

Innovation can then be described as, in part, a process of adjusting to the pressures of conflicting interest groups within a context of broad social change. The broad contextual pressures are indicated by the stark facts of precipitous rise in caseload size and costs, chronic manpower shortage and the glare of public attention as public assistance becomes a central political issue (and scapegoat).

The financial and manpower squeeze are easily indicated. Annual public assistance costs are around \$8 billion, total caseloads pass 8 million. Between January 1967 and January 1968, total costs rose about one-third, medical care costs increases seventy percent, caseloads (excluding M.A.) increased ten percent.¹¹ By 1970, it is estimated that there will be almost 100,000 social workers needed in public assistance, of whom about 31,500 should have two years of graduate training. In 1964 there were about 46,000 staff members in these agencies of whom only 2,200 had the desired graduate training.¹²

The conditions these figures signify, squeeze public assistance agencies severely. Pressures to provide services are matched by pressures to limit or reduce costs. Innovations which have a potential for increasing caseload size are difficult to initiate. The next section of this paper limits some of the major interest groups in public assistance and discusses the possible direction their influence might move agency policy. The basic conclusion of this section is that Declaration is a remarkably inviting innovation. It advances the goals or satisfies the demands of many interest groups, though substantial opposition will also be indicated. Major support comes from groups who favor increased services and/or more objective procedures, major opposition from groups concerned with increased cost or from staff members who resist this change for a variety of reasons independent of cost. The pattern of innovations described above indicates that the scope of implementation represents a compromise between these opposing views.

F. INTEREST GROUPS

The interest groups whose positions will be discussed include; State or local agency executives; caseworkers and other line staff; clients; federal agency staff; political officials, congress, governors and state legislators; and professional organizations, particularly the American Public Welfare Association.

Agency executives including directors and central staff members, are, I would suggest, the major source of initiative for this innovation. The executive's dilemma as already outlined; how can Declaration help him? The manpower shortage expresses itself in high turnover, low morale, and sheer staff shortage. The executive sees an opportunity to shift staff to services, raise morale and reduce turnover. Higher priced BA degree social workers can specialize in services and lower priced eligibility technicians can be used for eligibility determination. Hard-pressed staff may be able to "manage" larger caseloads or in ideal circumstances, caseload levels may allow the agency to secure 75 percent federal matching for "service costs," rather than the 50 percent administrative costs matching formula. Not least, the executive may achieve personal and professional career goals through developing a more service oriented agency structure.

Line staff, particularly caseworkers, exert considerable influence both supporting and resisting this change. Supporters argue that the eligibility determination role absorbs time, energy and motivation for their preferred role, service provision.

A few staff critics may question clients trustworthiness. Most questions, however, are directed at separation of services. Oriented to the traditional caseworker-client model, they wonder whether everyone who "need service" will receive it, unless routine application and redetermination interviews are maintained.

Staff resistance is invariably reported to decrease or vanish in time or through staff turnover. Nor, can one place the cause for this resistance solely upon staff attitudes. Complicated agency policy and a climate of deterrence encourage overly rigid and restrictive evaluation of mailed eligibility applications. To de-emphasize the traditional investigatory procedures, New York City and others assign newly hired staff to the eligibility unit. If innovation is a goal, even high staff turnover can be turned to advantage.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Advance Release of Public Assistance January 1968*, Social and Rehabilitation Service, January, 1968, Table 1 and Table 2. (Mimeographed).

¹² U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Closing the Gap . . . in Social Work Manpower*, Report of the Department Task Force on Social Work Education and Manpower, Office of the Under Secretary, November, 1965, p. 40.