

THE ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM - 1965

The Office of Economic Opportunity was established by the United States Congress on August 20, 1964. Its objective, as stated by President Lyndon B. Johnson, as a “War on Poverty,” a uniting for the first time of all the forces that fight poverty and a bolstering of these efforts with new resources, programs and ideas.

In this War on Poverty the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, mindful of the ever-recurring refrain in Jewish teaching “seek justice, relieve the oppressed” (Isaiah 1:17), finds itself a natural and most enthusiastic participant. Therefore, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in 25th Biennial Assembly convened, in the name of its United States affiliates, urges its members and Sisterhoods to participate in projects connected with the Anti-Poverty Program, such as Volunteers in Service to America (Vista), the Job Corps and Work Training and Work-Study programs; and in community action projects which operate in such areas as remedial education, early childhood development, tutorial programs including high school and college student volunteers, as well as adults, working under the supervision of professionals; development of cooperative organizations to plan housing rehabilitation and construction for low-income families; and employment information, counseling and placement programs for unemployed youth.

In this connection it should be noted that in no case should the principle of the separation of church and state be infringed. No Sisterhood or Congregation should seek or accept governmental funds. Neither should the Sisterhood or Congregation become a grantee or a delegate agency under the Office of Economic Opportunity program. Where projects are initiated by the Sisterhood, if governmental funds are to be asked for, the project should be turned over by the Sisterhood or Congregation to a broadly based community group, the Sisterhood or Congregation relinquishing its role and identity, although continuing to provide voluntary man or women power assistance.

It is also urged that United States members of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, as individuals and as Sisterhoods, look toward and work for the future; that they urge the federal and their respective State governments to pass additional legislation in the areas of: guaranteeing all citizens an opportunity for full employment; extending social security benefits to those millions of workers now excluded; setting minimum wages for those unskilled workers not now covered by present legislation; developing plans for low cost housing; and encouraging research and action in the field of inexpensive voluntary health insurance that is within the means of the low-income family.

Let us remember that there are fears and frustrations for both the limited in income and the secure and that these call for patience, dedication and humility on the part of all. We are now at a point where the success or failure of the adopted national legislation depends upon the extent to which men, women and youth personally involve themselves. There are personal as well as societal hurdles to overcome and the originality, dedication and perseverance with which the citizenry faces “the Great Society” will determine a large measure of its success or failure. While we speak especially in this resolution on behalf of our United State members, we urge members in all lands to be concerned within their nations with anti-poverty programs. For let none forget that in the words of Maimonides, “the eighth and most meritorious degree of charity is to anticipate charity by preventing poverty.”