

VISTA in Galveston: Yesterday's "ACORN"

Poverty Programs Stir Controversy

Attacks Continuing Across the State

By The Associated Press
Could you call it a war on the War on Poverty? It hasn't come to that, but the Office of Economic Opportunity program remains under continuing fire across Texas.

—Galveston County came

within one county commissioner's vote Monday of asking Gov. Preston Smith to oust VISTA workers from the county.

—Val Verde County is taking steps to designate its county commissioners as the governing agency of the War on Poverty.

—War on Poverty neighborhood workers are being blamed in connection with vandalism at three public housing projects in Dallas.

—There hasn't been a VISTA worker in Harrison, Panola or Val Verde counties since Governor Smith asked the Office of Economic Opportunity to pull them out of the counties late last year.

—The War on Poverty itself pulled its 15 VISTA workers out of Cameron and Willacy Counties last November because it said they had become "scapegoats in some local political disputes" in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. They never returned to the counties.

THE REMOVALS, and the current controversies, come at a time when Texas ranks first in low-income residents among the 50 states. The Texas Office of Economic Opportunity says 26 per cent of Texas' 3,532,568 families have incomes in the

poverty level, compared with a national percentage of 19.8 per cent.

The latest action at Del Rio is a statement of intent to have Val Verde County take over administering the War on Poverty. A public hearing on this is set for July 13.

The county's chief anti-poverty organization, the Community Action Agency, has been divided internally over selection of a new director and other matters. County Attorney John Pettit quit his post on the agency's board Monday.

In Galveston the vote was 2-2

on a motion to ask Smith to oust VISTA, and the county commissioners went on to vote to investigate the War on Poverty.

COMMISSIONER Paul Hopkins voted against the ouster but requested the investigation, saying too much of the talk about VISTA was emotional and not based on facts.

The commission heard of reports that VISTA people had participated in political activities, helped publish a black underground newspaper and had participated with militants in intimidating city residents.

Dallas Housing Authority director James L. Stephenson plans to ask for \$100,000 a year for police patrols to defend housing projects against what he called organized vandalism.

One housing project manager in Dallas reported that 650 elderly white tenants vacated the project following threats from blacks and incidents in which fire bombs were thrown at their doors.

Stephenson said militants living in the projects and operating on the outside have organized gangs of teen-age vandals. He declined to name names but did specify "neighborhood organizers with the War on Poverty" among other groups.