OEO Tells Acadiana Neuf To Reorganize, Stops Funds

By BOB ANGERS, JR.
Federal authorities have stepped into the controversy in the War On Poverty in Southwest Louisiana and directed reorganization of the Board of Acadiana Neuf.

All refunding of poverty projects in the six parishes centered on Lafayette will be held in abeyance pending adopting and implementing the thorough investigation into the operation of Acadiana Neuf, Inc., reviewing its board structure and the past performance of the Board of Directors.

We have come to the inescapable conclusion that if Acadiana Neuf is to continue as a representative agency for the Office of Economic Opportunity in the War On Poverty the Board must be reorganized in such a manner as to make it more responsive to the needs of the poor.

"Be Representative
"The policies of the Office of Economic Opportunity require that a Community Action Agency be broadly representative of all the elements of a community, including but not limited to representatives of all the public agencies, the minority groups, the poor and other interested citizens.

An assessment of the current composition of the Board of Directors of Acadiana Neuf indicates that it does not meet these criteria.

The current Board is composed of fourteen representatives of public agencies and thirteen representatives of the poor. Twelve of the representatives of the poor are members of the minority groups. Very few if any of these representatives could be classified in the poverty category.

Factionalized
"In addition to the above, it has become obvious over a period of several months of operation that interests on 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 interest rather than on the basis of the interest of the people whom this agency was set up to serve.

This factional infighting has affected the Board, but the new Board should, within a reasonable time after its installation, review its current staff personnel in terms of their qualifications, past performance and commitment and assure itself by means available to it, that its future staff will be both capable and committed to carry out the ends of the program.

Regret Action
"We regret that it has become necessary to recommend such drastic action, but we are sure that it is the only course which we can take to ensure that the battle against poverty is vigorously prosecuted.

Attached are our recommended changes in the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws which when put into effect will bring about the desired reorganization of the Board of Directors in such a manner as to equally distribute representation over the broad categories required by OEO.

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

In the event that inadequate delay is experienced, it will become necessary for us to reconsider projects through single purpose agencies when the past operation of these programs justify refunding."

Sincerely,
HERBERT L. TYSON
District Supervisor
Arkansas - Louisiana