

Involving Parents and Community

Panel IIIA

Panelist Martin noted that "our pedagogy has worked only when there has been parental concern. The greatest Negro revolution is that mothers are now determined that their children are to get an education. That will make everything we do work."

Panelist Peter G. Kontos, professor of education, Princeton University, described a community action program in Cleveland that took place several years ago and in some ways was a forerunner of many of today's antipoverty projects. The idea stemmed from disadvantaged teenagers themselves who did not like what people in the community thought of them. They organized into a Youth Corps to do things in the inner city without pay. Of the 80 members of the Youth Corps, over 70 percent had never before been involved in anything, in or out of school. They developed their own projects, such as informing the community on how to get more police protection and better health services. Once it became known that they existed, they were booked solid for months in advance with projects that other community agencies wanted done. The youth became consultants to other clubs in town that wanted to reach the inner city community. The entire project cost \$200 for 2 years. The significant change was in the youth themselves. A byproduct change was in the school curriculum which began to make use of the community as a laboratory.

Panel IVA

Panelist Donald P. Stone, assistant for education for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Atlanta, Ga., argued that the poor themselves have resources which should be brought to bear on their problems. "We accept the logic that poor people have no answers to problems," he said. "If we didn't accept this logic some of those poor people would be here with us now." The fact that representatives of the poor are absent from the conference is a "demonstration of bankruptcy" in the meeting, Stone said.

He urged that "power be redistributed along more realistic lines so that the people affected have a way to make some of the decisions." He said school people

ought to involve themselves "intimately in the lives of the people in a spiritual, not a materialistic, way. I have seen teachers totally uninvolved socially or any other way outside of the classroom," he said.

Asked by panelist Ambos, how educators can find the leaders of the poor, Stone said that when the schools become thoroughly involved they will see the people themselves come forth with leaders.

Consultant Sugarman noted that the schools are accustomed to dealing with groups which "gather together on a stable basis and have constant leadership," and that the poor have shifting allegiances to leaders among them. "It's most difficult to deal with groups that are here today and gone tomorrow," he said.

Chairman Cleveland reminded the participants that "there is no group to represent all Negroes, just as there is no group to represent all whites." The only solution to finding the leaders of the poor is to "go out and get to know the people ourselves," he said. Panelist Stone added that the constitutional system permits enough flexibility to transfer power within groups, but those in power resist losing it.

Panelist O'Neill said, "The time has come to educate a minority group so it can speak and exert intelligent power. The capacity to perform at a sophisticated level is what is needed." Cleveland noted that frequently the friends of the poor are the ones who become leaders rather than the poor themselves.

Many participants urged that the schools make use of the resources of the poor. Cleveland said that in the rush of filing applications for the first year of Title I money, the poor were not consulted about the projects. While this is understandable, he said, "we're continuing the same programs next year."

Panelist Banks said, "It is not difficult to involve the poor—if they can see how the involvement will help them." They will not learn this as long as the school system is isolated from the community, he said. "There is a basic intelligence among people that we ought to tap."

Grant Venn, Associate Commissioner for Adult and Vocational Education, said the schools must devise some means to make education more palatable to the