

cases centers have no program involvement except reaching out into the community to obtain participants. These wide variations in size and mode of operation are naturally reflected in the funding of the centers. Some centers have annual budgets in excess of \$1 million while others spend less than \$25,000 a year.

Almost all of the center budgets are devoted to staff salaries and almost all of the staff are poor residents of local neighborhoods. Thus, it can be said that the funds utilized in center operations are resulting directly in the employment of poor people, most of whom were previously unemployed.

It is almost impossible to compare costs and achievements at different centers because no two centers operate in the same way. Further, the records of outreach and services are fragmentary and incomparable. However, there are some comments that can be made regarding this subject. Two functions occupy almost all the efforts of most centers and these are outreach and services. Community organization or community action receives comparatively little attention at most centers except insofar as it is a method of getting people involved with center affairs. The outreach effort is costly because it involves personal door to door "selling" and there are no economies of scale in this activity. The economies that are realized are important and these are that the same outreach effort is generating a clientele for many organizations that would otherwise not be serving these people or would be involved with probably more costly and duplicative outreach efforts of their own. Thus, it is suggested that this work, although as yet not reaching a significant portion of the target populations, is a utilization of funds with a high return for the amount invested.

Funds are also spent for center staff and for staff of other agencies outposted to the centers who provide services. Most of the services provided are not new but are instead the traditional fare of established agencies are relatively minor modifications. Thus, the cost of providing the services and their quality is comparable to experience in better established social agencies. What is new is that a new "market" is being reached and in a way that is somewhat more responsive to the demands of the service recipients.

Most centers do not devote a lot of time and resources to community action although there are some notable exceptions. Where community action is emphasized a great deal of effort has been expended for what appear to be relatively minor results in the way of residential participation. However, the lack of standards makes it difficult to measure achievement. It is suggested that both the propriety and efficacy of emphasizing community action continue to be moot points until there is considerably more evidence to evaluate.

VII. EVALUATION

CRITERIA

This section deals principally with the neighborhood center as a device for implementing the purposes of the Economic Opportunity Act. Any evaluation of these purposes is peripheral to the task at hand.

About two years ago there were no such organizations as neighborhood centers. They are not required or suggested by law but are instead an outgrowth of administrative suggestions by the national level of OEO to the hundreds of community action agencies established to carry out the mandate of Title II. At the first rather confused period of their development there was little in the way of clear exposition of their precise goals, functions and justification for existence. Apparently, some previous experiences prompted the concept; it seemed to have merit; and it was incorporated into the CAP arsenal of programs and organizational devices.

The Community Action Program Guide¹ briefly mentions "neighborhood centers" and "multi-service centers" but the exposition is very limited. Since the first hectic days, there appears to have been a deliberate effort at the national level to avoid detailed instructions with respect to centers. This is a way of giving expression to the general philosophy that the local people should be encouraged to develop their own programs and organizations and that federal officials must be careful not to preempt this role. Recently, a pamphlet entitled "The Neighborhood Center"² was released. This document does not focus on the "service"

¹ "Community Action Program Guide," Volume 1. Instructions for Applicants, October 1965, p. 28.

² *The Neighborhood Center*, Office of Economic Opportunity, July 1966.