

11. Community Action

Because of the nature of this area and its people the concept of community action is almost inconceivable. Any innovations whatsoever in the direction of community action may be considered as progress.

Due to the efforts of the present area representative some interest in community activity may be in its early stages.

There is no Center in the community around which activities may be focused. The Community Council which meets in homes of residents is an informal group which has proposed a Community Recreation Facility. In order to be built this proposal has to be submitted to the voters along with a proposal for improvements to the schools. The school improvements portion of the package has been voted down by the people in past elections so if the proposals are accepted during this next election, it may be considered an important sign of progress.

The smallest innovation that is proposed by a member of this community is usually considered extremely radical. During one meeting our observers noted that the area representative suggested that they begin to work on some new ideas for summer programs. Suggestions from the floor brought out proposals for a youth cultural program and fixing up the baseball diamond. A community businessman turned to the observer and asked if she "thought they were crazy for making all these plans."

12. Participation of the Poor

The policies and activities of the CAA and its neighborhood representative are all designed to provide a limited number of services to the poor, and they are not concerned with the participation of the poor in policy making or administrative roles. Thus, there are some arrangements for participation by the poor but the facts are clear that this does not take place in any meaningful way except in the role of employees. On the other hand, it must be recognized that the program is reaching people who have never been served before. In the community under consideration, it is not reaching a large number of people but it is indeed reaching families and particularly their children. In addition, because of the existence of the programs there are certain rather modest changes in established institutions. The school system is attempting to improve itself for the first time in many years, and the Welfare Department is assuming a more active role. There are signs that the members of the advisory councils are becoming restive in their roles and desire to exert a larger influence on the character and extent of the anti-poverty program in their community. It may therefore be said that there are the first faint stirrings of hope, of participation, and of community action to deal with some of the problems of poverty. It is believed in the community that this will occur only when programs are directed for the entire community, not only for the poor, and so recent attention has been devoted to unifying community opinion and action behind one program (the new community building) that will benefit everyone. Should this program succeed, it is likely to be the first of more successes.

CENTER "E"

1. History and Origins

In 1962 a Corporation was established in response to a long-time community interest in the formation of an overall planning and coordinating agency for social services, and in association with a demonstration project for delinquency control. Fundamental to the planning objective was the attempt to bring to bear upon the problems of delinquency the coordinated and integrated influences of existing agencies. A geographically-based unit for the coordination of services became a central concept for implementation. The area in which the present Center is located was selected as the target for the demonstration. The Corporation that had been formed in 1962 became the agency to carry out the demonstration and in 1964 it was delegated to serve as the CAA for the entire city.

The Corporation adopted the concept that existing agencies had failed to meet the needs of the target population in the area and a more aggressive approach to the problems experienced by the area was necessary. This became the underlying philosophy of the Center when it opened. The departure from traditional views of services and a patent distrust of existing agencies meant that the CAA rather than a traditional agency operated the Center.

Prior to the opening of the Center there existed private social welfare agencies which were concerned about the conditions of the poor. The settlement houses and the service projects operated by ministers in the area are cases in point. A most significant conflict occurred between these private agencies and the CAA