

the law by providing probation and parole counseling and by providing legal aid, bail money or other such assistance for those who have been arrested. Still other special services provided by or through the neighborhood centers include planned parenthood counseling, credit union opportunities, neighborhood youth corps, and the scheduling of meetings or forms for political candidates.

One service in particular which attracted the special attention of one of our field researchers is the effort to train clients in how to apply for a job and how to take exams for a job. This is not occupational skill training. Rather, it is training in how to cope with some of the realities of bureaucratic life such as how to take civil service exams. It is a skill which is becoming more and more important in the modern world.

COMMUNITY ACTION EFFORTS

In Chapter IV it was stated that community action is a very undeveloped feature of the neighborhood centers investigated in this study. In this regard it will be recalled that community action here refers to the mobilization of the poor in a collective effort to resolve some problem or issue. Needless to say, efforts of this kind don't just happen. They must be deliberately initiated and managed. This requires leadership skills of an uncommon sort. As a case in point, Saul Alinsky is reported to have said that it takes three years to train an effective community organizer. It should not be surprising therefore to find neighborhood centers, none of which have been in existence more than two years, exhibiting few signs of promising community action development.

These remarks above should not be construed to mean that there are no signs of effective community action among the centers investigated here. In point of fact noticeable community action efforts have been mounted in several communities. None of these, however, are in small town or rural areas. Such locales appear to be utterly devoid of anything resembling collective action by people living in poverty conditions. In some cases (especially in rural areas) this seems to be due at least in part to the lack of frequent contact among the people. It is very difficult to organize people whose settlement pattern places them in situations of relative isolation. In other cases, the community "establishment" is so centrally involved in the whole CAP operation that community action aimed at fundamental change in any feature of the established order is simply unthinkable. This often seems to occur where officials in the education system play prominent roles in the organization and operation of the CAP.

When we turn from the small town and rural area setting to the large city, community action efforts become, if not spectacular, at least visible on occasion. Where they have appeared most conspicuously one can usually find evidence of a leadership which has a background of experience in activist movements (usually civil rights). Such experience, however, provides no guarantee of success. There are still a number of factors that pose serious difficulties for community action enthusiasts. One of these is the heterogeneous character of the population in many poverty areas. Reference here is to racial and ethnic heterogeneity which frequently operates as a divisive force among the poor. Another factor is the high transiency rate of many poverty areas. A sense of solidarity with one's fellows is hard to develop if one's fellows keep changing. A third factor is the counter force exerted by the establishment, often in the form of CAP activities. That is to say, a neighborhood community action effort can be blunted by resolving at a higher level a grievance which is serving as a rallying point for collective protest. This is especially true if the grievance resolution is achieved before the community action is well launched. Of course, one might argue that such a development really represents the triumph of community action. However, such a judgment appears, after some reflection, to be a bit hasty.

When the establishment moves to resolve a grievance which threatens to give rise to collective protest, it is the *potential* of community action that is being reacted to. Although this may appear to be a capitulation on the part of the establishment, it can also mean that the establishment is attempting to forestall the development of something far more significant than the particular point at issue—namely, the effective organization of poor people in a self-conscious effort to exercise their voice in affairs of consequence to them. It takes an astute community action leadership to cope with this problem be-