The Poor Versus the Powerful:
A Shared Concern Among Rural and Urban Communities

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In 1963, amidst civil rights demonstrations, economic turbulence, and industrial revolutions, Terry Sanford joined forces with the Ford Foundation's financial support to start the North Carolina Fund (NCF), a program that sought to end the vicious cycle of poverty which handicapped the South politically, socially, and economically. The North Carolina Fund focused on urban as well as rural areas with a statewide effort to eradicate poverty in all communities. Beginning as an education program, with a life expectancy of five years, it evolved into a community action based program. Community action programs (CAPs) were a means for incorporating the poor in development and implementation, eventually known as "maximum feasible participation" according to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).[1]

The eleven communities that were supported by the Fund included some of the most urban cities, such as Charlotte, as well as rural areas, such as the northeastern Choanoke region. The contrasts between rural and urban communities were endless. Local politics, economics, public services, natural resources, and the social climate varied greatly between these two communities. However, both types of communities were perceived by the Fund as worthy candidates for financial aid and for implementation of CAPs. Despite urban and rural differences, which would presumably set apart their means to achieving success, a significant factor in the failure of both types of programs was a similarity in the people who controlled them. Rural and urban leaders shared an interest in preserving the white power structure, so intrinsic to the social, economic, and political development of the South. It was not the policies that caused some programs to fail in these regions, but the people who shaped and controlled these policies to benefit the few, meanwhile sacrificing the welfare of the many who continued to live in poverty.

Local agencies resisted change to the status quo therefore progressive policies were difficult to implement.[2] The "real culprit" was local agencies who did not work in unison with one another or the Fund's ideals and were constrained by bureaucratic "red tape."[3] Thus it was not the programs themselves that were failures, but those who were expected to run the programs.

Two conditions in North Carolina at that time were important in understanding poverty. The first was that all issues were emotionally charged by racial discrimination; the second was that there was a significantly lower supply of resources with which to combat poverty[4]. Industrial growth was the inevitable means of North Carolina and the rest of the South, if they wanted to compete with the rest of the nation. To varying degrees, local governments accepted the transition from an Old conservative South to a new progressive South. For urban areas, like Charlotte, a basic set of resources was already in place. Charlotte was considered a progressive city, relative to the rest of the state, which provided a more stabilized infrastructure. Rural areas, like Choanoke, needed a more established infrastructure before programs could be successfully implemented. Rural farmlands lacked a diversity of economic resources because farms were small single crop plants worked by a labor force with minimal skills and education.[5] Rural areas were at a significant disadvantage compared to urban areas in terms of their ability to adapt and implement a progressive poverty policy that would change their traditional social, political, and economic infrastructure. However in rural areas, weaker infrastructures enabled grassroots organizations, which supported such progressive policies, to gain influence and challenge current powers faster and more effectively than urban areas.

While it would not be fair to say that the Fund failed for only these reasons, it is important to emphasize the fact that it was not a difference in resources alone that explained the success and failure of the CAP programs in these two types of communities. The Fund failed to properly research the subtle nuances of each community which required individual tailoring to local needs rather than one master CAP program. A deeper level of analysis, which reviews the political and financial powers within each of the regions, reveals a subtler explanation as to why these CAP programs were not properly implemented. Attitudes of the New South compared to conservative attitudes of the Old South were equally as hard to eliminate as tangible signs of poverty.

The Fund was a state program, which could not address the individual needs of every community under its umbrella. Grants were allocated with the assumption that when communities were selected, local political powers would work with other local agencies and citizens, to research, understand, and develop a program that would be appropriately structured according to the communities' unique needs. Success at a local level was determined by how this statewide concern for eradicating poverty filtered down. Therefore, in theory, how urban and rural poverty were attacked would vary greatly because of local differences. Despite this theory, practice demonstrated otherwise; while both types of programs made moderate efforts to implement feasible anti-poverty programs that involved direct participation of the poor, neither types of program adequately carried out these ideals in the fashion the North Carolina Fund had intended.

In late January, 1964, the Choanoke Area Development Association (CADA) and Charlotte Area Fund (CAF) submitted proposals to the North Carolina Fund. CADA's primary goal was to further industrial growth through increased job opportunities while

the CAF's primary goal was to improve the education system. Both programs were approved, granted their initial funding, and were ready for implementation. But what exactly would implementation in these two regions entail? Understanding how these two areas required different planning and execution efforts begins with an understanding of urban and rural poverty in order to identify the major similarities and differences between the two landscapes. Once they gained a fundamental understanding for what defined urban versus rural poverty, policy makers, at a local and state wide level, should have recognized the fact that the two areas were at different starting points. Therefore when establishing effective poverty policies the two communities could not necessarily follow the same direction. More important than their differences in resources or human manpower were the attitudes and power dynamics that controlled these regions.

The struggle against poverty in the 1960s was closely aligned with the struggle for civil rights. Urban poverty was seen as a "colored problem" that had an impact solely on African Americans, particularly in terms of housing and education. While this was not true, the urban poor were disproportionately African Americans. Urban cities had opportunities, but qualification and access were the primary barriers to jobs and better housing for the urban poor. This issue was compounded by the fact that they lacked political power and were at the bottom of the economic, social, and political hierarchy. Despite the overwhelming belief in the white community that poverty was a result of not working hard enough, most blacks in Charlotte felt that poverty was a result of limited opportunity.[6]

Unlike many areas that experienced a loss in population due to migration, Charlotte experienced a population growth. Many of the poor were migrants from the

cotton fields in North and South Carolina or the hills of Appalachia. These migrants lacked the skills and education to qualify for urban industrial jobs and were employed in jobs that were not desired by the rest of society. Leaving the farming and mining industries in order to find work in the cities was a disappointment. Rather than finding new opportunities, they dealt with urban concerns that included a lack of housing, limited education, high unemployment, unskilled labor, and poor public health.[7]

Charlotte considered itself to be the "Queen of the Carolinas, Spearhead of the New South and the competition for Atlanta." [8] Seventy-two percent of the population was white and seventy-eight percent was classified as urban.[9] In 1966, Charlotte's median income was $5,632, ranking highest in North Carolina; meanwhile, over twenty percent of the families had incomes under $3,000, representing the poor population in this city of prosperity. [10] The high costs of urban living only escalated the scale of poverty compared to what one felt when living below the poverty line in rural areas. More important was the disparity between black and white median incomes. The median income for white families was $6,440, and for black families was $2,904. This $3,536 difference is evidence of the fact that black families were much more likely to become victims of urban poverty than white families.[11] This increased likelihood is explained by the close correlation between racial discrimination and poverty, particularly in urban areas.

Furthermore, the correlation between low income, lack of education, and blighted housing was striking. In 1960 nationwide, six out of ten low-income families and seven out of ten non-white low-income families were headed by persons with no education past grammar school.[12] Like poverty itself, education had a cyclical effect. The children of

uneducated parents were often raised in a world of ignorance, which handicapped their future opportunities and chances for success, and increased the likelihood that they too would grow up uneducated and unskilled. While families in the city tended to be smaller than those in rural areas, only residents with higher levels of education were more aware of birth control methods and family planning, causing families to still be quite large among certain segments of the population in the cities.[13]

Among the urban poor, a majority of families were single parents; most often they were mothers who had been abandoned or were widows. In the transition, the patriarchal rural family style was destroyed as families moved to the slums of the city, and many men left their wives in search of employment.[14] In 1965 one in ten United States families was headed by a woman, and they accounted for one-third of the nation's poor.[15] The burdens of a single parent, which included raising children alone, finding affordable child care, and generating an income that could support the family, were not made lighter by the fact that single parents often had the lowest paying jobs, because they were uneducated, unskilled women.

Low income was compounded by the high costs of urban living. Most residents sought housing located in central areas in close proximity to the central business district. However, these neighborhoods were more expensive, more crowded, and more rundown than more distant areas. Consequently, the central city's physical appearance was a primary sign of urban poverty. Central neighborhoods in Charlotte, such as Brooklyn, were filled with dilapidated houses, which lacked adequate plumbing and heat and were very noisy. Privacy was rare, and most dwellings were overcrowded and under

equipped.[16] As migration continued to raise the population and housing became scarcer, these conditions only worsened.

By 1963 insufficient housing, education, and income could no longer be ignored. A group of businessmen and community leaders interested in solving these problems in order to boost economic development, started to discuss ideas for an anti-poverty program. Those who took the initial lead in establishing an anti-poverty policy noted that the problem in Charlotte was "not to create jobs, but to equip large portions of the labor force with the requisite skills needed for jobs available."[17] The two main leadership organizations that backed this movement were the United Community Service Organization and the Chamber of Commerce, which at the time was considered the most important force in Charlotte.[18] These men shared similar political and economic views, and all came from similar backgrounds of wealth and affluence.

A visit from the Ford Foundation in January, 1963, drove preliminary discussions to be developed into a more established program. Possible investments prompted representatives from the school systems and health and welfare departments to prepare a "Brief of a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Development Project."[19] However, once the Ford Foundation formally stated its endorsement for community action, this briefing was revised in order to appeal to these interests. "There was a stated desire to get into the difficult neighborhoods and to find indigenous leadership around which to build the confidence and participation of the poor."[20] Thanks to the North Carolina Fund's introduction to the idea of community action and direct involvement, Charlotte began drafting proposals for financial support beginning in 1963. On August 29, 1963, the Charlotte Area Fund was incorporated. However, further development was needed in

order to submit a proposal, which offered an expanded anti-poverty program to include more than education; it needed to incorporate the poor and seek out their leadership.

On January 29, 1964, the proposal submitted to the NCF, included two new important provisions. The first was that the program would involve direct action from the poor people in the neighborhoods. The second was that the program would be coordinated by a diverse group of representatives from a variety of races, backgrounds, and economic classes. Furthermore, these people would be independent of schools, government, or voluntary agencies.[21] Despite a revised plan of attack, the program still faced problems. Regardless of what was said on paper, the CAF failed to carry out these new goals. One of the primary resisters to the CAF was Dr. Reginald Hawkins, a leader in the black community. Hawkins claimed that real representation of the poor did not exist in either the planning or implementation of these programs. In a letter to George Esser, Executive Director of the North Carolina Fund, Hawkins wrote, "that the reason why the poor or the black leaders representing the poor were not involved in the program was a fear that the cause of poverty would be revealed."[22] Hawkins knew that the reason for the CAF's inevitable failure was not the program's faults but rather the representatives and supervisors who would control the program. Comprising a large proportion of the urban poor, black people better understood the poor's interests. Therefore, if they were to have greater representation, their needs and demands would challenge those who wanted to maintain the affluent white power structure. Little was done to change or acknowledge these accusations, and the program was submitted as planned.

In April the Charlotte Area Fund was admitted as one of the eleven communities to be funded by the NCF and received an administrative grant of $11, 275. Although the program now had adequate funding to begin implementation, the CAF failed to take action. The board did not meet, nor was the grant check cashed, until January, 1965. The program was accused of lethargy by the NCF, and it was not until the appointment of John Zuidema as the permanent project director that the CAF was ready to take action. Before Zuidema came to the CAF, he was the executive director of the Governor's Interagency Council on Mental Retardation Planning in South Carolina. On June 15, 1965, Zuidema entered the position with three specific target areas: the Westside Area, the Eastside Area, and the Southside Area. He considered himself a "jack-of-all trades in the people-helping business." Zuidema entered the position with a number of bad press releases about the program, which worked against his reputation and support for the program. Accusations claimed that the program failed to have fair representation, and its interests were biased. Consequently, his initial concern was to rebuild the communication between the CAF and other community agencies so as to establish stronger relationships among the local and state powers. He spent a large amount of time on public relations in order to gain local support and trust among these key power groups.[23]

At the same time, the NCF and OEO continued to urge the CAF to increase representation beyond civic and governmental leadership in order to include those who would be active in the program. The board's failure to attain diverse representation was hypocritical in light of so-called efforts for direct community action. As a consequence of these pressures, the board was forced to expand and added six new members, including

two ministers, one woman, and three representatives from low-income groups; of these members four were African American.[24] Even though the board had expanded to include a more diverse group, it did not guarantee that these new board members would have power or influence over the direction of the CAF. The poor rarely attended meetings; and when they did, participation was never in opposition to the leaders who controlled the meetings, particularly Reverend Hildebrandt, an authoritative Presbyterian minister. Furthermore, meetings were usually brief, non-controversial and poorly documented.[25] As a consequence, the poor did not feel powerful enough to speak their opinions and conformed to the demands of white civic leaders who held ultimate control. This lack of confidence only further diminished their chances of representation or opportunity to gain power over the direction of the CAF's future.

Esser, Executive Director of the North Carolina Fund, felt that the board was growing to represent a wider group of people and experiences even though the poor community felt otherwise. Not only was the black community discontent with their representation on the board, but the public was also beginning to feel as though this was a program built specifically to serve the black community, rather than the poor at large. Without representation of black or white poor people, the CAF failed at two levels. It failed to represent a racially diverse group as well as economically diverse one. This was partially due to the fact that the black community had found a stronger public leader to represent their needs-Dr. Hawkins-while whites remained silent. Despite previous lip service the Charlotte Area Fund provided to the OEO, NCF, and, most important, to the public about maximum feasible participation, by the spring of 1965, "curtailment of the community action component returned control to the local political elite, guaranteeing

that solutions to urban poverty would conform to a social work model focusing on individual pathologies."[26] Just as before, the primary concern among local elites was not redistribution of power, which might have challenged the current political agenda or increase minority power, but rather, maintaining the work hierarchy and protecting the white male job status.

This was the primary reason that local agencies distrusted the CAF. Local agencies were wary of change. Although the city held the highest median income across the state, it also housed some of the poorest residents. The only way for poverty to have improved would have been to alter the current infrastructure, which would increase the status of many while sacrificing the power of the few. Poor people had learned hard work did not necessarily mean wealth; it was not a matter of working harder that would end the cycle of urban poverty, but increased access to opportunity that would enable them to escape their current conditions. The program argued that it would succeed because of the genuine belief that it needed to be controlled by every level of the community; however, this belief seldom manifested into action.[27] The CAF needed to function efficiently at the local community level if the community genuinely planned to meet its obligations and solve its problems.

Distrust was heightened by poor lines of communication between the board of the CAF and local agencies. Local agencies were delegated various responsibilities under the command of the CAF; however, they did not necessarily agree with these orders and this strained implementation. For example, the plan called for all encompassing neighborhood centers that would offer an array of resources from employment and education opportunities to health and housing assistance. A key component of this was

the support of Charlotte's Health Department. However, the department refused to cooperate with the wishes of the Fund and insisted that they operate independently of the neighborhood centers.[28] This resistance created major delays in the implementation of the centers and exemplifies the weak communication paths between local agencies and the CAF, which lead to tensions between those who supported the poor versus the powerful. These tensions were amplified by the1966 elections and Republican victories, in which a move towards more conservative views was taken by Chamber of Commerce and noticed by most Charlotte residents. Republican victories altered the political atmosphere and led to the "decrease of support for the local anti-poverty program."[29] As relationships continued to become more complicated, and the direction of the CAF grew more controversial, the future of community action being a success in Charlotte was unlikely.

Between July 1, 1963, and July 31, 1968, the CAF ranked second highest of the eleven communities supported by the North Carolina Fund, with a budget of $7,664,894.[30] Adequate financial support was not the reason for the CAF's failure, neither was a lack of natural resources or agencies. The demise of the Charlotte Area Fund was a consequence of bad leadership, misguided direction, and poor communication. From the initial planning, white, wealthy men such as the Mayor of Charlotte, Chairman of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board, and the Chairman of the Society of Planning Council, whose primary concern was not finding a cure to poverty but rather preserving an elitist hierarchy, prevented those who genuinely understood poverty from gaining power and access to opportunity for change.[31]

While minimal changes were made, the most striking efforts were only words spoken to the NCF and OEO rather than the poor. Without the poor's involvement and the support of local agencies, the CAF was simply a good idea in theory, but never a possibility in practice. It managed to stay afloat during this experimental period but did not hold promise for a long future. Esser wrote in his evaluation of the CAF to the North Carolina Fund that despite complicated relations with local community agencies Charlotte had done a mediocre job at implementing the program.[32] `

This is seen in the final evaluation reports of the CAF. Education was the cornerstone of this program however it ignored the correlation between race relations and education.[33] If a majority of the uneducated poor were also black, how could issues of race be overlooked? The program was not willing to manifest ideas of desegregation into a reality and thus hindered an effective education policy for the long term. Consequently, the CAF received the lowest score possible when rating their defined short and long range goals. In other words, the program "merely state[d] a desire to eradicate poverty rather than establish tangible goals for short and long term success."[34] Esser noted similar weaknesses when he wrote, "the future of community action in urban areas such as Charlotte holds increasing challenges."[35] What the Fund had hoped for in terms of a successful community action program was not what local agencies were willing to implement. Esser accurately foresaw the fate of community action in cities that refused to make the social, political, and economic changes necessary to genuinely address the problems of poverty.

However cities were not the only communities that refused to make this transition. In fact it could be argued that rural areas were even slower because unlike the cities,

which had already undergone the transition into an industrialized economy, rural areas were slow to follow. As a consequence, rural poverty issues were a combination of racial tensions and over reliance on agriculture, which left many unskilled laborers unemployed after the introduction of mechanized farming.[36] Unlike urban ghettos, most of the rural poor were farmers who did not have their own land but worked as tenants on larger farms for white affluent landowners. Tenant farming resulted from a lack of land distribution programs forcing ex-slaves to work the land in exchange for a share of the crop.[37] This system placed the few wealthy, white landowning families in a position to control the economic, political, and social infrastructure, forcing the majority of the population of African Americans to work as sharecroppers who struggled to earn enough money to hold their own land. Many of the jobs which once employed low skilled workers were eliminated once farming transitioned from a labor intensive to mechanized industry. While African Americans were not the only victims of rural poverty, like the urban poor, they were disproportionately affected relative to the white community.

One of the most rural areas fighting poverty was the Choanoke region which encompassed four counties in Eastern North Carolina: Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, and Northampton. Population was very low, with only two towns in all four counties having more than 4,000 people.[38] In all four counties, more than half of the population was non-white. These rural regions relied on agriculture as their primary means of income. Cotton, corn, peanuts, and tobacco represented more than eighty percent of cash crops raised.[39] Industry was minimal, low scale, and locally owned, causing a mass migration out of Choanoke and into major cities. As a result of this mass outward migration, the rate of employable citizens declined rapidly. In addition to this, the introduction of farm

mechanization was the primary reason for the number of unemployed farm workers, particularly African Americans.

The average income for the four counties was $2,550, and more than half of the population in each of the four counties lived below the federally defined poverty income level of $3,000 per year.[40] Low income was compounded by low education levels and poor housing conditions. The average educational level was much lower than the national and state average. Without the proper education, people had almost no opportunity beyond farming. Choanoke faced a harsh reality in which it would be forced to find a new economic base. Like those in Charlotte, physical signs of poverty were seen in the state of housing. While forty-three percent of North Carolina's housing was considered unsound or lacked adequate plumbing, at least sixty percent (and sometimes as high as seventy-three percent) of the people living in these counties, lived with unsound housing facilities.[41] Halifax, Bertie, Hertford, and Northampton were some of the most poverty stricken regions in the state and in the entire nation.

Similar to that of Charlotte and other impoverished areas, Choanoke's condition was shaped by race relations. Leadership was predominantly white, and blacks did not hold positions in elective offices or community leadership positions. George Esser noted this in his Process Analysis Report when he wrote:

> The development of leaders among the indigenous poor was strongly resisted by the white "power structure" as was the advancement of the blacks in general. Discrimination was (and still is) the greatest contributing factor to poverty; under these circumstances it is not surprising that race relations have played an important role in the history of CADA.[42]

Despite these racial tensions, which had a significant impact on the development of the program, Terry Sanford urged counties, within the Choanoke region; to work together toward industrial and economic efforts, in response to the changing

economy and increased mechanization. He contacted the Community Development Division of the Agricultural Extension Service urging them to speak with local agencies in these areas. As a result, John Crawford, who was assigned the northeastern section of North Carolina, contacted local agencies with the suggestion of establishing a group that would focus on this development for the Choanoke region.[43] Residents from three of the four regions, Hertford, Bertie, and Northampton, gathered together to begin the initial organization of the group. Supporters included farmers, oil company owners, county commissioners, attorneys, businessmen, college professors, and local elected officials. All were considered prominent civic and business community leaders. At the end of November in 1961, the first official CADA meeting was held. Two hundred and twenty-five people attended, and they were all white. By April 20, 1962, CADA was incorporated as a nonprofit organization, and Dr. Bruce Whitaker, President of Chowan College, was elected the first President of CADA.[44] However, it was not until November 19, 1963, that CADA met with North Carolina Fund officials and considered formally submitting a proposal for funding. The proposal was submitted on January 31, 1964.[45]

From the beginning, the NCF had reservations about CADA and the intentions behind the program. While it did address the problems of poverty, it failed to mention how the poor would be involved in the planning or implementation of the program or how they would be represented on the board. Furthermore, it failed to address how the four communities, traditionally divided with independent governing bodies, would be able to coordinate efforts and work as a cohesive unit.[46] The fact that the committee

remained an all white organization until 1964 did not help convince the NCF that the Fund's interests were closely aligned with those of the Choanoke region. It was an unlikely coincidence that at the same time the proposal was being reviewed, the nominating committee decided it would finally elect one African American representative from each of the four counties.[47] Despite the addition of these members, "CADA remained under strong influence, if not control, of the white power structure and was not an agency whose function was the promotion of meaningful change."[48] As a result of black dependency on the white power structure, black representatives feared to speak out against the interest of white politicians.

While the NCF had reservations about the future of CADA, on August 25, 1964, the Choanoke region was selected as one of the eleven communities to receive community action funding from the NCF. The initial administrative grant was for $14,500. With this funding, CADA made various changes in its original objectives. Dependent upon the NCF for financial and administrative support, CADA dedicated itself to becoming a full-fledged anti-poverty organization with the goal of discovering methods to break the existing cycle of poverty in Northampton, Halifax, Hertford, and Bertie counties.[49] Changed objectives created a shift in power dynamics as well. Initially, the board was comprised of business-oriented men who were not interested in fighting the War on Poverty. As they lost support from those with conservative perspectives, those who were dedicated to the new objectives gained power and helped the current executive director, Roger Jackson, keep his position as he worked to please the demands of the OEO and NCF. The poor perceived Jackson to be a typical southern politician who avoided all possible interaction with blacks. They questioned his motives and

dedication to ending the War on Poverty and felt that he was only sympathetic to the needs of whites.[50] Consequently, race relations continued to be a concern for CADA, despite amendments to the bylaws and increased representation of African Americans. The problem was grounded in the white power structure, which represented large business and landholding interests, rather than those living in poverty.

Similar to Charlotte, Choanoke strongly felt this resistance when trying to integrate schools and political powers. Extreme measures were taken to prevent desegregation such as when the right wing Independent Club in Northampton renovated old buildings into all white private schools, in order to maintain racial segregation.[51] Rather than prevent further efforts, CADA administrators folded to the pressures of white elitism and continued to fuel black opposition. In order to counteract these white interests, local black organizations actively demonstrated their needs to local government agencies. These demonstrations began prior to the establishment of CADA; however activity heightened once the black community recognized that CADA would not be a venue for their social, political, and economic demands.

The year 1963 was "demonstration summer." Local residents Willa Johnson and John Slater of the Southern Conference Education Fund organized black citizens of Halifax County to participate in non-violent demonstrations in an effort to terminate discrimination.[52] By 1964 these demonstrations, with the support of the NAACP, helped to establish the Halifax County Voters Movement (HCVM). The movement urged the black community to become active political leaders, register to vote, support local marches and demonstrations, and, most important continue their public demand for better treatment. In a letter to the OEO, the HCVM argued that if sixty percent of the

population was black, their current representation on the board was unacceptable. "Out of forty-four directors on the board of Choanoke, ten are Negroes, three of whom have not attended meetings." [53] With such limited representation, CADA's aim to integrate the races through community action development was worthless.

Following the establishment of the HCVM, a conference was held in Bertie County that drew together one thousand blacks from local areas to organize a movement to eradicate discrimination. While this movement was independent from the efforts of CADA, the awareness and support that grew from this meeting contributed to further support of CADA from the African American community. By 1965 black representation had grown from four to eleven members. However, an increase in numbers did not increase power. The issue of representation was about more than who was on the board; it was about how representatives got there and what their positions were on the War on Poverty. Most African Americans felt that as long as Jackson remained the director of CADA, little would be done to end poverty in Choanoke. Continual pressure from the OEO and heightened friction between the black community and Jackson led to his resignation in 1965, when Fred Cooper assumed the role of the new president.[54]

This transition in power once again heightened community-wide organization among the African American population. Cooper made a distinct effort to involve and understand their needs. He attended local organizations' meetings, increased biracial membership on CADA's board, and appointed blacks, such as John Taylor, to supervisory positions.[55] Despite Cooper's efforts, the black community was not satisfied and demanded more. In response to his insufficient efforts, they abandoned any support they once pledged to CADA and transferred this energy into starting a new organization

in which they would have total control. This agency was called, the People's Program on Poverty (PPOP).

Mimicking the initial planning stages of CADA, PPOP held a conference to gather together supporters from the four counties, agreed on submitting a proposal to the NCF, became an incorporated non-profit organization, and received a grant $163,607. PPOP was the first nonprofit organization, in the Choanoke region, founded and controlled by blacks. The consequences of this organization had long-term benefits as well as severe consequences. PPOP provided a new venue for black power in terms of a civil rights program as well as an anti-poverty program, but it also created a competition for funds and support against CADA. While their efforts were similar, the two groups were forced to compete for the same limited resources. A major benefit that PPOP had over CADA was that it was independent of local agencies. CADA was a service agency and PPOP had become the real community development agency, dedicated to involving the poor.[56] CADA's refusal to truly dedicate itself to community action was based on two factors. The first was the conservative political structure in which it was working that had no interest in changing; the second was the personal attitudes and beliefs of the people in control of this structure. Conservative opinions within a conservative infrastructure curbed progressive efforts.

Failure to implement community action programs in Choanoke resulted in similar criticisms from the Fund as those in Charlotte. In 1966 the Fund provided CADA with an outline of the problems and barriers that prevented CADA from success as well as a list of suggested solutions. The Fund recognized the major barriers to be the lack of involvement on the poor's behalf as well as no commitment from local agencies to help

the poor. Strategies for overcoming these obstacles included a need for developing more specific goals as well as total community involvement.[57] Despite efforts to improve CADA's implementation, one year later the same problems still remained prevalent. While white board members argued that CADA had worked well with other local agencies, the Fund's review team argued that CADA did "not show a highly comprehensive attack on problems of poverty" nor did it show an understanding of the services intended to aid individuals and families in solving the problem.[58]

Despite criticism and poor evaluations, CADA received $3,429,128 worth of funds between July 1, 1963, and July 31, 1968, ranking eighth among the eleven communities supported by the NCF.[59] However, CADA's efforts were undermined by the strength and support which PPOP had gathered. PPOP challenged white control over services and resources and was able to develop local leadership and support, something that CADA failed to attempt. While white opposition ranged from discrimination to acts of violence, PPOP continued to gather support until it ceased to be funded by the NCF in 1968. PPOP was not able to function independently of the NCF's financial support. After 1968, the program began to phase out and Esser realized the fate of the programs was dismal without the political and financial support of the NCF. "I don't think we realized how much the problem of poverty is rooted in our economic structure. There's not much of a problem about people having motivation and working hard. Their work so many times just doesn't produce enough money for them...I didn't realize how much the problem of race contributed to black poverty."[60] As black power continued to rise across America, a trend of separatism undermined any united efforts across race lines. With a lack of funds and support, PPOP lost the ability to remain an active organization.

Many people argue that the War on Poverty failed because of a lack of funds. However, if the state were to provide an endless budget to these two regions, would either of the programs have succeeded? Given the social and political climate that shaped these regions, economics played a limited role in implementation. Both the CAF and CADA received significant funding. The Charlotte Area Fund received the second highest amount of money but still failed to demonstrate its ability to properly implement a community action program that involved the poor. The North Carolina Fund had a program that aimed to involve the people who understood poverty the best: the poor themselves. However, this was at a state level, and the same interests did not exist at a local level.

The failure of both programs was not a lack of resources, nor was it an urban or rural problem; rather it was a conflict of interests. Poverty cannot be easily defined, it cannot be explained just as a lack of education, or income, or housing. Above all, poverty must be explained as a lack of opportunity. The poor were willing to work and to contribute to the planning and development of an anti-poverty program that would provide them with the opportunities past political and social systems denied them. However, this was not in the interest of the few who benefited from the poverty cycle. They were not willing to forfeit their power to the less fortunate, which prevented these programs from developing. PPOP's success was due to its independence from local agencies; it had control over its agenda and addressed their own concerns directly.

Charlotte had the advantage of established agencies with more manpower and a stronger infrastructure. However, this infrastructure also worked against the organization. The ability to change attitudes and create new agendas proved to be more challenging. In

Choanoke, local grassroots movements like PPOP were more likely to emerge out of these anti-poverty programs, because power was not as concentrated. However, their ability to receive large financial contributions at the state level was reduced because they lacked the same political organization as Charlotte. Both regions' primary reason for failure was race relations. While the NCF's anti-poverty programs were not meant to be connected to the Civil Right's movement, the crossover between poverty and race was inevitable.

If poverty is a downward cycle, escaping poverty is an upward cycle. With community action involvement, the poor provide local agencies with support, which enables them to get more money from the state agencies, which provides them with more resources to offer to the poor to create more results, which leads to even more support. And so the cycle continues. However, the essential element in making this cycle work is community action. Community action was an ideal that confronted the challenges of a white powered reality. While the CAF and CADA may have agreed to community action on paper, neither organization committed itself to these goals in the planning or execution of these programs. Consequently, the programs were simply models but never long-term success stories.

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