

OEO Director Arnett Summarily Dismissed

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By Jules Witcover
Washington Post Staff Writer

Alvin J. Arnett, handed his hat and shoved out the door 13 days before his resignation as director of the Office of Economic Opportunity was to be effective, said yesterday he will work for legislation re-establishing a separate anti-poverty agency.

Arnett discussed his plans with reporters after delivering a sentimental farewell to about 200 OEO employees in a movie theater around the corner from the OEO offices from which he was summarily bounced by presidential directive Thursday night.

Arnett got the word in a terse letter from White House political adviser Dean Burch telling him he was through "at the close of business today." As an added sendoff, Burch informed the man who lost his job because he bucked Nixon administration plans to kill off OEO:

"Being a presidential appointee whose status is derived from a deliberate confidential relationship between yourself and the President, please know that the President no longer has confidence in that relationship."

Arnett said yesterday he thought the phrase 'confidential relationship' was "rather interesting" inasmuch as "I never met with the President as long as I was at OEO." He was director just over a year.

In his talk to his subordinates, Arnett revealed that last Oct. 25 in San Francisco he devised with directors of community action programs around the country the strategy that led to House passage on May 29 of a bill transferring that part of OEO to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

President Nixon has indicated he would veto the bill, but it passed so overwhelmingly that it appears to be

veto-proof. Arnett's missionary work with local and state officials to pressure Congress for its passage was blamed by OEO foes who demanded his removal.

A memorandum to the White House by four OEO subordinates, including William Buchanan, brother of presidential assistant Patrick J. Buchanan, documented the case against Arnett and he was called in by Burch last Monday and told to submit his resignation as of July 31. He did so the next day, but was told to get out two days later.

Arnett declined to speculate on why he was pushed out early, but he acknowledged there might be some validity in a reporter's reminder that he had said he hoped to fund certain OEO projects before he had to depart.

The ousted director asked his subordinates to "not deal in retribution but in redemption" toward those who differed with them on aid to the poor. He received standing applause when he finished speaking, later, he told reporters he had given no thought to firing the four men who wrote the anti-Arnett memo.