

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

PUBLIC AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508
Telephone: 296-2980

FOR RELEASE: AMs
MONDAY, MARCH 4, 1968

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP OF LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM
Recommendations on
Legal Services and the "Long Hot Summer"

The Advisory Group, having the benefit of the advice of Legal Services Projects that played a positive role in cities that experienced civil disturbances in the summers of 1966 and 1967, and believing that most civil disorders in recent years have arisen in communities where serious legitimate grievances of alienated people have not been met; believing further that massive disorder has often resulted in such communities from seemingly minor incidents because responsible public officials failed quickly to redress the grievance complained of, and being deeply concerned because our system of laws has largely failed to correct the just grievances of those who experience poverty and discrimination, makes the following recommendations:

1. National Policy Statement - the Advisory Group strongly urges that the President of the United States, the Attorney General of the United States, and the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity issue a national policy statement that federally funded OEO Legal Services projects are a primary organ for assisting indigent people to express their grievances and to obtain redress through existing legitimate avenues; and seek to create new ways of protecting their rights and effectively redressing their wrongs.

Legal Services projects should be involved in all national and local planning procedures concerned with the avoidance of civil disturbances and with minimizing the scope and duration of such disturbances should they occur. This policy statement should be sent to the Governors of the respective states, the mayors of the cities, local police officials, appropriate members of the Judiciary, and all others concerned with this problem.

(More)

2. National Task Force - The Legal Services Program of the OEO should promptly establish a National Task Force composed of Legal Service attorneys who have had experience in the indigent community during the course of civil disturbance, to consult, across the country, with Legal Services project directors in urban communities and with elected officials, law enforcement administrators, members of the judiciary, and leaders of local bar associations concerning the most effective ways to prevent civil disturbances and to minimize the effects should civil disturbances occur.
3. Legal Services Staff - In order for a Legal Services Program to effectively articulate the grievances of the indigent population it must have on its staff at least one person who has the respect and confidence of people representing the most disadvantaged areas of the community. The OEO should make maximum effort to assure that at least one such person can be employed as a part of every urban Legal Services Program.
4. Responsible Staff Member - That Legal Services project directors should promptly designate one member of their staff to be responsible for developing plans and implementing a program for the prevention of civil disturbance and further to insure the maintenance of basic legal rights in the event that civil disturbances should occur.
5. Preventing Civil Disturbances - That as a part of any program for preventing civil disturbances, Legal Services projects should:
 - (a) vigorously articulate the grievances of the members of the community and seek redress through existing legitimate channels; and seek to create new ways of protecting the rights and effectively redressing their wrongs;
 - (b) endeavor to make law enforcement officials aware of the kinds of police conduct which can provoke the indigents out of which civil disturbances can arise;
 - (c) establish channels of communication with law enforcement and other public officials and develop methods through which grievances arising out of provocative incidents can be resolved.