

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508

Telephone: 296-2980

FOR RELEASE: AMs
MONDAY, MARCH 4, 1968

LEGAL SERVICES SHOULD BE MAIN VEHICLE FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES OF POOR; ADVISORY GROUP SAYS

An advisory group of 24 directors of OEO-funded Legal Services Programs (LSP) across the country has recommended that the President establish as a national policy that LSP projects are "a primary organ" for aiding poor people to express and obtain redress of their grievances.

The committee also recommended that Legal Services projects be involved in all national and local planning aimed at avoiding civil disturbances or at minimizing the scope and duration of such disturbances if they occur.

The Project Advisory Group of the Legal Services Program also recommended the establishment of a national task force composed of Legal Services lawyers who have had experience in the slum communities during civil disorders to consult with elected officials, law enforcement officials, members of the judiciary, LSP directors and bar associations in urban communities on ways to prevent disturbances and to minimize their effects if they occur.

The new advisory group drafted the recommendations as a result of its discussions March 1 about what Legal Services projects could do to prevent or to calm civil disorders. The group met with officials of the OEO Legal Services Program. (A copy of the recommendations is attached.)

The subcommittee that drafted the recommendations was chaired by Oliver Lofton, director of the Newark Legal Services Project, and included directors of LSPs in Detroit, Cleveland, Miami, Los Angeles and Dallas.

The relevance of the work of Legal Services Programs in the prevention and the calming of civil disorders is discussed on Page 1022, Chapter 10, of the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.

Some 250 local Legal Services projects in 48 states, and in 45 of the 50 largest cities, provide counsel and representation in civil matters to poor clients and to groups of poor people seeking to obtain their rights and redress of their grievances. Legal Services Projects played an important role in preventing and calming disorders last summer.

6. Insuring Basic Rights - That as a part of any program for insuring the maintenance of basic legal rights in the event that a civil disturbance does occur, Legal Services Programs should, with other members of the local community, take the initiative for developing plans for:

- (a) the maximum use of the release on recognizance procedure rather than the posting of money bail and particularly in the case of curfew violations;
- (b) assuring that arrested persons are promptly admitted to reasonable bail;
- (c) assuring that arrested persons have legal counsel at the earliest possible moment;
- (d) assuring that bail will not be used for purposes of containment, but solely to insure that an arrestee will appear at the time of trial.