

do better, more workable plans result from wide participation in their development, but a higher good is served also. As I have said elsewhere: "The often flabby muscles of community and individual responsibility will never be invigorated unless the muscles are given work to do. They grow strong by use; there is no other way."¹

Sometimes governments, even democratic governments, forget that their ultimate aim is to foster the ability of citizens to draw out of their own minds, de-

¹ Lilienthal, David E.: *TVA: Democracy on the March*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944.

sires and needs, solutions to the problems that plague them. Democratic responsibility is the complement of democratic freedom. No public agency which by paternalism or domination diminishes the social responsibility of citizens can be considered helpful, however much its short-term program may seem to improve matters. It is on this profound conviction that TVA proceeds. It does not make plans for anyone, but finds a hundred ways of helping the people of the region to discover the alternatives of free choice, to assess the direction in which those choices may lead them, and to choose the course they prefer.

□ Community councils tackle local problems in Pittsburgh area

When Neighbors Get Together

WILLIAM BACON

Alert school people are quick to lend support to community groups seeking to improve the neighborhood, and they know that the active interest of teachers in such programs is a vital factor in integrating school and community. To give us an insight into how community planning works, William Bacon, executive secretary of the Association of Community Councils, Pittsburgh, Pa., describes the neighborhood programs in the urban area of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, a locality where crowded living and diversity in race and nationality create unusually difficult situations.

IN THE SMALL TOWN there is usually a rather high degree of community integration. The very smallness of this type of community makes it possible for the school person, the clergyman, the parent, the civic leader, and the interested citizen to know each other and to cooperate on various communitywide programs. In such a community the recognition of neighborhood problems is general. If a new school building is needed or a gang of boys indulges in vandalism, the whole town knows about it and is concerned about it. In this situation all the community

resources can be brought to bear upon the solution of the problem. The small town is the backbone of American democracy because in it are found a basic unity in community living, a quick recognition of its problems, and a ready cooperation to solve those problems.

Urban living has upset much of the community-mindedness and the natural approach to community problems that characterized the growth of American democracy. The size of the urban community has made it impossible for the people to know each other as they would

in the small community. Mobility of population has removed much of the personal concern of the individual about community problems. Both the size and mobility of the urban community have made the individual feel somewhat impotent to deal with the problems he sees. Whereas in the small town there is a unity in the ideals and social values adhered to by the school, the home, the church, and even the boys' gangs, the pattern of ideals and social values in the urban community is apt to be characterized by diversity rather than unity.

If the values of the small town are to be developed within the structure of the large urban community, it is necessary to provide channels of community cooperation. The Community Councils of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County provide such a channel. The purpose of a community council is to unify the social forces of a neighborhood for discovery of community needs and social planning to meet those needs. The neighborhood approach has the advantage of providing a small enough area of operation so that most of the conditions conducive to community planning in the small town can be duplicated. A community council is composed of delegates from all of the institutions and organizations of the neighborhood which are interested in cooperation for community betterment, and any other individuals who may want to participate. The council operates through committees formed to grapple with specific needs recognized by the neighborhood as a whole. The needs of each community are different and so the committees of the councils vary. Typical committees are concerned with recreation, health, race relations, housing, education, postwar planning, garbage disposal, public affairs, and day care for children of working mothers.

Fun for Young People

An example of how a council works in planning for the recreational needs of young people may be found in the experience of the Observatory Community Council. The Observatory community is a middle class neighborhood located on the edge of a large city park. Although the park provides opportunities for nature study, swimming, picnicking, and free play, there had been no provision in the entire community for young people's recreation under trained leadership. The Community Council, recognizing this need, set up a committee to work with representatives of the high school youth in the development of a program of wholesome recreation. The committee was composed of a representative of the high school faculty, a YMCA staff member whose branch was located in a nearby neighborhood, the park superintendent, and a number of parents. The faculty representative worked with a group of high school youth in finding out what types of programs were wanted by the young people.

A questionnaire circulated in the high school indicated that dancing was at the top of the list of activities desired, followed by group discussion and arts and crafts. The committee immediately integrated the resources of the community in providing a series of dances. An adequate place was found for the dance in the pavilion building of the park, the high school orchestra provided the dance music, and parents and teachers volunteered to serve as chaperons.

The success which greeted the efforts of the committee gave stimulus to the expansion of the program to include the other activities the young people wanted. A club house was obtained through the lease of an abandoned school building

from the Board of Education at a nominal sum. Paint was donated by a local business man for the renovation of the building, with the boys themselves doing the work under the direction of interested adults. Girls and their mothers made curtains. A dramatic group was established under the volunteer leadership of a high school teacher. The YMCA of the neighboring community provided a part-time worker to assist in the development of a boys' program which included group discussion and craft work. A group of women volunteered to supervise the girls' program of group discussion and crafts.

At present the club house is open two nights a week for girls, two nights a week for boys and one night a week for co-ed activities. The role of the Observatory Council in the development of this program was that of discovering the need, using appropriate resources in meeting the need, and then turning the entire project over to an advisory group to operate the program.

After the development of any program, a council turns its attention to other community problems, leaving the direct operation of any community program in the hands of the group or groups best able to operate it. A community council must avoid competing with participating organizations and therefore operates exclusively on a coordinating rather than direct service basis.

Toward Racial Harmony

The Hill District of Pittsburgh represents an entirely different kind of community from the Observatory community just described. The Hill District is a blighted area just adjacent to the business section. It is the location of one of the most famous Negro areas in the entire country. Here also are found the Ghetto,

Little Italy, the Greek Colony, and Little Syria. This area of the city, because it has long been recognized as a problem community, has more social agencies than any other comparable area in the city. Perhaps the most prominent need of this area is that of developing more harmonious relations between peoples of diverse racial and nationality backgrounds.

Recently, the Hill District Community Council sponsored a weekend conference of school people and recreation and group work agency staffs to develop a common body of principles for carrying on intercultural and interracial education. Out of this conference came not only a common approach to this vital work in the area but also a plan for a demonstration project. Many of the agencies, because of their past history, have served only part of the neighborhood in which they are located. The conference adopted a plan by which the social agencies will carry on extension programs in one of the schools of the community, serving the entire community without regard for race, creed, or color.

It was felt that this project with all agencies participating could open the way for further development of intercultural work reaching back into the agencies which at the present time have barriers against the participation of some of the groups in the community. The aim of the conference was not to impose intercultural and interracial activities upon groups not yet prepared to accept them, but to provide a meeting ground for intercultural and interracial contact which would be conducive to the development of friendly relations among people of diverse backgrounds when they are ready for it.

In this case the Hill District Community Council brought together the professional groups of the neighborhood concerned with and able to make major con-

tributions in the area of race relations. It provided the face-to-face contact necessary for the working out of the basic principles of intercultural work and stimulated the development of an integrated plan of intercultural work for the entire community.

The Theory That Makes It Work

In the two cases cited, it can be seen that the community council structure offers a unique and sound approach to neighborhood planning. In the first place, the planning is related to the needs of the community as seen by the people of the community itself. Secondly, the community council structure offers continuity between planning and action, since the council itself not only develops the plans, but implements them as well. Thirdly, the process of the development of plans through this type of community participation assures broad neighborhood support of the plans so developed. Finally and perhaps most importantly neighborhood planning through neighborhood participation is the democratic way.

A by-product of this democratic planning is the training of the citizen to participate in the larger community. All too frequently, planning on a citywide, countywide, statewide, or nationwide basis does not provide for the participa-

tion of the citizen. It is too often considered the work of the expert, whether he be architect, social engineer, or traffic planner. The community council offers a channel through which not only neighborhood planning can take place, but through which planning in the larger community can be related to the neighborhood and to the common citizen. Community councils frequently consult with representatives of planning bodies on city or countywide projects that affect their neighborhoods. They propose changes in plans to better serve the needs of the greatest number and give non-partisan public support to plans which meet their approval.

Community council planning and action are based upon the principles of democracy. They provide for the maximum of citizen participation. They also provide a means of citizenship education through doing. The teacher and school principal are concerned not only with the educational values of neighborhood planning and action but with the contributions they are able to make toward the wholesome integration of the neighborhood. The participation of the school person in neighborhood planning will pay dividends in community interest in the school program, the cooperation of parents, and the satisfaction of being a part of a community that attempts to handle its own problems.

Group Planning in Education

The 1945 yearbook of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, to come from the press this spring, will deal with group planning in education. Committee members for the preparation of this book are:

Paul J. Misner, Superintendent of Schools, Glencoe, Ill., *Chairman*
Agnes Adams, National College of Education, Evanston, Ill.
Peggy Brogan, Glencoe Public Schools, Glencoe, Ill.
Stephen M. Corey, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.
Howard A. Lane, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.
Virgil M. Rogers, Superintendent of Schools, River Forest, Ill.
Hazel Weakly, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.

Copyright © 1944 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.