

services, action to change the face of the neighborhood environment, and action to change the political or power structure of the community.

With respect to the first category listed, the kinds of actions engaged in tend to be focused on changing the rules governing the provision of services—especially employment and welfare services. Technically speaking, not all of the efforts aimed at altering the rules represent community action. However, the potential of genuine community action can and does lie behind much of the rule changing effort. For example, in one community the standard service agencies initiated their own review and reappraisal of policies and regulations so as to preclude militant action by center personnel and their clientele.

To illustrate the kinds of issues involving rules, we might consider employment service. It is standard agency procedure to limit the employment possibilities for young men who have a police record. However, in many poverty areas the proportion of youth with police records is very high. Consequently, employment counselling in accordance with traditional agency practice can have little effect in the area. In a few communities efforts have been made to alter the traditional practice either by erasing records of arrest for minors or by trying to persuade employers to hire youth who have had a brush with the law. In these efforts center personnel have played important roles. Unfortunately, however, the cases of this are infrequent. The usual pattern is one in which center service policy is tradition bound. In regard to employment this means that the emphasis is almost exclusively on fitting the poor to the needs of the employer and his job rather than trying to modify the job situation so that the poor can qualify for it.

With respect to action designed to create new services it should be recalled from earlier comments that very little specific service activity of the centers is new in the sense of being "newly invented." However, for particular areas and their populations the introduction of certain services well rooted in general tradition may represent a real innovation. Examples of this sort of thing would include tutoring programs, day care nurseries, thrift shops, recreation programs, etc. By and large the initiation of such proposals rests with center staff or board members after which efforts are launched to generate widespread resident support. Not infrequently such efforts come to naught—the victims of budgetary vetoes at a higher level in the OEO organization. That is to say, most proposals for new services involve costs which frequently cannot be budgeted. Unless the mobilization of resident support for such new services carries some "clout," they are likely to receive only casual attention from personnel at the CAA level of organization.

The third category of community action listed earlier involves the idea of changing the face of the neighborhood environment. This kind of effort usually focuses on mobilizing residents to clean up and repair their neighborhoods. The thought behind this type of action seems to be that of trying to generate interest among the residents in improving the conditions of their daily life. Pleasant surroundings are presumed to make for spiritual uplift. Such programs were not very conspicuous among the twenty centers studied here. Nine centers had mounted such efforts and all of these were initiated by CAA officials. Our impression is that this type of community action is not a spontaneous thing for poverty area residents. Rather it is a middle-class concern reflecting dismay primarily at the symptoms of the poverty "disease."

The fourth and last category of community action refers to changes intended to alter the political power structure of the community. This is far and away the most controversial aspect of community action. As might be expected, very few of our centers are involved in this type of community action, for in a sense it constitutes the act of biting the hand that feeds one. It also requires some sophistication in leadership which is not in long supply. What there is seems to be linked up with protest groups in the civil rights movement. This also helps to account for why this type of community action tends to be a big city kind of phenomenon. One of the typical targets of such action is slum housing. It is a "natural" cause around which to rally the poverty area residents because it is a gnawing irritation that is very conspicuous. Furthermore, it involves "bad guy" symbols against whom the pent up frustrations of the poor can easily be directed. The question of whether such actions can provide the foundation for a viable organization of the poor that must be reckoned with in terms of political power cannot be answered at the present time.