

SCHOOLS AND NEIGHBORS IN ACTION

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*Tools
for*
Human Relations

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I. CAN WE BUILD UP THE RESERVOIRS OF GOOD WILL?

N. Y. Herald Tribune, May, 1950

Clouds Belabored By Air and by Land

Howell Goes Up in Special DC-3, Loaned to City

Dr. Wallace E. Howell launched a new double-barreled attack against Catskill clouds yesterday—from the air he dropped dry ice and from the ground a mobile silver iodide generator spewed triggering crystals into winds heading for the watersheds.

The city's rainmaker, for the first time, flew in a specially equipped DC-3 owned by the Sperry Gyroscope Corporation and loaned to the rain-making project.

This clipping from a large metropolitan daily paper illustrates how far man has come from the days of the ceremonials and incantations of the ancient rainmakers.

Facing a rapidly dwindling water supply, New York City appealed to its scientists to "seed the clouds" to change atmospheric conditions so as to produce rain. As the modern rainmaker's plane droned slowly back and forth among the overhanging Catskill clouds, it was followed anxiously by many eyes and many minds. Was it really possible, through man's effort, to change the atmosphere, to produce clouds, to cause rain to fall upon hard and dry soil? Was it possible to build up the reserves of water, suddenly become so precious?

Seeding the Clouds of Good Will

Just as many minds and hearts were then concerned about the dangerously low water supply, so many others are worried about the low state of the reservoirs of good will in our communities. These reservoirs, as Wendell Willkie put it, are leaking badly. Can we appeal to "rainmakers" to fill them, too? Can we find the ways to produce the rains of cooperation and the spirit of common cause?

Many think it can be done, if there is a will and a plan. Everywhere in the smaller, self-contained communities that make up our large urbanized areas there are the neighborhood "rainmakers"—small groups of people interested in making better communities for themselves and their children. These people meet endlessly in homes, churches, settlement houses and schools to discuss their common problems and to devise means of coping with them. They too are engaged in "seeding the clouds"—clouds of suspicion and distrust which seem to rise from city sidewalks. They, too, are attempting to change the atmosphere—the social atmosphere—in which they live. Can they dissolve the clouds which often stand between groups; can they extend the areas of cooperation among welfare agencies, community organizations, schools, parents and citizens? Can the feeling of good will and the spirit of collective action be developed to the end that children and adults, Christians and Jews, negroes and whites can live happier and more creative lives?

Of course, these questions have been asked frequently before. Ready answers do not exist. But, as the scientist slowly, carefully, patiently seeks to influence nature, to discover its innermost secrets; so the educator, the parent, the priest, the rabbi the welfare worker, the citizen, all working together, are slowly, carefully, patiently seeking the formulae for cooperative consideration of common problems.

Neighborhoods—Healthy or Sick?

Neighborhoods, like individuals, are living things. They have a state of health which ranges from very good to very bad.

Urban communities, like other living things, have forces which work against their good health and which, if unchecked, will eventually destroy them. Two diseases which undermine community health are *group anarchy* and *anomy*, the cancer and leukemia of the neighborhood organism. By *group anarchy* we mean the organization and often the over organization of neighborhoods exclusively along the lines of particularist interests. Professor McIver of Columbia has expressed it in this way:

"Take the modern city; with every calling and every mode of life stratified: physicians congregate mainly with physicians, teachers with teachers, labor leaders with labor leaders, brokers with brokers, businessmen with businessmen, garment workers with garment workers, amusement caterers with amusement caterers—and not even in their common capacity as providing the same service for the community, but mostly in the several subdivisions into which their occupations fall. Or take the non-occupational categories, which again are criss-crossed by divisions so that we find, say, an Italian-American Democratic Club or a Greek Fur Workers Union Local, and so forth. We are not for a moment suggesting that such modes of organization are undesirable. What we are pointing to is the danger inherent in the multiplicity of compartmented groups unless some way is found of evoking the primary sense of unity that far transcends them."

Anomy on the other hand attacks individuals. It is the gradual disappearance of a person's sense of belonging, of being a responsible member of a society in which he has a place. The large city with its anonymity, its coldness, its impersonalness, contributes heavily to the development of *anomy*.

In their own way educational authorities in big cities, in cooperation with many forward-looking citizens, are seeking to attack these and other diseases of urban society. In the City of New York, the school system is now engaged in a variety of partnership projects seeking to influence adult behavior, to make better schools, to help create better neighborhoods, to reduce *group anarchy*, and to eliminate *anomy*. This pamphlet is the story of a few such efforts. Schools and school people have played a part in all of them. In some they have been leaders, in many others they have been followers, helpers—and gladly

so. Some of these experimental approaches to what is known variously as community organization, adult education and school-community relationships, have already shown themselves of great value; some cannot yet be evaluated; still others may be accounted as mis-steps along the road. All are presented here, not as patterns to be followed, but merely as stories of "What Has Been Tried."

WHICH SCHOOL IS SERVING BETTER?



*Keep Out—
after 3:00*

or

*All Invited—
open 'til 10:00*

II. CAN SCHOOLS HELP TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE COMMUNITIES?

An Island Apart

How many of our schools are described in the following paragraphs?

"Many schools are like little islands set apart from the mainland of life by a deep moat of convention and tradition. Across this moat there is a drawbridge which is lowered at certain periods during the day in order that the part-time inhabitants may cross over to the island in the morning and back to the mainland at night. Why do these young people go out to the island? They go there in order to learn how to live on the mainland. When they reach the island they are provided with a supply of excellent books that tell all about life on the mainland. They read these books diligently, even memorizing parts of them. Then they take examinations on them.

"Once in a while, as a special treat, the bus takes a few of the more fortunate or favored islanders on a hasty tour through the mainland itself. But this is very rare and is allowed to occur only when the reading of the books about the mainland has been thoroughly completed.

"After the last inhabitant of the island has left in the early afternoon, the drawbridge is raised. Janitors clean up the island, and the lights go out. No one is left there except perhaps a lonely watchman keeping a vigil along the shoreline. It never occurs to anyone on the mainland to go to the island after the usual daylight hours. The drawbridge stays up and the island is left empty and lifeless through all the late afternoon and evening hours, all the early morning hours, and all day on Sunday and Saturday. The raised drawbridge collects cobwebs for seven days a week throughout a long summer vacation, for two weeks at Christmas, and for another week or more at Easter.

"Once in a great while, some hardy soul will arrange to get the drawbridge lowered at one of the unusual hours. With a few companions, he will venture across to the island. The island, at such a time, is in a very unnatural and forbidding condition and is quite unlike the island during the middle of the day when its special inhabitants are there in full force.

"Day after day, week after week, continues the strange procession of young people going out to the island to learn about life on the mainland. At nine o'clock every morning they cross the drawbridge on their way to the island. As soon as they get across,

the drawbridge is raised, and no one may leave the island thereafter without a written permit. At three-thirty every afternoon, the drawbridge is lowered again in order that the inhabitants may leave.

"Then there comes a very unusual occasion. The island is lit up in the evening. This special lighting of the island one evening a year is called commencement. After the commencement exercises, along about ten o'clock at night, if the commencement speaker has been reasonably brief and humane, the school orchestra sends the sounds of Kipling's 'Recessional' echoing throughout the island, and a group of graduates cross the drawbridge back to the mainland for the last time. Yes, the last time, for when these graduates cross that drawbridge, they have then left the island for ever and ever. Many of them will literally never set foot on it again. Those who do occasionally visit it will regard it not as a place to learn, but as a place to make social or business contacts."

—(William Carr—from "Community Life in a Democracy.")

Such, in brief, is the relation of many an American school to many an American community. Such is the condition that schools and communities described in the following pages are attempting to change, firm in the belief that the use of all the schools' resources all the time for all the people is a sound investment in democracy.

Community-centered Education

The philosophy of community-centered education adopts as its basic premise the view that the source of America's greatness is its people; that basic to its democracy is a recognition of the strength that lies in diversity; a recognition of the value of difference and a realization that the cultivation of difference results in an enriched general welfare. American education seeks to integrate difference, not to annihilate it; to achieve unity but not uniformity.

Simply stated two primary objectives of democratic education are that children should learn to *live* friendliness and cooperation across group lines, and that parents and citizens who approve this goal for their children should, themselves, accept and apply it. Encouragement of the younger generation to live democratically should come from the older generation by example as well as precept. We learn what we *live*. Only as we practice at home and in our neighborhoods what we teach and

live in our schools does life assume that unity necessary for effective community education. Family life, for example, must accept the practice of discussion, joint planning and cooperative action that characterizes the democratic classroom. Communities must seek to weave into the daily life of the people social structures which reduce discrimination and intolerance.

In the general recognition of these twin goals and the growing acceptance of the view that the pattern of attitudes in the adult community is a crucial factor in the development of proper attitudes among children, we see a major change from the educational philosophy of earlier days. Book larnin', the three Rs, which sufficed in the days of Horace Mann, are inadequate and insufficient for a civilization whose chief characteristic is urbanization. Today we know that a school, be it traditional, modern, progressive, subject-centered or child-centered, cannot hope to accomplish its purposes unless it is also a community school. Educational leaders who are alive to their responsibilities recognize that what goes on within a school building in the traditional 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. period is not all there is to education. They recognize that the school must work closely and in harmony with other community agencies; that it must be concerned with what occurs on the street corner and in the community center; that it must understand the community *mores* and know the community leaders; and what is more, these leaders must understand and accept the school's program.

The contemporary school, being a part of a whole life's experience for its children, must seek to vitalize its nine-to-three program by using the community both as a resource and as a laboratory. But more than that, the school system of a neighborhood—the teachers, the principal, the assistant superintendent, the custodian—must regard itself and themselves as a community resource—an instrument by means of which the people of a neighborhood can come to know and to understand one another and to realize the strength of all. Better learning, better schools, better health, better housing, better people and

a better life are all possible when neighbors join hands and in partnership with the schools and other social agencies they seek community improvement.

How Can Schools Best Assume Community Responsibilities?

The public school, tax supported and with its policies controlled by the elected representatives of the people, is the common meeting ground, the agency in the community to which all the people can look with confidence for aid and assistance in dealing with community problems. The school, moreover, must know that its primary objective of educating children cannot be accomplished in a disorganized neighborhood and without community cooperation. Properly to discharge this dual responsibility, therefore:

1. The school must know the community. This means periodic surveys of the neighborhood to get a fresh view of its people, to discover its resources, its characteristics, its needs, its ambitions, its leaders, its tensions, its state of organization or disorganization.

2. This information about the community must be assembled, put into easily digestible form and made available to all school personnel. This means studying, discussing and applying, in and out of the classroom, the material which has been made available.

3. The resources of the school system must be placed at the disposal of the people on an around-the-clock basis. Lighted schoolhouses should be glowing evidence of a people's desire for individual improvement and community growth.

4. Adult education activity, whether in a collegiate "School of General Studies," a Board of Education Youth and Adult Center, or elementary classes for adults, should have as a primary objective increased civic participation and improved human relations.

5. School people must accept as a final evaluation of their work not only the development of individuals, but also the degree of improvement in community life.

The processes of community organization and adult educa-

tion result not only in an increased general level of understanding in the community, but can bring people together who ordinarily would never meet, show them their capacity for development as individuals and as groups, and help them to identify their needs and their resources.

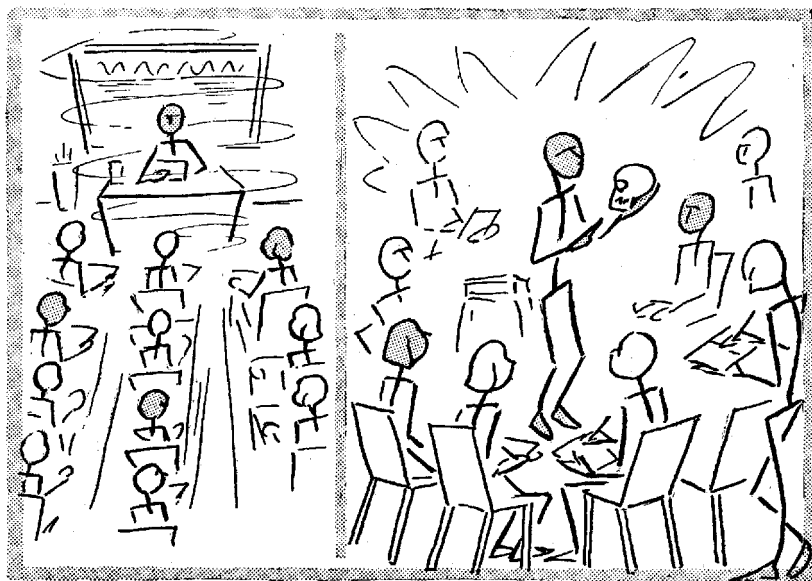
In our big cities we expect concerted action from large groups of people who have few opportunities even to get to know each other. Acquaintanceship is a first essential. Face-to-face relationships, even if only occasional, will tend to breed confidence; constant and regular intercourse, stemming from cooperation in common cause, will ultimately develop friendships. Community organization is a need which, once satisfied, does not disappear but instead becomes a prime community resource. Stories of grass roots action from the Tennessee Valley, from Montana, from Virginia, and of the efforts of sidewalk citizens in New York, Connecticut and California show how a neighborhood, be it rural or urban, when aroused and organized, can work out its own salvation.

III. WHAT HAS BEEN TRIED

Learning about Neighbors and Neighborhood (Elementary School)

In an elementary school, a science class studying the general subject of Food and Nutrition, took as its problem "Are the people of Europe on a starvation diet?" It was soon apparent that there was a need for establishing a scientific measurement for the term "starvation," as well as for obtaining a better understanding of the dietary habits of Europeans. Classroom and library research, visits to newspapers and talks with reporters resulted. These were followed by meals taken in "na-

HOW DO WE LEARN BEST?



Listening

or

Doing

tional" restaurants, Norwegian, Italian and Chinese, among others. In the Norwegian restaurant, a group of Greek, Jewish, Italian, Swedish and Norwegian children ate a Norwegian meal, sang the Norwegian national anthem which they had learned in the previous grade and ended with the Star Spangled Banner.

As a culminating activity the children organized a show entitled "The Foreign Food Follies." The school joined with the community in a campaign to collect food for the European countries which the students had found were on a subsistence diet. Committees visited grocers and druggists for food and vitamin preparations. Children walked about in the building with "sandwich" signs advertising the show (admission was two cans of food). "Foreign Food Follies" was presented to an auditorium full of students and parents each of whom understood more fully the joy of giving and the need for helping others.

Learning about Churches, Creeds and Congregations (Junior High School)

In a unit on Race and Religious Discrimination, a junior high school group began, but did not end, with a classroom reading of Ruth Benedict's "Races of Mankind." "The children," said the principal, in describing the project, "did many interesting and unusual things in addition to the usual research and discussion. One committee of boys who found themselves rather inarticulate did a really creative job with photographs. They went all about their neighborhood taking pictures of various churches, and of members of the congregations on their way home." The pictures taken were then mounted and flashed on screens in classrooms, and for larger groups, in the auditorium. Classmates were asked to match congregations and churches. The low scores of the children on this matching test led to the conclusions that "In our neighborhood, people coming out of church is a concept which knows no creed," and "you can't tell by looking at people what church or nationality they belong to."

Breaking Bread, Making Friends

Breaking bread together, historically, has been a method of making friends. Much of the planning for community improvement has begun around a luncheon or dinner table.

Schools are adopting the practice of organizing frequent international buffets. At these informal gatherings, parents, teachers and leaders in the community come to eat, to talk, to laugh and to learn about one another. An account of one of these and its results appeared in a recent issue of the New York City Board of Education's bulletin "Strengthening Democracy":

"When the buffet table was set, it stretched across the length of the basement. Among the national foods represented were those of Puerto Rican, Italian, Jewish, Russian, German, New England and Southern origin. One chose from such enticing dishes as bocadilla, arroz con pollo, gefulte fish, baked lasagna, Southern fried chicken, spaghetti, New England vegetable salad, German potato salad, Russian caviar, Italian olives, arroz con dulce, sweet potato pie, chocolate cake, lemon meringue pie, pirogen, herring—all you could eat of over forty different delicacies. Apple cider and tea topped off a fantastically varied menu. People laughed, exchanged recipes and chatted. This was 'culinary' brotherhood in action."

The *parranda*, a Puerto Rican custom in which entire families go visiting, was adopted by another school and became a bridge between school and home and between family and family in the neighborhood. Through the cooperation of the principal, the faculty, the Parents' Association and the Workshop for Cultural Democracy, two *parrandas* a week for eight weeks were conducted in homes culturally as diverse as Italian, Jewish, Puerto Rican, Irish, Chinese, German and Czech. Neighbors and their children, together with trained leaders met in each others' homes, ate together and learned about each other in a natural setting. Perhaps the *parranda*, and the Neighborhood-Home Festival described so well in Rachel Davis DuBois' book "Neighbors in Action" are steps toward finding those social inventions needed to integrate our culturally diversified neighborhoods and to help create that unity which gives immunity to prejudice.

Projecting A School Program into The Community (High School)

At Benjamin Franklin High School in New York, the principal and faculty are committed to the view that the curriculum must be developed in terms of responsibility to the community. Action-research has characterized the approach of Franklin students and East Harlem citizens to their problems. After a survey of the neighborhood, a citizenship committee of students and faculty undertook to do something concrete about one major community problem, namely, the large number of new immigrants in their area who spoke no English. A leaflet (in Spanish) was sent to the homes of the students indicating the facilities available in the community for teaching of English to adults. Student speakers who visited elementary and junior high schools explained to the children the importance of their parents' learning English and described the citizenship services available at the high school. To assure continuity of effort, a "citizenship week" with similar activities and objectives is planned for each year.

In addition, the principal and faculty of the school have helped to establish the East Harlem Research Bureau which carries on a continuous survey of the community. The need for improved housing, for a hospital, for a community health program has been publicized and dramatized through leaflets, posters, plays and public meetings. *The East Harlem News*—a community newspaper—published by the school, is an important factor in keeping the neighborhood informed and in lifting community morale. Franklin is not a school apart; it is a real part of the neighborhood.

"Small Town" Planning through Neighborhood Schools

Another project, headed by a district superintendent of schools and a high school principal, and conducted in cooperation with the Public Education Association and Teachers' College of Columbia University, is an attempt to promote "small town" interest in a neighborhood's schools. In the small town most people know what is going on in the school and many even know

why it is going on. In the big city there is too often that large moat which separates school from community and prevents public understanding of educational trends. To bridge this gap and to restore the "people's voice" to school planning, the Board of Education, the Public Education Association and Teachers College selected an area in the Bronx comprising about 140,000 people with 20,000 public school pupils and invited parents to give their frank and outspoken opinion of the schools in their neighborhood. Several conferences on the "Unmet Needs of the Schools" resulted literally in thousands of comments and suggestions. The recommendations are being studied by lay groups organized through the cooperation of school people, community agencies and neighborhood organizations. These committees are assisted by special study groups and professional staff. The sifted ideas will then be presented to the larger advisory committee of lay and school representatives for evaluation and implementation.

The project is a pilot study designed to devise the best means for tapping the resources of the people of a community to build the best education for the children of the community. The machinery established for school-community cooperation consists of four parts on both the elementary and high school level:

- (1) An advisory committee of lay people which serves mainly as a channel for the public to the professional people,
- (2) A staff steering committee which serves as a channel for the professional school people to the lay people,
- (3) A specially assigned staff member who, together with the assistant superintendent and the high school principal, serves as "pump primer" to facilitate the two-way flow of ideas,
- (4) A community charter which expresses agreed-upon working ways.

Can a large school system cut itself down to neighborhood size and take measures which will add to its professional competence the vigor which comes from close contact with the public? This project seeks the answer.

A Teacher-at-Large in the Community
(*The School-Community Coordinator*)

To President Garfield, a university was a log with a student at one end and Mark Hopkins at the other. To many people today, a good school consists basically of a group of children in a classroom with a good teacher and perhaps a principal, for good measure. But in the community school, the teacher must be bi-focal. He must be blessed with the kind of vision which enables him to keep one eye centered on each child in the classroom and the other focussed on conditions in the neighborhood. Since this, to put it mildly, is a difficult task, there has grown up in the City of New York the practice of giving teachers additional eyes (and ears) in the community. Specifically assigned school personnel is charged with the task of spending much time outside the school building to build many bridges over the moats between school and the community, between teachers and parents.

The attendance officer is an old standby in this field, but to him has been added the district health counselor, the court liaison worker, school deans, supervisors of recreational and community activities, guidance counselors, full time Community Center Directors, teachers-in-charge of afternoon playgrounds and evening centers, and the school-community "coordinator." All of these are the eyes, ears, legs and often the heart of the school in its relationship to the parents, citizen, welfare agencies and community organizations in the neighborhood.

The school-community coordinator, a relatively new school worker, has as his function serving as an aid to the principal or assistant superintendent in interpreting the school, its program and policies to the community, keeping school personnel aware of community conditions, enlisting community aid in the solution of school problems and offering school assistance where possible in the solution of community problems.

Almost all neighborhoods have organizations of people; some have too few, some have too many. Many of these organizations have narrow limited purposes; others have broad objec-

tives leading to improved general welfare. One of the functions of the school-community coordinator is to assist with this process of cooperation and coordination. It is not necessary for school personnel to take the lead in creating such organizations, although on occasion, where indigenous leadership has not reached the proper state of development, it may be necessary to consider the advisability of doing so. However, citizens have a right to expect the cooperation of principals and teachers in carrying out plans for community improvement and school people must not remain aloof from such activity.

Since teachers and principals have only a limited amount of time which they can spend in the community in which they work, it devolves upon the school-community coordinator to act as the liaison. It is he who explains the facilities, program and power of the school system which can properly be called upon by the community, and in turn, informs school people of community ferment and the opportunities for community education. A wise community coordinator, by being continually aware of the climate of neighborhood opinion, can help to prevent and ease tensions which would interfere seriously with the educational process. By acting as a positive interpreter between the school and the area it serves, he can help to keep alive the prime factor in good education—the spirit of continuous cooperation between school, home and community.

Citizen Social Action on School-Neighborhood Problems

Manhattan's Upper West Side is unusual in that within a radius of 10 blocks from one elementary school there is a wide range in the economic status of the inhabitants and fairly distinct lines of segregation. In the school community, there is a concentration of Irish, several *barrios* of Puerto Ricans and a heavy sprinkling of Russian and German Jews.

For many years, elementary schools No. 1 and No. 2, located in the "better" part of the neighborhood were regarded as "good schools," while schools A and B, located in the "slum" area, were considered by many parents as less desirable schools.

Parents and children contrived all sorts of stratagems and devices to gain admission to the "good" schools. That the problem is an old one is evident from a reading of the early chapters in Betty Smith's "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn."

What was serious in the field of school-community relations, however, was the growing view in the community and especially in the neighborhood of schools A and B that many youngsters were in attendance at schools No. 1 and No. 2 who, according to the zoning regulations, did not properly belong in them. The simmering discontent was brought to a boil through an announcement by the Board of Education of plans for the construction of a new school in the neighborhood. At the same time, plans were formulated for a revision of school zoning regulations to an east-west basis designed to cut across economic and cultural lines instead of maintaining north-south zoning which would tend to perpetuate economic and cultural segregation. One objective of the new zoning rules was to make the population in each school more representative of the neighborhood and to encourage the development of better human relations programs in the schools and the community.

The immediate reaction of the community seemed to be commendatory, if telegrams and messages to the assistant superintendent from Parents' Associations, local groups and citizens can be taken as an indication of community sentiment. However, after the first surge of approval, other groups became concerned with additional considerations involved in the east-west zoning, mainly safety in travel to school. Subsequently, a revised plan calling for north-south zoning was approved.

Parents of school A, one of the older schools, felt that north-south zoning would only further accentuate the segregated aspect of their school and deal a definitive blow to community morale. The Parents' Association of the school called a meeting, asked other Parents' Associations in the school district to meet to discuss the matter and to make their views known to the authorities. The aid of the federated organization, the United Parents Association, was enlisted.

The Association presidents met and unanimously adopted a letter to the school officials disapproving the north-south zoning regulations. A meeting of about 50 community leaders representing some fifteen neighborhood organizations met in school A, listened to a presentation of the implications of the different zoning regulations, based upon a large map of the neighborhood, and participated in a town hall discussion of the entire problem. A standing committee was appointed to express the sentiment of the group and to carry out the plans adopted at the meeting. These included additional meetings with school authorities, with elected officials and with other community leaders. It is significant to note that one of the members of the committee whose two children would be sent to the new school under the north-south regulations, felt sufficiently committed to the larger objectives of east-west zoning to be willing, under the latter regulations, to have her children attend one of the older schools. After several additional meetings, a compromise zoning regulation was offered which accepted the principle of a minimum of segregation and at the same time considered questions of traveling time and safety for the children. The compromise, although largely acceptable, was attacked by irreconcilable groups and resulted in some additional modifications which, however, did not materially affect the east-west zoning principle.

From the standpoint of school-community relations, this zoning problem brought out the following:

1. Zoning regulations which so intimately affect the lives of the families of a neighborhood, cannot be formulated from a physical map alone. The racial and cultural composition of the neighborhood are factors to be considered along with traffic hazards, population, size, etc.

2. It is good public and human relations to involve parents' associations and other community groups interested in school problems in the formulation of these regulations. The task becomes more difficult, administration is slower, but it does make people participants in decisions which affect their lives

and gives them the prime essential of the democratic process, a sense of participation.

3. The school-community coordinator was of great value as a two-way communication link between the school and the community in the entire controversy. She attended all the meetings called in the community, kept the facts constantly before all the groups. She was able to keep the schools informed as to the thinking of the community, while explaining to the community the reasoning behind school regulations. The coordinator, being on the spot with the facts, was able to explain that regulations were not designed to be hostile or discriminatory, but were dictated by real and pressing problems. By keeping in close touch with the situation as it evolved, the coordinator was able to counteract extremists who sought to use the incident as the basis for propaganda against the school authorities and to strengthen the hands of those citizens who sought constructive solutions to the problem.



Citizens meet to discuss a problem.

IV. COMMUNITIES CAN RAISE THEMSELVES BY THEIR BOOTSTRAPS

Working Partnerships

Community cooperation for the general welfare requires that agencies, public and private, must integrate their resources and facilities to create as efficient a network of neighborhood services as is possible. In several communities such cooperative action has proved its value. In the Chelsea-Clinton neighborhood (the west side of midtown Manhattan) the Division of Community Education is engaged in a three-way partnership with the citizens of Chelsea and the West Side Y. W. C. A.

When the cost of repairs to the old West Side Y. W. C. A. building threatened the continuance of that institution's programs, the Chelsea-Clinton Council for Community Planning, an affiliate of the Welfare Council, urged the "Y" to modify its program and to take steps to continue service to the neighborhood on a broader basis. A planning group consisting of representatives of the Y. W. C. A., the Board of Education and an advisory committee of local agencies and religious groups in the area met together to plan to serve all the people of the neighborhood—juniors, 'teen-agers and adults, male and female. This form of cooperation marked a point of departure for a private agency—to modify its program to meet the changing needs of a changed community. Where formerly it remained within its building and asked the people to come in, it now joins with other agencies to bring service out to where the people are. Because it is in partnership with a public agency the program must, of necessity, emerge more from the needs of the community and to that extent be less a reflection of the particular philosophy and purpose of the private agency. This flexibility in program enriches the community by establishing services which would not have been possible if the public and the private agencies each had tried to "go it alone."

Using a school building off Times Square, staff members contributed by the Y. W. C. A. and the Board of Education

carry on a comprehensive all year 'round program emphasizing activities for children and 'teen-agers but encouraging adults to participate as volunteers or in adult education classes. Its outstanding contribution has been a unique summer day camp with the children being taken by bus, three times a week, to Tallman Mountain State Park, 20 miles above the George Washington Bridge. A small fee is charged for those parents able to afford it, but no child is excluded by reason of inability to pay. Several such day camps are conducted in the city as cooperative efforts by the Board of Education and neighborhood citizens groups. They are an indication of how a community can itself enrich the minimal playground program offered by the city.

Youth Put to Work as a Community Force (Public, Private and Parochial Schools Cooperate)

Adults organized to do things for young people are relatively plentiful. Adults joined with 'teen-agers to help young children in a neighborhood is a fairly unique combination. Adolescents in our secondary schools are trained for "citizenship" but rarely do they have opportunities to accept community responsibilities which are meaningful and challenging. In New York's Yorkville section, the Parents' League, the principals of public and private schools and the Public Education Association joined with the Division of Community Education in a concerted attempt to improve recreational facilities available in the area. Basic to the program which was evolved is a group of volunteer workers, all under professional supervision. These volunteers consist of three groups, the *Junior Volunteers* consisting of more than one hundred 'teen-age boys and girls drawn from 25 neighborhood secondary schools, mainly private and parochial, the *Senior Volunteers*, comprising interested parents who serve at the Centers regardless of the type of school—public, private or parochial—their own children attend, and the *College Volunteers* who are students in the teacher training institutions and who come because of their desire to be of service and to gather experience in recreation

and group work. The volunteers are carefully screened, participate in several discussion sessions designed to develop knowledge and skill in handling children, and are then placed according to aptitudes and experience. They give one day a week on regular schedules and lead groups of children in activities as varied as dramatics, the dance, clay work, sewing and knitting.

The work has value for the adolescents in that it gives them a sense of achievement not often obtainable through academic experience. The schools attended by these young people recognize the value of this work and grant credit for it as a school-community activity. A written evaluation of the student's work is submitted each year by the Council Director and becomes a valuable part of references for college entrance or employment. The barriers between young people in public schools, private schools and parochial schools break down in the common effort to make life better for the children of the community.

It is worthy of note that the Yorkville Youth Council program conducted entirely in public school buildings received its initial impetus from the Parents' League of New York, a group drawn from parents whose children attend private schools in the neighborhood. The League, together with the Public Education Association, raised the first funds and influenced the Board of Education to provide space in public buildings and personnel to supervise and lead the first program. Today the project is a four-way partnership of private schools, parents' associations of the private schools and the public schools, the Public Education Association and the Board of Education. "The Council," says the Yorkville group, "is justly proud of what it has been able to do on a limited budget. It is proud also of the human values that are dividends on the investment it has made in building a neighborhood—a neighborhood which offers city dwellers some of the satisfactions of a small town. By taking part in the Council's work they discover how many friendly people there are who share their interest in their com-

munity, its schools and its children. And so they make Yorkville a better place to live in."

The railroad runs through the center of this neighborhood but the tracks are bridged by the common job undertaken for the welfare of the community.

Merchants Work for a Better Community

Community organization by compulsion is not accepted as a good means of doing the job. In the case of the Morrisania Community Council, however, it was the command of the Mayor that every police captain create a coordinating council in his precinct that provided the impetus for the organization. Within a short time after its formation, the 42nd Precinct Coordinating Council broadened the scope of its objectives, submerging its own desire for autonomy, and became the Morrisania Council, a rallying point for the citizens of the community. Created during World War II, the spirited war work of this organization has been continued in the post-war period. "Civilian defense" activity has been turned into "civilian offense" against the creeping obsolescence which attacks so many urban areas.

What is the formula for the success of this unique council? The "spark plug" of the organization, a local business man, explains it so:

"Take a couple of high school and a dozen public school principals, add an equal number of parents' association presidents, the religious leaders of the community, the librarians, the settlement house directors, the leaders of social and fraternal organizations, some business men, a community-minded police captain and an enthusiastic liaison patrolman. Mix them well, add the good will of neighbors and you have a product strong enough to fashion bridges of understanding among all the people in the neighborhood."

Under wise and enthusiastic leadership provided by local business men, housewives and school people, the Council has an imposing list of accomplishments, some requiring an outlay of money, but many necessitating huge expenditures of time and energy. Through financial assistance, the Council helps the Board of Education in the operation of afternoon and evening

centers in schools and play fields, provides portable floodlights to keep outdoor yards operating until 10 P.M. and enables private agencies to expand their recreational facilities for youth and adults. As a civic agency it sponsored the United Club Organization which materially reduced juvenile street conflict, helped in the drive for a community wing for the local high school, organized block associations to improve sanitation and safety, organized "mother and child" week-end trips to the country and joined with local and state-wide agencies in making plans for bringing increased social services of all kinds to the neighborhood. In cooperation with the Morrisania Youth Council it sponsored a Saturday Nite 'Teen-Age Canteen in a large room in a local department store. This Youth Council is another realistic attempt to give young people a chance to help deal with their own problems. The school administrators and the adult council laid the groundwork for the youth group which met weekly to discuss its problems. The 'teen-age canteen, one of their suggestions, is managed by the Council and includes the operation of a snack bar at a small profit. An entertainment committee discovers talent and arranges short programs. Morrisania youth are showing that young people can accept responsibility when adults are willing to share it with them.

The Morrisania Council, like other councils in large cities, is fortunate in that it has within it representatives of a business with a forward-looking philosophy of community relations. "Business," says the vice-president of this concern, "has a direct responsibility for improving social conditions in the neighborhood in which it operates." Placing the power of business organization, the unused facilities of business concerns and the skill and knowledge of business executives at the service of the community is a sound investment in community welfare and thus a direct contribution to the preservation of the democratic way of life. More business men must be brought to the realization that a happy community, a healthy community is a good community in which to do business.*

* See Pamphlet No. 3, **THE COMMUNITY IS GOOD BUSINESS**, by Philip H. Michaels, Vice President, Sachs Quality Furniture Stores.

V. COMBINED OPERATIONS— SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The Community Center Comes Alive

The Youth and Adult Center is an attempt to put into practice the ideal of continuous opportunity for education and recreation for all people of a natural neighborhood. An educational unit consisting usually of a high school building, a junior high school building and one or two elementary schools is created and placed under one administrative head. The program in this unit begins at 3 P.M. when day school offerings usually end. Children, instead of leaving the school building, rush eagerly to classes in hand arts or to participate in the team games and tournaments which are usually organized in co-operation with the day school. Classes in sewing, cooking, painting, printing, woodwork, leathercraft, jewelry-making and music are available for the children who want them. Adults may also come in the afternoon, and many do, to learn to speak English, to paint, to sew, to knit, to make jewelry or to learn about cooking.

It is in the evening, however, that the most heartwarming sights occur. The school buildings are ablaze with lights. Adults come to attend the evening elementary school, to continue with their formal education in search of a high school diploma, to spend time in the gym, swimming pool, billiard room, television lounge or to join with their neighbors in informal classes in which they can study whatever their heads or their hands require.

It is these latter classes that are filled with a cross section of the people from the sidewalks of New York. Furriers, insurance men, teachers, stenographers, truck drivers, policemen, city officials, carpenters, mechanics, housewives, unemployed all swarm into the schools to paint, to work with their hands, to learn about their children, to talk about good books, to listen to good music, to learn a new language, to improve methods of taking motion pictures; in a word to do what they have always wanted to do, but which lack of time or money or op-

portunity prevented them from doing. Most of the courses are given by regularly licensed instructors paid by the New York City Board of Education, but community organizations like the B'nai Brith, the Bronx County Medical Society, the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, the local real estate board, the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council undertake to sponsor other courses, as a service to the community.

Growing Good Centers

The success of each of the Centers is in large part the result of a good deal of spade work which is an essential preliminary to the opening of the school door for the first activity. It was realized from the beginning that only neighborhood leadership, stimulated and organized, could do anything deep and lasting for the community. Professional workers and city agencies might supply the seed and early nurture but the tree would grow in Brooklyn and later in Queens and in the Bronx, only if it could sink its roots through the sidewalks of New York into the good earth below.

The first step in digging into each community chosen as the site for a Youth and Adult Center was to make use of the local "know who" of school principals, district superintendent, political representatives and welfare agencies, and to prepare a comprehensive list of neighborhood leaders. Care was taken to include representatives of all religions, national and cultural groupings, of business and labor, of welfare agencies, city departments (police, fire, library, health, etc.) and parents' associations. A letter was sent out over the names of three or four well-known people explaining the plan for the neighborhood and inviting this Citizens Committee to meet to discuss the proposal. The response at each meeting was warm and enthusiastic. There were immediate offers of support and cooperation in every field including finance.

To sound out community sentiment further and incidentally to publicize the project, each Citizens Committee planned a Town Meeting at the high school which serves as the center of the neighborhood's activities. An action committee was appointed and the machinery of community cooperation began to

mesh and move. The men and women who came to the conference took the news of the Town Meeting back to their own organizations. A printed letter was taken home by all the school children in the neighborhood. Parents' Associations wrote to their members. Clergymen discussed the project in their synagogues and churches. Radio stations made spot announcements. Releases and feature stories appeared in the newspapers. Trailers were shown in local motion picture houses and throwaways were given out in subway stations and at bus stops. Libraries, grocery stores and drug stores distributed leaflets to their patrons. Large show cards were placed in the store windows throughout the neighborhood. The result in each community was the same. Crowds twice the capacity of the high school auditorium appeared at each presentation meeting. The overflow heard the proceedings in classrooms connected with the auditorium by the public address system.

The high school principal was the host for the evening, with the high school orchestra and glee club providing the music. The community leaders were invited to sit on the platform. Speakers representing the Board of Education and the community outlined the plans for the new Youth and Adult Center. The experience of the New York Adult Education Council together with the information on file in the office of the Division of Community Education were used to prepare a card with a description of the proposed program, including a listing of the new informal leisure time classes for adults. These were distributed with return post cards attached which gave the people at the meeting and 5,000 to 10,000 others in each area an opportunity to state what kind of activities they would like to have. An analysis of the returned cards was discussed with the community committee and a program designed to meet the needs and expressed desires of the people was set up.

To keep this program close to the people, the Community Committee and the Adult-Student Council, which were organized in each center, meet regularly with the Director of the Center. These groups discuss the existing courses, suggest new ones, advise concerning the most appropriate day and time

for courses, cooperate in running school functions and in general, serve as a means by which the Director can keep in touch with the people. "The People's House," as these centers are sometimes called, faces the challenge of flexibility; it must be able to start where people are, to change as their interests grow and to go forward along the road with them.

Not only the people as individuals, but the people organized into groups of all kinds, have displayed a high interest in these poly-sectarian, tax-supported Youth and Adult Centers. Some organizations contribute financially. The American Jewish Committee, for example, has made modest grants available to citizens committees, to be matched by the neighborhoods, in order to stimulate citizen participation in the process of building the Centers.

Other organizations sponsor forums, lectures and special classes. Some groups make extensive use of school facilities; others receive aid from the Centers in maintaining their own programs. All feel more a part of the whole than ever before, for the Center is really theirs, serving them and their community—a place in which the people of the community can gather to plan and achieve improvement in the quality of living.



Play is the thing at Community Centers.

VI. NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION— HOW TO START, HOW TO KEEP GOING

Getting Started

1. Great oaks do grow from little acorns. Most organizations originate in the mind of some one person. Yes, it might be you.

2. Discussion with others helps to fan the spark. Let the "idea" become the property of a group. The spirit of "we" and not "I" must be evident.

3. Search the neighborhood for an existing organization that can serve the purpose. If such a group is found, *join it*. This is a difficult step but an essential one. Much community manpower is dissipated by overlapping and competing organizations.

4. If you are convinced that nobody else is doing the job, then consider the problem of "timing." Is now the best time to launch your project? Look for the psychological moment, e.g., a dramatic incident which creates a favorable climate of opinion. A juvenile street conflict or a traffic accident may point up the need for recreational facilities; a news report on the incidence of tuberculosis may spur the movement for a health organization; the establishment of an adult center in some other neighborhood may awaken people to a similar need in "our town."

5. In the meanwhile, spend time in developing a better understanding of the neighborhood and its problems. Compile the statistical material available in the reports of Department of Health, Census, Housing Authority, Welfare Agencies, settlement houses, police department, school records, etc. Facts must accompany feeling about a problem. Make pilot community surveys; talk to the local postman, grocery owner, milkman, the policeman, the school principal. They know a lot about the neighborhood. The accumulation of facts and the development of community contacts will pay off.

6. Make a map of the geographic area in which you are to

work. Put together a list of the leaders in the neighborhood. Many of these are known to the school officials, the police captain, the local bank president, the funeral parlor director, the district's political leaders, the community chest executive, the local Red Cross headquarters, the city-wide religious organizations. Personal visits to some of these to explain the nature of the organization and its purposes are a great help. Get them to endorse the proposed objectives and to encourage direct participation by members of their own organizations.

7. A number of good people not in positions of leadership should be added to the group as they are discovered. Workers are needed as well as "leaders." Young adults especially ought to be involved. They are often overlooked as a source of energy and enthusiasm for the detail work which is a vital part of every organization. Opportunities for such service provide a proving ground and a training field for tomorrow's leadership.

8. Call an organization meeting of community leaders and workers, over the signature of a broadly representative committee. Since this is the first fruit of all the previous planning, the planning committee should be well prepared. Have the facts available for distribution, show the need which exists, explain how a council or neighborhood organization can meet the need, have someone ready with a proposed plan of organization. **ALLOW PLENTY OF TIME FOR FREE DISCUSSION.** Process is as important as end result in learning. The final decision as to whether the proposed organization is necessary should really be left to the group.

9. If the group approves the formation of an organization, appoint a steering committee and schedule another meeting. The steering committee should be charged with the responsibility to report on the tentative plan of organization, and for preparing a slate of officers, a statement of objectives and a plan of action.

10. Members of the group should undertake to explain the new organization to other organizations of which they are members. If accredited representatives are to be sent to the new

group, people who have an interest in the objectives and who have time to contribute should be selected. Dead wood is of no value to a council.

11. Don't expect too much too soon. A new organization is like a new-born babe. Its members must learn to talk together, to think together and to act together. The people must get to know, to understand and to trust one another before they can achieve that cooperation which will bring results.

Rolling Along

1. Don't bite off more than your group can chew. Begin with projects which are accepted by all and which can be achieved with the resources available within a comparatively short time. Meetings that "get somewhere" have the effect of unifying the members of the council and give them a feeling of accomplishment. Success begets membership and influence.

2. Keep extending the areas of agreement. Projects undertaken should be those where the minority is the smallest possible. Community unity is the goal, not majority decisions.

3. Good leaders, paired with good management, help make good councils. If you're elected, learn about your job. Leading a group requires at least as much study as driving a car.

4. Good management means giving adequate notice, in attractive form, of time and place of meeting, having the agenda and pertinent material mailed out in advance, seeing that physical arrangements are inviting and comfortable, making sure the meeting is prompt at both ends—beginning and ending—and summarizing the action phase of the meeting. The executive secretary should be the "follow-upper," checking to see that committees and individuals appointed to do jobs actually do them.

5. Don't try to do everything. You can't. Refer important matters not within the scope of your own objectives to other organizations. Offer them cooperation.

6. Keep the community informed. Don't hide your light

under a bushel. Use every means of communication to tell people about your program.

7. Don't duck the problem of finance. Tackle it intelligently. Many councils do an effective job with no financial resources. But money is good to have, and can be raised in hundreds of ways. Consult the experts and the texts.

8. Recognize real zeal. Good work deserves recognition, good workers are encouraged by it. A pat on the back keeps the shoulder to the wheel.

9. Use the abilities of all the people on your council. Latent leadership goes to waste in many communities. Look for it in discussion groups, adult classes, corner meetings, bridge clubs, etc. Once you have found it, don't let it go. Give it opportunity to develop and to grow. A Parents' Association that sent out the question, "What can you do for the P.T.A.?" received hundreds of answers from "wash dishes after a party," and "bake a cake," to "lead and direct a musical show."

10. Take time out for fun. Have your meetings in a "friendly" place. A "coke-tail" hour, a folk dance period, a film or a musician often are helpful.

11. Remember Socrates—"Hard is the good, nothing great is easy."

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In placing this series, *Tools for Human Relations*, before the American public, it is the hope of the editor and the publisher that these pamphlets will make available the knowledge and experience which are helping to make better and happier American communities.



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