later complain in late September that Evans told a group of NYC enrollees at Cherry Point that NYC was not to teach job skills but primarily discipline. This complaint was not brought up at the July committee meeting, however. See Willie Vails, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR. Colonel W.F. Evans believed, in contrast to Vails, that NYC "is not a way of life" and that enrollees were there primarily to "be learning and preparing for permanent employment" rather than necessarily learning specific job skills. See NYC Newsletter, August 5, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

laboring jobs” are the most difficult to fill because “it was difficult to find and convince enrollees who would accept and stay on such a job.”²⁶

In Monte’s opinion, then, no serious charges were leveled at Evans during the committee meeting and no evidence had been provided of mistreatment of enrollees based on racial prejudice, which was the primary issue that federal NYC officials were interested in investigating.²⁷ Not only were the issues seemingly of a minor nature to Monte, he also noted that the complaints came from a very small group. Most black community members and leaders, many of whom—including Whitehead— had fought to convince the City of New Bern to renew its contract with NYC back in February and March, had expressed no problems with Evans. In light of these observations, on July 21, Monte asked Mike Lorenzo for a written explanation from the Department of Labor about its dissatisfaction with Evans.²⁸ After almost two weeks went by without a response, Monte wrote Lorenzo again on August 1 pleading that “a matter as important, and unusual as the proposed dismissal of a responsible officer of this organization [should have] merited a reply from you by this time.”²⁹

As he waited for Lorenzo’s reply, Monte convinced Evans to form an additional advisory body, composed of fifteen male and female enrollees, that would help Evans and local NYC staff, as a NYC newsletter of August 5 stated, “to develop the kind of

²⁶ Robert R. Monte to Claretta Wordlaw, July 26, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

²⁷ NYC committee meeting, July 21, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

²⁸ Robert R. Monte to Michael J. Lorenzo, July 21, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

²⁹ Robert R. Monte to Michael J. Lorenzo, August 1, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

program that you enrollees want.” This biracial group would also act as grievance committee to take criticisms, suggestions, and questions from enrollees and community members.³⁰ Monte believed that an advisory board run by enrollees would improve Evans’ reputation and also be an effective way to keep the NYC program running.

Confident that he had done all he could, in mid-August Monte went on a short vacation with his family. Just before leaving, he assigned COP Deputy Director Lee Morgan, who Monte hired in 1965 at the request of Whitehead and other black civil rights leaders, to visit the Department of Labor during his absence and hand-deliver COP’s NYC proposal for the upcoming fiscal year. By sending Morgan to Washington, Monte hoped that federal officials could be influenced to give specific reasons for their desire to see Evans removed as NYC director. Upon Monte’s return to New Bern, Morgan had a memo waiting that summarized his conversations with Department of Labor officials. Evidently, these officials had merely told Morgan how they believed the NYC proposal could be improved for next year; no specific reasons for replacing Evans had been discussed. While Monte found the subject of the memo unsatisfactory, he could not necessarily blame Morgan. After all, federal officials may have been less cooperative than Monte assumed they would be. But after Monte later learned from a conversation with Morgan that NYC officials had given COP an ultimatum that Evans must either resign or write a letter admitting that he had been guilty of “poor administration, violation of the civil rights law, and poor public relations,” Monte became upset and questioned Morgan directly about why Morgan had not included this in the memo, copies of which

³⁰ NYC Newsletter, August 5, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR.

Morgan had also sent to the North Carolina Fund. Morgan defended himself, as he told North Carolina Fund Field Representative Royce Jordan, by arguing that “if the NYC officials were not going to commit this to paper, then he didn’t feel he should and that he was going to play the same game they did.”³¹

Monte grows tired; fires Morgan

Tensions between Morgan and Monte exploded when Monte discovered that Morgan had sent a recommendation to the COP executive committee recommending that the Day Care Centers be taken away from the Craven County Welfare Department and run solely by COP. Not only had this letter been written without Monte’s approval, while he was away on vacation, but Morgan’s recommendation also appeared hasty because it was based on a seemingly minor issue: Constance Rabin’s insistence that someone with a master’s degree in child development replace the day care director who had recently resigned rather than hire one of the other three candidates—two of whom were black but one of whom did not have a bachelor’s degree and the other whose husband was already employed on the regular Welfare staff.³² Soon after, Monte confided in North Carolina Fund Field Representative Royce Jordan that Morgan “would probably have to go.”

Jordan, who was startled by this possibility and how it might be interpreted by the local black community, sought out Whitehead to ask what he thought the chances were that Monte would fire Morgan. Monte would not “be that stupid,” Whitehead reportedly

³¹ Royce Jordan, Field Report, August 31, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

³² COP board meeting minutes, August 31, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

told Jordan, who also did not think that Monte would “be foolish enough” to fire Morgan.³³ The prospect was not all that improbable, however. The lack of respect between the two men, and their mutually low opinions of the other’s competence, had clearly deteriorated to the point of no return. In fact, Morgan had begun to consider leaving COP as early as June because he felt that Ralph Jacobs was still infringing on his responsibilities.³⁴ Monte would not give him the option of quitting. On September 1, the following termination letter appeared in Morgan’s mailbox:

It is with regret that I must terminate your services in the best interest of the program. You have stated on several occasions that you felt you couldn’t do the job unless additional backing was given to you by me. You have, in spite of having received in writing and verbally such backing, hesitated and not done the thorough job that you are capable of doing, nor the jobs assigned. You have on occasions insisted on speaking out against myself and our methods of operation and have stated that you will continue to do so. In lieu of these facts, you have left me no alternative but to give you thirty days notice of termination of employment. Sincerely,
Robert R. Monte
Executive Director³⁵

When the news spread that Monte was letting go of Lee Morgan, North Carolina Fund Field Representative Preston Kennedy sent a wire informing Executive Director George Esser: “Bob Monte fired Lee Morgan last night without the consent of the Board...It is

³³ Royce Jordan, Field Report, August 31, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

³⁴ Sarah W. Herbin, Field Report, June 22-24, 1966, folder 5038, NCFR.

³⁵ Robert R. Monte to Mr. L.R. Morgan, September 1, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR.

anticipated that the Negro community will react violently.”³⁶ Fearing a possible adverse reaction, Esser and black staffer Nathan Garrett drove to New Bern as soon as they could in hopes of convincing Monte to withdraw his letter to Morgan. Esser also called D.S. Coltrane of the North Carolina Good Neighbor Council to meet them there.

Before Esser and Garrett arrived, Whitehead and other black community leaders asked Monte to rescind Morgan’s termination and strongly suggested that he think it over for a few days; otherwise, a demonstration would be organized. It was probably Whitehead who had informed OEO administrator Harold Bailin of the situation. When Bailin subsequently called Monte in anger to confirm that he had fired Morgan, he later asked, “did you turn in your resignation?” Monte, of course, responded in the negative and added that he did not plan to do so, which angered Bailin even more. Bob Burns, who worked under Bailin as the Mid-Atlantic Regional Representative, informed John Miller of the North Carolina Fund on September 6 that Bailin was completely dissatisfied with Monte and saw him as incompetent. Burns later said that Bailin told him that “a nit wit couldn’t have done a more stupid thing [than firing Morgan]” and predicted that if Monte did not immediately resign on his own, Bailin himself would demand it.³⁷

In defiance of the wishes of both Bailin and local black leadership, Monte decided to stay on at COP until its funding for the next fiscal year was assured, but he would not consider rescinding his letter to Morgan, whom he had felt was fully justified in being

³⁶ Preston Kennedy (per Royce Jordan) to George Esser and Nathan Garrett, September 2, 1966, folder 5040, NCFR.

³⁷ Bob Burns, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 6, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

fired. He did, however, decide to resign himself by December 1. Knowing that Morgan would probably not step down without a fight and that Ralph Jacobs would be the focal point in that fight, on August 15 Monte directed Jacobs to prepare a letter of resignation that would become effective on January 1, 1967, if Jacobs did not rescind it before that date. It is reasonable to assume that Monte did not intend to provide motivation for a demonstration; after all, he did not think that his actions had warranted one. Local blacks, however, remained upset that a black man had been seemingly fired by a white man without demonstrably sufficient cause. Soon after Monte decided not to reinstate Morgan, Whitehead warned COP board members D. L. Stallings and Robert Pugh that a large demonstration was being planned that would be impossible for him to stop.³⁸ Moreover, Whitehead promised to endorse the demonstrations and to resign from the COP board, along with other black members, if Morgan was not rehired. Before his firing of Morgan, most blacks on the board generally had no serious issues with Monte and believed that he was doing a good job.³⁹ Afterward however, Whitehead claimed that most blacks, including himself, had become utterly disillusioned with COP and began to demand, along with Rivers and Wordlaw, that Monte resign. As Whitehead began to see it, the COP director was too weak and easy to manipulate and, thus, contrary to his original

³⁸ Royce Jordan, Field Report, August 31, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR. Interestingly, Leon Nixon was not likely involved in the planning of this demonstration. Because of both his personal power struggle with B.S. Rivers (Morgan's father-in-law) and his belief that middle-class blacks could not effectively lead the poor, he would argue that Lee Morgan was not worth supporting. See Leon Nixon, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

³⁹ John R. Hill, interview by John Miller, July 28, 1966, Vanceboro, NC, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

argument in support of Monte in October 1965, was “never the man for the job.”⁴⁰ But Monte’s decision to fire Morgan seemed to have been made without consulting anyone on the COP board.

Blacks were the not the only locals frustrated by Monte’s decision, however. Firing Morgan had not only been done without the knowledge of the COP board but had also defied Fund policy that required executive directors to consult the Fund before terminating local staff. When Royce Jordan first confronted Pugh and Stallings soon after Morgan’s firing, both were surprised and claimed to have had no idea that it had happened. Pugh told Jordan that he did not think Monte should have released Morgan, especially with the federal refunding of COP due in the next thirty days. According to Jordan’s notes, Pugh told him that “Craven County was up to the guidelines of integration that had been suggested by the federal government and that things were moving nicely, everything was quiet” and that he, Pugh, “didn’t want an uproar caused at this time.”⁴¹ Stallings, then in the hospital receiving treatment for back pain, felt the same way and may have even been concerned about being blamed for Monte’s decision to fire Morgan. In any case, Stallings boldly told Jordan that from the outset Monte had “completely ignored him” in the workings of COP; he must have been quite frustrated by Monte’s impulsive decision to make such an exaggerated statement. COP board chairman Reverend L. D. Munn, who had replaced Larry B. Pate on August 31, discussed the

⁴⁰ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 8, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

⁴¹ Royce Jordan, Field Report, August 31, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

situation with Esser, Jordan, and Preston Kennedy and then attempted to convince Monte to postpone any official action for sixty days.⁴²

Monte agreed to wait, but for no more than thirty days. During this time, Fund representatives and Craven leaders scrambled to broker a resolution between Monte and Morgan that would avoid both a local demonstration and the loss of federal funding. During the early stages of these negotiations, Esser telephoned Harold Bailin to find out how OEO would respond to Morgan's firing. As Esser had probably expected, Bailin said that he would not approve further funding for COP if Monte remained its executive director.

Bailin's plans extended beyond the ones he shared with Esser over the phone, however. On September 6, he sent Bob Burns to New Bern with explicit orders to fire Monte, even though OEO did not actually have the authority to do so. Possibly because he was aware of this limitation, Burns instead sought to "figure out the situation" in Craven and talk with those involved before any action was taken. But Burns' presence, which was in and of itself a manifestation of OEO administrators' frustrations with Monte, probably went a long way toward convincing the Fund that it would be best for everyone if Monte resigned much sooner than December 1. Perhaps because of Bailin's insistence that Morgan should not have been hired in the first place (because his father-in-law sat on the COP board), the Fund concluded that it was only fair for Morgan to officially resign as well. Morgan agreed to this stipulation but only after Esser made it

⁴² Ibid.

known that he would use all of the resources of the North Carolina Fund to see that Morgan was assured of a new job at equal salary.⁴³

Monte resigns

As gathered from North Carolina Fund field reports, the eventual agreement that was reached between Monte, Morgan and the North Carolina Fund began with Monte rescinding his termination letter to Morgan. Afterwards he announced his own resignation, citing “pressing business conditions.” Next, Morgan announced that he too had resigned. As a result of this agreement, Bailin delayed his decision about COP’s refunding for sixty days and local black leaders called off their planned demonstration. Neither Whitehead nor any other black COP board members resigned.⁴⁴

Around September 14, four days after Reverend Munn chose to step down as COP chairman, a press release from Monte informed the public that he was resigning as COP executive director as of October 15, 1966.⁴⁵ As promised, Monte stated that pressing business responsibilities were the reason for his departure. The truth, of course, was that Monte had no other option when faced with the combined power of OEO, the North Carolina Fund, and blacks on the COP board, all of whom were calling for him to step down.⁴⁶ For his part, Monte had also grown weary from frequently being caught

⁴³ Bob Burns, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 6, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

⁴⁴ John Miller, “Notes from visit to New Bern,” September 6-9, 1966, folder 792, NCFR; Royce Jordan, Field Report, August 31, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

⁴⁵ “Fourth New Bern Antipoverty Unit Official Resigns,” *Durham Herald*, September 16, 1966.

⁴⁶ Reverend Al Fisher, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

between the wishes of local black leaders, the broader Craven community, OEO, and the North Carolina Fund—which surely motivated him to give in to the calls for his resignation. As he would eventually tell John Miller of the North Carolina Fund, the sooner he could “turn over the job to someone else, the better...I’ve had it.” His attempts to strike a balance between these groups, although somewhat successful in the beginning, had become futile by August 1966 especially with the more hardened positions of the North Carolina Fund and OEO.

Monte was also extremely upset that his firing of Morgan had “become a racial issue because the Negroes think that by demanding they can get anything they want.”⁴⁷ Increased pressure from the North Carolina Fund and OEO on him for swifter action, which only emboldened black leaders in Craven, and the recurrent verbal directives and local intervention that came with had clearly worn him down. Monte was not opposed to all forms of outside “intervention,” such as OEO’s recommendation that the Adult Basic Education Recruitment (ABER) program merge with Community Development to save approximately \$50,000.⁴⁸ Nor had he minded when the Fund offered advice, technical assistance and training for local staff. And, of course, Monte had always understood the necessity of accepting both private and federal funds. Still, as he expressed to Rep. David N. Henderson on September 13, he could no longer cope with the gap between his goals

⁴⁷ John Miller, Notes from visit to New Bern, September 6-9, 1966, folder 7092, NCFR.

⁴⁸ COP board meeting minutes, August 31, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

for poverty reduction in Craven and the goals that he perceived OEO and the North Carolina Fund held:

I believe that the programs cannot succeed when they are headed by people in OEO who have on numerous occasions stated that what we needed in our area were a few more good demonstrations and when the North Carolina Fund openly attacks our elected representatives to the Congress and Senate plus actively supporting the civil rights groups in a so called “drive” for a change in local power structure which is in essence, a shield for the so called “black power” struggle....It appears to me that they have forgotten what the programs were originally designed for, that being to help people help themselves out of poverty.

“My only reason for ever accepting the position,” Monte’s letter continued, “was to try to help our area help itself.” But, “I’m afraid,” Monte lamented, “that the job was bigger than the man, although in honesty I did do all I could to serve the community.”⁴⁹ The frustration so evident in this letter had, of course, greatly influenced Monte’s impulsive decision to fire Morgan, who Monte felt was undermining him as COP executive director in the same way that the North Carolina Fund and OEO were doing. Regardless of whether Monte believed he had not needed any one’s permission to fire Morgan, this was the major mistake that the Fund and OEO ultimately needed to finally justify replacing him.

Monte’s frustrations were not unique to him or the situation in Craven County. Just before Monte announced his resignation, at least four other CAP heads supervised by the North Carolina Fund also resigned. As Esser recalled of this first major turnover,

⁴⁹ Robert R. Monte to Congressman David N. Henderson, September 13, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

“There were definite signs of battle fatigue and tension among the project directors, as well as obvious disagreement with Fund policy.” More crucial, however, was their feeling that, like Monte, “they were being opposed by Fund staff.”⁵⁰ What is interesting is that Fund staff, though they had shifted to a more radical stance shared by those working in OEO and mistakenly believed, for instance, that the lack of participation of the poor was merely a result of the “haves wanting to keep the have-nots down,” they were willing to acknowledge that OEO was causing seemingly unnecessary problems in local communities including Craven. As one Fund report stated with regard to COP, the way that OEO “hands down directives and the way it carries out its policies” was leading to both confusion and tension. Specifically, “Harold Bailin and his antagonistic way in his calling down to the CAP has aroused much opposition. His attitude of wanting controversy without wanting to get involved in the controversy has caused much concern in the area.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ The four executive directors who resigned by the summer of 1966 included Jim Rosene from Winston-Salem’s Experiment in Self-Reliance, Bob Foust from Durham’s Operation Breakthrough, George Crews from Tri-County, and Happy Lee of the Salisbury-Rowan CAP. See Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 202-203.

⁵¹ Craven County Strategy Paper, November 1966, folder 5026, NCFR. Of course, Craven County was far from the only community, rural or urban, in the country that had issues with OEO directives during the War on Poverty. Speaking of the experiences of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), which was still one of Sargent Shriver’s favorite anti-poverty programs at the time, Polly Greenberg details how in the summer of 1965: “We felt that OEO wasn’t entirely familiar with the [local] situation... We did talk with OEO representatives when they came down, but we didn’t always find these visits altogether helpful, because the representatives didn’t always agree with each other. It was very difficult to deal with them. You never quite knew what they wanted. OEO personnel gave contradictory advice.” In giving its directives, Greenberg also lamented of OEO: “Why did they choose to attack us instead of advise us?” See Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 261-262.

The Fund continued to defend OEO in the face of local complaints, largely because of the increased funding they were receiving from OEO by mid-1966. On September 20, George Esser wrote to Rep. Henderson in response to a critical letter from Henderson to OEO director Sargent Shriver, which had been copied to Esser, about Monte's recent missives: "I would certainly not disagree with you that the Office of Economic Opportunity has failed in many ways to establish good, constructive relationships with leaders in local communities as well as in Congress." "Though in fairness to Mr. Shriver," Esser added, "[g]earing up a program so large is immensely difficult."⁵²

OEO's plans for COP

For the sake of maintaining some degree of local influence over COP, it was in the best interests of both the organization and the local community for Monte to resign according to terms set by the Fund. Whether or not they realized it, if Harold Bailin had been the one to compel Monte to resign, as Bob Burns of the OEO told John Miller, Bailin would have placed someone from the National Association for Community Development (NACD) in Craven County, and this person would make COP "a sort of federal bureau of OEO." This new director, who would be hand-picked by federal authorities, would, in conjunction with OEO policy, concentrate primarily on "stirring up the poor." Burns was also convinced that Bailin, who did not believe that COP had significantly improved the life of Craven's poor but rather had "improved the life of the

⁵² George H. Esser to Congressman David N. Henderson, September 20, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

establishment,” planned to radically change the composition of the COP’s board or directors by removing Robert Pugh, Constance Rabin and other “power-structure types” and replacing them with “real grassroots representation of the poor,” most of whom they hoped would be black.⁵³

Negative views of COP and its local non-poor members within OEO were not limited just to Bailin. Several other OEO administrators were critical of “the governing group in New Bern,” including at least one staff member who believed COP was primarily defined by an “anti-integrationist-John Bircher point of view,” adding that, in his perspective, “the board’s intention [was] merely distributing the COP jobs, and the Federal money, among the deserving middle-class and ignoring the real goals of the poverty program.” Of course, such conclusions on the part of OEO frequently lacked ample or credible evidence.⁵⁴ Incidentally, after being told by COP board member Claretta Wordlaw that she guessed two-thirds of Craven whites “are members of the KKK” (a surprisingly serious exaggeration on her part, which would have been approximately double the Klan’s total membership in North Carolina at the time), an OEO administrator would be somewhat surprised to learn while on an inspection visit to

⁵³ Bob Burns, interview by John Miller, September 6, 1966, New Bern, NC, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR.

⁵⁴ Tom Kelly to Edgar May, memorandum, October 7, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of OEO. It is worth noting that the OEO administrator’s view that the Craven area “is dominated by the John Birch Society,” for instance, appeared to be based on little to no evidence: that the city of New Bern sponsored a “Support Your Local Police” week and Robert Whitehead’s hunch (admittedly with no proof) that Monte might be a member of the John Birch Society based on Monte’s association with fellow New Bern Yacht Club members, some of who were openly a part of the organization. See Tom Kelly to Edgar May, memorandum, September 22, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of OEO.

the county in September that “there [was] at least some open anti-Klan feeling in the county.”⁵⁵ Scholars have rightfully argued that OEO’s activism began to diminish after 1965 (especially after public approval fell in response to news stories of increased radicalism within certain CAAs) yet, as late as 1966, some OEO officials were clearly still very involved in monitoring local CAAs and/or imposing their own definition of community action, the latter of which defied original promises made by President Johnson and Sargent Shriver that there would “be no federal blueprint or magic formula worked out in Washington that would be imposed on local problems.”⁵⁶

Because OEO administrators like Bailin distrusted compromise and believed that organizing the poor for absolute control of board power was the surest and fairest method to defeat poverty (and that OEO knew better than locals who the best and most qualified persons were to lead a CAA), they felt justified to use greater federal authority to intervene locally in the interest of creating its version of the ideal situation. Bailin had said as much to Burns in early September, when he confided that he was “going to require absolute veto power over the next executive director of Craven Operation Progress.” Despite field representative Jordan’s succinct reaction (“I told Burns that I didn’t think Bailin could do this”), Burns agreed but not before declaring that OEO still “wanted to be consulted on the hiring of the next executive director of [COP] just as the

⁵⁵ Tom Kelly to Edgar May, memorandum, September 22, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of OEO.

⁵⁶ Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 269; James L. Sundquist, ed., *On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 75.

North Carolina Fund would be.”⁵⁷ The insistence of OEO officials to be heavily involved in local affairs to this extreme was not just at odds with the original intention of the War on Poverty as a “hometown fight” but also lost real and potential allies, such as Monte, in that fight.⁵⁸

Monte’s final stand

Despite his failure to win the favor of federal bureaucrats, Monte used his final month as executive director to fight for Colonel Evans to stay on as COP’s NYC director. Monte’s own experiences with OEO naturally led him to sympathize with Evans and, following his own personal defeat, he seemed to want to do all that he could to stand up to federal intervention that was, in his opinion, unwarranted. In his personal letter to Rep. Henderson of September 13, Monte promised to support Evans against NYC administrators in the U.S. Department of Labor in the name of “the principles and concepts in which our government was founded, plus individual freedoms and rights.”⁵⁹ At the September 19 COP board meeting, after reading a telegram from Region II Director of NYC William T. Davies stating that Davies would only recommend approval

⁵⁷ Royce Jordan, Field Report, August 31, 1966, folder 5039, NCFR.

⁵⁸ According to a pamphlet produced by CAP circa 1964: “The community action program reflects confidence in the ability of individual communities to organize and carry-out anti-poverty programs tailored to local needs and priorities.” See Sundquist, *On Fighting Poverty*, 75. During an August 20, 1967 television appearance on CBS News’ “*Face the Nation*” OEO director Sargent Shriver attempted to argue, despite evidence to the contrary, that CAAs are “locally managed, locally directed. The local people hire and fire the local employees. We don’t have that authority in Washington.” See CBS News, *Face the Nation: The collected transcripts from the CBS radio and television broadcasts*, Volume 10, 1967 (New York, NY: Holt Information Systems, 1967), 242.

⁵⁹ Robert R. Monte to Congressman David N. Henderson, September 13, 1966, box 147, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

of the NYC program for Coastal Progress (CPI) if Evans was dismissed, Monte read the telegram he had sent in response, which had informed Davies that he, Monte, could not remove Evans without consulting the CPI board and requested a ten-day extension for the NYC program so that the board could properly consider the matter.

Although Davies' telegram had specifically referred to "Clause 28" of the NYC agreement, which evoked the Department of Labor's right to approve all project directors and their successors, Monte did not believe that this clause allowed federal officials, as he wrote Labor Secretary Willard Wirtz on September 12, to "arbitrarily and capriciously discharge a responsible employee without reasons being brought forward."⁶⁰ Indeed, as Monte told the COP/CPI board on September 19, even though the uproar over NYC leadership had been going on for months, he still had not received specifics of the allegations against Evans and, based on his own observations, had continued to rate Evans' job performance as "outstanding."

Evans also continued to receive praise from some of the 120 male and female NYC enrollees he had helped find permanent employment. Typical sentiments were that Evans "has done an excellent job" and "has portrayed his fine character by simply devoting his time, energy, and encouragement to the enrollees of this program."⁶¹ These former enrollees seemed to agree that, in contrast to the persistent allegations from NYC officials of his violations of equal opportunity laws, Evans was only cooperating with

⁶⁰ Robert R. Monte to W. Willard Wirtz, September 12, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁶¹ "Fate of Neighborhood Youth Corp Discussed," *Sun Journal*, October 1, 1966; "Unfair Judgment," letter to the editor, *Sun Journal*, October 1, 1966.

local agencies that were in conformity with these laws.⁶² This positive feedback strengthened Monte's belief that pressure from NYC officials for Evans' resignation had stemmed primarily from a "personality clash" between Evans and Mike Lorenzo; in Monte's words, Evans had refused to be a "yes man."⁶³ In contrast to Labor Department officials, who wanted to expand the number of NYC enrollees across the nation, Evans' goal was to actually reduce the number of positions to a figure that was "based on the number of successful work experience positions that have been filled on a regular basis since the project has been in force."⁶⁴ Monte's own ardor for efficacy and efficiency, which was perhaps most evident during his conflict with Sandra Fisher over the ABER program in early 1966, would, not surprisingly, lead him to believe that Evans' approach was the most competent way to run the program.⁶⁵ Accordingly, Monte asked the COP/CPI board to approve a resolution to request specifics from Washington, D.C. about problems with Evans.⁶⁶

⁶² "Fate of Neighborhood Youth Corp Discussed," *Sun Journal*, October 1, 1966.

⁶³ "Youth Corp's Program Set For a Review," *Sun Journal*, October 15, 1966.

⁶⁴ Joseph A. Loftus, "Youth Corps Sees A Richer Program," *New York Times*, May 8, 1966; Robert R. Monte to Claretta Wordlaw, July 26, 1966, folder 5086, NCFR. An internal OEO memo dated October 7, 1966 helps to substantiate Monte's claim that the Department of Labor sought to remove Evans over Evans' refusal to be a "yes man." As the memo read, "[COP's] application was to enroll 403 young men and women. It enrolled only 197. (The Labor Department has reacted to this strongly and is seeking to replace the NYC director, W.F. Evans, a retired Marine)." See Tom Kelly to Edgar May, memorandum, October 7, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Records of the Community Services Administration, Record Group 381, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. Hereinafter cited as Records of OEO.

⁶⁵ Robert R. Monte to Michael J. Lorenzo, August 1, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁶⁶ COP board meeting minutes, September 19, 1966, folder 4977, NCFR.

Monte made it clear to the board that although he did not know how much power they in Craven held, he did not feel that “Washington could dictate the terms to the community if it were to be a true Community Action Program.” If federal authorities could do this, Monte quipped, the program should be called a “Washington Action Program.” Most of the board members agreed that they needed more information before they could agree to remove Evans. One of these was black member Willie Dawson who, based on his experiences with NYC as well as his encounters with and observations of Evans, found him efficient, professional, and “at all times considerate and with a deep understanding of the problems of the community.” Dawson, who believed that the NYC program had mostly been “a great benefit in Craven County” and surrounding counties, argued moreover that the problems between Evans and the NYC had been “badly misunderstood” and that “both [Evans] and the program have been mis-judged and deserve better treatment than they are receiving at the present time.”⁶⁷

Lee Morgan, whose resignation would not be official until September 28, concurred with Monte in front of the board and recalled that when he had traveled to D.C. to hand-deliver the NYC proposal in August, both Davies and Lorenzo had refused to give him specifics. White board member Nora Kennel remarked that “if Washington expected the Board to act in a responsible manner,” so should Washington. Members of the public also spoke out against the federal pressure to remove Evans. A white employer at Cherry Point, a supporter of the program who had hired eighteen youths, declared that

⁶⁷ Willie Dawson to Congressman David N. Henderson, September 12, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

the relative short-range gains of employing young people would be negated by the danger of “allowing our government to act without reason.” The only known local person in attendance who defended the decisions made by NYC administrators was board member Robert Whitehead who, while admitting that he was not familiar with any evidence that would prove the charges against Evans, argued that “surely they were not all made up” and that he, Whitehead, was not willing to let the NYC program fall for one man, Evans. Most of the other board members, however, were less concerned about the doubtful prospect of losing the program than about being disrespected by federal officials and losing influence over a program that operated within their community.

At the end of the September 19 meeting, which was covered by local press, the majority of the board agreed to immediately send a wire that would:

...inform the Washington office of Neighborhood Youth Corps of our deep concern for the welfare and continuation of the Neighborhood Youth Corps program in Craven, Jones, and Pamlico Counties, and that we are very much in need of more information concerning the specifics that may be included in Mr. Davies’ reference to Mr. Evans’ alleged inadequacies, we respectfully request a Bill of Particulars to be provided us and that we have a meeting with the Washington officials concerned in order that we might intelligently act on the request for Mr. Evans’ release as Director of our Neighborhood Youth Corps.

In addition, the CPI board would resolve that it would not accept directives from Washington without cause and stated its disapproval of what they considered arbitrary conduct by federal officials. The board also agreed that neither Monte nor his successor would remove Evans before specifics had been provided and the board had been able to discuss its decision. Copies of the resolution were sent to officials in the Labor

Department, OEO, members of Congress, and North Carolina Governor Dan K. Moore.⁶⁸ The two statements appeared to have served their purpose when Davies offered to fly to New Bern in early October for the sole purpose of discussing the allegations against Evans with the board (after which he would file specific charges). The meeting did occur, but, as Monte would tell the local press, it was a “waste of time and taxpayers’ money” because no specific grievances were revealed, nor were any charges filed.⁶⁹

Perhaps the confusion over Colonel Evans’ job performance stemmed from overworked NYC officials who had too many responsibilities and too little support staff. Evans himself claimed that once, at a meeting with Mike Lorenzo in D.C., not only had Lorenzo asked him to help open his mail but the pile of letters had also included three unopened ones from Evans that had been sitting for more than a month.⁷⁰ Or perhaps NYC administrators did not adequately respect local people and shared the belief, seemingly common among federal officials at the time, including those who worked for OEO, that locals (like the states) were often “disreputable obstructionists rather than creative partners” in the War on Poverty.⁷¹ Perhaps both possibilities played a part. The latter, however, seems more likely. The ways that NYC officials took liberties and acted more arbitrarily with regard to locals’ handling of COP/CPI seemed to confirm the

⁶⁸ COP board meeting minutes, September 19, 1966, folder 4977, NCFR.

⁶⁹ “Youth Corp’s Program Set For a Review,” *Sun Journal*, October 15, 1966.

⁷⁰ Colonel W.F. Evans, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 24, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

⁷¹ Gareth Davies, “Understanding the War on Poverty: The Advantages of a Canadian Perspective,” *Journal of Policy History* 9 (1997): 431.

observation made by several contemporary scholars of the War on Poverty of the strain between its theoretical commitment to “local control over local programs designed for local problems” and “the reality of strong federal control.”⁷²

Awareness of this conflict was echoed by North Carolina Fund founder and former North Carolina governor Terry Sanford, who maintained that no level of government “has a monopoly on solutions” and warned that the “chief danger of failure is that the [federal] guideline and policy formulators will forget the lesson that the strength and the best hope of success lie in community action, given freedom and flexibility to innovate and experiment and work within the limits of broad guidelines, but in their own best way with their peculiar requirements.”⁷³ Political science professor Richard H. Leach concurred, adding that “if, as it seems likely, a virtual revolution in the federal role is in the making, [more than] a drive to eliminate poverty is at stake here; the delicate balance of the federal system may be involved as well.”⁷⁴ Even the Fund’s George Esser, who had grown more sympathetic to the notion of greater federal control over local CAAs, was influenced to ponder by 1966 to “what extent must the federal government adopt common restrictions and regulations which limit local initiative but without which the intended benefits may not reach those who need to be helped?”⁷⁵

⁷² Nathan Glazer, “The Grand Design of the Poverty Program,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 27, 1966.

⁷³ Terry Sanford, *But What About the People?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 138-139.

⁷⁴ Leach, “The Federal Role in Everett,” *Anti-Poverty Programs*, 19.

⁷⁵ Esser, “The Role of a State-Wide Foundation,” in Everett, *Anti-Poverty Programs*, 101.

What made the situation particularly frustrating for Craven residents was not that the federal government was intervening in local affairs based on fairness or proper cause but just the opposite. Local people working for COP/CPI were not seeking to protect a man whom they knew to be disobeying equal opportunity laws; they were defending a man they believed had tried to follow them and who was serving their community well. Making matters worse was that federal officials tended to bow to local control when CAAs were run by minorities or powerful Democrats. Craven locals who kept up with national news were well aware that, for example, members of a CAA in Harlem had funneled \$40,000 in federal funds to New York City's Black Arts Theater, which then used the money for the production of controversial "anti-white" plays and the purchase of weapons including crossbows, knives, and pistols. In Chicago, Mayor Richard Daley used his influence in the Democratic Party to convince President Johnson and OEO into relaxing the "maximum feasible participation" requirements. In both examples, the CAA programs were treated with great leniency and received relatively little supervision.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ After OEO found out that the local community action program had funneled money to the Black Arts Theater in Harlem, no further money was given to the theater group and all relationships between the theater group and the local CAA were reportedly ended. "OEO does not condone or excuse the production of these plays," an OEO statement would read. "But they constituted an exceedingly small part of a larger summer program conducted in Harlem with substantial success and with the public approval of political leaders of both parties." The point, however, to outsiders was not that the OEO would eventually condone the use of the money or that the money was of a small amount but that not enough supervision had been given to the local CAA since the beginning. See "Harlem Theater Raids Yield Huge Cache of Weapons," *Charlotte Observer*, March 18, 1966; Congressman David N. Henderson to Dr. Baxter D. Huntley, March 24, 1966, box 149, folder 5; Office of Economic Opportunity, Statement on Black Arts Theater, box 149, folder 4, Henderson Papers. As a *Chicago Daily News* reporter put it, OEO also gave more leniency to Chicago's CAA largely because Washington "likes Chicago and its loyal, powerful city administration." As Zarefsky chronicled, congressional critics from the left also charged that OEO often played favorites by pressuring for the selection "of certain percentage of agency board members from among the poor, while in others—chiefly Los Angeles and Chicago—local officials were allowed to act as they pleased." See Lois Wille, "Troubled General Runs Poverty War—Dissension in the Ranks," *Chicago Daily News*, April 6,

As David Zarefsky argued about the War on Poverty in general, “‘flexibility’ was not a device to match programs to local needs but a means to avoid local political conflict.”⁷⁷ In contrast, CAAs such as COP/CPI that were not controlled by minorities or well-financed and influential figures in the Democratic Party would arguably undergo the greatest amount of federal intervention. Of course, during COP’s first eighteen months, when Hearn was in charge of its programs, federal intervention was muted because of Hearn’s previous ties to Washington, D.C.—a connection that influenced his aggressive style of leadership. In fact, OEO considered COP a showplace during these months primarily because of the way Hearn ran it: “the original very active, very competent director,” as Hearn was described by OEO staff, regularly challenged local board members, continuously pushed for rapid social change, almost exclusively targeted the black population, and applied for a considerable amount of federal money for a wide range of programs; OEO especially touted the fact that COP included programs under all six titles of the Economic Opportunity Act.⁷⁸ With Hearn serving as, in essence, a local arm of OEO, additional federal influence was not needed. Under Monte, however, who

1965; Greenstone and Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics*. 202; Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, 126.

⁷⁷ Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, 128.

⁷⁸ Ray Jacobson to Ed May, memorandum, March 16, 1966, Craven County, New Bern, Inspection Reports, 1964-1967, Records of the OEO; Joseph A. Viau to Director of Audits, memorandum, July 19, 1965, p.8, CAP/North Carolina, Audit Report-1965, Audit and Evaluation Files, Records of OEO; Office of Economic Opportunity, For Immediate Release: Craven County, North Carolina (Conduct and Administration), box 149, folder 2, Henderson Papers.

took a more gradual approach as he sought to maintain the support of the board and the local community, all of this changed.

The conflict over the firing of Evans would not be settled between COP/CPI and federal administrators until after Monte stepped down on October 15.⁷⁹ The day before, Monte wrote a letter to the board of directors wishing them “and your paid staff all the success possible in your attempt to alleviate causes and conditions of poverty in our community and area.” Monte was not leaving, he told them, because “of any difference between your goals and mine.” To the contrary, Monte wrote, “I have always to the best of my ability attempted to implement the desires of you, my employers.” Even though he was “now assuming the identity of a private citizen,” Monte promised to remain involved in the happenings of the program and would be open to offering his help anytime he was asked to assist Coastal Progress.

As Monte had made clear in an earlier letter, he was proud of the degree of “community-wide support” that had been achieved and believed that the “organization should survive,” for it “can be the most effective orderly forum for the expression of diverse viewpoints [that is] essential to community progress.”⁸⁰ As you know,” he

⁷⁹ W.F. Evans would assume position of Program Coordinator within Coastal Progress in December 1966, based on negotiations between NYC official Mike Lorenzo, Jim Godwin, and his Deputy Director Bill Riddick, II. Evans was eventually replaced as local NYC director by white New Bern native and fellow WWII and Korean War veteran John George in June 1967. George had first joined the local NYC staff as a field supervisor in early 1966. Just before George became the new director for NYC, Evans was promoted to the position of Program Coordinator within Coastal Progress. See Bill Riddick, II to Mr. Royce Jordan, December 19, 1966, folder 5047, NCFR; “Named Director of Local Youth Corps,” *Sun Journal*, June 14, 1967.

⁸⁰ Robert R. Monte to Board of Directors of Craven Operation Progress, September 14, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR.

reminded them, “there are many views as to how these causes and conditions can be best alleviated.” Before concluding his October 14 letter, Monte felt it necessary to give his opinions on two related matters. For one, he strongly recommended that the board “maintain their own integrity, their own beliefs, and their own concepts” of what was best for the community and the community action agency with regard to next year’s NYC proposal. “The other item I feel all of you should closely examine,” Monte wrote, “is the possibility that your present relationship with the North Carolina Fund is causing considerable confusion in your efforts to work for the deprived of the area.” Monte suggested that the board examine this relationship and determine for themselves “if the North Carolina Fund significantly shares your viewpoints, goals, and methods and if the North Carolina Fund, through its staff, is now in fact attempting to exert an inappropriate amount of the directional power over this organization which properly should be exerted by yourselves.”⁸¹

Monte shared these views about the Fund with more than his board of directors. Two weeks earlier he had also told North Carolina Fund executive director George Esser that, in his opinion, the Fund staff’s political leanings and interference in local affairs merited a statewide investigation. Even though Monte had expressed his concerns “on

⁸¹ Robert R. Monte to Board Members of Craven Operation Progress, Inc., Jones County Economic Development Corporation, Pamlico Operation Progress, Inc., Board Members of Coastal Progress, Inc., October 14, 1966, folder 5043, NCFR. Why Monte largely singled out the North Carolina Fund within his criticism of outside intervention, rather than to include OEO, is not definitively known. While Monte’s relationship with OEO administrators was characteristically tense and awkward, he was likely unaware that they, namely Harold Bailin, compelled the North Carolina Fund to ask for his own resignation. If this was the case, Monte likely concluded that the OEO had been the primary entity pushing for him to step down. Also, because Monte was in more frequent contact with the Fund than Washington officials, he may have found its staff to be larger hindrance to his executive directorship.

many occasions” to members of the Fund staff “about things they were doing,” he also felt a “certain sense of loyalty to the Fund” as long as he was being paid by the organization. After he agreed to resign, however, Monte felt that “my loyalty should revert entirely back to the people of my community.” Monte sent a copy of this letter to Governor Moore, who Monte hoped would order an investigation into the Fund’s political activities.⁸² Although Esser claimed to be surprised by Monte’s complaints about Fund staff and the degree of interference he noted, the reality was that frustration between the Fund staff and Monte had been mutual for several months.⁸³ By the time of his resignation, numerous Fund staff believed that COP’s goal of ending the cycle of poverty in Craven was not being effectively achieved under Monte. An internal staff paper that summarized Monte’s directorship noted that Monte had: “vetoed COP support for voter registration, vetoed a program for volunteers to teach basic education classes, ordered staff members to stay out of housing projects where protest against housing authorities was coming to a head, resisted integration of the day care centers,” in addition to cutting “COP activities so much that 160,000 dollars were left over in the 1965-1966 fiscal budget.” Fund staff also ascribed blame to Monte for the fact that the poor were not “effectively” involved in COP program planning despite “OEO’s guidelines about involving the poor, [and] for all the Fund’s urging to involve the poor.”⁸⁴ However, based on the historical record, (much of which is located in the surviving files of the North

⁸² Robert R. Monte to Mr. George H. Esser, September 23, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁸³ George H. Esser, Jr. to Mr. Robert R. Monte, September 20, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁸⁴ John Miller, “Staff-Board Politics: Craven Operation Progress,” folder 5026, NCFR.

Carolina Fund), most of these charges were either exaggerations or based upon misunderstandings of the complexities of the local situation. The surplus referred to above, for example, had come about largely as a result of unanticipated voids in the numbers of NYC enrollees and ABER recruits despite heavy campaigning in the community to attract as many low-income persons as possible. Nor was the low level of integration within the day care centers a result of Monte's resistance; in fact, he gave his Deputy Director Lee Morgan the go-ahead to investigate the situation, which proved to be due to the lower rates of poverty within the white community, the proximity of the day care centers to people's homes, and, as even Whitehead acknowledged, the fact that parents, black and white, could not be forced to integrate their children.⁸⁵

The power of moderation

The Fund staff's major issues with Monte did not prevent them from acknowledging some of Monte's attributes, however. For instance, unlike Hearn, who had "dominated the Board," Monte "went to pains not to antagonize the members. He asked their advice in numerous matters, let the members take the initiative in decision-making, and acquiesced to their wishes." "The Board now played a real policy-making role," the Fund reported, which "has reasserted itself as an equal partner in the total COP organization." This aspect of Monte's style, which may have been due to his experience as a board member, actually explains much about the greater influence enjoyed in 1966 by the black members of the board, both the poor and the middle-class. Black influence

⁸⁵ COP board meeting minutes, June 22, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR; Robert Monte to L.R. Morgan, December 20, 1965, folder 5086, NCFR.

within the COP board not only led to Monte's resignation, which Monte surely did not foresee, but also kept local whites accountable to equal employment and desegregation guidelines of both the North Carolina Fund and the federal government.

The presence of blacks and their growing influence meant that Monte and other board members were better informed about the attitudes and desires of the black poor. Under Monte, neighborhood groups were electing low-income people to the board for the first time, a development he seemed to support.⁸⁶ This attitude may seem surprising to some since even though Monte, much like many white COP board members, including D. L. Stallings and Larry Pate, understood that "the overwhelming majority of the persons in this area of North Carolina who were intended to be benefited by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 are negro," he did not think the primary purpose of the COP program was for "social integration."⁸⁷ Nevertheless, while social integration may not have been the primary goal, it was a sizeable outcome. When Monte left the directorship, all COP programs had a biracial staff, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission found that Craven County's Headstart programs had the highest average integration rates of all the programs in the seven states under the study, and Sargent Shriver confirmed that thirteen black members out of twenty-seven on the COP board was "fair representation for the area" and concluded that OEO still considered North Carolina "a leading example of our

⁸⁶ Robert R. Monte to Mrs. Maggie Blow, September 14, 1966, folder 5046, NCFR.

⁸⁷ Robert R. Monte to James C. McDonald, May 8, 1966, folder 5025, NCFR; Robert R. Monte to Mr. George H. Esser, September 23, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

Nation's fight to eliminate poverty.”⁸⁸ Moreover, as Fund staff member Royce Jordan observed at the time, if they did not before, “the majority of whites that worked on the COP board came to see blacks as human beings.” Jordan, who himself claims to be a “prime example of someone who broadened his views on race” during the 1960s, recalls that when he was growing up in Eastern North Carolina during the 1930s “the races acted civil toward one another but didn’t work together.”⁸⁹

Until his resignation, Monte's supervision did not prevent social progress between the races but arguably made it more attainable. His style, which involved gradual change, keeping the board and the community informed, and selling the programs to the community by helping them understand how lower poverty and unemployment rates for both blacks and whites was beneficial to everyone in Craven County, made social progress more acceptable at the local level than it had been under Hearn. Monte was among a growing number who are, as he put it, “now aware that people, well educated, well fed and housed, and well versed in their Government are the best resources a nation could have.” Yet, too many times, he believed, “[we] have overlooked the simple methods of education along basic self-help lines as the most effective and quickest manner to help combat ignorance and poverty among our people”—a solution that he, incidentally, believed was more compassionate because of its greater effectiveness.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Robert R. Monte to James C. McDonald, May 8, 1966, folder 5025, NCFR; Roy Parker, Jr., “Health, Welfare Programs in Eastern N.C. Criticized,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 24, 1966; Sargent Shriver to Congressman David N. Henderson, October 6, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

⁸⁹ Royce Jordan, phone interview by author, March 3, 2012, transcript in author's possession.

⁹⁰ Robert R. Monte, foreword in Cecilia M. Bose, *Ideas for Self-Help Neighborhood Centers*, folder 5082, NCFR.

“Of course, different people do things different ways,” Monte had told the COP board of directors on one of his first days as executive director. “Some people like to fly—some like to take a train to go to the same place.”⁹¹ For Monte, whose mindset was similar to that of many other businessmen and engineers, fighting to reduce poverty was largely a question of efficiency and getting the most “bang for your buck.” Thus, not surprisingly, under his leadership, pro-business and pro-economic growth conservatives were able to see the good in poverty programs and increased education to, if nothing else, improve the labor supply, a reality that surely existed in numerous communities besides Craven County. Along with MITCE, one of the programs that Monte was most proud of was the Small Business Development Center which, in his opinion, “has created jobs and opportunities never before available to men with potential and leadership...[its] services rendered...[have] more than paid for the cost of the program” and had also provided helpful advice for “existing businesses” in “continuing their successful operations.”⁹²

Monte understood very well that middle-class people in Craven County, like many smaller conservative communities, were willing to go along with social progress as long as it occurred gradually and could be shown to benefit them and the community as a whole. In order to maintain their support, he had to help white conservative board members and community members begin “to see that COP helped whites as well as

⁹¹ “Readers write to the editor,” *Sun Journal*, November 6, 1965.

⁹² Robert R. Monte to Congressman Walter B. Jones, September 21, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

blacks.”⁹³ Accordingly, he slowed the pace of COP so that he could improve its image and expand it later, with the good faith of the people. This tactic seemed to have worked quite well. In spite of the multitude of complaints from the Fund and OEO, there is no proof that Monte’s methods reduced the ability of COP to reach the poor or the effectiveness of its efforts to do so. In fact, COP programs reached more poor—both black and white—than they ever had during Hearn’s tenure. More programs were administered under COP than under Hearn, one of which included the Dental Mobile Services Unit, which was begun within days of Monte’s resignation. The size of most programs had also grown, and the majority of these programs were backed by greater community support.⁹⁴

During Monte’s term as executive director, even some of the most conservative whites in Craven were willing to support programs preferred by the poor, including Community Development. Pro-segregationist Cedric Boyd, who in November 1965 had reportedly told black COP board member Claretta Wordlaw that “all you colored people want is a hand-out from this [COP] program,” was openly commending the Community Development program by February 1966 as one of the best in COP for the job it did in showing what people “can do to help themselves improve the environment and community in which they live.” Boyd’s praise was even more remarkable because the

⁹³ Royce Jordan, phone interview by the author, March 3, 2012, transcript in author’s possession.

⁹⁴ The mobile dental unit traveled throughout the county providing examinations and follow-up treatment for medically indigent children and adults. The program received approximately \$35,000 from OEO in a CAP grant. See Office of Economic Opportunity, For Immediate Release: Craven County, North Carolina (Conduct and Administration), box 149, folder 2, Henderson Papers.

program was almost exclusive to black neighborhoods.⁹⁵ With its emphases on voter registration, sanitation, beautification, and other issues that did not directly impact the local economy, Community Development may not have been added if not for the North Carolina Fund's recommendation. Yet many of the middle-class within COP, including Monte, saw its focus on self-help as helping to strengthen other programs, such as MITCE and ABER, (especially after seeing it in action) and as guaranteeing Fund support of COP altogether. Interestingly, Community Development funding for the predominately black community of Pembroke was held up in August 1966—not because of lack of support among the community but due to slowness of OEO approval.⁹⁶

Just prior to Monte's resignation, most of the complaints leveled at COP seemed to be coming from the fringe of the white community, namely members of the John Birch Society and the local editor of the *New Bern Mirror*, who had a small but loyal following of conservative whites. A far larger segment seemed to agree that the programs should stay, despite controversies that had arisen in the past. Congressman David Henderson continued to vote for reapportionments of federal funding for the War on Poverty into 1966 from a belief that "The only way we will ever be able to get the low economic groups in our society up to a decent level is through education and training." Henderson also felt the COP "has done a lot of good despite the criticism which has been leveled at

⁹⁵ Claretta Wordlaw, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 14, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR; COP board meeting minutes, July 28, 1966, folder 4976, NCFR.

⁹⁶ Rev. Leo Bell to Jim McDonald, circa August 1966, folder 5041, NCFR; Robert R. Monte to Jim McDonald, August 9, 1966, folder 5041, NCFR.

it...”⁹⁷ Even New Bern Mayor Mack Lupton, who had not wanted to be on the COP board when he was appointed in 1964 and who had stated that “advertising Craven as a poverty county was detrimental to our community,” would come to see that COP needed to stay if for no other reason than because poor people’s hopes had been raised.⁹⁸ A North Carolina Fund-sponsored review of COP conducted in mid-October by an outside team that included the executive director of United Progress Inc. (UPI), a CAA located in Trenton, New Jersey, was impressed by the fact that “among the leaders of the churches and business community along with the pastors of the middle-class churches...there was feeling that the program was a good one for the COP area” for both the “social improvement of the lot of the poor” and the “economic boost that the program brought to the local area.”⁹⁹

There is no denying, however, that Monte’s handling of COP slowed progress to a rate below what some local poor blacks desired, for example those who had joined Leon Nixon’s SCLC committee. One of the most common complaints among this segment of the Craven community was that “those who had already had good jobs were the ones who got hired at COP.”¹⁰⁰ Nixon, himself, who claimed that COP had a “false representation

⁹⁷ Congressman David N. Henderson to Mrs. J.N. May, August 16, 1966, box 401, folder 1, Henderson Papers.

⁹⁸ Mack Lupton, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 21, 1966, transcript, folder 7092, NCFR.

⁹⁹ W. Judson King to George Esser, November 7, 1966, folder 5045, NCFR.

¹⁰⁰ Willie Vails, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR; David Whitfield, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, July 28, 1966, transcript, folder 7093, NCFR; Leon Nixon, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

of Negroes from [Robert M.] Whitehead, [Bishop S.] Rivers, and [Willie] Dawson,” was so frustrated with the pace of change that in September 1966 he argued that their presence was “not doing the community any good.” From his outside observation, Whitehead, Rivers, and Dawson too often followed the wishes of influential whites. As Nixon reasoned, these men, who he called “Uncle Toms,” live in “nice houses while other blacks starve,” so “How can they be leaders?” he asked.¹⁰¹ Many poor blacks disagreed with Nixon, however. COP board member Claretta Wordlaw, who was still living at Craven Terrace, argued that Whitehead, in particular, was “a fine and hard working man who wants to represent all the poor people of Craven County, not just the Negroes.”¹⁰² Several North Carolina Fund staff also disagreed with Nixon’s assessment. One North Carolina Fund staffer argued at the time that Nixon’s methods “to date had accomplished absolutely nothing” while “the accomplishments of Robert Whitehead,” who was more willing to negotiate with influential whites, “have led to the establishment of working relations with members of the power structure and local agency heads.”¹⁰³

Indeed, the more “working relations” were formed between whites and blacks, the more progress became imbedded in day-to-day interactions at the local level. The review team that evaluated COP in mid-October, all of whom were from outside the South,

¹⁰¹ Leon Nixon, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

¹⁰² Claretta Wordlaw, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 14, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Evans, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, March 24, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR.

recorded being surprised by the degree of integration they found among COP staff.¹⁰⁴ While they gave most of the credit to Hearn, rather than to a commitment by the board members, the final report included contradictory praise of strong support of community action among board members, who were described as having “an awareness of social change (integration), and the necessity for it.”¹⁰⁵ The review team also cited the fact that “most interest groups are represented” on the COP board and awarded COP six points on a scale of seven in that category.¹⁰⁶ As interactions between blacks and whites became more frequent, the two groups were learning how to collaborate in a just manner with regard to solving local issues. The review team also rated COP four out of seven in regards to the extent that “membership representative of the target area population and minority groups share in policy making” and noted that although poor whites participated the least, the “[a]bility of the Negro poor and other Negro representation to influence policy and specific actions of the organization seems to be increasing.” Examples included blacks’ ability to influence Monte to hire Lee Morgan and how blacks and whites “caucus before meetings to organize for specific purposes, and negroes at least, feel this has brought some specific gains.”¹⁰⁷

The biracial nature of COP staff was highly influential as well in creating little revolutions every day in the ways that blacks and whites worked side by side in jobs that

¹⁰⁴ Gregory Farrell to Mary Snyder, October 24, 1966, folder 5043, NCFR.

¹⁰⁵ Community Action Agency Evaluation, October 1966, p. 60, 63, folder 5031, NCFR.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 70.

had long been reserved exclusively for whites. COP programs, especially NYC and MITCE, also provided similar opportunities for program participants. Not only did growing numbers of whites deal with blacks on an equal footing, but several were even being supervised by blacks for the first time. Such practical experiences helped to change numerous attitudes among whites as they began to consider blacks on their merits rather than as members of a particular race.¹⁰⁸ COP's presence built upon earlier commitments to racial fairness and also spawned new ones. Largely because of COP, the community as a whole was more dedicated to investing in education, job training, and self-improvement for all—initiatives that they had never been able or willing to seriously consider before—and these new developments went right back into strengthening COP. It was not a coincidence then that integration within COP staff and the board began to mirror greater racial harmony in Craven's workplaces, schools and public departments and vice versa.

As records from the U.S. Equal Employment Office confirm, in 1966 several New Bern businesses, including Maola Milk and Ice Cream Company, Barbour Boats, and Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Company, hired dozens of black workers for positions reserved not long ago for whites only, including middle management positions as well as clerical, sales, and skilled and/or semi-skilled jobs.¹⁰⁹ The ways in which fairer hiring practices and job training programs increased black employment opportunities over time will be discussed further in Chapter VII and the conclusion. The schools also saw

¹⁰⁸ David Entin, "The Significance of the War on Poverty for a Local Community," folder 5107, NCFR.

¹⁰⁹ Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

tremendous change during Monte's tenure as head of COP. In addition to a near-100 percent increase in pupil integration between the 1965-1966 and 1966-1967 school years, in the fall of 1966 black teachers began to work for the first time in Craven County's previously all-white elementary, middle, and high schools.¹¹⁰ In addition, the Craven County Welfare Department, which was directed by COP board member Constance Rabin, began assigning caseloads on an integrated basis by early 1966.¹¹¹ Craven County's hospitals, after being criticized in February 1966 for having a few segregated wards in existence, became fully integrated soon thereafter and were approved by the federal government for Medicare funding in July.¹¹²

The increase in black voting in the area after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 also was responsible for the greater commitment to racial fairness shown by both COP and the larger community. Between October 1965 and May 1966, of the 1,725 newly registered

¹¹⁰ Craven County Schools Integration Projection Plans, 1966-1967, folder 5006, NCFR. During the 1965-1966 school year, 346 black students integrated previously all-white schools in the Craven County school system. In the 1966-1967 school year, the number of students grew to 659, with 16 black teachers. Private school enrollment would slightly increase in Craven County during the late 1960s but, even as late as 1979, the number of those enrolled in private schools (997—the vast majority of whom were middle-class whites) was less than 8 percent of the approximate school age population in Craven (16,031). The number of Craven's private school students would also not climb above 1,105 between 1979 and 2000. See State of North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, NC Department of Administration, Division of Non-Public Education, State of NC Private Grade K-12 school statistics, 1961-2000, accessed July 24, 2010, www.ncdnpe.org/hhh500.aspx; Table 46, *U.S. Census of Population: 1980*, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 35, North Carolina, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf.

¹¹¹ Dorothea Tuck to Miss Ellen Bush, memorandum, January 28, 1966, folder: Civil Rights, 1965-1966, Special Services Division, Civil Rights Section: County Correspondence (1965-1972), Old Records Center.

¹¹² Roy Parker, Jr., "Health, Welfare Programs in Eastern N.C. Criticized," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 24, 1966.

voters, more than 650 were blacks (close to 40 percent).¹¹³ By May 1966, black registered voters in Craven increased by 400, bringing the number to 3,473 black. Black voters would also grow to a total of 35 percent of Craven's sixteen thousand voters that year.¹¹⁴ James Gavin commented at the time that white politicians were more likely to make concessions to blacks since they formed a significant voting bloc. "The white politicians listen to us now," said Gavin.¹¹⁵

Amid these positive developments within Craven County, Monte's resignation struck a temporary sour note. Maggie Blow, the black director of Community Development, would argue that Monte's greatest weakness was that he worked "too hard to try to please everyone" and was often "walking a tightrope" between the poor and the COP board.¹¹⁶ One key example, discussed in Chapter VI, was with regard to the original Legal Services proposal that had been supported by Craven's poor but not the majority of COP board members. Even though Monte later told Esser that "One of the facts of life about being a director of a poverty program is that you cannot please all the people," he had in fact tried to do so to the best of his ability.¹¹⁷ However, Monte's attempts to please all factions as much as possible was not the primary cause of his downfall; in fact, his

¹¹³ Craven County Voter Registration, November 1964-May 1966, folder 5008, NCFR.

¹¹⁴ "Registration Hike Total of Craven Voters," *Sun Journal*, May 27, 1966; A.A. Kafer, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

¹¹⁵ James Gavin, interview by John Miller, James City, NC, September 29, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR.

¹¹⁶ Maggie Blow, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, May 11, 1966, transcript, folder 7091, NCFR.

¹¹⁷ Robert R. Monte to Mr. George H. Esser, Jr., September 23, 1966, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers.

ability to keep COP programs going through negotiations between both groups arguably secured him more time as executive director. Monte's downfall was instead rooted more in his decision to go it alone by firing Morgan without consulting the board or members of the community.

The new executive director

Because Fund staff believed that Monte had tried "to lead the Community Action Program down a path of right-wing philosophy," they were quite excited about his replacement, forty-one-year-old Havelock resident James L. Godwin, who was originally recommended by COP board member Constance Rabin and approved by the COP/CPI board on September 28. Godwin would officially take over the administration of COP on October 15.¹¹⁸ As the North Carolina Fund staff saw it, Godwin was a good choice because his views fell between those of Monte and Hearn. His previous experience in the military, as an entrepreneur, and as a community leader were in line with Monte's background, but the care he took to please Fund staff and OEO officials was more similar to Hearn's leadership style.

A native of South Carolina, Godwin completed his bachelor's degree in Economics at the University of North Carolina in 1949 after a three-year tour of duty with the U.S. Marines. A few months after graduation, Godwin moved to Craven County where he operated a drive-in theatre, restaurant, and laundry business with his brother in the city of Havelock. By 1953 he decided to begin selling life insurance, a career move

¹¹⁸ Royce Jordan, phone interview by author, March 3, 2012, transcript in author's possession; "Godwin Named Director of County COP," *Sun Journal*, September 29, 1966; Royce Jordan to George Esser, memorandum, October 25, 1966, folder 5038, NCFR.

that took him as far as Greenville, Tennessee, where he landed a job as vice president of the Franklin Life Insurance Company. In Tennessee he became involved in the community by serving as a county chairman for the United Fund campaign, a church elder, and a Bible class teacher. Nonetheless, career dissatisfaction caused him to resign from Franklin Life in 1965. He then returned to Havelock, in August of that year, and opened a retail shoe business in the spring of 1966. A few months later he accepted the position of Title V Work-Training Coordinator with the Craven County Welfare Department, whose goal it was to match heads of households receiving welfare with local training opportunities (in hopes of lifting them to financial self-reliance) and turned over the shoe business to his wife.¹¹⁹ Thus, Godwin had at least some familiarity with COP/CPI and the local War on Poverty before stepping into the role of executive director.

Soon into his administration, Godwin began making efforts to abide by the North Carolina Fund staff recommendations for COP/CPI about increased participation of the poor in program planning and policy making, better coordination among programs, specific attempts to involve more poor whites, and enhanced training of COP/CPI board and staff about the objectives of the CAA and their role in it.¹²⁰ As Royce Jordan described him, Godwin was “an appeaser” and was “good with working with both sides”

¹¹⁹ Biographical Sketch: James L. Godwin, folder 4983, NCFR.

¹²⁰ “Directors For Community Aid Program Meet,” *Sun Journal*, February 2, 1967.

in the event of a conflict.¹²¹ After lauding the program's past results, Godwin expressed confidence to the COP board on October 26 that "we will make progress during the coming year and you will be proud of your contribution and role in what we do for this community."¹²² These early actions indicate that Godwin was largely on board with the Fund and did not want to upset its staff or lead them to lose faith in his abilities. "We now have a CAP director in Jim Godwin and feel the relationship will be one of closeness and togetherness, one of trying to get the problems to the poor" read a Fund strategy paper of November 1966.¹²³ Nor did Godwin want to do anything that might upset OEO administrators. In fact, one of his first tasks as executive director was to dismiss Ralph Jacobs, who had been hired by Monte in February 1966, and eliminate the position of administrative assistant. Jacobs would protest that his dismissal had been engineered by Fund field representative Royce Jordan and SCLC leader Leon Nixon, both of whom he believed had complained to Godwin about him. Godwin admitted that Nixon had strongly suggested that Jacobs be removed because he saw him as an "obstructionist"; however, Godwin maintained that the Fund had played no role in pressuring him to release Jacobs and that, he, Godwin, had given Jacobs the opportunity to resign before firing him.¹²⁴ According to Godwin, pressure to discharge Jacobs had been communicated by Bob Burns of OEO, who informed him that "if Jacobs remained on the payroll OEO money

¹²¹ Royce Jordan, phone interview by author, March 3, 2012, transcript in author's possession.

¹²² "Craven Operation Progress Meeting," *Sun Journal*, October 26, 1966.

¹²³ Craven County Strategy Paper, November 1966, folder 5026, NCFR.

¹²⁴ Royce Jordan to George Esser, memorandum, April 12, 1968, folder 5037, NCFR.

would be hard to come by.” In response to Jacobs’ contention that the North Carolina Fund’s goals and methods were destructive and “dictatorial,” Godwin tactfully stated that the Fund acted only as an advisory group and that he planned to work with every possible advisory agency.¹²⁵

Godwin’s willingness to accommodate major funders, which was greater than Monte’s had been even before he fired Lee Morgan, went a long way with both the Fund and OEO. Neither would they intervene in the administrative matters of COP as they had when Monte was executive director. Indeed, when Godwin removed Ralph Jacobs without COP/CPI board approval, neither Esser, Fund staff, nor OEO made any protest which was in stark contrast to the harsh stance they took when Monte let Lee Morgan go before consulting the board. That Jacobs was white and that no community group was willing to demonstrate on his behalf certainly explained a good deal about why both situations were handled so differently by the two organizations.

In addition to Godwin’s discretion and flexibility, the growing criticism that surrounded the North Carolina Fund as a result of its controversial activities (namely its support of black community activist Howard Fuller) may have also led the Fund to seek to improve its working relationships with local executive directors by 1967. Although tensions between the Fund and COP/CPI almost disappeared after Godwin was hired, issues of local control between the CAA and OEO grew. The source of the problem, however, was new: OEO’s promotion of national emphasis programs in place of local

¹²⁵ Willis Mason, “Thinks N.C. Fund Exceeding Powers,” *Sun Journal*, October 24, 1966.

ideas.¹²⁶ This trend, which grew in response to conservative and moderate Congressmen's disdain for the radicalism that the War on Poverty had incited among the black poor in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and other large urban centers, had been in evidence during Monte's directorship but became paramount during Godwin's tenure.¹²⁷

OEO's new funding priorities

The new OEO funding priorities came at an inopportune time for COP/CPI. In part because few in the community knew the actual details of Monte's resignation, the community was still widely supportive of the CAA, or at least willing to grant it the benefit of the doubt, based on the results of the November 1966 election. In a record off-year voting turnout, incumbent Democrats (including D. L. Stallings) swept the entire election in Craven despite the appearance of more than a half-dozen Republican

¹²⁶ According to a November 25, 1966 memorandum, the director of CAP ordered OEO regional directors and CAP managers to "weed out 'low-priority' and 'low-quality' projects" which included educational counseling and guidance, remedial education (i.e. Adult Basic Education), "in-school" education, recreation, cultural enrichment, and social service counseling. See *Antipoverty Programs under the Economic Opportunity Act* (New York: Tax Foundation, Inc., 1968), 27.

¹²⁷ Joseph W. Sullivan, "War Over Poverty: Some Lawmakers Seek To Curb Local Control Of Antipoverty Projects," *Wall Street Journal*, February 16, 1966. As Rep. Gibbons of Florida argued, "We've got to make it clear that we aren't going to foster any revolutionary movements or put out money for the poor people to do with as they please. The program is being sponsored by the public for the public's benefit." Many other fellow congressmen, most of whom were Democrats, largely agreed and primarily wanted to steer community action programs toward a greater emphasis on job training and job recruitment. Earmarking with regard to COP/CPI first began in March 1966 when Monte was still executive director. He received a letter from Acting Regional Director of OEO Sidney H. Woolner who informed Monte that COP's application of December 1965 requesting supplementary funds for the Rural Environmental Sanitation project for \$6,367.50 was not approved because OEO's review of the project concluded that "this supplement would not enhance the present program of Craven Operation Progress." OEO suggested that based on the program's success in the past, that other local agencies might be willing to finance it further. As Woolner noted, "some determination must be made of priority areas which funds may be available." See Sidney H. Woolner to Mr. Robert Monte, March 15, 1966, folder 5096, NCFR.

challengers on the ballot (many of whom were members of the John Birch Society), who ran for local office for the first time in order to limit the antipoverty programs, if not eliminate them entirely.¹²⁸ The electability of Stallings and other incumbent county commissioners was undoubtedly assisted by their efforts to maintain the local tax rate, which had not budged in three years.¹²⁹ But as some within the North Carolina Fund had predicted, COP/CPI was too large a political liability to overcome for Stallings and other Democrats who had either served on the COP board or sponsored it.¹³⁰

These Fund staff observers were wrong, however, not least because they underestimated the degree of black political strength in Craven. Indeed, Stallings' reelection could not have been accomplished without the black voters who appreciated his efforts to prop up COP/CPI as well as to bring higher-wage industries to the area.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Richard Benninghoff, "Republican Bid For Election Is Halted Locally," *Sun Journal*, November 11, 1966. Guy A. Civils, who ran for Craven County Commissioner as a Republican, made the claim in his political ad that a vote for him was a vote against the "Johnson-Humphrey administration" in general. His ad also stated that he was against "forced integration, higher taxes that never find the way back to our country and creeping inflation." Civils would lose, however, by over 2,000 votes to Democrat Johnnie E. Daughtry. See Political Advertisement for Guy A. Civils, *Sun Journal*, October 27, 1966; "Craven's Unofficial Tabulation of Craven County's Tuesday General Election," *Sun Journal*, November 9, 1966.

¹²⁹ Richard Benninghoff, "Craven Budget For Year Made By Commission," *Sun Journal*, July 6, 1966.

¹³⁰ Former COP board chairman Larry Pate also won his unattested race for Craven County Board of Education in November 1966 local election.

¹³¹ Robert M. Whitehead, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, February 16, 1966, transcript, folder 7090, NCFR. One major exception was L.C. Nixon who, in addition to supporting the campaign of black Republican challenger Annette E. Frazier, attempted to persuade blacks not to vote for Stallings. Although Nixon said he believed in the potential of COP to help blacks and poor whites, Nixon preferred James Chance to be County Commissioner over Stallings even though Nixon claimed he did not know how Chance felt about the program. As Nixon saw it, Stallings had too much control over the CAA. A minority of blacks, however, would vote for Frazier and Chance. See Leon Nixon, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, September 30, 1966, transcript, folder 7094, NCFR. "Craven's Unofficial Tabulation of Craven County's Tuesday General Election," *Sun Journal*, November 9, 1966.

Fund staff also overestimated the size of the Republican opposition. Even with the majority of the black vote, Stallings could not have won reelection without sizeable support from Craven's white voters. Many whites supported him from a view that, though COP had its problems, the organization's effects were more positive than negative. Unlike the beating that Democrats took in the national races—forty-five OEO sympathizers were defeated in November 1966—those at the local level could often more easily see the benefits of the War on Poverty first-hand and the progress taking place in their communities. In September 1966, 59 percent of Americans rated President Johnson's handling of the War on Poverty as "only fair/poor."¹³² Many of those defeated at the national level were also in districts where political activity was more radical and only continued to grow into the urban riots of 1967.¹³³ Arguably, white support for COP/CPI stayed high for far longer than in many other urban areas due to a lack of protest among blacks, partially inspired by the example of the liberal to moderate black leadership of Whitehead, Rivers, Dawson, and Gavin.

The timing of the decline in OEO funding for local ideas was also unfortunate because Godwin was just beginning to implement the official expansion of Coastal Progress, which had been planned during Monte's tenure, by combining COP with the CAAs of Pamlico and Jones counties into a single board of directors. OEO was still

¹³² Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*, 160; Harris Survey, Sep, 1966. Retrieved Aug-25-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.libproxy.uncg.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html.

¹³³ Kenneth J. Heineman, "Model City: The War on Poverty, Race Relations, and Catholic Social Activism in 1960s Pittsburgh," *The Historian* 65, no. 4 (June 2003): 897-898.

helping to fund local initiatives such as the Neuse-Trent Diversified Marketing Association but funding was temporary; for long-term financial security, the association would have to rely predominately on the help of state and county leaders such as Craven County Agriculture Extension Chairman A.T. Jackson, who helped get an FHA loan for a new warehouse, as well as the North Carolina Fund which provided working capital and repayment assistance.¹³⁴ In general, OEO's tighter rules about local funding meant that Godwin would often have to rely on the community support department of the North Carolina Fund for several local program initiatives such as training funds and facilities for Community Development and additional revenue to expand the Manpower program.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Tillie Knowles, "Walter B. Jones Slated for Association Address," *Sun Journal*, May 31, 1967; "George Esser, Jr. Set in Dedication," *Sun Journal*, May 31, 1967; North Carolina Fund, Request for Grant, Craven Operation Progress, Inc., January 2, 1968, folder 5081, NCFR.

¹³⁵ James L. Godwin to James McDonald, February 6, 1967; James C. McDonald to Jim L. Godwin, February 10, 1967, folder 5043, NCFR; Royce Jordan, Field Report, January 7, 1968, folder 5039, NCFR; Royce Jordan, Field Report, January 22-26, 1968, folder 5039, NCFR. The Fund did not approve the extension of funds for all local ideas. For instance, according to Royce Jordan, the "Small Business Development Center is the least effective program." For reasons unknown, the center was not able to make as many loans to small businessmen as hoped, and, as Jordan argued "really gave them nothing to offer except advice and counseling." As a result, the program was terminated on August 31, 1967 and "will not be refunded." See Report of Royce Jordan, Grant Officer, COP, Inc., folder 5026, NCFR.



Figure 25. Dedication of Neuse-Trent Diversified Marketing Association, 1967. From left to right: George Esser, COP/CPI executive director Jim Godwin, Congressman Walter B. Jones, and Association Chairman Robert Ipock. *News & Observer*, 1967

Although he told Sargent Shriver that he was “in complete agreement with the priority system now used for funding by OEO,” North Carolina Fund executive director George Esser was clearly sympathetic to Godwin’s situation and would try to persuade the OEO director at least once to continue funding for local initiatives. The earliest known instance occurred in February 1967 when Esser requested that neither the Rural Environmental Sanitation program nor Home Management Program be cut from COP’s budget of approved programs as scheduled for March 1, 1967. Asking for a minimum of a seven-month extension for both projects (so that they could eventually be phased into the Community Development program), Esser explained to Shriver that “these programs in Craven deserve this extension based on past performance and local conditions. The tangible nature of their benefits to the poor can be readily seen and accepted by the total community, making involvement of the poor more readily accessible.” A handout

enclosed with Esser's letter showed that, since the two programs began, forty-six local home management groups had been set up and were serving more than 650 families and that over 1,500 county residents in need of rural environmental sanitation had been assisted through either rodent and insect control, sewage disposal, water supply, house repair, and rubble/refuse control. "I have been assured by Jim Godwin," Esser continued in his February 1967 letter to Shriver, "that [the extension] will enable him to set up the machinery to operate the parts of these programs needed by the poor, through his multi-purpose centers. I believe this can be done and that this will enable Coastal Progress, Inc. to become the all encompassing model rural community action program that it was originally intended to be."¹³⁶

However, even the influence of someone like George Esser, who had helped to craft the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, would not be able to halt the decline in OEO funding of local projects. The need for local leadership in the fight against poverty would therefore become all the more important. As a North Carolina Fund internal report observed, "New proposals and changes in existing components are at this time almost an impossibility. The present staff of OEO feels that this is a period to stand pat and not make too many innovative changes. This hampers the efforts of a community action agency such as Coastal [Progress]." With this being the case, the report also acknowledged that "It would be very easy to sit back and take the existing dictates from

¹³⁶ George Esser to Sargent Shriver, February 6, 1967, folder 5042, NCFR.

Washington, but Godwin and his staff, do not want to play the game this way.”¹³⁷ Far from opposing community action, CPI did all it could to keep it alive when OEO funding for local ideas was at an all-time low. Because of its financial resources and its almost five-year investment in CPI, between 1967 and 1969 the North Carolina Fund was a crucial partner in the endeavor to maintain the “community” in community action.

North Carolina Fund stands up for local ideas

During this two-year period, the local ideas for which Godwin sought Fund support revolved around ways to increase the availability of well-paying job opportunities for the area’s low-income residents. Helping to bring these ideas to life was a new funding provision, known as Plan B. As the Fund envisioned this grant, it would implement innovative, meaningful programs that could not be accomplished through other sources of funding such as staff training, citizenship education, leadership training, or economic and manpower development. On March 22, 1967, the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Fund reserved \$600,000 to enable ten Fund sites to apply for up to \$60,000 of Plan B funds. CPI was first approved for \$15,000 of Plan B money in July (to be matched by local funds of \$2,500 and OEO funds of \$10,000 for a total of \$27,500). The bulk of this total, \$25,000, was given to the Craven County Commissioners to hire a professional firm that was to “make a comprehensive study of the human and physical resources of the County [and] use this information to search for industry suitable to the purposes of proper economic development.”

¹³⁷ COP background history, folder 4965, NCFR.

This joint venture between CPI and the commissioners would serve the interests of both groups in the Craven community. For the commissioners, who under Stallings' guidance, had recently established a county planning board and approved participation in the state's Economic Development Commission program in early February 1967 as part of a state-federal effort to provide basic facilities necessary for its growth, the comprehensive study would begin to address their growing concerns about the relationship between an expanding population, a lack of higher-wage industries, and unemployment and poverty.¹³⁸ CPI, which desired more direct involvement of the business community and the middle-class in the activities of Coastal Progress, would find its aims were best served by attracting a type of industry (ideally a sewing factory) for low-skilled female heads of households. This plan had been first envisioned by Craven Industries, Inc., a biracial group founded in 1965, whose members included D. L. Stallings, Robert M. Whitehead, and B.S. Rivers, the latter of whom had recently been named the first non-white chairman of COP/CPI. As the Plan B grant application read, "Our worst poverty situations are those surrounding female heads of households, receiving Welfare Assistance. COP, Inc. would look forward to training these females toward gainful employment in this type of industry, thereby curing the economic aspect of this poverty circumstance."¹³⁹ One such industry, the New Bern Garment Company,

¹³⁸ "Program Approved in Craven," *News & Observer*, February 8, 1967.

¹³⁹ James L. Godwin to Mr. Grover Lancaster, October 13, 1967, folder 5038, NCFR.

was eventually established in New Bern by 1974 and employed thirty females in its first year of operation.¹⁴⁰

As it related to increasing the availability of well-paying jobs for the poor, Godwin also received assistance from the North Carolina Fund in 1967 to finalize plans to fully integrate the North Carolina Fund's Manpower demonstration project, MITCE, within Coastal Progress, which included folding some of the seventeen manpower field staff already stationed in Craven into the CPI staff.¹⁴¹ At this time, the MITCE was still in its experimental phase; the recruitment, counseling, and training remained under the authority of the North Carolina Fund. However, the program's importance continued to remain abundantly clear. At the end of the year, in addition to high unemployment and an approximately 20 percent poverty rate, there were over one thousand projected job openings in Craven, Jones, Pamlico, Beaufort, Carteret, and Lenoir counties.¹⁴² MITCE's success in the area also continued to be observable. In December 1967, more than 215 local people (204 of whom were black) had been directly placed or were receiving either on-the-job or institutional training (of these, the vast majority had been enrolled in institutional training).¹⁴³ With these successes in mind, the Fund agreed that

¹⁴⁰ North Carolina Department of Natural and Economic Resources, New Bern Manpower Data, January 31, 1974, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.

¹⁴¹ George H. Esser, Jr. to James L. Godwin, December 18, 1967, folder 5042, NCFR.

¹⁴² Lessie Stram to Lonzie McKeithen, memorandum, December 7, 1967, folder 5494, NCFR.

¹⁴³ Lonzie McKeithen, Field Supervisor to Area Coordinators, memorandum, December 1, 1967, folder 5525, NCFR.

the manpower program could benefit from an expansion and decided it would be easiest to achieve at the local level.

Coastal Progress narrowly avoids a shutdown

But before plans were fully underway to integrate the MITCE program into COP/CPI, and thereby expand the size of the CAA, in November 1967 congressional disagreements about the direction and purposes of the War on Poverty almost led to the shutdown of CPI. During this time, Godwin received several visits and phone calls from members of the community, most of whom were poor or who represented the poor, about their fears that the House of Representatives might cut funding to OEO and thereby close most of the centers that provided adult basic education, Head Start, daycare, and other popular and widely used programs. Because federal funding for CPI was only scheduled through December 1967, CPI would have had to close its doors without an extension. In addition to noting that at least three thousand people had been impacted by Coastal Progress between August and September 1967 alone, Godwin expressed to the local press his primary concern was about the abruptness that the withdrawal of \$1.25 million in federal funding would cause with regard to the ongoing development of the poor. “The poor people have not had enough time to develop the leadership needed to keep their centers in continuous operation,” Godwin said. “Of course, developing leadership among the poor—showing them how they can help themselves attain the things they want and need, is all a part of the job that certainly isn’t finished yet.” He added with pride that community residents were raising money themselves for equipment and furnishings and that parents of kindergarten classes paid teachers out of their own pockets and argued

that, for many of these people, the community centers provided their first opportunity to participate in community life. In addition to the poor's development, Godwin also worried about the impact that shutting down CPI would have on unemployment in the community, arguing that at least five hundred local people, including current NYC enrollees, would be left without jobs.¹⁴⁴

Fortunately for Godwin and supporters of CPI, in early December Congress reached a compromise on a two-year extension for OEO by way of the Green Amendment, introduced by Rep. Edith Green (D-Oregon). In an effort to draw the line between "acceptable boat-rocking and forbidden rabble-rousing," the amendment essentially turned over control of independent community action programs to local governments.¹⁴⁵ Specifically, it required that all local CAA funds be channeled through elected public officials in the city, county or state governments, one of which would have to approve fund allocations.¹⁴⁶ Even though he was not personally in favor of "rabble rousing" on the part of CAA staff or the poor, President Johnson was aware that "our tacit acceptance of [the Green Amendment] would be considered a sellout by the ultraliberals." But he also knew "for a fact that in many cases locally elected officials were already participating and, where they were, community action got the best results."

¹⁴⁴ "Anti-Poverty Program Director Cites Craven Problems If Funds End, Notes 500 Jobless, 3,000 Participated," *Havelock Progress*, November 9, 1967.

¹⁴⁵ Arlen J. Large, "Poverty War: Tightening the Strings," *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 1967; Richard L. Lyons, "OEO Wins Two-Year Extension," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1967.

¹⁴⁶ Jean M. White, "OEO Aides Meeting With Critics Again On 'City Hall' Rules," *Washington Post*, February 6, 1968.

Even more important, “we knew that with this amendment we could win the support of several Southern Democrats and solidify the support of Democrats from big cities who were under pressure for tighter local control.”¹⁴⁷

Almost a week later, Godwin was informed that Coastal Progress would indeed remain in operation. According to Godwin, the OEO grant came only after North Carolina Governor Dan Moore voiced his approval for the funds. The good news stopped there, however. CPI would only be awarded \$683,052 (slightly more than half of the previous year’s budget), set to expire in October 1968.¹⁴⁸ Although the smaller federal budget would force Godwin to lay off several dozen staff members and thereby temporarily reduce the size of several of the antipoverty programs, Godwin was determined to attract additional Fund money to at least partially offset the smaller size of the programs that had benefitted the poor. Indeed, in the Craven area, in contrast to critics of the Green amendment who argued that the new rule betrayed the poor and would reduce their influence, CPI did not turn into a mayor-run or county commissioner-run CAA. Like the majority of the nation’s CAAs, CPI essentially remained in the hands of private citizens of a local community, many of whom were acutely aware of the need for and benefits of the poor’s participation in the planning and functioning of the CAA. “The concept of participation in program operation and decision-making by the residents of target areas,” social worker Sanford Kravitz observed, “thought by many to be

¹⁴⁷ Johnson, *Vantage Point*, 83.

¹⁴⁸ “3-County Antipoverty Unit Staying,” *Durham Sun*, November 14, 1967; “Anti-Poverty Program Here is Re-Funded,” *Sun Journal*, November 14, 1967.

completely unworkable, has become an accomplished fact.”¹⁴⁹ In fact, within CPI, the influence of the poor only grew after 1967.

Of course, the poor’s influence on the COP/CPI board and staff had been growing for years. In September 1964, there had been no board members elected from the ranks of the poor, but by September 1967, there were eleven, more than half of whom were black, which was slightly more than the 33 percent minimum required by OEO. By September 1967, the number of poor people on the CPI staff payroll had also risen to approximately thirty-four, or 27 percent of all staff, though the number did not include NYC staff, clerical staff, or Head Start employees. Counting these employees would have likely amounted to a higher percentage.¹⁵⁰ The poor were also becoming more involved in making their interests known and becoming more involved in the political process more generally. This growth was true more for the black poor (as previously discussed, the white poor were not as organized and were less motivated, not having directly suffered the effects of Jim Crow). In response to a group of black Duffyfield residents who asked for better services from city leaders in April 1967, North Carolina Fund staff Bill Flowers wrote to Nathan Garrett that, “Several years ago, this would not have happened. Any

¹⁴⁹ Sanford Kravitz, “The Community Action Program—Past, Present, and Its Future?” in *On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience*, ed. James L. Sundquist (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 63.

¹⁵⁰ Other CAAs supported by North Carolina Fund had a higher percentage of staff that were poor, such as Choanoke Area Development Association (CADA), which led all North Carolina Fund CAAs with 50 percent of its employees from the poor population, and Charlotte with 43 percent. Nonetheless, Craven’s percentage appeared to be a good medium based on the percentage of people in the community who lived in poverty. See Table 4.1: Number of Target Area Recipients Employed as Project Staff By North Carolina Fund Related CAAs, June 1967, Final Report Prepared by the North Carolina Fund under Process Analysis Research Grant of the Office of Economic Opportunity, 1968, North Carolina Collection.

member of the minority group would have been reluctant to speak for himself of his neighbors unless he was well known and financially secure....Democracy is beginning to work, however, painfully slow.”¹⁵¹ Several months later, William Vails, speaking for three hundred blacks in New Bern, and Janice Williams, speaking for black youth, petitioned the board of aldermen to renew the city’s contract with NYC that had been allowed to expire more than a year before. Following the moderate leadership of Mayor Ethridge Ricks, the aldermen would agree to reinstate the NYC program in July 1967.¹⁵²

Growing partnership between CPI and Craven community

The fact that the poor were becoming more willing to speak out for their interests was not the only remarkable development; the larger community, seeing the benefits to the community that were resulting from greater participation and productivity, was also becoming more willing to listen. It did not hurt that most of the poor’s participation was accomplished peacefully and usually without demonstrations. Indeed, most of the poor appeared to be far from radical and merely wanted greater economic opportunities. Black New Bern citizen Alphonso Morris, who addressed the U.S. Senate in March 1967, along with several other poor people, came to speak out against the growing liberal idea that government should institute a guaranteed income for low-income individuals. “I believe

¹⁵¹ Bill Flowers to Nathan Garrett, memorandum, April 24, 1967, folder 5037, NCFR.

¹⁵² “City Aldermen Hear Petitions Tuesday Night,” *Sun Journal*, June 21, 1967; “City Aldermen Enact Limited Garbage Bill,” *Sun Journal*, July 7, 1967.

in giving a man an opportunity,” Morris shared with the Senate, thinking it would be “bad to give [income] that way.”¹⁵³

In mid-August, New Bern Mayor Ethridge H. Ricks wrote James Godwin that “the city of New Bern has enjoyed a splendid relationship with Coastal Progress, Inc. and has benefited greatly by having had the opportunity to work [with] members of the youth corps”; he also praised CPI for “work[ing] diligently and accomplish[ing] much in combating the poverty problems in New Bern [and for] maintaining communication between the underprivileged and those in authority.” In addition, he credited the poor for contributing “many worthwhile suggestions to help relieve the deplorable conditions in housing and other areas.” The result of one of these suggestions, a low-income housing corporation, would eventually be established. As Ricks summarized in his letter to Godwin, CPI “has not only benefited the poor, but has greatly benefited the entire citizenry of New Bern,” adding that he looked forward to “continued good working relations in order that we may be better understood and help those in need.”¹⁵⁴ Godwin also received a praise-filled letter that summer from Mary Gatlin, secretary of the Craven County Good Neighbor Council, that thanked him and the Coastal Progress staff for “your successful efforts in improving the relationships between the people of our community” and “outstanding contribution to a ‘Cool Summer’ in Craven County.”¹⁵⁵ As

¹⁵³ Joseph A. Loftus, “Senate Panel Finds Some Of Poor Reject Guaranteed Income,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1967.

¹⁵⁴ Mayor Ethridge H. Ricks to James L. Godwin, August 16, 1967, folder 5060, NCFR.

¹⁵⁵ Mary Gatlin to Jim Godwin, August 25, 1967, folder 5043, NCFR.

Royce Jordan recalls, there was “no major conflict” between whites and blacks in the area “while [Godwin] was the leader.”¹⁵⁶

The greater racial cooperation in Craven, specifically in New Bern, extended to urban renewal plans as well. By 1967, because they better understood that no mass relocation of urban residents would be required, blacks were largely supportive of the city’s proposed \$3 million waterfront revitalization. Just a few years earlier, led by B.S. Rivers and the New Bern Civic League, the black community had been the main stumbling block of this project.¹⁵⁷ What had led to success the second time around was whites’ recognition that progress could not be accomplished without wide black support and, thus, they had made a greater effort to include them in the discussion.

Therefore, when Godwin made the decision to apply for North Carolina Fund Plan B grants for FY 1968 that would include new and innovative antipoverty programs including Public Health Nursing and Education, Community Involvement and Recruitment, Leadership Training, and Citizenship Education, he was counting not only upon the growing involvement of the poor who sat on the board of directors or were engaging in the community but also upon greater receptivity within the community to such programs. In fact, the community involvement component was based on the active participation of those in city and county government. Similarly to Monte, Godwin was seeking to build community consensus around the CAA and understood the importance

¹⁵⁶ Royce Jordan, phone interview by author, March 3, 2012, transcript in author’s possession.

¹⁵⁷ B.S. Rivers, interview by John Miller, New Bern, NC, January 19, 1966, transcript, folder 7089, NCFR.

of doing so. Even Rep. Walter B. Jones, who was generally no fan of community action programs and was particularly opposed to the teachings and ideology of North Carolina Fund staff member Howard Fuller, expressed his support for Godwin by saying that if more people like Godwin were in the OEO “there would be fewer problems.”¹⁵⁸

Perhaps more than Monte, Godwin saw the increase in black voting as a positive indirect cause of community action. That CPI was encouraging community participation and citizenship responsibility was “a good thing.”¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, Godwin also applied for several North Carolina Fund Incentive Grants, whose objective was to “create within the target areas, groups that would organize to conduct a community project resulting from the perception of their needs in relation to each citizen of the community and how to satisfy this common need.” In 1968, incentive grants of \$1,500 were given in two segments to thirteen different target area community groups in the Craven area, including the Craven Terrace Community Council, to assist the low-income groups in starting their projects while encouraging them to carry the remaining expenses through voluntary services, in-kind contributions, and fund-raising activities. Because a group would only receive grant money by showing that the agreed-upon project could not be achieved through the services of any other existing agency in the community, CPI staff would only act in an advisory way.

Godwin’s championing of more self-sufficient community leadership among the poor did not mean, however, that he believed in confrontation or that all of the poor’s

¹⁵⁸ Walter B. Jones to James L. Godwin, November 13, 1967, folder 5045, NCFR.

¹⁵⁹ “Anti-Poverty Program Here is Re-Funded,” *Sun Journal*, November 14, 1967.

requests could or should be pursued. In June 1967, Nathan Garrett, the North Carolina Fund's deputy director who would later help found the all-black Fund-offshoot known as Foundation for Community Development (FDC), suggested to Godwin that the poor demand that plans for either improved or new government housing be added to New Bern's waterfront renewal project. Disagreeing with Garrett's suggested strategy, Godwin responded that "blocking or delaying the downtown project does not fit the 'positive force pattern' which is developing among our Neighborhood groups."¹⁶⁰

Godwin's frustrations with OEO; the North Carolina Fund ends its five-year experiment

As time passed and OEO became significantly more rigid in its funding priorities and seemingly more interested in self-preservation, Godwin viewed the Fund's assistance in supporting the continuation of local projects for the poor as all the more valuable. By January 1968, conflicts between CPI and OEO were even beginning to brew over projects that OEO had had previously claimed to enthusiastically support. On a visit to Washington to discuss the Manpower proposal with Bob Gardner of OEO, Godwin was told that CPI's proposal would have to be reworked because of new OEO guidelines, as outlined in a new CAP memo, stating that a project component could not be changed more than 20 percent in one year. After hearing about this new policy from Godwin, Fund field representative Royce Jordan predicted that it "is going to create quite a problem in trying to re-distribute the funds from existing components to the Manpower Component" and added that "Gardner also told Godwin that OEO was overspent in North

¹⁶⁰ James L. Godwin to Mr. Nathan T. Garrett, June 22, 1967, folder 5043, NCFR; Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 229-234.

Carolina approximately one quarter of a million dollars and this money had to be made up. As a result he (Gardner) didn't see any new money in the foreseeable future." Jordan lamented that "Bob Gardner, the analyst, is playing the Bureaucratic Game, he uses every OEO regulation, CAP memo and anything else at hand to keep from being flexible in any way concerning component changes or additional funding...I find that this is not only true with Craven but with all his CAPs. This is going to make the funding of a Manpower Component in Craven very difficult."

Jordan would consequently help former ABER director Tom Wallace rewrite the proposal to send back to Washington "for Gardner's critique."¹⁶¹ Perhaps what made the issue over CPI's Manpower program startling to Jordan was that Manpower had been the one area consistently supported by OEO during its slow-down phase. In June 1967, OEO had supplied the North Carolina Fund with a \$1.8 million grant to finance, through the non-profit North Carolina Manpower Corporation, a statewide experimental program supported by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) to speed up the process of linking North Carolina's seventy thousand unemployed with available jobs. One of the newest methods that the corporation hoped to launch was the use of computers to match workers and their skills to open jobs.¹⁶² "It is becoming clear that all of us engaged in the War on Poverty must place increasing emphasis in employment oriented programs if we are to continue to be responsive to the mandate of Congress and the real needs of the

¹⁶¹ Royce Jordan, Field Report, January 22-26, 1968, folder 5039, NCFR.

¹⁶² "Manpower Development Corporation," folder 5394, NCFR.

poor,” read a letter from an OEO administrator to CAA executive directors in North Carolina, adding that CAAs “are expected to play a major role in both planning and operation of manpower programs for the poor.”¹⁶³ Arguably, the Manpower Corporation’s goal of preparing the “manpower potential” of the state for the opportunities quality industrialization could bring was no different than the goals of the Manpower program designed by CPI, but the priority that the latter received within OEO suggested otherwise.¹⁶⁴ A year prior Jordan had written that “the inconsistency of [the OEO] in its directives is hard to understand.”¹⁶⁵

Godwin’s frustrating visit to OEO headquarters to discuss the Manpower proposal for CPI was compounded by his disappointment that the North Carolina Fund was ending its five-year experiment. The official beginning of the phase-out period had been announced in early January, by a letter from Esser to all Fund-supported community action programs. At the Fund’s inception in 1963, Governor Sanford had stated it would be in operation only five years. Esser expressed his desire to stay true to the program’s experimental nature in his letter. Other events and realities might have informed the decision to phase out the Fund, however, such as the political controversy surrounding Howard Fuller’s activities in Durham in 1967 (which resulted both in Fuller’s suspension by Sargent Shriver and the increase of Republican Congressman James C. Gardner’s

¹⁶³ James L. Draper to NC CAA executive directors, October 2, 1967, folder 5037, NCFR.

¹⁶⁴ “New Myths and New Realities Shown in ‘The State We’re In,’” *Greensboro Record*, June 30, 1967.

¹⁶⁵ “Craven County Strategy Paper,” 1966, folder 5026, NCFR.

political capital).¹⁶⁶ Moreover, according to some political observers, the campaign of Sanford himself for the U.S. Senate in 1968 probably would have floundered if the North Carolina Fund, which had become controversial in the state by 1966, was continued. All three reasons probably played some role in the dissolution of the organization.

Regardless of the reason, the Fund's closing was terribly upsetting to Jim Godwin. On January 15, 1968, Godwin expressed to Esser his utmost regret that after October 1 Coastal Progress would no longer have the technical assistance and resources of the Fund. As Godwin argued, the loss of the Fund could not come at a worse time, especially in light of the direction that OEO had recently taken: "Federal and State agencies cannot offer the guidance and the know-how provided by the Fund staff" and "OEO is entering tragic days. Words like 'innovation' and 'flexibility' will be seldom heard. OEO's effectiveness will diminish in direct proportion to the increase of its political acceptability." Godwin added that, "We are getting community involvement [in the Craven area], but we are not past the necessity for a 'buy-in,'" while arguing that "flexible funds were necessary in helping to attain this degree of community respectability." "With so much promise for the future, how can the N.C. Fund leave at this most important time?" Godwin asked rhetorically.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Sam Beard to Mr. George Esser, July 20, 1967, folder 318, NCFR; Nick Galifianakis to George Esser, July 20, 1967, folder 318, NCFR; James C. Gardner to Mr. George Esser, July 20, 1967, folder 318, NCFR; Ann Colarusso, "Pursell, Fuller Targets of OEO," *Durham Morning Herald*, July 21, 1967; Bob Lynch, "Tense Durham Gets Reprieve," *News & Observer*, July 22, 1967; "Official of North Carolina Fund Denies Causing Violence in Durham," *Winston-Salem Journal*, July 27, 1967; Billy Barnes, Re: Strategy for answering the Gardner attacks, folder 318, NCFR; "N.C. Fund Denies Role In Elections," *Washington Post*, August 3, 1967. See Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 303-305.

¹⁶⁷ James L. Godwin, "An Appeal to the North Carolina Fund," January 15, 1968, folder 5043, NCFR.

Godwin was not alone in his frustrations with OEO. In February 1968, the executive director of the Elk and Duck Rivers Community Association in Tennessee wrote Sargent Shriver complaining that “OEO seems to be running like a 230 pound fullback that realizes he can’t score and is content to duck his head and settle for three yards and a cloud of dust,” which is “exciting neither to the players or the paying customers.” In order to keep “Community Action in the game” the director suggested that CAAs be “invited in and allowed to make some input at the highest administrative level in the Brown Building.” He further expressed that “the time has come for ‘maximum feasible participation’ by CAP directors in planning programs and policy. If OEO expects us to involve those at the lowest level in planning, then OEO should be consistent and not make policy without asking those of us at the lowest level what we need.” The director pledged to want to be a part of a discussion of “new, bold, and innovative approaches to the War on Poverty.”¹⁶⁸

In Godwin’s last known letter to Esser, he lamented—much like the executive director from Tennessee—that “OEO is beginning to behave like a traditional Government bureau” and predicted that “OEO will become much like the proverbial ‘toothless tiger with a T-bone steak.’” “I agonize,” Godwin wrote “in anticipation of being Executive Director of this program next year, paid by OEO funds. The autonomy is important when I can say, ‘I am paid out of North Carolina Fund money.’” Godwin was grateful for the North Carolina Fund’s administrative grant for helping CPI become better

¹⁶⁸ Letter from W. Harris Loane to R. Sargent Shriver, February 29, 1968, Administrative-NC-Wyoming, State Files, 1965-1968, Records of the Director, Records of OEO.

equipped to request larger grants from OEO, but, ultimately, he found private funds more useful for launching and supporting innovative programs. "Private funds have meant plans for incentive grants toward low-income neighborhood construction of decent community meeting facilities. These same facilities will be used by the community to operate self-help kindergartens," Godwin was proud to report. "Citizenship education and leadership training can [also] best be done with private money," he added, noting that "Leadership development for low-income areas is an absolute must for the future success of community organization efforts."

Godwin's preference for private funds was not necessarily based on a conservative philosophy that was critical of the largesse of the federal government but, as illustrated above, he recognized the primary fact that private money allowed for more flexibility. "Private money does not set political respectability as a number one priority" and, thus, "can give us the freedom to search for new ideas and techniques. Godwin also gave other examples of private money that had been especially helpful to the Craven community:

A joint planning effort between City and County Planning Boards will occur as a result of the stimulation of private money. This will be the first significant joint venture between City and County in the long history of this community. Human resource planning will be the result. An Economic Development grant will result in two very important community activities. A concerted effort to locate a plant to hire females with entry-level skills, and a county-wide citizen's committee (70 members) selected by the County Planning Board under the direction of the County Commissioners, will conduct an involvement type evaluation of Craven Operation Progress, Inc. Private money provides the flexibility with which to make this community action possible. Quick action in the form of an emergency operating capital grant has saved our Marketing Association from going bankrupt...OEO could not have reacted in time to

even promise, much less produce the hard cash. Given a few thousand dollars each year with flexible application from a private source, we can stimulate very significant community action...Also, the use of transportation paid by North Carolina Fund money is very important since OEO has become highly restrictive in the use of tax money for transportation.

Godwin summarized his lengthy and passionate letter to Esser by congratulating the North Carolina Fund “for having the vision and the know-how needed to introduce Community Action to the citizens of Craven County. This community will forever be in your debt.” ¹⁶⁹

Godwin was right. The North Carolina Fund’s introduction of community action in Craven County had made a major impact by 1968. Not only would many CPI board members and staff (including Godwin) remain in the program through the 1970s but they would do so even though funding from the North Carolina Fund had disappeared and OEO funding had gone on a sizeable decline. Even more notable was the fact that middle-class community leaders in Craven would also continue supporting antipoverty initiatives, both inside and outside CPI, that addressed the problems of the poor and provided more opportunity in order to bring the disadvantaged directly into participation in the benefits of the economic system. As these leaders, most of whom were white, had seen firsthand, programs catered to improve the education, employability, and self-sufficiency of the poor had either shown or were beginning to show meaningful results that they would be seen as largely worth the investment. And for a community that was very much interested in moving forward industrially and improving its economic fortune,

¹⁶⁹ James L. Godwin to George Esser, February 23, 1968, folder 5043, NCFR.

it was widely known that it could not move forward without confronting the poverty in its midst. The strength of this reality was made apparent just a few days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968.

A high water-mark for community cooperation

On the evening of King's murder, approximately two hundred local black youth, most of whom were under twenty-one years of age, convened at the Craven Terrance Housing Project in New Bern, from where they dispersed into groups and marched downtown. Out of grief and resentment, the youth vandalized and looted over fifteen businesses on Broad Street and within the Five Points area, where predominately black businesses were located. While marching, many also began to throw bricks, bottles, and other objects at cars parked alongside the streets. Dozens of law enforcement officers from both the local police force and the North Carolina Highway Patrol were called in to halt the civil uprising. Armed with riot guns, nightclubs, and helmets, they forcefully broke up the protest march, arresting five of the demonstrators in the process. No injuries were reported, however, and peaceful order was restored by 3:00am. But just to be safe, Mayor Ethridge Ricks issued a public statement to the community requesting that "everyone stay at home unless absolutely necessary to be outside after sunset" and that "all citizens remain calm, and assist us in every way to maintain good relations among all the people." Mayor Ricks made plans that afternoon to meet with the New Bern board of aldermen and the local Good Neighbor Council to discuss the troubling events of the previous night. While meeting with the Good Neighbor Council, Ricks approved a list of thirty respected individuals from the black community that he thought he could count on

to help ease tensions and maintain peace.¹⁷⁰ The list of names included several current or former COP/CPI board members or staff such as Claretta Wordlaw, Johnnie Sampson, Seth Williams, Lee Morgan, and Tom Wallace. Local civil rights leaders Willie Vails of the NAACP and James Gavin, chairman of the Combined Civic Organizations of New Bern and Craven County were also listed.¹⁷¹

The biracial Craven County Good Neighbor Council, which was then headed by S.L. Pittman, Jr. and the aforementioned James Gavin, also swiftly convened during this time in order to discuss ways to avoid more instances of black unrest that were occurring in over one hundred of the nation's cities in response to King's death. During one of the meetings, Pittman, who was white, would express personal thanks to black leadership for the role they were playing in averting what could have been a disastrous situation for New Bern.¹⁷² "Their actions," Pittman said, "gave good reason to believe that it is possible to solve problems by both races working toward common goals." D. L. Stallings concurred, remarking that "We have just seen a real outstanding reason for the existence of a Good Neighbor Council." Lee Morgan also commented that the recent addition of

¹⁷⁰ Karen M. Hawkins, "Rising Phoenix-Like: The African American Struggle and Mobilization for Political Rights in New Bern, North Carolina, 1968-1979," *North Carolina Historical Review* LXXXV, no. 4 (October 2008): 384-385.

¹⁷¹ List of Recommended Black Citizens to Keep Peace in New Bern, folder 1015, NBOHP.

¹⁷² Black Power never gained a strong hold among the black community in Craven County even during its height during the late 1960s. But Black Power's growing influence among the youth would lead Coastal Progress' black deputy director Bill Riddick II, after condemning the "white power structure" in August 1967 for not doing enough, in his opinion, to meet blacks' rising expectations of economic parity with whites, to publically comment that he was "surprised fire bombs haven't been thrown in Eastern North Carolina." See 'White Power,' Nat'l Guard Catch Criticism from PPOP's Speakers," *Times-News* (Rich Square, NC), August 3, 1967.

two black policemen to the city's force was having a great psychological effect on black youth, many of whom, according to Morgan, believed they had little share in the community. "Negroes, too, want to enjoy the privilege of living in a community; to share some of the responsibilities of the community," he emphasized.

Efforts to secure greater job opportunities for blacks were also discussed at the meeting. Several black attendees expressed that a "summer job," such as one obtained through the NYC, was not enough without adequate opportunities for a full-time employment. (Incidentally, a group of black youth would complain to CPI executive director Jim Godwin in May 1968 that there were not enough summer jobs for them, not knowing then that the U.S. Department of Labor had set the maximum number at 250.¹⁷³) Other blacks at the meeting concluded that "an open attitude" on the part of the community was needed to increase black employment. Discussion ended with a suggestion that the council meet with the local Chamber of Commerce and Merchants Association to see if business firms could be persuaded to give employment to at least 150 presently unemployed black persons in the near future.¹⁷⁴

The extent to which the New Bern Chamber of Commerce and Merchants Association cooperated with this latter request is not fully known. Of course, numerous local businesses, some of which were members of one or both of these two organizations, were still cooperating with the Manpower program and would inevitably fill positions

¹⁷³ "Negro Students in Gathering Tuesday," *Sun Journal*, May 7, 1968.

¹⁷⁴ "Around the State: Craven County," *Good Neighbors At Work in North Carolina* 2 (May 1968): 4-5, folder 584, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

with unemployed blacks after April 1968. Well aware of the recent Newark and Detroit riots that shocked the nation, many were becoming more interested in stepping up their previous efforts. Statistics taken from the Employment Security Commission (ESC) office in New Bern in 1970 provides a snapshot of this growing reality. Of the 672 local men and women who were placed in local non-agricultural jobs that year, over half (359) were black, many of whom were also designated as “disadvantaged.” In that year New Bern ESC office staff also visited 294 non-agricultural employers in their effort to pair applicants with jobs and enrolled another 94 disadvantaged persons for whom an employer match could not yet be made in the Manpower program.¹⁷⁵ Throughout the country, including Southern cities and towns, increasing jobs for black youth and adults were a major focus of most private and public groups by 1968, if for no other reason than to avoid racial tension, violence, and disruption of society and business.

Employment would become an even more important focus of the state Good Neighbor Council, as well, starting with Governor Dan K. Moore. In May 1968, Governor Moore introduced his special employment program to find private businesses willing to assist in his goal of hiring up to one hundred thousand unemployed high school and college students for gainful employment over the summer, which would provide money to help them continue their studies in the fall.¹⁷⁶ The state Good Neighbor Council

¹⁷⁵ Table V, Bureau of Employment Security Research, *1970 Annual Report, Employment Security Local Office Operations* (Raleigh, NC: Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, 1971), State Library of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC. In 1970 there were 3,692 new applications filed at the New Bern ESC office, 1,382 of whom were black, and 528 of whom were classified as “disadvantaged.”

¹⁷⁶ “From the Governor’s Office,” *Good Neighbors At Work in North Carolina* 2 (May 1968): 6, folder 584, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

also traveled to Eastern North Carolina and other parts of the state to talk with over one hundred business firms about doubling down on their efforts to hire qualified non-whites; in 1967 and 1968, over nine hundred were placed in about six months.¹⁷⁷ During the same period the council, in conjunction with the EEOC-sponsored Plans for Progress, a voluntary equal employment program of American business and industry, established four Vocational Guidance Institutes, one of which was located at East Carolina University in Greenville, that served to better acquaint high school counselors with the rapidly changing job market in the areas and its needs.¹⁷⁸ Finally, the council published a booklet that showcased forty-eight case reports of black North Carolinians who were employed or preparing themselves for employment in order to provide examples for employers, “which demonstrate that merit hiring in this State is practicable and profitable,” and to show students proof that “your own future depends decreasingly on our society’s whims and prejudices, and increasingly on your determination and ability.”¹⁷⁹ As will be discussed in the conclusion, growing numbers of black and white citizens in Craven would come to see the truth in both of these statements.

¹⁷⁷ “Employment Gains Cited,” *Good Neighbors At Work in North Carolina* 2 (June-July 1968): 5, folder 584, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

¹⁷⁸ “Vocational Guidance Institutes Again Planned This Year,” *Good Neighbors At Work in North Carolina* 2 (June-July 1968): 7, folder 584, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

¹⁷⁹ NC Good Neighbor Council, *At Work in North Carolina Today*, foreword, folder 585, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

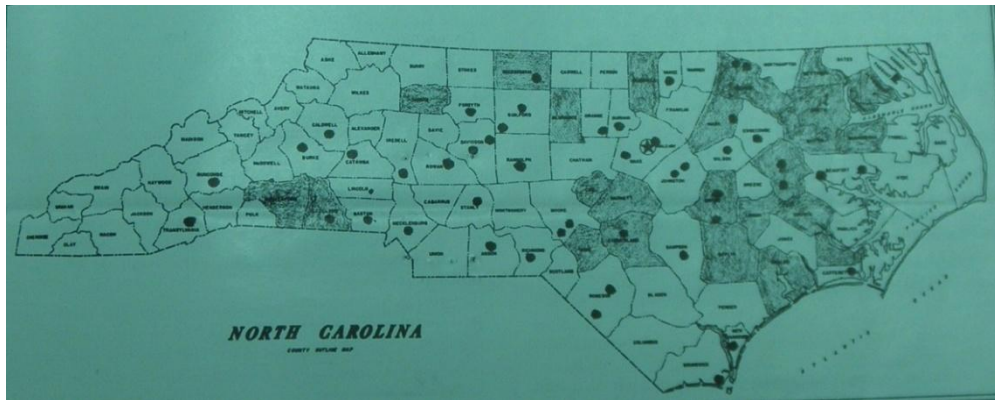


Figure 26. Location of Human Relations (Good Neighbor) Councils in North Carolina, October 1968. Dots represent city-based councils whereas shaded areas signify county-based councils. (Source: *Good Neighbors At Work in North Carolina 2* (October 1968): 3, Folder 586, North Carolina Council on Human Relations, Southern Historical Collection.



Figure 27. Congressman Walter B. Jones at desk in Washington D.C., 1967. Photographs, 1967, Box 377, Walter Beaman Jones Papers (#285), Special Collections Department, J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.



Figure 28. Coastal Progress Manpower retreat at Quail's Roost and Conference Center, Durham, NC, circa 1968. Seated from left to right: Emma Turnage, Claretta Wordlaw, Tillie Knowles, Thelma Chadwick, Janie Watts, Betty George, Frances Sampson, Barbara Lee, Pearl Moore. Standing from left to right: George Eglesby, Carl Laughinghouse, Dewey Strayhorn, Jerry Harper, Alvin Hill, Royce Jordan, Johnny Bryant, unknown, Billy Rich, Executive Director Jim Godwin, Tom Wallace. Photo courtesy of Ms. Thelma Chadwick.

Conclusion

As this chapter has highlighted, OEO's neglect of local initiatives reflected how federal policy was becoming more about meeting national goals and avoiding political risks rather than the needs of local communities. The attempts of Monte, and later Godwin, to fight for local control were oftentimes unsuccessful. OEO's lack of support for local innovation and direction between 1966 and 1968 was temporarily overcome by Coastal Progress during Godwin's tenure because the North Carolina Fund continued to fund innovative programs while OEO pushed national emphasis programs. With the

Fund's official disappearance by 1969, however, the ability of Coastal Progress to continue forward in this direction was made difficult. All grants to Fund-sponsored community action programs ceased in June 1968.¹⁸⁰ Not long thereafter, as attested by Royce Jordan, Godwin would become so disillusioned and frustrated by "the kind of control that [OEO] tried to take away from local people" that he would step down as executive director of CPI and head west to Chapel Hill to work for the North Carolina Manpower Corporation.¹⁸¹

As in the past, however, local people in Craven did not await federal action in seeking to solve the problems of poverty in their midst. In fact, other ongoing developments at the local level spurred by black and white community leaders both inside and outside of CPI were most effective in overcoming the imbalance between local and federal ideas to fight the War on Poverty. The most notable of these was a historic rise in economic development and industrial growth in Craven beginning in 1968, which incidentally helped strengthen the War on Poverty by providing the bulk of justice, namely steady and well-paying jobs, that the poor were most interested in attaining.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 297. Moreover, the proportion OEO made available for innovative, locally initiated programs, which was already limited to approximately one-third, would actually decline after the 1968 fiscal year. See James L. Sundquist, *Making Federalism Work: A Study of Program Coordination at the Community Level* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1969), 42.

¹⁸¹ Royce Jordan, phone interview by author, March 3, 2012, transcript in author's possession.

¹⁸² "The poor themselves see their problem as a simple one with a simple solution," black *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry reported in 1966. "We're poor, they tell you, because we don't have any money. The answer? A job, man, a job." See William Raspberry, "Failure to Provide Jobs is Plaguing Poverty War," *Washington Post*, April 3, 1966. Brookings Institution Director James L. Sundquist agreed. "More than any other one thing, the poor who came through the doors of community action offices and neighborhood centers wanted jobs." See Sundquist, *Making Federalism Work*, 49.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In 1966, the North Carolina Fund Committee on Manpower and Economic Development argued that “a faster rate of economic growth will not of itself solve the problems of the poor [but neither] will current anti-poverty programs....Both approaches must be pursued.” The same held true for the local war on poverty in Craven County, which would not be won solely on the basis of the antipoverty programs of COP/CPI. Although the successes of Rural Environmental Sanitation, Manpower Training, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Strawberry Marketing, Day Care Centers, Head Start, Dental Services, Adult Basic Education, Home Management, the Federal Credit Union and other antipoverty programs improved the education, skills, and standard of living for many of those in poverty, they were not enough.¹ The problem of a low income, which was the biggest contributor to poverty in the area, would continue to exist for a sizeable number of the poor without the addition of more higher-skilled jobs in the county.

¹ Providing opportunities for the poor to learn new skills was important even without simultaneous economic development. Even in locales with less local interest and success than Craven County in attracting better jobs and industry, if poor people learned new skills they were no longer tied to the area and could potentially relocate to places with open jobs that valued those skills. Moreover, as Craven experienced, if enough local poor improved their education and skill sets, additional and higher-wage businesses could be attracted to the area.

Between 1964 and 1967, Craven County leaders had added only one major high-wage industry, Stanley Power Tools. But, partly due to heavier investment in education, which led to a larger trainable work base—48 percent of Craven residents twenty-five years and older graduated high school by 1970 compared to less than 20 percent in 1960—four new high-skilled industries would move to Craven County between 1968 and 1972: Hatteras Yachts (1968), Weyerhaeuser (1969), Clark Boat Company (1970), and Texifi Industries (1972).¹ According to former Craven County commissioner Grover Lancaster, who was first elected in 1962 along with D. L. Stallings, at least one of the companies, Weyerhaeuser (a multinational paper company headquartered in Washington State), approached the county commissioners first about possibly opening a pulp mill in the area. In addition to the generous supply of southern pine and mixed hardwoods in Craven County, Weyerhaeuser was undoubtedly attracted to the area's growing supply of trainable workers.²

The arrival of these four industries contributed to a promising trend for Eastern North Carolina. By the early 1970s, the region “fared better than the Piedmont and

¹ Table 120, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973) U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf; Table 93, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35_TOC.pdf. Between 1968 and 1973, the percent of Craven County's property tax levied for schools ranged between 57.2% to 66.0%. One notable new investment in local education was the opening of West Craven High School in Vanceboro in 1971. See North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Planning, Craven County School Survey, 1973-1974, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.

² Grover Lancaster, phone interview by author, September 14, 2011, transcript in author's possession.

Mountain regions in attracting new plants that were high-wage, high value-added, capital intensive, big establishments.”³ Up to 1979, most of the manufacturing employment to be found in the state was in non-durable goods (such as textiles, which tended to pay lower wages due to low profit margins and greater foreign competition) but beginning in 1968 a good number of Craven’s new industries would be different; they centered around the production of durable goods which were generally more profitable and allowed higher wages for employees.⁴ In 1970, for instance, the average weekly earning for manufacturing employees in Craven was \$116.55, approximately five dollars higher than the state average.⁵ Such an industrial surge in a fairly rural area may would have surprised some, but as Deputy Under Secretary of Labor Millard Cass affirmed in 1967, “Our experience has been this: Despite everything we are told, industry does go most often where a work force is available, and a trained rural work force will attract industry.”⁶ A survey that tracked the influence of location factors to new or expanded manufacturing firms in the South between 1965 and 1974 confirmed that productivity of

³ Barry M. Moriarty, “Manufacturing Wage Rates, Plant Location, and Plant Location Policies,” *Popular Government* 43 (Spring 1977): 48-53.

⁴ Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Bureau of Employment, *Manufacturing Employment in North Carolina, 1969 to 1979* (Raleigh, NC: The Commission, 1979), Government and Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.

⁵ Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, North Carolina Insured Employment and Wage Payments, 1970 (Raleigh, NC: Bureau of Employment Security Research, 1971), Government and Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.

⁶ *Rural Poverty: Hearings Before the National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty*, 89th Cong. 277 (1967) (statement of Millard Cass, Deputy Under Secretary of Labor).

labor was considered more “essential” to a greater number of industrialists than labor costs.⁷

A community’s industrial climate, or receptiveness to and welcoming of new industry, was also an important consideration for many industrialists. This understanding at least partially inspired the establishment of the Neuse River Economic Development Council in 1968, which sought to bring the “maximum benefit in terms of new jobs and increased incomes to the people” of a nine-county district in Eastern North Carolina.⁸ Headquartered on Tryon Palace Drive in New Bern, the council consisted of a thirty-six-member board of directors of elected officials or representatives of elected officials appointed by boards of the county commissioners. Four members from each of the nine counties, including Craven County, were represented. In 1970, former COP board member and county commissioner D. L. Stallings was elected president of the council who, based on his experience in attracting the Stanley Plant in 1964, well understood the need to convince potential businessmen that a community was interested in prioritizing industrial development. Under Stallings’ leadership, the council began to progressively counteract several negative economic realities in Eastern North Carolina from high

⁷ Barry M. Moriarty, *Industrial Location and Community Development* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 101.

⁸ Robert A. Podesta to Honorable David N. Henderson, June 15, 1972, box 176, folder 1, Henderson Papers. The council consisted of the following counties: Craven, Carteret, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico and Wayne, which together, combined for a population of 410,000 circa 1970. In its first year, the council received a federal Economic Development Association (EDA) grant to cover 75 percent of its administrative expenses (two staff members and two secretaries) while the remaining 25 percent was provided through local matching but federal funds significantly decreased each successive year. By 1972, local governments were providing close to half of the administrative budget. At that time, the state of North Carolina was not authorized to provide any administrative funds to multi-county planning and development organizations. See Organizational Overview of a Multi-County Planning and Development Council in Non-Metropolitan America, box 176, folder 1, Henderson Papers.

poverty levels, relatively high unemployment, low manufacturing employment, below average local support funds for education, and high out-migration by compiling economic data for potential industrialists, encouraging and carrying out the expansion of existing community colleges and technical institutes in the area, gaining more participation of private companies to provide job training, and attracting industry by constructing speculative industrial buildings in several of the counties.⁹ Of course, because Craven County was considered a “growth center,” the council’s primary focus was on the other eight counties in Eastern North Carolina whose poverty rates, unemployment, out-migration, and low-wages were dramatically more prevalent than those in Craven. But aside from the enhanced industrial prestige that likely arose from leading such a council, Craven County’s elected officials would see through the implementation of several of the council’s goals, such as the transformation of the county Industrial Education Center to a community college, which also likely played a role in enticing many of the four new industries that located in Craven between 1968 and 1972.¹⁰

By 1972, these four industries, Hatteras, Clark, Weyerhaeuser, and Texifi, had brought a total of 1,366 new jobs for local men and women. The largest was Texifi Industries, which opened one of the nation’s first combined polyester fiber manufacturing and texturing plants and supplied approximately five hundred new jobs in its first year of

⁹ Neuse River Economic Development Commission: A Summary of Problems and Potentials, box 176, folder 1, Henderson Papers.

¹⁰ “A Brief Historical Perspective,” Eastern Carolina Council, accessed July 24, 2010, http://www.eccog.org/document.asp?document_id=103.

operation.¹¹ The impact of these four high-skilled industries was not limited to jobs, however; they also increased the area's wages, consumer spending, and tax base. These improvements raised the standard of living and dramatically reduced the incidence of poverty for residents of Craven as well commuters from the neighboring counties of Jones, Pamlico, Lenoir, and Carteret. And in addition to providing the needed revenue for Craven County to improve and add infrastructure, expand the local hospital, provide additional recreational facilities, and invest more into education, the arrival of these industries helped Craven become the economic growth center of Eastern North Carolina's forty-two counties. By the early 1980s, Craven County was considered the industrial "jewel of the East": in 1989 its economic growth was second only to Wake County, home of the state capital Raleigh.¹²

Indeed, an important reason that North Carolina could boast from the late 1960s through the 1980s that it was one of the nation's leading states in terms of its number of manufacturing employees was the industrial growth that occurred in the East, particularly in Craven County.¹³ In 1978, North Carolina Commerce Secretary Lauch Faircloth announced that the state had had a record year of industrial growth and acknowledged that "Industries themselves are showing more interest in our smaller communities...Since

¹¹ Texifi Industries, Inc., Annual Report, 1969-1984, North Carolina Collection.

¹² The Craven County Committee of 100 Newsletter, April 1989, p. 6, Vertical File, Kellenberger Room, New Bern-Craven County Public Library.

¹³ According to *Fortune Magazine*, by 1967, more than half of the nation's largest one hundred firms operated industrial facilities in North Carolina. See "North Carolina Industry on Parade," *Durham Morning Herald*, November 24, 1967. The number of firms operating in North Carolina would continue to grow into the 1970s and 1980s.

1970, the fastest growing job market has been in Eastern North Carolina.” In fact, “during 1977 the amount of investment dollars in industrial growth in the East was 31 percent of the total \$1.45 billion.” Faircloth was also proud to note that the new industries tend “to be of a higher-technology than our current industrial base and that it is more diversified in content.”¹⁴ While lower tax rates and the state’s right-to-work laws both attracted companies from the North and West to North Carolina and tended to keep manufacturing wages lower than in states with a heavier union presence and higher cost-of-living, North Carolina’s increase in manufacturing wage earnings between 1964 and 1970 was one of the highest in the country—higher even than New York and California.¹⁵

The benefits of new higher-skilled industries and the elevated wages that came with them were not limited, in either the state as a whole or Eastern North Carolina specifically, to whites or the elites who played the largest roles in attracting them. The presence of more manufacturing job opportunities in the Craven area was especially helpful in providing local blacks with unprecedented avenues into the middle class. Because all of the new industries that arrived in the county between 1968 and 1972 had a need to fill hundreds of high-skilled jobs, they could not afford to limit their searches to white workers to the exclusion of blacks, who made up almost 40 percent of the county’s

¹⁴ D.M. (Lauch) Faircloth, “Balanced growth keyed on dispersal of industry,” *News & Observer*, July 30, 1978.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment, Hours, and Earnings, States and Areas, 1939-1982*, Statewide Manufacturing, Vol. 1: Alabama-Nevada and Vol. 2: New Hampshire-Wyoming (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984).

population. This reality was especially true for Hatteras Yachts and Clark Boats which had to compete with Barbour Boats and New Bern Shipyards to find and hire the most skilled, reliable, and productive workforce; for them, the cost of any type of racial discrimination in hiring would be, in the words of economist Thomas Sowell, “prohibitive.”¹⁶ Although the median levels of black education, high school graduation rates, and jobs skills were lower than whites, black achievement steadily rose in all three categories during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1960, only 9 percent of blacks in Craven aged twenty-five years and older had completed four years of high school. By 1970, because of the ABER program, greater local investment in education, local school desegregation efforts, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (all of which improved black confidence that greater education led to better-paying jobs), at least 21 percent had done so, which raised the median for school years completed among blacks from 6.7 to more than eight.¹⁷ Blacks twenty-five years and older living in New Bern boasted even better

¹⁶ Thomas Sowell, *Markets and Minorities* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 26, 32, 39-40.

¹⁷ Table 87, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Volume 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35.pdf>; Table 125, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2001, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf. In terms of school desegregation, by the 1970-1971 school year, racial composition of most schools in the Craven County school system (thus, excluding New Bern Schools) approximately matched the percentage of black and white students in the system, as had been ordered by District Judge John D. Larkins, Jr.. Most of the Craven County schools were located in the western part of the county which was predominately rural and had had the largest Klan following during the 1960s (i.e., Bridgeton, Vanceboro, and Jasper). During the 1970-1971 school year, 3,023 (or 34%) of the 8,861 students enrolled in the Craven County schools, all of which were desegregated, were black. Ten out of thirteen of these west Craven schools had at least a 22 percent black enrollment and of these ten only three were more than 50 percent black (the highest black enrollment rate was 74 percent at Fort Barnwell School). As late as the 1967-1968 school year, which was still during Craven’s freedom of choice plan phase, only 45 percent

numbers in 1970; 25 percent of males and 26 percent of females had completed four years of high school.¹⁸ Black employability was also increasing because of the offerings of the Craven Industrial Education Center (IEC) and the Manpower program, which enhanced black residents' skill sets through industrial education classes and on-the-job training.

The continuing expansion of the Craven IEC to a technical institute in 1968 and then to a community college in the early 1970s widened such opportunities for local blacks. In December 1967, the community revealed its favor for greater educational investment by voting for a \$5.5 bond referendum that included \$500,000 for the Craven County Technical Institute. \$230,000 in state funds (46 percent of the new facilities' total cost) and \$180,000 in federal funds (36 percent) matched this total. In addition to providing "individual guidance to assist all students in making wise choices of both vocation and avocation to better equip them as effective members of a democratic society," the institute, which opened in 1968, offered vocational education classes and diploma/certificate programs in drafting, electronic data processing, physics, machinist, business administration, nursing, accounting, applied science, executive secretarial,

of Craven's schools were desegregated. As for the racial composition of teachers hired to work in the desegregated Craven County schools during the 1970-1971 school year, 22 percent were black and most schools had between five and ten black teachers on staff. Havelock Junior High employed 16 black teachers. See J. LeVonne Chambers to Honorable John D. Larkins, Jr., April 30, 1969; "Exhibit B" Craven County Schools, New Bern, North Carolina, 1970-1971, Racial Composition of Students and Faculty, folder: U.S. District Court Case, Hickman, Erving et. al. vs. Craven County Board of Education, Larkins Papers.

¹⁸ Table 108, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf.

psychology, cosmetology, and welding as well as adult education for grades one through eight and high school diploma and equivalency programs.¹⁹

By 1972, as the industrial landscape continued to broaden in the area, the institute applied to become a community college so that it could provide residents two years of college transfer education; this change would better help local citizens compete in Eastern North Carolina's job market, whose manufacturing sector had grown 39.4 percent between 1962 and 1970. According to the application, "College transfer work is a pre-requisite for positions of leadership, as well as for many of the so-called 'skilled' positions." The expense of education outside the area (especially at four-year universities) emphasized the need for college transfer options that were financially "within the grasp of the average citizen" and within commuting distance of their homes.²⁰ Of course, whites in Craven would also benefit from the establishment of a local community college, but previous lack of equal access to education seemed to have a greater effect upon the enthusiasm of blacks as well as upon their desire to take advantage of opportunities that would help them acquire better-paying jobs.²¹ For the

¹⁹ Craven County Technical Institute, 1969-1971 Catalog, p. 8-9, State Library of North Carolina.

²⁰ Craven Technical Institute, Request for Community College Status, Spring 1972, State Library of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC.

²¹ In January 1967, for instance, Congressman Walter B. Jones received several letters from local black citizens enrolled in Adult Basic Education who asked him to vote for continued funding for the program based on the improvement in their reading, writing and arithmetic skills. In the words of one of the females, "I want at this time to tell you how much I appreciate [adult basic education]. I wish the program could be extended to all. It is a wonderful thing in our county. Something we have never had offered before." Viola White to Mr. Walter B. Jones, January 25, 1967, folder: Legislative Correspondence, Adult Education Appropriations, January 1967, Jones Papers. Another constituent explained to the congressman how important the classes were in the potential for improving one's income. "All of us in Wednesday and Thursday class feel that this Basic Education class will help us a great deal in making a higher

1972-1973 academic year, total enrollment had grown to 9,060 day and evening students (up from 6,957 in 1971-1972) of which 30 percent were black. During the 1971-1972 academic year, 26 percent of enrolled students were black. Clearly, local understanding of the importance of education was on the rise for whites and blacks alike. This understanding, of course, was largely made possible by the growth in the local economy and the simultaneous rise in local job opportunities. Approximately 95 percent of all students who graduated from the school between 1968 and 1973 (88 percent of whom were Craven residents) were placed in jobs in Craven County.²²

income...”See Mr. William Ward to Hon. Walter Jones, no date, Legislative Correspondence, Adult Education Appropriations, January 1967, Jones Papers. After indicating his “interest in this and other educational programs,” Congressman Jones would later assure each constituent that NC Department of Community Colleges will be “able to continue all existing classes through this fiscal year.” See Congressman Walter B. Jones to ___, January 26, 1967, folder: Legislative Correspondence, Adult Education Appropriations, January 1967, Jones Papers.

²² North Carolina Department of Natural and Economic Resources, *Community Facilities Plan and Public Improvement Program, Craven County, North Carolina*, May 1973, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.



Figure 29. Library and Learning Laboratory located at Tryon Palace Drive, New Bern, one of three temporary facilities of the Craven County Technical Institute, circa 1969. Craven County Technical Institute, 1969-1971 Catalog, State Library of North Carolina.

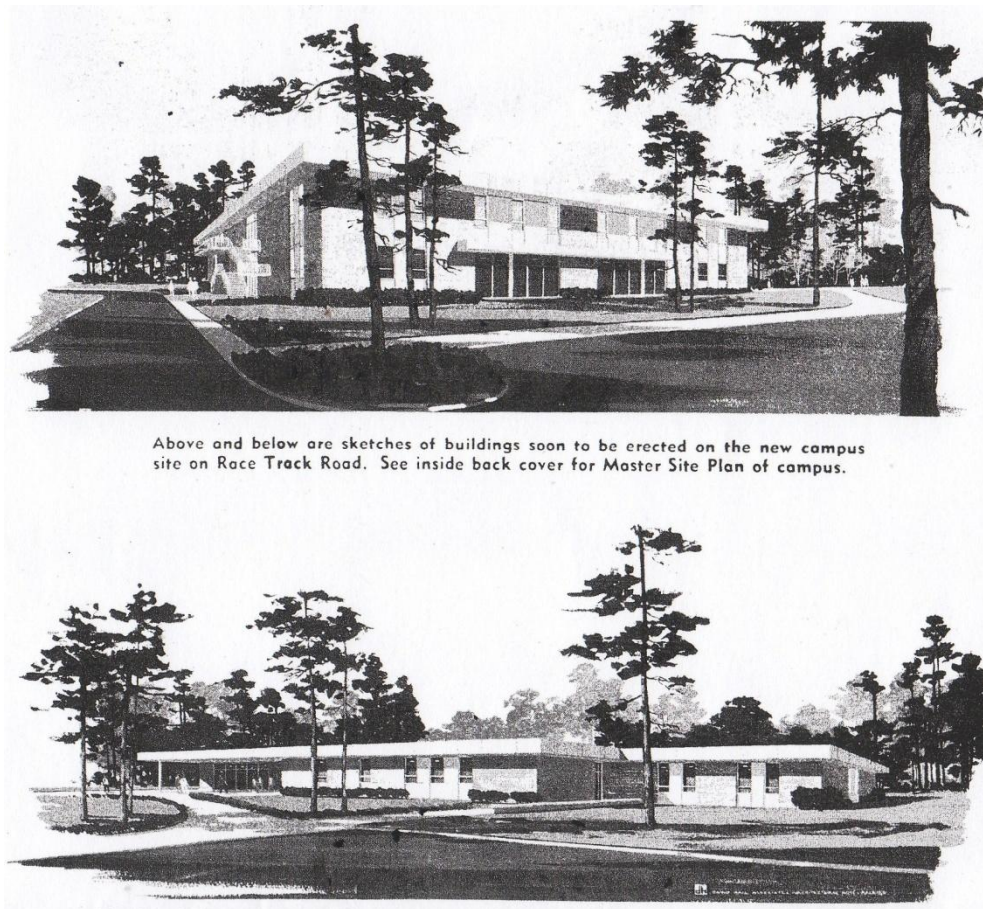


Figure 30. Sketches for new facilities that would be built as part of Craven County Community College, 1971. Craven County Technical Institute, 1969-1971 Catalog, State Library of North Carolina.

Indeed, because of their general desire to land the new better-paying jobs in the area, productivity among the blacks who were eventually hired for them proved to be just as good, if not better, than that of some whites. Bernard White, currently one of New Bern's three black city aldermen, is a prime example. After working for Hatteras Yachts in the late 1960s (where he helped build seven boats including one for actor Pernell Roberts of the TV series "*Bonanza*"), White was tested at the local employment security office in the early 1970s for a possible job at Texifi (whose facilities were still under

construction). White, who had recently received training as an electrician in Lenoir County, received near-perfect test scores and was hired as soon as the Texifi facilities were completed. During his 9 ½ years operating a knitting machine at Texifi, where he continued to earn high wages on a graduated pay scale, White was considered one of the top electricians and was promoted by management to the position of Lead Man in which he oversaw black as well as white employees.²³ Other industries in Craven also recognized and benefitted from black productivity during this time. For example, between August and September 1973, employees at the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill, at least 16 percent of whom were black, broke production records four times while also maintaining a perfect safety record (no lost time or accidents).²⁴

With the exception of Hatteras Yachts, all of the new industries that arrived in the Craven area between 1968 and 1972 hailed from outside the former Jim Crow South. Although the mores of racial segregation had convinced numerous local businessmen in the past to believe that blacks were either not capable of learning required job skills or that white employees and/or customers would not accept blacks as equals, these kind of considerations were extremely rare by the early 1970s. In addition, business owners could not ignore the fact that profits in this new era of greater black employability would suffer if more than 30 percent of the available labor force continued to be excluded. Of course, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as well as the presence of a county-wide manpower program had helped dissipate the area's institutional racism. Thus, even before the arrival of each

²³ Bernard White, phone interview by author, September 14, 2011, transcript in author's possession.

²⁴ "Weyerhaeuser Marks Production Records," *Sun Journal*, September 20, 1973.

of the new industries, dozens of local employers both inside and outside manufacturing had come to the realization that blacks could learn just as easily as whites and that the races could work together peacefully and productively. Between 1960 and 1970, for instance, the percentage of employed blacks in New Bern who were hired for skilled positions (including health workers, teachers, technicians, managers, administrators, and craftsmen) rose from 16.5 percent to 26.3 percent.²⁵

National and state affirmative action programs such as Plans for Progress and Job Opportunities in the Business Sector (JOBS), which received the cooperation of the National Alliance of Businessmen and the National Association of Manufacturers, also helped to build a larger consensus against racial discrimination among large nationwide employers, which included Texifi and Weyerhaeuser, by providing incentives for them to train and hire more blacks, in part to prevent the kind of black disillusionment and unemployment that seemed to underlie the rising rates of urban riots and crime.²⁶ Tables

²⁵ Table 78, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35_TOC.pdf; Table 110, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf.

²⁶ Charles A. Myers, *The Role of the Private Sector in Manpower Development* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press, 1971), 27; Alfonso J. Cervantes, "To prevent a chain of super-Watts," *Harvard Business Review* 45, (September-October 1967): 55-61; Roscoe Drummond, "Private Way Yields Results on Poverty," *Washington Post*, November 27, 1968; John P. Condon, "The National Alliance of Businessmen JOBS Program: A Critical Appraisal, 1968-1974" (Ph.D. diss., University of California-Irvine, 1976); Delton, *Racial Integration in Corporate America*, 206-238; "Job Training Plan Here is Approved," *New York Times*, June 30, 1968; G.E. Morse, "How Honeywell took the JOBS Program to heart," *Manpower*, February-March 1969, 22-25; John L. Iacobelli, "A survey of employer attitudes toward training the disadvantaged," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1970, 51-55; North Carolina Department of Justice, *Crime in North Carolina*, January-December 1973, Robert Morgan Papers, Special Collections, J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University.

2-4, which are based on the annual EEO-1 form that employers of twenty-five or more workers were required to submit to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Office, detail how three industries in Craven County (Stanley Tools, whose plant had opened in 1964, and Hatteras and Weyerhaeuser) were notable providers of on-the-job training and employment for local blacks.²⁷ In all three companies, black employment rose from 92 percent to 99 percent between 1966, the first year data was available, and 1980. Moreover, within most specific job categories, including officials/managers, office/clerical, skilled craftsmen, and semi-skilled operatives, the numbers of black employees similarly increased. Although racial discrimination still lingered in the private sector, many blacks such as former Texifi employee Bernard White believed that beginning in the late 1960s blacks could practically “go as high as [they] wanted to go as long as [they] applied [themselves.],” an observation supported by *Time* magazine’s devotion of an entire June 1974 issue to the rise of the black middle class, which grew from 12 percent of the black population in 1960 to 30 percent by 1974.²⁸ Locally, the June 1973 establishment of the joint Human Relations Council for New Bern and Craven County, which like the Good Neighbor Council discussed ways to increase black employment with local employers, helped to legitimize this development and move it

²⁷ Employment data from six other major industries in Craven between 1966 and 1980 as well as tables that detail the rise in number black officials/ managers, office/clerical workers, sales workers, and skilled and semi-skilled workers during this period can be found in the Appendix.

²⁸ Bernard White, phone interview by author, September 14, 2011, transcript in author’s possession; “America’s Rising Black Middle Class,” *Time*, June 17, 1974. Leah M. Wright, “The Loneliness of the Black Conservative: Black Republicans and the Grand Old Party, 1964-1980” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2009), 220.

forward. As the graphs below suggest, however, it could take years for an individual—black or white—to acquire the skills, educational attainments, and experience needed for the better paying jobs in the area (particularly within the most skilled positions). Yet despite the gradual pace of change with regard to better black employment, the graphs below do highlight a major development over the past in which, prior to the 1960s, most blacks in Craven worked in neither skilled nor semi-skilled positions but mostly in those that were unskilled. Both assisting and reflecting this development were the New Bern ESC office employees, many if not most of whom were white. These staff workers, who would rank in 1965 among the top five offices in the state in terms of the number of promotional telephone contacts and staff visits to nonagricultural employees per month, found matches for thousands of black and/or disadvantaged applicants with dozens of local cooperating employers who were in need of skilled workers.²⁹ Between 1970 and 1980, for instance, even though the vast majority of the new applicants who registered with the New Bern ESC were white, between 42 percent and 53 percent of the local residents who were placed in non-agricultural job openings were actually nonwhite.³⁰ The availability of federal tax credits through the Work Incentive Program (WIN), created in

²⁹ Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, *Local Office Operations, Annual Report: 1965* (Raleigh, NC: Bureau of Employment Security Research, 1966), Table VIII, Table IX, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of NC.

³⁰ Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, *Local Office Operations, Annual Report: 1970* (Raleigh, NC: Bureau of Employment Security Research, 1971), Table V; Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, *Local Office Operations, Annual Report: 1975* (Raleigh, NC: Bureau of Employment Security Research, 1976), Table IV; Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, *Local Office Operations, Annual Report: 1980* (Raleigh, NC: Bureau of Employment Security Research, 1981), Table IV, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of NC.

1967, and the Revenue Act of 1978 also influenced employers to cooperate with the New Bern ESC and hire and train more readily available disadvantaged persons, such as black male AFDC recipients. “Help yourself by helping someone receive training who presently is unable to find employment,” read a local advertisement from 1976.³¹ For a detailed breakdown of the activities of the New Bern ESC office, see Table 5.

Table 2. Black employment (male and female) at Stanley Works, New Bern, NC, 1966-1980. * When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicals	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees*	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1966	145	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3 [2%]	1 (0)
1968	200	0	0	2	0	3	25	23	30 [15%]	5 (3)
1970	346	0	0	3	5	2	49	38	59 [17%]	11 (3)
1972	289	0	0	3	5	3	25	48	36 [12%]	7 (8)
1974	269	1	0	4	5	5	37	45	52 [19%]	12 (12)
1975	257	1	0	3	6	3	35	52	48 [18%]	12 (12)
1980	268	2	0	2	5	4	43	59	57 [21%]	18 (19)

³¹ New Bern Area Labor Market Newsletter (Craven and Pamlico Counties), November 1976; New Bern Area Labor Market Newsletter (Craven and Pamlico Counties), January 1979; New Bern Area Labor Market Newsletter (Craven, Carteret, and Pamlico Counties), May 1981, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of NC.

Table 3. Black employment (male and female) at Hatteras Yachts, New Bern, NC, 1968-1980.

* When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicians	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees*	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1968	38	0	0	n/a	0	1	0	0	1 [3%]	0 (0)
1969	164	0	0	1	0	6	20	45	39 [24%]	6 (0)
1970	314	0	0	8	0	7	60	55	90 [29%]	12 (6)
1972	397	3	0	0	0	38	67	0	108 [27%]	11 (7)
1974	515	1	0	0	1	68	109	0	179 [35%]	44 (0)
1975	231	0	0	n/a	0	1	28	0	48 [21%]	14 (0)
1980	794	3	0	0	0	108	89	0	223 [28%]	n/a

Table 4. Black employment (male and female) at Weyerhaeuser Company, New Bern, NC, 1970-1980.

* When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicians	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees*	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1970	224	0	2	n/a	3	2	26	0	33 [15%]	3 (0)
1971	265	0	1	n/a	3	1	32	33	37 [14%]	3 (3)
1972	309	0	1	n/a	1	2	40	34	44 [14%]	3 (3)
1973	393	0	2	n/a	3	3	55	51	63 [16%]	3 (3)
1974	398	1	1	n/a	1	12	84	63	119 [30%]	15 (3)
1975	310	0	1	0	1	8	43	0	53 [17%]	2 (0)
1980	763	5	3	0	28	26	64	0	156 [20%]	38 (0)

Table 5. Job Placement Activities, New Bern Employment Security Commission Office, 1970-1980.

* After 1968, available data was not organized to reflect the number of female applicants nor the number of females placed in open jobs. Between 1970 and 1980, available data was also not organized and therefore does not exist on the number of black female applicants or the number of black females placed in jobs in the years above.

Year	No. of New Applicants (white and black)	No. of New Black Applicants	No. of Applicants Placed in a Job (white and black)	No. of Black Applicants Placed in a Job	No. of Dis-advantaged Applicants Placed in a Job	No. of Female Applicants (white and black)	No. of Female Applicants Placed in a Job (white and black)
1970	3,692	1,382	672	359	100	n/a	n/a
1975	5,430	2,026	1,377	573	259	n/a	n/a
1980	8,795	3,857	2,404	1,073	582	n/a	n/a

As historian Raymond Gavins argued, if racial prejudice and segregation “were methods of keeping blacks in economic captivity,” it was also true that “tolerance and desegregation could facilitate their making a decent living.”³² In Craven, however, the number of black skilled and semi-skilled workers would not continue to rise through the 1980s simply because employers had instituted more open hiring policies; the draw of high-wages that provided upward mobility was also responsible. In fact, because of the high skill requirements of most manufacturing jobs by the 1960s, manufacturing wages supplied some of the highest wages for blacks across the nation during the 1960s and 1970s, including the South.³³ In Craven County, the average manufacturing wages were

³² Raymond Gavins, *The Perils and Prospects of Southern Black Leadership: Gordon Blaine Hancock, 1884-1970* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1977), 172.

³³ Wayne Vroman, “Industrial Change and Black Men’s Relative Earnings,” *Research in Labor Economics* 12 (1991): 221, 225, 226, 242; Because manufacturing wages had been so critical to black American advancement in the post-World War II period, when manufacturing plants in Northern cities (most notably Detroit) began to leave for the Sun Belt during the 1970s and 1980s, historic rises in black poverty were

second to government jobs only.³⁴ According to the 1970 U.S. census, black males in New Bern who were employed as skilled craftsmen or semi-skilled operatives had median annual earnings of \$5,129 and \$4,708 respectively; both of these salaries were well above the median income of \$4,364 for black males in New Bern over the age of sixteen. Black laborers, on the other hand, who were considered non-skilled, had a median annual income of just \$3,359.³⁵ A similar discrepancy of income based on skill level was also seen among Craven whites, as well.

The reason for these differences in wages is clear if one understands the value of a skilled and semi-skilled worker to an employer. As defined by the U.S. Equal Employment Office, craftsmen were “manual workers of relatively high skill level having a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the processes involved in their work [who] exercise considerable independent judgment and usually receive an extensive period of training.” These would include mechanics, repairmen, typesetters, electricians, tailors, and stationary engineers. Operatives, who also had considerable responsibility, were defined as “workers who operate machine or processing equipment or perform other factory-type duties of intermediate skill level which can be mastered in a few weeks and

seen in the abandoned areas. See William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1978.

³⁴ The Craven County Committee of 100 Newsletter, April 1989, p. 6, Vertical File, Kellenberger Room, New Bern-Craven County Public Library.

³⁵ Table 110, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973) , U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf.

require only limited training” and would include bricklayers, carpenters, painters, welders, and delivery men. Laborers were defined as “workers in manual operations which generally require no special training [who] perform elementary duties that may be learned in a few days and require the application of little to no independent judgment.” These would include lumbermen, groundskeepers, and longshoremen.³⁶

As these definitions affirm, workers in skilled craftsman and semi-skilled operative positions required extensive training and education. The time and effort spent by black individuals to acquire training and education, however, greatly improved their earning capacity and helped to bridge the gap between black and white income (see Table 18 in Appendix A). Black wages and opportunities for upward mobility would continue to grow into the 1980s as the push for industrial development continued in Eastern North Carolina.

The arrival of Hatteras, Clark, Weyerhaeuser, and Texifi only increased the urge of local people and businessmen for additional industries; in 1975, the Craven County Industrial Development Commission and the Committee of 100 were formed to attract them.³⁷ The support of Craven’s county commissioners, who eagerly approved the use of county money to hire an industrial development professional to lead the commission, was partially driven by the wish to keep more of their best and brightest in the area by

³⁶ Equal Employment Opportunity, Employer Information Report EEO-1, Standard Form 100, Instructions, January 1966 in National Archives and Records Administration, Reference Copy of Technical Documentation for Accessioned Electronic Records (March 23, 2005), 44.

³⁷ Yvonne Strader, “Craven Industrial Commission Sought,” *Sun Journal*, August 6, 1974; “Committee Means New Jobs,” *Sun Journal*, December 23, 1993.

guaranteeing profitable jobs for recent high school and college graduates. Much like other southern leaders in military base communities, the jobs provided by Cherry Point, though profound, were not sufficient and thus could not ensure regional development.³⁸ The commissioners were equally driven to attract more industry from a desire to improve infrastructure, build new schools, and add on to the hospital. Increasing the local tax base with an influx of new industry would provide the revenue to accomplish these goals.³⁹ Said Tom Thompson, executive director of the county industrial development commission, “[W]e are seeking high paying, low-polluting industry to improve the standard of living in Craven County.”⁴⁰

But, by the early 1970s, competition between the state’s cities and counties over industrial development had intensified; even nearby cities like Greenville were successfully attracting prominent companies such as Proctor and Gamble. Incentives were seemingly becoming all the more necessary to attract additional industries to be lured to Craven. Many such industries, not only “want workers who will be available and willing to work” but also incentives such as “buildings ready to use,” according to NC Commerce Secretary Faircloth.⁴¹

The leading force for improving the attractiveness of Craven County was the private, non-profit Committee of 100 (which was originally a group of approximately one

³⁸ Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*, 110. In fact, due to cuts to federal military budgets, Cherry Point came close to being shut down at least twice in its history.

³⁹ Grover Lancaster, phone interview by author, September 14, 2011, transcript in author’s possession.

⁴⁰ Francis Sawyer, “12 Craven industry hunters set off to meet with Hunt,” *Sun Journal*, November 1, 1978.

⁴¹ Ibid.

hundred local businessmen) that included former COP board members Frank Efird and D. L. Stallings (then a North Carolina state senator).⁴² The primary activity of the committee was the use of membership dues to entertain potential industrial candidates and the purchase of a \$1.8 million 510-acre tract of land in Craven in 1979 to establish a twenty-one-site industrial park whose eventual construction would increase private employment 50.5 percent during the 1980s.⁴³ The committee also financed the construction of a 5,800 sq.-ft. industrial training center, rented by Craven County Community College, that was available to any new or existing industry that had “legitimate training needs.”⁴⁴ According to one of the original committee members, “Local governments were not allowed to perform that kind of economic development at the time.”⁴⁵ The committee understood, however, that even with these added incentives, industries would be reluctant to build in Craven unless utilities were connected to the park. With support from the committee and other locals, the county agreed to pay approximately \$220,000 of the cost of a \$500,000 water and sewer extension project to the site; federal funds through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) covered the other 60 percent.⁴⁶

⁴² By 1989, the Committee of 100 grew to 400, including current NC Governor Beverly Perdue.

⁴³ “Craven Prospers in Employment,” *Sun Journal*, May 31, 1993.

⁴⁴ Diane Lupton, “Park’s First Industry Gears Up For Production,” *Sun Journal*, February 4, 1982.

⁴⁵ “Industrial Site Grant Given Approval,” *Sun Journal*, September 17, 1971; John Burns, “Craven Eyes Industrial Park Plan,” *Sun Journal*, August 19, 1977; Sue Book, “Impacting the Local Economy,” *Sun Journal*, October 2, 2005.

⁴⁶ Craven County, which had been considered a growth center as early as 1967, was eligible for EDA funds because of the high unemployment and low family incomes in the neighboring counties of Jones, Pamlico,

Most of the funding and incentives for industrial development, however, would come from local sources instead of federal or even state coffers.⁴⁷ Speaking on the subject, former County Commissioner Grover Lancaster observed that “[we] had no idea that support from the citizens would be as strong as it was.”⁴⁸ In 1977, just before plans for the industrial park were finalized, citizens widely agreed that the arrival of new industries in the park would do much more than pay back the initial investments. In fact, it was estimated that a fully occupied park would add \$105 million to the county’s \$500 million tax base.⁴⁹ The black community seemed to generally share the belief as well that local investments were worth the initial costs. New Bern’s first black mayor, Lee Morgan, formerly deputy director of COP/CPI under Bob Monte, whose elections in 1977 and 1979 had depended on a sizeable black turnout, was especially supportive of economic development. During the late 1970s, he frequently met with the Committee of 100 and the Craven County Industrial Development Commission to discuss ways to

and Carteret that would benefit from additional jobs in Craven. See “Industrial Site Grant Given Approval,” *Sun Journal*, September 17, 1971; “A Brief Historical Perspective,” Eastern Carolina Council, accessed May 25, 2011, <http://www.eccog.org>.

⁴⁷ Steve Jones, “Lawmakers, others unhappy over state’s industry hunting efforts,” *Sun Journal*, November 13, 1991; Grover Lancaster, phone interview by author, September 14, 2011, transcript in author’s possession.

⁴⁸ The Craven County Committee of 100 Newsletter, April 1989, p. 2, Vertical File, New Bern-Craven County Public Library.

⁴⁹ John Burns, “Craven Eyes Industrial Park Plan,” *Sun Journal*, August 19, 1977.

attract industry to the area as a means of increasing employment for all, including blacks.⁵⁰

According to the 1977 U.S. Census of Manufactures, Craven comprised 97 businesses, 3,400 employees, \$36 million in payroll, and \$97.7 million in value-added—a great improvement in just five years, most notably in terms of value-added, which in 1972 had been \$46 million.⁵¹ These improvements continued with the arrival of more large employers attracted by the county’s new industrial park; these included Moen, a nation-leading manufacturer of faucets and kitchen/bathroom fixtures, and Power Projects, Inc., a wood-fired power plant that produced electric energy for Carolina Power and Light (now Progress Energy). Many of the original industries that located in the park are still in the area.⁵² Craven’s business-friendly atmosphere also attracted companies to settle outside of the park including German-based Robert Bosch Tools which bought Stanley Tools in 1980 and is now known as B/S/H Home Appliances.⁵³

⁵⁰ “12 Craven industry hunters set off to meet with Hunt,” *Sun Journal*, November 1, 1978; Re-election advertisement for L.R. (Lee) Morgan, *Sun Journal*, October 4, 1979; Medlin, “Reclaiming First Class Citizenship,” 119-124.

⁵¹ Value-added is derived from the total cost of resources subtracted from total value of shipments. Thus, a high value-added company earns more profits and is more capable of paying its workers higher wages. See U.S. Department of Commerce, *1977 Census of Manufactures, Geographic Area Series, North Carolina*, Table 4. All Manufacturing Statistics for the State, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Counties, and Selected Cities, 1977 and 1972, 34-8, 34-10 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1980).

⁵² “Moen Marks 25 Years in New Bern,” *Sun Journal*, June 14, 2007; “Plant Planned,” *Sun Journal*, September 14, 1988.

⁵³ Catherine Landis, “Stanley Tools Sold to Germany Company,” *Sun Journal*, July 1, 1980. By 2000, Robert Bosch Tools officially became B/S/H home appliances, which currently manufactures Bosch and Thermador brand dishwashers, stoves, built-in ovens, and free-standing ranges, and would expand to around 1,200 employees. The company’s distribution center was relocated from Greenville to Craven County Industrial Park by 2007.

In the same way that investment in education assisted in drawing industry to the Craven area, the existence of industry also helped to keep the area investing in its workers so that they could compete in the modern labor market. Besides contributing to the higher tax revenues that, in turn, helped the county invest more in public education, industries including Robert Bosch, Texasgulf, and Weyerhaeuser provided financial assistance for employees to further their education at either Cherry Point, Craven County Community College, or another nearby accredited school such as North Carolina State University whose pulp and paper science engineering program, for instance, was and continues to be nationally renowned.⁵⁴ During the 1980s, Weyerhaeuser also donated \$25,000 to the East Carolina University School of Business to establish courses for executive education and training programs for Eastern North Carolina's managers and small business owners.⁵⁵ Workforce development was naturally favored by these high-skilled industries that depended on a well-educated workforce; the success of this partnership of industrial and educational leaders for employers and employees alike continues in Craven to this day.

⁵⁴ "Industries Provide Employee Schooling," *Sun Journal*, March 24, 1983; Tricia Robertson, "Want a good job? Acquire a skill," *Sun Journal*, March 24, 1983; Penny Round, "BSH, schools team up for program," *Sun Journal*, December 16, 2001. In 1982, twenty-two scholarships, for \$900 each, were funded by the Weyerhaeuser Company foundation for employees to pursue continuing education in fields such as computer science and electronics. That same year, at least 20 percent of Bosch employees were participating in classes held at Craven Community College (which the company reimbursed in full) and Texasgulf, which also provided tuition assistance for its employees pursuing a degree program related to their jobs, rewarded thirty-five \$3,000 college scholarships to sons and daughters of its employees. See "Weyerhaeuser Donates," *Sun Journal*, October 31, 1974.

⁵⁵ "Passing Hands," *Sun Journal*, January 13, 1989.

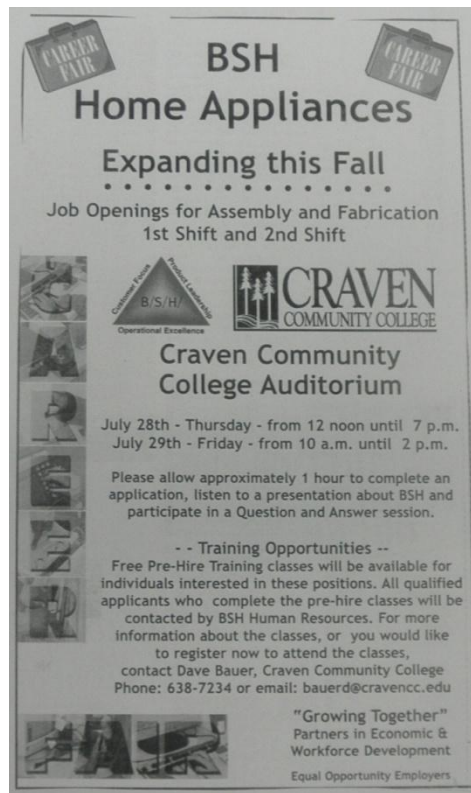


Figure 31. Advertisement for the BSH and Craven Community College partnership in enhancing economic and workforce development. (Source: *Sun Journal*, July 21, 2005.)

As a result of these industrial and educational developments, wages, the range of job choices, and occupational mobility notably expanded in Craven County well into the 1980s and beyond. Based solely on the industries who reported to the EEO office between 1966 and 1980, the number of skilled craftsmen positions grew from 294 to 1,030.⁵⁶ This number would continue to increase significantly over time. More so than

⁵⁶ Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration; 16% of employed Craven residents worked in manufacturing in 1959 compared to 24% in 1989. Table 36, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Volume 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35.pdf>; Table 146, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1990*, Social and Economic

most economic sectors, manufacturing creates additional jobs in both the supply chain and labor market. The presence of manufacturing jobs, in other words, tends to beget additional jobs. Power Projects, Inc., for instance, asked for permission to open a plant in the Craven area specifically because of the presence of Weyerhaeuser whose wood chip waste the former used to produce electricity. Not surprisingly, the presence of manufacturing (especially high-skilled manufacturing which often requires large numbers of employees) played a large role in reducing unemployment which fell to as low as 2.7 percent (in the late 1980s) as the number of employed grew from 22,474 in 1976 to 30,880 in 1989.⁵⁷ The growth of high-skilled manufacturing also played an immense role in increasing the wage rates for the Craven area. According to the 1980 census, per capita income in Craven grew to 92 percent of the state's average (which was up to 20 percent higher than numerous other Eastern North Carolina counties), and helps to explain the 2 to 3 percent rate of in-migration in Craven during the 1980s.⁵⁸ In-migrants, many of whom were well-educated and were attracted to the higher wage jobs that were added to

Characteristics, North Carolina, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp2/cp-2-35-1.pdf> .

⁵⁷ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Craven, Jones, and Pamlico Counties, 1976-1989; Market fluctuations and economic downturns occasionally led to layoffs, especially in businesses like Hatteras Yachts that depended on an affluent customer base, but even when layoffs occurred as a result of either businesses moving away or shutting down (i.e. Texifi in 1980), they, that is layoffs, appear to have been largely temporary as local leaders continuously sought new industries to help fill the employment void.

⁵⁸ Table 57, Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1980*, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 35, North Carolina, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf; The Craven County Committee of 100 Newsletter, April 1989, 6, Vertical File, New Bern-Craven County Public Library.

the area, would certainly help to dilute the instance of poverty in Craven County, however, because large employers prefer to hire the workforce already living in the communities they locate to, there is no reason to suspect that plants only hired a minority of local people. Even the Stanley factory employed a majority of local people, albeit a slight one, when it first arrived in 1964 (when the area's number of high school graduates were a far smaller percentage of the population than by the 1980s).

As economic historian Gavin Wright argued, ““business climate”” during this period was not just “a euphemism for low wages and anti-unionism” and neither did “boosterism”...largely serve to “tighten the grip of the old cheap-labor economy.”⁵⁹ To boot, in contrast to the arguments of one of the War on Poverty's premier historians, James T. Patterson, Craven's experience shows that the “potential for rehabilitating the poor by opening up opportunity” was not as limited across the nation as it has been presumed.⁶⁰ By 1999, the Craven County poverty rate for families fell to an all-time low of 9.9 percent, almost the same as the average state rate of 9.0 percent. The poverty rate for black families also fell to an all-time low that year to 23 percent; like the overall county rate, this decrease halved the figures from 1969 (18.7 percent and 41.2 percent respectively).⁶¹ Because government jobs, whether federal (i.e., Cherry Point Naval Air

⁵⁹ Wright, *Old South, New South*, 263-264.

⁶⁰ Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty*, 148.

⁶¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, United States—States; and Puerto Rico GCT-P14, QT-P35, Poverty Status in 1999 of Families and Nonfamily Householders: 2000 Data Set: Census 2000 summary File 3 (SF 3), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 9, 2011, <http://factfinder.census.gov>; Table 128, Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part

Base), state, or local, provided no more than 30 percent of the jobs for local blacks during this period, the emergence of an industrially strong Craven County was crucial in providing long-term ways for blacks to escape poverty.⁶²

Unfortunately, the historic rise in industrial development for the Craven area from 1968 through the late 1990s and onward did not bring financial stability for all area residents. As late as 1990, only 57.8 percent of blacks more than twenty-five years old had earned a high school degree in Craven compared to 81.7 percent of whites; in New Bern, the percentage of black high school graduates (53.1 percent) correlated almost directly with those who worked fifty to fifty-two weeks/year (58 percent).⁶³ In that same year, 43 percent of black families who were below the poverty line in Craven had no householder working year-round and/or full time.⁶⁴ By this time, there was also a rise in the number of welfare cases and single mothers, particularly within the black community. Between 1960 and 1990, fewer blacks in Craven under the age of eighteen were living

35, North Carolina, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf.

⁶² Table 126, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf; Table 184, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1980, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf.

⁶³ Table 8, Table 9, Table 184, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1990, Social and Economic Characteristics*, North Carolina, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp2/cp-2-35-1.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Table 149, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1990, Social and Economic Characteristics*, North Carolina, Section 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp2/cp-2-35-1.pdf>.

with two parents. In New Bern alone, the rate dropped from 53 percent in 1960 to 40 percent in 1970; this trend continued due in part to the strength of the national welfare rights movement which, by the 1970s, influenced the federal government to make it increasingly possible for those who had difficulty finding steady employment, especially single mothers of young children, to receive more generous cash support.⁶⁵ Between 1960 and 1972, the number of American families on the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) rolls increased from 745,000 to three million; the amount of payments they received grew at a similar rate from less than \$1 billion to \$6 billion.⁶⁶

In 1980, 65 percent of black households in New Bern were receiving at least one form of government assistance, and more than half of these funds came from AFDC. But in spite of the exponential growth of the welfare rolls, 45 percent of black families living in the city had incomes below the poverty line (an increase of 2.1 percent since 1970). In

⁶⁵ Table 77, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Volume 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35.pdf>; Table 108, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf; The welfare rights revolution was largely made possible at both the federal and state level through the loosening of previous welfare restrictions such as “man in the house.” “Senate Votes to Kill Limit on Welfare,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1967; Carol Honsa, “Welfare Chief Defends Controversial Changes,” *Washington Post*, December 9, 1967; John Barnett, “Welfare Begins to Applaud the Critics,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 1968; Carol Honsa, “Welfare Rules Drafted on Jobs,” *Washington Post*, February 27, 1968; Ed Lahey, “Two Events Underscore Welfare’s Great Revolution,” *Charlotte Observer*, March 10, 1968; “Welfare Board Allows Color TV,” *News & Observer*, February 26, 1970; Carolyn P. DuBose, “Champion of Welfare Rights: Former college prof leads poor against relief bureaucracy,” *Ebony*, April 1970, 31-40; “Welfare—The Shame of a Nation,” *Newsweek*, February 8, 1971. See Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005).

⁶⁶ Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 264.

Craven County the rate of black households receiving government assistance also rose, from 44 percent in 1970 to 46 percent in 1980. As seen in New Bern, the number of black families under the poverty line in Craven also increased during this period from 1,331 to 1,474.⁶⁷ For reasons including the broadening availability of welfare and a 9.6 percent unemployment rate among black males, by 1980, approximately 30 percent of black families in Craven reported no wage or salary earnings. Many of these households were headed by single mothers who had often been unable to find low-skilled and/or full-time work that also allowed them the time to look after their children. Among female-headed households, including both black and white, 28 percent had no workers present in 1980.⁶⁸ Many of these households were headed by single mothers who had often been unable to find low-skilled and/or part-time work that also allowed them the time to look after their children. Part of the problem was that there had been fewer jobs and training opportunities available to unemployed and/or low-income women through COP/CPI, which staff members of MITCE in particular were aware of, as compared to unemployed and/or low-income men. Yet, at the same time, few AFDC recipients participated in job

⁶⁷ Table 128, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-05.pdf; Table 187, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1980*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf. In contrast to data on New Bern, however, the percentage of black family poverty in Craven actually fell from 40 percent in 1969 to 34 percent in 1979.

⁶⁸ Table 179, Table 184, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1980*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf.

training since it was still considered appropriate both at the local and federal level for mothers of young children to remain at home and care for them. Under the the Work Incentive Program (WIN), for instance, which was based on the theory that adults on welfare should make “good-faith efforts to become economically self-sufficient,” the federal government mandated welfare recipients’ participation in employment and training programs in 1971 but excluded those who had special responsibilities at home or who had preschool age children.⁶⁹ The New Bern ESC office was proud to note in 1978 that as a result of a coordinated effort between it and the Craven County Department of Social Services, Craven County saved \$68,236 in welfare grant reductions in helping to “put employable welfare recipients in jobs.” Of course, the most “employable” were rarely mothers with young children at home.⁷⁰

For a significant number of poor local mothers in and around Craven, most of whom were single, black, lived in New Bern, and had a lack of affordable daycare options, their primary available opportunity to provide for themselves and their families into the 1980s involved becoming a recipient of public welfare (which usually did not raise them above the poverty line and, thus, was rarely their first choice). Regardless of the reason, unemployed or part-time working women without a husband as a second “breadwinner” kept poverty rates inflated. In 1980, a female householder living in Craven

⁶⁹Susan W. Blank and Barbara B. Blum, “The Work Incentive Program and OBRA Demonstrations (1976-1986),” accessed July 14, 2012, <http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=54&articleid=298§ionid=1968>.

⁷⁰ New Bern Area Labor Market Newsletter (Craven and Pamlico), November 1978, Government and Heritage Library, State Library of NC.

(irrespective of race) with no husband had a \$6,250 median annual income compared to \$16,657 for a married couple. For a black female in New Bern with at least one child under eighteen years old in the home, the median annual income was \$3, 679, which was well below the poverty rate at the time for a family of just two persons.⁷¹

Table 6. Percentage of black and white Craven families on public assistance (P.A.) and percentage of black and white families with female head of household and no husband present (FHOH). (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980).

Year	% of Craven Families with FHOH	% of Craven Families on P.A.	Mean P.A. income for Craven Families	% of Black Craven Families on P.A.	% of Black Craven Families with FHOH	% of Black New Bern Families with FHOH	% of Black New Bern Families on P.A.	Mean P.A. Income for Black New Bern families	U.S. Poverty Threshold for Non-farm Family of Four
1970	11%	6%	\$1,041	19%	18%	30%	28%	\$1,247	\$3,968
1980	15%	9%	\$2,090	24%	32%	51%	34% (of households)	\$2,379	\$8,414

Despite realities that prevented local efforts from more fully stamping out the sources of poverty in Craven, industrial development played an important role in raising both white and black economic fortunes, including those who were not directly hired by the new industries. As economists have shown, a community's economic growth can raise the standard of living and "earning capacities of the populations at large—even of

⁷¹ Table 180, Table 165, U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. Census of Population: 1980*, Volume I, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf; Table 3.E8-Poverty guidelines for families of specified sizes, 1965-2010, U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 8, 2011, <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2010/3e.html>. Mean public assistance payment to black families in New Bern, though higher than that of whites, was only \$2,379.

the less educated, less motivated, and less healthy.”⁷² To name a few, the expansion of the Craven County hospital, the building of additional schools, and the construction and repaving of local roads, all of which were largely made possible by private investment, helped to reduce the severity of poverty for the low-income residents in the area. The growth of industry would also contribute to Craven County’s shift in status from predominately rural to predominately urban by the mid-1970s thereby reducing the degree of isolation for low-income individuals. For a sizeable number of the poor, however, they would directly benefit from the expansion of industry in providing opportunities for higher wages and career advancements that had not been possible in the past. In 1960, only 56 percent of all adults employed in Craven County could find work fifty to fifty-two weeks/year.⁷³ By 1990, 65 percent could.⁷⁴ But while local awareness of poverty, the desire to cure it, and the knowledge of how to do so had grown as a result of Craven’s involvement in the War on Poverty, if COP/CPI had relied only upon federal programs, especially after OEO began decreased funding local initiatives in rural areas, much less poverty reduction would have occurred. After all, even though OEO had established agencies and programs in most sections in the country, it had reached no

⁷² James Tobin, “The Case for an Income Guarantee,” *Public Interest* 4 (Summer 1966): 31.

⁷³ Table 86, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population*, Part 35, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35_TOC.pdf.

⁷⁴ Table 147, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1990, Social and Economic Characteristics*, North Carolina, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 4, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp2/cp-2-35-1.pdf>.

more than 6 percent of the poor in the United States by 1968.⁷⁵ Local initiatives (namely private and public funding for economic development) were, thus, crucial to the reduction of poverty.

Discussions of how economic development and industrial growth helped reduce poverty in the South in the 1970s and 1980s are essentially absent from histories of local community action agencies or the War on Poverty in general. Even President Johnson admitted that economic growth, and not the War on Poverty alone, played a key role in reducing the number of the nation's poor between 1964 and 1968.⁷⁶ Yet a sizeable number of scholars who have written about the War on Poverty have promoted the argument that, especially with regard to urban blacks, a weak connection existed between educational and training programs and earning capacity.⁷⁷ Instead, many scholars have concluded that a massive redistribution of wealth and/or political power demanded by the poor and directed by the federal government was the only means to fairly and effectively

⁷⁵ Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*, 196.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 87.

⁷⁷ As these scholars presume, many of whom (including Frances Fox Piven, Richard A. Cloward, and Michael Katz) are avowed Marxists, "attempts by liberals and conservatives to explain poverty by either the educational skills or motivation of indigents or the structure of the economy overlook the functional role that the poor serve in a society dominated by class interests." See Kelso, *Poverty and the Underclass*, 254. Scholars Cloward and Piven were among the most ardent critics of what they refer to as "the [American] ideal of individual social and economic mobility" through the institution of private enterprise as well as calls for programs, such as job training, that are meant to "enable people to become economically competitive." As they have argued, "Individual mobility is no answer to the question of how to abolish the massive problem of poverty now." Instead, noting in 1966 that millions of the nation's poor were elderly or in families headed by a female, they believed that "a federal program of income redistribution [via a guaranteed income] has become necessary to elevate the poor en masse from poverty." See Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, "A Strategy to End Poverty," *The Nation*, May 2, 1966, 510-511. See also Frank Stricker, *Why America Lost the War on Poverty and How to Win It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

improve the lot of the poor.⁷⁸ This theory continues to be espoused despite the fact that there is inconclusive evidence that a direct link exists between political participation and individual economic advancement. In fact, depending on the degree of intensity, political activism among the poor and their advocates could and often did have the opposite effect by alienating and making enemies out of those in influential positions, many of who seemed genuinely interested in providing avenues out of poverty for indigents.⁷⁹

In direct contradiction to the assumption that efforts to bring the poor into the economic mainstream did not effectively reduce poverty rates, the story of Craven County's war on poverty shows that doing so could indeed make significant and lasting headway. This result was especially true for black citizens who, prior to 1964, had generally not been afforded equal job or training opportunities and therefore did not have compelling reasons to graduate from high school. Providing training for the unskilled, educating youth and illiterate adults, and attracting higher-wage industries to improve job opportunities took time (and some poor were either unable or unwilling to take

⁷⁸ Ashmore, *Carry It On*, 53; Korstad and Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs*, 174; Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 241; Hazirjian, "Negotiating Poverty," 503; Brown and Erie, "Blacks and the Legacy of the Great Society," 313-316. Not all scholars who have studied the War on Poverty agree with these views; dissenters include neoconservatives Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, and Edward Bell. According to Kristol, "All of us at the core of *The Public Interest* had grown up in lower-middle-class or working-class households—unlike the academics who had authored the War on Poverty—and we knew that becoming politically militant was no way for poor people to lift themselves out of poverty. This, it seemed to us, was just a sociological echo of an older socialist idea that a 'Great Society' could only come about as a consequence of class struggle." See Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 30.

⁷⁹ See Lemann, *Promised Land*, 344 and Kelso, *Poverty and the Underclass*, 266-269. Negative public opinion polls on the War on Poverty from 1966 and onward, in particular, were very much related to the increased political activism (which was sometimes violent and radical) among some of the poor and their supporters within the nation's CAAs.

advantage) but the historic increase of such efforts by local community leaders was not only well received in the black community but was also crucial to eliminating several of Craven's largest sources of past poverty.⁸⁰

The notion that smaller Southern communities consisted of white middle-class leaders and elites who were willing and capable of enlarging opportunities for the disadvantaged also does not fit within the historiography of the War on Poverty.⁸¹ Related to the belief that self-seeking white politicians and middle-class leaders stood as the primary obstructions to the empowerment of the poor living within their communities, too few historians have grasped that it was possible for individual leaders, such as Craven County Commissioner D. L. Stallings, to work for their own self-interest as well as the interests and benefits of the community by raising the educational and economic opportunities for all, including those at the bottom of the economic ladder. No later than 1963, such leaders knew that if they wanted their communities to move forward industrially and economically they could neither ignore poverty nor disregard the voices

⁸⁰ A few months after Johnson declared war on poverty, social scientists from the *Yale Law Journal* warned that "Poverty in America is not just a lack of material goods, education, and jobs; it is also a sense of helplessness, a defeatism, a lack of dignity and self-respect all of which are externally confirmed in varying degrees. It is exceedingly difficult to have dignity without food or clothing or a job. But it by no means follows that the provision of services and the supplying of material wants will yield a sense of self-respect. And the elimination of want will not necessarily produce the kind of alert and concerned citizenry on which our democratic process relies." Other social scientists agreed that poverty was not just a lack of income. Future sociologist Michael Harrington wrote in *The Other America* (1962) that "There is, in a sense, a personality of poverty, a type of human being produced by the grinding, wearing life of the slums. The other Americans feel differently than the rest of the nation. They tend to be hopeless and passive, yet prone to bursts of violence; they are lonely and isolated, often rigid and hostile. To be poor is not simply to be deprived of the material things of this world. It is to enter a fatal, futile universe, an America within America, with a twisted spirit." See Edgar S. Cahn and Jean C. Cahn, "The War on Poverty: A Civilian Perspective," *The Yale Law Journal* 73, no. 8 (July 1964):1321; Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, 49, 74.

⁸¹ See Orleck and Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty*.

of the poor—including those in the black community. In Craven, community leaders both white and black well understood that the greater the labor market potential, the more likely high value-added and skilled industries, such as Hatteras Yachts, Weyerhaeuser, Texifi, Moen, and Robert Bosch, would be induced to locate there.⁸² North Carolina Commissioner of Labor John C. Brooks argued in 1979 that “If there is no immediate benefit to most North Carolina workers from recruiting high-skill industry to the state, because they cannot claim the jobs which are created, there is also little potential long-range benefit to the state unless we begin to educate and train our unemployed and underemployed.”⁸³ The time and effort with which Craven leaders spent advocating a local community college was a later example of their sincere desire to replace low-wage industries. After all, as many county leaders saw it, reaching and developing wasted human resources was crucial to improving the future of the county as a whole and they knew that anything outside of improving the education and economic status of the poor were but temporary solutions.

County leaders were aware, however, that providing enhanced educational opportunities for the disadvantaged was more than a means to attract industry; it was among one of the best ways to create a safe, harmonious community atmosphere. Undoubtedly, this realization was a timely one in light of events both afar (the Newark and Detroit riots of 1967) and nearby (the post-Martin Luther King, Jr. assassination

⁸² Abt Associates, Inc., *The Industrialization of Southern Rural Areas: A Study of Industry and Federal Assistance in Small Towns With Recommendations for Future Policy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Economic Research, Economic Development Administration, 1968), ii.

⁸³ John C. Brooks, “A plea for better jobs—not just more jobs,” *News & Observer*, January 28, 1979.

protests led by black youth in New Bern). Of course, enhanced job training, educational, and economic options would have meant little without the cooperation of local businessmen. Recognizing their responsibility to the community which they operated within, between 1966 and 1980 both new and established businessmen agreed to train and hire black youth and members of the poor in unprecedented numbers, and many did so through MITCE. Their decision, like those of county leaders, were partially motivated by the need to cooperate with federal equal opportunity laws but were also rooted in the financial advantages of securing qualified, pre-screened, reliable workers. As David Zarefsky argued about the War on Poverty in general, since the poor made up a minority of population, “By asking the nonpoor to sacrifice on behalf of the poor, it depended ultimately upon a moral appeal... The middle class could not be expected permanently to support a program from which its members not only did not stand to benefit but eventually lost relative status or advantage.”⁸⁴

Craven County’s success in reducing poverty to historic lows was largely enabled by a relatively early commitment among local leaders to confront the sources of a low income within their environs. As discussed in Chapter II, the North Carolina Fund’s statewide call in October 1963 for community antipoverty proposals stirred local leaders and interested citizens in Craven, who had lacked the financial resources to combat poverty prior, to begin to take meaningful action for the long term. Although federal money became crucial to financing the programs and paying the staff of Craven Operation Progress/Coastal Progress, it must be remembered that interest and practice in

⁸⁴ Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, 200.

community action in Craven County began at the grassroots level before President Johnson announced his intentions to ask Congress for funding for a national War on Poverty. As they explained in their original proposal to the North Carolina Fund, Craven County leaders understood that new, coordinated approaches that would tackle all known sources of poverty were necessary in order for disadvantaged residents, including blacks, to be assimilated into the larger society's social, economic and cultural aspects.

In addition to improving the poor's health, education, and housing, other long-range goals in Craven County's proposal to the North Carolina Fund included convincing "the population of poverty that they can live with competency and satisfaction in our society of free enterprise, that a full life is worth the effort it requires, and that there are willing hands to lift them up to where they can stand firmly in their own strength." As discussed in Chapter II, Craven County leaders did not see themselves as part of a remote community with exceptional problems but belonging to a bigger movement to defeat the ideology of communism amid the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. County leaders also wanted to reduce poverty to improve the lives and outlook of the greater community as well, expressed as the hope of making "the entire community fully aware of its unceasing responsibility to the whole society," accomplishing "adequate employment capacities and suitable job placement for the employables of families," and, in recognition of the inherent problems of an undiversified agricultural economy, promoting "a better balance among the elements of the community's economy." Local leaders also hoped that their efforts to combat poverty would become a part of a bigger process "to determine by experimentation the pilot

projects of the campaign which are worth perpetuating for continuing community welfare and effective enough to be recommended to other communities of the state.”⁸⁵ These statements show that the majority of Craven’s original program ideas, several of which would receive financial support from the North Carolina Fund, focused on ways to provide better-paying jobs for poor people including an adult high school equivalency program, basic education for functional illiterates, vocational training/education for secondary and post-secondary youth, a youth work camp project, and a job-finding/counseling/referral program.⁸⁶

Several members of the “power structure,” including Stallings, county welfare department director Constance Rabin, county schools superintendent Robert L. Pugh, assistant superintendent T. J. Collier, and county public health department director Dr. W. A. Browne, to name a few, were not only involved in the brainstorming, researching, and writing of Craven County’s proposal to the North Carolina Fund but would serve on the COP board of directors from its inception through the mid-to-late 1960s. As this dissertation has argued, most middle-class whites who served on the COP board did not oppose social and economic progress but instead were partners in that progress by advocating moderation. In addition to being very familiar with the area’s problems and resources, they became some of the most committed to solutions. For many of these local leaders, their closeness to the problems of poverty made them that much more inspired to correct them, precisely because they had to live with them. This desire to improve their

⁸⁵ Original Proposal, Craven County, Long-Range Goals, folder 3472, NCFR.

⁸⁶ “Digests of 51 proposals, non-indexed,” Craven County, folder 3404, NCFR.

communities, however, does not fully explain their commitment to community progress. The time and energy they invested, and their willingness to put their own reputations on the line, kept Craven's antipoverty initiatives moving forward during episodes of controversy such as following the KKK shooting of the North Carolina Volunteers in the summer of 1965 or even when outside funding dropped off by 1968 as a result of the official closing of the North Carolina Fund and OEO's shift away from funding local initiatives, especially in rural areas.

North Carolina Fund research director Michael Brooks, who holds a degree from UNC-Chapel Hill in research planning, recalls his naïveté in believing that he could "rationally plan poverty out of existence in the state of North Carolina." As he learned, local people who were involved in the antipoverty programs were largely responsible for the programs' success.

We ended up with 11 studies of the ways in which the communities reacted to these new programs in their midst and the kinds of political and social changes that ultimately came about and so forth... There were some problems with the research, one, there was a problem based on the very assumption that the Ford Foundation had, this notion that, that you can, you can try innovative programs and then evaluate them, and if they work then you can kind of wholesale them around the state to other communities, or around the nation for that matter. And the flaw, there were a couple of flaws there, one is that so much of what makes a person, or a program, successful is the people who are involved in it and the dedication and the skill and so forth that they bring to it. And when you're doing a program experimentally, and it's getting a lot of attention, you tend to draw to it people who are, are well trained and excited about it and so forth. So then it's successful and you say, Ah hah, that program works. And then you, you distribute it to other communities, and it's taken over by bureaucrats who don't have much investment in it, and all of a sudden it's not working any more. So I came to the conclusion eventually that what makes these programs successful or not is people, the people who are running them, and that it's not so much the program idea

as it is the dedication and the resources and the skill, including the political skill, with which, with which these programs are run.⁸⁷

Just after COP had been awarded OEO funds in 1964, the *News & Observer* similarly agreed that local commitment was crucial to the fight against poverty. “No swift improvements in Craven or anywhere else are going to come as a result of federal grants to combat poverty. The federal grants are greatly needed,” the *N&O* acknowledged, but “once in hand they become the least important element in this ambitious program.”⁸⁸

Similar conclusions were found in a 1968 Senate staff report on the War on Poverty nationwide. “Nearly all CAAs doing an effective job,” the report cited, “are located in areas where important groups in the local community are committed to program objectives. In communities where the governing coalition provides CAA leadership, there are very complete poverty programs, with a broad array of services, planning and coordination, and resident participation.” The Senate staff study also encountered “more harmony than disharmony” between CAAs and local communities and found that “most power struggles were resolved through social bargaining and compromise.”⁸⁹

The COP board, of course, was prodded early on by the North Carolina Fund staff and members of the black community to involve more local residents approved by the black and poor populations. But the willingness of the mostly-white COP board to agree to meet the OEO guidelines of “maximum feasible participation” and facilitate greater

⁸⁷ Michael P. Brooks, interview by Rebecca Cereese, transcript in possession of James L. Leloudis.

⁸⁸ “Beginning the Fight,” *News & Observer*, November 27, 1964.

⁸⁹ *Antipoverty Programs under the Economic Opportunity Act* (New York: Tax Foundation, Inc., 1968), 23.

participatory democracy with regard to local antipoverty plans and programs was reflective not just of their need for outside funding but also of their greater commitment, albeit partially out of self-interest, to fairness and justice. As discussed in chapters II and III, whites' experiences during early days of the local civil rights movement provided transformative opportunities for them to negotiate and interact with members of the black community as well as to sympathize with black calls for more equal opportunity. Several whites who would later join the COP board had actually participated in the talks between the white and black communities after civil rights demonstrations. As a result, the prospect of federal money with strings attached (i.e. an increase in minority representation) was not a particularly hard sell as it would have been just twenty years prior.⁹⁰ Whites' willingness to "follow the rules" did not mean that racial prejudices disappeared but it does demonstrate that such prejudices were becoming a less-definitive feature of their lives.

As this dissertation has argued, white obstructionism played a minimal role in the local antipoverty efforts in Craven. Only three North Carolina Fund CAPs had their federal monies temporarily suspended by OEO due to a lack of participation of blacks and/or the poor on their boards or within their programs. COP/CPI, of course, was not

⁹⁰ Speaking of white Southerners in general, "While many southerners remained watchful of the federal government, and resentful of its growing involvement in race relations," historian Bruce J. Schulman argues, "the southern people needed federal dollars, and their leaders went out to acquire them. When the national government eventually demanded that the South dance to the tune federal dollars had called, whether that melody involved labor standards or segregation, a growing constituency within the southern polity agreed." See Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*, 133.

among these.⁹¹ Not only did COP/CPI meet the overwhelming majority of the conditions set by OEO and the North Carolina Fund, no evidence suggests that this cooperation was mere window dressing. Most of the black members of the COP/CPI board from 1964 into the early 1970s were moderate to liberal (at least in comparison to SCLC leader Leon Nixon) and were also financially solvent members of the black community. Also, most, like Combined Civic Organizations of New Bern and Craven County president Robert M. Whitehead, had been deeply involved in the local civil rights movement before joining the board. As a group, they were not “Uncle Toms” who “rubber stamped” all white initiatives, but instead, they regularly maintained their independence by challenging racial inequality when it reared its head and kept white board members accountable when they felt their interests were being overlooked.

The majority of the black COP/CPI board members during the 1960s did, however, understand the importance of working within the formal frameworks of institutionalized politics. In part because of their willingness to negotiate with whites, black influence on the board and within the staff, both poor and non-poor, only grew over time and included the naming of Bishop S. Rivers as the first non-white chairman of COP/CPI in August 1967. By 1971, the number of black staff supervisors within

⁹¹ Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 140, 176; Hazirjian, “Negotiating Poverty,” 513. Incidentally, all three North Carolina Fund CAPs whose funding was stopped by OEO were located in Eastern North Carolina. But as Sargent Shriver wrote to officials of CADA, one of the three, “only a very small minority of the 2,300 [nationwide Head Start] programs proved disappointing in [complying with the requirement that there be no racial discrimination]. Regrettably, your agency’s program was among the small minority.” See Sargent Shriver to Fred Cooper, December 5, 1965, folder 4902, NCFR.

COP/CPI had increased to ten (of fourteen).⁹² Moreover, in contrast to sociologist Jill Quadagno's argument that black antipoverty leaders were frequently "unable to capitalize on their newly won power," several former black COP/CPI board members and staff won local political office between 1971 and 1989. The most well-known of these, Lee Morgan, used his power as an aldermen and later as New Bern mayor to improve street maintenance, garbage collection, drainage, and recreation in black communities and to bring in industries that offered better wages and jobs to black people.⁹³

Too much had changed, both locally and nationally, by early 1965 for white obstructionism to be fully successful. In an annual report issued by the liberal Southern Regional Council, executive director Leslie W. Dunbar confidently asserted that there was fundamentally one South, which was then "seeking escape from its common history of racism, poverty, and political absurdity."⁹⁴ Indeed, growing numbers of whites recognized that their own advancement was tied to the advancement of blacks. No longer was there a question of whether whites should compromise with black demands. In Craven County, in particular, achievements early in the civil rights era that had stamped out segregation and led to a larger, more influential black electorate not only helped to better inform whites of black interests but also compelled growing numbers of white

⁹² Source: Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

⁹³ Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, 52.

⁹⁴ Annual Report of the Executive Director of the Southern Regional Council: A Review of Program Activities During 1964, p. 23-24, folder, 290, North Carolina Council on Human Relations.

leaders, including most of the ones who served on the COP board, to try to accommodate these interests out of both basic humanity and self-interest. In line with historian Michael R. Deaderick's conclusion from his study of moderate whites' handling of racial tension in 1960s Forrest City, Arkansas, while white moderates in Craven felt pressure from the federal government to appease black grievances, the pressure applied to them by local black leaders played one of the most important roles in determining the successful outcome of greater black influence.⁹⁵ The same became true specifically with regard to the black poor as well, who grew more vocal between 1966 and 1968.

Three particularly illustrative examples of these changes between 1967 and 1968 were New Bern officials' approval of the city's low-income housing corporation, their agreement to renew its NYC contract, and their encouragement of businessmen to hire more black youth. The ways that influential whites thought about poverty were clearly expanding; black disadvantage was no longer being ignored but instead was becoming more central to local efforts to improve the entire area's economic health. As a *Washington Post* editorial broadly observed about the War on Poverty in late 1966, "Strong new lines of communication are now open between the slums and the men who, from another world, govern them."⁹⁶

Of course, agreeing to demands made by the black community and/or the black poor also went a long way toward enhancing whites' political initiatives and interests,

⁹⁵ Michael Deaderick, "Racial Conflict in Forrest City: The Trial and Triumph of Moderation in an Arkansas Delta Town," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* LXIX (Spring 2010): 27.

⁹⁶ "OEO in Decline," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1966.

specifically industrial development. Indeed, because so many leading whites in Craven were behind economic development and attracting industry to the area (a desire that only seemed to grow from year to year beginning in 1963) and understood that improved training and education was important if this desire was to be fulfilled, only a minority between 1964 and 1968 expressed interest in the CAA's termination.⁹⁷ In other words, white middle-class support for industrial development did not threaten to curb the strength of the antipoverty programs between 1964 and 1968 but just the opposite: it strengthened them.

The fact that most of the whites who served on the COP/CPI board or supported its programs were not liberal but were moderate to conservative challenges established scholarly conclusions that those of "the middle"—who were most interested in gradual change, avoiding conflict, and maintaining social harmony—were merely supporters of the status quo and, thus, stumbling blocks to needed changes.⁹⁸ Perhaps most importantly, this fact challenges the notion that consensus was antithetical to progress and particularly to progress related to racial equality and economic advancements within the black

⁹⁷ Within this minority were conservatives within the local John Birch Society and local Republican candidates that ran against Craven County Commissioner D. L. Stallings and other COP supporters during the 1966 local election.

⁹⁸ Based on their study of the War on Poverty in St. Louis, Robert Kerstein and Robert R. Judd made the case that local CAAs failed to "stimulate a redistribution of influence in the city," and only "served established interests by providing a 'buffering' mechanism that allowed the existing structure of authority in the city to function generally uncontested" by its poverty-stricken residents. See Robert Kerstein and Dennis R. Judd, "Achieving Less Influence with More Democracy: The Permanent Legacy of the War on Poverty," *Social Science Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Sept. 1980): 209.

community.⁹⁹ The war on poverty in Eastern North Carolina led to improvements for many black citizens due to a combination of factors including demonstrations (or the threat of demonstrations) such as boycotts and picketing. But while Martin Luther King, Jr. was right to argue that direct-action could “open the door to negotiation,” the record of SCLC leader Leon C. Nixon clearly demonstrates the limits of what such tactics could accomplish.¹⁰⁰ Confrontation, whether initiated by the poor, black civil rights groups, VISTAs, or Fund staff, could and did alienate moderates whose numbers were large and whose good will and support were crucial to the continuation of the antipoverty programs. White moderates’ willingness to sympathize with the programs’ goals did not translate into full approval of any and all means of expanding them.

As in dozens of other Southern communities during the 1960s and beyond, positive racial change in Eastern North Carolina occurred at least as much, if not more so, because of biracial negotiations and the art of appealing to the moral consciences and economic self-interests of all residents as attempts at coercion and threats of force. As this study has sought to demonstrate, the story of interracial cooperation, which is also the story of white accommodation to national civil rights laws and local black demands, was as much a part of the truth and reality of the modern South as the rise of Alabama Governor George Wallace and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan. Moderate white leaders in Craven would not stop wanting to maintain racial harmony and avoid conflict,

⁹⁹ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3-10, 42-70.

¹⁰⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), 90.

however, these desires did not weaken black influence either inside or outside COP/CPI. By the 1960s, the search for consensus was enough of an incentive for white moderates to include black leaders and citizens in community affairs to a greater extent than ever before and also to seek more of their cooperation than had ever been thought necessary (for example New Bern's urban renewal plans in 1967). Moreover, the presence and influence of white moderates in Craven prevented the forces of extremist whites from defeating such progress.

These efforts to include more local black voices and to heed more of their input was based on a recognition, especially among New Bern aldermen, county commissioners, the Craven County Good Neighbor Council, and COP/CPI executive directors Robert Monte and James Godwin, that the entire community would move forward together or not at all. And because most blacks' believed it helped deliver meaningful and lasting results, biracial negotiation and cooperation continued to be a standard feature in Craven County well into the 1970s. To borrow another quote from Michael Brooks of the North Carolina Fund: during the 1960s, "Some people were beginning to argue that only through conflict can you achieve social change, that people are not gonna change until they're in situations of conflict...I think probably one of the errors we were making at that time by the way was to think in terms of cooperation and consensus building, or conflict, that it had to be one or the other. And I think what we have learned over time," Brooks recalled, "is that both are needed."¹⁰¹ The social change that "situations of conflict" brought to the South has already been very well documented

¹⁰¹ Michael Brooks, interview by Rebecca Cereese, transcript in possession of James L. LeLoudis.

but negotiation fueled by mutual interest between the races is a primary source of social change that has markedly been underappreciated by historians.

To say that there was a historic amount of interracial cooperation in Craven County is not to argue that there were never disagreements or tension between blacks and whites. Neither does it mean that the achievement of black citizens' goals was always dependent on local white favor. But although blacks and whites did not always agree on all aspects of how the Craven antipoverty programs should be administered (for example, whether Jim Hearn should be removed as executive director, whether Legal Services should be run by the county bar, or whether Colonel W.F. Evans should remain as NYC director), they did agree about the most crucial thrusts of the local war on poverty: increased job training, education, and economic development for greater job opportunities. A poll conducted by Oliver Quayle for the North Carolina Fund in 1968 showed that blacks and whites shared common ground on these issues throughout the state. While only about 10 percent of blacks (compared to 64 percent of whites) agreed that "whites and Negroes have equal opportunities in this state," when asked "Why do you think poor people in N.C. are poor?" both the majority of black and white respondents agreed that "lack of education," "job training," or "no jobs available" were the three largest reasons. Also, 86 percent of blacks, compared to 56 percent of whites, answered that job training was "very important." Interestingly, both a small minority of blacks and whites believed that poverty was rooted in "no say in public affairs." Within the same poll, the vast majority of both races answered that "new industry" and "schools

and education” were “the public necessities [they] would most like to see tax dollars spent on.”¹⁰²

The disagreements that blacks and whites had in Craven did not appear to have significantly limited black influence or delayed improvements to the earning capacities of the poor. Instead of proving to be a region of the country too racially backwards to receive federal funding, as was once thought by many including North Carolina Fund executive director George Esser, Craven County in fact serves as a model of how a mutual interest in reducing local poverty provided historic opportunities for blacks and whites in a southern community to overcome their Jim Crow past.

Largely because of the use of underutilized primary sources—1960s- and 1970s-era oral interviews of antipoverty workers and local citizens (including middle-class whites), records from the U.S. Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, and written communications between COP and the North Carolina Fund as well as the Office of Economic Opportunity—new questions have been asked, new conclusions have been drawn, and a fuller history of community action and antipoverty efforts at the local level has been unearthed. The North Carolina Fund Records, which are housed at the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill, have been especially indispensable in providing the intricate details that are necessary to tell the broader story included in this dissertation. The North Carolina Fund staff kept diligent records comprising 143 folders that contain internal memos, correspondence, transcripts of interviews, and financial records with regard to COP alone; still more folders are dedicated to the Fund

¹⁰² Oliver Quayle, North Carolina Fund Poll, Part III, Part IV, 1968, North Carolina Collection.

administration and the other ten North Carolina Fund sites. Because few other CAAs had their records kept in such a meticulous manner, it is unlikely then that historians will be able to evaluate other CAAs in comparable detail as those supported by the North Carolina Fund. Nonetheless, this dissertation may inspire other efforts to reappraise the War on Poverty through the rigorous search of previously unexamined sources.

Arguably, the ability to draw fully applicable lessons from War on Poverty scholarship is limited by disproportionate reliance on contemporary individual testimonies of poor people with whom historians have understandably tended to sympathize with most. As a result, historians, and especially those who study the South, have tended to associate the failures of the War on Poverty with the shortcomings of white and black middle-class leaders while they have granted most of the credit for its success to the poor as well as funding support from Washington. As this dissertation has sought to demonstrate, such narratives are incomplete. At least within Craven County, reality was that the poor as well as the middle class whites and blacks alike all stood to profit from the improved economic health of the area. Moreover, all contributed, in varying degrees, depending on the situation and context, to the successes of the local war on poverty in terms of both antipoverty programs and economic development. Determining where and why efforts to curb poverty worked is just as crucial, if not more so, than studying the places where and reasons that such efforts were less successful.

Because this dissertation focuses on the first four years of COP/CPI, it is not intended to address how CAAs were administered after Richard Nixon won the presidency in 1968 and carried through his campaign promise to dismantle OEO. (In spite

of Nixon's efforts, Coastal Progress would last until 1979; its vast change in direction during the 1970s would make an interesting subject of future scholarship.) Moreover, because it traces the administration, accomplishments, and fortunes of one CAA among approximately a half-dozen in Eastern North Carolina alone, this dissertation does not seek to represent the variety of experiences throughout the rural South during the Great Society years. By the same token, however, the mere fact that an entity such as COP/CPI existed at all in a region that at one time housed one of the largest slave populations in the nation during the nineteenth century raises the question of whether similar successes in biracial cooperation and similar returns on greater investments in education, job training, and economic development can be found in other parts of the South—a region that historians have broadly painted as uninterested in finding ways to reduce poverty for all of its citizens primarily because wide federal wealth redistribution or a guaranteed income was not championed.¹⁰³

This dissertation has focused most intently on the roles of local people; however, both the North Carolina Fund and OEO—notwithstanding instances in which both organizations actually intentionally and unintentionally complicated local efforts in battling poverty—were inarguably important partners in Craven County's fight to reduce local and area poverty. Not only did the North Carolina Fund inspire the launching of numerous community action initiatives in 1963, its expertise, technical assistance, and private funding meant that the Craven area could enjoy a notable amount of freedom and

¹⁰³ John H. Strange, "Community Action in North Carolina: Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding? Mistake? Or Magic Formula?" *Publius* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1972): 64.

practice in the ways it utilized new techniques to fight poverty. At least in its first few months of operation, the Fund's private nature surely helped to persuade conservatives to accept the notion of community action amid a period of racial and social change.¹⁰⁴ Also, due to the Fund's close proximity and degree of knowledge of the area, its representatives and staff visited Coastal Progress much more frequently than OEO officials were able to do; these visits were often paramount in helping to ease and moderate community issues. OEO's most crucial contribution was the millions of funding dollars supplied for COP/CPI's antipoverty programs; however, in combination with the North Carolina Fund, OEO also helped local people stay accountable to standards concerning the fair and equitable inclusion of the poor and minorities. Nonetheless, although COP/CPI relied on outside funding, technical assistance, and guidance, the various kinds of outside help it received were not the defining features of successful poverty reduction in the Craven area: local commitment, cooperation, and the knowledge and experience gained from experimental antipoverty programs that the lives of a substantial number of the poor could be improved through self-help were instead the most important features.

In February 1965, Craven Community Action Technician David Entin, who helped COP executive director Jim Hearn compose applications for OEO funding, touted

¹⁰⁴ David N. Henderson to Mr. W.M. Barbee, September 13, 1967, box 149, folder 5, Henderson Papers. In September 1967, Rep. Henderson, whose district then no longer included Craven, Jones, or Pamlico counties, wrote the NC State AFL-CIO President that "As you may know, I am one of the few southern Congressmen who initially supported the Economic Opportunity Act. I did so because I recognized the great need of the poor people in North Carolina and in my district for meaningful assistance as contrasted with demoralizing handouts," adding that "I was impressed with the announced objective of both the North Carolina Fund which was the forerunner of the national poverty program, and the poverty program 'to help the poor to help themselves.'"

the early promise of Craven Operation Progress in an article for *The County Officer*. Entin closed the piece by prescribing that achievement of the goals of the War on Poverty would be dependent upon three things: “the response of the disadvantaged people to the new opportunities and challenges presented to them, the continued support and interest of all Craven’s citizens, and the effective and judicious operation of the various programs. On the success of these tasks history will judge Craven County.”¹⁰⁵ This dissertation provides ample evidence that Craven County, though far from totally victorious in the war, ultimately deserves to be judged generously among the nation’s most successful antipoverty efforts both during and after the Great Society. Yet, for the purposes of this dissertation, judging the degree of success of a program or community based on its reduction of poverty is arguably less important than the exploration into the full range of individuals, motivations, methods, and influences that made that success possible.

¹⁰⁵ David Entin, “North Carolina County Paces Nation in Community Action Against Poverty,” *The County Officer*, February 1965, p. 34.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 7. Black employment (male and female) at Craven County Hospital, New Bern, NC, 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. *When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicals	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1966	307	3	14	63	4	1	17	0	102 [39%]	73 (0)
1968	303	3	19	75	3	1	6	136	107 [35%]	81 (102)
1970	339	4	26	71	4	0	8	0	113 [33%]	85 (0)
1972	436	4	25	86	5	0	19	106	139 [32%]	95 (86)
1974	480	2	20	103	6	0	3	119	134 [28%]	109 (86)
1975	579	0	15	70	8	0	84	135	184 [32%]	147 (109)
1980	922	11	56	155	31	0	0	221	253 [27%]	216 (176)

Table 8. Black employment (male and female) at Montgomery Ward Company, New Bern, NC, 1968-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1968-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. * When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicals	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1968	88	0	n/a	1	0	0	4	0	5 [6%]	0 (0)
1970	103	1	n/a	3	0	0	1	9	7 [7%]	0 (2)
1971	103	1	n/a	3	0	0	1	7	7 [7%]	0 (0)
1972	123	2	n/a	5	0	0	0	7	8 [7%]	2 (0)
1974	148	2	n/a	5	0	1	3	13	13 [9%]	3 (5)
1980	117	6	n/a	12	0	0	2	19	14 [12%]	10 (9)

Table 9. Black employment (male and female) at Coastal Progress, New Bern, NC, 1970-1973. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1970-1973, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. * When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicians	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	No. and % Black Employees	No. of Black Female Employees
1970	114	6	6	70	9	n/a	n/a	91 [80%]	71
1971	113	10	6	72	9	n/a	n/a	97 [86%]	79
1972	102	8	6	48	5	n/a	n/a	67 [66%]	50
1973	104	9	6	48	6	n/a	n/a	69 [66%]	51

Table 10. Black employment (male and female) at Texifi Industries, Inc., New Bern, NC, 1972-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1972-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. * When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicians	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees*	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1972	488	0	1	10	3	7	76	10	97 [20%]	31 (6)
1973	587	2	0	11	2	5	62	66	82 [14%]	88 (39)
1975	790	4	5	15	3	13	241	315	281 [35%]	135 (159)
1980	484	2	0	7	4	0	107	188	194 [40%]	98 (85)

Table 11. Black employment (male and female) at Maysville Garment, Inc., Maysville, NC (Jones County), 1968-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1968-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. * When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicians	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1968	133	0	0	0	0	22	n/a	0	22 [17%]	22 (0)
1970	181	0	0	0	0	41	n/a	0	41 [23%]	41 (0)
1972	158	0	0	0	0	38	n/a	34	38 [24%]	38 (34)
1974	166	0	0	0	0	54	n/a	38	54 [33%]	54 (38)
1975	169	0	0	0	0	54	n/a	0	54 [32%]	54 (0)
1978	167	0	0	0	0	39	n/a	40	39 [23%]	39 (40)
1980	164	0	0	0	0	42	n/a	57	42 [26%]	42 (57)

Table 12. Black employment (male and female) at Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Co., New Bern, NC, 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. * When applicable, total includes laborers (unskilled) but does not include on-the-job (OTJ) trainees/apprentices.

Year	Total No. of Employees (white and black)	Officials/Managers	Professionals/Technicals	Sales/Service Workers	Office/Clerical	Craftsmen (skilled)	Operatives (semi-skilled)	OTJ Trainees	No. and % Black Employees	No. of Black Female Employees/ (OTJ trainees)
1966	212	0	0	4	0	1	2	0	9 [4%]	1 (0)
1968	250	0	0	0	0	0	2	15	16 [6%]	2 (1)
1970	359	0	0	6	21	3	0	12	33 [9%]	21 (3)
1972	308	0	0	8	17	3	3	27	31 [10%]	18 (17)
1974	311	0	0	7	28	3	3	36	41 [13%]	29 (24)
1975	318	1	0	7	36	2	3	36	49 [15%]	36 (24)
1980	406	3	0	6	60	5	3	72	77 [19%]	62 (58)

Table 13. Number of male and female black office/clerical workers employed in Craven County (based on businesses who reported to EEO office), 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Year	Total Number	No. of Black Females
1966	7	6
1970	45	43
1974	57	57
1980	144	126

Table 14. Number of male and female black sales workers employed in Craven County (based on businesses who reported to EEO office), 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Year	Total Number	No. of Black Females
1966	12	2
1970	22	15
1974	66	28
1980	67	43

Table 15. Number of male and female black officials/managers employed in Craven County (based on businesses who reported to EEO office), 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Year	Total Number	No. of Black Females
1966	4	0
1970	14	0
1974	15	5
1980	40	18

Table 16. Number of male and female black skilled workers employed in Craven County (based on businesses who reported to EEO office), 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Year	Total Number	No. of Black Females
1966	19	0
1970	72	42
1974	165	60
1980	220	68

Table 17. Number of skilled worker positions available in Craven and Jones County (based on businesses who reported to EEO office), 1966-1980. Employer Information Report Files (EEO-1), 1966-1980, Craven County, Records of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Year	Total Number	No. of Positions Filled by Women
1966	294	6
1970	590	173
1974	765	169
1980	1030	237

Table 18. Median black income as a percentage of median income among families in Craven County, 1969-1999. U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000.

Year	Craven County Median Family Income	Median Black Family Income	Median Black Family Income as a Percentage of Median Family Income in Craven
1969	\$7,046	\$3,314	47%
1979	\$13,060	\$8,051	61%
1989	\$29,109	\$19,816	68%
1999	\$42,574	\$27,362	64%

Table 19. Percentage of Poverty and Black Poverty among families in Craven County, 1969-1999. U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000.

Year	Percentage of Craven Families with Income Less than Poverty Level	Percentage of Black Craven Families with Income Less than Poverty Level
1969	18.7%	41.2%
1979	15.5%	34%
1989	10.5%	26.7%
1999	9.9%	23%