

dustrial communities hit hard by recession and unemployment rather than chronically depressed rural areas in need of the basic infrastructure for development. "The Douglas-Payne Bill," reported the *Louisville Courier-Journal* in February 1959, "would not, for an instance, make significant headway towards mitigating those all-important economic factors affecting Eastern Kentucky: lack of modern transportation networks, vulnerability to floods, and the decline of coal-mining."⁸² Frustrated, Whisman and other leaders of the eastern Kentucky commission launched a campaign to change federal policies in favor of "underdeveloped areas" and to make government and industry leaders more aware of Appalachia's plight and potential.

As the 1950s drew to a close, efforts increased throughout Appalachia to focus the attention of state and national leaders on the burgeoning crises in the hills. Rising welfare rolls and unemployment placed heavy burdens on state resources and spurred even non-Appalachian legislators, journalists, and private citizens to join the call for action. In the elections of 1960, candidates for governor in almost every Appalachian state endorsed programs to reduce poverty in the mountain counties, and in Kentucky, mountain lawyer and gubernatorial candidate Bert Combs promised to implement the recommendations of the Eastern Kentucky Regional Planning Commission. But it would take a national rediscovery of poverty throughout affluent America and the unexpected victory of a New England senator in the 1960 presidential primary to draw the nation's attention to the need for federal assistance to the region. Even then there would be little agreement on the sources of Appalachia's problems or the solutions to its distress. For the post-World War II generation, confident in its ability to sustain growth and to build a better life for everyone, Appalachia remained an American enigma.

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Uneven Ground

Appalachia Since 1945

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I've been preachin' the gospel for 25 years, and I've never seen a time so bad.

—Levi McGeorge, pastor of the Cloplint Church of God, Harlan County, Kentucky, February 1959

The winters of 1959 and 1960 were unusually harsh in Appalachia, bringing additional burdens to an already hard-pressed land. The destruction of the record flood of 1957 could still be seen in many mountain communities, and a national recession only deepened the economic crisis in the hills. Throughout central Appalachia, hundreds of displaced coal miners faced the specter of expired unemployment benefits and dwindling food supplies. Heavy snows and subfreezing temperatures resulted in several deaths from starvation and exposure. Kentucky governor Happy Chandler declared an emergency in eastern Kentucky and initiated a modest relief effort, but state resources were inadequate to meet the problem.¹

Conditions were equally severe in West Virginia when Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts arrived to campaign in the 1960 Democratic presidential primary. Kennedy's subsequent victory in the West Virginia primary would mark a turning point in his drive to the presidency. Winning in the Mountain State settled the question of whether a Catholic candidate could carry a predominantly Protestant state and smoothed the senator's path to victory in other primaries. For Appalachia, however, the 1960 primary was a watershed of another kind. Events in West Virginia drew the attention of the federal

government and national media to the economic despair that had settled over the region.

When Senator Kennedy came to West Virginia, mountain villages were still digging out from heavy snows and bitter cold, the coldest March on record and the most snowfall since 1914.² By April the campaign began to warm along with the weather, and the candidates carried their search for votes out of the urban areas and into the rural districts and coal camps of the southern part of the state. Political strategists expected that the issue of religion would dominate the campaign, as it had in other states, and Kennedy was prepared to confront religious bigotry head-on. But the crowds of unemployed coal miners who greeted the senator in places like Welch and Williamson and in dozens of other coal communities along Paint Creek, Cabin Creek, and the New River were less interested in the candidate's religion than in his plans to relieve their economic distress.

Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, the only candidate to challenge Kennedy in the Mountain State, had raised concerns about economic conditions in the coalfields as early as January 1960. In a speech before the West Virginia Legislature, Humphrey attacked poverty in affluent America as "a national scandal," but he failed to reach the people with his message, and he could not compete with the Kennedy money and political organization. Kennedy, who seemed genuinely stunned by the conditions he witnessed in the coal camps, turned the economic issue to his advantage, suggesting that he was the only candidate who could provide relief for the state, if West Virginians would send him to the White House. Tying himself to the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the patron saint of Democrats who had brought the union and relief programs to the mountains during the Great Depression, Kennedy campaigned alongside Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., who assured hungry coal miners that the Massachusetts senator would follow through on aid to depressed areas. On the eve of the May 10 primary, Kennedy went before television cameras and promised the people of West Virginia, "If I'm nominated and elected president, within sixty days of the start of my administration, I will introduce a program to the Congress for aid to West Virginia." The next day Senator Kennedy received over 60 percent of the votes of West Virginia

Democrats for their party's presidential nomination, and Senator Humphrey withdrew from the race.³

While Democrats campaigned in West Virginia, state and local leaders in other Appalachian states pressed for federal assistance to the region. In January 1960 newly elected governor Bert T. Combs of Kentucky endorsed Program 60's recommendations as priority objectives for his administration, including the call for a meeting of Appalachian governors. Later that spring, concerned with the special problems of Maryland's Appalachian counties, Governor Millard Tawes invited the governors and representatives of seven Appalachian states to convene in Annapolis to coordinate state development efforts across the region. The first Conference of Appalachian Governors met on May 20, 1960, only ten days after the West Virginia primary and a week after President Eisenhower vetoed another depressed areas bill sent to him by Congress. The governors reviewed a report on economic conditions and population trends in eleven Appalachian states prepared by the Maryland Department of Economic Development.⁴ They resolved to push for further cooperation among the states, but they were unable to agree on support for federal action.

Democratic governors at the Annapolis meeting favored special legislation to assist the self-help programs being developed within the Appalachian states, but Republican governor Cecil Underwood of West Virginia defended the president's veto of the depressed areas bill. "The President was 1,000 percent right to veto this bill," he argued, "on the grounds that it sets up another federal agency. We already have enough departments in the federal government." Adding that the "magic" of depressed areas legislation was "not the answer," he complained that politicians and journalists who had publicized the plight of West Virginia during the recent primary had not given a balanced picture: "It is true that 20 per cent of our workforce has been displaced. But we still have a strong, vigorous economy. We are not as bad off as Michigan. We have not had to borrow for unemployment compensation as Pennsylvania has. We are still teetering on the brink of solvency."⁵

Despite his opposition to the depressed areas bill, Underwood supported the idea of interstate cooperation, and the group agreed to hold a second Conference of Appalachian Governors to be hosted by Gov-

ernor Combs the following fall. Meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, on October 17–18, 1960, the governors of five states and the representatives of six others discussed mutual problems facing their Appalachian areas, especially the challenges of highway construction and water control. Present were Governors Luther Hodges of North Carolina, Buford Ellington of Tennessee, and Lindsey Almond of Virginia, as well as Combs of Kentucky and Tawes of Maryland. Also attending were representatives of several federal agencies; Willis Weatherford of Berea College, who outlined the goals of the Appalachian regional survey then underway; and Perley Ayer, director of the CSM, who pledged the support of his organization.

Again Governor Combs called for the passage of federal area redevelopment legislation that would help address the "acute problem of unemployment in the region," and he appointed a committee chaired by Governor Tawes to draft a "statement of principles" that might serve as a framework for cooperation and "might be able to get the interest—and possibly some commitments—from both the presidential candidates [Richard Nixon and Kennedy] and from candidates for Congress."⁶ Notwithstanding the reluctance of representatives from Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and Virginia "to yield even a portion of state sovereignty" to any new federal program,⁷ the governors approved the "Declaration for Action Regarding the Appalachian Region." The resolution pledged to form and continue a "voluntary association of the states" to advance "a special regional program of development," and it called for candidates for national office to support "appropriate federal participation" in the solutions to the region's problems.⁸

The conference and the declaration for action bore the distinct mark of John Whisman. Serving as aide to Governor Combs, Whisman had helped to organize the Annapolis meeting and had coordinated planning for the Lexington conference. The Lexington resolution drew extensively on Program 60 for both its language and its strategies for action. The resolution, for example, avoided the phrase "depressed area" that was popularly associated with urban redevelopment efforts and instead pointed to the "chronic condition of underdevelopment and severe unemployment" that existed in the region. "As a result [of underdevelopment], the declaration read, 'many people [of

Appalachia] are denied reasonable economic and cultural opportunities through no fault of their own. In addition, the productive force in both physical and human resources is severely limited in its contribution to the nation, while the costs of essential welfare services are steadily increasing."⁹

By characterizing Appalachia as an underdeveloped region rather than a depressed area, the governors hoped to draw attention to Appalachia's special problems and to distinguish the needs of the mountains from those of urban areas that had achieved development but were now suffering from temporary economic decline. "By underdevelopment, we mean that basic handicaps to development of adequate facilities involving transportation and water resources have in turn hindered the local ability to support necessary public services and private enterprise activity. Because of such basic deficiencies, the success of local development activity in all areas of life is severely handicapped." What Appalachia needed, the document suggested, was temporary public work and job training programs similar to those being proposed for the rest of the country and the creation of modern economic infrastructure such as key roads and major water control facilities. Planning for this basic infrastructure should be connected to a "comprehensive state and regional development program . . . in appropriate fields of activity, including forestry, agriculture, mineral resources and tourist travel, industrial and community development, education, health and welfare."¹⁰ The declaration attempted to move policy discussions beyond relief programs and toward the use of federal resources for the comprehensive development of the region. Effectively, the Lexington resolution outlined the issues that would shape efforts to create a special Appalachian development program over the next five years. The conference also adopted a resolution endorsing an Appalachian development highway system and elected Governor Combs as chair. Whisman was designated to head a permanent staff committee to plan future meetings and actions.

The recommendations of the governors' conference in Lexington took on additional significance three weeks later, when John F. Kennedy was elected to the presidency of the United States. To prepare his domestic agenda, the president-elect immediately asked his brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, to put together a series of twenty-nine teams that

would meet to draft a legislative program for the new administration.¹¹ Fulfilling Kennedy's pledge to the people of West Virginia, one of the first teams created was the Task Force on Area Redevelopment, appointed to formulate specific recommendations to assist people in economically depressed areas. Generally the Kennedy task forces comprised academics, business leaders, congressional staff, and members of the Kennedy team, but the ten members appointed to the Task Force on Area Redevelopment included seven labor and industrial leaders from West Virginia, the secretary of labor and industry from Pennsylvania, and the assistant to the president of the UMW in Washington. Kennedy asked Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois, who had led congressional efforts to enact depressed areas legislation throughout the 1950s, to serve as chair of the committee and, after a last-minute request from Governor Combs, added Whisman to the team.¹²

The West Virginia task force, as the Kennedy people called it, met initially in Charleston, West Virginia, on December 9, 1960, and within two weeks it issued a report recommending both a short-term package of immediate relief for those unemployed as a result of the recession and a broader strategy of area development to provide long-term job opportunities. The report called for the passage of area redevelopment legislation similar to that which had failed during the Eisenhower years, including the creation of an area redevelopment administration and programs in human resource development, natural resource development, and public works. Most of these proposals were designed to address unemployment problems in declining urban areas such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Chicago, but the final recommendation of the report—reflecting Whisman's influence—urged the establishment of a system of regional development commissions across the nation that would attack the special problems of distressed regions and carry out comprehensive development programs. As an immediate step, the committee recommended that the president appoint an Appalachian regional commission, based on the initiative of the Appalachian governors, that might serve as a pilot for similar efforts in other regions.¹³

The core recommendations of the task force became Senate bill 1 when the new Congress convened in January 1961, but the proposals for a national system of development commissions and a pilot Appala-

chian regional commission failed to make the final draft of the legislation. A parade of Appalachian members of Congress testified in favor of the bill during House and Senate hearings. Jennings Randolph and Robert Byrd of West Virginia, John Sherman Cooper and Carl Perkins of Kentucky, Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, and Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania described the critical economic conditions in their mountain counties that had led to official unemployment rates of 12 to 25 percent. Governors Tawes of Maryland, Ellington of Tennessee, and Combs of Kentucky all praised the bill but added that other measures were also needed, including a highway program, funds for natural resource development, and increased aid to education. Opponents of the Area Redevelopment Act complained that the legislation was not needed and objected to the federal government's interfering in the economic affairs of local areas, but Congress passed the legislation in late March 1961.¹⁴

The Area Redevelopment Act authorized the creation of the Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA) in the Department of Commerce and the expenditure of \$394 million over a four-year period. Most of the funds were to provide low-interest industrial loans, grants to local governments for public facilities needed to attract businesses, and subsistence for worker training programs. Even ARA officials acknowledged that the act "essentially followed a 'trickle down' approach to poverty and unemployment, with most of the direct benefits going to businesses and not to unemployed people," but Appalachian political leaders hoped that the legislation would lead to broader efforts to assist the region.¹⁵

The act became law on May 1, 1961, and a week later the Conference of Appalachian Governors met in Washington with President Kennedy and the director of the new ARA to coordinate regional development strategies with the agency. In response to the governors' proposal to create an Appalachian commission, the president asked the ARA to establish a liaison with the governors to coordinate state and federal development strategies. The governors appointed a staff committee, chaired by Whisman, to work with the ARA liaison to channel recommendations to the agency. Later this informal arrangement became the federal interagency committee on the Appalachian

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region, but there were no special funds set aside for Appalachia, and the responsibility for drafting a comprehensive development plan for the region remained with the governors.¹⁶

Over the next two years, the Conference of Appalachian Governors (now called the Council of Appalachian Governors) continued to meet on a regular basis and to formulate proposals for an Appalachian highway program, water resource and forestry development, and education and job training programs, but the president proved unresponsive to the call for a state-federal Appalachian regional commission. Frustration also grew with the ARA and with the slow distribution of federal aid to distressed mountain communities. Not only was the ARA severely underfunded for its task, but fully one-third of the counties in the nation qualified for ARA benefits. Seventy-six percent of Appalachian counties qualified for the program, but the bulk of ARA resources flowed to private businesses located primarily in urban centers outside the region. Rural areas, like most of Appalachia, lacked the existing businesses and business prospects to make them eligible for assistance, and they lacked the professional staff necessary to prepare the overall economic development plans necessary for funding. Furthermore, ARA and other federal programs continued to require local matching funds that seriously depressed rural communities were unable to supply. ARA also provided no funds for education, health care, or other human resource development needs.¹⁷

Only West Virginia benefited significantly from ARA resources, and these were utilized primarily in the development of tourism projects. Over half of the ARA funds expended in Appalachia (\$79 million) during its four-year existence went to the Mountain State, and much of that was allocated to the massive New River Gorge project designed to create a series of tourism attractions in Fayette and Raleigh counties. The bulk of business loans and grants were funneled to a handful of heavily industrialized valley counties in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. The Appalachian portions of three states (Maryland, North Carolina, and Ohio) received no public facilities dollars at all, while four other states (Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia) received less than 7 percent of the funds. ARA job training programs were slow to get started, and the few training programs funded in Appalachia were not linked to specific business expansions.

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Many of the trainees had to be shipped out of the region to find jobs.¹⁸

By 1962 disappointment with the ARA was widespread in the mountains. Harry Caudill wrote that the ARA had been launched with "the most laudable intentions" but had "accomplished little beyond a few small loans for minor business enterprises."¹⁹ The *Louisville Courier-Journal* complained that the agency's efforts in eastern Kentucky were "as useless as oars on an airplane."²⁰ The annual report of the Eastern Kentucky Regional Planning Commission noted that ARA loans, grants, and training programs were "useful tools" but that these were "far less important" than the agency's "potential function—inadequately used to date—in providing technical assistance and in coordinating federal programs."²¹

The Appalachian governors and the CSM continued to lobby the president to create a separate Appalachian regional commission that could coordinate federal programs with the states and could administer supplemental and special federal benefits for regional development. Although the president's attention turned to other domestic and foreign policy concerns in 1962, intellectual and political currents were converging rapidly on a mainstream assault on poverty as part of a new national agenda. Events in the mountains would place Appalachia at the center of that effort.

Following the West Virginia presidential primary in 1960, national journalists had increasingly turned to Appalachia as a symbol of the growing disparity between poverty and affluence in the United States. The image of a rich, young New England senator being greeted by barefoot children and destitute coal miners fueled an escalating sense that two societies had emerged in postwar America. Despite the conspicuous wealth evident in new suburban housing projects, shopping centers, interstate highways, and other signs of an emerging consumer culture, many rural areas and inner-city communities in the 1960s still struggled to overcome the blight of depression and poverty.

Kennedy's visible alarm at conditions in the Mountain State and the attention given to economic issues in the presidential campaign lured dozens of journalists to the mountains in the months that followed the election. Stories of human tragedy, personal struggle, cruel

injustice, and heroic perseverance abounded in Appalachia and provided grist for a growing media mill of articles about poverty in America. The region's natural beauty and romantic folk culture added mystery and curiosity to tales of personal adversity and hardship, and it was an easy progression from stories of individual tragedy to descriptions of Appalachia itself as a region apart from the rest of America, a poor place in an otherwise rich land. Embedded in the idea of Appalachia as a distressed region, moreover, were unsettling questions about the American economic system as a whole—who benefited from development and who didn't, and why entire regions of the country failed to share in the rewards of postwar growth.

For the second time in less than a century, Appalachia appeared at the heart of national debates about modernization and progress. Whereas a generation of writers after the Civil War had helped to define Appalachia in the popular mind as the antithesis of an emerging national culture, journalists in the 1960s concentrated their attention on images of Appalachia as a socioeconomic problem area. To a generation immersed in the cold war and confronted by the civil rights movement, Appalachia provided further evidence of the failure of the American promise for many whites as well as for blacks. The presence of widespread poverty in an old and predominantly white part of the nation's heartland challenged prevailing assumptions about technology, the free market, and the social responsibility of wealth. In the context of the 1960s, the region became a popular symbol of poverty and of weakness in the American economy itself.

The rediscovery of the region fed on old stereotypes and outdated images, but the new commentaries spoke as much to the anxieties confronting the larger society as they did to the political and economic problems of the mountains. Images of Appalachia as isolated and of Appalachians as a quaint and sometimes violent people persisted, but increasingly observers described Appalachian poverty not as a permanent condition but as something that could be alleviated by the application of modern resources to human problems. If Appalachia was a distressed region, they reasoned, it must not have experienced the same economic and cultural changes that had lifted the rest of the nation out of the Depression and placed it on the road to prosperity after World War II. Appalachia might once have been a cultural and geographic

anomaly, but, thanks to advances in science and technology, these conditions could now be overcome.

Postwar confidence in the American path to modernization provided the solution to the conundrum of Appalachian poverty, just as American capitalism provided a light for third world progress, but Americans differed on how to put the region on the road to prosperity. For some, poverty was the result of individual character weaknesses that could be alleviated through technical education, job training, and the cultural adjustment to modern values. For others, poverty was the consequence of governmental neglect of the basic public infrastructure that moved societies through the stages of development and capitalist expansion—roads, water systems, and public facilities. Most assumed that raising the expectations of poor people and providing the goods of industrial production—that is, modernization—would bring poor regions into the mainstream. Few questioned the benefits of growth or associated poverty with systemic inequalities in political or economic structures.

As early as the 1950s, liberal politicians and scholars had begun to describe poverty as an anomaly, a minority condition within an otherwise prosperous nation. Early in the decade, Minnesota senator Hubert Humphrey called for the creation of a youth conservation corps to address what were believed to be growing problems of juvenile delinquency, idleness, and poverty in urban areas. Later, Governor Averell Harriman asked the New York legislature for funds to study the causes of poverty in the Empire State, and twice in the decade Illinois senator Paul Douglas, a professional economist, sponsored federal legislation to aid depressed areas. Most of these efforts saw poverty as a deviation from the American norm that could be corrected by government investment in public works projects and job programs, but these New Deal-style initiatives failed repeatedly to pass in the face of postwar Republican opposition.

In 1958 Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith confirmed American confidence in the arrival of a new age of mass prosperity with the publication of his best-selling book *The Affluent Society*. The economic crisis of the Great Depression, he suggested, had been overcome now for most Americans. Scarcity had been replaced by affluence except in a few unrelenting pockets of poverty that still demanded

government attention. Galbraith saw the persistence of poverty as a national scandal, but as a Keynesian economist he was primarily interested in the growing gap between private opulence and the need for public sector investment in roads, schools, parks, and other infrastructure to sustain growth.²²

Other writers, however, led by Michael Harrington, soon extended Galbraith's analysis and questioned the depth of the postwar economic miracle. In the July 1959 issue of *Commentary* magazine, Harrington estimated that as much as a third of the nation's people still lived at substandard levels and were permanently, not temporarily, distressed. It was a popular myth, Harrington argued, that the poor in the United States were a small and declining group, largely limited to nonwhites and rural southerners and protected from despair by the reforms of the New Deal. The facts, he suggested, presented "a different and far less pretty picture." Poverty had become a trap for many Americans, and he called for a "comprehensive assault on poverty . . . [in] America's rural and urban slums."²³

The events of the West Virginia primary appeared to confirm Harrington's views, and, soon after Kennedy's victory in the Mountain State, *Washington Post* staff reporter Julius Duschka followed up on Harrington's critique of the American economy by touring Appalachia, "this country's worst blighted area." Duschka's August 1960 essay set the pattern for a generation of writers who would see the southern Appalachian Mountains as a region in need and mountain people as victims. "From the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia to the trail of the Cumberland Gap in Kentucky," he wrote, "tens of thousands of Americans live in appalling poverty. Live? No, they hardly exist." These once proud and independent mountain families—"many of them descendants of pioneer American families"—had been reduced to living on handouts of surplus food or what they could scratch from hillside gardens. According to William D. Gorman, a community leader in Hazard, Kentucky, things were so bad that some people in his church were no longer coming to worship services "because they didn't have clothes to wear or food to eat."

Duschka found evidence of misery throughout the half-ghost, half-coal towns of eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia: "the gaunt, hungry faces; the unpainted, crumbling homes; the women who

are pitifully old before their time, and the men who have nothing to do but sit and tell a grim story that needs no substantiation with figures." The decline of coal mining and the obsolescence of the small farm had caused this suffering, and the region needed "massive assistance of the kind that Government and industry have given to the underdeveloped countries of the world. For much of the Southern Appalachians is as underdeveloped, when compared with the affluence of the rest of America, as the newly independent countries of Africa." In light of American abundance, he concluded, the nation "should be able to provide a decent life for all persons, whether they live in a hollow, on a ridge, in a city or on a 500-acre Iowa farm."²⁴

A host of other writers followed in the literary path opened by the *Washington Post* reporter. Over the next three years, a wave of articles, books, and television documentaries flooded the media with descriptions of Appalachian poverty. In 1961 David Grossman and Melvin Levin, New England-based planners who had prepared the reference materials for the Annapolis Conference of Appalachian Governors, published a report in the journal *Land Economics* that statistically defined Appalachia as a "national problem area." Grossman and Levin identified a number of obstacles to economic growth in the region, including the topography, tax policies, inadequate community facilities, "unfavorable psychological attitudes," and a "superannuated, unskilled" workforce.²⁵ In 1962 a group of nationally acclaimed scholars came to similar conclusions when they released *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. The study provided scientific analyses of the region's economy and social institutions, but it laid most of the blame for regional backwardness on the provincial culture of the mountain people.²⁶ Later that year Michael Harrington included Appalachia as part of the "other America" in his book of that title designed to stir the conscience of Americans to do something for the nation's poor.²⁷

These and other essays fed a growing chorus of commentary among the intellectual elite on the political and economic dilemma of poverty,²⁸ but when *Look* magazine published a collection of photographs of Appalachia in December 1962, the face of poverty in the United States, at least for many middle-class Americans, became indelibly Appalachian. Part of a series of essays about American regions,

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the *Look* photographs avoided the old stereotypes of mountain residents as historical relics or degenerate rubes. Instead they captured images of solid American families surrounded by the trappings of modern life but caught in the web of economic deprivation. Abandoned appliances and disabled cars belied the gaunt beauty of a young mother or the hidden strength of an unemployed coal miner. In images that evoked middle-class values of family, religion, and hard work, the magazine connected Appalachia with readers' notions of mainstream America. The people of "Appalachia, U.S.A.," declared the accompanying text, lived in an underdeveloped country. "No less than Latin Americans or Africans, they can use more American aid. They are more entitled to it because they are our own people."²⁹

The idea that Appalachia deserved special attention as an internal example of the third world received further validation the following year with the publication of Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*. Probably the most widely read book ever written about Appalachia, Caudill's passionate account of the human and environmental devastation wreaked by the coal industry on his native eastern Kentucky was a cry from the exploited heartland for government assistance to a desperate people. In a mixed narrative that combined images of cultural degeneracy and corporate abuse, Caudill decried the economic, political, and social blight that had settled over the mountains and called for the creation of a southern mountain authority, patterned after the TVA, to oversee regional development. "Idleness and waste are antipathetic to progress and growth," he wrote, "and, unless the Cumberland Plateau is to remain an anchor dragging behind the rest of America, it—and the rest of the Southern Appalachians—must be rescued while there is yet time."³⁰

Caudill quickly became a popular and eloquent spokesperson for the region, spreading the story of Appalachian distress on television and before congressional committees. Journalists by the dozens visited his Whitesburg, Kentucky, home and, after absorbing the Caudill "treatment" over tea, were granted a personal tour of decaying coal camps and scarred hillsides. One Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, Homer Bigart, wrote a moving series for the *New York Times* following his pilgrimage to Whitesburg that depicted a wasted landscape and a people so poor that children ate dirt out of the chimneys to

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ease their hunger.³¹ The series caught the attention of President Kennedy and helped to seal his commitment to antipoverity legislation for the 1964 Congress.

By the end of 1963, the image of Appalachia as a region of endemic poverty had settled once again in the popular mind.³² Regional scholars and policy makers alike utilized the image to build their cases for federal funding for uplift and development programs. Journalists and politicians outside the mountains exploited regional economic distress to gather public support for a national crusade on poverty. Ironically, within the mountains the idea of Appalachia as a problem region was not widely recognized except among academics and social reformers. The word "Appalachia" itself was seldom used by mountain residents, except in reference to the town of that name in southwest Virginia. Interestingly, as the region came to be identified with national poverty, many among the mountain middle class rejected the application of the term "Appalachia" to their own community, preferring to associate it with communities far removed from their own. For observers in the rest of the country, however, Appalachia was more than an embarrassment. It had become part of a national problem.

The swell of media attention on Appalachia in the early 1960s was part of a rising wave of concern for the country's economy. The boom times of the 1950s had begun to falter a bit in the last years of that decade. Although Senator Kennedy had promised to get the nation "moving again" during the presidential campaign, the country's economy continued to struggle throughout the first two years of the Kennedy administration. Unemployment remained unacceptably high, hovering around 7 percent, and in May 1962 the stock market fell to its lowest point since the inauguration. Unemployment and applications for public assistance continued to rise throughout Appalachia, where joblessness was twice the national average.

During the summer of 1962, desperate families in central Appalachia received an additional blow when the UMW announced that it was revoking the cherished health cards on which many depended for medical care. The UMW had established its Health and Retirement Funds to provide free health care and other benefits to miners and their families, and in 1954 the union had built ten state-of-the-art

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Miners Memorial hospitals in southern West Virginia, Virginia, and eastern Kentucky that provided medical care for a large percentage of families in the area. Now, however, declining revenues in its Health and Retirement Funds made it impossible for the union to sustain benefits for miners whose companies were no longer paying royalties into the funds. Most of the operators who defaulted on their forty-cent-per-ton royalty payment to the funds were small truck mine owners who had signed "sweetheart contracts" with the UMW, allowing them to pay wages below the national contract. Declining coal markets in the early 1960s and competition from larger mechanized mines, however, led many of the struggling truck mines to cease their contributions to the funds. Miners in eastern Kentucky had accepted lower wages, but the loss of their family health cards was too much. They responded with a time-honored "wildcat strike" despite the union's objections.

By September roving bands of pickets were moving from one small mine to another, attempting to shut down delinquent operations. When the UMW announced in October that it intended to sell or close its hospitals in Kentucky and other Appalachian states, the frustration of out-of-work miners boiled over. The roving pickets movement soon degenerated into class warfare, with jobless families on one side and coal operators, businesspeople, and local government officials on the other. At times nearly five hundred miners caravanned to a small truck mine only to be dispersed by state police, armed company guards, and the local sheriff, who in Perry County was himself a coal operator. Arson, shootings, beatings, and the dynamiting of homes, trucks, tip-ple, and equipment soon forced Governor Combs to intervene in search of a truce, but only the heavy snow and icy roads of December quieted the violence.³³

The lethargic national economy and rising labor unrest in the coalfields prompted President Kennedy to look for ways to stimulate business growth. A fiscal conservative who disliked deficit spending, the president settled on an across-the-board tax cut. Before announcing his decision, however, he asked Walter Heller, chair of his Council of Economic Advisors, to look into recent media estimates of the number of poor people in America. Kennedy anticipated opposition to tax reduction from liberal Democrats in Congress, and he was aware that a tax cut would leave him vulnerable to criticism that he was indifferent

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to poverty at a time of increasing popular concern for the poor. Prior to this time, poverty had not been a focal point for policy discussions in the Kennedy White House. Like many Americans, the president assumed that a rising economic tide would steadily reduce the size of the low-income population. The domestic programs of the New Frontier had concentrated on generating growth rather than on fighting poverty. As a tireless reader with a strong sense of social obligation to the disadvantaged, however, Kennedy was sensitive to the intellectual currents of his time, especially to suggestions that his administration was not meeting the country's problems.³⁴

In January 1963 the president read Dwight MacDonald's lengthy review in the *New Yorker* of several recent studies of poverty, including Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. MacDonald found ample evidence of persistent poverty within the United States, and he lambasted the Kennedy administration for neglecting "our invisible poor." Ignoring the plight of the disadvantaged not only made us "feel uncomfortable," he chided, but also challenged the general prosperity of the nation. Hidden in the midst of an otherwise rich country, the very poor could no longer be helped by economic expansion alone but must have government assistance lest they become permanently alienated from the rest of the society.³⁵ Troubled by MacDonald's criticism, Kennedy encouraged Heller to begin to identify antipoverty strategies that might be included in the domestic agenda for his 1964 reelection campaign.

The president's tax cut languished in Congress during 1963, but his request to Heller generated considerable interest among a small group of Kennedy advisors. Heller invited other economists from the Council of Economic Advisors, including Robert Lampman and Kermit Gordon, to meet for informal Saturday discussions with colleagues from the Bureau of the Budget and the Labor, Justice, and Health, Education, and Welfare departments. Most of these advisors were economists like Heller, trained in the postwar Keynesian philosophy of government investment in the economy to sustain growth, but some, like Daniel Moynihan, were social scientists who believed in government intervention to rectify social distress.³⁶ Although Heller and his associates viewed poverty as a moral problem, they also assumed that an assault on poverty would have economic and political benefits for

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the administration in 1964. Not only would a limited antipovertry program help to boost the national economy, but, since poverty cut across race and geography, it would appeal to rural whites in the South as well as to blacks and suburban liberals.³⁷

As the Heller group began its meetings in the White House, spring rains in the mountains once again brought Appalachia to national attention. In mid-March 1963 back-to-back floods once more struck the Cumberland Plateau, causing rivers to pour out of their banks and displacing twenty-five thousand people from their homes. Coming within eight days of each other, the heavy rains caused more than \$80 million in damage across fifty counties in the heart of the region. Although the work of the informal interagency committee on Appalachia expedited flood rehabilitation efforts among federal agencies, editors throughout the region criticized the inadequate federal response. "The floods that are tearing the economic life out of the mountains are the direct and inevitable result of fifty years of federal neglect," wrote the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. "Our people and our economy are tired, worn out, exhausted," lamented the *Whitesburg (KY) Mountain Eagle*. "We do not have the money, the energy, or the willpower to dig ourselves out."³⁸

On March 29, 1963, Governor Bert Combs and his staff met with Ed McDermott, chief of the federal Office of Emergency Planning, and other White House aides to discuss specific actions on postflood problems. Along with a number of proposals for immediate action, Combs again emphasized the difficulty of "the dual emergency of Appalachia—the long standing economic emergency now compounded by the natural disaster emergency." He also pointed out the proposal of the Appalachian governors for a special, comprehensive, and long-term Appalachian regional development program. Later the same day, McDermott met with the president, who expressed interest in the idea of an Appalachian program and agreed to add the subject to the agenda of an April 9 cabinet meeting originally scheduled to review the ARA. As a result of the president's decision to include the special focus on the Appalachian problem, the Appalachian governors were invited to attend the cabinet meeting.³⁹

Over the next week, John Whisman and Governor William Barron of West Virginia, who had succeeded Combs as chair of the Coun-

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cil of Appalachian Governors, coordinated arrangements for the meeting with the governors and their staffs. On the afternoon of April 9, five Appalachian governors—Combs of Kentucky, Barron of West Virginia, Tawes of Maryland, Frank Clement of Tennessee, and Albertis Harrison of Virginia—along with representatives of the governors of North Carolina and Pennsylvania, met with the president, his cabinet, and a number of agency heads in the Cabinet Room of the White House. Also in attendance were presidential aide Lee White, Walter Heller of the Council of Economic Advisors and the informal antipovertry discussion group, and Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., undersecretary of commerce.⁴⁰

The president was delayed by a ceremony in the Rose Garden granting honorary citizenship to Winston Churchill. As those assembled awaited his arrival, Commerce Secretary Luther Hodges asked the other cabinet secretaries to begin reporting on the effectiveness of their departments' programs in Appalachia. The theme was one that the governors had heard many times before. Labor Secretary William Wirtz, for example, lamented the inability of job training programs under the Area Redevelopment Act and the Manpower Development and Training Act to alleviate the long-term problems of the region. Unless they could identify new kinds of businesses to receive trainees, he pointed out, Appalachian people would continue to be trained for jobs that were simply not there. Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman added that overall regional planning was desperately needed, but he could offer no suggestions for developing a comprehensive regional plan.⁴¹

In the middle of Freeman's remarks, President Kennedy arrived and assumed leadership of the meeting. The president welcomed the governors and reemphasized his deep concern for the economic problems of the Appalachian region. He noted that it had been a primary goal of his administration to reduce the immediate distress in the mountains and to help "build a solid economic basis on which the region could prosper." But unemployment remained unacceptably high, and federal efforts through the ARA and other programs were "not making much progress in the sense of really biting into the long term unemployment." Consequently, the president announced, he would take the following actions: First, he would direct his department heads

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to speed up current programs affecting Appalachia and to include more programs for the Appalachian region in their fiscal year 1965 budgets. Second, he would establish within the Department of Commerce a joint federal-state committee on the Appalachian region to develop a comprehensive program for regional economic development that would report back to him by January 1, 1964. This program would include recommendations for improving transportation facilities; providing education and job training; conducting research; developing water, mineral, and forest resources; and attracting tourists. Finally, he would seek to create an Appalachian development institute to serve as a nonfederal center for research and training on the economic problems of the region.⁴²

After completing his remarks, Kennedy moved to a chair directly across from Combs while members of the cabinet and the governors discussed his proposals. Secretary Freeman resumed his comments, but everyone was watching the president as he pulled a sheet of notepaper from the table and wrote something. He then folded the paper into a little airplane and sent it gliding toward Combs, landing in front of the governor. The note read, "Bert, what do you really want?" Combs seized the opportunity and, in his formal remarks to the group, commented that the creation of a permanent federal-state regional agency would be the most important product of the president's committee. "The more I come up here [to Washington]," he explained, "the more I believe we need a handle to work with. You cannot go to Commerce and then to Agriculture and then to HEW, and then go to all of these other agencies and get a great deal done unless you live up here. And I just don't have the time to stay up here." The other governors concurred.⁴³

Kennedy's choice to head the joint federal-state committee, the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC), was Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., who had campaigned with the president in West Virginia during the crucial 1960 primary. Once informed of his appointment to chair the commission, Roosevelt outlined the steps that he would take to achieve his goal. He asked each governor and each cabinet secretary to appoint a representative to the commission, which would begin its work with a tour of the state capitals to gather information and ideas for the development of the region. To assist him in

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drafting the final report, he selected John L. Sweeney from the Department of Commerce as executive director of the commission and appointed John Whisman to represent the states as executive secretary. Interestingly, he invited no members of the informal White House anti-poverty group to serve on the commission.

Under Roosevelt's leadership, PARC began immediately to gather ideas and program recommendations from state, federal, and academic leaders. The commission launched initial visits to seven state capitals, and Roosevelt appointed Benjamin Chinitz, a Harvard-trained economist and chair of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Economics, to undertake a study of regional conditions. Chinitz pulled together a task force of academic sociologists, economists, political scientists, and geographers to analyze data gathered by agency professionals from each of the Appalachian states. With the assistance of staff from fourteen federal agencies, the research team collected information on a wide assortment of chronic problems, including water resources, coal, electric power, finance, highways, education, and forestry.

Like Whisman, Chinitz considered the Appalachian region to be underdeveloped in the same sense that "poverty-ridden countries in Latin America are underdeveloped." An unfortunate history of resource extraction, he believed, had left the region without the "superstructure" (schools, factories, private enterprises, public services) on which to sustain a modern economy. In the absence of core infrastructure for development, human resources languished. "So there is no second and third wave of economic development," Chinitz wrote, "founded by an interested entrepreneurial society." Federal, state, and county governments alone had not been able to address the region's chronic needs, he wrote, but "federal-state-county governments working together can."⁴⁴

Chinitz's opinion that Appalachia's problems resulted from a lag in the natural stages of development was consistent with contemporary academic theories of economic growth and paralleled the ideas that Whisman had incorporated into *Program 60* and the "Declaration for Action Regarding the Appalachian Region" issued by the Conference of Appalachian Governors. American intellectuals and business leaders in the post-World War II years, drawing on their ex-

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perience in rebuilding Europe and Japan, were confident that the mobilization of government resources to build basic infrastructure could set an impoverished region on the road to development.

This confidence in the benefits of physical infrastructure development was reinforced by suggestions that PARC received from meetings with state officials and cooperating federal agencies. Department of Transportation officials, for example, were "only too willing to suggest a \$1.2 billion program of regional and local-access roads to be financed largely by additional federal funds."⁴⁵ The states were clear that they wanted highways, resource development, and preferential treatment on federal grants. State and federal bureaucrats agreed that the problems of Appalachia resulted from a lack of basic infrastructure for development. In this manner, academic theories about the process of development came together with the professional interests of federal agency personnel and state political leadership to provide a common agenda for the region.

During the summer of 1963, Whisman and Sweeney organized PARC into five working teams, which began to draft recommendations on transportation, human resources, physical resources, water, and the organization of a permanent commission. In addition to Chinitz's academic advisors, more than three hundred individuals from various branches of government participated in the deliberations. At the end of October, a draft report was readied, and between November 12 and 20, the commission staff again toured the states, seeking responses to its preliminary recommendations. By this time the number of states to be included in the new program had increased to ten with the addition of Ohio and Georgia.

While PARC prepared to finalize its report, President Kennedy followed through on his commitment to tap existing federal programs for emergency relief in central Appalachia. Responding to Bigart's October *New York Times* article that exposed the hardships of Kentucky coal miners facing a "grim winter,"⁴⁶ the president informed Walter Heller that he planned to include antipoverity legislation in the agenda for the next Congress. He also ordered a special winter relief program for the mountain coalfields that would serve as an advance demonstration of the special Appalachian initiative. Announced on November 14, 1963, the winter program included grants for food relief, home

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repairs, education, and school lunch programs. The president also instructed the Army Corps of Engineers to accelerate work on a number of water projects to provide additional jobs, and he requested the Forest Service to redirect funds for timber stand improvement to hire unemployed youth. Finally, he asked the Department of Labor to create a special job training program for displaced coal miners.⁴⁷

The following day, Kennedy telephoned his congratulations to the newly elected governor of Kentucky, Edward "Ned" Breathitt, and assured him that the White House would follow through on its commitment to Appalachia. PARC, he added, was about to complete its work, and Kennedy would be in touch with Governor Breathitt to set up a meeting on the Kentucky-West Virginia border to announce his support for an Appalachian commission. He would have his secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, call the governor's office with details shortly after he returned from a brief trip to Dallas, Texas.

The assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963, however, suspended plans to announce the Appalachian program and raised serious questions about the future of that initiative as well as that of the parallel antipoverity program being discussed by the Heller committee. Some observers feared that the Appalachian effort might die along with the slain president, since relations between Vice President Lyndon Johnson and PARC chair Roosevelt were strained at best, and Johnson had no particular knowledge of the region. At an Executive Office Building gathering on the evening before Kennedy's funeral, though, Johnson assured the nation's governors that he intended to complete everything on Kennedy's legislative agenda. Later that evening, Governor Breathitt and former governor Combs met privately with the new president in Johnson's vice presidential office. Recalling his election day conversation with Kennedy, Breathitt praised the work of Combs and other governors on the Appalachian program. Johnson responded that if the commitment had been made, he would carry it out along with other Kennedy proposals.

The new president had learned about the antipoverity discussions the day after the assassination, when Heller briefed him on his predecessor's economic plans. Johnson quickly expressed interest in the initiative and instructed Heller to prepare a draft proposal. The informal Kennedy discussion group had evolved into an interdepartmental task

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force in October, but the conversations had produced little in the way of hard plans. Heller hurriedly pulled together a brief proposal for a small, experimental program of demonstration projects among carefully targeted groups, but when he and budget director Kermit Gordon presented the plan to the president in late December, Johnson declared it to be inadequate. The timid plan was not his kind of program. To the amazement of Heller and Gordon, the president wanted to put a poverty program in every community that wanted one and to bypass experimentation for direct action. The next day he announced to reporters that he would take up the fight against poverty in the next congressional session.⁴⁸

Johnson's motivation for making the antipoverty initiative a centerpiece in his Great Society agenda was as complex as the president himself. An old New Dealer, Johnson believed in government action to solve problems, and he had a strong, personal, if paternalistic, commitment to help the disadvantaged. Never an intellectual, he was uncomfortable around the liberal academics that Kennedy had welcomed into the White House, but he valued their respect and wanted to assert an image of himself as heir to Franklin Roosevelt. Above all, Johnson was the ultimate politician, who recognized the need to establish his own agenda while appearing to fulfill that of the slain president. More than the Kennedy advisors, Johnson understood the political benefits of government investment in local poverty programs, especially in the South, where white leaders were resisting federal civil rights pressures. Since Kennedy had not publicly announced a crusade against poverty, Johnson could present it as his own program. On January 8, 1964, in his first State of the Union address, Johnson declared "unconditional war on poverty in America" and appointed Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, to head a poverty task force to design a strategy for the campaign.

In the weeks following Kennedy's assassination, political leaders from Appalachia continued to urge the new president to follow through on the Appalachian program as well. Governor Wally Barron of West Virginia wrote to Johnson soon after the funeral to familiarize him with the goals of the Conference of Appalachian Governors and the work of PARC. U.S. Representative Carl Perkins wrote his old friend about the problems facing his district in eastern Kentucky and recom-

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mended a program of public works similar to that being proposed by the Roosevelt commission. On December 13 Governor Breathitt, former governor Combs, Whisman, and Representative Perkins met with the president, recounted their conversations with Kennedy, and emphasized the need for action. Governor Barron sent a telegram to the president requesting a meeting with the Appalachian governors as soon as possible. On each occasion Johnson renewed his commitment to the program, but by the end of the year he still had not been formally briefed on the Appalachian initiative.⁴⁹ John Sweeney, executive director of PARC, feared that these commitments still lacked "a passionate quality" rooted in Johnson's own political agenda and that Johnson was committed to them only as part of the ex-president's program.⁵⁰

In the meantime PARC staff hurried to prepare the final draft of their report. A variety of special interest groups attempted to influence staff recommendations. Harry Caudill lobbied strongly for an organizational structure similar to that of the TVA and, along with the American Public Power Association, advocated the use of public funds to generate and sell electric power from water- and coal-powered generating plants that might be built in the region. The coal industry, upset with the relative paucity of attention given to coal resource development in early drafts, advocated greater infrastructure investment and the elimination of government policies it believed impeded the expansion of coal markets. The Forest Industries Council, while interested in making timber the centerpiece of Appalachian economic development, objected to recommendations that would establish cooperative timber development organizations in the region whose demonstration centers might compete with existing sawmills. Even the Bureau of the Budget objected to the proposed structure of the new commission, which it believed transferred too much authority to the states and impeded the president's power to exercise responsibilities vested in him by the Constitution. PARC, however, resisted most of these lobbying efforts, and the final report adopted the majority of the ideas and strategies for a comprehensive development program that had been advocated by the Conference of Appalachian Governors since 1960.⁵¹

Appalachia: A Report by the President's Appalachian Regional Commission was completed in February 1964, but political considerations delayed its release. Just as the Roosevelt commission was finish-

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ing its work, President Johnson and his aides were absorbed in planning for the 1964 presidential campaign, including preparations for the War on Poverty initiative. Sweeney and several Johnson advisors were concerned that the Appalachian program, now a holdover from the Kennedy administration, might appear to duplicate the new poverty program, and they favored delaying the release of the report until after the announcement of Johnson's poverty initiative. Indeed, these concerns contributed to a greater emphasis in the final report on highways and other infrastructure than on health care, job training, education, and other human service programs. Whisman and other early advocates of the Appalachian program believed that investment in both the physical and human capacities of the region was essential to comprehensive development, but to distinguish the Appalachian program from the War on Poverty, PARC staff emphasized the long-term role of the new Appalachian commission in building public facilities for development while leaving the immediate goal of alleviating individual hardship to the new poverty agency. The Appalachian program, they argued, would not abandon its comprehensive development strategies but would initially emphasize infrastructure needs while coordinating its human development programs with those of the national poverty effort.⁵²

Scheduling a date for the release of the report also proved to be complicated. Sweeney and his staff believed that the announcement of the Appalachian program should come only after Johnson's declaration of the War on Poverty, and finding a day when the president, ten governors, and members of the commission could be present for the announcement was a challenge. The president's staff hoped to schedule a meeting at the White House during the second week of April, but this failed because Undersecretary Roosevelt planned to be in India at that time. With concern mounting among the governors that the Eighty-eighth Congress might adjourn in July before any action could be taken on Appalachian legislation, Roosevelt presented the report to the president on April 9, 1964, before leaving for India and without a formal ceremony.

The PARC report described Appalachia as "a region apart," a land of geographical diversity and natural wealth that lagged behind the rest of the nation in measures of economic growth. Defining Appala-

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chia broadly to include both the urban centers and the rural areas of ten contiguous states, the report made the case for a regional approach to common problems of distress and for a special national commitment to address those problems. While the most severe distress was concentrated in the rural, interior counties, even the urban-industrial centers of the region lagged behind their national counterparts. The realities of deprivation across Appalachia, the report noted, were reflected in measures of income, housing, education, and employment. The lack of urbanization and years of exploitation of natural resources without a return of wealth to local communities had left the region's development "retarded" and unable to support the kinds of "social overhead capital" necessary to succeed in a modern economy. Poor roads, poor schools, inadequate health care, dilapidated housing, insufficient community facilities, and weak institutions were the results of the failure of the normal process of development in Appalachia, what the report called "a record of insufficiency—a history of traditional acts not performed, of American patterns not fulfilled."⁵³

To redress this legacy of neglect, PARC proposed that "a coordinated and adequately funded and sustained effort" be undertaken to restore the region's economic vitality. The commission recommended action on a regional investment strategy in four priority areas and proposed the creation of a permanent agency to implement the effort. Emphasizing the need for simultaneous investment in both human and economic resource development, PARC called for legislation to increase access to and within the region, establish programs to more fully utilize the region's natural resources, construct facilities to control and exploit the abundant rainfall of Appalachia, and create programs to provide immediate improvements in human resources. A comprehensive approach to the region's problems was necessary. "Only a balanced, coordinated series of programs," it emphasized, "can achieve the goals of this Commission and of the region."⁵⁴

Included among the PARC proposals were recommendations for a major Appalachian development highway system, regional airports, flood control and sewage management facilities, programs for pasture improvement and cooperative timber marketing, recreational tourism development, research into coal utilization and power production, and funds for vocational schools, health centers, and housing. The report

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looked to pending antipovertry legislation to expand programs in job training, secondary education, adult literacy, medical care, nutrition, and other human services, but it requested additional funding for these special programs in Appalachia. To coordinate these efforts, PARC called for the creation of a new independent agency, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which would organize state, federal, and private efforts to develop the region, encourage multistate collaboration, and foster local community development and planning.

Experience had shown, the report concluded, that "the unique tangle of problems in Appalachia call for a uniquely tailored program and that neither the States alone nor the Federal Government alone are adequate to this challenge which involves them both so closely." Rather than recommending a single plan for Appalachia, therefore, the commission proposed immediate actions to "attack the central strands of the regional knot" and a mechanism for suggesting new actions and developing new programs in the future. "In the years ahead," the report observed, "the Appalachian program will be many programs, unified only by their singleness of focus: the introduction of Appalachia and its people into fully active membership in the American society."⁵⁵

To assure continuity of effort between the submission of the report by PARC and congressional action to establish the new commission, PARC recommended that the organization of state and federal agency representatives created to draft the report itself continue. Prior to the establishment of a new unit, the PARC staff would sustain cooperation, further inventory the region's resources, and prepare detailed plans for the new development highway system, new water projects, training programs, and other public facilities. Consequently, Sweeney, Whisman, Harry Boswell of Maryland, Paul Grabtree of West Virginia, and other core staff continued to refine the program even while the proposed legislation was being debated on Capitol Hill.

Shortly after the release of the PARC report, President Johnson fulfilled President Kennedy's promise to visit Appalachia and to meet again with the Appalachian governors. On the afternoon of April 24, 1964, the president flew to Huntington, West Virginia, and greeted a delegation that included Governors Breathitt and Barron, Senators Jennings Randolph and Robert Byrd of West Virginia, Senator John

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Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, U.S. Representative Carl Perkins of Kentucky, and U.S. Representative Ken Hechler of West Virginia. The trip was hastily arranged after Johnson suddenly decided to rally support for his War on Poverty by making two "poverty trips" to publicize the need for pending legislation. The first trip included stops in the Midwest, Pittsburgh, and central Appalachia and provided an opportunity to meet with the Appalachian governors who had been pressing him to follow up on the PARC report. Undertaken as a strategy to gain political ground for his own antipovertry program and to fulfill a promise by his predecessor, the trip to Appalachia changed Johnson's perspective on the region and energized his own commitment to passing an Appalachian bill.

From the Huntington airport, the First Family's entourage traveled by helicopter to eastern Kentucky, where the president and Mrs. Johnson saw mountain poverty firsthand. Near Inez, in Martin County, they sat on the porch of an unemployed sawmill worker with eight children who survived on an income of four hundred dollars a year. In Paintsville they toured a job training facility for unemployed miners. Along the highway they greeted hundreds of schoolchildren, many in neat but well-worn clothes. The sights of poverty—barren and stripped hillsides, dilapidated housing, and poor roads—moved the president, and he promised to help the people of the mountains to become part of the Great Society. "We are not going to be satisfied," he told a crowd on the courthouse steps in Paintsville, "until we have driven poverty underground, until we have found jobs for our people. We are not going to be satisfied until our people have decent housing, until our aged folks have medical care, until our people have equal rights."⁵⁶

The next day Johnson concluded his visit by meeting with the Council of Appalachian Governors in Huntington. Governors Tawes of Maryland, Sanders of Georgia, Sanford of North Carolina, Clement of Tennessee, and Harrison of Virginia joined Governors Breathitt and Barron in pressing the president for the Appalachian program. Only Governors George Wallace of Alabama and William Scranton of Pennsylvania were absent, and Governor Scranton had privately spoken to Johnson in favor of the bill at a Washington function a few days before. The president had come to Huntington to gather the governors' support for his antipovertry legislation, but, according to John Swee-

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ney, his attempts to talk about the War on Poverty were repeatedly shunted aside by the "unequivocal chirping" of the governors for the Appalachian program.⁵⁷ Finally, the president declared his support for the Appalachian bill, but he wanted to delay any formal announcement until after the House Education and Labor Committee reported favorably on the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA), the antipoverly legislation. "No one expects," Johnson told reporters as he left for Washington, "that this curse of centuries [poverty] can be wiped out in a few days or a few weeks or a few years. . . . But we intend to set the people of this region out on a bright highway of hope. . . . I hope to send a message to Congress in a few days to implement this program."⁵⁸

The administration delivered the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA) to the Hill three days later, on April 28, 1964, but in the ensuing months, the act continued to flounder in the shadows of the War on Poverty and election-year politics. Sweeney and the PARC staff began to prepare draft legislation soon after the release of the PARC report. On the plane back to Washington after his meeting with the Appalachian governors, Johnson instructed Sweeney to work with Charles Schulze from the Bureau of the Budget to prepare an acceptable bill. Schulze had been part of Walter Heller's original poverty discussion group and was concerned about both the scale and structure of the regional program. Sweeney assured the president that any legislation for Appalachia would concentrate, for the most part, on highways and infrastructure and would not interfere with any part of the poverty program currently before Congress.⁵⁹

To avoid confusion with the EOA, the ARDA was submitted to the Senate and House public works committees rather than to the education and labor committees then considering the antipoverly legislation. The House began hearings on the bill in early May and the Senate in mid-June, but by July progress toward a vote had stalled. Both the House and the Senate were preoccupied in June and July with debates on the EOA and the Civil Rights Act and later with the political conventions and campaigns of the 1964 election. As the summer dragged on, supporters of the ARDA grew nervous that further delay would weaken the bill by opening the door to attacks from special interests.

The ARDA of 1964 contained most of the recommendations of the PARC report, and opponents of the bill quickly focused on familiar

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criticisms: the structure of the new commission gave the federal government too much power in state affairs; the commission duplicated other federal programs and competed with private interests; there was no provision for generating public power for regional development; the program discriminated against other regions with conditions similar to those of Appalachia; and it would benefit more prosperous urban areas of the mountains as well as impoverished rural populations. Sweeney and other administration spokespersons were able to counter most of the criticisms by pointing to the uniqueness of the Appalachian problem, the need for region-wide planning, and the collaborative-federalist nature of the new commission, but one challenge proved more difficult.

The PARC report had recommended the creation of a federally chartered, mixed-ownership corporation to provide access to private money for local development projects. Although the Johnson administration supported the recommendation, many in Congress opposed it because it would have created a semi-independent agency outside normal legislative review. Many Republicans, moreover, objected to this proposed Appalachian development fund on the grounds that it unconstitutionally required government to become a stockholder in a private corporation. Indeed, Governor Scranton of Pennsylvania, a Republican, while strongly supporting the other recommendations of the PARC report, refused to sign the letter of transmittal by the Council of Appalachian Governors at the beginning of the report and instead submitted his own letter of endorsement, opposing the mixed-ownership corporation.⁶⁰ Many in Congress also opposed this concept on the ground that "funds should be provided through legislative appropriation channels subject to congressional oversight" rather than through a permanent, independent corporation.⁶¹ Eventually, the administration dropped the development corporation idea, leaving the subsequent agency perpetually dependent on congressional reauthorization for funding.

To boost congressional support for the bill, the Johnson administration expanded the region to be served by the ARDA, adding Ohio and South Carolina to the original nine states covered by the PARC report. Ohio governor James Rhodes originally opposed his state's participation in the program, preferring a heavy investment of state

funds for highways and other improvements in the Ohio Appalachian counties to federal intervention. Encouraged to reconsider by fellow Republican Scranton and by growing pressure from Ohio's congressional delegation and from local officials in southeast Ohio, Rhodes acquiesced. South Carolina under Governor Ernest Hollings also had declined to participate in the Council of Appalachian Governors, but its new governor, Donald Russell, requested that the state be added to the ARDA in June, and the president eagerly agreed.

Despite bipartisan support, however, the ARDA languished in the House because of opposition from representatives from outside Appalachia who questioned the wisdom of favoring development in one geographic region over another. Congress eventually passed the EOA on August 7, 1964, launching the War on Poverty, and on September 25 the Senate passed its version of the ARDA, but the Eighty-eighth Congress adjourned sine die on October 3, without action on the Appalachian bill in the House. The fate of the ARDA now lay in the fall elections, with the hope for a more favorable environment for regional development legislation in the House. To sustain the work of the PARC staff until the next session of Congress, President Johnson issued an executive order in late October establishing the Federal Development Planning Committee for Appalachia. Following Johnson's landslide victory in November, this committee prepared revised legislation to submit early in the new year.

On January 6, 1965, the ARDA was reintroduced in the Eighty-ninth Congress as Senate bill 3. Now a top priority for the Johnson administration, the bill emerged from the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee by the end of the month, and it passed the full Senate on February 1 with only minor amendments. Bipartisan, widespread support eased the bill through the Senate. Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, the bill's chief sponsor, chaired the committee hearings and received strong support on the floor from Republican Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and from Robert Kennedy, the late president's brother. As a result of Pennsylvania's interest in mine reclamation, \$20 million in special funding was added to the bill for the restoration of abandoned coal lands, and Senator Kennedy attached a provision allowing fourteen contiguous counties in New York to join the new commission.

In the House, the new Democratic majority acted quickly to vote the act out of committee on February 17, and, despite an attempt by opponents to recommit, the ARDA passed the House on March 3 by a vote of 257-165. To reassure House and Senate supporters still concerned about providing preferential treatment for Appalachia, the administration promised to support the creation of similar regional development programs for other areas of the country that suffered from economic distress. Proponents also argued that the bill represented "a redress of basic past shortcomings of federal spending policies in the Appalachian region" and that the special expenditures in Appalachia would benefit the entire nation, not just the participating states themselves.⁶² On March 9, 1965, less than a week after its passage in the House, President Johnson signed the ARDA into law.

The bill as enacted by the Eighty-ninth Congress included most of the recommendations of the PARC and was similar to the bill that had emerged from committee hearings in 1964, with a few important exceptions. Adding three states to the program resulted in the addition of five hundred miles to the local access roads program. The pasture improvement program, which had come under attack from midwestern members of Congress, was eliminated, as was the controversial Appalachian development corporation. The program for timber development was modified to limit planning and resource management services to nonprofit organizations so as not to compete with the existing timber industry. The secretary of the army was instructed to prepare a comprehensive plan for the development of water resources in the Appalachian region, and the secretary of agriculture was asked to convene an interagency federal task force for the purpose of recommending a long-range program for the reclamation and rehabilitation of strip- and surface-mined areas.

One small change was almost overlooked in the 1965 hearings, but it would have significant ramifications for the infant commission. Following the failure of the act to pass the House in October 1964, PARC director John Sweeney and Charles Schultze from the Bureau of the Budget added a sentence to the introductory paragraph of the 1965 ARDA declaring that "public investments made in the region under this Act shall be concentrated in areas where there is a significant potential for future growth, and where the expected return on public

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dollars invested will be the greatest." Federal representatives and some economists had discussed this "growth center" strategy during the initial meetings of the PARC, but state representatives and their governors who wanted greater flexibility in the distribution of development funds rejected the idea almost universally. Sweeney and Schultze, however, strongly believed that there would never be enough federal money to address the many problems of such a vast region and that political support in Congress would be stronger if resources were concentrated in less distressed areas of potential growth. An unpublished report commissioned by PARC from the Phantix Corporation also pointed to the difficulties of attracting industries to rural areas of Appalachia, which lacked basic infrastructure and human capital.⁶³ Although it was ignored in the rush to secure enactment, this addition to the ARDA would open a recurring debate among policy makers in the early years of the ARC and would prove to be one of the more divisive issues facing the regional partnership.

Concern about different strategies for development, however, was far from the minds of those who gathered in the Rose Garden on March 9 to witness the signing of the ARDA. For some in attendance—like John Whisman, Bert Combs, Harry Boswell, and Millard Tawes—the event was the culmination of five years of political negotiations at the state and federal levels. Conceived in the hopes and frustrations of a few Appalachian leaders, the idea for a regional commission was nurtured by intellectuals, planners, and state officials as a way to encourage cooperation and planning in a region long typified by government neglect and aimless growth. Others at the event were impressed by the unique ARC partnership, and they saw the commission as a prototype for a nationwide policy of strategic regional development, one that might link the greater resources of state and federal governments to the self-defined needs of local communities. Everyone hoped that the ARDA marked the dawn of a new era of national commitment to the problems of rural communities and distressed people.

As he signed the Appalachian bill, President Johnson observed that the objectives of the act were important, but its origins were equally significant. "Originated by the Governors of the Appalachian states, formed in close cooperation with the Federal Executive, approved and enacted by the Congress of all the people, this," he observed, "is the

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truest example of creative federalism in our times." Pointing to the low per capita incomes, high poverty rates, low education levels, and heavy dependence on public assistance that plagued many Appalachian communities, the president acknowledged the challenges facing the new commission. "The bill that I will now sign will work no miracles overnight. Whether it works at all depends not upon the Federal Government alone, but the states and local governments as well." Of all the legislative measures that he had received from Congress since becoming president, he concluded, "this measure today may well outlive others in its lasting contribution to the well being of our nation."⁶⁴

Passing the ARDA and the EOA marked a watershed for Appalachia and set the stage for government-sponsored intervention in the mountains for decades to come. Both initiatives were part of Johnson's blueprint for a Great Society that would extend the benefits of modern life to all Americans. As such, they mirrored the best intentions of a generation confident of its accomplishments and ready to apply scientific knowledge to the problems of the disadvantaged. "In your time," Johnson told the graduates of the University of Michigan in May 1964, "we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society . . . a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods."⁶⁵ A month earlier, the president had assured the people of Appalachia that the Great Society would not only bring jobs and higher incomes but the promise of dignity and opportunity as well.⁶⁶

Conceived of idealism and compromise, the War on Poverty and the ARC were a mixture of popular ideas wrapped in the vagaries of the national politics and intellectual trends of their day. Both combined moral concern for the poor, practical expediency, and political self-interest to create a venue for change. Always a complex individual, Johnson himself reflected the multiple personalities that shaped the antipoverty agenda. The president clearly believed that he could use the power of his office to improve the lives of marginalized Americans. He was moved by the poverty he witnessed in Appalachia, but he also recognized the political value of hope and government largesse in an election year. Both of his "poverty trips" during the spring of 1964,

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undertaken to gather support for the EOA, were carefully orchestrated to maximize political benefits and to reassure local Democrats that fighting poverty would be good for them and for the economy.⁶⁷ Johnson was an ardent New Dealer, and his faith in the ability of economic growth to reduce the levels of poverty was matched only by his confidence in the capacity of government to produce growth. For post-war liberals there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the political and economic system that new roads, schools, and other public infrastructure could not correct.

Appalachia provided the ideal proving ground for this vision. Having played an important role in the rediscovery of poverty in America during the early 1960s, the region became the symbol of America's crusade to eliminate poverty after 1964. It was Homer Bigart's exposé of the plight of eastern Kentucky coal miners that moved John Kennedy to instruct his staff to prepare specific antipoverity legislation, and it was to central Appalachia that Lyndon Johnson came to dramatize that initiative. Certainly the roots of the War on Poverty were intertwined with the civil rights movement, urban decay, presidential politics, and the rising influence of social scientists in government, but Appalachia, with its contradictory images of American otherness, was at the center of that campaign. When asked whether the War on Poverty was designed specifically to help urban blacks, Adam Yaromlinsky, a key advisor to Kennedy and Johnson, commented that administration planners in 1963 paid less attention to the problems of the ghettos than to Appalachia. "Color it Appalachian," he concluded, "if you are going to color it anything at all."⁶⁸

As the antipoverity programs unfolded, moreover, Appalachia increasingly became the yardstick against which to measure government success in the War on Poverty. Not only was Appalachia on the front lines for the EOA, but it was also the only American region to receive a special program for infrastructure development. Consequently, media coverage of the region intensified between 1965 and 1968 as national correspondents flocked to the mountains to describe the battlefield and follow the poverty warriors up the hollows and into the fray. Broadcast journalists joined their print counterparts in utilizing Appalachia as a regular setting for commentary about the other America. Some decried the inadequate incomes of the region and criticized

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the new programs for not providing sufficient jobs. Others disparaged the government efforts for not attacking the "culture of mountain poverty."⁶⁹ Almost all saw the region as a burden on an otherwise progressive nation.

Such accounts transposed Appalachia into a marketable media commodity and helped to establish a pattern of critical but superficial commentary that would sustain the image of Appalachia as a problem area for years to come. Even after the War on Poverty collapsed in 1972, periodic investigations of conditions in the mountains continued as standard fare for television, newspaper, and magazine editors. The ARC survived, but it became the subject of regular criticism as a symbol of political boondoggling and the government's failure to drive poverty from its door.

The intellectual and political currents that came together in the EOA and the ARC helped to focus national attention on Appalachia, but media sketches and government programs rarely addressed many of the underlying problems of the region. Bothered by the idea of poverty in an affluent society and confident that planning and economic growth could overcome the lack of material goods and transform a backward culture, correspondents and policy makers seldom questioned the equity of politics and economic relationships within the region. Poverty in Appalachia, they believed, was simply out of step with the rest of America and could be conquered by government investments in public infrastructure to open up markets and by the extension of opportunities for the poor to join the cultural mainstream.

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It is difficult to separate the War on Poverty from the effusive confidence that permeated American society in the 1960s. Faith in the ability of economic expansion to produce abundance and a more equitable, just society seemed inherently logical. For a generation that had overcome the Depression, conquered fascism, and harnessed unprecedented technology, the future was brimming with opportunity. Lyndon Johnson hoped to tap this energy for change to extend the promise of American abundance to everyone, even those marginalized by race and class in urban ghettos and by the accident of birth in rural places like Appalachia. Although much of Johnson's Great Society legislation was aimed at the educated middle class, with initiatives such as National Public Radio, endowments for the arts and humanities, land conservation, automobile safety, highway beautification, consumer protection, federal aid for education, and Medicare, it was the effort to eradicate poverty that reflected the era's highest goals and deepest failures.

Among the academics and policy makers who designed both the War on Poverty and the ARC, confidence in the ability of American society to build a more perfect world was deeply rooted in experience and faith. The triumph of wartime mobilization, the successful postwar reconstruction of Europe and Japan, and, above all, the unparalleled expansion of prosperity at home had convinced a generation of intellectuals that the American dream was not only possible but perhaps now widely attainable. The mass poverty of the Great Depression had been replaced by mass accumulation; Americans, in the words of postwar historian David Potter, had become a "people of plenty."¹ In the internationally competitive environment of the cold war, the na-

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tion's steady growth in personal income and consumption appeared to confirm the popular consensus that American capitalism had found the path to abundance.

Within this ideology of certainty, there was no place for poverty and little excuse for economic failure. Prosperity, it was widely believed, was now the promise, if not the norm, for the majority of Americans. Among a growing cadre of intellectuals, scarcity became an anomaly, a "paradox" of the marginalized few. The minority poor were a separate group from most Americans, a "self-contained, culturally deprived social group." Depressed areas of the country were now "poverty pockets" that rising affluence had left behind.² This "other America" lacked access to the opportunities (education, jobs, etc.) that had allowed the rest of the nation to prosper. Isolated in ghettos and rural enclaves, poor people lacked the skills and motivation necessary to get ahead in modern society. Increasingly, poverty was viewed as a deviant condition, the result of the deficits of poor people and poor places themselves, rather than as the product of inequities fostered by society or economic modernization. That millions of unskilled workers had been displaced by the same mechanization that produced the affordable goods of the consumer age was seen not as a structural flaw in the market economy but as an unfortunate by-product of progress and growth.

Even the most liberal economists of the 1960s viewed poverty as a deviation from the norm, something that would eventually be eliminated by continuous growth. Most leading economists by the late 1950s had accepted the Keynesian model of government-induced growth. National wealth, the argument went, was like a rising tide that lifted all boats. Indeed, John Kenneth Galbraith's popular critique of American opulence, *The Affluent Society*, acknowledged that expanding private wealth in the 1950s had failed to end poverty, but the Harvard economist was more concerned with the problems that the pursuit of growth had generated in the public sector, including inflation, pollution, deteriorating highways, and inner-city decay, than with inequality within the system itself. Government investment in the public sector, he reasoned, would not only get the nation moving again but eventually eliminate poverty as a "residual" problem. Galbraith and other growth theory economists carried their ideas into the Ken-

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needy White House, where these ideas came to dominate the president's Council of Economic Advisors. Concerned that lingering poverty and unemployment were signs of a stagnating market, they believed that stimulating the economy rather than attacking poverty was the administration's number one problem.

It would fall to a new generation of social scientists to raise concern for economic inequality to the level of a national movement. Influenced by the same political, economic, and cultural changes that shaped postwar economic theory, social scientists in the two decades after World War II also came to view poverty as an anomaly, but rather than linking this abnormality to flaws in the American system, they found the roots of poverty in the culture and social psychology of the poor themselves. This new "poverty knowledge" was an outgrowth of the reorganization and expansion of the social sciences in the 1940s, especially the emergence of applied behavioral science theories that placed greater emphasis on individual performance and on the application of scientific knowledge to a wide range of human social problems. Postwar behavioral scientists professed to provide insights into human motivation that offered all-too-easy solutions for enlightened policy makers concerned with developing the "human capital" necessary for modern economic growth.³ The behavioral sciences not only supplied a politically acceptable explanation for the "paradox" of poverty—the poor themselves were to blame—they also offered strategies for altering this destructive behavior without resorting to redistribution of wealth or to significant structural reform.

In the minds of cold war-era social scientists, moreover, the presence of poverty in the middle of affluent America was more than just a temporary consequence of economic stagnation. Persistent poverty challenged the optimistic assumptions that underlay the affluent society—the premise that the American path to affluence would eventually produce a unified, classless, and rich society. As Michael Harrington pointed out, the poor constituted a "separate culture, another nation, with its own way of life." With the poor unable to participate in the consumer society, their numbers were not diminishing as the economists had implied. "They are a different kind of people," he wrote. "They think and feel differently; they look upon a different America than the middle class looks upon."⁴ For activist intellectuals such as

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Harrington, the presence of the other America was an embarrassment and a threat to the larger society itself. Bringing these forgotten Americans into the mainstream, they argued, was the preeminent challenge facing their generation, and this, they admonished, would require a broad-based government initiative to redeem the poor.

These two strains of postwar thought—economic growth theory and human capital theory—would come together in the design of the War on Poverty and provide a conceptual framework for government intervention strategies toward Appalachia. Although none of the major crafters of the War on Poverty were from the region or had any extensive knowledge of it, popular images of Appalachia rooted deep in the nation's consciousness predisposed Great Society policy makers to identify Appalachia as "deviant" and thus as a prime target in the antipoverty campaign. Though the region had long been perceived as an economic and cultural backwater, "a land where time stood still," its otherness could now be eliminated, they assumed, through development and assimilation into the mainstream.

Once defined as part of the "other America," Appalachia became a pawn in a great national experiment that sought to eradicate poverty without confronting the specific institutional and economic structures that abused the region in the first place. The catalyst for that experiment was the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), and although it was short lived and conceived to fight national perceptions of poverty and its causes, the OEO brought hope and empowerment to millions in Appalachia, fueling a nascent regional identity and stirring the waters of resistance in ways its designers did not envision.

When President Johnson announced the antipoverty initiative in his State of the Union address on January 8, 1964, the War on Poverty was a proclamation without a plan. The president's Council of Economic Advisors, under Walter Heller, had drafted a limited proposal for "widening participation in prosperity" through a series of demonstration projects in selected American cities, but Johnson had rejected the plan as being too timid for his vision. The new president wanted something that could define his presidency and make his mark before the approaching 1964 elections, something, he told Heller, that would be "big and bold and hit the nation with real impact."⁵ He wasn't in-

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reterested in demonstration programs; he wanted a poverty project in every community, and he wanted to make the initiative the centerpiece of his Great Society.

The task of designing a strategy for the poverty campaign fell to Kennedy brother-in-law and head of the Peace Corps Sargent Shriver. By tapping Shriver to head the initiative, Johnson not only tied the crusade to the memory of the slain president but gained the support of the Kennedy faithful and the northeastern intellectuals who had been calling for government action on behalf of the poor. Shriver had turned the Peace Corps into one of the most successful programs of the Kennedy era, and he had a longtime personal interest in volunteerism, youth, and juvenile delinquency, issues that the president initially saw as the core of the antipovertry program.⁶ Like President Johnson, Shriver had an enthusiasm for challenges and an indefatigable commitment to work, and after his appointment on February 1, he immediately convened a task force to build on the recommendations already made by the Council of Economic Advisors. Working quickly, he organized a series of seminars and informal discussions that brought together a variety of idealistic young bureaucrats and leading academic experts on poverty. The task force completed its work within six weeks and sent the omnibus EOA to Congress on March 16, 1964.

The hastily designed proposal called for the annual expenditure of almost a billion dollars on a package of ten disparate and mostly untested programs. The initiative combined an assortment of strategies that reflected both the political heritage of the New Deal and the new social science theories of the postwar period. Much of the act focused government resources on workforce development and on helping poor youth to break the "cycle of poverty." Title I of the legislation, for example, established the Job Corps, modeled after the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, which was designed to provide education and vocational training in rural conservation camps for disadvantaged urban youth. More than just a federal job program, however, the Job Corps, headed by university administrator Otis Singletary, was also an educational program aimed at teaching underprivileged youth the behaviors needed to get jobs in the new economy. The act also created the Neighborhood Youth Corps to offer community-based training and work experience for young people living at home and established

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a work-study program to help low-income college students remain in school. Similarly, the bill made funds available to the states to set up programs for unemployed fathers of needy children to gain work experience and job training. Favoring education over federal job creation, the EOA sought to change the behavior of the poor rather than to provide direct transfer payments that would leave them permanently dependent on the government for survival. It offered a "hand up" rather than a "hand out," as Johnson put it.

To develop the capacity of the poor to help themselves and to coordinate community services to combat poverty, the act called for the establishment of community action agencies (CAAs) run by local people, including the poor themselves. The idea of community action was at the core of the earlier Council of Economic Advisors' recommendations and consumed more than half of the new antipovertry budget. CAAs were intended to serve as the vehicles for quickly and directly channeling federal funds into local neighborhoods across the country. These nonprofit agencies would prioritize community needs and receive grants for a wide range of education and cultural enrichment projects, including adult literacy, health services, legal aid for the poor, and child development programs such as Head Start. To assist in organizing antipovertry projects and to provide direct training services, the act created a domestic volunteer service corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), patterned after Shriver's Peace Corps. Finally, the bill established the OEO to administer grants and to direct the effort.⁷

Although the EOA included a number of manpower development components long favored by liberal Democrats to retrain unemployed workers for jobs in a growing economy, the heart of the act lay in the process of community action. Not surprisingly, however, there was little agreement about what "community action" meant, and in the rush to formulate a plan, the idea came to represent different things to politicians, bureaucrats, and intellectuals. Almost everyone believed that the antipovertry campaign should be waged at the local level by local people rather than administered from Washington, but there was little understanding of how that strategy would work in practice. Johnson initially believed that the attack on poverty would concentrate on education and vocational training for inner-city and rural youths, and he saw community action as connecting parents, teachers, and other

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professionals in the task of educating children, after the pattern of FDR's National Youth Administration. Officials in the Bureau of the Budget and in other cabinet agencies thought of community action simply as an efficient mechanism to coordinate the delivery of antipovertry services, synchronizing a multitude of state and federal programs. Most academics saw the concept as an opportunity to reorganize the poor community around modern, middle-class values and structures.⁸

The idea of community action blended a number of theories of government planning and social engineering that had been evolving throughout the twentieth century, but it owed much to the intellectual changes taking place in the social sciences in the postwar era. The application of social science theories of community development to the problems of the inner cities, for example, provided a model for fighting poverty on a national scale (rather than case by case) that appealed to the drafters of the antipovertry program. Sociologists at the University of Chicago had long utilized their city as a microcosm of the larger society, and in the 1920s and 1930s they developed a theory of community disorganization to explain the persistence of poverty in the Chicago slums. The problems of the inner city, they argued, were environmental, the results of the dislocation of workers and weak community organizations that in turn produced alienation and hopelessness. Rather than concentrating eleemosynary resources on individual uplift, as had been the practice in traditional settlement house casework, the Chicago scholars urged social workers to focus their energies on building organizational connections that would improve the opportunities of the poor as a group. Low-income people, they suggested, lacked the organizational skills of the middle class to exert pressure on politicians, coordinate community services, and discipline themselves. The way to assimilate these poor, often immigrant populations into the mainstream was to assist them in developing the appropriate behaviors and institutions that made for successful communities.

Much of the field research of the Chicago school sociologists focused on the link between poverty and juvenile delinquency, since the latter seemed to represent a perfect example of the failure of community organizations to provide opportunities and discipline for young people. As national concern about urban crime and delinquency began

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to mount after World War II, social science research increasingly linked poverty and delinquency with community disorganization and urged public and private programs to expand community improvement efforts, aimed now at a new group of immigrants—Hispanics, southern blacks, and Appalachian migrants. In the late 1950s, the Ford Foundation launched an experimental project based on the Chicago model to revitalize slum areas and to increase employment opportunities for youth in four major cities and in rural areas of North Carolina. Under the leadership of Paul Ylvisaker, the Gray Areas Program helped to sponsor community development projects planned and implemented by local neighborhood organizations. Ylvisaker believed that these projects could demonstrate effective strategies of organizing poor people and poor communities to help themselves. Ford also sponsored a series of workshops, coordinated by the GSA, to educate law enforcement and social service agencies about the particular problems of Appalachian migrants in Chicago and other midwestern cities.

After the 1960 presidential election, many of the young activist intellectuals associated with the Gray Areas Program followed John Kennedy to Washington, and they carried the idea of community action with them to new positions in the federal government, especially on the staff of Attorney General Robert Kennedy. In 1961, at the request of the attorney general, John Kennedy created the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, headed by Robert Kennedy's college roommate David Hackett. Hackett and his staff quickly turned to the Ford Foundation for help in establishing demonstration projects to reduce delinquency. The committee launched a number of projects that applied the principles of the Gray Areas Program to the coordination of services for youth. At least two committee grants went to projects started by the Ford Foundation, in New York and New Haven, but the initiative suffered from limited funding, and Hackett was continuously frustrated by the absence of cooperation from other federal agencies. Several of these projects proved to be politically controversial because of their practice of "indigenous" participation, but Hackett believed that the idea of community action itself offered promise for attacking not only juvenile delinquency but also the larger problem of poverty itself. When Heller invited Hackett

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and other members of his team to participate in his anti-poverty discussions in 1963, Justice Department staffers seized the opportunity to expand the lessons of community action onto a larger stage.

In the absence of any other comprehensive strategy to attack poverty and with the apparent endorsement of the new social science community, "Hackert's guerrillas," as the Justice staff came to be called, aggressively projected community action to the center of Heller's anti-poverty proposal. Although few of the economists and bureaucrats on the poverty working group understood the implications of the strategy, the process of attacking poverty by coordinating local agencies and organizing local people appeared to be cost effective and politically sound. Most of Johnson's advisors, including the director of the Bureau of the Budget, Kermit Gordon—another former employee of the Ford Foundation—believed that community action would be administered through agencies of local government.⁹ Even Shriver, who initially had reservations about the concept, saw the local CAAs as being "composed of distinguished people" who could "speak out on behalf of the poor" to elected officials.¹⁰

In reality, the concept of community action encompassed a range of strategies designed to assimilate the poor into the mainstream of American society. Some proponents saw the process as one of institutional change, helping to reorganize government services to open new opportunities for individuals to succeed within the existing system. Other, more radical strategists saw community action as a way to bypass conservative local governments and empower the poor to take charge of their own communities through political organizing. While some saw community action in terms of cultural rehabilitation, resident involvement, and top-down change, others advocated bottom-up strategies of resident control and empowerment. Most proponents of bottom-up change, especially those in the Justice Department, believed that CAAs controlled by the poor themselves were the only way to circumvent segregationist attempts in the South to set up all-white poverty programs.

One of the most ardent voices for empowering the poor was that of Richard Boone, who had worked for the Ford Foundation's Gray Areas Program before becoming an aide to Hackert's committee on juvenile delinquency and a member of Shriver's anti-poverty task force.

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Boone so persistently repeated the phrase "maximum feasible participation" of the poor at task force meetings that it was eventually included in the language of the bill. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Boone held degrees from the University of Chicago and had worked as a Cook County, Illinois, police officer before joining Paul Ylvisaker at Ford. Steeped in the Chicago school of community organizing, he was a protégé of Chicago social activist and labor advocate Saul Alinsky, who had been organizing stockyard workers on the South Side of Chicago since the 1930s. Unlike most of his university colleagues, who saw community organizing as a means of educating and assimilating the poor, Alinsky believed that the problems of the poor were essentially political and began organizing workers to pressure authorities for better municipal services. In the early 1960s, Alinsky took his grassroots style of political organizing into the black community of Woodlawn, where his model of resident participation challenged official control of welfare policies and programs to serve the poor.¹¹

Boone shared the belief that people were poor because they lacked political power, and he insisted that the CAAs of the War on Poverty include the "maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served" to assure grassroots control. Other poverty ideologues in the Justice Department shared Boone's fear of "establishment" control of CAAs, especially in the segregationist South, and they were encouraged when Shriver appointed Jack Conway, a former Chicago labor organizer, as director of the Community Action division of the OEO. Conway had served as administrative assistant to United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther and shared Boone's commitment to organizing for political action. Boone subsequently became director of policy and programming in the new Community Action division.

Although empowering the poor became the mantra for a few key administrators within the OEO, most of the thinkers and planners who launched the War on Poverty initially saw community action as an organizational mechanism to improve service delivery and rehabilitate the poor into mainstream culture. Most liberal reformers of the period assumed that the poor lacked only the skills and behaviors necessary to succeed in modern society. What the disadvantaged needed to lift themselves out of poverty, they believed, were education and op-

portunity, not political confrontation. The deficiencies of the poor could be addressed through behavior modification and job training programs rather than by the redistribution of wealth or political restructuring.

The assumption that poverty resulted from natural circumstances or the lack of personal motivation was deeply rooted in the American myth, but in the years following World War II, new behavioral science research added the proposition that poverty might be the product of certain cultural factors as well. Scholars had long recognized the cultural differences between "traditional" and "modern" societies and, in the early years of the century, had begun to document the folkways of American regions and minority groups. After the war some anthropologists developed the idea that certain group folkways, out of place in modern society, could also produce a "culture of poverty," passed from one generation to another, that kept entire populations of people in cycles of despair. For a postwar generation of intellectuals confident in the primacy of middle-class values and in the benefits of modernization, the culture of poverty theory offered a convenient explanation for government to act as an agent of acculturation.

Emerging from the work of anthropologist Oscar Lewis, the culture of poverty model became a widely accepted explanation in the 1960s for the "underdevelopment" of certain "third world" societies and, by extension, of impoverished populations within the United States. In two best-selling books, *The Children of Sanchez* (1961) and *La Vida* (1966), Lewis argued that people from "primitive" cultures were not inferior to modern people; they just lacked the skills, habits, and attitudes necessary to achieve success in the modern world. Their traditional cultures perpetuated apathy, divisiveness, and resignation and reproduced underdevelopment rather than integration into the modern, market economy. Lewis identified a long list of deviant psychological traits that were perpetuated by the family within these cultures and prevented children from breaking out of poverty. In addition to jobs and job training, he suggested, programs of cultural intervention were required if the children of poor families were to take full advantage of changing conditions and opportunities in their lifetimes.¹²

Although Lewis's research was based on fieldwork with families in Mexico and Puerto Rico, other scholars applied the culture of poverty

theory universally to the poor, including to southern blacks who had migrated to northern ghettos and pockets of hillbilly poverty in Appalachia and the Ozarks. In 1962 North Carolina sociologist Rupert Vance wrote that the physical isolation that had created a distinct culture in Appalachia now was in danger of producing "a permanent culture of poverty" in the mountains unless the government intervened to raise the "goals and aspirations of the people."¹³ That same year Michael Harrington utilized the model in *The Other America* to suggest that the poor were like an "underdeveloped nation" within the United States.¹⁴ This tendency to think about the poor as part of the third world not only allowed policy makers to see poverty as a universal condition that could be overcome by American-style "development" but also displaced responsibility for poverty onto the culture of the poor themselves. Later generations of scholars would reject the culture of poverty model as blaming the victim, but the theory played a powerful role in shaping many of the antipoverity programs of the late twentieth century.

Lewis, Harrington, and other leading advocates of the culture of poverty participated in the Shriver planning meetings to design the War on Poverty, and almost every program administered by the OEO reflected the theory. The Job Corps, for example, although it was one of the administration's few concessions to calls for a massive job training program, was essentially an education program whose primary goal was to teach young people how to apply for jobs. Senior Johnson administration officials referred to OEO employment programs like the Job Corps and state-sponsored efforts like Kentucky's "Happy Pappy" program for unemployed fathers as "our charm school" because they were based on assumptions "that people who didn't fit the established culture didn't get jobs."¹⁵ Educational programs such as Head Start, after-school enrichment, VISTA, and homemaker skills training were designed to change the behavior of families, raise the expectations of youth, and prepare adults for jobs in the new economy. Even the participation of the poor in CAAs was deemed by many OEO administrators as just another tool to acculturate the poor into the value system and behaviors of the middle class, since most CAAs, they assumed, would be operated under the aegis of the local government.¹⁶

The culture of poverty model fit the popular idea of Appalachia

flawlessly. Not only was mountain culture considered to be a remnant of the American past, but now the region's socioeconomic problems also could be attributed to that backward culture. After all, according to popular myth, the region was inhabited by old-stock Americans who, in the words of British historian Arnold Toynbee, had simply "acquired civilization and then lost it."¹⁷ For many intellectuals and poverty warriors of the 1960s, Appalachia needed only to be redeemed from government neglect and geographic isolation. Once the mountaineers were returned to the cultural mainstream, the problem of poverty in the region would be alleviated without any significant restructuring of the political and economic system.

Indeed, one popular monograph distributed to poverty workers throughout Appalachia during the War on Poverty labeled Appalachians as "yesterday's people" and contrasted their anachronistic folk culture with that of modern, middle-class Americans. Written by Jack Weller, a New York-born Presbyterian minister who borrowed heavily from Oscar Lewis's ideas, the book found mountain people to be fatalistic, person oriented, present minded, and individualistic in a world given to reason, accumulation, community organizations, and faith in the future. The "personality" and "general tendencies of behavior in the mountaineer," Weller suggested, had ill prepared the mountain people for life in the modern world. "The greatest challenge of Appalachia, and the most difficult," he claimed, "is its people."¹⁸

Bolstered by an introduction from sociologist Rupert Vance and a foreword by Appalachian advocate Harry Caudill, the volume implied that "to change the mountains is to change the mountain personality," as Vance put it.¹⁹ Weller himself did not consider the traditional mountain subculture to be wrong, only different, but it was an easy step for readers to conclude that cultural difference was the cause of mountain poverty. Endorsed, moreover, by the CSM and published by the University of Kentucky Press, the monograph linked the academic ideas of the culture of poverty with popular images of Appalachian otherness to provide an intellectual framework for regional uplift programs. Weller's book became a working manual for hundreds of antipoverty warriors and one of the most popular volumes on Appalachia in the 1960s.

As the OEO prepared to launch its assault on poverty in the mountains, it therefore did so from a position narrowed by politics, conflict-

ing strategies, and misguided assumptions. Pressured by political expediency, antipoverty planners turned to untested theories and experimental urban programs to design a universal and practical strategy for change. Denied the option of direct income transfers of wealth to the poor, they relied on the latest academic theories of human capital development to provide a bridge for the assimilation of the poor into the cultural mainstream. Divided over the meanings of community action and local control, they initiated a process for change that pitted disparate forces and incompatible ideas against each other in a volatile environment and in unpredictable times. Initially an important symbol of the paradox of poverty in America, Appalachia became a critical testing ground for academic theories and popular ideas about government intervention on behalf of the poor. Already rent by decades of exploitation, corruption, and greed, the region also became a battleground for the political struggles and the alternative social visions that divided the Great Society itself.

The Eighty-eighth Congress passed the HOA on August 7, 1964, just three months before the presidential election. Staff of the new OEA scrambled to set up programs and channel funds into communities as quickly as possible to maximize the political benefits of the new program before the fall elections, but launching the War on Poverty proved to be a challenge. Early designers of the antipoverty program had proposed to fund a limited number of startup projects and to provide for a lengthier planning and evaluation period, but politics and the massive scale of the billion-dollar national effort demanded swift results. President Johnson had raised awareness of the initiative during his poverty trips the previous April, but planners at the OEO found that organizing the poor to design and submit applications for federal assistance was slow. The agency distributed hundreds of brochures describing the new federal programs and urging local officials to establish CAAs and submit proposals to Washington. When applications dribbled in slowly, the staff turned to conventional organizations and institutions to launch demonstration projects as models for local action.

In Appalachia there was no shortage of service organizations, government planning agencies, and educational institutions eager to take up Washington's challenge on behalf of the poor. For decades the re-

gion had drawn the attention of well-meaning missionaries, academics, social workers, philanthropists, and college students intent on understanding and/or resolving the otherness of the mountains. Many of these reformers were connected with each other through the CSM and other organizations that had been calling for government intervention in the region. Now, with the promise of federal funding, this network of people provided a ready vehicle for launching antipoverty initiatives in communities and institutions throughout the mountains. Although some programs of "national emphasis" filtered down from Washington and a few experimental, grassroots projects eventually bubbled up from the bottom, local and state governments, colleges and universities, and other institutions within Appalachia provided the organizational and communication structures for early poverty proposals.

Out of these institutions poured a generation with pent-up energy and idealism that transformed a medley of federal programs into a progressive, moral crusade. Interest in improving Appalachian life had grown among southern educators, church officials, planners, and social service providers since the early 1950s. Convinced of their ability to organize communities, overcome challenges, and uplift people, an army of social change agents swept up the hollows and coves after the passage of the EOA, bringing a flurry of public and private programs designed to address a host of community needs. Within a year, hundreds of CAAs, Head Start programs, job training centers, and other projects had been launched, serving almost every county of the region. Early projects established rural community centers, set up adult education programs, sponsored free health screenings, provided housing rehabilitation, and conducted summer reading programs in rural schools. Since most Appalachian counties qualified for 100 percent federal funding, initial grants were often utilized to hire professional staff whose job it was to manage the local, nonprofit CAA, organize constituencies, and develop new initiatives.

State and local governments across the region were eager to tap into the new source of federal dollars. Some states, like West Virginia, organized CAAs in almost every county to coordinate the delivery of expanded welfare services. Others converted existing economic development councils into nonprofit CAAs or created new, multicounty

agencies to develop programs for large rural areas. OEO grants went to local school boards, state councils of churches, and colleges and universities, and the CSM received several grants for region-wide initiatives, including one of the first national demonstration grants for a student voluntary service program, the Appalachian Volunteers. One of the first CAAs funded in North Carolina was WAMY, a four-county antipoverty program in the Blue Ridge created earlier by the North Carolina Fund, an original partner in the Ford Foundation's Gray Areas Program.

Despite having a common source of funding and shared program guidelines from the OEO, this plethora of local programs and structures did not represent any regionally or nationally coordinated strategy to fight poverty in Appalachia. Sargent Shriver's report to the president outlining the War on Poverty had recognized that poverty in Harlan County, Kentucky, was not the same as poverty in Harlem, New York, but "the program's design did nothing to address Appalachian problems as different from those of Harlem."²⁰ Resembling more a conflagration of scattered assaults and experimental incursions than a well-orchestrated battle, the war to end poverty in the mountains was waged on multiple levels, utilizing different tactics in each community, and it produced a wide range of responses from indigenous people. What gave the campaign a collective momentum and unity of spirit was the moral sense of outrage, hope, and mission that the legislation itself unleashed. For Appalachia, the War on Poverty was as much an attitude, a moral crusade, as a set of programs. Eventually, among a core group of young poverty warriors, this commitment to social justice and reform would evolve into a regional social movement that reached far beyond the work of the OEO.

The idea of community action provided the only common theme that ran through the poverty program, but just as policy makers in Washington differed on the meaning of local control, the CAAs differed in how they administered federal funds in the mountains. Some were little more than transformed economic development commissions, controlled by local elites. Others evolved out of grassroots organizations and were designed to confront local bureaucracies and power structures in the interest of the poor. The majority of CAAs

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were more moderate, functioning primarily to deliver social services designed to modify the behavior of individual poor people. Where they included the participation of the poor, CAAs usually designated sympathetic county professionals to represent the poor or established local, community-based advisory boards.²¹

This was especially the case among many of the early CAAs launched in response to the initial call for applications to state and local officials, before the staff at the OEO began to insist on maximum feasible participation of the poor in the composition of CAA boards. The CAA in Rockcastle County, Kentucky, for example, was created out of the Rockcastle Development Association when the county became one of the first 182 counties eligible nationally for full OEO funding. The board of the new Rockcastle County Economic Opportunity Council included the county judge executive, the superintendent of schools, the county agricultural extension agent, the mayor of the largest town, and the chair of the county Democratic Party. With funds from its first OEO program development grant, the council hired a local schoolteacher as administrator and established an office in the school board administration building. Most of the agency's early programs involved expanding educational services to the poor, including establishing a Head Start program and hiring additional teachers and teachers' aides for summer enrichment programs.²²

Service-oriented CAAs like the one in Rockcastle County burgeoned and became a common model for uplifting the poor throughout the region. Such programs focused federal resources on education and low-skill employment activities disguised as job training opportunities (such as clearing roadside brush and painting public buildings) rather than on more structural approaches to fighting poverty. In mountain counties, where local school superintendents often controlled county political machines, these strategies assured that poverty dollars would be channeled through local institutions, where power brokers could utilize the funds for patronage purposes. The public schools were usually the largest employers in rural counties, and jobs as recreational directors, trainers, teachers' aides, counselors, janitors, cooks, and bus drivers only increased the poor's dependency on the political status quo.

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Even those CAAs that were more willing to listen to the poor themselves—often those whose directors had been hired from outside the area—opted for moderate programs of personal empowerment, establishing rural community centers, craft programs, sewing centers, and cooperative small businesses. In Kentucky, the Knox County Economic Opportunity Council, established at the same time as the Rockcastle County CAA, provided home economic aides, home improvement demonstrations, recreational activities, and early childhood programs in thirteen community centers located in discarded one-room schools in poor, rural districts. Representatives of these centers filled a third of the seats on the Knox County CAA board. Eventually the award-winning agency started a small furniture factory and handicraft shop for low-income workers. However, a study undertaken by University of Kentucky researchers three years into the program found that, despite these services, the agency had done little to alter the county's institutional structures or patterns of political alignments.²³ Such was the case in Mingo County, West Virginia, as well, where the local CAA's agency-based strategy, intended to improve existing service delivery programs, gradually evolved into a more confrontational strategy. Under the leadership of Mingo County native Huey Perry, the program eventually organized a political action league and a fair elections committee and established an independent grocery that threatened local political and business interests.²⁴

At least at the outset of the War on Poverty, mountain power brokers welcomed the new federal programs and assumed that funding would be administered through state and local governments in the pattern established by the New Deal. Douglass Arnett, who studied the community action process in Clay County, Kentucky, pointed out that political leaders in the mountains "had no objections to giving more money or more services to poor people" as long as those "resources were channeled through existing institutions and organizations controlled by the local power structure."²⁵ Only when OEO administrators in Washington began to pressure CAAs to increase involvement of the poor on their boards and to directly fund demonstration projects by grassroots groups and nongovernmental organizations did the local political machines begin to question the intent of the national pro-

gram. By that time, hundreds of outside VISTA volunteers, energetic college students, and idealistic community organizers fresh from the civil rights movement had arrived in the mountains. Increasingly they joined with poor people, labor organizers, and indigenous reformers to question the service delivery approach and to challenge the assumptions on which it was based.

From the beginning, a small but influential group of OEO administrators, led by Richard Boone and his associate Sanford Kravitz, believed that defeating poverty would require more than the expansion of existing social services programs. Convinced that the poor "need access to power as well as to resources," they advocated a bolder approach to community action and increasingly used their positions to encourage more radical change.²⁶ Deeply committed to the idea of maximum feasible participation of the poor, Boone pushed OEO staff to demand greater involvement of poor people on CAA boards, especially after some county governments in the South refused to allow black representation and some urban startup proposals in the North became dominated by representatives of the local city hall.

Although the principle of community action emphasized local decision making and the majority of funds flowed to CAAs organized under the aegis of local governments, the EOA reserved 15 percent of the community action budget for national emphasis programs and demonstration projects. As head of the OEO Policy and Planning division from 1964 to 1965, Boone utilized these funds to encourage more radical experimentation and to support demonstration grants to non-CAAs.²⁷ These grants often bypassed local power structures and extended support directly to grassroots organizations and academic institutions for programs designed more to empower the poor than just to assimilate them into mainstream culture. Many of these experimental projects drew heavily on the community organizing work of Chicago's Saul Alinsky and the youth-oriented efforts of the Gray Areas Program. They assumed that the needs of the poor would not be met until they were organized to voice their concerns on critical issues such as housing, jobs, health care, and welfare reform. Assisted by the growing number of VISTA volunteers and poverty consultants in the region, these programs nurtured a generation of young activists, both indigenous and nonnative, that increasingly rejected the service deliv-

ery model as ineffective if it failed to change the political and economic status quo. In Appalachia, as in northern cities, these special demonstration projects proved to be both the most innovative and the most controversial of the antipoverty programs.

Offering greater flexibility and freedom from local government oversight, demonstration grants tapped into new ideas and energies long stifled by the traditional political culture in the mountains. Except in labor unions, poor people had seldom been organized in Appalachia, and formal middle-class institutions such as colleges and professional organizations were sparse. The core of the region, from Morgantown, West Virginia, to Knoxville, Tennessee, lacked a major university that might have generated creativity and intellectual leadership, and the scattering of small private colleges struggled, like castles in the wilderness, to uplift a talented few. The availability of federal funds offered poor people and middle-class reformers the opportunity to mobilize for change, and it unleashed the potential of academics and professionals on the edges of the region who were eager to facilitate that change.

Whether funded by OEO demonstration grants or by the swell of private foundation dollars that flowed into the region as a result of the War on Poverty, nongovernmental initiatives burgeoned in Appalachia in the 1960s and 1970s. Like the more service-oriented CAAs, the nongovernmental antipoverty programs differed in their approaches to mountain problems. Most recognized the weakness of Appalachian civic institutions and advocated policies for social transformation, but their tactics to accomplish reform varied according to class, conviction, and moment in time. Colleges, universities, and organizations such as the CSM launched traditional programs of educational outreach, leadership training, and professional development designed to enrich the learning environment of poor children or to provide technical assistance for community planning and economic growth. Many of these efforts brought students, young professionals, and other outside experts into the region. Grassroots organizations, on the other hand, often led by poor people and their advocates, were more likely to challenge the local political and economic system by establishing cooperative businesses, creating community-based housing and health care programs, and questioning the decisions of school boards and county

governments. Eventually even some of the more moderate, institutionally based projects clashed with regional power structures, and in time the progeny of the colleges and universities joined with the poor to organize dissent and resistance. Collectively, however, these nongovernmental efforts tended to question long established structures and relationships in the mountains and to test the resolve of national and local leaders to change them.

Colleges and universities played a pivotal role in the War on Poverty in Appalachia and in turn experienced major growth as a result of antipoverity research and demonstration contracts and other Great Society investments in higher education. Academics had long helped to shape the popular images and stereotypes of Appalachia, and social scientists at leading research universities on the perimeter of the region had contributed to the definition of Appalachia as a national problem area. Many of the initial planners and administrators at the OEO were scholars or at least well-trained intellectuals, and the experimental character of the War on Poverty reflected the academic model of testing hypotheses through selected demonstration projects. Although the limited demonstration model succumbed to the political demands of an all-out assault on poverty, the idea of applying knowledge to practice survived in both privately and publicly funded antipoverity efforts.

Since World War II, higher education had increasingly embraced the values of the private market, competing for an ever growing number of federal research grants and shaping the production of knowledge to meet political as well as administrative needs.²⁸ The rise of interest in "poverty knowledge" during the 1960s spurred the attention of academics and institutions serving Appalachia and resulted in the expansion of education and research initiatives that sought to apply new knowledge to the region's problems and that also contributed to the growth of the institutions. Especially at major research universities such as the University of Kentucky, West Virginia University, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Pittsburgh, social scientists were quick to focus their research agendas on the region and to propose intervention strategies. Faculty from these institutions contributed to the 1962 regional assessment *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*, funded by the Ford Foundation, and served as consultants to the PARC. The University of North Carolina played a cen-

tral role in the design of the North Carolina Fund, a state-level predecessor to the War on Poverty. George Esser, a UNC professor, became the North Carolina Fund's executive director.

In Kentucky, professors from the University of Kentucky, Berea College, and Morehead State University (all located on the periphery of the region) had been involved in raising awareness of mountain problems since the 1950s. Faculty contributed to the early regional development plan *Program 60* and prepared draft proposals in forest and water management, highway and agricultural development, and small-town revitalization, including the New Cities plan for community relocation. In 1961 the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture launched a major outreach initiative in eastern Kentucky, the Eastern Kentucky Resource Development Project, with a \$754,000 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and a \$1 million state appropriation. The seven-year project established a ten-member team of economic development experts at a new research and demonstration center in Breathitt County. The ironically named Quicksand Demonstration Center worked with local leaders on a variety of activities ranging from industrial planning to livestock production.²⁹ Such projects were designed to link the resources of the university with the needs of Appalachian communities in a pattern consistent with its land-grant mission. West Virginia University went so far as to reorganize its administrative structure to better coordinate outreach services to the Mountain State, creating the Center for Appalachian Studies and Development, the first of its kind, in 1964.³⁰

Not only did university-based initiatives in Appalachia describe the problems of the mountains as developmental deficiencies that could be alleviated with the application of technology and knowledge, but, like land-grant universities elsewhere, they tended to focus their efforts on work with local elites. One of the extension community development specialists in the UK project described his job as helping mountain communities to "mature" by sponsoring county and multi-county public forums for regional leaders. "This 'developmental task' concept for communities," he wrote, "is derived from that discipline of educators, physiologists, sociologists, and anthropologists who believe that a child cannot crawl, walk, or run in a coordinated fashion, without first accomplishing certain developmental tasks (maturation)." He

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added, "Likewise, a community should not expect to have a large industry or outstanding commercial center until it has 'matured' sufficiently to support those aspects of community living which an industrial or commercial community must have for its people. The potential development of facilities and institutions of a community are almost entirely dependent upon the degree of mental, physical, and social development of the people involved."³¹

Along with other technical and education initiatives, the Eastern Kentucky Resource Development Project and the WVU Center for Appalachian Studies and Development helped to start county development associations and later to set up multicounty planning councils. Local leaders, however, often distrusted the outside experts, resented university paternalism, and were suspicious of political reform. When funding for the Kentucky project expired and the university was unable to sustain the initiative, the Kentucky area development councils squashed a grant proposal to the OEO to revive the program on the grounds that the university project contested with the councils "for the support of local officials and development organizations."³² Mountain elites did not object to the placement of student interns on selected service projects in their communities, but they feared the loss of control over local development decisions that federal funding of university professionals might foster.

Colleges and universities, however, tended not to distinguish between student-centered projects assisting poor people in the field and the action-oriented intervention efforts of faculty and other professionals to facilitate community planning. Both were part of the educational mission of higher education in the 1960s. Even smaller, liberal arts colleges in the mountains encouraged students and faculty to apply their knowledge to society's problems, and many took advantage of new federal programs and foundation support to launch local outreach initiatives. For example, Mars Hill College, a small Baptist institution in western North Carolina, took the lead in organizing the antipoverty campaign in Madison County, one of the poorest counties in the state. Over the course of the next decade, the college doubled its enrollment, faculty, and operating budget and received national recognition for programs that placed student interns in a variety of new social service agencies in the county.³³

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Guided by a visionary, ex-Mennonite dean, Richard Hoffman, who had come south with the civil rights movement, the college organized the local CAA, the Madison County Opportunity Corporation, which wrote federal grants that established Head Start centers, family counseling and other mental health services, housing renovation projects, and job training workshops. Hoffman served for a time as executive director of the local agency, and the college president served on the board of directors along with prominent doctors and educators from the Mars Hill area. The chair of the Department of Sociology, Don Anderson, served as head of a new Madison County planning commission, the first such commission in the North Carolina mountains. Other faculty and administrators helped to create the award-winning Hot Springs Health Program, which provided health services to remote sections of the county. To better coordinate student participation in these outreach activities, Mars Hill College created the Community Development Institute, in which students worked part time as recreational directors, teaching assistants, secretaries, and staff aides in local poverty agencies. Between 1965 and 1970, the college established an Upward Bound program for local high school students and received funding from the OEO and the Southern Regional Education Board to train VISTA and other poverty workers. Many of the professional staff from these initiatives later became permanent faculty at the institution.

Other colleges in the mountains launched similar programs to involve students and staff in community service. A number of these institutions began as settlement schools earlier in the century and slowly evolved into two- and four-year colleges after World War II. Federal resources for Upward Bound, work-study, and other antipoverty programs helped these small colleges to extend their traditional mission of community-based service into more distant hollows while providing financial support for their students and enhancing institutional growth. One of the most successful programs was that undertaken by tiny Alice Lloyd College in eastern Kentucky. Created in 1916 as the Caney Creek Settlement School in Knott County, the college became a junior college after the death of its founder, Alice Lloyd, in 1962 and began receiving OEO grants in the mid-1960s to establish "outpost centers" in neighboring communities. By 1969, with assistance from the Bruner Foundation in New York, the program evolved into the Alice Lloyd

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College Outreach Reserves (ALCOR), which placed live-in students in sixteen area communities to provide summer recreation and educational enrichment activities.³⁴

Settlement schools had always taken an active role in providing health screening and nutritional education in mountain communities, and ALCOR developed a special emphasis on identifying family health problems, teaching dental hygiene and personal cleanliness, and linking poor families with public health services. Led by two Alice Lloyd graduates who would later establish their own health clinic in Knott County, Benny Ray Bailey and Grady Stumbo, the project brought in nurses and medical students from outside the region to work with the college volunteers and conduct health screenings. In 1971 the summer program was extended to three other eastern Kentucky colleges and renamed Appalachian Leadership and Community Outreach. The collaborative program involved more than 150 students deployed in seventy-seven locations in twenty-two counties.³⁵

Student service-learning projects such as ALCOR blossomed in the mountains during the 1960s. Some programs placed indigenous Appalachian students in their own communities to sponsor educational enrichment activities, teach crafts, organize community cleanup campaigns, or link families with health and social service providers, but others tapped into a growing national trend for middle-class college students to volunteer their time in underdeveloped areas. The largest of these student volunteer efforts, the Appalachian Volunteers (AV), brought together native and nonnative young people into a multistate initiative that served most of central Appalachia. Not only did the organization provide fertile ground for a growing network of regional activists, but it eventually broke with its institutional founders to become one of the more radical reform groups in the region.

Formed in the winter of 1963–1964 as part of President Kennedy's emergency winter program for eastern Kentucky, the AV predated the passage of the EOA and reflected both the origins and the conflicting ideologies of the War on Poverty in the mountains. As early as the spring of 1963, the CSM had approached the Ford Foundation for money to form a volunteer organization of young people to provide education and social services to the people of Appalachia. The council

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eventually was awarded a small planning grant from the Edgar Stern Family Fund of New York, but the idea received a major boost in December 1963 when Richard Boone called Milton Ogle of the council and proposed to fund a pilot effort utilizing money from the president's special winterization fund. During the January 1964 winter break, more than three hundred area college students participated in the renovation of two rural schools in Harlan County, Kentucky, and, at a meeting of educators, council representatives, and government officials in February, the AV was formally established and extended to nineteen Kentucky colleges with the assistance of a fifty-thousand-dollar grant from the ARA. Later that year the council received the first of several OEO demonstration grants from Boone's office to expand AV services and hire a field staff to supervise student workers.³⁶

Under Ogle's leadership, the AVs (as the volunteers were known) at first followed a traditional consensus and self-help approach to working with mountain people. Students ventured forth to refurbish one-room schools and winterize homes, utilizing materials donated by area businesses and working alongside resident volunteers. With the cooperation of local school superintendents, AVs provided enrichment programs in the schools, showing movies on hygiene, demonstrating traditional dances, constructing playground equipment, and leading group recreational activities. This strategy of working with local leaders to provide services to the poor was consistent with the CSM's philosophy of helping "any group working for the betterment of conditions in the mountains" and with the training that most early AV staff had received as students at Berea College.³⁷ As Ogle wrote in a letter soliciting materials from businesses, "Deprived people cannot be helped; they must help themselves."³⁸

In the first year of the program, students fanned out into forty eastern Kentucky counties, hanging wallboard, repairing broken windows, replacing rotted floors, and painting woodwork on many of the more than one thousand one- and two-room schools that dotted the eastern Kentucky landscape. Weekend and summer volunteers restored twenty-one dilapidated houses in Stone Fork in Knott County, helped to organize a community center in Persimmon Fork in Leslie County, constructed a greenhouse at Mill Creek in Clay County, and directed summer recreational programs for children throughout the area.³⁹ A

second OEO grant in 1965 added 150 VISTA volunteers to the program and funded additional staff to expand the AV into West Virginia, Virginia, and Tennessee. Two years after its founding, the AV was a showcase OEO program. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* praised the students as "young Samaritans" who "with little more than enthusiasm, hammers and saws" had made "a deep impression on the mountain people."⁴⁰

The very success of the early AV, however, also dramatized the depth of the problems in the mountains and ultimately led to the decline of government support for the program. As hundreds of student volunteers poured into the region—many not native to the mountains—and as field staff established permanent residences and working relationships in rural communities, cultural and political conflicts began to strain the cooperative relationship between the young poverty warriors and local elites. Some student volunteers began to question whether the renovation projects did anything to end poverty or merely camouflaged the worst manifestations of a corrupt system. Returning volunteers found little change in the communities or in the status of the poor. Schools they had repaired a year earlier were soon run down again; windows were broken, and educational materials lost. "When you start fixing up a one-room school, you start wondering," one volunteer later recalled, "Why didn't the local school board fix this up a long time ago? Then you ask, why aren't there books?"⁴¹

The sudden growth of the AV in 1965 brought student volunteers from as far away as California and new staff from urban centers in the Midwest and East. Some were fresh from Harvard; others had worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the South. A few came from class-conscious, union families in the Midwest, and one had been a community organizer in Chicago's Uptown.⁴² The new arrivals brought a more assertive view of fighting poverty than was shared by the leadership of the CSM. Even many of the indigenous AVs increasingly questioned whether the service-oriented programs of the council were doing anything to empower the poor or to alter the structures that had generated the conditions in the first place. More and more the volunteers saw the county school superintendents and the judge executives with whom the council worked to gain entry to mountain communities as the problem, not the cure, and they strained at the

institutional ties that kept them from engaging in political advocacy for the poor.

Throughout 1965 relationships between the volunteers and council leadership deteriorated as the young organizers pressed their more conservative elders to move beyond their service programs and into community action. The conflict of age and ideology came to a head in the spring of 1966 when Perley Ayer, director of the CSM, abruptly fired Ogile and the senior staff of the AV for insubordination. The remaining thirteen staff members summarily resigned and reorganized themselves the following day as a nonprofit organization, Appalachian Volunteers Inc. The newly independent organization moved its offices from Berea, Kentucky, to Bristol, Tennessee, and announced that it intended to become more assertive in organizing the poor. No longer constrained by the program-oriented consensus politics of the council, Ogile declared that the AV was "definitely an action agency."⁴³

Within a few days, the OEO shifted its funding for the AV to the new organization, which immediately expanded its operations in the coalfields. By the summer of 1966, the AVs were supervising the training of almost five hundred VISTA volunteers and had established several outpost education centers intended as living spaces for volunteer workers in poor communities. Instead of painting schoolhouses and providing educational enrichment activities, AV field-workers now began assisting poor people's organizations and forming community groups around the issues of strip mining and welfare rights. Especially in eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia, AVs became vocal critics not only of the coal industry and the local political establishment but of the more moderate CAAs as well.

In southeast Kentucky, for example, AV field-workers organized demonstrations against the eight-county Cumberland Valley CAA in the summer of 1966, resulting in the eventual dismantling of the agency and the reestablishment of one- and two-county CAAs that reflected greater participation by the poor. In West Virginia, AVs turned out hundreds of community people to challenge control of CAA boards by local elites and even seized control for a time of the Raleigh County agency.⁴⁴ By the end of 1967, AVs were directly challenging CAAs throughout central Appalachia to be more responsive to the needs of the poor and were helping local citizens' groups to demand greater

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voices in community health, education, and economic policies. No longer content with refurbishing schoolhouses and showing dental hygiene films to poor children, AVs became impatient advocates of change in a political atmosphere that feared structural change. For many state and local leaders, young AVs came to symbolize the veiled potential of the War on Poverty to upset the status quo in the mountains, a threat that increasingly concerned regional power brokers.

Although university professors, college students, social activists, and middle-class professionals differed in their approaches to fighting poverty in Appalachia, they shared a collective movement culture that bound them in a common crusade. Most professed a faith in the American dream, valued the poor, appreciated participatory processes, and expected social justice. Many approached their work with a strong moral conviction to serve the disadvantaged, and more than a few were ordained clergy, lay leaders, or students from church-affiliated colleges and organizations. Indeed, the organized church had long played an important role in popularizing and addressing the human problems of the mountains, and the War on Poverty offered an opportunity for national denominations and spiritually motivated individuals to refocus their energies on the region. Not surprisingly, the response of the church to the War on Poverty was as diverse in Appalachia as was that of secular institutions, ranging from individual self-help initiatives to community development and resistance.

Southern Appalachia had been the focus of home mission work by major Christian denominations since the late nineteenth century, and national religious leaders drew on their history of launching mission churches and settlement schools in the mountains when they responded to the campaign against poverty. A gulf had existed for years between the indigenous churches of the region and mainstream denominations. Rural churches in Appalachia were small, having evolved as extensions of local communities and specific family groups, and they were typically informal and independent of national affiliations. The few mainline denominations (generally Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians) were usually clustered in the county seats, reflecting both the social aspirations of the mountain middle class and their greater ties to the national economy. Even the larger coal camp

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churches, including Catholic missions, often owed their survival to the benevolence of the coal companies, and almost all avoided involvement in social conflict issues, preferring to concentrate on personal salvation rather than the social gospel.

Outside churches and nationally based religious organizations therefore took the lead in a second wave of home mission activities to the mountains after World War II. Like others before them, the latest missionaries blended the desire to provide humanitarian uplift in the form of education and health care with the hope of expanding their own denomination in the region. Denominational leaders had been active in the CSM since its founding in the 1920s, and after the war, participation in the council's spiritual life committee grew as many denominations established special managerial units to coordinate their revitalized mountain mission work. The Catholic Diocese of Covington, Kentucky, for instance, sent dozens of young priests into eastern Kentucky to establish new congregations, provide parochial education, and build rural hospitals. The Presbyterian Church (USA) created the West Virginia Mountain Project and sent seminary students to minister in poor and rural congregations during the summer. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) launched a special "church in town and country" unit to expand human and spiritual services to communities in the Cumberland Plateau.⁴⁵ Lutherans, American Baptists, Brethren, Episcopalians, Mennonites, and Quakers all organized special church divisions to coordinate charity and mission work in the mountains.

These denominational efforts provided a national network of urban congregations that supported evangelical work in the region, and under the leadership of Perley Ayer and Willis Weatherford, the CSM became the hub of efforts to expand the involvement of these congregations in mountain relief work as well. In some cases this meant raising monetary contributions for specific council projects or assisting mountain migrants in northern cities; in others it meant chaplaining suburban youngsters on weekend mission trips into mountain communities to remodel churches or restore dilapidated housing. With the rise of national concern about poverty in the 1960s, these programs established summer camps for needy children, book drives for schools and community centers, adult education and job training

programs, and, of course, emergency relief efforts to distribute truckloads of food and used clothing to help mountain families make it through the winter.

In 1963 this network of churches generated funds to rescue ten miners' hospitals that the UMWPA planned to shut down in central Appalachia as a result of declining resources in the union's Health and Retirement Funds. Two years later, with the help of the National Council of Churches, eighteen denominations and religious organizations collaborated to form the Commission on Religion in Appalachia to coordinate ecumenical antipovertry programs in the region, provide continuing education for clergy, and "articulate the ethical considerations of business and industrial practices in Appalachia."⁴⁶ Church-sponsored antipovertry activities continued to reflect a wide range of philosophies and approaches, but by the end of the decade, church-supported organizers worked hand in hand with AVs, VISTA volunteers, and other poverty warriors. Some became more radicalized by their experiences and later played key roles in creating alternative, nonprofit community development corporations and in supporting citizen efforts to achieve land reform, economic justice, and environmental protection.

The broad diversity of religious responses to poverty in Appalachia was perhaps best reflected in the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church. Never a very large denomination in the mountains, the Catholic Church established a foothold in the region at the turn of the twentieth century in response to the arrival of European immigrants to the coalfields and other industrial areas. With the out-migration of many immigrant families during the Great Depression and the general abandonment of company support for churches and other coal camp institutions in the 1930s, the number of Catholics in the mountains declined until another generation of bishops undertook to grow new parishes in the region after World War II. Concentrating on small towns and county seats rather than coal camps, itinerant priests and nuns opened mission centers to serve the small Catholic population and to attract new congregants. Especially after the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, these village parishes began to reach out to surrounding rural communities to provide social and spiritual services to the poor no matter what their religious affiliations.

This was the path, for example, followed by Father Ralph Beiting, who came to eastern Kentucky in 1950 and stayed to found one of the largest private antipovertry agencies in the country. Assigned by his bishop to establish a new parish in Madison and surrounding counties, Beiting eventually ventured deeper into the coalfields as a street preacher and witnessed firsthand the poverty that plagued the region. By the late 1950s, he began to build on his spiritual message with a growing concern for the material needs of the primarily non-Catholic population, and, from his base near Berea, the young priest became active in the burgeoning regional efforts to draw state and national attention to Appalachia's problems. In 1958 he purchased a youth camp in Garrard County and established a used clothing warehouse in Berea for the poor. During the early 1960s, Beiting's *Christian Appalachian Project* (CAP) developed a small farm support program and opened a Christmas wreath factory in nearby Jackson County. Father Beiting supported his initial efforts to fight poverty by raising donations and attracting volunteers through speaking engagements in Catholic schools and churches across the country.

With the outbreak of the War on Poverty in 1964, Beiting incorporated the CAP as an independent nonprofit organization and expanded its service area to include eleven counties and a wide range of self-help programs. The CAP operated teen and child development centers, GED programs, workshops for handicapped adults, home repair programs, used clothing outlets, and family abuse shelters. Hundreds of weekend and summer volunteers were recruited from urban churches to work as counselors, advisors, and instructors in CAP youth camps and outreach centers. By the mid-1980s, the CAP was the largest nonprofit organization in the region, with 285 employees and an annual operating budget of more than \$14 million. The organization managed eighty programs, touching an estimated ninety thousand people per year.⁴⁷

Although the CAP was officially a nondenominational Christian organization, Father Beiting continued to serve as president and chair of the CAP board. To support his rapidly growing program, Beiting increased his speaking tours and developed a massive and effective direct-mail campaign that included a free copy of his book *God Can Move Mountains*. Beiting, his staff, and volunteers generally avoided

involvement in local politics and in the issue-based organizing that the AVs came to represent, preferring to focus their energies on self-help opportunities for individuals. Few in the region or outside questioned the value of the CAP's humanitarian services, which reached thousands of the most desperately poor, but critics increasingly questioned administrative overhead expenses and challenged the ethics of Beiting's fund-raising strategies. Still, as late as 1987, more than 80 percent of the CAP's annual budget went to salaries and other administrative costs.⁴⁸

Even more controversial among some poverty warriors, however, was the CAP's use of regional stereotypes in direct mail, television commercials, and other fund-raising efforts. Missionaries, educators, and writers had utilized emotional imagery and heartrending personal stories for years to dramatize the continuing need for donations to sustain their work, but Beiting's successful use of this strategy in direct-mail fund-raising produced questions about paternalism and the misrepresentation of the region within and outside the organization. Appeals for donations almost always included images of frail and destitute children and stories of personal hardship related by Father Beiting, who was often identified by the more popular "Reverend Beiting" in mass mailings. Letters and accompanying literature described the people of the mountains as descendants of "our early American pioneers" who were "some of the most creative, dynamic people ever to grace this continent" but who had fallen under the yoke of poverty and, with just a little help, could make a better life for themselves. With imagery reminiscent of early local color writers, Beiting's personal stories told of a region rent by violence, ignorance, and feuding, where outside volunteers struggled resolutely to bring help.

Perhaps the most controversial example of this appeal was the Bobbie Sue letter, which set records in the direct-mail industry for both income generated and continuous years of use.⁴⁹ Picturing a young girl standing on the porch of a ramshackle cabin and carrying her infant sibling on her hip, the letter introduced its readers to Bobbie Sue from Appalachia, who "through no fault of her own" had to "go to bed hungry many nights." Produced by a Washington DC-area fund-raising firm, the appeal reinforced universal stereotypes of Appalachian destitution while portraying the mountaineers as noble and

long suffering, in need only of individual assistance and opportunity. "Through absolutely no fault of their own," the letter posited, "they have had to endure a fantastically high rate of unemployment, miserable living conditions, and empty promise after empty promise. Nowhere else in America will you find fewer educational opportunities, poorer housing, or less medical care covering such a large area."⁵⁰ Despite these conditions, the letter concluded, the people of Appalachia had not lost hope, in part because of the work of the CAP, whose continued success depended on donations from "concerned Americans across the country." The letter was "printed by Appalachian craftsmen" and signed by the Reverend Ralph Beiting.

The Bobbie Sue letter (and dozens like it from other organizations) reflected the compassion and concern that motivated the War on Poverty, but it also mirrored the national misunderstanding of Appalachia's history and problems. Like the service-oriented programs of most CAAs and the educational outreach programs of colleges and universities, the CAP avoided the larger structural problems of Appalachia's politics and economy and assumed that individuals could lift themselves out of poverty if given the opportunity and resources to change their behavior. Alleviating poverty, to many religious workers as well as to those in government and education, was a matter of individual and cultural change rather than societal transformation. Drawing on received images of Appalachian isolation and degeneracy to justify its programs, the CAP reinforced the popular idea of Appalachian otherness and limited its own ability to effect sustainable change. While meeting the critical and real needs of impoverished families, self-help organizations like the CAP failed to confront the realities of injustice and economic exploitation that continued to marginalize poor people.

Of course, some church-based poverty workers followed a different path. Like their secular counterparts in the AV, a few Catholic priests and nuns, especially after Vatican II, recognized the limitations of service-oriented strategies, and in time they adopted a more aggressive approach to community problems. Less burdened with the task of church building, individuals from religious orders such as the Glenmary Sisters were more likely to become enmeshed in rural community life and to utilize the community empowerment strategies of

liberation theology that were beginning to sweep the Catholic world. Sent to the mountains in the mid-1960s to "help rural people survive and maintain rural values so they might reinvigorate the church," many of these workers left their religious orders to become permanent residents and activist leaders in communities across the region.⁵¹

Almost fifty Glenmary Sisters departed the order in 1967 to form their own experimental community in the mountains, and dozens of others left individually after reexamining their work in light of contemporary needs and issues. Freed from the restrictive, male-dominated rules of the church, these religious women became a powerful organizing force in communities throughout rural Appalachia, helping to set up health clinics, worker-owned businesses, homeless shelters, town water systems, arts programs, and scores of other community-based projects. Taking literally the call of Vatican II to be "in the world, acting on behalf of justice," the former Glenmary Sisters took up residences in rural communities, established friendships with neighbors, listened to concerns at community gatherings, and visited the poor. Unlike other poverty warriors, they did not bring prepackaged projects but shared their skills, ideas, energy, and networks of friends and resources. In time, they gained the confidence of the community.⁵²

Listening to the concerns of the poor, the former Glenmary Sisters helped to organize community-based programs that provided alternatives to the institutionally based services that were often controlled by local elites. Building strong partnerships, especially among the women of these poor communities, they organized community-controlled health clinics and community centers, which in turn led to the creation of child development and tutoring programs. In east Tennessee, Marie Cirillo and others organized a coalition of local women into the Mountain Women's Exchange, which launched a craft cooperative and thrift shops and later established a satellite college program whose courses were offered by nearby colleges under a curriculum controlled by the community itself. In southwest Virginia, Anne Leibig and other former nuns helped to organize community arts programs, small business co-ops, and eventually the Appalachian Community Development Corporation, one of the first nonprofit, community-controlled economic planning and fund-raising organizations in the region.

Nor did the sisters shy away from advocacy and social action. To-

gether with local citizens and with the assistance of students from Vanderbilt University, former Glenmary Sisters in Tennessee helped to form Save Our Cumberland Mountains, a 1,500-member environmental group that opposed strip mining and other land degradation. When they learned that many people in their poor counties were not receiving the social services to which they were legally entitled, the women began developing legal aid clinics and training local people to serve as legal advocates for the poor. In Wise County, Virginia, they helped to establish a legal support group, Concerned Citizens for Social and Economic Justice, and, through the Wise County Welfare Rights Organization, they worked with hundreds of people to get fair treatment from the local welfare department.⁵³

Whereas efforts like those of the CAP and the CSM sought to supplement government programs that served the poor, the former nuns and their male and female counterparts from other denominations often bypassed government agencies to establish alternative businesses, clinics, schools, and other structures controlled by poor people themselves. Although they seldom engaged in political organizing in the manner that some young activists attempted to gain control of poverty agencies, school boards, and other county offices, these religious radicals challenged the values of a society that allowed corporate exploitation of land and natural resources to leave some mountain people impoverished and without basic human services. They acted to create community-based alternatives to existing structures and to confront those institutional structures on specific issues with community-based organizations and knowledge.

Like many of their secular counterparts among the AVs and VISTA volunteers, these more radical religious workers eventually rejected cultural explanations of poverty and became increasingly critical of the economic and political system that had produced the injustices they found in their communities. Living among the poor and listening to their concerns, they were convinced that the lack of a voice in local public policy decisions and dependence on local elites for jobs and services had left the poor powerless to control their own fate. Having rejected traditional, gendered structures in the church, religious workers questioned a corporate economic system that benefited the few at the expense of the common good. They increasingly found the

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problems of the mountains to lie less in the values of the people than in the actions of the corporations, institutions, and politicians that controlled the land and public resources of the region.

Nothing reflected the distance between Father Beiting's self-help approach of Christian charity and the participatory, community-based strategies of the former Glenmary Sisters quite like the publication of the pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia in 1975. Written and produced by the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, a group composed of former Glenmary Sisters and other religious activists, the letter reflected the sense of unity that these Catholic workers felt with the people of their rural communities and challenged fellow Christians throughout Appalachia and the country to work for social and economic justice in the region. Poignantly titled *This Land Is Home to Me*, the report described the industrial and corporate exploitation of the mountains and condemned the culture of greed and "maximization of profit" that left the land ravaged and the people powerless and poor. A problem for all of America, Appalachia was a symbol of the failed promise of technological development and the "conspicuous consumption" that had become an idol in the larger society. With no plea for money, no images of undernourished mountain children, the bishops' statement laid the blame for poverty in the region on corporate profits, human greed, and wasteful economic development. "Powerlessness in Appalachia," the letter professed, could be overcome only through partnership with the poor, careful use of scientific resources, and community-based planning for future growth. The struggle for social justice in the mountains, the bishops concluded, was part of a larger struggle for justice in the world, and they encouraged Catholics in the region to investigate a wide range of issues, such as strip mining, land acquisition, the exploitation of cheap labor, occupational health and safety, union reform, taxation, cooperatives, education, tourism, and civic participation.⁵⁴

Coming as it did at the end of the formal War on Poverty, the bishops' pastoral letter on Appalachia echoed the concerns and challenges that had emerged within mountain communities over the previous decade, and it revealed the great divide between the self-help efforts promoted

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by government and private programs and the calls for structural reform, alternative development, and social justice being made by a growing number of activists and community leaders. Proponents of this more radical perspective, however, remained in the minority during the height of the War on Poverty. Most antipoverity programs sought to extend social services to the poor and accepted the idea that if the poor could be trained to think and act like middle-class Americans, they would be successfully absorbed into the larger society.

As long as local elites believed that the goal of antipoverity programs was acculturation, they welcomed the new resources that boosted village economies and promised hope for the poor. Like other postwar Americans, the mountain middle class was confident that science, technology, and free markets would eventually bring affluence to everyone and that it was only isolation from these modernizing forces that had prevented the region from participating in the national prosperity. The new public and nongovernmental programs brought a spate of young professionals to the region—doctors, nurses, caseworkers, teachers, technicians, and administrators—and with them the demand for better housing, medical care, highways, education, and consumer goods. The promise of participation in the Great Society also raised the expectations of the poor, and therein lay the hidden danger for those who benefited from the status quo.

Despite its intellectual assumptions about poverty and about Appalachia, the War on Poverty (like the civil rights movement) revived a dialogue about basic American values that inspired poor people and their advocates to challenge existing institutions and structures. The idea of community action itself unleashed an energy that local power brokers could not control, and the partnerships among citizens, poverty warriors, educated professionals, and youth soon posed a threat to powerful economic interests inside and outside the region. As federal resources poured into the mountains and as activists increasingly confronted what they perceived as injustice, a cultural and political struggle ensued over the direction of development and the meaning of the good life.

Although state and local leaders eventually succeeded in controlling OEO funds, community organizing and grassroots resistance con-

tinued to grow in the mountains long after the agency's demise. Launched as an effort to reduce the cultural and economic distance between Appalachia and America, the crusade against poverty ultimately fueled a renaissance of Appalachian identity. It also fed a social movement within the region that voiced mounting concern about modernity, social justice, and the goals of the Great Society itself.

4

CONFRONTING DEVELOPMENT

Controversy surrounded the War on Poverty from the beginning. In Appalachia, as in the nation's inner cities, the crusade kindled the flames of long smoldering dissent and eventually sparked a backlash of resistance from the old power brokers. Along with the civil rights movement and later the Vietnam War, the struggle to end poverty unmasked profound social divisions in America and in Appalachia.

Early popular enthusiasm for the campaign concealed a society of disparate values and competing conceptions of the American dream. Even the scholars and bureaucrats who designed the antipoverty program disagreed over the causes of poverty and the implementation of the EOA's most important provisions. Conservative politicians, always uneasy with the expansion of federal power, persistently challenged liberal assumptions about human engineering and the ability of government to solve social problems. Middle-class whites, proud of their own success in the drive for accumulation, resented the transfer of wealth to inner-city blacks and "shiftless" rural whites. State and local officials increasingly railed against a burgeoning Washington bureaucracy that threatened to bypass traditional leadership in favor of non-elected community organizers and academics. More and more young people questioned a political and economic system that resisted change and appeared to blame the poor for their own problems. Many of these misgivings about the Great Society would eventually erupt in the national turmoil over the Vietnam War, but the campaign to end poverty revealed just how deeply Americans differed in their visions of democracy and the good life.