Government Halts Funds

OEO Says Acadiana Neuf Needs to Be Re-Organized

Board of Directors Fails to Meet Criteria

LAFAYETTE, La. (AP)—The federal government has halted funds for a six-parish war on poverty amidst charges of infighting and intimidation.

The Office of Economic Opportunity said a pioneer in Louisiana anti-poverty projects, Acadiana Neuf, Inc., would have to be reorganized. A member of the board of directors of Acadiana Neuf has called for police protection at future meetings of the board.

In a letter controversy that came to light Tuesday, all funds of poverty projects in the six parishes centered on Lafayette were held in abeyance.

Projects involved are Lafayette, St. Landry, Acadia, St. Martin, Iberia and Vermilion.

Letter from Herbert L. Tyson, district supervisor of Arkansas and Louisiana for the regional Office of Economic Opportunity in Austin, Tex., to Acadiana Neuf president James R. Oliver, Tyson wrote: "We have reached the inescapable conclusion that if Acadiana Neuf is to continue as a representative agency for OEO the board must be re-organized to make it more responsive to the needs of the poor.

Tyson said that policies of OEO require that a community action agency board represent all elements of the community. He said an assessment of the current composition of the board of directors of Acadiana Neuf indicates that it does not meet those criteria.

The current board is composed of 14 representatives of public agencies and 14 representatives of the poor. Twelve of the representatives of the poor are members of minority groups, and Tyson said "very few, if any, of these representatives can be classified in the poverty category.

"In addition to the above, it has been obvious over a period of several months of operation that interests of the board of directors have become factionalized and as a result, issues affecting the welfare of the poor are determined on the basis of factional interests rather than on the axioms of the interest of the people the agency was set up to serve," Tyson wrote.

"Consequently, it will be necessary to reorganize the board, but the new board should review the situation, and assure itself that the future staff will be committed to carrying out the ends of the program without the participation of the old chairman.

"Pending the adoption and implementation of these changes, all releasing of Acadiana Neuf projects will be held in abeyance."

Tyson added that if a delay is experienced, it will become necessary for OEO to finance existing programs through single-purpose agencies.

In a related action, Dennis David, Iberia Police Jury member of the board, called on the president of Acadiana Neuf in Lafayette to provide protection at future meetings.

The Daily Advertiser obtained copies of letters from David to Dr. James R. Oliver, president, at which David charged that "a near riot situation" took place at a special meeting of the board Aug. 31. He clotted that board members were barricaded and front doors blocked.

The Iberia jury leveled its allegations against a group from St. Landry Parish and claimed that the action caused the meeting to be prolonged without anything being accomplished.

Copies of David's letter were sent to Sargent Shriver, OEO director; the regional and state anti-poverty offices; and to area congressmen.