

Carolina Fund Grows Forward

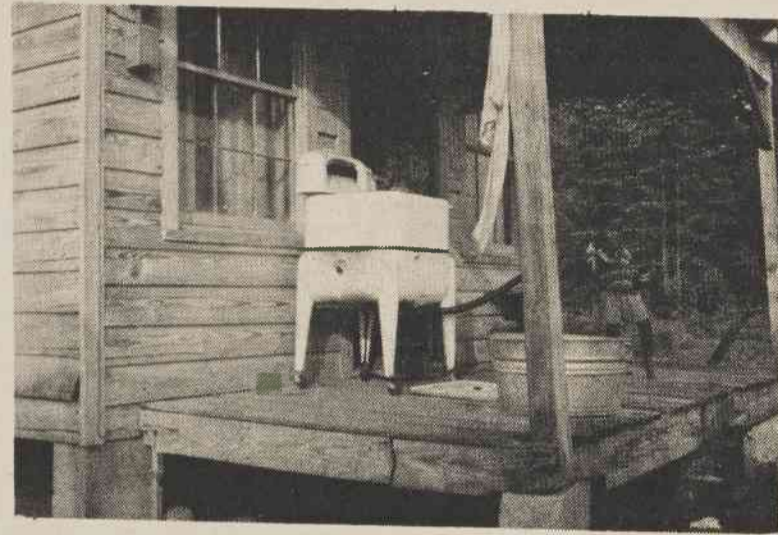
(A Feature-Editorial)
by Edward Lewis

Ever since President Johnson announced his "War on Poverty" last spring, there has been a great deal of excitement in various areas of the country over his proposal. One billion dollars was appropriated for a massive war on the abject poverty which produces painful living conditions in many parts of the U. S., especially in the Appalachian region. Many states, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and others, looked forward to the establishment of the sorely needed project. North Carolina, however, was one jump ahead of the game, for in June, 1963, Governor Sanford had initiated just such a program which officially began in December of 1963, thereby making North Carolina the focal point of the National program. Already one state, despite some strong opposition, had begun to act with a plan which should have been initiated years ago.

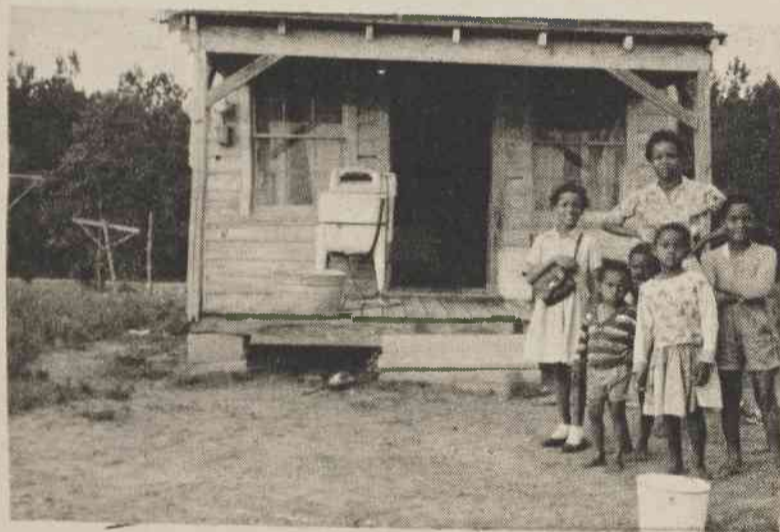
One of the very first areas in North Carolina to take positive action was the Rocky Mount region. Today the product of the action in this area is N.E.E.D. — Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development, Inc., of the North Carolina Fund. Once this organization was finally cleared and underway they were given a scant two weeks to draw up a proposal to submit to Washington. Under the able directorship of Captain R. T. (Tim) Brinn the job was carried out in an admirable fashion with the combined efforts of N.E.E.D. and a number of local citizens. The final proposal: \$5,615,652. Of this amount the local share is \$561,565.20; local payment in kind, \$507,790; Federal Grant \$5,054,086.80. There are also other sources of income.

The need for such a program is obvious to anyone who has paused long enough to take an even casual look at the Rocky Mount area. Housing problems are staggering. Employment could stand vast improving, as welfare figures can prove, and it goes without saying that the public health situation is in a rotten condition. Opportunities for vocational training are virtually non-existent.

Even the poor have to eat and all too often the only grocery store is similar to the one on the left . . . also run by the poor.



One youngster gnaws a piece of cornbread while his mother watches from behind an old washing machine.

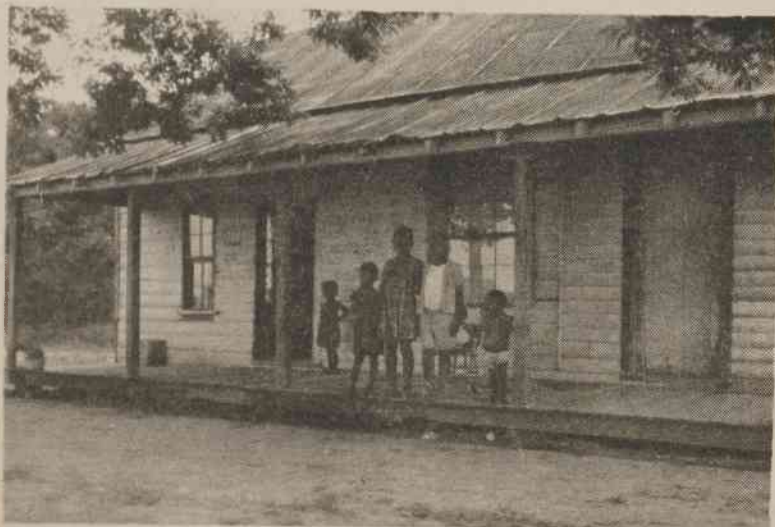


LEFT: This woman has another mouth to feed from the ones pictured. We won't even quote the sum of money her husband makes a week . . . you wouldn't believe it, anyway.

RIGHT: Two Negro girls pause long enough for photographer to catch shabby clothes and bare feet.



This family is more fortunate than some: they have decent clothes and their house contains more than 4 rooms.



This is a fairly large house. The inhabitants are also lucky enough to have shade, and it was rumored that the father possibly made our \$85.00 per month.

This program has been condemned by some as just another social welfare program which will eventually reach the expensive fate that all other such programs have come to — handouts to the poor who will always remain poor. However, I believe that these people overlook (by choice or ignorance) the manner in which this project is constructed. True, a great deal of money is being poured into his project — it takes a lot of money even to undertake such a task. But money is only the means (I should say, part of the means) toward an end which ultimately transcends money by returning this invested sum with interest. If the impoverished are lifted from their miserable (tax-eating) existence into education and jobs, then this knowledge and training will begin to bring money back into the community which first gave them the opportunity to become something better. When this is done we will, indeed, have "made tax-payers out of tax-eaters." Granted, this is an oversimplification of the problem and the plan, but this is the general structure.

Among the many proposed projects of N.E.E.D., some of the more interesting are day care-centers, summer enrichment, and vocational education.

Day care-centers will care for children of large families in order that the parents (especially the mothers) may be freed to work. The added income from this addition to the local labor force will far exceed the cost of the centers.

Summer enrichment will make increased educational, recreational, and cultural resources available to children who would not otherwise receive such benefits. Summer enrichment should lead to scholastic enrichment and there is a dire need for better education.

Vocational education will teach people in the Rocky Mount area the skills necessary for working in many of Rocky Mount's new industries.

So one can easily see that some sort of economic reform is badly needed in this area, and I believe N.E.E.D., one of the twelve project area organizations in North Carolina, can, with sound judgment and responsible decisions, provide at least partial alleviation to this real problem. To those who "smell a rat" I shall only ask, "Can you come up with something better?"