Monograph No. 15

POWER AND PARTICIPATION IN THE SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, 1964-1967

by Natalie Becker and Marjorie Myhill

Institute of Urban and Regional Development
University of California, Berkeley

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FOREWORD

Probably the first real test of "maximum feasible participation" arose in San Francisco in 1964 and 1965 in a contest for power between San Francisco poverty groups and the city government. Drawing upon the momentum established in earlier civil rights struggles, these groups sought early realization of the promise of the language of the Economic Opportunity Act by seeking control of the poverty program in San Francisco. The subsequent contest for power among Negro groups and between them and city government and within the poverty program staff and directorate is here described by Marjorie Myhill and Natalie Becker.

Those who did not live through the actions of those months and years may find it difficult to reconstruct the surge of enthusiasm and hope, the high expectations, the tremendous energies, and at times the bruising disappointments of those months and years. Across the country, similar struggles developed during 1965 and 1966, were reinforced by new legislative enactments offering the promise of more resources for the poor, and by a series of court decisions which seemed to rewrite many precedents to assure a truer degree of equality for all American citizens. At times, the rhetoric of the movement, coupled with its occasionally violent incidents, produced panicky reactions in government circles, as if there were a serious revolutionary challenge to the existing order. At other times and in other places, existing institutions reacted more flexibly to accommodate the newly expressed aspirations of the poor, to

give their leaders a more effective voice in decision-making, and thus to reduce the level of controversy to one of bargaining for power and resources in the American tradition, rather than to create some higher level of tension.

The Ms. Myhill and Becker, concerned about local renewal policy, were fortunately positioned as graduate students in city and regional planning to participate in and record these events on the spot. Happily, the Office of Economic Opportunity, also concerned about the consequences of its legislative mandate, was prepared to provide modest support for their efforts to analyze the events then occurring, so that its programs could respond more effectively to the political tensions and social needs which were being swiftly unearthed. The result is this thoughtful monograph which objectively records the evolution of the struggle, the role of various parties in it at various levels of intervention, the accommodations made, and the intermediate-term consequences.

The work clearly dispenses with the notion that there is any monolithic community of minority groups and that there was any serious threat to the established order. It shows that there were very serious needs for social and institutional reform and acute needs for additional resources. Our institutions responded slowly and, at times, ineptly to the new aspirations of groups who had for too long failed to assert their legitimate claims for a more equitable distribution of the benefits of this richest of societies. In the end, it reveals the very conservative nature of preferences within the Negro community and the high degree of inertia which those seeking more fundamental changes encountered. At the same time, the work reveals how fruitfully the legislative

mandate operated to provide a forum for new and more aggressive minority leadership, to give them experience and, ultimately, influence in decision processes. It suggests that structured conflict over resources is not so much a cataclysmic challenge to order as it is an opportunity to secure needed change or, at least, to reveal the urgency of change in the strident terms apparently required to secure any attention to these issues. A more complete biographic treatment of the actors would indicate that these events pushed them to increasingly responsible leadership in the national stage and that their experiences produced capacities for community organization in support of greater equity which scarcely existed before.

We are indebted to the Office of Economic Opportunity for support, to Professor William Kornhauser for his assistance in guiding the analysis, and to Ms. Becker and Myhill for their splendid recording and interpretation of these events. This solid piece of scientific work is testimony to the fact that academic institutions are not divorced from the flow of real events and issues. On the contrary, they have timely and insightful contributions to make to the understanding of those events.

William L. C. Wheaton

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PREFACE

From 1965 to 1967, the authors of this study acted as participant-observers in the San Francisco anti-poverty program. The program was established in October, 1964, as the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc., to implement the "maximum feasible participation" clause of the Economic Opportunity Act, then two months old. As participant-observers, we gained a richness of perspective and degree of accessibility to original data that would have been impossible otherwise.

Given the quantity of material at our disposal, the selection of data became an important problem. It also became increasingly impractical to explore the full range of meanings, and widespread ramifications of the program. The decision was therefore made to limit our analysis to those aspects of the program's history that held the most significance for public policy on poverty and race. The following study of participation and the struggle for power in the San Francisco anti-poverty program is guided by this orientation.

Acknowledgement is given to the Office of Economic Opportunity for the support given this study. We are indebted to Professors William Kornhauser and William L. C. Wheaton, of the University of California, for their continual encouragement and advice. We thank especially all those Staff and Board members

of the Western Addition Target Area and those from the Executive Council for generously and patiently helping us to understand the importance of their program.

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INTRODUCTION

This study will examine the struggle for power among Negro groups in the San Francisco anti-poverty program. The program was one of the first in the Western Region to be established; it met as an official body in September, 1964, one month after the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act. The program therefore represents an important opportunity to observe the early consequences of public policy on poverty and race in a local community.

The Economic Opportunity Act was signed by President Johnson into law against a background of mounting racial tensions. In search of new directions, the civil rights movement across the country was turning from protest to politics. Many observers felt that the Act was intended to address the same constituency -- even to compete for it. That constituency was the rapidly growing masses of Negro people, caught in an endless cycle of poverty. It would address this constituency by couching its goals in the same participatory language as the civil rights movement.

The ambiguity of the clause specifying "maximum feasible participation," however, immediately led to a great deal of confusion in each local community. This lack of any real clarity meant that its definition would inevitably vary with the interests of individuals and groups in the community. Consequently, controversy over "maximum feasible participation" was built into the Act at the start. It was this clause, however, that succeeded in lifting

the legislation above an ordinary grant-in-aid or technical assistance program into a potential force for social change.

In San Francisco, the language of the Act suggested to the militant civil rights leaders a strong compatibility with their own participatory ideology. The failure of the protests and demonstrations of 1963 and 1964 to achieve meaningful results led them to welcome the legislation as a potential ally in the civil rights struggle. Therefore, after the incorporation of the Economic Opportunity Council in October, 1964, a lengthy battle with City Hall over control of the program began. With the uneasy support of the Negro establishment, the militants fought the Mayor for over a year to gain majority representation of the four Target Areas[1] on the city-wide policy level and local control over programs and staff.

After the victory of the Target Areas over City Hall, conflict immediately shifted to factions within the Negro community. The anti-poverty program became the new arena for the struggle for power among Negro groups, and the new constraints and opportunities embedded in a public program deepened the seriousness of the struggle. In short, the meaning of "maximum feasible participation" in San Francisco was shaped by the struggle of conflicting interests over

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[1]The Target Areas -- Chinatown, Mission, Hunters Point, and the Western Addition -- coincided with the major concentrations of Chinese, Mexican-American, and Negro populations in the city. The focus of our study, the Western Addition, is the largest (145,000) Target Area and the largest (45,000) Negro community in San Francisco. The majority of its people came from semi-rural areas in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana in the 1940s to work in the shipyards of the Bay Area. It is a socially heterogeneous community; a majority of the Negro leaders live and work there as well as the masses of the Negro poor. Because of its size and heterogeneity, it is the center of Negro life in San Francisco.

control of the anti-poverty program. The important results of that program were largely the unintended consequences of that struggle. Where public policy stresses broadening citizen participation in public programs, the strongest, deepest needs of the community will seek expression, and, where needs clash, conflict will be the natural mode of expression.

In Chapter One, we will examine the origins of the struggle for power in the local civil rights demonstrations in the early 1960s. Chapter Two will discuss the temporary alliance between the militants and the Negro establishment in the early days of the anti-poverty program. Chapter Three will examine the rebirth of the struggle for power with the efforts of the militants to build a strong community organization in the Negro community. Chapter Four will describe the struggle for power between old and new groups in the Negro community over control of the anti-poverty program. Lastly, we will consider the general implications of the San Francisco program for public policy on poverty and race.

CHAPTER ONE

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN SAN FRANCISCO

1963-1964

To understand the struggle for power among Negro groups in the anti-poverty program, we must first examine its origins in the civil rights events of 1963 and 1964. These events not only ended in mass arrests, lengthy trials, and jail sentences, but in a general failure to achieve civil rights goals. By the fall of 1964, moreover, the civil rights movement in San Francisco was seriously weakened by a deepening rift between the militants and the established Negro leaders. After the incorporation of the Economic Opportunity Council in October, 1964, the struggle for power among Negro groups shifted to the anti-poverty program. It became the critical factor in shaping the meaning and significance of "maximum feasible participation" in San Francisco.

United Freedom Movement

At the center of Negro militancy in San Francisco was a tightly-knit group headed by Wilfred Ussery, chairman of local CORE,[1] and Dr. Thomas Burbridge, president of the local NAACP chapter. Central to their ideology was the insistent demand for broadening participation in decision-making by minority groups.

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[1] Later National Chairman of CORE.

Whereas the older civil rights leaders believed in working through existing institutional channels, the militants were ready to try new, unorthodox tactics.

In the spring of 1963, the militants organized the United Freedom Movement (UFM) with the intention of building a united Negro front in San Francisco and thereby solving civil rights issues directly. Its structure, a confederation of local civil rights groups,[2] drew heavily on the Martin Luther King model in Birmingham, which had similar goals.

At the same time, church and labor leaders in the Negro community formed the Church-Labor Conference (CLC), consisting of the Baptist Ministers Union, the Ministerial Alliance, and the United Negro Labor Assembly.[3] Unlike the UFM, the CLC had a solid constituency in the Negro community. Although the militants were eager to have the CLC join the UFM, a number of obstacles stood in the way. While each member group of the UFM had one vote, the CLC, with its larger constituency, demanded a larger voice. Even more importantly, while the UFM was committed to direct action and civil disobedience, the CLC was steadfastly opposed to tactics other than negotiation. As David Wellman stated:

> To align organizationally with the civil rights leaders would be to submerge themselves in an organization which

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[2]The founding groups were CORE, the NAACP, the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination, and a group of SNCC members.

[3]David Wellman, Negro Leadership in San Francisco, Master of Arts Thesis, University of California, Dept. of Sociology, unpublished, 1967, pp. 11 and 13. The Baptist ministers Union was an organization of Baptist Ministers, the Ministerial Alliance included both large and storefront churches and fundamentalist groups, and the United Negro Assembly was composed of local trade union members.

> would prevent them from acting as autonomous groups. Under such an arrangement they would also be held responsible for the actions of the larger group made up of groups with varying orientations and tactics.[4]

Within the UFM, organizational weaknesses and competition led to other problems. It thus fell short of establishing the consistent strength and mass support necessary to implement militant strategy.

Direct Action and Civil Disobedience

In early 1963, the Mayor created a bi-racial Human Rights Commission to act as mediator in disputes between industry and civil rights groups. The Mayor had begun to take alarm at the recent demonstrations, and intended that the Commission act as a mechanism to "reduce racial tension and prevent violence."[5] Some Negro leaders, such as Attorney (later Supervisor) Terry Francois and Attorney (later Assemblyman) Willie Brown, held exploratory talks with the Commission. The legitimacy of these talks however were quickly challenged by the militants. As Wilfred Ussery stated:

> The white community will not be permitted to name our leaders and spokesmen by appointing them to some well-intentioned bi-racial committee, which is advisory by nature, and does not have the power to execute its decisions. It is mandatory that the Negro leadership in San Francisco not be stampeded into any bi-racial talks with the Mayor or anyone else. The eyeballs-to-eyeballs confrontation with the power structure of San Francisco is not for the Mayor or the downtown interests to decide. The timetable now resides in the Negro community.[6]

In early 1964, the member groups of the UFM engaged in three major demonstrations -- Sheraton-Palace, Auto Row, and Bank of America -- to emphasize their basic demand for direct negotiations.

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[4] Wellman, op. cit., p. 38.

[5] Edgar Osgood, San Francisco Chronicle, October 23, 1964.

[6] Wilfred Ussery, ibid., July 23, 1963.

Their strategy was to confront an employer with a package of radical demands and insist that an agreement be signed directly with the member groups. With the failure of this strategy, they were ready to turn to civil disobedience.

In January, 1964, hundreds of demonstrators picketed outside the Sheraton-Palace Hotel. Before long, the picketing turned into a walk-in, the walk-in into a moving, chanting serpentine, the serpentine into a sit-in, and the sit-in into a sleep-in. All exits were blocked. A few Negro lawyers, among them Terry Francois and Willie Brown, both members of the local NAACP chapters, pleaded with the demonstrators to get away from the doors. All they got in reply were cat calls of "Uncle Tom." Finally, at least 167 demonstrators were arrested and taken to the county jail.

Two months later, the demonstrations began again. In February, 1964, singing, chanting, and shouting demonstrators, led by the local NAACP chapter, invaded Auto Row. Two hundred of them were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly, refusal to disperse, trespassing, and disturbing the peace.

The following week, thousands of demonstrators again flooded Auto Row. With the persistent refusal of the dealers to enter into direct negotiations, the militants decided to engage in acts of civil disobedience. They lay under cars, in cars, on desks, linked arms and went limp when taken under arrest to the county jail. With these tactics, the Motor Car Dealers Association made known its decision to cut short all discussions. A spokesman said:

> As far as we are concerned, we have had all of the meetings we intend to have with the NAACP. The demonstrations which

> took place last Saturday were deliberate malicious invasions of the rights of others. We have sincerely extended the hand of friendship to the minority groups and this is what we got in return. Nevertheless, we do not hold the entire minority group population responsible for these acts. We believe that most members of minority groups in San Francisco deplore these demonstrations as we do. We have prepared our own program to implement the employment of minority groups which is set forth in our Declaration of Principles and which we propose to put into effect immediately. We will, of course, be happy to confer with the Mayor's Committee but we think that no useful purpose would be served by further discussion with those who originated and directed last Saturday's demonstrations.[7]

The third major confrontation occurred in April, 1964, at the Bank of America. These demonstrations were intended by CORE to raise the question of direct negotiations to the state level by forcing the Bank of America to reach a state-wide agreement with the local CORE chapters. As stated by Wilfred Ussery, the goal was to establish "a one-to-one relationship between the Bank of America and CORE." Of all the demonstrations, these were the least dramatic. Like the others, however, they made little headway in the achievement of radical goals.

NAACP

As we have seen, the tactics of the demonstrators succeeded less in advancing race goals than in advancing conflict among the civil rights leaders. Although the local NAACP chapter, for example, had a unique history of militancy -- witness its membership in the UFM -- many of its members did not agree with Dr. Burbridge's militancy. Among others, U.S. Attorney Cecil Poole, the first Negro to hold that post, expressed his opposition in a formal

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[7] G. O. Bahrs, San Francisco Chronicle, April 15, 1964.

statement to the press. He said:

> I was shocked at the defiant, door blocking tactics of the demonstrators. I cannot even approve of successful tactics that have the effect of breaking the law. This kind of conduct brings into disrepute the entire movement, including its objectives.[8]

The later trial of the demonstrators led to even greater tensions. Whereas Terry Francois and Willie Brown recommended that the demonstrators plead nolo contendere and, in effect, throw themselves on the mercy of the court, the demonstrators did not agree. At a mass strategy meeting, the two lawyers were openly "hissed and booed,"[9] and, in retaliation, they sent a letter to the press, condemning the militants' strategy of continuing the trial and deliberately clogging the courts.[10]

In short, current controversy often found lively expression in the local NAACP chapter. Since ideology is always embedded in personality, controversy frequently took the form of a leadership struggle. Consequently, the conflict among the civil rights leaders over tactics only thinly hid a bitter struggle for the right to speak for the Negro community. The issue of structural reform, so important to the militants, was as relevant to the narrow circle of Negro leadership in San Francisco as to the white power structure.

The matter came to a head in the Fall of 1964, when Dr. Burbridge and five other key militant leaders resigned as members of the Board of the local NAACP chapter. In an interview, Dr.

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[8]Cecil Poole, San Francisco Chronicle, March 8, 1964.

[9]San Francisco News Call Bulletin, June 8, 1964.

[10]Terry Francois, San Francisco Chronicle, June 9, 1964.

Burbridge stated to the press that the resignations were the result of "a deep philosophical rift" in the organization.[11]

When the elections were held, in December 1964, the official nominating committee slate, with the names of Cecil Poole, Terry Francois, and Willie Brown, among others, lost to the dissident Burbridge forces. The traditional Negro leaders resigned. From a broadly-based organization, the local NAACP became a militant civil rights organization, shunned by the local Negro establishment and the national organization alike, and subject to all the organizational perils of any local militant civil rights group.

A great deal of publicity attended the elections. The account in the local newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle, underlined the role of the elections in the polarization of the local chapter.

> The NAACP voters failed to give U.S. Attorney Cecil Poole a seat on the Board of Directors -- and San Francisco Supervisor Terry Francois squeaked by with only a ten vote majority. "I won't accept the position on the Board. I plan to disassociate myself from this branch completely in view of the election results. I'll maintain my membership in the national office. I think the national office will step in now -- and probably will reorganize the branch," he said. He repeated previous anonymous charges that CORE, which is acknowledged to be more militant in the civil rights revolution -- has sought through the Burbridge slate to 'infiltrate' the NAACP branch. "It was a CORE takeover," the Supervisor said.[12]

Freedom House

Besides the UFM, the militants founded another umbrella organization of civil rights groups. In March, 1964, a group of

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[11] Thomas Burbridge, San Francisco Chronicle, October 23, 1964.

[12] San Francisco Chronicle, December 21, 1964.

civil rights activists in San Francisco opened a storefront on Fillmore Street -- Freedom House -- with the specific intention of effectively opposing a new redevelopment scheme for the Western Addition.

Since redevelopment began, in 1961, approximately 25 blocks had been cleared at the core of the Western Addition to make room for new middle-income and luxury housing projects. This had resulted in a substantial reduction in the stock of low-income housing in the city, and in the increasing ghettoization of immediately adjacent areas, massive failure of Negro businesses too precarious to survive the demands of relocation, and widespread institutionalization of the elderly.

Despite this gloomy record, the Board of Supervisors approved the new plan calling for the redevelopment of 72 additional blocks. Although the Western Addition was the largest poverty community in San Francisco, the plan provided only 200 units of low-income housing. Asked by the Redevelopment Agency to assist in relocation, the Council of Churches was pessimistic about the future of large numbers of the elderly, many of whom were indigent, ill, and lonely. The fate of the small, struggling, marginal Negro businesses also promised to be harsh, and the majority of them were not expected to survive. The greatest loss, however, would undoubtedly result from the disintegration of the complex web of relationships that held the Negro community together.

Freedom House set out to mobilize a united front against the plan by forming a network of block clubs. The effort was aided enthusiastically by white college students and at least

50 or 60 volunteers did door-to-door work in the community. The fruit of this effort came in April, 1964, when large crowds attended the mandatory public hearings on the plan, and more than 3000 residents of the Western Addition spoke in opposition to it. The block clubs were at their strongest -- approximately 15 were meeting regularly -- at the start of the summer.

Two months later, Freedom House presented an alternative redevelopment plan to a large community meeting. The plan included the creation of neighborhood non-profit corporations to deal with housing and other community-related activities. Its major concern was the problem of maintaining and strengthening the existing Western Addition community. Those at the meeting approved the Alternate Plan.

In September, 1964, a public hearing was held by the Board of Supervisors for the final phase of plan approval. Freedom House had mobilized petitions, distributed leaflets, and encouraged the residents of the Western Addition to attend the hearing. It went on through the night and early next morning the Supervisors voted to reconvene two weeks later.

By the time of the second hearing, the local NAACP chapter, always a strong supporter of Freedom House, had changed its stand. Contending that the Alternate Plan did not sufficiently stress integration, the chapter withdrew from Freedom House and agreed to support the official Redevelopment Agency Plan if certain conditions (morally, but not legally, binding) were met: periodic relocation reports, more low-income housing, integrated housing for relocatees, and scattered public housing. The Supervisors finally approved the plan with these changes.

It was then that Dr. Burbridge resigned the presidency of the local NAACP chapter, claiming "gross insincerity" on the part of the Executive Board. In an interview, he stated:

> Their concern with integration was too ludicrous when decent housing for Negroes was the issue. I couldn't care less whether middle class Negroes can get to live in white middle class neighborhoods. The poor Negro is the real problem and my concern. And he is pushed around from one slum to another. The reasons why certain NAACP members pressured for a withdrawal of legal action on A2 is so politically fraught, so economically obvious, I don't even want to go into it. When you have real interests involved you don't have to look too deep to find out why certain people acted a certain way.

By the end of 1964, the major thrust of the civil rights movement in San Francisco was over. Although they shared a commitment to equality, the civil rights leaders were obviously deeply split over methods and specific goals. Consequently, it was inevitable that a variety of individuals and groups in the Negro community would seek to claim the new anti-poverty agency as an organizational vehicle.

CHAPTER TWO

FIGHT FOR MAJORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

1964 - 1965

As we have seen, the civil rights demonstrations had polarized the leadership of the Negro community. On the one hand, there were those accustomed to speaking for the community -- the ministers, politicians, and lawyers, who preferred working out race problems within the regular institutional framework of the larger community. Their chief interest lay in specific problems of discrimination. On the other hand were those who challenged the traditional hegemony -- the militant, idealistic, nonviolent, intellectual civil rights workers, who were interested in the general problem of Negro powerlessness. Although the traditionalists had more of a following than the militants, neither had a consistent base of power; the struggle between the two groups never involved any substantial portions of the Negro community.

The civil rights demonstrations did not succeed in substantially changing race conditions in the city. Although important in the evolution of radical ideology, they were disappointing in their results. Thus, the civil rights movement in the tumultuous summer of 1964 was looking for new directions and an arena for immediate action. It found both in the anti-poverty program. Both the rhetoric and the underlying philosophy

of the Economic Opportunity Act immediately appealed to the militants. By a coalition of minority groups, they sought to wrest control of the program from a reluctant Mayor and use its funds to organize the Negro community. Their decision to become involved in a government program, however, represented a real change in direction. In effect, they now chose to work within the constraints of a formal organizational setting, rather than from without.

Even earlier than the militants, the traditional Negro leaders had regarded the anti-poverty program as a new opportunity to advance race goals. Shortly before the passage of the Act, they made overtures to the Mayor to establish a Negro community action agency. However, their efforts were rebuffed, leaving them as discontent as the radicals. As the common enemy, City Hall thus served to unite the dissident Negro groups, at least for the time being. The alliance, however temporary, produced enough strength to achieve the immediate goal of majority representation, i.e., control, by a coalition of minority groups led by the militant Negroes.

The fight between the Mayor and the coalition of minority groups lasted nearly a year. Outwardly, it focused on the definition of "maximum feasible participation," on the ratio of elected representatives from the Target Areas to the mayoral appointees. The deeper conflict, however, was between differing notions of public responsibility: the responsibility to ensure that the poor have a voice in decisions affecting their lives or the responsibility to use public funds in the best interests of the broader taxpaying community. On the one hand, social reformers were arguing

that raising the motivation of recipients could be accomplished only by broadening participation in decision-making, and, on the other hand, taxpayers were voicing disapproval of the administration of large sums of money by the poor.

Minority Action Committee

Months before the anti-poverty legislation was approved in Washington, a small group of established Negro leaders in San Francisco created a Minority Action Committee. The group stated its intention to Mayor Shelley of becoming the official agency to administer anti-poverty funds. It was their understanding that the anti-poverty program was intended primarily for Negroes, and that the legislation had been a response to the demands of the civil rights demonstrations. The initiators of the Minority Action Committee had been actively involved in the economic life of the Negro community up until the time that poverty legislation was enacted. They were the principal directors of Plan of Action for Changing Times (PACT), an organization to promote economic growth within the Negro community. They saw the anti-poverty program as a means of carrying out some of the same goals.

In addition to Chinese and Mexican-Americans, therefore, a group of prominent Negroes was invited to join the Committee. They included Dr. Arthur Coleman, a local physician, Dr. Carleton Goodlett, publisher of the local Sun-Reporter, Percy Steele, Jr., Executive Director of the Bay Area Urban League, and Reverend J. Austell Hall, minister of the Beth El AME Church. During the first half-year of the program, the Minority Action Committee met

often to discuss new strategies and tactics. As a result of these meetings, they sent a number of letters to the Mayor stating that they intended to appeal directly to OEO to become the official community action agency.[1]

The original Economic Opportunity Council, with 39 members, was appointed by Mayor Shelley on September 2, 1964, and was formally incorporated as a non-profit corporation on October 23.[2] The complete Council was to have 50 members, all appointed by the Mayor from five segments of the city: business, labor, public agencies, racial and ethnic groups. The Council included only five Minority Action Committee members.[3] As a symbol of Negro participation, the Mayor appointed two Minority Action Committee members, Dr. Arthur Coleman and Everett Brandon, to the positions of Chairman and Executive Director.

The symbolism did not content the Minority Action Committee, and they made strong demands to the Mayor for ten additional appointments to the Council.[4] They believed that one-third representation would give the Negro community a greater voice in decision-making and still keep access to new channels of power within the traditional leadership. From September

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[1] Minority Action Committee, Minutes of letters and meetings with Mayor John F. Shelley, July-August and October, 1964.

[2] San Francisco Examiner, September 13, 1964, Articles of Incorporation, Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc., October 23, 1964.

[3] Arthur Coleman, M.D., Rev. J. Austell Hall, Henry Lucas, D.D.S., Herman Gellegos, Everett Brandon.

[4] Minority Action Committee, Minutes, September 9, 1964, indicating meeting with Mayor Shelley. Interviews with Minority Action Committee members.

1964 to March 1965, however, the issue of additional minority appointments to the Council was never brought to the floor. Although the Minority Action Committee repeatedly threatened demonstrations if their demands were not met, they were apparently not taken seriously by the Mayor; nor is there any evidence that the Committee officially appealed to Washington for support.

In determining the composition of the Council, the Mayor was advised by prominent white liberal civic leaders in the city. Consequently, his appointees were mostly white businessmen, philanthropists, agency officials, labor representatives, and other public-spirited citizens. They were chosen, by and large, on their merits as civic leaders, and not as representatives of any particular group or organization.

By refusing to recognize the Minority Action Committee's demands, the Mayor alienated certain prominent Negroes who had previously been his supporters. The Mayor and the traditional Negro leadership had always held a number of goals in common. Both were more interested in establishing an orderly mechanism to transmit policy decisions to a client public than in broadening mass participation in the decision-making process. Although they both sought to correct conditions of inequality, neither, in fact, wanted to confront directly the existing distribution of power in the Negro or the white community.

In spite of this similarity, the Mayor made no attempt to satisfy the demand for additional appointments. At the first meeting of the Council, he responded with a statement that the program was not to be considered a "grab-bag or

instrument for a power play by small cliques."[5] It was to be used, he continued, to develop programs to benefit the people of the city wherever a "need is clearly established. The Council is broadly representative of all sections of the city and should make plans that will rebound to the benefit of the whole city."[6]

Reverend Hall, chairman of the Minority Action Committee, was among those strongly dissatisfied with the composition of the Council. In an interview, three years after the incorporation of the Council, he readily referred to the hypocrisy of the early program.

> It was the Mayor's idea that the Council would be advisory to him. He made it top-heavy with people from downtown -- just paper names that didn't even get together for meetings. We were genuinely concerned with the basic purposes of the Economic Opportunity Act. That Council did not fit our interpretation of 'maximum feasible participation.' The Mayor and his appointees really didn't want the poor or their elected representatives on the Council.[7]

In another interview with a Negro dentist active in the Minority Action Committee, the response to the question, "Why didn't Mayor Shelley appoint more Negroes to the Council?" elicited intense emotion. Pointing to his office walls and doors which were covered with lists of city commissions and district maps, he shouted:

> Look at that list! How many Negro names can you add up? You have to be pretty naive to ask why there weren't more Negroes appointed. The only time anything is done for Negroes in San Francisco is when there is a crisis. What

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[5] Economic Opportunity Council, Minutes, Sept. 11, 1964.

[6] Ibid.

[7] J. Austell Hall, Interviews, April-May, 1967.

> do you think the Human Rights Commission is -- it is a crisis commission -- and that's what we call it. In this city, the only way Negroes are going to get anywhere is by making it economically. In politics they have no allies here -- no matter what anyone tells you. We wanted the anti-poverty program to help us get some Negroes started in business, or with new jobs. But from the beginning it was a rat race.

His despair was echoed in many interviews conducted in the Negro community for this report. This discontent was never dealt with by the Mayor, and he made no attempt to appoint additional minority members to the Council. Thus, the Negro community tended to regard the program with genuine distrust, and the Mayor, in effect, set the stage for the different factions in the Negro community to unite.

In compliance with the OEO requirement that the residents of the Target Areas be involved in the formulation of a program, the Council instituted a series of "dialogues with the poor" to ascertain community needs. Since there were no funds for staff and administration at that time, it was necessary to submit the package to Washington with the least delay. The dialogues, in other words, had to be completed quickly, and meetings were called in the Target Areas in December of 1964 by "contact teams." The plan was to channel the results of the dialogues to the social service agencies, which would then formulate programs to fit the needs of the community. Within a month, the Central Staff stated that the dialogues had been completed with "3,000 persons having answered a questionnaire."

The Mayor expressed his basic agreement with the Council's wish to contact the residents of the Target Areas, but he stressed that it should be done quickly. At the October 16th

Council meeting, before the dialogues had gotten underway, he said, "speed in projecting plans is essential in order to make certain that funds will still be available to us when they are needed."[8] A complete program could develop gradually, he went on, and be supplemented as needed, but some "predictably planned projects should be designed immediately so that our requests for funds can go forward."[9]

Less than a month later, it was announced that summaries of the dialogues would be distributed to Council members. These dialogues constituted the only effort of the Council over six months to include the residents of the Target Areas in program planning. There is no evidence, in any form, that the dialogues were conducted in any organized manner. The Chinatown Target Area organizer did, in fact, collect answers to questions about programs from several hundred residents, but this was the only case.[10]

To a large extent, the mayoral appointees were caught in the middle of a fight between City Hall and Negro groups. Basically, they were political appointments to an agency that was, from the beginning, failing them. Having no precedent to follow, they were groping in the dark with administrative red-tape, vague guidelines, inefficient channels of communication from Washington to San Francisco, and the ambiguous requirement for the participation of the poor.

Many of the mayoral appointees indicated in interviews that they were under the impression that the dialogues were

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[8] Economic Opportunity Council, Minutes, Oct. 16, 1965.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Interviews with EOC staff and directors, 1966-67.

efficiently tapping the opinions of the poor. In general, they said they were unaware of demands for more representation on the Council, and when they did hear about it they assumed it was some political powerplay. Attorney George Choppelas, one of the original mayoral appointees, thought at first that groups in the Target Areas had no reason at all to complain.

> I thought that one of the best things about the program was the establishment of the dialogues with the poor. I thought the poor were finally going to get a chance to speak up about their needs as they see them. At the time of the dialogues I hardly knew anything about the demands for more representation. And when I did hear about it, I thought it was just a lot of griping, because I believed the dialogues were doing the job. When the complaints got really bad, I decided to put a stop to all that nonsense by producing the tapes of the dialogues at a meeting when the people from the CUAP appeared to complain. So I tried to get the tapes -- or notes -- or any proof that they took place. It was my first real shock! I began to wonder if they did have something real to complain about. I'll tell you, I became very disillusioned about the process we had followed. And I never believed anything the staff said after that.

Jack Crowley, Executive Secretary of the San Francisco Labor Council, and also an original mayoral appointee, explained his feelings about the dialogues.

> I felt as far as contacting the neighborhoods were concerned, things were going well. We were all working extremely hard to get the program going, and there were so many administrative details to get done and I knew they weren't going well. If you come down to it, I really didn't stop to think what the dialogues were about. What in the world is a dialogue with the poor? I was chairman of the personnel committee, and I had my share of trouble with that. Anyway I never saw any evidence of dialogues -- or a lot of other things for that matter. When the neighborhoods began to complain I really got mad at the staff -- and I never forgot it as long as I was in the program. It wasn't that I or the others were against participation of the poor, we were led to believe that we were having it. The program was new, funds were low, there was no money for the staff hired; I kept telling them not to continue hiring. By the time the poverty people started complaining, I felt I had plenty of complaints myself. It was my intention then to get the program going and then to see adequate representation by the poor.

The attempt at dialogues, however, succeeded in antagonizing groups and individuals within the Target Areas. It raised expectations, additionally, that certain programs elicited from individuals might be funded. The haphazard way the dialogues were conducted alienated groups not contacted; the civil rights leaders as well as neighborhood civic leaders felt not only ignored but threatened. Since the final responsibility for the conduct of the dialogues lay with the Negro Executive Director, an additional strain was put on the already shaky alliance between the established Negroes and the militants. It was at this point that the radical leaders decided they must move swiftly in taking over the anti-poverty program before it took them over.

Appointment of Staff

Although the alliance was to remain viable for several more months, the seeds of future discord were being sown, even at the inception of the program. A case in point is the selection of the Executive Director. The personal choice of the Mayor was a young white man from Washington, Joseph Arington. In his eyes, Arington had the great advantage of coming from outside the complicated local web of political loyalties. Arington, therefore, moved to San Francisco and was ready to begin the job, when the Mayor was forced to reconsider his position by strong pressure from the Minority Action Committee.

They wanted a Negro as Executive Director and advanced their own candidate, Everett Brandon, a local stockbroker. As Reverend Hall explained the situation:

> Shelley wanted Arington, but we asked him what Arington could do that Brandon couldn't do. Shelley said that Brandon could not cut all the red tape in Washington. But Brandon knew as much about the program as anybody. Granted not everybody in the Negro community was in favor of Brandon; even so, we told him that the minority groups won't have any program if Brandon isn't hired. Coleman, Goodlett and Francois put a lot of political pressure on the Mayor, and they made no bones about it.

In the end, Brandon was selected. The Minority Action Committee considered this a major victory. They depended on Brandon to keep the program financially stable, to carefully distribute jobs and funds, and to keep internal bickering out of the public eye. The Mayor was willing to accept Brandon because, although a San Franciscan, he had no strong local commitments. He was not involved in either political or ideological struggles; he seemed an ideal compromise. The Mayor looked to Brandon to run the program smoothly and keep it as apolitical as possible.

Joseph Arington, the original mayoral candidate, was made Associate Director. He was an avowed ideologue (as well as an architect, painter and writer). He had served in the Peace Corps, and went from there to OEO. The indecision and final reversal of position by the Mayor had been a source of distress and embarrassment to Arington, but he agreed to serve under Brandon. A clash between these two administrators -- Brandon with his preference for non-commitment, and Arington, for whom intense commitment was a way of life -- was inevitable.

Citizens United Against Poverty

At the beginning of January, the EOC issued a Progress Report which indicated that a draft program for the San Francisco CAP had been completed. The report stated that the program "represents indications of the felt needs of people in the Target Areas as well as a cross section of people in the broad community as meetings were held with over 3,000 persons."[11] This statement, however, completely contradicted the assessment of the situation made by the militants, and they decided to fight for majority representation while a fluid situation still allowed the possibility of change. Their first step was to hold a mass meeting at the Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church in the Western Addition, in February of 1965. Ussery, Bradley and Simmons were among the chief speakers, and Ussery, in particular, decided to challenge both the Mayor and the Negro establishment with a package of radical demands. He said:

> The Economic Opportunity Act itself requires the participation of the poor. We can no longer have selected Negroes sit downtown for us. Even though this program was created with the intention of putting the lid on the civil rights movement, it has potential. We must let the Mayor and the Council know that we are dissatisfied with the improper and inadequate representation and that we will not sit still about it any longer.

In an interview with the authors, three years later, Reverand Hall recalled the Macedonia meeting as a landmark in the history of the program. He said:

> When I heard Ussery, Simmons, and Bradley were at the Macedonia Church eating up Coleman, saying that he didn't

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[11] Progress Report of the Economic Opportunity Council, January, 1965.

> represent the poor, I decided we all had to get together. I became the pipeline to both groups, and we were 100% together -- Chinese, Mexicans and Negroes. I knew we weren't going to get anywhere divided and that our only chance was to stick together.

A new organization, the Citizens United Against Poverty (CUAP), was formed at the meeting. It consisted of more than 25 already-existing groups,[12] widely representative of the four target areas, but each, in fact, representing very little real power in the city. The CUAP's hope lay in the power of organization and in the compelling attention they could demand from a society consciously advocating equality and democracy.

The CUAP passed resolutions which demanded majority representation on the city-wide level and local autonomy on the target areas.[13] These demands, however, were ignored by the Executive Committee, the Council, the Mayor and the newspapers. One of the first references to them came from Everett Brandon in early March, when, at an Executive Committee meeting, he referred to activist groups in the community as "stirring up concern regarding citizen participation on key decision-making bodies of the Community Action Program."[14] Without giving the

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[12] S.F. CORE, Freedom House, Fillmore Barber's Association, Negro American Labor Council, Bayview Hunters Point Citizens Committee, Potrero Hill Citizens Improvement Association, Baptist Ministers Union, Jones Methodist Church, Beth El AME, Pride of S.F. Elks, Shasta Lodge Elks, Golden Gate Temple, No Fad National Assn. of Fashion and Design, Guiding Star Temple, Sunnydale Ad-Hoc Committee, Just Us Girls Social Club, Co-op Housing Comm., Progressive Parents Assn., Mothers Club of Potrero Hill, Resident and Home Owners Council, Bayview Youth Guidance Center, Hunters Point Bayview Block Organization, Exodus Baptist Church, Western Addition District Council, Yerba Buena Tenant's Union.

[13] CUAP Resolutions, February 26, 1965.

[14] Executive Committee, Minutes, March 3, 1965.

details of the CUAP resolutions, Brandon explained that the concern was chiefly due to the Council's inability, because of lack of funds, to hire the promised staff.

The real aim of the resolutions, however, was not to hasten staff hiring, but to stop it until the militants had won greater representation on the Executive Committee. The CUAP had several inadvertant allies -- OEO in Washington, which had not yet approved the program package or allocated any funds to San Francisco, and Jack Crowley, appointee and the chairman of the Council's Personnel Committee. His conscientious attention to detail and his real concern for the efficient handling of public funds made him adverse to the Mayor's attempt to rush a program through. Supported by George Choppelas, he made other council members aware that the issue was both large and complex. The time the Council spent studying the program was of great help in CUAP's delaying efforts. On the issue of representation, the Council members voiced the wide diversity of opinion existing in the city as a whole. Few had strong opinions on the matter, although most of them agreed that their present responsibility was to get the program ready for approval by Washington with the greatest speed. This accomplished, they could then consider other issues. Representation was not discussed until March 5, when, in a speech to the Council, Melvin Mogoloff, representative in charge of the Regional Office of OEO, stated that OEO requires at least one person from each Target Area on the Council. If the Council meets infrequently, then the Executive Committee would have to include that many Target Area persons. Although this was

a matter about which the local agency had no choice, seven months after its incorporation the Economic Opportunity Council still did not meet the minimum official requirements.

Neighborhood Boards

One of the key concepts developed in the anti-poverty program to fulfill the participatory requirement of the Economic Opportunity Act was that of neighborhood boards. Given the existence of a struggle for power, it was inevitable that different factions in the program would interpret the role of neighborhood boards differently. As a mayoral appointee, Brandon's plan was to set up boards in each Target Area that would be representative of the major groups and organizations. These boards would act as advisory committees to traditional neighborhood multi-service centers. Opposed to his plan, the CUAP demanded that these boards be democratically elected in each Target Area, and that multi-service centers be established to refer clients to indigenous, non-profit corporations, i.e., the new social institutions in the community.

The proposal set forth by Brandon met important needs in the Mayor's program. The neighborhood boards could provide access for the Mayor to churches, social agencies, and other groups and organizations in the community. Formal authority could be shared with the Target Areas without the transfer of any actual power. The boards could absorb potentially disruptive centers of influence in the community and modify their effects on the organization; they could lend legitimacy to a program requiring participation by the poor, but not established in response to any

large-scale demands by the poor. In short, the Mayor could maintain his control over anti-poverty funds and obtain entry into the local community, while, at the same time, fulfilling the participatory requirement of the Act.

The militants regarded the neighborhood boards as a major strategy to achieve radical civil rights goals, not the goals of the Mayor. Thus, they demanded that the boards have the power to plan, develop, and implement local programs and city-wide policy. This was integral to the long-range militant scheme to use public anti-poverty funds to build an independent Negro community.

Still ignoring the demands of the CUAP, the Executive Committee passed a resolution, late in March to begin the process of developing groups (Area Organizing Committees) in each Target Area to establish neighborhood boards. Deeply concerned about the potential threat to the Mayor, the Executive Committee referred each new recommendation to him for review. Their major problem would be to develop an effective mechanism of control; their success would largely depend on how the new boards were established.

Despite the concern of the Mayor, it became clear that Brandon had no interest in the process of establishing the neighborhood boards. In fact, he apparently saw resident participation as an obstacle to getting the program underway, and it was not surprising that he failed to organize effective initial groups. It was equally inevitable that the militants were able to completely take over the Area Organizing Committee in the Western Addition, and thereby determine the character of the permanent board.

United Front for Majority Representation

Although the leadership controversy in the Negro community was still unresolved, the different factions had far more influence on each other than on the Mayor. Therefore, when it became clear that the Mayor would ignore their demands for additional appointments to the Council, the Negro establishment had to ally with the radicals, and, in fact, many of them went so far as to join the CUAP. Reverend Hall, the chairman of the Minority Action Committee, became the chairman of the CUAP and acted as a "pipeline" to the Negro establishment, the Mexican-Americans and the Chinese-Americans. Once the established Negro leaders joined the CUAP, the press no longer ignored it. In April, Dr. Carleton Goodlett, as spokesman for the CUAP, called a press conference criticizing the Mayor's position on representation. He stated that the CUAP had been denied the opportunity to elect its own representatives to the Executive Committee. "The Mayor seems to have forgotten that he received his majority vote from the black belts," Goodlett said.[15] He charged that the Mayor had ignored a telegram from the CUAP requesting a conference. Responding to these charges, a spokesman said that the Mayor had not refused to meet with the CUAP, and that Goodlett was making a "power grab in an attempt to control anti-poverty funds by stacking the Executive Committee."[16]

The Mayor finally met with them in early May, and Terry Francois, as the spokesman for the CUAP, demanded majority representation on the Executive Committee. The meeting ended

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[15] Carleton Goodlett, San Francisco Chronicle, April 30, 1965.

[16] Ibid.

inconclusively. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee began to discuss the issue with greater seriousness. Human Rights Commissioner Earl Raab, a member of the Committee, suggested a plan to allow more representation from the Target Areas. It called for an Executive Committee of twenty, with two representatives from each of the four Target Areas.[17] Jack Crowley, and other members of the Committee, suggested resigning in favor of a new Committee, the same size as the existing one (fifteen), but with more representation from the Target Areas.[18] However, Raab believed that it would be a mistake if the residents of the Target Areas constituted a majority of the Committee at that point, and his view prevailed.[19]

In mid-May, representatives from the CUAP attended a meeting of the Executive Committee and demanded answers to a number of questions on the issue of representation. As the discussion began to get lively, Dr. Coleman interrupted saying that the Committee was not prepared to deal with these questions. Bill Bradley, as spokesman for the CUAP, responded, "I don't feel that these questions need so much preparation. Essentially we are interested in getting some feeling about how the Executive Committee is related to these basic questions. The CUAP hoped for an informal discussion on these matters tonight."[20]

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[17]Executive Committee, Minutes, May 1, 1965.

[18]Executive Committee, Minutes, April-May, 1965, San Francisco Chronicle, May 26, 1965.

[19]Executive Committee, Minutes, April 28, 1965.

[20]Executive Committee, Minutes, May 12, 1965.

Two days later, Mayor Shelley decided to address the Executive Committee on the issue of representation. He charged that the CUAP was a "self-appointed and self-annointed group involved in a power play that could wreck the city's anti-poverty program."[21] In fact, he said, the city had to become more, not less, involved in running the program. The chairman, Dr. Coleman, then, in answer to the questions put to the Committee by the CUAP, stated that OEO did not require majority representation by the poor, only representation.[22]

At the same time, Mogoloff of OEO indicated that, according to the requirement that at least one low-income person from each Target Area be on a policy-making level, representation was presently inadequate. However, he said, the package could be submitted for funding with a proviso "indicating that neighborhood boards once adequately established could request the cessation of any programs in the neighborhoods and recommend new uses for the funds.[23]

The major issue immediately became whether one or two low-income persons from each Target Area should be on the Executive Committee. The Mayor held out for one, and the CUAP for two, that is, for a total of eight on a committee of fifteen. The press devoted front page stories to the controversy, and it was becoming clear that the CUAP was gaining support from the white liberal community. The summer was approaching and the threat of demonstrations and the possibility of riots was taken seriously.

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[21] San Francisco Chronicle, June 5, 1965, p. 3.

[22] Executive Committee, Minutes, May 15, 1965.

[23] Ibid.

The Mayor not only wanted to limit representation, but he also sought to retain a veto power over all appointments, even those elected in the Target Areas. He asked, "What if they should elect a criminal or a communist?"[24] His real concern, however, was apparently that Burton supporters would be elected to the boards. A freshman Congressman, Philip Burton had unseated Mayor Shelley a year earlier from the congressional seat he had held for over fifteen years, and now had the support of the majority of Negro politicians in the city. The constant fear of the Mayor was that Burton would gain control of anti-poverty patronage.

After considerable pressure, the Mayor agreed, at the end of May, to reconstitute the Executive Committee, giving majority representation to the Target Areas. He then immediately left to attend a Conference of Mayors in St. Louis, where representation of the poor in the anti-poverty program was to be discussed. Before leaving, however, he emphasized that the Executive Committee should not delay sending in the program package for the June 1st funding deadline, since program modifications, according to Mogoloff, could be made later. Although Dr. Coleman agreed with the Mayor, Reverend Hall did not. He said:

> Who will benefit from the War on Poverty? Confusion is due to the hassle over control -- control by agencies, by do-gooders, by administrators. The small voice of the poor is barely heard. It is a hassle over money the Council does not even have yet. Is the Council a legal body? It is not clear to me what the structure of the Council is. My greatest concern is with the program itself since it hasn't been sufficiently reviewed by the groups concerned. I don't believe the provision for modification is acceptable until the exact extent of the powers of modification are made very

[24] San Francisco Chronicle, May 18, 1965.

> clear. Washington is being asked to fund confusion. The Committee has been charged to come with a program not in spite of the needs of the people, but because of them.[25]

Nevertheless, the Executive Committee voted to send the program package to Washington for approval. Kenneth Simmons, vice chairman of the CUAP, called the action a travesty of justice. He said that only a properly constituted Executive Committee would be the appropriate body to send the package in. "The CUAP will undoubtedly fight the Committee decision with telegrams and possibly even send representatives directly to Washington."[26]

Percy Steele, Jr., Executive Director of the Bay Area Urban League, called a press conference immediately:

> San Francisco's War on Poverty is faced with a real crisis, and this crisis was reached last night at a very bizarre and unsavory, as well as undemocratic meeting of the Executive Committee. It was insulting, degrading, disgraceful, and an affront to the many fine citizens, organizations, agencies and groups in San Francisco who sincerely desire to help make effective programs for the War on Poverty. In my opinion, the responsibility for this present situation rests squarely on the shoulders of Mayor Shelley, who seemingly has been playing games with this program since its inception in one political play after another. The Executive Committee autocratically and abruptly adjourned the meeting without permitting those of us who came to help even to be heard. In fact the meeting opened and immediately a 6 to 3 vote in favor of submitting their proposal to Washington was taken, prior to anyone else being heard.[27]

An emergency meeting of the Executive Committee was called and Simmons presented a list of provisos to be affixed to the program; the major proviso demanded that the Executive Committee be reconstituted before any funds were released.

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[25] Executive Committee, Minutes, May 27, 1965.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Press Release of Percy Steele, Jr., Executive Director of the Bay Area Urban League, May 28, 1965.

Another stipulated that there should be a complete staff review.[28] The provisos were finally approved by the Executive Committee, but the feelings between the mayoral appointees and the CUAP were very bitter. Several times, actual physical fighting broke out between individuals in both groups.

At the same time, the Mayor persuaded the Resolutions Committee at the St. Louis Conference to draft a policy statement affirming that city governments should be in fiscal control of local programs. He conferred with Theodore Berry, Director of Community Action Programs, and obtained a statement indicating that minority groups benefitting from the program should not be in the majority on the policy-making levels and that no single interest should control policy. Hubert Humphrey met with the delegation of mayors and was quoted as saying that he was "shocked to learn that control of the programs by the poor was an idea prevalent around the country."[29]

The Mayor returned to San Francisco strengthened by this support and stated:

> There'll have to be further reorganization of the program here, more people pulled in, including representatives of business, labor, the Board of Supervisors, and the general citizenry. Berry said clearly it was never intended that recipients of the program should control it. Such control is a little ridiculous when you consider the fiscal responsibility city officials assume when they take office.[30]

Goodlett heatedly responded. He said:

> Whether or not the Mayor wanted to control the program is a moot point now. The only currency in a politician's bank is his word. What is Mayor Shelley's word worth?[31]

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[28] Executive Committee, Minutes, May 28, 1965.

[29] San Francisco Chronicle, June 8, 1965.

[30] San Francisco Examiner, June 4, 1965.

[31] San Francisco Chronicle, June 5, 1965.

The CUAP wrote Shelley:

> It is our feeling that any further delay in clarifying the San Francisco situation must be viewed as an attempt on your part to stifle the democratic process so essential to a meaningful program. The position of the CUAP is clear. 1) We have entered into an agreement with you on maximum participation of the poor; 2) We have elected our interim representatives to the Executive Committee and approved the program delivery to Sargent Shriver's office.[32]

In addition to the CUAP, the letter was signed by the four newly-elected Area Organizing Committees. It asked that the Mayor implement the agreement within 48 hours or they would be forced to "mobilize for any necessary action."

In reply, the Mayor appeared before the Executive Committee and delivered a lengthy speech intended to appease the militants. He stated that it had gradually become clear to him that there was some confusion over the words "maximum" and "majority." He said:

> Many people seemed to think "maximum" meant majority, but subsequent to this meeting I discovered this was not the intention of the federal government, nor did they intend control be taken from city officials who shoulder the responsibility on the financial level. That meeting of May 21st concluded with the agreement to have two representatives from each Target Area, to be reduced to one from each of the full eight Target Areas as they were set up. I agree that the residents of the poverty areas should be able to express what they feel are their needs. This is why I agreed to an 8-7 member Executive Committee.[33]

Furthermore, according to Hubert Humphrey himself, the federal government did not support the notion of majority representation. He said:

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[32]Letter to Mayor John F. Shelley from the four Area Organizing Committees, June 8, 1965.

[33]Executive Committee, Minutes, July 9, 1965.

> According to the federal legislation, I do not have to give a majority representation to the communities, but although it causes me great consternation, I will not change the basic agreement of an 8 to 7 ratio.[34]

Although he was going to honor his commitment to majority representation on the Executive Committee, some major organizational changes would have to be made. For example, the by-laws would need to be re-written to give the Council final authority on budget and programs. He said:

> A battle of power must be avoided. Using the money to do things for the people is the fundamental objective of the whole program, and the city must have control over the money. The existing by-laws must be changed to meet the new situation. Any delay would simply hurt the people who will be the beneficiaries.[35]

Under the new by-laws, the Mayor proposed that the Executive Committee would exercise four functions:

1) initiate programs
2) act as a contact group to Target Area Boards
3) make recommendations to the Council
4) act on matters referred to it by the Council by submitting a report which the Council could accept, reject or amend.

The Mayor's intention was to appease the militants by yielding on the question of representation on the Executive Committee, but to conserve his power by shifting many of the Committee's functions over to the Council. The Negroes saw through this strategy, however, and immediately switched the focus of their effort to winning seats on the Council.

The newly reconstituted Executive Committee, which now included Reverend Hall and Kenneth Simmons from the Western Addition, began discussing the composition of the Council at its

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

very first meeting. With the recent shift in control away from the Executive Committee, Simmons and Reverend Hall now fought for majority representation on the Council. Consequently, the major issue during the next two months became the content of the new by-laws, which would define the composition of both the Executive Committee and the Council. For their first reading, the gallery was filled with CUAP supporters. Acting chairman Jack Crowley ruled that there would be no discussion from the gallery. Reverend Hall objected. He demanded that everyone be given the right to speak, since the by-laws did not live up to the earlier promises that the program would be controlled by the poor. When his motion to allow speakers from the gallery lost, the Negro representatives on the Council left with a substantial portion of the gallery. Discussion continued, but before a vote could be taken the Executive Director decided to address the remaining members of the Council:

> I have a feeling for what can happen when this kind of discontent is allowed to build up. These people who have walked out feel they are not involved, that the Economic Opportunity Act does not mean anything if they cannot be a part of its development. No matter how unreasonable you think they are, their feelings are valid and they must be involved. I can think of no worse job than to be director of this Council if the rules of the organization are passed without the participation of the people now absent. I don't want to be in the position of placing an ultimatum before you, but I am forced to submit my resignation at this moment if this group attempts to pass the by-laws without the involvement of the people who have walked out.[36]

The statement was surprising, because Brandon had never publicly taken a stand in favor of majority representation. It was also effective, for the Council did not actually take a vote on the by-laws at the meeting. Pleased with the success of their

[36]Economic Opportunity Council, Minutes, August 11, 1965.

tactics, the Negroes continued to boycott the Council, in the belief that the program could not continue without their participation.

At the next meeting of the Council, Dr. Coleman spoke on the issue of majority representation. He explained that because the existing neighborhood boards were not broadly representative, the Mayor was not yet prepared to give up control to the Target Areas. His personal sympathy was for majority representation, but, given the reluctance of the Mayor and the fact that OEO was satisfied with the composition of the Council, he did not feel that such a position was legitimate at that time. Although he hoped the absent members would return, the work of the Council must continue.[37]

The Target Area representatives still attended the Executive Committee meetings since they had majority representation there. At the August 25th meeting, Kenneth Simmons announced that the Negro Target Areas had written a new set of by-laws that included majority representation on the Council.

Hastily distributing a copy to each member, he said:

> It is the fervent hope of these boards that the Executive Committee will see fit to adopt this set of by-laws and pass them on to the larger Council. The Areas are very resolute in their intent to achieve a meaningful program that will involve the people of the area to a maximum extent.[38]

Dr. Coleman ruled a motion to adopt the by-laws out of order on the grounds that there had been no time to properly study them. However, a majority vote overruled the chair. The

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[37]Economic Opportunity Council, Minutes, August 23, 1965.

[38]Executive Committee, Minutes, August 25, 1965.

mayoral appointees immediately objected stating that until the adoption of the by-laws by the Council, the Executive Committee was not a legal body. Simmons spoke to the press after the meeting:

> We are tired and weary from this fight but more resolute than ever. We can no longer be bought off. Negro communities all over the country are seething cauldrons of anxiety, idleness, helplessness, and despair. This fantastic energy can explode, damaging both black and white, or this fantastic energy can be channeled constructively. We are more determined than ever to secure maximum feasible participation, meaning no less than a simple majority of the Council shall be from the Area Boards. Our communities are prepared to engage in a massive campaign of direct action, including picketing, boycotting, and civil disobedience if necessary.[39]

The newspapers and television played up his threats. With Watts fresh in the minds of everyone, the CUAP became the stronghold of Negro militancy. Finally, it was announced that there would be a public meeting to give representatives from groups in the community concerned with poverty an opportunity to speak out on the issue of representation. On August 31st it became clear that the CUAP had sustained its coalition and was capable of winning majority representation in the program as a whole. Dr. Coleman opened the meeting with the comment that although the concept of majority representation is radically new, it is profoundly sound. Forty persons spoke, with only one speaking against majority representation. When the speeches were concluded, it was clear that the Mayor would give in, and, on September 8th, Dr. Coleman announced that, indeed, Mayor Shelley did not wish to stand in the way of majority representation. The Negroes had won their fight.

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[39] News Call Bulletin, August 26, 1965.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN THE WESTERN ADDITION

1965-1966

With the initial step of their strategy a success, the Negro community now had substantial control of the anti-poverty program. The next phase of the plan, however, proved to be more difficult. With majority representation on the policy-making levels, control over programs and funds lay in the hands of the Target Areas -- Chinatown, the Mission, Hunters Point, and the Western Addition, the most important Negro community in San Francisco. It was the hope of the radical leaders that this would lead to a new organization of the poor. Kenneth Simmons, speaking on this subject, stated:

> Now as to what the goals of the EOC should be: it is my firm belief that it should be power (would you believe poor power?) purely and simply. In a society of contending powerful interest groups, to bring about any improvement in the lot of low-income people, they have to have more effective power. Community organization will make it possible to get on with the task of job training, job development, etc. -- only in a meaningful way -- related to the perceived needs of the community of the poor.

The effort to organize the Western Addition, however, precipitated a new struggle among the Negro groups. The victory over the Mayor had signalled the end of the coalition between establishment and militant forces. With the common enemy defeated, there was time now to take up the fight for leadership of the community again. The struggle was mild and sporadic during the

time the Interim Board was in existence, but it became serious and sustained once the permanent Board had been elected and begun to function on its own.

Interim Board

Late in the spring of 1965, while the outcome of majority representation was still in doubt, elections were held to form an Area Organizing Committee (Interim Board) in the Western Addition. At this time the strength of the militants was at its height, and this strength was reflected in the election of the Interim Board.

The election took place at the Booker T. Washington Community Center. Approximately 200 community groups, social agencies, and churches were asked to send representatives, and more than 100 people attended the meeting. It was considered an important community event, and individuals and groups met informally beforehand to electioneer for particular candidates. Nominations were taken from the floor and, as a result of a voice vote, 21 were elected to an Interim Board. The cadre of civil rights workers worked for over two weeks to put together a slate of candidates that would support militant civil rights goals. They succeeded in getting all but two elected. Reverend Hall, staunch supporter of the Target Areas in the struggle for majority representation, was unanimously elected chairman of the Interim Board, and Kenneth Simmons was elected vice-chairman.

All but one of the Board members were Negro. The average age was 43. Only two were established leaders; one was an official in a Negro white collar union; another was the president

of the Fillmore Barbers' Association, a union of local barbers organized by Freedom House in 1964. Three were social workers. One was an organizer of a local tenants union and welfare rights organization. Another was assistant to Congressman Philip Burton. Fourteen were members of the CUAP, four were active members of CORE; in all but a few cases they knew one another from Freedom House.

The attitude of the Negro establishment at this point seems to have been a watchful silence. They were aware of the problems that would face the militants as they tried to build the new organization and cope with the unfamiliar constraints and pressures of a government agency. They therefore decided to wait and see how the militants performed. The effect was a truce, in which the Negro establishment remained for a time on the sidelines. Crucial to the truce was the test of power. Spheres of influence had to be obeyed, for the Negro establishment did not intend to step aside completely. The point was emphatically made by Dr. Goodlett as follows:

> The EOC is another way for the blacks to gain a voice in the city. My principle is the more spheres of influence the better. Ussery has to organize the poor for a political base, and as long as he has mass support and keeps within his own territory, he's alright. If he can't hold the people, or if he gets too greedy, no one will help him.

It was clear that sooner or later the struggle for power between the radicals and the establishment would have to be played out, but for the moment the issue was quiescent. At this time, the second year of the program, the ideology of the militants was dominant, and power came either from an identification with those ideological goals or personal charisma.

In the meantime, the Interim Board undertook with deep commitment its self-appointed task of organizing the residents of the Western Addition. They made a strong effort to rationalize their activity, and work schedules and phasing plans were set forth in detail as a practical guide to action. The Interim Board tried to dig deeper roots in the community by utilizing the organizing skills of its members. Some of the older women had been block club organizers in the Freedom House days, and were still block club leaders; others were members of Reverend Hall's church. Although not a militant, Reverend Hall was a loyal ally of the militants, and in general regarded the social, as well as the spiritual, guidance of his congregation as his duty. By appealing to a wide range of individuals and groups in the community he played a significant role in the organization.

The Board was agreed that programs and services should await the organization of the community. The permanent Board could then more effectively utilize anti-poverty funds for community services. The general consensus at the first meeting was that the main purpose of the Interim Board was to create the permanent Area Board. Their primary task, therefore, was to set up and carry out the best procedures for organizing the community to elect that Board.

A Structure Committee was appointed by Reverend Hall to work on the mechanics of setting up sub-districts for the elections, with Ussery as chairman, and Simmons and five others as members. In his own words, Ussery was a "student of the Movement structure." As chairman of the Structure Committee, he sought to develop an organizational form that would guarantee

a maximum number of residents of the Western Addition a real voice in social policy decisions.

Soon after the Mayor acceded to the demands for majority representation, Ussery presented his Area Development Plan of the Western Addition to the Council for approval. The representatives from the Target Areas greeted it with enthusiasm stating that at least one such bold visionary scheme to reach and involve the poor should be set forth in the city. The regional office of OEO considered it one of the most experimental and creative programs in the Western Region.[1]

The plan called for almost the entire budget in the Western Addition to be used for community organization. To aid the organizing activity, the Western Addition was divided into five administrative districts and thirty-two neighborhoods. Since the Structure Committee felt that small units would guarantee broader representation, a neighborhood was designated as eight or ten square blocks. The sense of community would be accomplished by bringing the elected representatives together in a complex system of interlocking decision-making bodies. Each neighborhood would have a council of thirty members to debate issues of importance and reach a consensus of neighborhood opinion. This consensus would be expressed by the elected neighborhood representatives on the Area Board, who would then carry policy decisions back to the council for implementation.

The locus of significant decision-making would be the different committees of the neighborhood councils in such specific areas as manpower, economic development, education,

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[1]Letter from Melvin Mogoloff to Everett Brandon, March 15, 1965.

youth activities, social services, and housing. The chairmen of the thirty-two committees from each neighborhood would constitute the board of directors of an area-wide non-profit corporation, A system of such corporations would then act as delegate agencies to the Area Board, and independently bid for public and private funds. The militant leaders realistically expected that community action funds would be cut off altogether in two or three years, and, therefore, should be used as seed money to build non-profit corporations. These corporations would become the central institutions in the Negro community, with a clear responsibility to its low-income residents. As such they would eventually replace the traditionally alienated institutions in the city and thereby help to realize the goal of a self-determining community.[2]

For the successful completion of their task, the Interim Board had to confront the problem of transferring official policy to the permanent Area Board. In the fall of 1965, they hired Ussery as Area Director to administer official policy and guarantee the indoctrination of the new members. Successful indoctrination could provide a continuity of leadership and policy and guard against serious organizational disorders.

Election of Permanent Board

The Interim Board decided that the yearly elections to the Area Board should be staggered to allow new representatives

[2]The concept is similar to the plan for school decentralization by McGeorge Bundy in New York City, and to the new neighborhood non-profit housing corporations across the country. In 1965, in San Francisco, however, it was a new idea.

to learn official goals and procedures from the older members. Residency in the Target Area was the only formal requirement, besides age, for candidacy. In reality, however, the emphasis on such matters as phasing, scheduling, programming, by-laws, organizational charts, and parliamentary procedures acted as selective factors in the recruitment of members. Those in the community who felt at ease with organizational procedures, who regarded themselves as potential civic leaders, who were ambitious, aggressive, articulate, and upwardly mobile, ran for election to the Area Board. The public sponsorship of the program, its national publicity, contributed to the seriousness with which the role was taken. The image each candidate had of himself was that of a new leader of the Negro people and the role had great appeal for those who themselves stood on the edge of poverty. For many, a good deal was at stake in terms of power, prestige, and economic gain.

By the spring of 1966, a full year after the election of the Interim Board, the thirty-two elected representatives of the residents of the Western Addition sat on the permanent Board. They included an insurance salesman, a beauty shop owner, a charm school director, a laundry worker, a mechanic, an importer, two domestics, an electrician, a day laborer, a longshoreman, a lawyer, a teacher, and several housewives. More than half the Board were women, and the average age was approximately 36 years. At least half earned less than $5000 a year, and six earned $10,000 or more.

The permanent Board thus elected was very different from the preceding Interim Board. The Interim Board was composed

largely of civil rights workers and their supporters. This homogeneity gave it the equilibrium to function effectively in the face of developmental problems, inexperience, and pressures from public agencies, politicians, and dissidents. Although there were differences of opinion with the Central Staff, the unanimity of the Board was never threatened.

The new Board was more representative of the community as a whole. Socially diverse, non-ideological, uncommitted to broad social goals, it reflected the social structure of the Negro community itself. It was, in fact, the very Board that the militants had hoped to elect. Now it remained only for them, many of whom were now in key staff posts, to indoctrinate the new Board so that it could carry out the long-range militant goals. This conscious attempt on the part of a small avant-garde group at restructuring the goals and values of the new members, and through them the entire community, naturally created conflict. The question that would have to be answered through the test of experience was whether or not that conflict could bring about the desired changes in the new members and the community.

The conflict began to express itself increasingly as the new members were elected to the Board. It was most prominent in three areas: the hiring of staff, the selection of programs, and the election of officers.

Hiring of Staff

After the approval of the Area Development Plan by the newly reconstituted Council in the fall of 1965, the majority

of anti-poverty funds in the Western Addition were re-allocated to community organization. This meant that hiring would be on a grand scale and the number of staff members would eventually increase to 190. The proposed budget in 1965 for the new staffing plan increased from $168,000 to $271,050 for six months, with additional funds recovered from rejected or deferred programs. This amount of built-in patronage was not enjoyed by any other organization on a community level in the Western Addition. Control over hiring, therefore, was strategic and, in fact, often at the center of controversy.

At least half of the Interim Board became staff members. Ussery and Simmons were given strategic positions as Area Director and Program Coordinator, respectively. Norman Brown, a local CORE officer, was hired as Community Organizer. The salaries for these positions ranged from $9,000 to $12,000. Four others were given positions on the staff at salaries ranging from $7,000 to over $10,000, and at least four became Neighborhood Organizers at $400 a month.

By the end of 1965, the Personnel Committee had more than 200 applicants for 14 additional Neighborhood Organizer positions. The Structure Committee had provided for the review of all applications by the Area Director, who, in turn, would make recommendations on hiring to the Personnel Committee. The Committee would then select a tentative roster of applicants to be interviewed by a panel consisting of the Area Director and two of its members. The panel would give their recommendations to the Area Board in the form of a written report; however, these procedures were never actually followed.

Nevertheless, hiring proceeded fairly smoothly until the elected representatives began to be seated on the permanent Board. Jobs then became the focus of attention. One of the first confrontations over hiring involved the position of Intake-Referral Coordinator. A newly elected representative, James Lester, argued that the job should be given to Mrs. Hightower, a member of the Interim Board. He was supported by the anti-Ussery wing of local CORE and by Willie Thompson, a personal enemy of Ussery. The Interim Board, however, supported the Ussery position that the job specifications for Intake-Referral Coordinator should be rewritten to read as Staff Developer. Since a major purpose of the War on Poverty was to train persons in the community to develop general skills, the Intake-Referral Coordinator should be able to orient new staff members and train and supervise the staff as a whole.

Lester, a man with a propensity toward supporting the underdog, opposed the idea of job qualifications as an excuse for patronage. Furthermore, he maintained that politics were involved in the opposition to Mrs. Hightower, and that Ussery must have a friend in mind for the job. He said:

> We say job qualification but we really mean requirements. Qualifications is a brainwash word. If she can do the work as a volunteer she can do the work for pay. If she can't cut the mustard then we get rid of her. We fought the EOC to get what we wanted and now we fight our own. I say, give her a chance. There is a job today and the changes you talk about are two to four weeks away. Our Director is trying to show muscle on the Board. The Director cannot run the show, not on General Motors, not on DuPont. We, the Board, give him the policy, the final decisions. How weak can a Board be? Why wait four weeks, why not give it to her when she needs it? She's worked hard. I'm pleading with the Board to hire her now. There are people,

> I won't mention names, trying to get her property. You know what I mean.[3]

In an interview, an Ussery supporter told the authors that James Lester and a CORE faction stand behind Mrs. Hightower to show the people that they care, not because the job is right for her or that she is right for the job. She said:

> Her talents lie more as an organizer. She knows it and everybody knows it. She has allowed herself to be torn to shreds in a public meeting, and to be a pawn of James Lester. The job of Intake-Referral Coordinator is more money than Neighborhood Organizer; it involves setting up, training, and supervising the staff. How can she do this on her own? For James Lester, and those like him, it is a matter of persons, not of issues. He cuts the Board right down the middle and sets it up as a divided camp. In time tremendous things can come of people like James Lester, and Mrs. Hightower. There is an opportunity in the program for growth and change, but what will happen, we don't know. The change is already upon us. Ussery is now in the role of hired help, not a spearheader. The role is new for him and he can't talk the same. When the Board hired him they lost a strong voice downtown. Who can take his place? The proposal to expand the staff is an example of the vision of these men in helping the poor to lift themselves out of poverty. They see the hiring of staff as a program, the job itself as a process of training and, as such, a part of the program. This is what the poverty program is all about, it is a training program, it is not just a rehash of the same old programs, the service programs our society has always given the Negro as an answer to his problems, and that have never done him any good.

The concept of Staff Developer divided the new anti-poverty philosophy from traditional social welfare theory. The militant leaders did not regard their position as a rejection of Mrs. Hightower as a person, but only of her ability to perform. The Intake-Referral Coordinator was the fourth most important staff job, after Area Director, Program Coordinator, and Community Organizer, and, they felt, the strategic point at which

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[3]Western Addition Target Area Board Meeting, Nov. 2, 1965.

the program became not merely a matter of jobs but of job training and development as well.

Mrs. Hightower, a large, comfortable-looking, religious, hard-working, middle-aged Negro woman, who had been a Freedom House volunteer and a loyal supporter of the militants, saw her job as helping others, and having a good heart and the right spirit. She was, in the language of OEO, an indigenous sub-professional anti-poverty worker, who made a serious effort to learn how to be a social worker and make her job in the community a success. The Interim Board departed from their original strategy by hiring Mrs. Hightower. She did, however, become a liaison with the social agencies in the Western Addition, and an important repository of information for its poverty-stricken residents. A balance was finally struck, although not without a struggle, between long-range societal goals and individual interests. Unfortunately, not all the conflicts to come would have such a satisfactory resolution.

Selection of Programs

The most significant example of conflict in the selection of programs was the case of the Family Service Agency. This issue began while the Interim Board was still overseeing the elections to the permanent Board and some new members were already seated. The Agency was making a strong effort to incorporate the principle of "maximum feasible participation" into a new project by that name. The project was to be funded directly by Washington and only required the approval of the Board. Ussery and Simmons, however, with the majority of the Board behind

them, opposed approval on the grounds that the proposal, however worthy, conflicted with the Area Development Plan. The more important principle at stake was the right to self-determination; it was never a question of services versus organization, but control. Furthermore, for the community to develop its own set of priorities as standards and criteria for approval, it must first be organized into decision-making groups. Henry Schubart, the single white member of the Interim Board, spoke forcefully to the point. He said:

> We must not forget that there is a more important principle involved in this disucssion tonight. It is whether we are going to develop the organization in our community or again settle for the few crumbs given by a white social service agency. I have no doubt that their program is a good one, but our concern now must be organization so that the community can once and for all be the decision-makers.[4]

The Executive Director of the Agency presented his proposal to the Board and stated that the poor mothers and fathers of the Western Addition needed the program. The audience included approximately thirty members of the Mothers and Fathers Club of the Family Service Agency, who were extremely vocal throughout the debate. Emotions ran high as they broke into tears, shouting that the Board didn't understand how it felt to be poor. In unison, James Lester and Willie Thompson demanded: "Let's ask the poor what they want," and, "The poor must determine our programs and NOW." The controversy became wilder and, at one point, a young man excitedly ran to the microphone and demanded the ouster of the Board saying that they did not represent the poor.

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[4] Ibid., January 11, 1965.

> I'm from Harlem and I know these kind of people don't care about us. I've seen them on TV. They must be thrown out and a poor people's board put in.[5]

Reverend Hall tried to maintain order while giving everyone who wanted to the opportunity to speak. He said:

> Each one of us here on the Board knows the meaning of poverty. We are the poor, and God knows we just got here. We are trying our best to make this program different from other programs. We do not want to choose services now when we have not organized the community to do the selecting for themselves.[6]

The issue, according to Ussery, was not a matter of the approval or disapproval of a program, but of the relationship of the Board of Directors of the Family Service Agency to the Area Board. It was important for the Board to face the crucial issue of control, to establish a relationship with the Family Service Agency that would set a pattern for such relationships. The issue of majority representation on a joint policy-making body was central to the issue of Area Board approval and to the intent of the Economic Opportunity Act. In the heat of the argument, Wilfred Ussery confronted the Executive Director of the Agency with the following words:

> Don't come in here pushing a few black faces at me and tell me the blacks are running the Agency. Stand up here and tell me what the Board of Directors will promise us. We cannot pass on this program unless there is a formal working out of policy from our Board to your Board.[7]

It was clear, however, that despite the personal wishes of the Executive Director, he could not simply hand over the authority of the Family Service Agency to the Area Board. The

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

most he could offer was to recommend to his Board of Directors that a joint committee be established for the development of future programs. As the debate grew in intensity the Board was finally persuaded to capitulate to the wishes of the audience. The failure to change the policy-making body of the Family Service Agency was actually the first in a series of failures to effect real social change in the city. Although the Economic Opportunity Act shared the social goals of the militant leaders, CAP funds did not provide sufficient means to implement these goals. In general, the anti-poverty program raised expectations of social change in the Negro community, but could not compete with the immediate gains and greater funds for services provided by other social agencies.

A similar event occurred again in June, 1966. This time the issue involved the creation of a non-profit corporation to build a housing project on two square blocks in the new redevelopment area. This was the last time the long-range goals of the Area Development Plan were brought before the Board for discussion. The proposal was presented by Ulysses J. Montgomery, a Negro engineer and a newcomer to the community who sought the approval of the Board "in principle." The real issue, however, in militant eyes was the conflict with the non-profit housing corporation planned by them on an area-wide basis. Both Ussery and Simmons tried to explain to the Board that if the two square blocks were approved, it would set a precedent in the community. Montgomery was highly persuasive. He spent an evening showing the Board colored slides of middle-income housing projects across the country and promising similar amenities in the Western Addition.

The other proposal was colorless in comparison, and, therefore, the Board believed it was worth a try to support Montgomery.

The long range goals of the Area Development Plan were not taken as seriously by the permanent Board as they were by the Interim Board. By the approval of the Family Service Agency project a compromise was made to allow the immediate gains the residents of the Western Addition expected from the anti-poverty program to find expression. The approval of the non-profit housing corporation by a private developer also expressed the great need of the community to receive some immediate benefits from the exercise of public policy.

Election of Officers

The difficulty over the election of officers was created primarily by the disruptive actions of a few members. James Lester, a permanent Board member, and, therefore, secure in his status, and Willie Thompson, an Interim Board member, constituted a storm center for much of 1965. Lester's bent was rebellion; he spoke as if in the union hall where, in fact, he received his basic training in oratory. He regarded himself as the spokesman of the poor simple Negro -- proud of his color and his poverty. "The only thing we have in common with downtown is Robert's Rules of Order. They want to get us in the mainstream and keep us flowing right through the city." Both he and Willie Thompson were adept in the use of parliamentary procedures to delay, frustrate, and confuse any issue. Their opposition was apparently personal or narrowly political, rather than ideological. They were not, however, able to muster any substantial or consistent

support. Their behavior was too volatile, too unreliable, and too inconsistent for the majority of the members to ally with them. Regardless, in December of 1965, Lester was elected vice chairman. The vote of the Interim Board was split between several candidates, giving Lester a small majority of the votes, but a majority nonetheless. His rebellious speeches were at times appealing to the neutrals on the Board for their homespun quality and the directness of their appeal to the plight of the poor.

The burden of these disruptive tactics fell most heavily on the Chairman, Reverend Hall. It was his responsibility both to resolve personal conflicts and expedite the Board's work. Consequently, he found himself opposed at every turn by Thompson and Lester, and, finally, was driven to submit his resignation. The result was another brief alliance between the militants and the establishment, as they united behind Reverend Hall and against Lester. A secret Board meeting was called by Ussery to "put the chains" on Lester and rescind his election as vice-chairman. Also present at this meeting were Dr. Arthur Coleman, Supervisor Terry Francois, Dr. Carleton Goodlett, and Assemblyman Willie Brown.

Reverend Hall began the meeting by saying that his future was not at stake, that he was not involved as a person in this controversy. He said:

> I did not want my resignation to create any suspicion. I did not want to have Downtown take hold of it and look into the Western Addition. One word kept coming up again and again when we were fighting for maximum feasible participation. That word was 'irresponsible.' 'Irresponsible!' The program would be in jeopardy because of 'irresponsible' behavior. We assured those Downtown that that which they

> feared most would not happen. We got control. We went into neighborhoods to put the plan into action -- Will's plan. But we made a mistake when we allowed personal feelings to interfere with the program for the poor. It came to a head the other night. What Downtown thought would happen is happening. Since Brother Lester has come into the picture he has made his attacks on people, not programs, but people. I remember the first meeting he attended. We thought he was a man we could use. We took him to Hunters Point and had him speak out there. But lately he has been wheeling and dealing in corners, pushing something. Wherever he's going, I'm in his way. He cannot represent me on the Executive Committee or on the Council. He represents to me what we said wouldn't happen. An element of irresponsibility has been introduced through him. This is the reason for my resignation.[8]

The members soon moved to reconsider the resignation of Reverend Hall and to rescind the motion electing the vice chairman. James Lester and Willie Thompson naturally objected to the new turn of events. Lester said:

> If one man can be the cause this month then it will be another man another month. Reverend Hall leans backwards to let some of us speak out, but not others. If I can't disagree with the chairman then it will fall on you when you disagree. I want a strong chairman. How can one person stop a program. I'm asking you to vote for me as the vice chairman, because Reverend Hall's resignation is just a plea for sympathy.[9]

Both Goodlett and Francois gave laudatory speeches defending Reverend Hall. They said that while they were taking care of "downtown," it was the duty of the Board to take care of the community. In particular, Goodlett said:

> If you can stick to your responsibilities we will stick to ours. We take care of downtown, while you organize the community. You must remember that without Reverend Hall there wouldn't be any majority representation, and you would not be sitting here now.[10]

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[8] Western Addition Target Area Board Meeting, Dec. 5, 1965.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

The problems raised by Lester were solved when a meeting held in his neighborhood recalled him as representative. Thompson was ignored until his Interim term expired. Unfortunately, Reverand Hall kept his promise and resigned; in him the Board lost a personality able to command respect and cooperation from radical and traditionalist alike, at a time when he could have been most useful.

Conflict so far had been minor. After the Interim Board stepped down, however, the militant leadership was brought more and more into question. Less and less attention was paid to content, and conflict, personality clashes, factional alliances, and irrational behavior marked the new organizational style. It became clear that actual participation was less important to the militants than formal goals. These goals, however, were less important to the Board than immediate gains, and they finally succeeded both in subverting the goals and in overthrowing the militants who had formulated them.

CHAPTER FOUR

STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

1966-1967

For the preceding year, the militants had been able to impose their ideology on the operations of the Interim Board. Although some conflict did occur, it had been settled by compromises which both the radicals and the Negro establishment could accept. By 1966, however, the situation had developed to the point where a struggle for control could no longer be avoided. There were several reasons for this. First, the Negro establishment began to fear that the militants were gaining influence and that they would soon have an effective power base in the community from which to threaten them. Secondly, the militants themselves realized that their recent freedom of action was only temporary; to make it permanent, they would have to confront the establishment and win. So the struggle between the two groups began, to end only when the militants were ousted and the establishment badly weakened and shaken.

Attempt to Unseat the Executive Director

It will be remembered that the Mayor and the Minority Action Committee, in their conflict over an Executive Director, had struck a compromise with the hiring of Everett Brandon. The fact that he was a compromise candidate, however, with no strong

nucleus of support, made it difficult for him to carry out his duties. Hired because he was non-ideological, Brandon could not deal effectively with the intensely committed civil rights leaders. He was both unsophisticated in his handling of political issues, and handicapped by his lack of experience. Initially, these factors made him so ineffectual that by the end of the first year not one member of the Executive Committee would vote for anything he recommended -- not even a typist.

Although they made strange bedfellows, the militants and the white mayoral appointees formed an alliance against Brandon. The militants thought him misguided, the mayoral appointees inefficient, but together they hoped to push him out.

By this time, however, the militants had stepped down from the Interim Board and were staff members without vote. As a minority bloc, the mayoral appointees needed the votes of at least one Target Area. But the Target Areas were understandably reluctant to "stick their necks out" to fire a Negro in alliance with the white establishment. As the behavior of Brandon became increasingly unacceptable, the mayoral appointees, nevertheless, made several attempts to fire him. Because the difficulty of amassing a majority vote always stood in their way, as a nucleus of support for the militants they had a number of real weaknesses.

The first sign of the battle was the argument over Brandon's choice of a Public Information Officer. The militants regarded it as a political appointment, guided solely by expediency. The mayoral appointees lent support to the claim of the militants, and drafted a resolution to fire Brandon on grounds of incompetency.

However, they could not muster enough votes to pass the resolution, and it was quietly dropped.

The issue of the Public Information Officer was followed by still another with even greater consequences for the growth of hostilities. The occasion was a meeting held in the Mayor's office in January, 1966 at which Dr. Arthur Coleman, John Dukes and Ruth Williams of Hunters Point, Wilfred Ussery, Kenneth Simmons and Kermit Scott of the Western Addition, and a few other Negro leaders were present. The militants immediately brought the name of Everett Brandon to the floor for discussion, and Dr. Coleman left in great anger. In the anteroom, he made the following statement to the press:

> I excused myself from the meeting -- I just didn't like the setup. You can quote me, I'm tired of power plays -- I want to see some programs to help the people. I think that because I excused myself, I threw the whole meeting out of gear -- I don't think it progressed as it was intended.[1]

The meeting with the Mayor was the first public display of Negro factionalism in the local War on Poverty, and it was given front page headlines in the local newspapers. An observer "close to the scene" was quoted in the Examiner as follows:

> Young activist groups would like to see Brandon replaced. Old line leaders don't, and they especially don't want to see him cut up in public.[2]

It was now a matter of public record that the militants were out "to get" Brandon, and he, in turn, was out "to get" them. The maneuvers of these early skirmishes would occupy the attention not only of the contestants, but also of the organization as a

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[1] San Francisco Chronicle, January 12, 1966.

[2] San Francisco Examiner, January 12, 1966.

whole. Consequently, the discussion of issues became a strategy in a struggle for power to gain points for one side or another. Each side kept the other under close scrutiny, and each sought to involve the important bystanders. "Incompetency" became a popular slogan in the mounting controversy. The extremist tactics by both sides led to great fears and tensions, and real incompetency on all levels increased. The intensity of the quarrels, however, was a sign that more than organizational efficiency was at stake.

The establishment was severely critical of the militants for the recent public display of conflict. They felt that the militants had overstepped their bounds; they had "given" them the Western Addition, and now they "greedily" wanted "downtown" as well. In their eyes, the militants had broken an unwritten pact that each group had its own "sphere of influence," and would stay within it.

The feud deepened when the state-wide Negro Leadership Conference met in April of 1966 to unify Negro politicians behind certain candidates in the coming primary elections. Since it was likely that the Democrats would nominate a Negro to run for Secretary of State, major attention was paid to that office. As titular head of the San Francisco delegation, Supervisor Terry Francois confidently sought the endorsement of the Conference. At the last moment, however, Ussery decided to enter the race. This split the local bloc with the result that the endorsement of the Conference went to a delegate from the Los Angeles area. Now the establishment had both a grudge and a focus, in the person of Ussery.

The first major act of retaliation was directed not against Ussery, but one of his supporters: Brandon fired Kenneth Simmons as Program Coordinator. As grounds, "incompetency, abuse of professional trust, and undermining staff morale," were given. The newspaper account was quick to point out the factionalism implicit in the firing. It read:

> Ken Simmons has been summarily discharged as program coordinator assigned to the War on Poverty in the Western Addition. The 34 year old Harvard graduate was given his exit papers by Dr. Arthur Coleman, chairman of the Economic Opportunity Council, on grounds of "incompetence, abuse of professional trust, and undermining staff morale." "We have been concerned that the program remains in the hands of the poor, and does not turn into the hands of a few individuals," Dr. Coleman commented. This action against Simmons, he added, comes under the heading of "housecleaning." He declined, however, to discuss speculations that it laid the groundwork for an effort to remove Wilfred Ussery as Director of the Western Addition.[3]

Since he was fired without its approval, Simmons requested a hearing by the Executive Committee. It was held on the night of May 18, and lasted into the next morning. The central headquarters on Polk Street was packed with people dozing, talking, and arguing in the empty offices and in the corridors. The charges against Simmons were unconvincing to the Executive Committee, and Brandon apparently could not substantiate them. Examination of the minutes of the lengthy hearing reveals a general disapproval of his procedures, and, as a body, the Executive Committee was against him. By 4:30 a.m., when all the evidence had been heard, the vote taken was overwhelmingly in favor of reinstatement.

On the crest of this victory, the mayoral appointees, urged by the militants, made an effort to fire Brandon. On

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[3] San Francisco Examiner, May 10, 1966.

June 1, they held a meeting of the Executive Committee, without Dr. Coleman, to hear Kenneth Simmons and Dorothy von Beroldingen, a white mayoral appointee. Both presentations were a repudiation of the evidence and testimony on Simmons given to the Executive Committee by Brandon, as "lies and deliberate misstatements."

The effort to fire Brandon was a major tactical error on the part of the militants. The Negro community was angered by the bad publicity, and by the alliance with the Mayor. There were rumors that the militants had gotten support for Simmons in return for greater mayoral control. The upshot was that a mass meeting was held at the Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church to call down the militants, and to throw the full weight of the Negro establishment behind Brandon. Long speeches were given by influential Negro leaders in testimonial to him. Supervisor Terry Francois said:

> We're cutting each other up. Each side is going to City Hall for support. This program is to benefit the poor. It's the only program in the city that's being run by Negroes. Let's keep the program, and stop fighting each other.

Dr. Coleman had words of praise for Brandon and bitter criticism for the militants. He said:

> If Brandon went out to lunch, or to a meeting, he never knew if his desk would be there when he got back. He has done a fantastic job under terrific odds. He should have the privilege of having people on his staff he can work with; if they can't work with him they should leave and fight him from the outside. If we don't keep together now, we may never have another chance. Because we have majority control are we going to let every Tom, Dick, and Harry run the program?

The meeting ended with a long prayer for unity by Reverend F. D. Haynes, the pastor of the Third Baptist Church.

He said:

> We cannot let the poor suffer while we fight at the top. We should now get together at long last to meet behind locked doors, and at long last get together, and this has to do with keeping things out of the papers, with keeping people from running downtown. We would not steer you wrong. We will lead you out of this. We will now pray for unity. We bless you, Dr. Coleman; we bless you Brother Brandon. We bless all the poor people of this city.

The major result of the meeting was to publicly align the Negro establishment solidly against the militants. The establishment in the anti-poverty organization (Coleman and Brandon), in the city (Francois), and in the churches (Baptist Ministers Union), was now ready to exert the full weight of their authority in the Negro community to defeat the militants. The function of the Macedonia meeting was to inform the people of the Western Addition of this fact and to tell them that in their opinion the militants did not have their best interests at heart.

The Issue of Organizational Form

It was commonly held that the major problems were structural. A recurrent question was whether centralization or decentralization of authority would solve these problems better. For the Negro establishment, centralization of authority meant not only greater efficiency, but also more control over the Target Areas. For the militants, decentralization of authority meant not only the achievement of local self-government, but also more control by the Target Areas.

The underlying struggle for power led to structural ambiguity and inefficiency; channels of communication from

the Central Staff to the Target Area Staff, from the Area Board to the Target Area Staff, from the Central Staff to the Executive Committee and the Council, from the Executive Committee,and the Council to the Area Board, for example, were blocked by general breakdowns in the flow of information. As these problems grew, so did the intensity of the struggle for power.

An important facet was the problematical relationship between the Executive Director and the Area Directors. In the local newspapers, Dr. Coleman blamed "irreparable fissures" in the organization for current problems. He said:

> The by-laws have never spelled out clearly the relationship between the area directors and the central executive director.[4]

Indeed, the organizational charts were drawn up prior to the reconstitution of the Executive Committee and the Council to provide for majority representation. The executive Director was responsible to the Executive Committee and the Council and had authority over the Central Staff, including the Area Directors. After majority representation, however, the Central Staff was not reconstituted to conform to the authority of the Target Areas. The result was structural ambiguity, which, in turn, led to a number of serious results. The most important of these was to intensify the competition between the Executive Director and the Area Directors. Thus, structural ambiguity became a vehicle for the deepening rift in the organization.

After reconstitution, final authority in Target Area matters lay with the Area Boards, and the Area Directors were

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[4] San Francisco Chronicle, May 16, 1966.

directly responsible to them. To what extent the Area Directors were responsible to the Executive Director, however, and what authority the Executive Director had over the Area Directors, was not clear. Furthermore, not only was the extent of his authority ambiguous, but after reconstitution his source of authority also was.

The Economic Opportunity Council consists of two major groups, the mayoral appointees and the elected Target Area representatives. Although its intent was to establish a bloc vote, majority representation did not guarantee that the Target Areas would vote together. In fact, the composition of the majority vote changed from issue to issue. Consequently, there was no consistent source to delegate authority to the Executive Director, nor to which he had final responsibility. He was, therefore, led to use irregular administrative procedures to maintain his slim hegemony. The effect of such activities was to further weaken general confidence in him and increase his need to extend his control by acts of expediency.

After majority representation, the Executive Director had no more authority over the Area Directors than the Executive Committee and the Council had over the Area Boards. The victory over the Mayor not only had important consequences for City Hall, but also for the Negro establishment. They were, therefore, as unsympathetic to the decentralization of administrative authority as the mayoral appointees had been to the decentralization of policy-making. They both fought for centralization to preserve a declining hegemony in the local War on Poverty, and the growing unpopularity of the Executive Director was reflected in the

dissatisfaction throughout the organization with the budget of the Central Staff.[5]

Led by the militants, a number of individuals were ready to question the effectiveness of a Central Staff in an organization which holds participatory democracy as a major goal. The decentralization of administrative authority was advocated by Ussery both as a structural reform and to correct current problems. Specifically, he urged the adoption of a group, rather than an individual, as the seat of administrative authority. The group would be composed of the Executive Director and the Area Directors, and the Area Directors would thereby be brought into the same line of authority as the Executive Director. It would be responsible to the Executive Committee and the Council, and would have authority over the Area Directors and the Executive Director. The problem of double allegiance would remain, but the interests of the group would supposedly be homogeneous with the interests of the Target Areas. The major role of the Executive Director would be to coordinate Target Area activities, and administer those areas of common concern. For Ussery, such a scheme was more in line with the participatory goals of the organization than the traditional chain of administrative authority.

The mayoral appointees agreed that such reforms were necessary to the survival of the organization. Moreover, they

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[5]The July, 1966 budgetary breakdown for the Central Staff for 6.5 months was approximately equal to the administrative budget of at least three of the four target areas, although each target area budget included area redevelopment.

were as eager as the militants to get rid of Brandon and thought that he would resign rather than work within such a scheme. Ussery's plan was labeled a "superstructure" by the Negro establishment and condemned as yet another attempt to undermine the authority of the Executive Director. Brandon sent letters to that effect to the Area Boards, and both he and Dr. Coleman gave a number of speeches in the Western Addition on the improper behavior of Ussery. They said that they had the interests of the people at heart, but the militants only sought to amass power for themselves. Furthermore, OEO would not sponsor such a scheme, the Board of Supervisors would not pass it,[6] and they would not sign any financial warrants if final authority lay in the Target Areas. In reply, Ussery emphasized the importance of local autonomy; this is what they fought the Mayor for, and won against great odds in the early days of the program.

The struggle between the Negro leaders thinly hid a deep rift in organizational goals, which, in turn, reflected a real disparity in ideology and in attitudes towards the issue of black identity. The goal of Wilfred Ussery was local self-governmental; Everett Brandon's was to turn out competent programs for approval by Washington. Because of his initial difficulties, however, and the efforts of the militants to undermine his authority,[7] Brandon felt his position to be weak and threatened.

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[6] Supervisor Terry Francois made it clear that the Finance Committee of the Board of Supervisors would rather deal with a strong central administration than with four Target areas.

[7] At this point the majority of his staff agreed with Ussery that experimentation was more important in the local War on Poverty than efficiency, and, in fact, staff meetings were mostly ideological harangues over the larger organizational goals.

To maintain his hegemony, he sought allies in the Target Areas, and marginal persons were thereby brought into the controversy. It was through the agency of some of these allies that the final ouster of the militants was accomplished.

Community Discontent with Militant Policies

At its first meeting, in May 1965, the Interim Board declared that "service programs must be built on a base of involvement," and, therefore, their first task would be to organize the community to elect a permanent Area Board, which, in turn, would develop programs that met the needs of the poor. A year later, when the elections were almost over, Ussery began to lay the groundwork for the first program package of indigenous proposals. All-day conferences were held in the five districts in the Western Addition to rally community participation and, as he said, to "give those with low income the chance to tell us how to spend our anti-poverty funds." The conferences, starting with a "free breakfast of grits," were expected to become a regular thing to seek out "grass roots" opinions on how to run the program.[8]

On the basis of priorities established by the conference, the program package was hastily put together and sent to Washington for approval. Shortly afterwards, however, word came back that $97,000 and 50 jobs had been cut. The reason given was as follows:

> The Western Addition development program has not had sufficient experience with the present expanded level of

[8] San Francisco Chronicle, March 22, 1966.

operation to justify another major expansion.

Six of the rejected or deferred programs were new programs in which the sponsor was a Board member and the delegate agency a new non-profit neighborhood corporation. They included a leadership training program, a community and child care center, a job opportunities center, a housing program, and a personal development program. A question and answer period was held by the Area Board, and Ussery and Simmons were subject to bitter attack. Hervy Luster said:

> Why didn't the programs go through? There's no point in skirting around the issue. What I'm against is a man having a job and not doing it. And if he can't do it he should step down. This Board should take a firm stand and stack these conditions so that these programs can go through. (Applause)

The program sponsors were bitter and unhappy at the unexpected turn of events. In the majority of programs, the sponsor was a director or a consultant at a high salary, and, in some cases, the non-profit corporation could also be a vehicle for the expansion of existing enterprises.[9] Consequently, the Board felt let down by the militants. Since they did not really

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[9]For example, it was generally agreed that Mrs. Chew's interest in her neighborhood, Neighborhood E, District 3, was confined to her proposal for a charm school training center. Since she already ran a charm school in the Western Addition, the proposal could obviously result in a great deal of gain for her. After its deferral, therefore, she became very hostile to Wilfred Ussery, and any interest she may have had in her neighborhood declined rapidly. She became a strong supporter of Hervy Luster and, at his request, submitted an application for Public Information Officer in the Western Addition. Wilfred Ussery, however, consistently fought her application on the grounds that she did not possess the necessary qualifications. If there was any doubt earlier, Mrs. Chew now became a real enemy of the administration, and an avowed adversary of Wilfred Ussery.

understand the theory of neighborhood non-profit corporations, they were puzzled as well as angry at the outcome.

Attempting to explain the unexpected turn of events, Simmons said:

> You have to face some facts about your federal government. The War on Poverty was created for political reasons -- to win friends and influence people for President Johnson. It is well known that Congress is nervous about the War on Poverty, especially the Community Action Program. It has kicked up a lot of trouble -- more headaches than anyone in the government expected.

Ussery's explanation was that CAP money was too political. He said:

> The trouble is that we sent in programs from a neighborhood council, and the other target areas did not. It's not just a matter of writing up a program well, but also that this is the most politically advanced program in the country.

By setting up non-profit corporations inter-locked with neighborhood councils on an area-wide basis, the Board could establish indigenous organizations along issue-oriented lines. These corporations could go after federal, state, and private foundation money outside the poverty program. "I am talking about a corporate format," he said, "a corporate structure that will work for any organization -- housing, employment, youth, and so on."

In reply, a Board member said:

> We were not advised properly about the matter of non-profit corporations. Washington said they have never seen a worse package put together.

With a sheaf of figures in his hand, Dr. Coleman took the floor. He said that Washington had cut back the Western Addition budget because its application was sometimes incomplete, unconvincing as to need, and faulty in its arithmetic.

A final warning was given the Board by Hervy Luster. "Let's not spend another year and another million dollars running around and not getting anything to the poor."

The cut in neighborhood organizers was regarded far more seriously by the militants than the rejection of the program package. The majority of the Board, however, looked upon the local War on Poverty more as a vehicle for the advancement of individual interests than as an instrument for social gain. Although the area-wide corporate structure was for Ussery an important step toward self-determining communities, to the Board members it meant fat fees and other kinds of gain.

Consequently, after the rejection of the package, general confidence in Ussery took a sharp drop. Interest in program proposals rapidly declined, and the Program Committee stopped meeting altogether. The disparity in goals became obvious, and the alienation of the Board from the original social goals was as evident as the alienation of Ussery from the goals of the rank and file.

Ouster of the Area Director

The ensuing months of bitter hostilities within the Board ended with the firing of Ussery. The fight to oust Ussery was led by Hervy Luster, an ambitious Board member who befriended the discontented, allied himself with all those who had grievances against Ussery, and, as chairman of the Personnel Committee, promised his friends and allies staff positions.

At the Board meeting of October 28, 1966, a motion was quickly made that Wilfred Ussery "be terminated" that night. It was seconded and, after a lengthy discussion, carried. A second

motion was made by Hervy Luster that they request Everett Brandon to appoint a temporary Director for the Western Addition, and that Wilfred Ussery "surrender the keys, remove his personal belongings from the building, and vacate the premises." It, too, was seconded and carried. The minutes read: "There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m."[10]

An account of the event in The Sun Reporter gave the long-standing entanglements in the local War on Poverty as the precipitating factor in the firing. It read:

> A long-standing feud between Wilfred Ussery, Western Addition Executive Director of the War on Poverty and Everett Brandon, Executive Director of the San Francisco office of the War on Poverty, flared anew with the dismissal of Ussery by the Western Addition Board...Ussery, who was charged with incompetence by the Board as ground for his dismissal, said that Brandon advised the Board that if it got rid of its Executive Director, Ussery, the employment jam...would be solved...Ussery, as Executive Director, has selected people to fill the jobs, but the jobs could not be filled until the applicants were interviewed and confirmed by the Personnel Committee, which consists of several members of the Western Addition Board. Hervy Luster is chairman of the Personnel Committee. Ussery charges that Luster and the Personnel Committee have failed to vote approval of any of the job applicants for reasons best known to themselves. Ussery further stated that Luster is a member of a clique that has been seeking his dismissal, that Brandon and members of the clique have been after him ever since the unsuccessful attempt by Brandon to discharge Kenneth Simmons.[11]

A number of individuals and organizations immediately sent telegrams and letters to the Board expressing their dismay. The telegram from the local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers was typical of the concern shown by the local public and private social agencies. It read:

> ...That such drastic action should be taken by a minority of the Board without due regard to democratic procedures

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[10] Western Addition Area Board Meeting, October 28, 1966.

[11] The Sun Reporter, November 5, 1966.

> is a great shock to all of us. We believe this threatens the whole concept of democratic involvement of the people in decision making...

The arbitrary behavior of Hervy Luster and his supporters was deeply offensive to Wilfred Ussery and he immediately brought the matter of his firing before the Executive Committee for review. This step clearly showed how working within an institutional framework had changed the militants. Since extra-institutional means were traditionally their only weapon, they now found themselves essentially powerless. Consequently, Ussery's only hope lay in manipulating the organizational machinery to his advantage. When he became Area Director he had, in effect, agreed to play the game by the establishment's rules.

As chairman of the Economic Opportunity Council, Dr. Arthur Coleman ruled that the Executive Committee must uphold Area Board autonomy and adopt a "hands off" policy in the Western Addition. He said:

> As President of this Body, with authority to direct what is to be the business of our organization, I direct, order, and state that tonight, this business is not properly before us, and at a future date it can come before the Council for the Council to decide if it, in fact, has any jurisdiction, or if it forfeited this jurisdiction by virtue of the Personnel Practices and Procedures which was adopted in March, 1966, which states "all firing and hiring of Area Board personnel would be done by the Area Boards, and that the Area Board decisions would be final."

He then quickly adjourned the meeting. The mayoral appointees strongly objected to such arbitrary behavior, and, therefore, the meeting was not adjourned until much later. Meanwhile, after a ten-minute recess, the Executive Committee voted that the matter be put on the agenda of the Council for

that body to determine whether or not it had jurisdiction to hear testimony on Target Area staff.

The insurgents in the Western Addition eagerly took up the banner handed them by Dr. Coleman and condemned any review of the matter by the Council as an invasion of local autonomy. They sent a memorandum to the members of the Economic Opportunity Council. It read:

> The Western Addition Target Area Board resents and condemns the action taken by the Executive Committee of the Economic Opportunity Council on Wednesday, November 2, 1966, regarding Western Addition Area personnel matters. The involvement of the Executive Committee is without precedent, legally or informally. The Board insists on the maintenance of the autonomy of its functions in matters relating to the initiation of programs and the hiring and firing of staff. The Board demands that all action pertaining to these autonomous responsibilities of the Western Addition Target Area Board be declared void, illegal, and not in the best interests nor the spirit of the Economic Opportunity Program.

It was an ironic reversal that the cry of local autonomy, the watchword of militancy, was now being used against one of its chief ideologues. Consequently, Ussery was in the difficult position of trying to maintain his support of local autonomy, and, at the same time, to get the Council to overrule its procedures. The real issue, according to his attorney, Ephraim Margolin, was "the protection of individual rights where questions of due process are debated under strong emotional pressure, and in an atmosphere of acrimony and mutual intolerance."[12]

The major concern became which side had the votes. On November 15th, the pro-Ussery supporters were in the majority, and Hervy Luster and his group left. The others voted to stay

[12] Letter from Ephraim Margolin to Edward Anderson, November 7, 1966.

even without a quorum. The next day, Jeff Andrews, chairman of the Board and ally of Luster, sent telegrams to the Board members stating that all meetings in the Western Addition were "illegal" until after the Council met. This strategy, however, did not deter the pro-Ussery group; they met a few days later to hold elections for new officers, and declared the October 28 meeting in the Western Addition illegal. There were now two Boards in the Western Addition, with two sets of officers, and the split in the local War on Poverty was a reality.[13]

Meanwhile, the Council met and voted that it was within its jurisdiction to hear the case of Wilfred Ussery. Two weeks later it heard his appeal and voted that the October 28 meeting in the Western Addition be declared illegal, null and void.

The vote was swung by the mayoral appointees. In their anxiety over the irregular administrative procedures of Everett Brandon, they stood ready to support Ussery as, in the past, they had supported Simmons. For the mayoral appointees, the alliance was an anti-Brandon strategy rather than a pro-Ussery statement. In fact, most of them hardly knew Ussery. For his part, it was an alliance that Ussery never sought and toward which he felt, to say the least, highly ambivalent. Consequently, it was, at most, an alliance of mutual convenience.

The following day, Dr. Coleman sent a letter to the representatives in the Western Addition establishing that the

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[13]On one occasion, the two Boards met at the same time, but did not sit together. In the general hubbub, each chairman tried to conduct a regular meeting with correct parliamentary procedures, but as the evening wore on the general excitement mounted, and in the confusion and disorder shouts and threats of violence were common.

official Area Board was that Board headed by Jeff Andrews, and that he was the only official chairman. By that act he effectively sealed the fate of the militants in the local War on Poverty. The actual consequences of his decision had wide ramifications. It not only had repercussions in the organization, but also in the community as a whole. The uneasy alliance between the militants and the Negro establishment was over. The end of that alliance meant the end of Negro militancy in San Francisco, for the militants in fact had put all their eggs in one basket. The dream of the militants had been that the anti-poverty organization would be the civil rights organization in the city. It would build a black constituency to back up radical Negro demands, and the militants would be the representatives of the interests of that constituency. A year later, however, there was still no constituency, and the threat of mass support could no longer be taken seriously. In short, the militants were left at the end of the controversy without any bargaining power, even that of protest.

A few days later, Hervy Luster sent Ussery a letter stating that the Investigating Committee would recommend to the Area Board "that your services be terminated on Tuesday, December 20, 1966, because of a lack of confidence in you and your administration." And, for the second time in two months, the Area Board fired its Director; this time, too, Brandon immediately sent in a replacement. "It is difficult, if not impossible," wrote Wilfred Ussery to Dr. Coleman, "for me to continue my protest of illegal meetings of the Western Addition Area Action Board, without generating gross doubts about my motives." He requested, therefore, that

Dr. Coleman declare this "latest chapter of ruthless tactics" to be illegal, null and void and accept his resignation. In his reply, Dr. Coleman stated that he recognized the resignation of Ussery as the only official act pertaining to him on December 20. The two letters were read by Dr. Coleman to the Area Board; he recommended that the Board become an Interim Board, and that elections be held in the Western Addition to elect a permanent Board.

The resignation of Wilfred Ussery as Area Director in the Western Addition was announced by Dr. Coleman to the Executive Committee. At the same time he stated that he would accept that resignation, and that he too would resign. "For me to stay on any longer," he said, "would serve no useful purpose. In fact, it might delay the reorganization and restructuring of the Economic Opportunity Council which is so badly needed."

The first group of elections in the Western Addition was scheduled for January 28, in District 5. In Neighborhood E, Hervy Luster ran for reelection and won by a good margin. The elections in the other Districts were held the next month, on February 18. The majority of his supporters, however, did not run for reelection. Although they were the victors in the controversy, the casualties ran high on both sides. The struggle for power had left both camps weary and extremely bitter.

The social and economic characteristics of the new Board were broadly similar to the old one. The number of civil rights members, however, dropped even lower, while the number of church members rose. There was no sign that the dream of the militants that each new election would throw up a membership body that was

closer to the "hard core" poor, was any nearer to being realized. Moreover, given the importance of the War on Poverty in the Negro community, it is unrealistic to suppose that control by new leaders would be relinquished without a fight.

The hiring of an Area Director was delayed by the large number of applicants and its importance in the Negro community. Although he was now vice chairman of the new Board, even Hervy Luster handed in his application. Finally, in the spring of 1967, Rip Ridley, a local management consultant and manpower expert, was hired. He was a large, well-dressed, cigar-smoking, jovial man who, right at the start, delegated a great deal of authority to his staff. He was a man without any specific ideology, who took his public relations work extremely seriously. He spoke the same language as the majority of the Board, the language of ambition. His mission was to keep everybody happy, and to keep the show on the road. Rip Ridley was an organization man and a conciliator. He became Area Director at a critical point in the history of the local War on Poverty, and with sound instinct he tended to be guided by the will of the majority.

While old leaders were busy with familiar quarrels, new leaders seized advantage of the situation. The commitment to participation by the militants opened the door to a new kind of leader in the Negro community: a highly ambitious individual without any ideology or commitment to social goals. These are marginal men who have not been leaders in the past, who face none of the constraints or cross pressures felt by members of community organizations, and who have no real identity with the

community. In general, the interests of the new leaders in the anti-poverty organization were simply to keep the organization funded as a vehicle for economic gain, prestige, and the opportunity to have a real say in community affairs.

Such issues as local autonomy versus downtown control, organizational versus service priorities, and so on, all burning issues in the past, were now a distant memory. A federal management study recommended tightening up administrative procedures in the anti-poverty organization by increasing the centralization of authority, and the old issues had an archaic ring in contrast to the thrust of the new management terminology. The official goal became "responsibility," not "participation."

By the winter of 1967, Kenneth Simmons, Wilfred Ussery, and Arthur Coleman had all resigned, and the resignation of Everett Brandon was confirmed in the early summer. With his resignation, the last of the initial Negro leaders in the local War on Poverty left. The struggle by the militants to widen the structure of authority in the Negro community had already shifted to new arenas, and new actors played the leading roles.[14]

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[14] In the winter of 1968, Hervy Luster became the new chairman of the Area Board in the Western Addition. As a leader in the Negro community, he now took a stand on such community issues as school integration and redevelopment. His stand on these issues, however, was guided more by opportunism than by any consistent ideology, and his major alliances were with the establishment rather than with the militants.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority by Congress in May, 1933, the notion that democratic planning must come to terms with local interests has become firmly established in social thought.[1] In recent years, "local involvement" has been further expanded to mean the participation of individuals and groups in the decision-making process. Modern interpretations of democratic planning stress the importance of citizen participation. Indeed, the question of greatest concern to many social planners is the broadening participation of citizens in community affairs. The passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in August 1964, reflected this trend.[2]

As participatory clauses became common, interest turned to a deeper analysis of the meaning and significance of citizen participation in public programs. The major issue in contemporary public policy circles is not whether citizen participation is necessary, but, rather, what kind of participation is consistent with the goals of a democratic society. Should

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[1] See Philip Selznick in TVA and the Grass Roots.

[2] "The Economic Opportunity Act requires that a community action program be developed, conducted and administered with the maximum feasible participation of the residents of the areas or neighborhoods in which the program will be carried out and of the members of the groups that it will serve." CAP Guide. Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C., October, 1965. p. 16.

participation mean that local citizens have minimum, or maximum representation in the decision-making process? Should it mean administrative involvement, or, rather, "meaningful" participation?[3]

Despite the intention of its framers, the Economic Opportunity Act did not specify the meaning of citizen participation. Its meaning was actually shaped in each local community by the struggle of conflicting interests to control anti-poverty funds. Nevertheless, the existence of minimum standards for representation of local citizens on the policy levels of a community action agency did constitute a step towards a uniform definition.[4] The commitment of public policy to the principle of citizen participation was much greater in 1964 than in 1933.

As demands for control by local groups became more insistent, standards for quality participation became increasingly urgent. Such standards could act as guides to the rational allocation of scarce anti-poverty resources, and to the development of a system of rewards and punishments that bears some relationship to social goals.

The anti-poverty program in San Francisco provided an excellent opportunity to study these questions. It was one of the first, and, for a number of years, the only program with

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[3] "Achievement of meaningful participation shall be a continuous objective of every community action program, since it is through their own effective participation that the residents and groups to be served can most readily achieve the objective of a permanent increase in their capacity to deal with their own problems without further assistance." Ibid., p. 16.

[4] "Representation from residents of the areas and members of the groups to be served, including at least one representative selected from each of the neighborhoods or areas in which the community action program will be concentrated." Ibid., p. 18.

majority representation (local control) of the Target Areas on the policy levels. Furthermore, with a high percentage of Negroes in key posts, it was, in effect, a Negro program, and, consequently, provided a wealth of data on the successes and failures of public policy in addressing race issues in the realm of poverty.

Our intention is not to find standards for quality participation in a record of program achievement, but in the actual behavior of key participants. This behavior represents the consequences in action of "maximum feasible participation" in a particular local context. We will thus establish broad criteria to judge citizen participation in existing public programs, and provide guidelines for future programs based on a participatory model. First, however, we will briefly review the important events in the history of the San Francisco program which bear on these conclusions.

Summary

In 1963 and 1964 militant civil rights groups in San Francisco led a series of demonstrations to directly confront selected employers with a package of radical demands. The major thrust was toward forcing these employers to bargain directly with civil rights groups and sign agreements with them. The demand for direct negotiations was an attempt to win recognition as "bargaining agents" for the Negro community as a whole. When the demonstrations failed to achieve these goals, civil disobedience followed. Although some concessions

were won, mass arrests and convictions made the cost of direct confrontation too high for the civil rights movement to sustain. Consequently, the most important result of the demonstrations was the establishment of a new goal: the acquisition of authority to participate in the decision-making process.

In the spring of 1964, as the fervor of the demonstrations began to wane, the militants turned their energies to combating the official redevelopment plan for the Negro community. Because the plan was established without the participation of the community, they believed it did not express its needs. Throughout the summer, they organized block clubs to mobilize the community against the plan; but, although direct action was threatened, they did not succeed in blocking or even substantially changing it.

It was precisely at this time, following ten months of unsuccessful civil rights agitation, that the Mayor established the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc. He quickly appointed a policy-making Council, and, just as quickly, Negro groups, led by militant civil rights workers, sought to wrest control from him. In this case, however, the militants had the powerful weapon of the Act itself, namely, the "maximum feasible participation" clause.

Their commitment to participation led the militants to demand control over anti-poverty funds by the elected representatives of the poor. Specifically, they demanded majority representation on the city-wide level and the priority of community organization in each Target Area. By these demands they sought

to create an organization of the poor capable of stimulating a bargaining relationship with city officials and agencies on all poverty-related matters.

Before the Mayor established his program, the traditional Negro leaders had formed a Minority Action Committee with the intention of becoming the official anti-poverty agency. In the fall of 1964, therefore, when the Mayor appointed only five Negro members to his new Council, the Committee demanded at least ten additional seats. The demand however appears to have posed no real threat to the Mayor, and he made no attempt to meet it. Consequently, the Negro establishment threw its support to the militants; the Negro coalition and the Mayor became increasingly antagonistic, each charging the other with attempting a "power grab."

In early summer of 1965, faced with a united Negro bloc, the Mayor agreed to majority representation on the Executive Committee, but then made the Council, over which he still had control, the major policy-making body. At this point, the rioting in Watts took place. A militant leader told the press that Negroes in San Francisco were prepared to engage in massive civil disobedience if majority representation on the Council were not forthcoming. It became clear that the Negroes had sustained their coalition and were ready to act, and, shortly thereafter, the Mayor announced that he would no longer stand in their way.

The militants then won approval from a reconstituted Council to use anti-poverty funds to build a mass organization

capable of "governing" the Negro community. However, since their previous experience lay exclusively in extra-institutional means, they now suffered a severe handicap. This, added to their failure to quickly build a base of support in the Negro community, and the newly rekindled opposition of the Negro establishment, led to a series of setbacks. A year later, they were defeated by new opportunistic leaders in the Negro community backed by a hostile establishment.

In the anti-poverty program, as in the prior civil rights struggles, confrontation failed to yield major social change. The participation of Negroes in local decision-making was not appreciably advanced, nor have local institutions been restructured or rendered more responsive to community needs. However, these confrontations have increasingly politicized and widened the range of decision-making within the Negro community; they have given that community a greater consciousness of its own identity. This was the central result of the numerous conflicts, first, between the Negro groups and City Hall, and, secondly, among the Negro groups themselves, over recruitment of staff, elections of representatives and officers, and selection of programs.

In short, during its first three years, the anti-poverty program became a new arena for community conflict and a vehicle for emerging community identity. That the subsequent level of conflict in the anti-poverty program is much lower reflects not its resolution, but, rather, its shift to another arena. Furthermore, the sharp reduction of interest in the program is not a sign of health, but of its declining significance for the community.

Effects on Individuals

The implementation of "maximum feasible participation" in the San Francisco program led to two major changes in the behavior of individuals: changes in levels of motivation and in achievement.

It is widely agreed that apathy is the hand-maiden of poverty. Consequently, in an anti-poverty program, levels of motivation can act as a barometer of quality participation. An important indicator of levels of motivation, in turn, is the degree of activity generated by individuals. The characteristic mode of activity in the San Francisco program was conflict, and, in fact, participation and conflict always went hand in hand. From 1964 to 1967 there were tremendous strides in participation as highly-motivated individuals, in a restless search for power, indulged in threats, slander, endless telephone calls, telegrams, secret meetings, and even physical violence. This activity, if recorded, would provide vivid testimony to the level of individual motivation and the caliber of participation in the program. In terms of its consequences for changing individual psychological characteristics, the quality of citizen participation in the San Francisco program ranks high.

We can also measure quality participation by changes in the environment, that is, by changes in levels of individual achievement. In the San Francisco program, the rate of success in new jobs and in new careers was high; for, participation meant not only new jobs for unskilled workers, but also higher status and higher paid jobs for professional and intellectual

Negroes. For many of the militants, the program acted as a training ground for participation in a duly constituted public program. As a result of their involvement in the program, many previously unknown "natural" leaders in the Negro community became influential. The changing life styles and politicization of many individuals gave further testimony to the high degree of general involvement and the quality of participation. Although difficult to measure, these changes in individual behavior had important social ramifications.

Effects on the Community

Few changes in social institutions resulted from the activity of the program. Although the Family Service Agency underwent a number of major policy changes, it did not relinquish any formal power. In general, the program affected only those institutions that depended for their survival on the good-will of the community; the Redevelopment Agency, for example, did not respond to the militant demands, nor did the Board of Education. Consequently, a real lack of power to effect changes in social institutions lay at the heart of resident participation. Given the meager anti-poverty resources, however, it appears unrealistic to apply standards of widespread social change to participation in existing anti-poverty programs.

The most spectacular results of the San Francisco program lay within the Negro community. Despite a multiplicity of voluntary organizations, the community suffers from a paucity of civic organizations. This means that avenues to local political influence are few, and the leadership structure remains

rigidly narrow. The anti-poverty program quickly became the arena for a struggle for power among various Negro groups. Consequently, government subsidy of citizen participation in San Francisco led to the generation of conflict in the Negro community and to unexpected social changes. It led specifically to an expansion of the tight circle of traditional Negro leaders to make room, first, for the militants, and, secondly, for the new voices of an upwardly mobile and ambitious Negro leader.

Thus, formal anti-poverty goals thinly hid a variety of individual and group interests which had had no previous opportunity to find expression. The strength of these informal goals led to a profound struggle for power by Negro groups which ended by unleashing strong new social forces. However unintended, the changes wrought by these forces were the real marks of quality participation. In short, "maximum feasible participation" led to massive social upheaval in the Negro community -- to the break-up of the old narrow social order and its replacement by a newer and more fluid situation.

Conclusions

Our data led to the conclusion that quality participation means the continuous generation of the kind and degree of conflict that results in individual and social change. Participation engenders conflict, conflict engenders change, individuals and groups adjust to that change, new conflict is engendered, that conflict summons new change, and so on. In short, quality participation is a process, a dynamic process. The tendency to rigidify and institutionalize the results of

past conflict is its very antithesis. These characteristics -- process, conflict, and change -- can also constitute standards for public programs, and, further, serve as guidelines for public policy on participation.

What can be done to guarantee quality participation? First, we must guarantee the continuous expression of individual and group interests. Secondly, we must recognize that such expression means the existence of a continuous struggle between conflicting interests over control of the program -- with no final victors. For, when one side finally "wins" over the other, the program can no longer be the dynamic force for change it once was. The winners must quickly institutionalize their victory in order to forestall any future threats; what they therefore seek is a traditional program of social services, not a vehicle for on-going conflict. Participation is now limited to administration; its quality correspondingly declines drastically. The only way to guarantee the creative expression of a variety of interests (and the survival of quality participation) is to guarantee that conflict is never ended.

In practice, there are several ways to do this. The initial step is attention to the language and terminology of the program. While the writing should be clear in regard to basic goals and underlying philosophy, rules for implementation, on the other hand, should be general. A degree of ambiguity would allow each community to develop its own goals, its methods, and its leaders, and thereby establish the legitimacy of the program. For example, in San Francisco, the initial controversy over majority representation was of great importance in articulating

the significant ideologies in the local community and legitimizing their spokesmen.

Secondly, the program should be seen as a complex of local decision-making bodies to better encourage the full expression of community opinion. In the Western Addition, the participation of citizens in such local issues as the election of representatives to the Area Board was clearly much greater than in broader city-wide issues. The latter were primarily of interest to the same group of political leaders who had fought to act as the spokesmen for the Negro masses in the earlier days of the demonstrations. For them, participation tended to mean "crisis participation," that is, to rally the rank-and-file on occasion to sign a petition or threaten a protest. Through the agency of the local election process, however, new political leaders now emerged in the Negro community, and many members of that community encountered, for the first time, the possibility of successful individual political action.

Thirdly, the program should be seen as a series of projects to carry out in successive phases the general goals of the program. When one interest group gains control and a project no longer functions as a catalyst for change, a new project should be funded. The "losers" thus have another opportunity to gain control, and, naturally, another opportunity to lose. The phasing of projects is not intended to give "something" to "everybody," but is simply a way of encouraging the kind of conflict that can result in purposeful change in individuals and groups.

If we apply these proposals to the experience of the anti-poverty program, they take on added significance. In language and terminology, the program in general was satisfactory. The phrase "maximum feasible participation" gave firm philosophical orientation to the program and yet allowed a great deal of flexibility in local interpretations. In the establishment of local decision-making bodies the San Francisco program, in particular, was successful. The Area Boards provided a number of local arenas for the expression of community opinion, which meant that many citizens who had never been involved in issues on a community level were now participants in a lively and bitter struggle for power.

Its most serious failure lay in the fact that the program was meant to deal simultaneously with the full gamut of poverty problems. Thus, in San Francisco, when the opportunists won, there was no room in the program for the defeated militants to express their interests. In effect, their voices were permanently stilled. The conflict was ended. Such adverse consequences might have been avoided if the program had been designed as a series of successive phases. If it had begun with, let us say, a job training program, the struggle for control of that program might have taken the course that we have followed in this study. Then, when the new leaders won, they would control that program. In the meantime, a new program, say, to improve education, would be launched. It would then be the new arena for the expression of conflicting interests in the local community, and a new force for social change.

Conclusions in Brief

(1) The ultimate goal of any public program is constructive social change.

(2) In any public program, social change is the consequence of the struggle of conflicting interests for control over public funds; consequently, quality participation means the generation of conflict between various individuals and groups.

(3) There are three ways to allow full scope to the possibility of social change:

(a) The official guidelines to the program should be broad statements of general policy.

(b) The program should be a loosly-knit complex of local decision-making bodies.

(c) The program should be a series of successive phases or projects. The timing of each project should be periodically reviewed to adjust the general goals of the program to existing social reality.