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THE FEDERAL STATE AND HEGEMONY: POLITICS IN FLOYD COUNTY,
KENTUCKY AND THE LATTER YEARS OF THE WAR ON POVERTY

BY

RICCARDO PAOLO D'AMATO

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BY

RICCARDO PAOLO D'AMATO

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

2019

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother, Judith Vermillion

Without your stories of post-war America, I never would have started down this path.

My only regret is not hearing more from you during our time together

ABSTRACT

The central question this thesis addresses is how increasing federal power impacted local peoples, both politicians and otherwise. Kentucky politics was an already convoluted subject of local interconnected patronage without adding even more possible connections. The War on Poverty did just that, adding more players to the ‘game’ of Kentucky politics through numerous influential programs. This thesis closely follows the later years of the War on Poverty in Floyd County specifically to discover what changes were created in the political and social spheres.

This thesis’ findings are based in a contextualized reading of local and foreign newspapers, letters to Representative Carl D. Perkins and various local and federal documents relating to the Appalachian Volunteers, VISTA, and Floyd County. By contextualizing these sources with ideas of political hegemony, postwar changes to conservatism and liberalism, and a historical knowledge of the processes of Kentucky politics, these sources reveal a deeper impact to the War on Poverty in Floyd County. More radical programs of War on Poverty, the Appalachian Volunteers and VISTA, had stirred the local political giants of Floyd County into opposing them to retain control over the flow of local funding. This funding itself had unintended consequences for Floyd County politics. Elites’ inability to reach political hegemony and cement their powers shaped the emerging three-party relationship between local politicians, the federal state, and locals who were simultaneously constituents of both, forever changing how local politics function in Floyd County.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Floyd County, Kentucky was a place of instability during the latter years of the War on Poverty. As President Johnson's mission for the American people was slowing down, resistance to some of the ideas of the War on Poverty increased. Elites of Floyd County began to far more heavily push to remove the Appalachian Volunteers and Volunteers in Service to America in their area between 1967 and 1970. These groups were targeted out of the War on Poverty due to their incompatibility with how Kentucky politics usually functioned. As groups that represented the side of the War on Poverty that believed in the politicization of the poor over organization by local politicians, elites of Floyd County attempted to exercise their political muscle to have them removed from the area as to no longer influence their constituents. As this thesis will argue, their efforts were ultimately successful, but consequently created an acceptance of the federal government as a political and social player in the local sphere. The federal government became a legitimized alternative source of information, defined here by access to knowledge about programs and benefits available to an individual, in local spheres that was separate from the elite power bases in Floyd County. The information from the federal government subverted local control over the ever-present patronage system in county politics, weakening local power despite their success in driving out the AVs and VISTAs.

Johnson's War on Poverty mainly centered on the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which represented Johnson's view of the directive. The act's opening declaration of purpose stated that the War on Poverty would "eliminate the paradox of poverty in

the midst of plenty” through “opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training.” The act created numerous programs, most importantly the Job Corps in Title I and the Community Action Program in Title II, that revolved around increasing the permanent capacity of individuals. Giving opportunities to the impoverished over simply handing out benefits was crucial to many supporters of the act, as Johnson and others believed that poverty was born out of an “impoverishment of opportunity.” Johnson held a distaste for “welfarism” and Sargent Shriver, Johnson’s appointee for program planning, was explicitly told “no doles.”¹ To lead the wildly varied programs of the War on Poverty, the Economic Opportunity Act also created the Office of Economic Opportunity to give direction for the conglomerate of programs.

The programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity varied wildly due to their differing interpretations of a phrase in the Economic Opportunity Act, “maximum feasible participation of the residents.”² Johnson saw the Economic Opportunity Act as delivering job training and necessary services without intruding on local elites or social welfare agencies. However, many others in Johnson’s administration, including the later director of the Community Action Program Fred O’R Hayes, saw the phrase as federal endorsement of politically organizing the poor to press their needs on local political figures. The differing views over anti-poverty planning led to conflicts between local governments and anti-poverty programs and within the OEO itself. The Community Action Program empowered the poor via a number of Community Action Agencies that

¹ Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1996), 34-39

² Irwin Unger, *The Best of Intentions: The Triumph and Failure of the Great Society Under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon* (St. James: Brandywine Press, Inc., 1996), 82.

were led by locals. Veteran community organizers and civil rights activists gained many of these local leadership positions, using federal grants for political empowerment of disadvantaged groups.

VISTA's impact on the local was similar, as the program helped fight against local housing exploitation and educate individuals on the programs and resources available to them outside the control of local political powerhouses. Rather than focusing on an impoverishment of opportunity through existing local power structures, VISTA and the CAAs held the potential to destabilize local power structures and give political power to new groups through the phrase "maximum feasible participation." Due to their challenge to local authority, the programs faced heavy resistance from local leadership. Johnson also quickly backed away from the more progressive side of the Office of Economic Opportunity, stating "To hell with Community Action." The War on Poverty split very early on into the two different interpretations of "maximum feasible participation" seen in Johnson's impoverishment of opportunity that worked with local leadership and VISTA's direct political involvement of the poor.³

For Appalachia specifically, anti-poverty efforts had already been underway under a regionalist approach. The Area Redevelopment Act of 1961 created the Area Redevelopment Administration, which followed a "trickle down" approach to anti-poverty through small business loans and grants to local governments for public structural improvements. The regional development approach differentiated the ARA from the OEO, as the Appalachian Regional Commission was formed to replace the

³ Annelise Orleck "Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 2-15.

ARA as an independent agency that focused on structural improvements to the Appalachian region over local involvement. The Appalachian Volunteers also predated the War on Poverty, beginning in 1963 under the Council of the Southern Mountains.

The CSM and the AVs were similar to the ARA, focusing on regional cooperation, expansion for industry, and schools as community building institutions. The Appalachian Volunteers originally followed this philosophy, working on repairing school buildings and offering enrichment classes for encouraging education. The AVs quickly began to mix with the War on Poverty in 1964, however, receiving an OEO grant to expand their services. A second grant in 1965 brought greater changes, as volunteers and staff coming from areas as far out as California began to radicalize the ideology of the AVs. When the CSM fired the senior staff of the AVs for their conflicts with local authority the AVs created their own separate non-profit organization, which the OEO soon shifted its original funding to.⁴ This thesis deals with the OEO at the exclusion of the regionalist approach, with heavy exceptions for the AVs due to their interactions with OEO programs and money. The AVs trained VISTA workers coming to Appalachia, and many residents referred to them by either name without much distinction. Despite their influence, the AVs and VISTAs alone do not explain the political battles of the War on Poverty in Appalachia. The conflicts of the War on Poverty in Floyd County were impacted by more than the previous anti-poverty efforts.

To understand the direction the three-year conflict in Floyd County took, as well as the meaning behind its ramifications, one must understand the longstanding

⁴ Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 42, 59, 78, 80, 114, 116-117.

patronage politics of Kentucky. By the 1960s, elites had dominated political and economic markets in Kentucky for over a century. County politicians had enormous power to influence the lives of locals, as the courts made up a centerpiece of Kentucky life. Court officials were made up largely of rich mine owners and merchants who used the position to pursue beneficial policies for themselves. These policies focused around “modernization” and industrial development, meaning that legislation would encourage the expansion of industry and commercial ties to the rest of the nation.⁵ In Kentucky, one of the main bases of wealth was land ownership, as the main industries in the Kentucky area during the 1800s were salt, timber, and, in the latter years coal, all of which required considerable amounts of land to be successful in. Land ownership was, however, often concentrated in a small elite who had entered Kentucky with the connections necessary to acquire large amounts of land. Clay County, for example, approached levels of centralization where the top 10 percent wealthiest household heads could own nearly 40 percent of the land in the area in 1860.⁶ Thus, the main beneficiaries of Kentucky’s core industries, all revolving around resource extraction, were those who already owned the majority of the land in the mountains. The exclusion and subjugation of the less fortunate only increased with extraction, as elites purchased more and more land, excluding others from its economic stability and benefits, while simultaneously hiring displaced people as dependent wage laborers to extract wealth

⁵ Dwight B. Billings and Kathleen M. Blee, *The Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 109.

⁶ Billings and Blee, *The Road to Poverty*, 224-245.

from the purchased land.⁷ In such a situation, creating policy was as good as writing your own rules for this expansion.

Counties took on the characteristics of “semi-sovereignities,” where counties managed to usurp the theoretically subordinate relationship they had with the state government, entrenching their own power while diminishing the ability for the state government to interfere.⁸ Thus, the counties of Kentucky were extremely powerful within their borders, as many duties of the state government were accomplished on a county level. Sheriffs, for example, functioned as tax collectors for both the county and the state which made for a potentially lucrative position. County judges held an incredible amount of consolidated power, allowing them control over court decisions both moral and fiscal, and the county jailer earned fees from all levels of government for multiple areas of his duties.⁹ These elites saw the potential for their political positions to be used to further their economic goals, and they abused their positions for favors and favorable industrial policy.

They kept their positions through a complex system of clientelism and patronage that ensured that disobedience held consequences. As both agriculture and resource extraction relied on land, residents became more and more dependent on the elite families that controlled that land.¹⁰ These elites controlled all jobs for the land they held, meaning that any resident employed by that elite had to take the risks to his livelihood into account when choosing political sides or voting, as retribution, both

⁷ Billings and Blee, *The Road to Poverty*, 264-269.

⁸ Robert M. Ireland, *Little Kingdoms: The Counties of Kentucky, 1850-1891* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 1.

⁹ Ireland, *Little Kingdoms*, 36.

¹⁰ Billings and Blee, *The Road to Poverty*, 295.

physical and economic, scared people into supporting the agendas of a political and economic elite. This, of course, only furthered their elite status and further separated them from the dispossessed. A class-based society had arisen in Kentucky, where positions of political power were acquired by the already wealthy to extend their power even further. Cases such as the Turner family of Breathitt County arose, who managed by spreading their family across the entirety of political positions within the area to create a political dominion over their county powerful enough to withstand federal intrusion in less than fifty years of first taking a political office.¹¹

Douglas Arnett suggests that Appalachian society was made up of four “classes” of people: the absentee owners, the local elite, the middle class, and the dispossessed.¹² A close examination of these categories shows how Eastern Kentucky was stratified. Historically, the bottom class was formed out of a “coalition of interests,” that was formed when local political figures responded to the needs of the metropolis, meaning industry and concentrated areas of population, over the worker. This furthered the stratification of the area via continuing their economic agenda at the detriment of the workers involved.¹³ The local elite owned much of the land that was required for economic success, and they used favorable deals and legislation to further their ability to both acquire land and extract wealth from that land. Thus, the interests of the local elite and the absentee owners coincided. The middle class was made up of beneficiaries of the patronage system of the local elites, including small merchants who relied on

¹¹ John R. Burch Jr., “The Turner Family of Breathitt County, Kentucky, and the War on Poverty,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 107, no.3 (2009): 401-404

¹² Douglas O’Neil Arnett, “Eastern Kentucky: The Politics of Dependency and Underdevelopment” (PhD diss., Department of Political Science Duke University, 1978), 87.

¹³ Arnett, “Eastern Kentucky: The Politics of Dependency and Underdevelopment,” 50.

their connections and more lucrative professional jobs, such as teaching, that placed them in a higher class than the miners, small farmers, and other dispossessed who were mostly unable to gain from the patronage system of the other three classes.

What this system offered to the dispossessed and poor instead, was to force their help to perpetuate it. Often forced by a lack of available land into precarious coal towns for wage work, the miners faced threats to their home and livelihood if they did not vote “correctly.”¹⁴ The elites worked to depoliticize the dispossessed as much as possible by increasing their reliance upon the political elites and discouraging them from other avenues of information that may have led to organization. Workers in the mines often faced numerous fees, for anything from rent to supplies used in their work, that prevented them from gathering wealth, ensuring that the miner could not save enough to remove himself from his employer and purchase land and economic stability.¹⁵ Reliant upon their jobs, these jobs were then held at ransom for continued participation in the system. Miners who bought from private merchants rather than heavily marked up company stores faced reprimands and discharges.¹⁶

Such an opposition to agency also resulted in heavy control over sources of information and organization, namely anti-unionism. County officials used their control over courts, police, and influence in the local press to attempt to wage war against emerging resistance in the dispossessed through the unions.¹⁷ To elites, the United Mine

¹⁴ Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 213.

¹⁵ Melvin P. Levy, “Class War in Kentucky,” in *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, ed. Leonard W. Levy (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 27.

¹⁶ Levy, “Class War in Kentucky,” in *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, 29.

¹⁷ Charles Rumform Walker, “Organizing a Union in Kentucky,” in *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, ed. Leonard W. Levy (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 46-47

Workers union represented a threat to domination of the coal market. Mine owners used their low labor costs from fighting union organization to obtain wider markets, moving from the east into the lucrative Midwest trade.¹⁸ Unions threatened this expansion, and, to the mine owners, union involvement became one of the biggest taboos of a coal town. Unions disrupted elite control over coal towns, as well as disrupting their views on the relationship between management and labor.¹⁹ “Union agitation,” became a synonym for mutiny for the paternalistic elite and was grounds for the immediate eviction and dismissal of the miner involved. Potential union organizers were often met with county police or sheriffs who interrogated them to decide eligibility to enter the county. Potentially subversive elements were controlled and excluded with both threats of legal action and violence, showing how unified the ‘little kingdoms’ were when it came to defending their interests.

While the unions did achieve some success in fighting the local elites, the method elites used to fight them would remain significant. Faced with the impossibility of physically controlling all of the dispossessed, local elites attempted to control their symbolic access to information as much as they attempted to control the miners themselves. The patronage system of Appalachia required that the dispossessed had no other options other than the elites, so the elites’ worst enemy was information brought from areas outside their control. Potentially dangerous sources of news such as the *Daily Worker*, were restricted through the means elites already held. Workers who agreed to cease reading the *Daily Worker* or associating with the unions would find

¹⁸ Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 129.

¹⁹ Eller, *Miners millhand* P.209

themselves far more included into the patronage system than before, receiving easier access to welfare opportunities of food and medicine.²⁰ Thus, through the continuous leveraging of political and economic factors, local elites tried to control what topics even arose in the political sphere to achieve the results of a political hegemony.²¹

The potential gain for dissent by the dispossessed had to be weighed against the threats to their jobs, family, and personal safety, achieving the results of a political hegemony, in which the lower class works of its own volition in ways that benefit the elite class, without coopting the culture of the lower class.²² The local elites had essentially attempted to create a situation where searching outward for information was so discouraged that entire counties would be politically isolated to that area, keeping the local elites as the only non-isolated residents of that area so as to pull political support from sources unavailable to the dispossessed. While not completely successful, if nothing else the continuing impact of the United Mine Workers of America showed that the dispossessed still sought to resist when pushed, local politicians still managed to keep a large amount of control via restricting avenues of information, or at least discouraging their use.

Problems emerged during the latter half of the 20th century, but the poor and dispossessed did not have to seek the War on Poverty. The War on Poverty came to the dispossessed. The War on Poverty programs, at least in the mind of president Lyndon

²⁰ Theodore Dreiser, "Introduction," in *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, ed. Leonard W. Levy (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 12.

²¹ John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 106-108.

²² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Elecbook, 1999), 526.

B. Johnson, never should have been the threat they ended up posing to local leadership. While committed to anti-poverty measures at large, Johnson's beliefs in the methods of the liberal state were more of a call to previous New Deal styles of liberal reform, embracing Keynesian ideas of growth while rejecting issues of structural inequalities that prevented equal access to resources.²³ Johnson's, and many others involved with the War on Poverty, ideas for policy were job training and education alongside local leadership, or a 'trickle down' method of development similar to the ARC's methods where a solid base for economic benefit would be created through structural improvements in areas of interest to local leadership.²⁴ Others involved with the War on Poverty presented an understanding of the War on Poverty focusing on the other interpretation of the term "maximum feasible participation," making the politicization of the poor a firm goal for their programs and saw the local leadership as creating the structural inequalities that kept groups dispossessed and impoverished.²⁵

For Appalachian leadership, the first methodology was heavily preferable. County leadership had habitually spent state money as if it were its own, abusing state funding for to obtain subsidies for jobs used in the patronage system and for local welfare projects such as taking care of a county's "pauper idiots." The committees for such funding would often be a few members or even a single merchant, which, alongside the unusually high numbers for pauper idiots in counties between 1881 and 1910, made it even more clear that the beneficiaries were abusing the state's funding for

²³ Guian A Mckee, "'This Government Is with Us': Lyndon Johnson and the Grassroots War on Poverty," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 33.

²⁴ Arnett, "Eastern Kentucky," 160-161.

²⁵ Mckee, "'This Government Is with Us'," 46.

personal gain. For example, by 1910 Clay County claimed more than twice the state average for pauper idiots with a ratio of 1 for every 456 people.²⁶ When entities of the War on Poverty then turned to the local leadership to essentially design their own programs in their areas of control, many saw it as an extension of their longstanding abuse of state funding. Previous models used in siphoning state funding into counties extended rather naturally to federal programs of the War on Poverty.

Political leaders were often happy to receive federal funding for antipoverty programs. They found little reason to object to giving more money to the poor or for welfare services, so long as two circumstances were in play. First, that the federal government was footing the bill instead of the local elites, and secondly that the money was being channeled through existing local power structures to remain under elite control.²⁷ This way, local elites were able to receive extra funding to distribute under the patronage system to increase their control at little cost to themselves. Although local elites had wildly differing levels of empathy towards the message the War on Poverty brought, many, such as those in Mingo County West Virginia, simply saw it as a new addition to the patronage system and valued programs by the money they brought under their power rather than the potential benefit of lowering poverty.²⁸

There was, however, more than one philosophical side to the planning of the War on Poverty. The civil rights movement had done much to legitimize the concept of dissent, making nonviolent political protest seem like a feasible strategy for political

²⁶ Billings and Blee, *The Road to Poverty*, 305.

²⁷ Arnett, "Eastern Kentucky," 172.

²⁸ Huey Perry, "*They'll Cut Off Your Project*"; *A Mingo County Chronicle* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 35.

action.²⁹ While the designs of local elites furthered hegemonic ideas of patronage culture using federal money while continuing to exclude the poor as a dispossessed body of controllable votes, the War on Poverty also brought ideas from the rest of the nation. Ideas included the legitimization of dissent as well as concepts of American progress and inclusion into the “American success story” that were not useful to Appalachian politics.³⁰ In order to keep their previous control over their regions while still receiving the new avenues of funding from the War on Poverty, local elites had to attempt to discredit potential threats from the War on Poverty and disassociate them from the rest of the message of the War on Poverty, setting the two philosophical sides against one-another while remaining ‘open’ to anti-poverty planning.

This process took place at different times for many areas, as the potential effects of federal intrusion were not immediately obvious. For Floyd County, Governor Breathitt suspending the Puritan Coal Company’s permit on August 1, 1967 was that obvious sign of federal influence on local politics.³¹ Breathitt’s action represented the most blatant state level challenge to coal power ever made in Kentucky, but elites of Floyd and Pike counties did not see it as Breathitt’s personal action. Elites were quick to blame the anti-coal actions of Breathitt on the increased politicization that emerged from the War on Poverty. The more ‘radical’ programs of the War on Poverty,

²⁹ Stephen L. Fisher, “The Grass Roots Speak Back,” in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 204.

³⁰ Herbert Reid, “Regional Consciousness and Political Imagination: The Appalachian Connection in an Anxious Nation,” in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 313 & 322.

³¹ Paul Good, “Kentucky’s Coal Beds of Sedition,” in *Appalachia in the Sixties: Decade of Reawakening*, ed. David S. Walls and John B. Stephenson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 189.

particularly VISTA and the AVs, had given a stronger political voice to the poor who bore the brunt of coal power's consequences to land quality. Sensing the risk to their power, elites of multiple counties singled out the Appalachian Volunteers and the Volunteers in Service to America program as troublemakers in state politics and took immediate steps against them.

Floyd County involved itself with a broader anti-AV and anti-VISTA framework spanning multiple counties. Pike County responded to Breathitt's actions by arranging the arrests of three individuals related to the AVs and anti-strip mining in Pike County. These individuals were: Joe Mulloy, a current AV organizer, Alan McSurley, an antipoverty organizer from Northern Virginia, and Alan's wife Margret McSurley, who had done previous work with the southern civil rights movement before coming to Kentucky. All three were radical and experienced organizers, with Alan McSurley being too radical even for the AVs as he was let go after four weeks with the organization for being too controversial. The three were active in Pike County fighting strip mining, and elites credited Breathitt's actions to their work. Thomas Ratliff, the commonwealth attorney for Pike County, pushed for the midnight arrests of Mulloy and the McSurleys under an illegal sedition law from the 1920s, justifying their arrest by charging them with having a "Communist library out of the world," and attempting to overthrow the government in Pike County.³²

Elites of Floyd County, desperate to retain a stranglehold over information and public perception in the area after witnessing the events in Pike County, attempted to

³² Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 148-151.

remove the volunteer programs via leveraging the opposing side of the War on Poverty alongside local conservatives with a powerful rhetoric of anti-communism and localism similar Ratliff's. The Big Sandy Area Community Action Agency, CAA for the Floyd County region and other counties along the Big Sandy River, had a director, Harry Eastburn, who opposed the actions and presence of the Appalachian Volunteers in his region during the late 1960s.³³ Elites of Floyd County directly attempted to use Eastburn as a way to legitimize their removal of the volunteer groups, politically allying themselves with the War on Poverty to keep receiving funds from the movement while still being able to publicly discredit another antipoverty program.

The attempt at a political alliance between local Floyd County elites and the philosophical side of the War on Poverty that sympathized with those elites sparked a series of political battles between the AVs and local powers. Governor Breathitt's challenge to coal power began the battles between the volunteer groups and local elites in Eastern Kentucky. The battling spanned a period of three years for Floyd County, all in the later years of the War on Poverty. While other counties, notably Pike County, also reacted to Governor Breathitt's actions, the Floyd County Community Action Agency's attempts at inviting the War on Poverty to war against itself made Floyd County notable. The reaction of Floyd County elites to Breathitt's anti-coal actions was to leverage the philosophical tensions between the AVs and the Big Sandy CAA. The local elites in the Floyd County CAA tried to benefit from federal intervention while

³³ Evaluation Report of the Appalachian Volunteers in Eastern Kentucky June 24 to July 3, 1968, Box D-067, Folder 8, Carl D. Perkins Congressional Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

keeping the previous class system status quo, beginning with an anti-volunteer group resolution in 1968.

Chapter 2: Philosophical Problems: Conflict Within the War on Poverty and the Floyd
County Community Action Agency

My opposition is not directed to Harry Eastburn or the Big Sandy CAP – but simply to the indefinite suspension (complete rejection?) of VISTA for this area. – Rev. William

G. Poole³⁴

In April of 1968 the Floyd County Community Action Agency set itself against the Appalachian Volunteers, passing a resolution that stated that officially protested the actions of the volunteer group in Kentucky.³⁵ In the wake of the Mulloy and McSurley midnight arrests, the Floyd County CAA borrowed the same anti-AV rhetoric, explaining that the Appalachian Volunteers had created strife and bitterness knowingly and were starting class and race warfare in their operations.³⁶ The Floyd County CAA wanted the volunteers removed from Floyd County and Kentucky at large for their disruptions. However, the Floyd County CAA did not send this resolution outside of the “local” area. This resolution was not sent to the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, but rather to just three groups or individuals: Governor Louie Nunn, the Big Sandy CAA, and the local Floyd County Appalachian Volunteers.

³⁴ Letter from William G. Poole to Robert Ceapiewaki May 17 1966, Box 46, Folder 19, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

³⁵ A Resolution by the Floyd County Community Action Program 4/8/68, Box 46, Folder 18, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

³⁶ It’s important to note that the documents used for this thesis use CAA and CAP interchangeably, without much order or identifiable reason. Thus, to avoid complication, I will use CAA when possible when referring to the community action organizations.

The reason for not sending the resolution to Washington was that the Floyd County CAA was attempting to enforce local jurisdiction in response to what they saw as the potential successes of the AVs. Governor Breathitt's revocation of the Puritan Coal Company's strip-mining permit set off a chain of events as local county leadership saw their current relationship with the state government at risk of usurpation. While Pike County had the most famous reaction, in the arrests of Mulloy and the McSurleys on charges of Communism and sedition, other counties also got involved in eliminating what they saw as the cause of disruption in power relations between the state and local governments. The presence of the AVs helped to destabilize the control of information held by local elites sent to the state and given to the locals. Local elites mostly contented themselves to sit back in order to avoid making an enemy of the War on Poverty and to receive more funding. Once the power of Floyd County elites had been challenged as a result of the AVs, however, the elites joined in on a larger movement to discredit the Appalachian Volunteers. Joining the anti-AV movement explains the copy sent to Louie Nunn, as part of a local and state coalition that the counties had previously controlled, but it does not explain the copy sent to the Big Sandy CAA. The Big Sandy CAA's copy of the resolution, however, was part of a local attempt to attack the AVs without appearing as being against anti-poverty efforts. If the local elite of Floyd County could leverage the Big Sandy CAA to take the lead in removing the volunteers from the area, Floyd County could remain appearing as staunchly anti-poverty and continue receiving anti-poverty funding from the War on Poverty. Both the Big Sandy CAA and the AVs both disrupted local power, constituting a federal entity in areas elites attempted to localize to ensure their continued influence through patronage.

Nonetheless, once the state coalition was at risk the local politicians felt they needed to fight the AV influence in the area by any means necessary, including allying with the Big Sandy CAA.

The Appalachian Volunteers in Floyd County, however, had already come under opposition before having drawn the full ire of the Floyd County CAA. In fact, the opposition in the area to the VISTA's and the AV's appeared to come from the Big Sandy CAA just as much as from coal allied politicians. Harry Eastburn, director of the Big Sandy CAA, was particularly vocal about his distaste for the volunteers. Mr. Eastburn was a firm proponent of avoiding "outsiders" when training and recruiting volunteers.³⁷ He believed that the VISTA program and the CAA's simply could not work together, "I could list two pages of problems... most of them stem from the fact that there are two (2) agencies involved with two philosophies plus a lack of close supervision."³⁸ Harry Eastburn believed the responsibility of the CAAs was to solve poverty through involving local politicians as much as possible to properly tailor relief to the needs of the area, making the politicizing of the poor by the VISTA's abhorrent to his work. The two agencies' wildly different responses to the ideas of the War on Poverty, at least to Harry Eastburn, precluded any sort of comradery that they may have enjoyed in sharing the goal of ending poverty, going so far as to claim that over ninety percent of CAA directors he had associated with were ready to do away with VISTA involvement in the area entirely.³⁹ According to Wesley G. Phelps, most national and

³⁷ Letter from William G. Poole to Harry Eastburn April 22, 1966, Box 46, Folder 19, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

³⁸ Letter from Harry Eastburn to William G. Poole May 2, 1966, Box 46, Folder 19, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

³⁹ Letter from Harry Eastburn to William G. Poole May 2, 1966, Box 46, Folder 19, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

local government officials saw VISTA as a harmless Peace Corps that merely assisted poor families deal with their poverty-stricken state on a more personal level.⁴⁰ However, Floyd County was seemingly exceptionally aware of the power of VISTA to provide information, destabilizing local power constructs. Both Harry Eastburn and the local Floyd political elite shared a knowledge of the power of VISTA, and had similar reactions to that power, implying a level of similarity to their political and social goals. Thus, Harry Eastburn saw the VISTAs as an extreme danger to the methods of CAAs in Appalachia. Despite their differences, however, both organizations impacted local elites in similar ways.

By 1967, the federal presence brought by the War on Poverty threatened elites' control over Floyd County. Charles Clark, superintendent of Floyd County schools, took great exception to federal oversight on Head Start dollars that would require CAA committee recommendations in order to hire staff. Clark claimed that dealing with "Washington" made planning difficult, resulting in uncertainty and ineffective use of funds for the area.⁴¹ Indeed, county politicians were warned that they may lose any semblance of control over anti-poverty programs in Kentucky. Instead of a county by county basis, federal anti-poverty efforts would be planned on a district basis comprised of multiple counties. Having counties tied together directly weakened the control a single county or elite could exact over programs, as they would be far less able to tailor how their county experienced the War on Poverty. The information that the federal

⁴⁰ Wesley G. Phelps, "Ideological Diversity and the Implementation of the War on Poverty in Houston," in *The War on Poverty*, 95.

⁴¹ "Clark, Others ask for Head Start Change," *The Floyd County Times*, March 16, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4792/March_16_1967.pdf (accessed February 15, 2019).

government presented would thus be far less under the control of local elites, and the results of such were starting to show.

The Floyd County Times was a pro-coal power newspaper. The editor, Norman Allen, appeared to be a local conservative, and friend to the coal industry. Allen attacked multiple parts of the intrusive War on Poverty in his 1967 editorials. In “The Poor Should Look Before Taking This Leap,” Allen called into question the motivations behind recent attempts to gather the unemployed into a union. He reminded readers of the 1930s when a union was actually organized, which he claimed that “good loyal mountain men learned they had membership in a Communistic organization,” once the National Miners Union “openly admitted that the organization was Communist-inspired.”⁴² While he does not identify the group attempting to organize the poor at his time of writing, nor does he call the organizing motivated by communism, his concern over communism and grassroots action were consistent with late 60s conservatism and the fears of Appalachian elites. This alignment however, made his vocal distaste for strip mining something of a departure. Allen stated that, while Kentucky had what was likely the strongest strip-mine laws in the nation, “You simply can’t put Humpty Dumpty together again after he has fallen off the wall and broken up.”⁴³ The only solution, for a man who referred to the coal industry as playing a vital role that benefitted the country as a whole, was to ban strip mining.⁴⁴ While the position of a newspaper editor could not be taken as the position of a community, Allen’s

⁴² “The Poor Should Look Before Taking This Leap,” *The Floyd County Times*, March 2, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4790/March_02_1967.pdf (accessed February 15, 2019).

⁴³ “No Law Will “Restore” Strip-Mined Land,” *The Floyd County Times*, July 13, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4782/July_13_1967.pdf (accessed February 15, 2019).

⁴⁴ “An Important Industry and an Important Issue,” *The Floyd County Times*, February 16, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4775/February_16_1967.pdf (accessed February 15, 2019).

conservative pro-coal philosophy made for an unlikely proponent of anti-strip mining, indicative of how widespread information about strip mining had become. Governor Edward Breathitt's actions in 1967, however, shocked local elites and indicated just how much control they may have lost in their own regions.

Governor Breathitt's suspension of Puritan Mines Inc.'s strip mine permit showed just how dangerous the political side of the War on Poverty had become for local elites. His revoking of the permit challenged coal power at a state level, threatening the financial cornerstones of favorable permits and tax laws that kept local political machines running. The main motivation for the revoking was Jink Ray of Pike County's conflict with Puritan Mines Inc. One of the previously dispossessed poor of Appalachia, Jink Ray was able to show enough political maneuvering to get his case known and challenge coal power. Likely just as local elites feared, one major breach in their control of information, the publicizing of Ray's struggle for land ownership, resulted in incredible risks for their power. Not only did this struggle result in the state suspension of the Puritan license to strip mine, it prompted Governor Breathitt to go on what he called a "fact-finding trip to Eastern Kentucky," where he personally evaluated strip mine operations. As a direct result of this informative trip, Governor Breathitt requested hearings over present strip-mining regulations with the intention of seeing if more strict regulation was necessary.⁴⁵ The risk of increased state regulation off of a politicized poor provoked a violent response from local elites, both in Pike County and elsewhere. Only eleven days passed between Governor Breathitt getting the suspension

⁴⁵ "Breathitt Discusses Strip-Mine Situation," *The Floyd County Times*, July 27, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4784/July_27_1967.pdf (accessed February 15, 2019).

to stick and the raid by Pike County prosecutor Ratliff that led to the arrests of Al and Margaret McSurley, staff workers of the Southern Conference Education Fund, and Joseph Malloy, a representative of the Appalachian Volunteers.⁴⁶ These arrests were designed to quickly discredit two of the premier organizations of the War on Poverty in Appalachia that focused on politicizing the poor, particularly the Appalachian Volunteers, via charges of communism and sedition.

Perhaps predictably, *The Floyd County Times* heavily covered the arrests, spreading knowledge of the accusations and borrowing the arrests to impact the influence of VISTA and the AVs outside of Pike County. In fact, Allen's article on August 17th directly after the arrests was a fantastic piece of anti-communist fearmongering. While claiming that the newspaper was "unwilling to brand everybody who is connected with the so-called 'war on poverty' as a communist, simply because of three persons... we cannot escape the conviction that subversive elements are taking advantage of the plight of those who are obviously in need." Allen claimed that, just as a "Negro leader" was in Cuba planning guerilla warfare in urban centers, it was not impossible that there would be a similar organization or man that would lead the white poor of the nation in similarly "sinister and desperate actions."⁴⁷ The message was clear. While Allen would not directly call the entire War on Poverty Communist, the politicization of the poor was to be met with suspicion, helping to recement local power over outside influences.

⁴⁶ Paul Good, "Kentucky's Coal Beds of Sedition," in *Appalachia in the Sixties: Decade of Reawakening*, ed. David S. Walls and John B. Stephenson (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 189-191.

⁴⁷ "Subversive elements may thrive on human need," *The Floyd County Times*, August 17, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4767/August_17_1967.pdf (accessed February 16, 2019).

Floyd County would soon face a unique problem compared to Pike County when it came to the Appalachian Volunteers; they stuck around. In fact, their presence increased rather than decreased. *The Floyd County Times*, in the months following the August arrests, only reported on the AVs or VISTAs a few more times, ending 1967 with an article titled “VISTA Workers Out in Kentucky” that detailed Harry Eastburn’s dislike for the volunteer groups. Eastburn said that no more outside volunteers would be accepted for the purpose of “trying to tell our people how to live.”⁴⁸ Then, with the idea that the volunteer problem was solved, Floyd County went about continuing to be a center for the War on Poverty, so long as programs were under local control. Sanitation work directed by John Milton Stumbo, chairman of the Floyd County Community Action Agency, and the rest of the Floyd County CAA was completed in Ligon, Charles Clark was elected to his third consecutive four year term as Floyd County superintendent, and the Big Sandy Community Action Agency received a grant for \$647,286 of which \$107,987 was for Floyd County alone.⁴⁹ Floyd County elites would soon have to engage with the AVs again, and far more closely than simply spreading the rhetoric surrounding the Pike County arrests.

The Appalachian Volunteers had been based in Bristol, Tennessee, but the groups’ director, Milton Ogle, decided on moving the organization to Prestonsburg, Kentucky. In many ways, this was a logical move. The Appalachian Volunteers,

⁴⁸ “VISTA Workers Out in Kentucky,” *The Floyd County Times*, December 14, 1967 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/65/4771/December_14_1967.pdf (accessed February 16, 2019).

⁴⁹ “Ligon Sanitation Work Cited as Outstanding,” *The Floyd County Times*, January 4, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4727/January_04_1968.pdf (accessed February 16, 2019). “Board Hires Clark For a Third Term,” *The Floyd County Times*, January 11, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4728/January_11_1968.pdf (accessed February 16, 2019). “Floyd, Five other east Ky. Counties to Share CAP Grant,” *The Floyd County Times*, February 8, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4723/February_08_1968.pdf (accessed February 16, 2019).

according to the mayor of Bristol, Wesley Davis, did not do any work in the Bristol area.⁵⁰ This was not disparagement, as Davis claimed that they had received the fullest cooperation from the Appalachian Volunteers, but simply that Ogle believed moving to Prestonsburg would be better for the organization. Prestonsburg, according to Ogle, had become one of the leading communities in Eastern Kentucky, and was an excellent location for AV activities intending to “contribute to this progressive spirit.”⁵¹ The members of the Floyd County Community Action Agency, having been able to assume local control over programs, resented this reintroduction of the Appalachian Volunteers. On April 8th, 1968, the Floyd County CAP passed a resolution requesting the removal of the Appalachian Volunteers from both Floyd County, and Kentucky as a whole.

The motivations behind this resolution were suspect, however, for numerous reasons. First, the Floyd County Community Action Agency was not a federally funded program. The federal list of Community Action Program Grants and Grantees has no mention of the Floyd County CAA, meaning they did not receive federal support under their own organization.⁵² Yet, this so-called CAA had directed other programs in the Floyd County area such as the Ligon cleanup. The Floyd County CAA had managed to lead numerous programs in Floyd County that did receive federal funding without any for itself. It was far more likely then, that the Floyd County Community Action Agency

⁵⁰ Phoned in statement to the Appalachian Volunteer Accounting office in Bristol on April 10, 1968 by Wesley Davis, Box 46, Folder 18, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

⁵¹ “AV’s Move Office Here From Bristol,” *The Floyd County Times*, March 14, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4740/March_14_1968.pdf (accessed February 16, 2019).

⁵² Funded Program Account Master File, 7/1/1964 – 6/30/1971, Records About Community Action Program Grants and Grantees, created 7/1/1964 - 9/30/1981, documenting the period 7/1/1964 - 9/30/1981 - Record Group 381, aad.archives.gov/aad/fielded-search.jsp?dt=158&tf=F&cat=all&bc=sl (accessed February 16, 2019).

was an organization made up of local elites seeking to control the direction of the War on Poverty. As Kent B. Germany argues regarding the Louisiana deltas, powerful local leadership saw the entire War on Poverty as an enemy and would attempt to reject all it could.⁵³ The rhetoric of the war on poverty in Floyd County was less racially charged than Louisiana, meaning that a solidified resistance along race lines was not likely. Germany also argues that the programs that could not be rejected were incorporated or curtailed for other reasons, such as the sedition claims against the Appalachian Volunteers. The message was not that their mission to politicize and help the poor was bad. The elites needed another reason to reject their influence, especially when the influx of federal dollars was another motivation to avoid pushing against the War on Poverty rhetoric itself.

In order to keep as much control as possible while still receiving federal money, the local elites of Floyd County were forced to try to control the War on Poverty rather than remove it entirely. Elites of Floyd County chose the Community Action Agencies to base their control off of, as the local CAA had proven favorable to their interests in comparison to programs like the AVs. Harry Eastburn and the Big Sandy CAA made for a good example of a side of the War on Poverty that would be agreeable to local elites. With his focus on involving local leadership, training programs, and avoiding outside volunteers, politicians of Floyd County had far less to fear from the community action model shown to them by Harry Eastburn than the more radical actions of the Appalachian Volunteers' ideas of maximum feasible participation of the poor. The

⁵³ Kent B. Germany, "Poverty Wars in the Louisiana Delta: Whites Resistance, Black Power, and the Poorest Place in America," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 232.

resolution itself was even sent to the Big Sandy CAA for their direct consideration. John Milton Stumbo, chairman, and the rest of the Floyd County CAA likely felt that, given Harry Eastburn's previous actions and vocal dislike of the AVs and VISTAs, he would assist them in curtailing the influence of the incoming volunteers.

A second point of suspicion was how pointedly the resolution refers to the midnight arrests made in Pike County in response to Governor Breathitt's suspension of the Puritan Coal's strip mining license. The resolution makes no specific reference to actions of the Appalachian Volunteers taken in Floyd County, claiming instead that, "the said Appalachian Volunteers have knowingly created strife, bitterness, and set race against race, friends against friends, and class against class in all areas... especially in the cities of Bristol, Tennessee, and Pikeville, Kentucky."⁵⁴ This strong linkage gives clues as to the motivations behind the resolution, as the arrests in Pikeville were to discredit the Appalachian Volunteers as a source of information in the area. As the AVs had, in the eyes of the local coal powers, successfully inspired statewide legislation restricting strip mining through politically organizing the poor in Pike County, the Floyd County CAA wanted to preemptively strike against their influence before similar demonstrations came to Floyd County. The AVs themselves saw the arrests in the same fashion. The AV supported newspaper in Floyd County, *The Hawkeye*, claimed that an AV staff member said that "he thought everyone knew that the problems in Pike County grew out of support for Jink Ray who threw the strip miners off his land." Both the AVs and the local leadership knew that the problem was not communism, but the political

⁵⁴ A Resolution by the Floyd County Community Action Program 4/8/68, Box 46, Folder 18, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

information and support the AVs provided to the poor of Pike County.⁵⁵ The Floyd County CAA wanted their constituents to be terrified enough of the AVs, who they claimed, “knowingly associated with known Communists and subversive elements,” that they would ostracize them and thus limit their impact on the politics of Floyd County.

Finally, the resolution was suspicious for how limited it was in scope. This resolution was not a formal federal complaint. Instead, it was only sent to three people or groups: Governor Louie Nunn in Frankfort, Kentucky, Big Sandy Area CAA, Paintsville Kentucky, and the Appalachian Volunteers in Prestonsburg, Kentucky. Of these, Harry Eastburn was well known for his dislike of VISTA and “outsiders,” and the Floyd County CAA claimed that Governor Nunn had fully agreed with previous motions to remove or limit the Appalachian volunteers put forth by Governor Breathitt and Sargent Shriver, the previous director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Once again, this was not a federal complaint. This was a resolution passed “unanimously” by the Floyd County CAA in order to follow the legacy of the Mulloy and McSurley arrests sent to as few authorities as necessary to limit AV activity and organization.⁵⁶ The Floyd County CAA wanted to reclaim local control using local conflict, playing the Community Action Agency, mostly the Big Sandy CAA but also the organizational ideas behind the CAAs, against the AVs without drawing in increased federal influence.

⁵⁵ “Floyd C.A.P Opposes A.V. Activity,” The Hawkeye, April 22, 1968, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

⁵⁶ A Resolution by the Floyd County Community Action Program 4/8/68, Box 46, Folder, 18, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

Conflict over the resolution began immediately. Milton Ogle defended the AVs in a letter published in *The Floyd County Times*, stating that the charges represented a gross misrepresentation of AV activities, and that legal action for malicious slander was being considered. Ogle took particular care as well to mention the number of long-time residents and native-born Eastern Kentuckians who were part of the AVs in both Floyd and Pike County, knowing full well the biases against outside volunteers that was being leveraged against them by the Floyd County CAA. Ogle further countered the allegations by quoting Mayor Wesley Davis's phone message stating that they had received the fullest cooperation from the AVs in Bristol, far from the allegations of strife and bitterness in the area.⁵⁷ Surprisingly, based off past interactions, Harry Eastburn was rather cautious regarding the resolution. On April 18th, Eastburn released a memorandum to the board members of the Big Sandy CAA requesting that they take no action on the resolution. He asked the board members to "merely take the resolution under advisement," until "all the allegations proven through documentation."⁵⁸ Without what he considered proper evidence, Eastburn was not going to take any direct action against the AVs in Floyd County. The resolution did find validation at a state level, however. Governor Louie Nunn requested "a long hard look to see what the organization has accomplished," echoing back to Harry Eastburn's meritocratic arguments against the VISTAs in the Big Sandy area.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ "Ogle Says Charges 'Ludicrous,' Baseless; Legal Action Studied," *The Floyd County Times*, April 11, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4711/April_11_1968.pdf (accessed February 17, 2019).

⁵⁸ Memorandum from Harry Eastburn to all Big Sandy CAP board members regarding the Floyd County Resolution April 18, 1968, Box 46, Folder 18, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

⁵⁹ "Nunn Calls for AV Study," *The Floyd County Times*, April 25, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4713/April_25_1968.pdf (accessed February 17, 2019).

Reverend William Poole, board member of the Big Sandy CAA, took particular exception to the resolution, directly writing to *The Floyd County Times* calling the resolution “illegal and incredible.” In this, Poole directly attacked the workings of the Floyd County CAA. He claimed that meetings of the CAA never have the required number of members to make decisions, with rarely more than four or five attending meetings. The majority of “board members” were always absent, violating the guidelines of the Office of Economic Opportunity and making the passed resolution a farce passed “unanimously” by a small group of elites under no evidence besides their own word. The resolution only had three names from the Floyd County CAA on it: John Roberts, Regina Roberts, and the signature of John Milton Stumbo as chairman of the Floyd County CAA. The motion for the resolution was made by John Roberts and seconded by Regina Roberts, who was presumably his wife, before being “unanimously” passed with no specific mentions for other supporters. Poole challenged the language of the resolution as well, stating that the language used was careless and unsubstantiated with evidence. The claim that the AVs had set “race against race” in particular bothered Reverend Poole, as he stated that Appalachia was, “practically speaking,” all white.⁶⁰ Thus, Poole claimed that a small faction in Floyd County resented social reformers who did not adhere to their own values, spinning the image of the AVs in order to link them to the radical and dangerous sides of the War on Poverty via accusations of communism and racial militancy.

⁶⁰ Father William G. Poole, “Letters to the Editor: Says Resolution ‘Illegal and Incredible,’” *The Floyd County Times*, May 2, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4743/May_02_1968.pdf (accessed February 17, 2019).

The elite of Floyd County were relentless, as the AVs were continually asked to defend themselves. One resident of Floyd County, Jane R. Combs, even took the information war outside of the County, taking it upon herself to respond to a pro-AV editorial in *The Courier-Journal* titled “The AVs Deserve More Than Bricks.” Interestingly, the reasons given for the request to ban AV operations were, for the most part, entirely new reasons that had not been mentioned in the original resolution. Instead, they represent the evolving discourse between the AVs and the Floyd County CAA, as those seeking to ban the AVs have had to continue finding more evidence as the AVs defend themselves. Jane Combs’ letter makes all new accusations in order to gain an advantage in a war of information, providing four reasons for the request for the AVs in the April resolution. Her reasons were: some of the AVs published achievements in their October 1967 report were either not identifiable or were accomplishments of other agencies; the AVs regional office in Prestonsburg had not made contact with county officials by time of the April resolution; even if some of the AVs were Kentuckians; they were directed by questionable officials; and there was no need for AV activity, quoting *The Floyd County Times* stating that Appalachia must “lock the door against any more experts,” and help themselves. Her letter then finishes with a single generalized sentence, “Recent activities of the AVs in Prestonsburg have caused disturbance and confusion.”

The subtle, and not so subtle, ways that this set of reasons differed from the reasons stated in the April resolution by the Floyd County CAA reveal how this war of information was evolving. It was not contained simply within Floyd County from the very beginning, as the resolution specifically called readers to remember the events in

Pike County as evidence. Similarly, this letter purposefully aimed to preempt the spread of debate outside the county. The questions over the October quarterly report achievements, for example, were entirely new. Although Jane Combs did not provide any specific achievements out of that report, the accusations were more likely to remain uncontested for a longer period of time outside of Floyd County, successfully influencing the public perception of the AVs across counties in preparation for the investigation by the OEO requested by Louie Nunn. Perhaps the two most interesting reasons are her third and fourth reasons. Both appear to have a single aim, disassociating the volunteers from the AVs. Many of the young volunteers that made up the groundwork of the AVs could hardly be considered ‘experts,’ but to Combs that did not matter. As she said, “Even if some of the youth workers are Kentuckians, we are convinced that they are directed by AV officials whose motives could be open to question.”⁶¹ The Floyd County accusations towards the AVs were not motivated by any certain individuals, who may or may not be locals themselves, but their entire philosophy on the War on Poverty. While Floyd County officials at least appeared to accept the War on Poverty, bringing in project after project, they required those projects to be under their own control financially and organizationally to minimize the disruption such programs cause to their political machines.

In response to the widespread smearing by the elites of Floyd County, and Governor Louie Nunn’s request for an OEO investigation of the AVs, Milton Ogle issued a preemptive request to the Office of Inspection of the OEO. Ogle was

⁶¹ Jane Combs, “Readers’ Views: The Floyd County AVs,” *The Courier-Journal*, May 16, 1968 (KY), <https://courier-journal.newspapers.com/image/109429737/> (accessed February 18, 2019).

requesting that Edgar May, assistant director of the Office of Inspection, conduct an investigation of the Floyd County Community Action Agency, assumedly instead of Louie Nunn's recommendations, in the wake of John Milton Stumbo's resignation as chairman of the Floyd County CAA. Ogle claimed that the community action advisory board for Floyd County had been infiltrated, and nearly taken over, by right-wing extremists. Ogle's claims tried to discredit the Floyd County CAA in a similar fashion to how the Floyd County CAA was verbally smearing the AVs. Ogle placed the blame for the April resolution asking for a ban on AV activities on three members of the Floyd County CAA: John Roberts and his wife Regina Mayo Roberts, a pair of "elderly cranks," and A.J. Reed, a police officer in Martin, Kentucky. Reed was seen as particularly dangerous due to what Ogle claimed were his abuses of authority and a speech at the May meeting for the Floyd County CAA "denouncing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a communist and the Poor Peoples' Campaign as a subversive plot." Ogle claimed that four new board members had been appointed as Stumbo resigned, three of which were chosen, according to Rev. William Poole, solely on their opposition to the AVs in the previous May meeting. The three appointees were Reed himself, Jane Combs, who was responsible for the attack on the AVs in the May 16th issue of *The Courier-Journal*, and Rev. Hemphill whom Ogle compared to a local answer to Father Caughlin. He feared that, with such a dedicated group, the Floyd County CAA would be taken over by the "kooks," and Reed would be appointed as chairman to replace the conservative but reasonable Stumbo. His final recommendation was that the OEO, the

Big Sandy CAA, and the Kentucky OEO all dissociate themselves from the Floyd County CAA, a “travesty masquerading as part of the War on Poverty.”⁶²

However, Ogle’s request fell on deaf ears, as the OEO began Louie Nunn’s requested study of the Appalachian Volunteer’s work, starting with Floyd County.⁶³ While representatives from Washington and Frankfort both joined the study, it did not lessen the anti-AV direction the study was heading in. The OEO did not support the AVs after all the controversy surrounding them in the Eastern Kentucky area, preferring the approach to the War on Poverty represented in the area by Harry Eastburn involving local and state officials as much as possible. While the study was not particularly out to “get” the AVs, it certainly found issues with the organization. While the report claimed that the AVs had a positive impact on their communities and that no evidence had been found that the AVs were seditious or communist plotters, the study found that the AVs were to blame for most of their problems. Their hippie attire had damaged their reputation, the AVs, were to blame for their antagonistic relationship with county officials, and the AVs had overall shown a lack of effort in fixing apparent shortcomings in their organization. Their recommendation was a broad restructuring of the AV operation to refurbish their image, as the AVs were charged with a lack of cultural awareness, which would be fixed by solving the AV’s “crying need” for highly skilled or professional personnel.⁶⁴ In this, the Floyd County CAA was victorious. While their resolution did not completely ban AV activity in Kentucky or Floyd

⁶² Letter to Edgar May from Milton Ogle June 11, 1968, Box 46, Folder 18, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

⁶³ “Nunn-requested study of AV’s Is Begun Here,” *The Floyd County Times*, June 27, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4738/June_27_1968.pdf (accessed February 18, 2019).

⁶⁴ “Study Team Report Lauds, Blames AV’s,” *The Floyd County Times*, September 12, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4758/September_12_1968.pdf (accessed February 18, 2019).

County, they successfully had them cut off from the main ideological path, and funding, of the OEO. The OEO wishes for professionalization and sanitization of the AVs along local middle-class mores would have destroyed the structure of the AVs who were organized around politicizing the poor in an area. While such recommendations were not carried out, the Floyd County CAA had still managed to create a rift, further isolating the AVs. The OEO had shifted away from politicizing the poor into more tangible programs involving local leadership. The Floyd County CAA mostly succeeded in controlling the image of the AVs, hindering their influence in the area by taking advantage of the philosophical differences between the AVs and other programs of the OEO.

Chapter 3: My Project My Way: Conflict in Floyd County Programs

“Once again our good people have been mis-led by outside people who have no idea about the real facts in Floyd County.”⁶⁵ – Charles F. Clark

On July 21, 1969, the Floyd County Board of Education proved that, despite previous successes in discrediting the Appalachian Volunteers, local elites were far from ready to make peace with the organization’s presence. The board, likely at the behest of superintendent Charles Clark, issued the second Appalachian Volunteer-related resolution to come out of Floyd County that banned both AV and VISTA related peoples from all schools and school property. By this point, the AVs was an unfunded and understaffed organization that was struggling to keep a presence in Floyd, the region of its own headquarters. What sparked a new wave of increased antagonism against the group? When the school board urged Clark less than two weeks beforehand to expedite the construction of a new high school, why did those steps lead to the banning of the volunteer groups from school property?⁶⁶ What happened, was that the AV presence in Floyd County was nowhere near as quiet as the organization seemed in the rest of Eastern Kentucky. With a nearly ruined reputation, both among conservative groups in Kentucky attracted by the labels of communist sympathizing and with the

⁶⁵ Letter to Treva Collins from Charles F. Clark, Superintendent September 5, 1969 – reprinted in the Hawkeye newspaper October 1969, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

⁶⁶ “Board Plans New Start on School: Tells Clark to Act Soon on Program,” *The Floyd County Times*, July 10, 1969 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/63/4680/July_10_1969.pdf (accessed February 20, 2019).

OEO, whose report had signified its desire to disassociate itself from the “radicals” of the War on Poverty, the AVs had become much smaller in size and scope.⁶⁷

This decrease in size also accompanied an increase in operations nearer to home, their relatively new home in Prestonsburg, the county seat of Floyd County, KY, to be specific. Despite “defeating” the AVs, the three major power groups in Floyd County, The Floyd County CAA, the Floyd County Board of Education, and the Big Sandy CAA under Harry Eastburn, saw more and more of their locally controlled programs encountering AV and VISTA instigated interference and counterinformation. Previously however, the Big Sandy CAA proved unresponsive to the Floyd County CAA’s attempts to goad it into a hardline stance against the volunteer groups’ actions in the area. The solution then was to take the lead themselves. Rather than essentially only trying to hook onto the existing state-wide anti-AV reactions, elites of Floyd County turned to local enforcement to provoke a response. The resolution by the Floyd County Board of Education attempted to leverage the existing patronage system in local schools against the volunteers. By taking such a stance, they attempted to force locals of Floyd County to take sides, and hopefully consolidate their control. Unlike the previous resolution, this one was specifically local, essentially not being officially sent out of the county as the AVs were based in Prestonsburg in Floyd County. This change from a state-wide to a more localized effort showed just how desperate the local elites were to be rid of interference. By containing the anti-AV war to the local setting, local elites attempted to regain some of the control they had been losing through the War on Poverty, re-isolating the area politically through beneficiaries of the patronage system

that joined with the politicians of Floyd County in order to not risk those benefits. Local elites felt confident taking this stance due to the changes in the OEO, as the AVs had become an outlier in the War on Poverty. Thomas Kiffmeyer has argued that the AVs became an outlier to the War on Poverty, as the end of the Johnson administration brought about trends in the OEO towards the side of the War on poverty more aligned with Harry Eastburn and other middle-class conservatives and political elites.⁶⁸ Fighting with an outlier of the War on Poverty would not bring the same risks to anti-poverty funding that were present previously, allowing for a more aggressive approach in Floyd County that pit the political machine directly against the volunteer groups and any area that supported them.

Running in the background before the next major conflict between the AVs and local elites, was that Governor Louie Nunn did not instigate only one study, the OEO study, of the AVs. The 1968 General Assembly of Kentucky created Kentucky's Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, often known as KUAC (Kentucky Un-American Activities Committee), in response to civil rights unrest in Louisville, Kentucky.⁶⁹ The appointments for this committee, however, were made by Governor Louie Nunn. The governor, while interested in counteracting the civil rights movement in Louisville, had already shown interest in further checks on the affairs of AVs and other challenges to Eastern Kentucky power. Inevitably, KUAC's attention turned towards AV activities, starting a hearing in Pike County regarding the arrests of Mulloy

⁶⁸ For more on this, see Thomas Kiffmeyer's work *Reformers to Radicals: The Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty*

⁶⁹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1980* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 198.

and the McSurleys in the region on charges of sedition mere months after the committee's creation.

The acting director for the AVs after Milton Ogle's resignation earlier in the year, David Walls, accused the move of being politically motivated, as it was focusing on AV interaction with a local project, calling the summoning of the committee "the latest of ongoing attempts by a coalition of self-seeking Pike County political figures and the Independent Coal Operators' Association to harass and intimidate."⁷⁰ The AVs had disputed the size of a tap-on fee for a water project in Marrowbone Creek, an area in Pike County. Disputing the tap-on fee ran the AVs up against the local elites of Pike County due to its potential to sink the entire project, losing that money for local elites. The AVs had asked for lessened or removed fees for the impoverished in the area, preventing the required amount of signatures by telling residents that they could tap-on for less in the future.

The Floyd County Times stated that no AVs were subpoenaed to appear at the KUAC hearings, and Walls issued a statement that said that the AVs would not appear before a committee which labels those it questions as un-American.⁷¹ Wall's statement ended up being not exactly true. One AV did speak at the KUAC hearings, although it is unknown if Norman Allen was trying to portray the AVs in a certain light by avoiding her mention. Edith Easterling went against Walls's recommendation and spoke at the KUAC hearings in order to challenge the assumptions made and expose the political

⁷⁰ "KUAC Slates Pike Hearing," *The Floyd County Times*, October 10, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4753/October_10_1968.pdf (accessed February 20, 2019).

⁷¹ "AVs, Water Row Aired at Hearing," *The Floyd County Times*, October 17, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4754/October_17_1968.pdf (accessed February 21, 2019).

aims of those involved. Her testimony was mostly disregarded via a mix of conservative stereotypes that portrayed her as an unwitting tool for communist men. KUAC attempted to portray her as a weak woman who had no knowledge of her actions using questions such as “Do you know anybody that is associated with the Highlander Folk School, and “Have you ever taken trips to the Highlander Folk School?”⁷² Leading questions were used to find a way to show that Edith did not fully understand her actions or who she may have been associating with.

The AVs themselves were also either uncomfortable with a woman taking such a strong stance as a mover of the organization, or Walls simply disliked that she disregarded his statement, as she was laid off from the AVs after her testimony. For their part, Pike County representatives stated that the water project, with its \$1.8 million dollar federal grant and \$270,000 federal loan, required a total of 700 subscribers to get off the ground, yet they only had 12 out of those 700 required.⁷³ The reason, in the eyes of those elites, was not the \$25 initial cost for subscribing itself, but the spread of disinformation by the AVs and their ‘allies’, likely referring to VISTA, that they could and should get it cheaper. The AVs organized a local citizens’ association and lobbied that the residents of Marrowbone Creek were too poor to pay for it, prompting the Pike County politicians to pull in KUAC to help cease the spread of dissenting information at its roots.

⁷² Jessica Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have to Fight: How Women Led Appalachian Movements for Social Justice* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 76-78.

⁷³ “AVs, Water Row Aired at Hearing,” *The Floyd County Times*, October 17, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4754/October_17_1968.pdf (accessed February 21, 2019).

Floyd County had a lot of reason to worry about AV interference as well. The number of programs with potential for disruption by the local AVs was staggering. Not only did Floyd County have its own water projects to worry about, two of which cost more than \$4 million, but a new hospital costing 1.3 million, and funding boosts for Floyd County schools for teachers and school lunches.⁷⁴ All of this came in a no more than two-month period and was not atypical as far as programs went in Floyd County. Massive amounts of federal money moved into Floyd County, much of which of which went into the schools. Floyd County schools were allotted \$3,078,975.17 in the Fall of 1968, enough to see teacher salaries increase ranging from \$200-\$700 dollars.⁷⁵ The AVs had long been interested in matters of education, working with schools since their very inception. With so much money flowing through the schools in Floyd County, local politicians worried about AV interference, and for good reason. Thomas Kiffmeyer describes the very first AV project as a school repainting project in Harlan County, Kentucky. Under the direction of the Council of the Southern Mountains, much of early AV work was organizing student volunteers to repair schoolhouses. Their other goal in schools early on, attempting to broaden the horizons of local kids through field trips and exposure to media, certainly would prove troublesome to many political machines. Backlash from local politicians, such as the school superintendent, eventually ensured that AV power was less focused in the schools in the later years of the War on

⁷⁴ "Floyd School Aid From State Upped," *The Floyd County Times*, October 3, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4752/October_03_1968.pdf (accessed February 21, 2019). "\$1.3 Million Grant OK'd for Hospital," *The Floyd County Times*, November 7, 1968 (KY) http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4748/November_07_1968.pdf (accessed February 21, 2019).

"Water Distribution Possibility Grows," *The Floyd County Times*, November 14, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4749/November_14_1968.pdf (accessed February 21, 2019).

⁷⁵ "Floyd School Aid From State Upped," *The Floyd County Times*, October 3, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4752/October_03_1968.pdf (accessed February 21, 2019).

Poverty. Despite backlash, the AVs remained concerned about education as a core principle of their activities. The Floyd County Board of Education's fear of AVs based in Floyd County getting involved with the funds flowing through the education system in the area was thus both a historical and legitimate fear.⁷⁶

Protecting the schools of Floyd County from outside information was especially important due to the power of one certain position in Eastern Kentucky politics, the superintendent. The superintendents in Eastern Kentucky counties held an incredibly powerful position that near singlehandedly held access to some of the best jobs in the area outside of the coal mines, making their goodwill a near necessity for advancement. In addition, in the same way judges and other politicians could grant or withhold access to welfare money based on support, superintendents could control which kids benefitted from certain school programs, providing a powerful incentive to support their political machines. The position could, for those so inclined, provide a base from which to influence nearly any position in a County once acquired. The Turner family in Breathitt County around this same time provides a good example of how central the superintendent position was. While tracing the power of one specific family in Breathitt County, John R. Burch Jr. found that the first position of power the family held was school superintendent in 1913. By the time of the War on Poverty, not only had Marie Turner held the position since 1931 herself, she had expanded the power in her position to place her family in a number of positions including circuit court judge, state senator, Democratic Party organizer, and an officer of the Citizens Bank of Jackson. That the

⁷⁶ Thomas Kiffmeyer, *Reformers to Radicals: The Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 18.

influence of one position was used to concentrate the politics of an entire county into one family over no more than one or two generations of political careers gives a strong idea of how powerful the position could be.⁷⁷

Charles Clark himself had made full use of the position during his time as well. Any mention of teaching hires by the Floyd County Board of Education in *The Floyd County Times* were invariably followed by stating that the teacher in question was employed on the superintendent's recommendation.⁷⁸ In June 1967, the board employed nearly 400 teachers, all under Superintendent Clark's recommendation, with many of them being provisional hires that had not finished their education.⁷⁹ While there was nothing particularly wrong with the hires at the time, the massive number of hires without any obvious increases in school planning appeared as if Clark was handing out political favors from his position. This only seemed more suspect when just over a year later Clark foretells of a "teacher surplus" and states that "some teachers will have to be transferred, and it isn't at all impossible that some will have to be laid off."⁸⁰ Clark himself mentioned that, although over-hiring was the norm, 1968 was an exceptionally large year for hires. Some choices regarding the hired teachers must be made. Of course, those choices on transfer or laying off of teachers would be made by Charles Clark's recommendation just as their initial hires were. Clark was, in essence, able to

⁷⁷ Burch Jr., "The Turner Family of Breathitt County, Kentucky, and the War on Poverty," 404.

⁷⁸ "School Job Is Approved," *The Floyd County Times*, April 6, 1967 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/65/4761/April_06_1967.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019). "Board of Education Employs Teachers, Other Personnel," *The Floyd County Times*, June 8, 1967 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/65/4786/June_08_1967.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019).

⁷⁹ "Board of Education Employs Teachers, Other Personnel," *The Floyd County Times*, June 8, 1967 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/65/4786/June_08_1967.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019).

⁸⁰ "County Now Has Teacher Surplus," *The Floyd County Times*, October 10, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4753/October_10_1968.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019).

control a huge number of local jobs through mass over-hiring and then could use the threat of potential transfer or layoffs to keep a tight grip over the school system

The education system in Floyd County, while made up of many different people, represented a unified local power. Neither he nor the members of the Floyd County Board of Education were going anywhere soon. The board renewed Clark's four-year contract for the third time in January, 1968 with a unanimous vote, demonstrating, in Clark's own words, "faith in the present leadership of our school system," and crowing that his last seven and a half years had brought "great progress...in upgrading educational opportunities for all our young people."⁸¹ The board that renewed his contract wasn't going anywhere either. The elections later in the year showed convincing wins for all incumbents of the board. They won re-election to the Floyd County Board of Education after slightly controversial elections where write in opponents claimed that they had lost their places on the ballot via local court decisions.⁸² The board and superintendent supported one another and freely exercised their power to keep themselves in office, with Charles Clark as much of the public face of the alliance. Their power was both stable and yet increasing due to the increasing amounts of federal money entering the county school system. As the warning signs in Pike County indicated, however, the AVs were far from emasculated. While less able to organize by themselves, the ability for the AVs to tap into local discontent and help politically organize it was still strong.

⁸¹ "Board Hires Clark for a Third Term," *The Floyd County Times*, January 11, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4728/January_11_1968.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019).

⁸² "Board Incumbents Defeat Opponents," *The Floyd County Times*, November 7, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4748/November_07_1968.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019).

This problem came to a head when the use of school funds in Floyd County came into question, mostly regarding the free lunch programs for the area. The new elementary school for Mud Creek only served lunches to children who paid the full price, forcing the children who couldn't afford the full price to sit on a stage and watch others eat.⁸³ Federal money guaranteed free or reduced-price lunches for children who did not have the money for a full price lunch and Mud Creek residents immediately vocalized their indignation. A local chapter of the National Welfare Rights Organization mostly made up of Mud Creek residents, referred to as the Eastern Kentucky Welfare Rights Organization, issued seven demands to Superintendent Clark in late 1968.⁸⁴ These demands centered around information about the school lunch program, including broader coverage, hearing of complaints, and publicizing rules and regulations regarding school lunch availability. The demands issued purposefully targeted Clark's ability to arbitrate access to the program, among others, on a personal or politically motivated basis, asking that he relinquish his near exclusive control over the programs' clients. Obviously, Clark refused, stating that acceding to the demands would close every school lunchroom in under two days. Clark claimed that he specifically met with EKWRO in order to help them understand "a situation about which they have been misinformed."⁸⁵ To Charles Clark, those spreading 'misinformation' were, as usual, the ever-controversial Appalachian Volunteers.

⁸³ Eula Hall, "If There's One Thing You Can Tell Them, It's That You're Free," in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 193.

⁸⁴ For more on the National Welfare Rights Organization, see Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement*, 3, 153, and 183.

⁸⁵ "Group Demands Free Lunches for 'Poor'," *The Floyd County Times*, November 28, 1968 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/64/4751/November_28_1968.pdf (accessed February 23, 2019).

Clark's suspicion was likely correct however, as the EKWRO were very much related to the Appalachian Volunteers. EKWRO was made up of residents of Mud Creek, where the AV assisted and advised 979 Area Community Action Committee resided. The 979 Area Community Action Committee helped to politicize the people residing in the 979 postal code through an AV organized advisory board made up of poor representatives of the 979 postal code area. Between the 979 area CAC and EKWRO, Mud Creek was an area that likely had more contact with the AVs than any other area in Floyd County. Not only had the AVs worked on a substantial number of projects in the area, they organized the locals into creating their own Community Action Committee, who then established the Hawkeye newspaper to give different meaning to local information by competing with interpretations of events by *The Floyd County Times* or local politicians. EKWRO was organized by residents of Mud Creek for much the same reason, to provide equal access to and information about federal money coming into Floyd County, making sure to declare that people were poor for generations directly due to coal exploitation that their goal was to prevent federal aid being used to control or reward political favors.⁸⁶ It was not a difficult stretch to imagine, as Clark seemed to, that the "locals" of the EKWRO were an extension of AV power and influence, seeing as they were from Mud Creek.

In response to the accusations, Charles Clark made a report about the lunchrooms for the month of October 1968, and *The Floyd County Times* published an article summarizing his findings. Charles Clark claimed that 28.7 percent of school

⁸⁶ Eastern Kentucky Welfare Right's Organization Constitution and By-Laws, Box 46, Folder 4, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

lunches served in October were free for Floyd County, and that the majority of the 19 lunchrooms in Floyd County could not operate more than two days on their cash balances after state reimbursement.⁸⁷ The same newspaper published a final report from KUAC, urging Governor Nunn to cease AV work in Kentucky. The report claimed that the AV were “poorly supervised, overfinanced, and staffed by persons with little training. ‘they work apparently to create strife rather than better the life of the people.’⁸⁸ As soon as the AVs, or their perceived representatives in EKWRO, became active in Floyd County, they set the elite resistance in motion once again. In addition, the OEO advertised that there would be 20 percent less money to go around for anti-poverty programs in the future, making control over current programs even more precious than ever for the elites of Floyd County.⁸⁹

In the face of rising opposition from both the AVs and locals, locals attempted to reconsolidate their power through policy first. Despite lessening funds and renewed dissention, quite a bit of money was still coming into Floyd County. In particular, the county’s Head Start program received a continuation and funding boost for the entire year, a new high school was set to involve over \$900,000 in construction, and the Mud Creek Water District opened bids for the estimated \$1,261,000 project on January 27, 1969.⁹⁰ Charles Clark began to implement a new style of teaching in certain Floyd

⁸⁷ “Oct Report Shows Lunchrooms Lose,” *The Floyd County Times*, December 5, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4719/December_05_1968.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

⁸⁸ “KUAC Urges Nunn to Halt AV Work,” *The Floyd County Times*, December 5, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4719/December_05_1968.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

⁸⁹ “Financial Pinch to Hit Ky. Poverty Programs,” *The Floyd County Times*, January 2, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4674/January_02_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

⁹⁰ “Head Start Gets Funds,” *The Floyd County Times*, January 9, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4675/January_09_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019). “Big Projects Set for Work in 1969,” *The Floyd County Times*, January 9, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4675/January_09_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

County schools that would take 75 early-age school children and give them personalized teaching and having them work far closer with teachers overall. The criteria for picking these children was, “chosen at random from first, second, and third graders.”⁹¹ This “random,” was likely to be anything but random, as it would give Charles Clark or the higher ups of the local school the ability to provide access to an “advanced” style of learning in their schools, discriminating based on reward or opportunity brought by those wishing for a better future for their children.

Not long after EKWRO’s previous protest of the lunchroom program, the Floyd County Board of Education acquired a new set of criteria for the lunchroom program in Floyd County. Predictably, this also offered a legal background for their greater control over the program. School officials would consider far more than family size or eligibility for other programs and would include a few more individualized reasons for deciding eligibility for free lunches. The new lunch criteria included such reasons as “individual pupil evaluation by the classroom teacher,” and “announcement by school officials of the food service availability.”⁹² With the amount of control the school superintendent had over teaching positions, Charles Clark would have the final say in who would and would not be recommended by their classroom teachers. In addition, he would be able to determine how many lunches were to be made available, denying excess lunches to certain areas. These cemented his control over access to the free lunch

⁹¹ “One Floyd School in Pioneer Group,” *The Floyd County Times*, December 19, 1968 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/64/4721/December_19_1968.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

⁹² “Board Gets Lunch Guide,” *The Floyd County Times*, January 30, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4678/January_30_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

program money and helped to begin a new round of conflict between the AVs and local elites.

Just a month after the new lunch guidelines were revealed, another article placed the AVs in opposition to Floyd County politicians. On February 20, 1969, *The Courier-Journal* published an article called “Despite U.S. Aid, Hunger still the Rule in Much of Appalachia.” The article claimed that the programs of the War on Poverty, naming food stamps and direct commodity distribution, were not enough to keep the Appalachian poor from going hungry. The article quoted the Appalachian Volunteers as well, claiming that many mountaineers were kept purposefully ignorant of their rights when it came to their welfare and poverty program rights, simply relying on their county officials to inform them of their rights and simply returning home in dejection when denied welfare by those officials over demanding hearings. Even worse, Robert B. Choate, a “leading advocate in Washington for the hungry poor,” specifically noted that welfare in Appalachia was dominated by county political machines that determined welfare access as political favors.⁹³

Floyd County officials vehemently denied these allegations, claiming that they worked by “established rules and regulations,” instead of bending the rules (implying that the AVs did).⁹⁴ Instead, hunger was blamed on the ignorance of the welfare recipients. County Judge Henry Stumbo was quoted that “it would be good if we had somebody to tell them how to make their stamps go farther, but we don’t have that, and

⁹³ Homer Bigart, “Despite U.S. Aid, Hunger still the Rule in Much of Appalachia,” *The Courier-Journal*, February 20, 1969 (KY), <https://courier-journal.newspapers.com/image/109498633/> (accessed February 24, 2019).

⁹⁴ “Story Says Hunger Defies Aid Effort,” *The Floyd County Times*, February 27, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4673/February_27_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

so the stamps last about three weeks.” A Pike County judge, Bill Pauley, was especially descriptive, claiming that he had a number of cases where welfare money was ignorantly used. Cases ranged from purchasing cakes and goodies over more substantial food, use of the assistance check for whiskey, or even supporting a sweetheart over their own children. Harlan County Judge Hugh Hall summarized their thoughts the best, stating that, while he knew there was hunger in the area, it was not the fault of a lack of aid or stonewalling by county officials. Instead, Hall said that “In most cases I know about, it is a matter of bad parents.”⁹⁵ Officials of numerous counties were publicly compiled in *The Floyd County Times* for a unified response to AV allegations in *The Courier-Journal*. The existence of hunger could not be denied, but the reasons the AVs provided needed to be disputed in order to keep their control over federal programs.

Efforts to ensure county policy by counteracting AV reasoning were proving less successful than elites would like. In March, the Kentucky Superintendent of Public Instruction, Wendell Butler, stated that every school district must provide a policy statement to him for providing free or reduced-price lunches by June 30th, 1969 and show that they have made plans to inform the public of that policy as well. The policy issued previously, and read with enthusiasm by Floyd County officials, was reviewed by the federal government and found to be against the wishes of the Department of Agriculture, and thus required change. *The Hawkeye* doubled down on this revelation, telling readers of what exact details they should look for from the Floyd County policy statement, and urging readers on how they can influence the process politically. The

⁹⁵ “Story Says Hunger Defies Aid Effort,” *The Floyd County Times*, February 27, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4673/February_27_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

writers explicitly lined out political actions to take based on school policy, ranging from making suggestions to local lunch directors, advising low-income families of their federal rights in place of local officials, and who to contact if their local school district doesn't appear to be compliant with the law, exactly what local officials did not wish for as control over federal programs appeared to be slipping out of their hands once again.⁹⁶ This was not unusual for *The Hawkeye* either, as the majority of its articles were dedicated to welfare rights issues. They even had their own adverts for the issues, such as a large two-page advertisement for a public hearing in Frankfort on June 20th 1969 that slammed current welfare policy and asked if officials had ever “asked you what you really need?”⁹⁷ *The Hawkeye*, and the AVs that influenced it and the 979 Area C.A.C, would only continue to be more inflammatory to the Floyd County Board of Education, among other officials.

In light of AV activity and organizing, the Big Sandy CAA and the Floyd County CAA appeared to close their ranks to better combat them. Cecil Sturgill resigned as chairman from both the Floyd County Community Program and the Floyd County Planning and Development Association due to conflict with Douglas Morrison, the new director of the Floyd County CAA after Stumbo's resignation, and Harry Eastburn. Sturgill aired grievances regarding the two programs' operation, especially relating to the hiring and placement of personnel, saying that the problems in Floyd

⁹⁶ “School Lunches,” *Hawkeye Newspaper* May 1, 1969, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

⁹⁷ “Welfare Recipients Do Not Need What Other People Need,” *The Hawkeye* June 15, 1969, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

County had progressed into an “intolerable situation.”⁹⁸ Morrison’s take on the matter was that he and Harry Eastburn had no conflict with Sturgill, outside of that Sturgill’s opinions did not always agree with federal guidelines, an accusation eerily similar to the one implied towards the AVs. Sturgill had previously sought charges against Morrison and the removal of Morrison from his post, but instead ended up resigning himself despite promises to continue his work to improve the county.

At the same time as Sturgill’s resignation, Harry Eastburn issued a warning to the personnel of the Big Sandy CAA, reprimanding them for circulating stories about how elected officials got them their job with the Big Sandy CAA. Eastburn threatened that any statements attributing a personnel member’s hiring to a “specific person running for office may be interpreted as campaigning under the Hatch Act and may result in the termination of your job.”⁹⁹ In previous years the Big Sandy CAA was strongly anti-AV and VISTA, but it did not show too much complicity with Floyd County officials. Here, however, Eastburn appears to be deeply involved with Floyd County politics and attempting to prevent another situation like Sturgill from occurring in the future. With organizations like The Hawkeye and 979 Area CAC around, Floyd County politicians needed to avoid controversy and opportunities for these organizations to attack their character.

⁹⁸ “Sturgill Resigns, Airs CAP Conflict,” *The Floyd County Times*, May 15, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4694/May_15_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

⁹⁹ “No Politics is Warning,” *The Floyd County Times*, May 15, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4694/May_15_1969.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

In spite of their defensive efforts, the school lunch program only became more controversial, as well as more valuable.¹⁰⁰ The Floyd County lunch program was embarrassed by a combination of two articles, one in *Impact*, a magazine published by the New Community Press, and more importantly a follow up article in *The Courier-Journal*. These two articles helped confirm and reiterate the previous claims made by EKWRO and the February *Courier-Journal* article by Homer Bigart. While the article in *Impact* was likely to fly under the radar itself in the area, *The Courier-Journal* article was reprinted and spread through the Hawkeye for Floyd County, and provoked an immediate response from Charles Clark, as both articles attacked the school lunch program of Floyd County that had already proven controversial.¹⁰¹

The main article Clark found offensive in *The Courier-Journal* directly quoted the charges from Remsberg, the author of the *Impact* article, stating that in Floyd County, “At least 2,000 youngsters are not receiving lunches.” Other charges including shaming students who could not afford lunch to sit without food in the same lunchroom as those who could, promising free school lunches in return for votes, and purposefully ignoring lunch program rules for their own gain. School officials, mainly Clark and Forrest Curry, principal of Curry’s Stumbo school that the *Impact* article examined in some detail, stated that their reason for non-compliance was that, although they knew the law, higher numbers of free lunches would be unaffordable to their lunchrooms due to the high numbers of poor. Curry was quoted saying that his lunchroom already lost

¹⁰⁰ “Perkins Wins Approval of Lunch Program Boost; Bill Now Goes to House,” *The Floyd County Times*, May 29, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4696/May_29_1969.pdf (accessed February 25, 2019).

¹⁰¹ “Report Assails East Kentucky School-Lunch ‘Failure,’ reprinted in *The Hawkeye* July 15, 1969, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

money, and “We can’t turn this into a charity thing.” Curry, like many officials according to Remsberg, advertised his belief that students skipped meals by choice rather than by necessity, “They have the money, but they don’t want to eat. We can’t force children to eat. That would be violating their constitutional rights.”¹⁰² Despite Curry’s claims, Remsberg claimed that many locals told him of being denied lunches or told that they could work for their meals instead. While the topic of the article was the school lunch programs in Floyd County, it undeniably blamed that failure on purposeful management by Floyd County political elites.

Charles Clark, of course, was offended by the allegations from the Remsberg article, and in particular that *The Courier-Journal* would provide more publicity to the article by reprinting and discussing its ideas. Clark claimed that Remsberg came to the Floyd County Board of Education posing as an investigator for the Ford Foundation wanting to investigate if they should extend funding to the Appalachian Volunteers. The board, likely wishing to color the investigator’s findings on the AVs, seemingly opened up completely to Remsberg, discussing the AVs part in disrupting the school lunch program and asking Blanche Dingus, the Floyd County Lunchroom Supervisor, and Forrest Curry to cooperate with the investigation. Dingus supposedly even showed Remsberg the financial records of all lunchrooms in an attempt to drive home the deficit they were running under despite federal assistance. Clark accused Remsberg of being another “up-East journalist” looking for a Sidney Hillman award, and proposed the creation of an Ananias award that would be given by the “proper leadership” in the area

¹⁰² Jim Renneisen, “Report Assails East Kentucky School-Lunch ‘Failure’,” *The Courier-Journal*, June 27, 1969 (KY), <https://courier-journal.newspapers.com/image/107474391/> (accessed February 25, 2019).

each year to the journalist who “stays farthest from the truth in his reporting, and thereby does most damage to progress in Appalachia.”¹⁰³

In light of the arguments posted by Remsburg, particularly those related to compliance with federal regulation, EKWRO decided to revive their efforts to get Superintendent Clark to publicize specific requirements for free lunch approval. On July 7th, four representatives of EKWRO went to Superintendent Clark to ask again that he comply with federal policy from earlier in the year that required he make Floyd County school lunch regulations public.¹⁰⁴ While Clark stated that, while policy had been prepared, he did not personally have a copy and Dingus would provide one instead. Dingus, unfortunately, was out of the office, and could not, or would not, be found by anyone with the Floyd County schools. Clark had learned his lesson from Remsburg. Any information provided to the Appalachian Volunteers, or anyone he saw as related to them, was dangerous for his publicity and put his control at risk of federal intervention. Charles Clark claimed that the previous *Courier-Journal* article that helped publicize Remsburg’s ‘findings’ had generated quite a bit negative publicity. He reported that he had received a number of anonymous “hate” phone calls and letters as a result. This negative identity was far from what Clark cultivated for the Floyd County lunch programs, where Floyd was painted as a progressive area that spent its too meager funding as best as it could. More than likely, Clark wanted to dismiss the allegations of

¹⁰³ Floyd County Board of Education News Release June 30, 1969, Box 4, Folder 13, John L. Vickers Papers, 1958-1976, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

¹⁰⁴ “EKWRO Denied Access to School Lunch Regulations,” *The Hawkeye* July 15, 1969, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

the “Impact” article and downplay the resulting “hate” in order to avoid too much attention outside of his own control.¹⁰⁵

This was what the political sphere looked like for Floyd County when the board encouraged Clark to “take any steps necessary” when it came to the school construction project.¹⁰⁶ School programs had spent most of the year under attack in one way or another, and the school lunch program in particular had received an inordinate amount of publicity for how Clark and the board of education wanted to use it. Clark was under a lot of pressure, as he had nearly completely lost control over information about his own programs. Thus, when EKWRO came to his office to inquire about school lunch policy again on July 17th, 1969, he decided to take what he saw as that necessary step the board recommended. At this meeting, Clark banned AVs and VISTAs from all Floyd County school property in an effort to restrict their ability to acquire and spread dissenting information.

According to a report of the meeting created by the EKWRO School Committee, Clark radically separated the citizens of Floyd County from the “long-haired foreigners” that also entered his office, showing hostility to AVs while attempting to assure the “locals” of his intentions with a story of his past poverty and the pride he associated with it. However, upon the entrance of Steve Brooks, a VISTA volunteer, he supposedly became belligerent, cursing and claiming that the AVs and VISTAs had been spreading lies, while Steve Brooks was a foreigner that was probably from Russia.

¹⁰⁵ Kyle Vance, “Floyd Educator Defends School’s Lunch Program,” *The Courier-Journal*, July 6, 1969 (KY), <https://courier-journal.newspapers.com/image/108014776/> (accessed February 26, 2019).

¹⁰⁶ “Board plans new start on school: tells Clark to act soon on program” *The Floyd County Times*, July 10, 1969 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/63/4680/July_10_1969.pdf (accessed February 26, 2019).

While what Brooks responded with was not stated, the end result was that Clark personally thanked the ‘local people’ for coming in with a promise that he would send them a report, while telling Steve Brooks to tell all of his “foreign friends” that Floyd County school property would henceforth be off limits to them.¹⁰⁷

A few days later, the official resolution was passed that formally ordered all AVs and VISTAs off of school property. The official resolution laid down a number of new allegations towards the AVs and VISTA. Gone was the allegations of sedition and communism from the previous resolution by the Floyd County CAA, and even in Clark’s alleged words from EKWRO’s July 17th report. Instead, the allegations focused on the cooperation, or lack thereof, of the groups with local political bodies and on their “willful ignorance” that made them unfit for antipoverty action. Rather than communism, it was this ignorance that had them misleading local residents into suspecting of local agencies and officials, hurting their own antipoverty efforts by rendering them unable to properly help those in need. The resolution alleged that VISTAs and AVs had been sustained on private and OEO money for years, yet a “great majority of Floyd countians cannot find a single tangible evidence of a worthwhile idea or act attributable to them.” Thus, in light of their “complete lack of knowledge...and their sense of what is decent in conduct and dress,” the Floyd County Board of Education passed the resolution unanimously in their board meeting on August 2nd in order to provide more opportunities for “proper leadership.”¹⁰⁸ In response, on August

¹⁰⁷ “Meeting With Charles Clark” EKWRO School Committee July 18th 1969, Box 46, Folder 16, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers.

¹⁰⁸ Floyd County Board of Education, Resolution Banning Volunteers From School Property, July 21 1969, Box 46, Folder 16, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

7th a group of around 50 residents of the Mud Creek area went to Clark's office in Prestonsburg to discuss the lunchroom issue and volunteer ban. Clark refused to allow the residents into the Floyd County Board of Education offices and supposedly began a fistfight with a VISTA named Palmer Frasier in order to prevent his entry.¹⁰⁹ Clark saw it differently, as he posited to *The Floyd County Times* that the board was "anxious to meet any time with any delegation from any section of Floyd County...but we do intend to resist with all our energy continued harassment by these imported characters." He claimed that he willingly accepted meeting with all Floyd County citizens and VISTA employees, but refused Steve Brooks and other out-of-state peoples. Upon Brook's insistence that they would all enter despite Clark, the superintendent and his staff nobly resisted their attempt to usurp the office.¹¹⁰ In the end, nothing was accomplished by EKWRO's meeting with Clark besides another fight.

The 979 CAC and EKWRO held an emergency meeting on August 11th to decide their next course of action, discussing Clark's attitude in order to decide how to approach him. His insistence on leaving out the AVs and VISTAs (supposedly his refusal to see the group on August 7th occurred after having questioned if there were any AVs or VISTAs present) was intensely disturbing to the members, and a "cooling off" period of ten days to two weeks was proposed before approaching Clark again.¹¹¹ The intention was twofold, to both allow Clark to calm down and perhaps be more receptive,

¹⁰⁹ "History of the School Lunch Issue," The Hawkeye August 1969, Box 130, Folder 1, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

¹¹⁰ "AV, VISTA Groups Ban Told By Clark," *The Floyd County Times*, August 14, 1969 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/63/4663/August_14_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹¹¹ "979 Community Action Council and Eastern Kentucky Welfare Rights Organization Emergency Meeting" August 11, 1969, Box 46, Folder 16, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

and to find an intermediary to help avoid Clark's apparent phobia of the volunteer groups. The EKWRO members also imagined that this wait also may allow them to see firsthand how the school lunch program would be carried out, as the school year would have begun by then, so they could be more specific with approaching the board.

It is worth noting that the Floyd County Board of Education had actually publicized its school lunch policy in the August 7th, 1969 issue of *The Floyd County Times*. However, this uniform policy was about as useful as the previous one, stating in the paper only three things. First, each school would have a committee to evaluate school lunch applications with the principal as chairman. Second, consideration was given to the size of the family, number of children in school, the economic situation of the family, and "other factors." And finally, each committee used a uniform scale that was similar to approved scaled used by other welfare programs in judging economic conditions of families. Clark's "Notice" on the policy, published in the *Floyd County Times*, finished by simply stating that interested parents could view the "complete" policy at their principal's office. Based on the reception given to EKWRO and the citizens of 979, one can judge how the principals might have been able to abuse this to continue to conceal the specifics of the lunch policy for their own benefit by design. Despite the notice having been given publicly, those at the emergency meeting still had no idea as to how the lunch program would operate, likely by design.¹¹² The motion to wait passed with a vote of 18 in favor and two against. The opposition warned, however, that giving more time to the board was a mistake. Opponents claimed that the

¹¹² Charles Clark, "NOTICE," *The Floyd County Times*, August 7, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4662/August_07_1969.pdf (accessed March 13, 2019).

more time was allowed, the more time the politicians and school officials had to organize against them.

Concerns over elite organization turned out to be prophetic, as fewer than ten days later the Floyd County Board of Education rediscovered a political ally to help them phase out the volunteer groups, Big Sandy CAA director Harry Eastburn. While Eastburn did not take action under the previous resolution, advising caution to his members over voting out the AVs and VISTAs, he was much more proactive towards the new resolution's less radical language. After hearing Charles Clark's explanation of the Board of Education's resolution, Eastburn ordered that all VISTAs in the area would be required to be screened and employed by the Big Sandy Community Action Agency directly, with an eye towards removing all non-local membership. Eastburn assured this was not an attempt to eliminate VISTA work, but to limit their impact as "outside VISTA's are not desired."¹¹³ In response, the 979 CAC voted to retain the two non-local VISTAs working in the area as they unanimously voted a motion considering non-local VISTAs to be a great help to the community rather than a menace as the Big Sandy CAA had issued.¹¹⁴ The EKWRO also unanimously voted to support non-local VISTAs, and they together requested the Big Sandy CAA to reconsider its action.

Simultaneously, the AVs and VISTAs were fighting for themselves against Charles Clark. While a Floyd County Circuit Court decision on August 12th had supported and enhanced the allegations of the Floyd County Board of Education,

¹¹³ "CAP Board Bans 'Outside' VISTAs," *The Floyd County Times*, August 21, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4664/August_21_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹¹⁴ "976 Council Board Asks 'Outside' AVs," *The Floyd County Times*, September 11, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4707/September_11_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

claiming that the plaintiffs, the volunteer groups, had no adequate remedy at law or otherwise for the harm and damage they have done or threatened thus making the ban an appropriate response until elites could “recover their costs and be granted proper relief,” the volunteer groups had moved their case into state court.¹¹⁵ The case named Clark and other members of the Floyd County Board of Education and local law enforcement as defendants, asking that they dissolve the resolution barring the AVs and VISTAs from school property and refrain from interfering with the volunteer groups and the EKWRO. The request was based on two violations of the plaintiffs’ rights. First, their right to free speech and association had been violated, and second their right to vote had been violated. Clark and co. were charged with depriving the plaintiffs of their ability to protest, and that the ban from school property was essentially a deprivation of voting rights as many of the polls were on school property. Clark had tried to directly remove the political power of the protesting groups by a roundaboutly depriving dissenters of their right to vote. Clark stated that he would fight the case by any possible means, “legal of course,” as a victory by the volunteer groups could cause “an untold amount of furore in the school system,” as it would not only generate a large amount of poor publicity, but also risk federal intervention if Clark defied the court ruling.

Unfortunately, the case ultimately seemed to make little difference. For one, the Big Sandy CAA stood firm in its opposition to non-local VISTAs. Eastburn and the board reiterated that they were not refusing to sponsor VISTA, but only would accept

¹¹⁵ Floyd Circuit Court CR 720 filed August 12, 1969 Clark, etc. vs AVs, VISTAs, etc., Box 46, Folder 16, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

VISTA work if they had control over the work done and the workers involved.¹¹⁶ At the same time, Clark was trying to put a public cap on his side of the conflict with the 979 CAC and EKWRO, reporting for an article in *The Floyd County Times* that he had come to an agreement with the “Floyd County people, not outsiders,” to not persecute fellow Floyd countians or interfere with the school system.¹¹⁷ He reported that the stance of the board had not changed on out-of-state VISTAs and AVs, as he believed that they were paid federal funds to promote progress and instead wasted those funds inciting revolution.

Norman Allen made a reappearance as well, professing a “lack of patience” with the attitudes of some of the AVs and VISTAs, citing an article titled “How To Destroy Imperialism,” he believed represented AV thinking. The article, in Allen’s mind, refers to attempts to “associate” with the people they are organizing. Allen quoted the article, stating that the “nice little regular people that make up 90 per cent of this society,” were all sick in the head.¹¹⁸ Allen tried to portray the outside AVs and VISTAs as looking down on the little regular people of the county, attempting to associate with them only for the sake of leading them for their own purposes. Opposition to the AVs was supposedly also composed of nice little regular people who did not understand the AV’s enlightened views. Allen used the article to portray the outside AVs and VISTAs as

¹¹⁶ “VISTA Rule Plea Denied by Board,” *The Floyd County Times*, September 18, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4708/September_18_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹¹⁷ “Mud-Cr. VISTAS, Clark Feud Cools,” *The Floyd County Times*, September 25, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4709/September_25_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹¹⁸ Norman Allen, “Whose ‘Imperialism’?,” *The Floyd County Times*, September 25, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4709/September_25_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

stuck-up experts who were here to patronizingly save the little regular people from themselves.

Although the Mud Creek residents attempted to fire back and defend the AVs and VISTAs, they did not succeed in freeing the volunteer groups from their labels. The residents of Mud Creek claimed that Clark's statements of cooperation were a hoax, and that they had made no such promises regarding the school system.¹¹⁹ The statement also defended the AVs and VISTAs, claiming that rather than inciting revolution, they were only interested in making Clark comply with federal and state laws. This defense mattered little, however, as accusations of the outside AVs and VISTAs continued. A letter to *The Floyd County Times* claimed that it was obvious by the AVs failure that federal programs could not work out for anyone if they "have contempt for the people they are supposedly trying to help." Instead, the letter alleges that, without federal money, these "long-haired, bearded, and not tidy looking people," wouldn't be anywhere near Floyd County.¹²⁰ Rather than the officials of Floyd County abusing federal monies, mismanagement of anti-poverty programs was the fault of the outsiders.

With a falling reputation, and increased pressure from Harry Eastburn, The VISTAs of Floyd County acquiesced. In order to continue their work in the area at least relatively unmolested, the workers accepted the terms posed by Big Sandy CAA and Harry Eastburn to place operation and staffing of VISTA in the area under the Big Sandy CAA. The threat of losing OEO funding was too much for them to bear.

¹¹⁹ "Peace Claim Said False," *The Floyd County Times*, October 2, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4701/October_02_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹²⁰ Mitchell Hester, "The Solution to Imperialism," *The Floyd County Times*, October 2, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4701/October_02_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

Eastburn reported to *The Floyd County Times* that, “with the proper supervision VISTA can be a good program,” implying that they themselves would be the proper supervision for such a program.¹²¹ Less than two weeks later, Big Sandy CAA nearly unanimously voted to end their association with VISTA, seemingly content with the idea that they acquiesced in the first place. VISTA was once again at risk of ending all operations in the Floyd County area, having given in to a sponsor for OEO funding only to be subsequently dropped.¹²²

While this did not end up spelling the end of VISTA in Floyd County, as the OEO appeared to continue its support of the organization in the area despite the will of the Big Sandy CAA, it did show how the organization had been politically cornered despite its best efforts and the support of locals.¹²³ Charles Clark and other politicians of Floyd County forced a dichotomy of local vs foreign in some of the bluntest possible ways, but politically it appeared successful. The AVs had been nearly shut out of the news by the end of 1969, and VISTA was barely hanging on until the OEO decided to continue funding them. Politically, the local elites had won the information war, minimizing the potential influence of the volunteer groups.

However, it was far from a complete victory. Neither group was actually removed from Floyd County, representing a lingering danger for local elites in legacy and action. In addition, the Floyd County Board of Education’s apparent alliance with

¹²¹ “VISTA Agrees to Controls, Work in County Continues,” *The Floyd County Times*, November 6, 1969 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/63/4697/November_06_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹²² “CAP Directors Vote VISTA Program Out,” *The Floyd County Times*, November 20, 1969 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/63/4699/November_20_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹²³ “OEO May Ignore Outster of VISTA by Big Sandy CAP,” *The Floyd County Times*, December 11, 1969 (KY), http://history.fclib.org/files/original/63/4667/December_11_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

Harry Eastburn represented its own challenges for domination. While Clark managed to successfully divert part of the War on Poverty programs spreading dissent in his area, he was forced to join the other side of the War on Poverty in the area, represented by Harry Eastburn and the Big Sandy CAA, in order to do so. The local politicians were still not completely free to manage federal money however they wished, as they had to accept a sort of lesser of two evils in order to remove what they saw as the greater obstacle to their control, the volunteer groups. While Clark and the Board of Education curtailed local resistance to their program implementation by attempting to politically neuter the voices influenced by the two volunteer groups, they gained the interference of Big Sandy CAA, who, in the same meeting that ended their cooperation with the newly controlled VISTAs, had held Floyd County program funding hostage over improper hiring and firing of OEO employees in certain programs.¹²⁴ Improper, in other words, by not consulting with Harry Eastburn, who had his own agendas. While Clark and other Floyd County elites regained some influence by removing the political influence of the volunteer programs, their success in removing the volunteer's political power left a vacuum. Much of the power vacuum was claimed by the Big Sandy CAA in exchange for having brought them further into the local political sphere, leaving Floyd County elites far from the pre-War on Poverty levels of influence and control despite their success.

¹²⁴ CAP Directors Vote VISTA Program Out," *The Floyd County Times*, November 20, 1969 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/63/4699/November_20_1969.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

Chapter 4: Conservatives of Eastern Kentucky: Responses to AV Conflict from Floyd
Countians

“Please – please do something. Charles Clark is only in on the beginning. I want you to
know what he knows.” – Irene Hayes¹²⁵

In the middle of all this political action, a number of individuals took it upon themselves to try to fix what they saw as the issues in Floyd County. Political entities of Floyd County (the Floyd County CAA, the Big Sandy CAA, and the Floyd County Board of Education), chose their actions purposefully and were motivated by political control. That Mulloy and the McSurleys were accused by elites of multiple counties of Communism when they were arrested was no accident, and instead played into the conservative trends emerging in Floyd County. When these individuals perceived that their County, or at least its officials, were under attack by dangerous elements that they struggled to remove on their own, residents of Floyd County reached out to the Federal government through Representative Carl D. Perkins in a number of letters concerning the volunteer situation in Floyd County. In 1969 and 1970, Representative Perkins received an unusually large number of letters from Floyd County relating to the Appalachian Volunteers and VISTA, nearly all of them from women. Michelle Nickerson argues that conservative women often were some of the strongest anti-

¹²⁵ Letter from Irene Hayes to Carl D. Perkins, August 7, 1969, Box D-077, Folder 3, Carl D. Perkins Congressional Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

communists, as they saw their conservative gender roles as a boon rather than a detriment to anti-communism. Their flexible hours as a stay at home mother and closeness to family and community gave them, in their own eyes, more insight than others to expose communist infiltrations of the community.¹²⁶ Woman's clubs then, were also a powerful source of anti-Communism as groups of women shared their findings. Woman's clubs were usually dominated by religious and conservative membership that used their organization to spread or compile "research" on the community. With the idea that women were more in tune with the community than others, organizations would take on the mantle of community leaders or perhaps watchers.¹²⁷ As leaders or watchers, it was the role of conservative women to correspond with political leaders with their "research" in order to expose Communism. This influx of correspondence was between various residents of Floyd County, supposedly one of the more progressive counties in Eastern Kentucky if progressivism was measured by the amount of money used for local anti-poverty programs. The letters sent from Floyd County residents to Representative Perkins told a story of how conservatives in the area saw the federal government and the volunteer programs. Their words revealed how the residents saw the volunteer groups themselves as well as their own personal role in the struggle between the volunteers and local politicians.

One resident, Irene Hayes, had an extreme reaction to the perceived presence of communism in Floyd County. The letter was written on August 7th, 1969, the very same day that Superintendent Clark and the Mud Creek residents fought. Her letter was

¹²⁶ Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 137-138.

¹²⁷ Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 38-50.

seemingly written in a panic, a direct reaction to the conflict as she mentions that, “The AV’s have attacked Charles Clark.” She was greatly disturbed by her belief that the AVs were communists who had usurped the programs that Perkins had “worked so hard to get for Eastern Kentucky,” to be “used for purposes only God knows and hopefully the F.B.I.” She firmly stated that they were not volunteers, but subversives in all respects, and asked that Perkins personally come to receive “evidence” of her investigation, as well as obtain a transcript of the KUAC hearings in Pikeville. She claimed that her three weeks of research had brought her dangerous knowledge, and “If I can find out what I know in three weeks – What must there be to really find out.”¹²⁸ Irene Hayes’s letter reads similarly to the “awakenings” described by conservative women in Southern California studied by Michelle Nickerson.¹²⁹ After an event made her “aware,” her research made her, in her mind, know more about the “enemy” than anyone else in the area and it was her job to shine light on this enemy for all to see.

Hayes’s three-week timetable showed that she was directly impacted by the resolution issued by the Floyd County Board of Education in July 1969. Her plea was an intensely local one that serves an example of a rhetorical success by the political elites of Floyd County. Here was someone who not only completely believed in their rhetoric, but also took steps on her own to look more into reports of events such as the KUAC hearings. She obviously had done her own, albeit biased, research into the happenings there, as she had specifically mentioned for Representative Perkins to get a

¹²⁸ Letter from Irene Hayes to Carl D. Perkins, August 7, 1969, Box D-077, Folder 3, Carl D. Perkins Congressional Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

¹²⁹ Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 51-55.

transcript of the hearings as a source of information. It was local, too, in that her allies are only the local elite. There was no mention of other programs, and she stated that outside newspapers such as *The Courier-Journal* would never reveal the “truth” to their readers. Her named allies were the victimized Clark and Norman Allen, who she admitted had not printed what she saw as the “truth” about the Communist nature of the volunteer groups in *The Floyd County Times* but that she believed Allen soon would.¹³⁰ Perkins’s involvement here, was transformed into the local as well. Hayes appeared to have a personal connection with Representative Perkins, both addressing the letter to him by his first name and sending it to his home rather than to his office. While Hayes may have meant for Perkins to use his power as a representative to do something about the situation, the letter was not sent to him in his capacity as a state representative. While it was not as if the federal government was the enemy, all “outsiders” obviously were. The only one she trusted was the local representative, Perkins. She saw her role in the conflict as an investigator out to reveal the “truth” about the volunteer groups. Federal intervention or interference was, to Hayes along with the politicians of Floyd County, something to be avoided.

The other letter of 1969 sent to Carl Perkins regarding the Floyd County volunteer groups, however, was the only pro-volunteer letter Perkins received on the topic. Pina Williams wrote Perkins after Eastburn showed his support for Clark by asking for a ban on outside VISTAs, two of whom helped in Mud Creek. Williams was a female member of EKWRO, the 979 Community Action Council organization that

¹³⁰ Correctly in fact, as Norman Allen did attack the volunteer groups in the September 25, 1969 issue of the *Floyd County Times* as previously mentioned.

was responsible for pushing Clark to retaliation by requesting knowledge of the school lunch program. Williams showed her support for the VISTA workers in the area, and requested Perkins put a stop to “a group of people in Paintsville Kentucky,” that was “working on trying to get these VISTA all put out of Eastern Kentucky.” Despite her appeal being directed towards Perkins, just the same as Irene Hayes’s letter, each letter reached out to Perkins in a different capacity. William’s letter called for receiving federal intervention from a state representative. Rather than Hayes’s letter addressing Perkins as a friend to confide in, Williams specifically requested that Perkins bring up the intervention of Paintsville, as “I’m sure Paintsville Doesn’t know the need of our people.”¹³¹ This was an intensely local argument, despite requesting federal intervention. Williams was attempting to argue that Floyd County should not be beholden to the will of another county. This was an argument for local power more commonly seen in conservatives who usually opposed the volunteer groups rather than supporting them. Although Williams never mentioned the name of the “group of people in Paintsville Kentucky,” the letter’s timing and subject matter, including Superintendent Clark reaching out directly to the organization to help run VISTA out of the area, implied that this unnamed organization was the Big Sandy CAA. By not mentioning the name of the federally sponsored CAA, Williams was quietly asking Perkins to control the federal side of things in Floyd County without directly challenging federal authority, seemingly confident in the ability of VISTA and EKWRO to apply pressure to Clark without the CAA interfering with them. Williams, however,

¹³¹ Letter from Pina Williams to Carl D. Perkins August 28, 1969, Box D-077, Folder 3, Carl D. Perkins Congressional Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

was almost alone in her protest, as hers was essentially the only pro-volunteer letter Carl Perkins received during the entire congressional session. Women played a large hand in the War on Poverty in Appalachia according to Jessica Wilkerson, carving a political zone for themselves through the spread of information and services to residents in their community.¹³² While Pina Williams would fit into that legacy, the vast majority of protests sent to Perkins, at least from Floyd County, were women who opposed the movements for social justice rather than supporting them.

Pina Williams was especially interesting as it was Conservatism in the postwar era that was usually associated with an attitude that focused on local power with minimal federal power, while Liberalism in the postwar era focused on the power of the state to solve problems. In Appalachia, this usually meant that a focus on the local coincided with a distaste for the uncontrollable federal groups or programs such as the AVs. Here, however, Williams was supporting the VISTAs by requesting Perkins keep other federal programs, in this case the Big Sandy CAA, from interfering. Supporting VISTA and requesting the federal government withdraw from local events were two usually mutually exclusive attitudes. The presence of both attitudes either implied a more Conservative support base for the volunteer groups in Floyd County than usually imagined, or that some supporters of the volunteer groups saw them as part of the local sphere despite being a federal program. It is worth considering if the AVs could be considered to have turned more Conservative when they turned “radical” toward the end

¹³² For more on Women in the War on Poverty in Appalachia, see Jessica Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have to Fight: How Women Led Appalachian Movements for Social Justice* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2019).

of the War on Poverty, as they attempted to preserve local culture over eliminating and assimilating it into the State.

The change of years from 1968 and 1970 appeared to have brought a shift in mindset regarding the volunteer groups in Floyd County. Richard Nixon's presidential election brought about shifts in the operation and motives of the federal government. The shift from a Democratic to a Republican president was major change, as post-war conservatism had become a movement in itself underneath the Republican party due to candidates such as Barry Goldwater. Nixon as a president appealed to the traditionally Democratic voting South in many ways, as many of the middle and upper-class Southern residents saw their favored party drifting ever deeper into issues of civil rights and representation of women.¹³³ Nixon brought a federal government with him that was more concerned overall with issues of the economy, backed by constituents who thrived on tradition and anti-communism. As Johnson was exiting, and Nixon was winning support, the conservative rhetoric surrounding and criticizing the War on Poverty began to concentrate on the term "waste." Rather than open declarations of racism or opposition, as the conservative leaders still wanted federal dollars, programs they did not control or did not agree with would be publicly deemed as "wasteful."¹³⁴

Accusations of "wasting" federal dollars, with the new presidency, were far more likely to yield results or investigations from the federal government that placed

¹³³ Ronald Story and Bruce Laurie, "Introduction: The Making of a Movement," in *The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 12-14.

¹³⁴ Germany, "Poverty Wars in the Louisiana Delta," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History 1964-1980*, 246.

pressure on local poverty advocates in their struggles to administer their programs.¹³⁵ Appalachia was no exception to this shift, as residents and politicians alike in Mingo County, West Virginia petitioned Senator Byrd to raise questions about how activists were ruining “legitimate” businesses and that federal funds were being wasted to embarrass the local Democratic party organizers.¹³⁶ The accusations of wasting federal funds led to an FBI investigation in Mingo County that heavily disrupted the local poverty organizers’ efforts to bring charges against the local political figures for their fraud and patronage. Floyd County, however, appeared to have been slower to adopt this rhetoric. Clark’s and Eastburn’s efforts to remove the AVs and VISTAs mostly relied on more longstanding methods such as complaints of their refusal to cooperate with local officials and accusations of seditious organizing. Irene Hayes showed this perfectly, as she was not concerned over the waste of funds, but rather their cooption by dangerous elements, and her phrasing was typical of anti-volunteer rhetoric in Floyd County for years.

The rhetoric that arose alongside the new president regarding the War on Poverty did, however, eventually spread to Floyd County. While the political battles against the AVs and VISTAs had essentially ended in Floyd County with their crippling around the end of 1969, their occasional remnants still managed to infuriate conservative residents and stir them into an anti-communistic fury. In particular, Maytown residents in June of 1970 held two discussions over the issue of

¹³⁵ Greta De Jong, “Plantation Politics: The Tufts-Delta Health Center and Intra-racial Class Conflict in Mississippi, 1965-1972,” in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 267-268

¹³⁶ Perry, “*They’ll Cut Off Your Project*,” 246-247.

Communism. College students residing in Floyd County presented a program on Communism on June 14th for Maytown residents, and a meeting of the Woman's Society of Christian Service ended with a discussion on "Communism Throughout the Church."¹³⁷ While perhaps innocuous on their own, these meetings inspired several Maytown residents to write to Representative Perkins asking for investigations of various groups and individuals as the Nixon administration had shown willingness to do for areas such as Mingo County, West Virginia.

These letters, while short and abrupt in comparison to the letters of Irene Hayes and Pina Williams, were packed with the shared knowledge of subversive activities from the Maytown meetings. Dortha W. Allen, in her letter, was concerned with the "so-called" VISTA workers in her area and claimed that many communities "wonder" why they have shown up. She questioned if they really were who they said they were, bringing in questions of infiltration by seditious factors, and implied their non-communication as communities were left to wonder their purpose for being there. She capped this off with a sentence stating that, "From personal observation this is a waste of government money. Will you please ask for an investigation and a stoppage to all this." Allen used conservative rhetoric despite her letter being addressed to the Democrat Perkins, attempting to reach out for an investigation from the more rhetorically money-conscious Nixon administration without changing the Democratic political machine of Floyd County. She quickly painted VISTA as a perfect target for

¹³⁷ "Maytown News: To Present Program," *The Floyd County Times*, June 11, 1970 (KY), http://history.fcilib.org/files/original/62/4634/June_11_1970.pdf (accessed March 2, 2019).

the Nixon administration, labeling it as a government funded program worthy of suspicion that refused to communicate with the local community.

The program was useless and unnecessary to Allen, as “mountain people have managed in the past to care for their needy.”¹³⁸ She then asked Perkins to consider if the program could be an act of communism and identified herself as having retired from school teaching this year. Allen, as a former school-teacher, presented herself as a learned individual who was qualified to teach others. Allen provided further authority to her claims via emphasizing her gender and her status as a retiree, as both implied, she had the time and energy to properly research her claims.¹³⁹ Having retired in 1970 showed that Allen was more than likely greatly aware of the fight between VISTA and the Floyd County Board of Education as she taught during the height of it. However, she made no mention of prior conflict in her letter and treated the groups as a more recent problem in hopes of attaining an investigation through Representative Perkins.

Not all of the June letters treated the volunteer problem as a recent development, Mrs. Mosaleete Patton wrote two letters to Perkins asking about the “overrunning” of the county every summer for a few years. One of the letters was a personal letter, and the other she wrote in her capacity as president of the Maytown Woman’s Club. In her personal letter, Patton asked Perkins for the procedure to have a group investigated, while avoiding mentioning the name of the group. Floyd County was being “over-run with numbers of young people who look to be of questionable character,” and was mirroring events “in both Pike and Knott counties for the past few summers.” The

¹³⁸ Letter from Dortha W. Allen to Carl D. Perkins June 15, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

¹³⁹ Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 137-138.

reason for concern was that she felt the people were creeping closer and closer towards Langley, Kentucky, where the letter was sent from. Most notable was her avoidance of naming the group.

While Patton was certainly complaining about an identifiable group, likely associated with the AVs or VISTA, she avoids naming them and prefers to claim that they were mysterious. She claimed that, “even their next door neighbors can not find out their purpose in being here.”¹⁴⁰ By doing so, she was able to imply the danger this group supposedly posed while avoiding any connection to long-standing local conflicts, ones that Perkins would have heard about over and over. Perkins was fond of replying to complaints about VISTA and AVs that he had a hand in drafting current law, and that the groups could not operate in a state without the governor’s permission.¹⁴¹ Patton likely knew Perkins’s attitude towards the volunteer groups. Thus, her refusal to identify the group in question was a purposeful attempt to obtain his cooperation with the group’s removal. While it was possible that the group did have nothing to do with any federally funded program, it would have been unlikely considering both groups were still technically active in the Floyd County area.

This connection between the mystery group and the volunteers was made even more obvious when considering the letter she wrote to Perkins as president of the Maytown Woman’s Club. While some of the tone differs, as she was asking for advice for how the Maytown Woman’s Club may go about investigating this mystery group

¹⁴⁰ Letter to Carl D. Perkins from Mosaleete Patton June 15, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

¹⁴¹ Letter to Dortha W. Allen from Carl D. Perkins June 18, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984.

instead of asking Perkins for an investigation, much of the letter was identical outside of some wording. She complained about the appearances of the group members again, but now she mentioned their actions as well. Specifically, she said that the group's purpose, which their neighbors apparently could not find before, was to "help the poor oppressed people," and that the Maytown Woman's Club did not condone their actions.¹⁴² Instead of the mystery being their purpose, the Maytown Woman's Club letter claimed that they could not find out who had sent the group to the Floyd County area, attempting to remove their possible association with the federally funded AVs or VISTAs. That Allen was able to identify the group involved as VISTA while Mrs. Patton did not in either letter, despite all three letters being written on the same date, lends more credence to this being a purposeful mystification. Patton saw it as her duty as a community leader to seek the removal of these 'dangerous' folk and was attempting to alarm Representative Perkins as she knew what his reaction would be to questioning VISTA or the AVs once again in Floyd County.

All of the letters to Perkins were related to groups or organizations but only one letter attempted to use an individual to reach the group rather than disparaging the group as a whole. The outlier appeared as a letter written by Mrs. Otha Hopkins. Unlike the other letters, Mrs. Hopkins attacks one individual in particular in order to disrupt volunteer efforts in the area, longtime VISTA supporter Reverend William Poole. While the meaning of attacking Poole has in essence the same effect of damaging the "undesirable" volunteer groups, it took a path similar to the midnight arrests in Pike

¹⁴² Letter to Carl D. Perkins from the Maytown Woman's Club June 15, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

County where a single individual was used to cast guilt on an entire association. Conservatives often characterized calls for racial justice, liberal education, and other progressive shifts as communist. Such movements were seen as purposefully stirring up trouble or weakening the American youth, and thus seditious by nature, and any relation to those would be furiously tracked and brought to light. Attacking Poole, in the accuser's mind, brought all of his associations into question, which in this case was essentially everything that was in conflict with the political powers of Floyd County.

Poole's years of support for the more liberal sides of the War on Poverty placed him in opposition to some of the biggest political names in Floyd County, often appearing in *The Floyd County Times* to defend the AVs or VISTA against any article that slandered them. Poole's vocal support of the volunteers, of course, had placed a target on him as he ran up against Eastburn, Clark, and Stumbo of the Floyd County CAA, while also holding no small amount of influence as a member of the Big Sandy CAA board himself. Hopkins claimed that Poole was responsible for bringing in "undesirables," to the point that even "many of the Floyd County Catholics have moved to Johnson County." Due to his antics, she claimed that the women of Maytown Methodist and several other local churches, whose membership included Irene Hayes and Mosaleete Patton, had taken it to be their responsibility to remove Father Poole from Floyd County by bringing his misdeeds to Perkins and the public.

Hopkins, in order to convince Perkins that assisting their investigations would be the right cause, stated that Poole was suspected of being "the big dope pusher in the area," and "repeatedly teaching homosexuality to our youngsters and supporting nudity in and around his headquarters." Similarly to Irene Hayes, to Hopkins this was not just a

danger for Floyd County, or at least she preferred to involve a larger scope when requesting Perkins take action. She claimed that it must be either the Cardinals or the Pope who was directly involved with keeping Poole in Floyd County, and that there “must be some way the American people can be rid of such a plague.”¹⁴³ Unlike Hayes, Hopkins mixed fears of Catholic sedition into fears of Communist sedition to cast doubt, and also unlike Hayes she was calling for a national solution. With a more conservatively responsive government, this was not a personal appeal to Perkins, but a request that he seek national responses to Father Poole’s presence. Through her letter, Hopkins wanted to make a new Mulloy out of Poole, inspiring fear of his associations among locals and thereby lowering their influence.

The final letter of the congressional session also came from the only male to send Perkins a letter protesting the volunteer groups in Floyd County. C. C. Hamilton, a self-professed poor man, was far more direct in his accusations as he claimed VISTAs uselessness in the area. The accusations of Communism were removed in favor of pure political maneuvering, as his letter was less of a request and more a statement to Representative Perkins that a formal request was forthcoming from the Floyd County judge. Hamilton found it unfair that VISTAs from other states could find work in the area while local children had to leave or even go to Vietnam in order to find employment, as he watched the VISTAs “run up and down the road getting (paid) for nothing.”¹⁴⁴ What stood out about Hamilton’s letter was how he experienced VISTA in

¹⁴³ Letter from Mrs. Eugene Hopkins to Carl D. Perkins June 15, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from C. C. Hamilton to Carl D. Perkins July 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

Floyd County. Hamilton stated that, while Hamilton was a school teacher, Palmer Frasure claimed that two of Hamilton's students missed seven days of school in a single month.¹⁴⁵ Palmer Frasure was a VISTA member who had already fought with Charles Clark previously, and Hamilton portrayed Frasure's claim as a personal attack. Hamilton's experience with VISTA was more personally motivated than the other letters, as he felt wronged by their membership. Hamilton focused less on accusations of communism due to his more personal experiences with VISTA.

Hamilton was someone who was part of the political system of Floyd County despite his claims to poverty, which shaped how he viewed Frasure's comments. While the two were not mutually exclusive, it does put suspicion on his motivations for gathering this petition for the removal of VISTA from Floyd County. While he professed that the money would be better spent on more tangible projects, this petition likely earned him some extra attention from the politicians of Floyd County. He mentioned that he was on both welfare and food stamps, while many other poor people were not, and it's hard to imagine that he would have attained full benefits in Floyd County after AV and VISTA influence fell so heavily by the end of 1969 without having some sort of influence with the political elites such as Charles Clark. In fact, Charles Clark was one of the sources Hamilton provided for Perkins to write for more information about VISTA and how they were not "for the poor."¹⁴⁶ Hamilton may or may not have had strong thoughts about VISTA to begin with, but the end result

¹⁴⁵ 979 Community Action Council and Eastern Kentucky Welfare Rights Organization Emergency Meeting August 11, 1969, Box 46, Folder 16, Records of the Appalachian Volunteers, 1963-1971, Berea College Special Collections & Archives, Berea, KY.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from C. C. Hamilton to Carl D. Perkins July 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984.

appeared to be that his protesting was part of Clark's political machine designed to elicit favors for the retired teacher and his nine children in the county.

These letters showed another side to Floyd County, one that wasn't just dominated by big groups fighting with other big groups over federal dollars. Each side had to be conscious of a number of individuals of varying backgrounds while grappling for power, as information is useless without a recipient to inform. On the other hand, the presence of the letters showed an interesting reality of Floyd County. Despite all of the efforts to remove outside alternatives to dealing with local elites, anti-volunteer residents of Floyd County still relied upon the federal government as their local government failed, in their eyes, to keep control over the situation. Eastburn and Clark may have shut down most of the political power of the VISTAs in the area, but many residents saw it as their own duty to take care of the full removal of the undesirable groups. They did not see the neutering of VISTA as a victory, as their presence was still in the area, and all it took was a reminder to send conservative residents into a righteous anti-communistic fury. VISTA's continuing presence, in addition to the attraction of the Republican Party's rhetoric, brought the majority Democrat voting Southern conservatives to look towards a Republican federal government for aid with their problems. The "Southern Strategy" had worked, as Democrats alienated Southern constituents by pushing for racial and gender issues against the traditional roles favored by the Southern conservatives.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Story and Laurie, "Introduction," in *The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents*, 14.

The contradiction of Democrat voters espousing Republican views, despite continuing to vote Democrat, also likely accounted for Representative Perkins's rather cool response to the letters sent to him. The Democrat political machine in Floyd County remained powerful, but residents had a strong cultural affinity to the post-war conservatism of the "Southern Strategy." Perkins answered all of the varied complaints and methods from the letters he received during this period in similar ways. His answers always centered around the same points, the friendliness of Kentuckians, a disbelief in charges of sedition, and a reminder that he himself drafted current law regarding VISTA and AV operations and that under that law the governor had not objected to their operation. Perkins calmed conservatives who contacted him, asking them to be friendly in sharing "our beautiful area and its landmarks, and our way of living and doing things," with the accused outsiders rather than rejecting them outright.¹⁴⁸ If problems persisted, Perkins recommended instead that they reach out to local law enforcement, as those coming to Eastern Kentucky "with some dishonorable purpose," would not find Eastern Kentucky helpless.¹⁴⁹

Perkins routinely attempted to mollify the conservative outbursts he received, despite their incessancy, and returned rather stock answers that suggested he wanted them to cooperate more with the groups in question rather than reject them as he dodged all requests for a federal investigation over the use of local authorities. For Perkins, if Louie Nunn had not fully rejected the operations of the volunteer groups, locals should

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Carl D. Perkins to the Maytown Woman's Club June 18, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984, Eastern Kentucky University, Special Collections and Archives, Richmond, KY.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Carl D. Perkins to Dortha W. Allen June 18, 1970, Box D-077, Folder 3, Perkins Papers, 1948-1984.

work with his programs in order to better the area. The numerous ways in which the residents of Floyd County entreated Perkins, however, show how the town fit into the changing political landscape of conservatism. Floyd County residents directly responded to the changes in conservatism that led to Nixon's election, believing in the "Southern Strategy" style despite the apparent lack of racial issues in Floyd County. In a twist of fate their responses took them even further out of the locally controlled information bubble that local politicians had been attempting to reclaim by driving out the volunteer groups in Floyd County. The reliance of locals on reaching the federal government showed that the control of local politicians had reached its breaking point, forced to give up its bubble of information in favor of federal funding.

Conclusions

The latter years of the War on Poverty were a tumultuous time for Floyd County. The elites of Floyd County had attempted to enter the statewide motion resulting from Governor Breathitt's revoking of the Puritan Coal Company's strip-mining permit first, aligning themselves with the leadership of Pike County through the anti-communist rhetoric campaign against the AVs. The midnight arrests of the McSurleys and Mulloy was used as if it were their own evidence, trying to let Floyd County in on this larger motion while also dragging the entire state along with it. The idea was to have a coalition of all the counties, the new governor Louie Nunn, and the Big Sandy CAA that was sympathetic to local elites to push for the removal of the volunteer group from Kentucky. Nonetheless, the attempt to completely remove the volunteer groups was ultimately unsuccessful. That the CAA backed out rather than supporting the motions was crucial. Without the CAA backing, the elites of Floyd County would lose the high ground they wished to acquire that would leave them as allies of the War on Poverty for continued funding despite their heavy opposition to two of the key programs of the War on Poverty in Appalachia. What it did do was set in motion another anti-volunteer campaign, one that was far more local in scope.

That the AVs moved their base of operations from Bristol, Tennessee to Prestonsburg, right in the heart of Floyd County, presented both a danger and an opportunity to elites of Floyd County. The danger was that now the opposing source of information undermined the patronage system of local elites by offering alternatives to what a local elite stated, was based directly within Floyd County now with far greater

access to the voting body of the county. The opportunity was that the core of the AVs now fell within the borders of the patronage system of Floyd County. Thus, local elites, particularly the Board of Education and Charles Clark, began attempts to re-isolate the area politically and blackball the AVs within that context. By more direct control over local opinion and 'side taking,' local elites could force the AVs and VISTAs out of the inner political sphere of Prestonsburg either physically or by discouraging the voting body from accessing them via discrediting and potential threats.

Elite attempts to shape public opinion of the volunteer groups were in many ways successful in Floyd County, nearly expelling VISTA while leaving the AVs with little influence in the area of Prestonsburg. The shift of federal control helped this shift along, as the OEO itself became less willing to support more 'radical' ends of the War on Poverty such as the AVs under Nixon. The OEO withdrawing support from the AVs allowed members of the War on Poverty programs such as Harry Eastburn to freely ally with the local elites of Floyd County to remove 'outside' influence. Local elites wished to shift public opinion in Floyd County against the volunteer groups, especially near Prestonsburg as a central voting area, and in that they succeeded. Middle class citizens, for a number of reasons, spoke out against the volunteer groups and asked for their removal, likely ostracizing them in their personal lives as well as in politics. Nonetheless, the way they did this did show a fundamental failure in how local elites had regained their power.

John Burch Jr. argues that economically and politically, the War on Poverty changed little in Appalachia, especially counties served by the Middle Kentucky River Area Development Council. The control of local elites was not destabilized for long,

and a resident recalled the War on Poverty as “the worst thing that ever happened to Appalachia.”¹⁵⁰ However, at least for Floyd County, a fundamental shift in the local regime did occur, although not in a particularly tangible way. McKee argues that local governments would not stand for the creation of what elites saw as federally created political opposition, and was mostly right.¹⁵¹ Floyd County certainly saw the volunteer groups as a source of opposition and rejected their intrusion of the local politically motivated patronage system. Despite this, the War on poverty had more to it than just political goals, as anti-poverty for them had cultural aspects to it. Many CAA personnel, and other members of the War on Poverty programs, saw cultural distinctions as a price to pay for “progress” in anti-poverty terms.¹⁵² Indeed much of the War on Poverty in Appalachia was motivated by a need to bring these “others” who were “out of touch” into the federal American fold.¹⁵³ Stereotypes of Appalachia reduced major political problems of the area to cultural quirks that were unlikely to be fixed by the War on Poverty, hence the eventual remaining strength of the local elites by the end of the War on Poverty.¹⁵⁴ However, the influence of the hegemonic “American mainstream” still entered into the supposedly “isolated” Floyd County.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Burch Jr., “The Turner Family of Breathitt County, Kentucky, and the War on Poverty,” 417.

¹⁵¹ McKee, “‘This Government Is with Us’,” in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, 52.

¹⁵² Daniel M. Cobb, “The War on Poverty In Mississippi and Oklahoma: Beyond Black and White,” in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 401.

¹⁵³ Karen M. Tani, “The House that ‘Equality’ Built: The Asian American Movement and the Legacy of Community Action,” in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 413.

¹⁵⁴ Ronald D. Eller, “Foreword,” in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), x.

¹⁵⁵ Reid, “Regional Consciousness and Political Imagination,” in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, 313.

Floyd County elites mostly relied on the rhetoric of anti-communism and pro-localism as a way to strengthen their own influence in the area against these federal programs that threatened their “isolation.” While anti-communism was part of the emerging post-war conservatism that was found in middle class residents, localism had its roots in far more practical purposes. Handing a patronage reward to a local person carried far more benefits than the same reward would have for a non-local. Patronizing locals allowed elites to maximize benefits for patronage, as they would be influencing not just the individual receiving the reward, but also hook the votes of their family into the benefits received by the local.¹⁵⁶ Elites’ emphasizing the local helps to remind us of something very important about these leaders. They did not see themselves as against anti-poverty. Elite goals were not to starve and dispossess others for the fun of it, but they were simply self-interested people. Elites attempted to maximize their benefits from what they had through preserving the status quo as best they could in the face of federal intrusion through the War on Poverty.¹⁵⁷

While the local elites did manage to discredit the Appalachian Volunteers and VISTAs in Floyd County, their success came at the cost of a major shift in the meaning of the status quo. Floyd County elites preserved at least a semblance of the status quo in the short term, keeping the poor as dispossessed as possible and continuing to usurp federal funds for the purposes of patronage. However, the “local” now permanently held a caveat to it. In removing the influence of the volunteers from the County, the local elites relied upon the federal government itself in many ways, mostly through their

¹⁵⁶ Arnett, “Eastern Kentucky: The Politics of Dependency and Underdevelopment,” 84.

¹⁵⁷ Arnett, “Eastern Kentucky: The Politics of Dependency and Underdevelopment,” 86.

reliance on OEO trends and the support of the Big Sandy CAA in the area. This ended up trickling into their constituents and supporters who they had attempted to mobilize against the volunteers. While conservatism was usually associated with the local and small scale, these conservative middle-class supporters asked for federal intervention and large-scale movements. Thus, we see the true impact of these three years of conflict in Floyd County, the normalization of the federal government in the area.

The cost of success in Floyd County was the political and social acceptance of the federal government as a player in the local by both the elites and locals. The federal government became legitimized in Floyd County as a source of information that was completely separate, and perhaps superior to in cases, from the elite base of patronage power for the area. Federal presence opened up an entirely new avenue of information for the politically disfranchised that was no longer able to close. The multitude of letters that Carl Perkins received shows this new basic assumption. The middle-class residents of Floyd County who wished ill for the volunteer groups in the area purposefully went beyond the local when attempting to attack the groups, bypassing Clark and other elites despite their sympathies towards them to ask for federal intervention. While this was partly due to the newly sympathetic Nixon administration, it still showed the existence and acknowledgment of this new source of power in the local sphere.

Federal power made local politics an inherently far trickier subject, even if the federal government did not actively exercise power in the area. Increased interest made publicity a far more potentially damaging prospect, as seen by Clark's massive reaction to the "hate calls" he received. Being disliked presented a physical threat to Clark's position, as it could bring far too much examination to a local subject that could

withstand little of such. The blatant abuses of power from the height of coal, and even before, such as trials without testimony or evidence for the purposes of anti-unionism and more physical threats of bodily harm for disobedience were far more difficult and rarer under federal intrusion.¹⁵⁸ Although local elites had minimized the politicization that the AVs and VISTAs ended up causing, essentially removing them from county politics by 1970, their actions legitimized the federal government's place in local politics in the minds of Floyd countians. This created a continual alternative for the dispossessed that, while less impactful perhaps than the direct interference of the AVs and VISTAs, still was a major shift in how local politics functioned. Although the elites of Floyd County had won the battle against the AVs and VISTAs, they had lost the war. The status quo they so desired would never be the same.

¹⁵⁸ Arnold Johnson, "The Lawlessness of the Law in Kentucky," in *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, ed. Leonard W. Levy (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 59-60.

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