

Poverty Agency Chief

NYTimes

Howard Jay Phillips

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 16—
When a visitor asked Howard Jay Phillips recently to respond to a "tough" question, Mr. Phillips, the acting director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, replied: "That's okay, I can be tough, too." Mr. Phillips has been selected by the White House

Man
in the
News

to direct the dismantling of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the anti-poverty agency, with some parts of it to be abolished and others to be assigned to other agencies. His job is much like that of a referee in bankruptcy but he approaches it with fervor and the toughness of which he boasts. It was disclosed and the toughness of which he boasts. It was disclosed today that an internal O.E.O. memorandum called for swift dismantling of the agency before Congress acted to save it.

It was Mr. Phillips's toughness that thrust him into the center of a new political controversy this week when he abruptly dismissed Ted R. Tetzlaff, the acting director of the legal services program, a successful but intensely controversial component of the poverty agency that is scheduled to continue as an independent public corporation.

The dismissal of Mr. Tetzlaff came only hours after the American Bar Association's policy-making board had urged increased support for the program and that it be insulated from political pressures.

The dismissal of Mr. Tetzlaff is one in a series of actions that have generated passionate and widely divergent views of the 32-year-old Mr. Phillips.

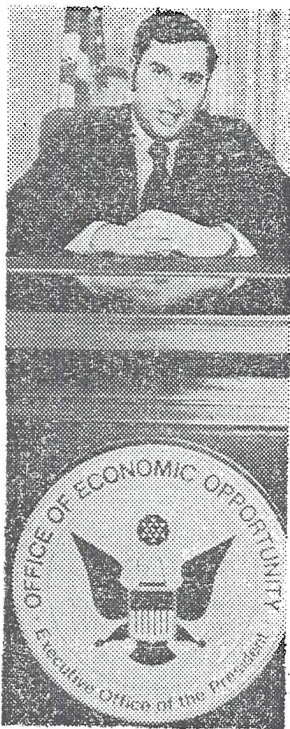
According to associates, his typical work day at O.E.O. is about 14 hours and includes three staff meetings.

'Diligent and Demanding'

"He is tough, diligent and very demanding of his staff, requiring us to be on call 24 hours a day," according to Barry Locke, a long-time personal friend whom Mr. Phillips named acting director of communications Tuesday.

"But he is at the same time compassionate and concerned with the problems of his employes," Mr. Locke continued during a recent interview. "He has established a job counseling operation here to assist those that will be displaced," Mr. Locke said. Others described him as "totally dedicated to his job to which he is fanatically devoted. So much so that he only eats one meal daily—breakfast—with his family."

Critics, however, describe him as "brutal, insensitive and hard to associate with



Associated Press

*Believes the President
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any clear philosophy."

According to a former high agency official, within a half hour after taking custody of the agency, Mr. Phillips ordered the outgoing director, Phillip V. Sanchez, and his secretary, to "be cleared out by morning."

Another Dismissal

Later, according to the same official, Mr. Phillips ordered David Jones, head of the agency's operations division to convene a staff meeting to which he sent an assistant to inform the chief that he had been discharged.

Mr. Phillips, who was born Feb. 3, 1941, in Danvers, Mass., has the build of a football lineman, the effervescence of a small-town politician and the rhetoric of a political science teacher.

"I believe that the most important issue in a free society is empowerment," he said in explaining his philosophy, "the power of an individual to determine his or her own destiny. In terms of Government policies for the poor, we need expanding choices."

"In the Legal Services Program the attorneys have had a monopoly on the poor and much of their effort has been aimed at criticizing or embarrassing the Government. I don't think this is the proper use of Federal funds," he said.

Mr. Phillips said for that reason he supports the "creative federalism" programs of President Nixon, whom he says he has idolized since age 11. "I believe Richard

Nixon epitomizes the American dream and represents all that is great in America," Mr. Phillips said.

He graduated in 1962 from Harvard College where he majored in Government and served two terms as president of the student Council.

Mr. Phillips, who was a founder of Young Americans for Freedom, a staunchly conservative student organization, said he had been interested in politics for as long as he could remember. He said that his family, most of whom were Democrats, frequently discussed politics and the work ethic during his childhood.