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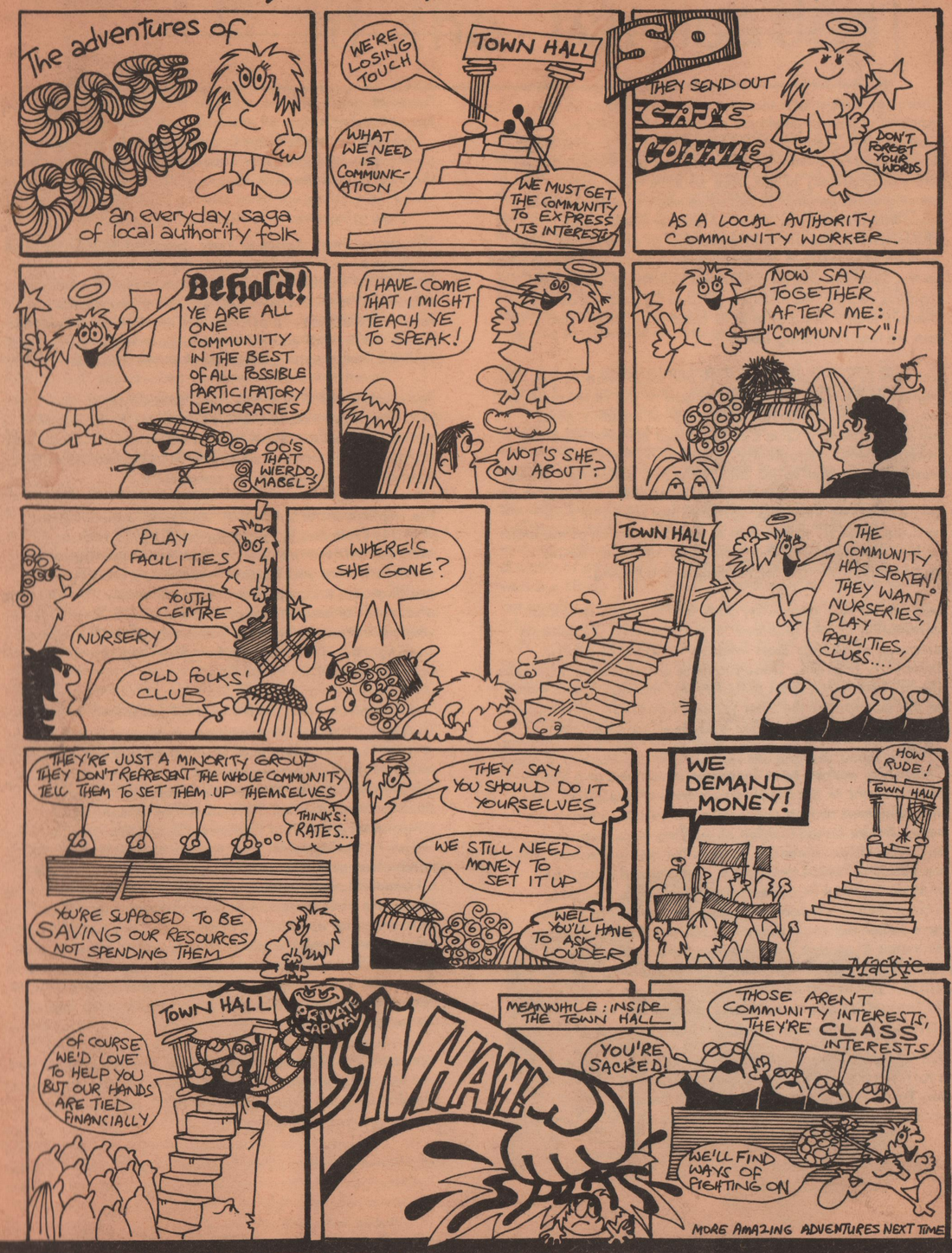


COMMUNITY WORK ISSUE

case·con editorial

There has been a vast increase, in recent years, in the numbers of people employed as community workers. This work is often regarded as being progressive, even radical, in its practice. Although Case Con has previously queried these assumptions, in this issue we have collected commentaries on what is called community work to try and elucidate a radical criticism of the community work phenomenon. The increasing pressure on or desire of social workers to practice a 'community work approach' is indicated in the Seebohm charter and in the content of social work training courses. As members of Case Con we are asking if there is such a thing as radical community work - and if so can we learn anything from it?

Common to both community work and social work is the repressive function they fulfill as part of the state machine which works to check the realisation of working class action and power. Case Con has stated elsewhere that in practice, and ideologically, social work translates working class deprivation into individual pathology. Social work 'treats' people individually, as'clients', conning them into attributing their deprivation to the results of their own inadequacy, rather than to their oppression as members of the working class. This 'pathology' approach denies any structural reasons for hardship and suffering.

In a similar way community work particularises structural deprivation as the 'problems' of a community, and diverts attention away from class interests in favour of narrow community interests. These problems are attributed to factors like a tight-fisted local authority or landlord, rather than to the structure of the total system. Community work, like social work diverts attention away from political class issues.

Community workers have increased in numbers at a significant moment in the accelerating crisis of capitalism, as unemployment rockets and welfare provision is being cut back. As the intensification of working class oppression and deprivation increases, so does the disillusionment with the pluralist liberal democracy. Consequently there has been an increase in collective working class struggles, such as factory occupations and town hall sit-ins, which have demanded concessions in a militant fashion. Capitalism needs to revamp bourgeois democracy, and their version is participatory democracy. By offering funds to militant groups and by employing community workers to infiltrate them, the state aims to contain and control militant groups via 'participation'.

The real gains from participation are negligible. The gain is for the state which deludes groups into believing they have some power whe they are involved in deciding what colour to paint their garden fence. The state also makes financial gains. It is no accident that local self-help is encouraged at a time of economic cuts. The participation of the tenants' association in estate management results in tenants controlling dogs and doing their own repairs. The increase in real power is illusory.

The controlling function of state sponsored community work is discussed in 'Civil Servants at the Barricades'. Both this article and 'Local Authority Community Work" examine the response of radical community workers to the oppressive nature of their job. 'Iron Fists, Kid Gloves' describes the most overt form of control via community work in the desc ription of army anti-guerilla tactics in N. Ireland.

The misunderstanding of the term 'community' is indicated in 'Subversives: Women in the Community', which asserts that the lack of a precise Marxist definition of 'community' has ignored the position of women as being central to the revolutionary struggle in the community.

The employment of community workers and the implications of this is examined in 'Train for Pay'. Keith Jackson maintains that militant activists in working class struggles such as Trade Unions and Tenants' Associations are largely working class and unpaid for these activities. The distinction of community work is that activists are paid. Case Con asks whether community workers lose their credibility with the working class if they do not themselves organise collectively in Trade Unions.

The Community work 'BASW' - the Association of Community Workers, states that 'community work method is still vague enough to accomodate most ideologies', yet the anticipated axing of the CDP programme and the experiences of Case Connie demonstrate that certain ideologies cannot be accomodated. Radical activists within working class struggles may thus find themselves inevitably unpaid. Where 'vague' situations exist they must be exploited and concessions gained as part of the working class struggle. Like radical social workers, radical activists reject repressive ideologies of individual and cultural pathology. They insist on a structural approach to deprivation, and work to inform, educate and support working class groups to advance their struggle. Social workers can learn from their experience that collective action is not a radical action in itself, and that participation is a reformist blind-alley as it leads to consensus not conflict.

We leave the final comment to Marx who saw community not as local, but transcending even rational boundaries, as flowing from the class solidarity, to be achieved through revolutionary practice.

C.D.Ps. - Civil Servants at the barricades

This article has been written on behalf of the Political Economy Collective within the National Community Development Project. It traces the development of the Project, and reflects in general terms the position of those workers in the group on the question of community work.

Roots in Colonialism

Community work is an approach to solving social problems which was used primarily in the context of colonial rule to control and socialise native populations into accepting British Administration, and also in the context of attempts by Federal Governments to integrate the poor into American society and reduce urban violence. The extension of community work into Britain in the late 1960s must be seen as a method of chanelling and controlling protest movements particularly in the context of the mushrooming of pressure group politics during that period.

The British Government's official 'Poverty Programme' was introduced by the Labour Government in 1969 with the passing of the Social Needs Grants Act. It can be regarded as a reformist gain by the Labour Movement since it was a marginal attempt to redistribute social resources through 'positive discrimination' in favour areas. The Home Office launched the National Community Development Project as part of its Urban Programme. The Project was described as "a modest attempt at action research into the better understanding and more comprehensive tackling of social needs," in particular to " re-inforce and not to damage the spirit and efforts of elective local government." (1)

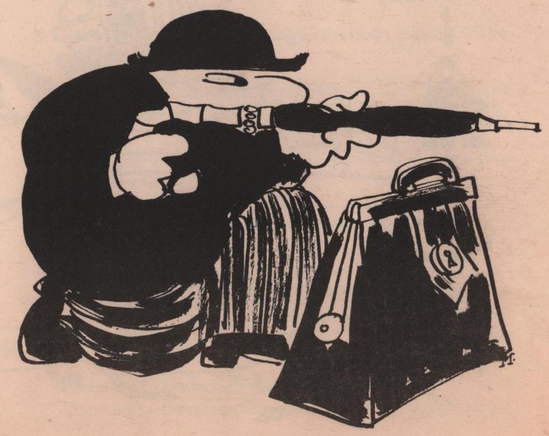
Strategies For Control

The CDP was to be an excercise in re-inforcing the role of the local state (authority) in relation to the twelve working class 'project areas', and it was quite clear that action and research strategies were to be geared in that direction. At the outset CDP was a social control mechanism aimed at dispelling working class protest and collective action. This has recently been well documented elsewhere by Lee Bridges. (2)

As projects developed it became clear to a number of CDP workers that the initial assumptions behind CDP were incorrect. Coventry (August '72) (3) reported that it was misleading to concentrate on small areas; Glamorgan (1973) (4) that the problems of Glyncorrwg derived from structural changes in the South West coalfield. Following these early reports a new set of general perspectives emerged to which most of the projects gave support - that poverty and urban decline was a consequence not of the inadequacies of the poor themselves, or simply poor communications within local authorities, but of fundamental inequalities in our present political and economic system. The appalling housing conditions, high unemployment and low incomes of a large number of working class people were a consequence in fact of the private control of capital

The remaining ten projects (Coventry and Liverpool CDPs have now ended) have, therefore, developed a programme of work which is designed to investigate not the habits of the working class for the benefits of capital, but the reverse - to examine the political and economic structure of specific areas to demonstrate how private capital operate against the interests of the working class, and to prepare facts and analyses for groups of workers as a basis for collective action, and to assist the development of links between sections of class at a local level, intheir efforts to organise to defend their interests.

This is a very different approach to social problems from that of Community Work, and Community Development. In the first place, the term 'community' is based on a pluralist analysis not a class analysis. Secondly, community workers operate generally inan extremely isolated position, and while they are often described as working 'on behalf of' their local communities, their location, often within the state bureaucracy, frequently tends to make their position untenable. There is no particular reason why working class people should not be used by the state, directly or otherwise, to control the activities of the working class. Employment of working class people as community workers represents part of this control function. What does matter is the analysis and the strategies which such workers develop; and these must be designed to serve the interests of the working class. The more effective radical community workers are, the more likely they are to be pressurised out of their jobs. This is basically what is now happening in CDP. With the developmentof socialist perspectives within CDP, both central and local state have made it increasingly difficult for the projects to operate.



Aims & Organisation

A clearer picture of Home Office intentions is evident from the initial set of assumptions and objectives (5) which were as follows:

1. that poor families are concentrated in particular geographical areas
2. that while existing social services were useful, they were not enough
3. that untapped welfare and self-help resources might have a dramatic effect in reducing dependency on social services
4. that the gap between actual and expressed need is caused by inadequate communication
5. that the best method of improving living standards in poor areas is not known.

The initial objectives were:

1. to describe fully the social conditions in each area
2. to develop better communications between the community and Local Authority services
3. to develop co-operative action within local government to deal with local problems, and joint action with local residents
4. to create a more integrated community supported by integrated services
5. to evaluate action taken.

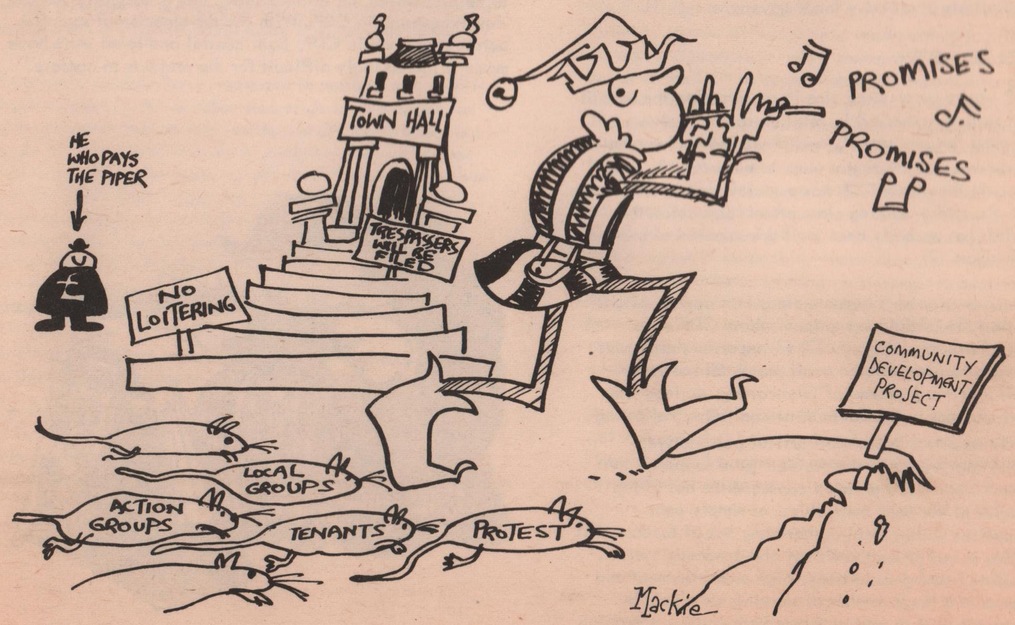
A Central Research Team was established to identify possible project areas, produce a research design for local teams, and to co-ordinate all research activities. Local Action Teams and Research Teams were appointed (over a period of three years), the Action Teams under Local Authority Management Committees, and Research Teams in an appropriate department of a local University or Polytechnic. It was an unnecessarily complicated structure with an inter-locking organisational hierarchy, having the Home Office at the pinnacle.

Eroding the Structure

After considerable efforts on the part of project teams this pyramidal structure was gradually broken down. In 1972 after a joint meeting between Projects and Home Office officials, a Consultative Council was set up, comprising Home Office advisors and officials and Project Directors. This token gesture at democratising CDP lasted until 1974 when project workers finally replaced the Consultative Council by electing their own Workers' Organisation which co-ordinates project initiatives on a national basis despite the implicit insistence of Home Office officials that the line of command continues to be through Project Directors.

In 1973 the Central Research Team was disbanded and shortly afterwards the Home Office Advisors also departed at the request of local projects. Greater local autonomy was achieved but the Home Office continued to be concerned with control functions. A number of projects were requested to provide reports to the Home Office Minister of State in 1973. Projects also collaborated in the production of a joint Inter-Project Report for a wider audience which began to express the shift in thinking within CDP. The Projects were then subjected to a Management review which recommended greater control and co-ordination of the projects. The Review proposed a central committee and a national co-ordinator, and required forward plans fromeach project. Following complete opposition from local projects, the Home Office dropped these proposals. Projects again co-operated to produce an Inter-Project Forward Plan (6) which developed CDP's analysis further. Immediately the long period of insecurity surrounding the Management Review appeared to be over, the Home Office announced that CDP would be subjected to a public expenditure review, and froze all new appointments.

The Urban Deprivation Unit controlled within the Home Office is being built up and has begunto contract work out to organisations such as the Low Pay Unit, and the new



'Poverty Programme . Comprehensive Community Programmes sponsored by the HomeOffice have stealthily changed their emphasis away from neighbourhood based experiments towards ones concerned with efficient managementof resources. The way is clear to close down CDP in 1976.

During this period of organisational tension the Projects developed a much clearer socialist analysis of their work, and the political implications of this analysis have strengthened the resolve of the Home Office to close CDP prematurely. There is still by no means unanimity and a number of project workers continue to hold the more pragmatic approaches of community work. There is a signif-icant grouping of project workers in the Political Economy Collective which is committed to developing a Marxist-inspired analysis of the problems of their areas.

A Marxist Analysis.

This analysis shows how the problems facing the neighbourhoods into which Projects have been drafted are the result of the private accumulation and control of capital, and that the local and central states are the agents for capitalism. Two of the key issues facing these neighbourhoods are bad housing and declining industry with associated rising unemployment. Unemployment is a critical problem in these areas, primarily as a consequence of withdrawal of private capital. The role of the local state in this is clear. Local authorities have been assisting private capitalists by dispersing working class populations and accumulating parcels of land to sell off for lucrative office and shopping developments(7,8)

Instead of pursuing traditional community work goals within a pluralist analysis of society, radical community workers both within abd outside CDP consider that the solution to them does not lie at the local level. There are marginal gains which can be won for working class people at the local level, but without the complete overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism there can be no lasting solutions. What is required now is to analyze and collect information on issues affecting workers both at the work-place and where they live, and to stimulate and support collective action by residents and workers to defend their interests against the operations of capital, and to raise demands as a means of developing political consciouness of the oppressive conditions under which they live and work. Traditional community work is dangerous in that it is aimed at socialising working class areas into the existing economic system, and community workers who are developing such strategies must be challenged about their attempts to control and dispel (on behalf of the state) working class action and protest.

Liberal Diversions

Some writers on community work are currently arguing that community work must become more political (e.g. Griffiths 1974, Stills 1975 (9) but clearly what is meant here is 'political' in a general sense, i.e. that there should be more awareness of local power structures. Socialist community workers should not be misled into that this represents a radical development in community work. Much of this thinking is still within liberal ideology, and it is important to clarify the distinction between 'community politics' and 'class politics'. Community politics was initially developed by the Young Liberals in the late sixties as an electioneering technique which is now used widely by all political groupings, including the National Fro nt. It is simply another name for raising local demands about local issues, and is a strategy which is relevant to high income middle class areas faced with a local problem as it is to working class areas.

The development of class politics however, is a recognition of the class divisions within society. Socialist Community Workers must be selective about the alliances which should be supported, and work with rank and file workers such as the shop stewards movement, the 'left opposition' on the Labour Party, and tenants and residents groups who are prepared to raise socialist demands about local housing conditions, social facilities,etc.

Action Now

Action strategies are now being developed by CDP projects which include the development of campaigns around council house building, house improvements, and against the public expenditutre cuts; welfare rights campaigns to show up the iniqities and injustice of the present system of means-tested benefits; the development of industrial research units for local workers; supporting shop stewards working parties on industrial issues such as the Industry Bill; and campaigns on the unionisation of workers, women's rights, etc. Projects do undertake local issues with residents' groups, such as playschemes,provision of community centres, but increasingly these are not seen as ends in themselves but as demands for additional social resources upon the system, and as useful ways of developing political consciousness of how the local state functions as an ally to private capital. Some projects undertake street theatre, local festivals and other cultural activities not as ends in themselves but as a contribution to the reassertion of working-class culture. These activities are important in terms of increasing the local residents' awareness of the wider economic forces of our capitalist society, and of the need for wider political action.

gary craig & steve corky

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SPONSORED & SPONTANEOUS

In this article a fundamental distinction will be made between state sponsored and "spontaneous" community work. We attempt to describe the potential and the limitations of the community action which is constantly taking place outside the fetters of the state and to ask whether state sponsored community work is of any value or in fact a danger to the development of working class community based powers?

We shall refer to Batley, where we are working, as a case-study.

The historical origins of sponsored or official community work are described elsewhere in this issue of Case Con. Most importantly, community work as we know it in advanced capitalist society grew out of the sophisticated form of internal imperialism practised in the U.S.A. in the mid-60's. Like the New Deal before it, the War on Poverty was a political response by the state to the build-up of unemployment which was the result of mechanisation of Southern agriculture from 1950 onwards and obviously interlinked with racism. The war in Vietnam was also threatening internal security. At the same time, and seemingly by coincidence, the liberal academics were expanding their social science theories and action proposals about poverty and social problems. The blacks from the South had come North and were living in a very un-American fashion: they were not working for capitalism, and matriarchy and illegitimacy were rife. So we have the high point of liberal political theory in the idea of "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in their own poverty projects. The Home Office echoed this phrase in 1970 in describing its Community Development Programme (C.D.P.) as having "special emphasis on citizen involvement and community self-help".

In America this War on the Poor and the military suppression of rioters was followed by administrative containment programmes such as "Model Cities". The liberal theory of 'creative contlict' was exposed as a veneer overlaying the realities of state power and class conflict. It is clear from the U.S. experience that state sponsored community work exists for reasons of defusion and tokenism. Defusions of militancy among negroes being harrassed by a savage welfare system must certainly be regarded as a major function of the Poverty Programme. Tokenism exists in the public relations aspects of poverty programmes in reassuring the aroused middle class conscience that something is being done to help "their people" without, of course, spending very much of "our" money in the process.

A further reason for state sponsorship of community work exists in the need of the ruling classes to find out about and assess the locations and potential of grass-roots working class power. Such information is highly dangerous and offensive in the hands of a class-based state, although this fact is frequently overlooked by the academic liberals who make their living out of supplying it.

The most overt use of community work for intelligence operations occurs in Northern Ireland as prescribed by Kitson (see 'Iron Fists, Kid Gloves' in this issue.) In England a survey is at present being carried out which will be fed into the Home Office via its Voluntary Services Unit. The stated purpose is to discover the numbers, strengths and aims of independent grass-roots organisations. The researchers say this information will then be used as evidence to press the case for independent funding. It is obvious that the information, including addresses of activists, can also be used in other ways, namely for intelligence purposes. Other centralised community work projects have also fulfilled state aims. Y.V.F.F.*, for example, has its employees take records of community group meetings which are then forwarded to leaders for "research purposes". One Y.V.F.F. worker recently took minutes at the Claimants Union Federation's National Meeting in Birmingham. This activity is not widely talked about in professional community work circles.

Both recent developments in British Community Work and the present situation in Northern Ireland and England indicate that there are some sinister complications which need exposing in a much more forceful manner than has hitherto been the case.

The Potential and Limitations of Spontaneous Community Work - the Batley Experience.

By spontaneous community work, we mean activities which are not controlled by state sponsored development. We use the phrase to refer to a wide range of activities and organisations which have been initiated and controlled by local people in response to their pressing needs. We do not mean shallow well-publicised activities which are separate from the growth and development of working class community groups.

What is the realistic potential and limitations which face independent groups who have organised around specific issues? At the group level the dilemmas are ones of the group's ability to develop its own power on its own terms. The dangers are co-option into the system; of being infiltrated and taken over; that the group will learn the "realities" of the local state bureaucracy and become its outreach arm. The potential is that community action groups can be part of an alternative development towards working class power. At present this will be expressed by operating on the Council and other Authorities and private interests, as a counter-balance to the opposite pressures of corporate state capitalism. It is important to note that this is a relatively limited aim and the local working class pressure groups must be ready to broaden their horizons and make links with other groups.

Such an aim is difficult to achieve in sponsored practice because state authorities are not going to pay to be pressurised, no matter how much their Public Relations Departments espouse the ideals of participation. Labour Councillors are not, on the whole, ready to create pressure on themselves from below, however much they may lament their own impotence in being controlled from above. There are exceptions, however, and there are many cases where groups and community workers have "got away with" building genuinely independent pressure groups.

* Y.V.F.F. = Young Volunteer Force Foundation

A.C.T. Batley:

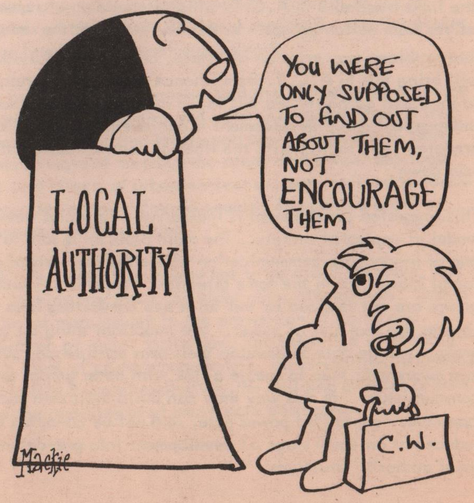
The issue of independence then is crucial. It was mainly this issue which produced the public conflict in Batley last year concerning the C.D.P. and the Advice Centre. The Advice Centre for the town (A.C.T.) was started as an entirely independent Tenants' Association in 1972, fighting the Housing Finance Act and mobilising huge numbers of the local people. An Advice Centre was later set up to support the rent strike and began to deal with individual and community problems. The activities of the tenants were proving, to put it mildly, highly embarrassing for the local Labour Council. Thus, when in March 1973 A.C.T. applied to the C.D.P. for a grant from C.D.P.'s special action fund (£49,000 p.a.) to expand their activities, the local Batley Council were in bitter opposition. The whole issue of whether to apply for Government money had split A.C.T., with the more vociferous members opposing the application (with some degree of foresight). The grant application was only filed after a promise was obtained from the C.D.P. Director that social action money was available to groups "with no strings attached" as far as policy or management control. Eventually the first grant was obtained in October 1973 after a variety of community action tactics. On the transfer of Batley C.D.P. to the new Local Authority, Kirklees, in April 1974, the battle began again. By this time both parties had re-grouped and the A.C.T. group was very militant over the question of their independence. Kirklees Council insisted on making the current year's grant dependent on three Councillors being on the A.C.T. management group, which was by now made up of representatives from six separate working class action groups.

A.C.T. had, in fact, always worked with the Council from the position of an independent body, raising public issues forcefully when the situation demanded. The group felt that the demand for Councillors on their Committees was an affront and the thin end of the wedge, as well as presenting problems over information hostile to A.C.T., would dominate and fragment the group. So when A.C.T. rejected these conditions, the C.D.P.action workers, of whom we were part, went on strike and eventually resigned, in order to continue working in an independent fashion with A.C.T. and local groups. The conflict between A.C.T. and C.D.P./Kirklees Council dragged on. Kirklees finally agreed to remove the Councillor requirement in October 1974, following extensive local and national publicity, but immediately substituted a more insidious formula - 6 of the existing group plus 6 representatives of local middle class charities. The A.C.T. again rejected these terms, and has thus remained financially independent since April 1974. The Association of Community Workers (A.C.W.) supported the stand taken over the local and national issues raised by the A.C.T. dispute: they seriously embarrassed Kirklees by blacking all the community work jobs until specific assurances were given relating to community groups and A.C.T. in particular. At this stage in late 1974 A.C.T. was desperate for financial help. An urban aid application had also been rejected by Kirklees, and another application for C.D.P. cash for April 1975 following was immediately rejected by Kirklees "in view of the present constitution and management of the Centre" (meaning that they objected to the fact that representatives of tenant and action groups fully controlled the centre).

The consequences of these struggles have been that A.C.T. has not been co-opted (or funded) and has, in fact, emerged as strengthened, although there are still many dangers vividly present. These dangers can best be illustrated by the most recent development. After the C.D.P. Sub-committee and the full Council had categorically rejected A.C.T.'s application for 1975/76 funding, the Chief Executive wrote to the Chairman of the Association of Community Workers, informing him that the grant situation was still "open", provided that certain requirements were met concerning the constitution and the conflict tactics used by A.C.T. Eventually A.C.T., with A.C.W. mediation, suggested an amendment of its constitution, provided that the Local Authority also moved its position. Kirklees responded by arranging a meeting with A.C.T., Councillors from their C.D.P. Committee and the Chief Executive and other officers. The A.C.T. group found the meeting surprisingly constructive, with the Chief Executive showing great support for A.C.T. Much to everyone's amazement the Local Authority Councillor group voted unanimously to propose to the full Council that A.C.T. receive its grant.

However once more A.C.T. will not get the necessary substantial grant (£6000), despite the fact that all parties are clear that A.C.T. had compromised to an 'acceptable' degree. On 26th. June the C.D.P.Committee insulted A.C.T. with an offer of £200 - later confirmed after two long and bitter full Labour group meetings, and after an hour's debate in the full Council on 6th. August. Fundamental political issues have been raised within the Kirklees Labour party, not simply over support for grass-roots organisations like A.C.T. but also over whose side they are on over wider issues. The cause for this was the resignation from the Labour whip of one Batley councillor - thus depriving Labour of their precarious hold on power in Kirklees. The resigning councillor summarised his position thus :-

" I cannot under any circumstances go along with the lack of political morality in this situation. I find it abhorrent. A grave injustice has been done to A.C.T. ..... Labour councillors have voted with Conservatives on this ....I always thought the Labour party aimed to eradicate poverty, overcome inequality and enable ordinary people to participate in the political life of their community."



The Labour party, amid scenes of high emotion in their full group meeting, threatened violence to other political defectors - and now stand clearly exposed as agents of social control keeping the working class in their place. The full implications for Batley CDP remain to be worked out. They have however stated that their position is totally untenable with this Kirklees committee.

Some Implications - Continuing Pressure for Co-option in Batley.

A.C.T. made two compromise offers to Kirklees Council The first of these was on the constituition and the second was the offer to hold regular consultative meetings with them. The dangers in these proposals illustrate the forms of continued pressures on community action groups in general.

The Constitution :

The highlighting of this issue allowed for much backdoor manipulation by local authority officers - in part because the legal details are extremely complex. The real control at present lies totally with the Management Group, who must be members of an action group or a tenants group. With the ammendment offered any voluntary or community group can be member of the Management Group. Thus the Local Authority at last saw a possibility that control would not rest solely with tenants'representatives but with the situation open to the numerous well organised middle-class charity organisations. In Batley these groups have close links with the local councillors and, in fact, often have an overlapping membership. They have long wanted to control and modify A.C.T. which they paternalistically say " does a good job but.....uses the wrong methods.....involves the wrong people.....creates splits in the town.....is unrealistic..... lacks responsibility." Responsibility to whom? Whose reality?

Quarterly Consultative Meetings :

These were proposed to serve the purpose of a financial accounting session in which A.C.T. would have to justify its expenditure. The Chief Executive was more concerned that these meetings should provide a forum for the dicussion of community issues. At the moment when an issue arises, A.C.T. supports the independent development of a group on an estate around a particular issue. With such support the group will then develop its own tactics and awareness through the links available in A.C.T. which is made up of representatives from action groups. In the new structure the danger is that problems may arise on an estate, one or two individuals will bring this to A.C.T. from whence they will be relayed to the local authority via this forum meeting. Even if some independent group development is achieved, there will be predetermined tactics with the lines of communication already laid down.

This suggested development is indicative of a social democrat model of capitalist society. The main problem is said to be one of inadequate communication where the interests of all social classes lie in the same direction. Experienced action groups are not seduced by this false and comforting idea which ignores the realities of power. The important thing for local groups is to be able to develop their own confidence, strength and awareness; then to create a link with other groups around common issues. In this way they can build their own local community controlled power base, and not be co-opted or seduced at an early stage of development into pre-determined local authority structures.

Professional Reactions and Dilemmas.

A further interesting consequence of the Batley situation has been the split in community work circles over the whole issue of C.D.P. and A.C.T. Much of this split ostensibly centres on the role of the resigned workers and there is still , nearly a year later, a mixture of highly personalised and ill-informed criticism circulating on the liberal-academic and professional networks. We are convinced that the actions of the workers last year were justified in the particularity of the Batley situation. The fact is that the recent turn of events demonstrates that the dilemmas for local groups in relation to a sponsored poverty programme are structural. Furthermore, not only has local group development in Batley increased in strength (inspite of allegations from people who know nothing about the local situation) with a broadening and multiplier effect and a sharpening of political awareness in the groups - for example on housing issues. It is clear that the dilemmas of sponsored workers will often have to be faced in similar ways. The political function of gossip in general is that uncomfortable issues are almost deliberately obscured.

The only real or serious charge made has come from the Marxist Group of C.D.P. workers that in Batley we were guilty of "adventurism". Presumably this means an opportunistic and unsuccessful use of local situations simply to fit in with the workers'preconceived political notions. Such criticism is answered by the continuing growth of groups in Batley described above. Obviosly there is a need for action groups to have an overall political understanding - but through their own developing experiences in working with "key issues" such as housing. It is true that the A.C.T. did not get its grant as a result of the decision to get publicity nationally. However, a sharpened awareness of the real dilemmas of action workers was brought to a wide audience.

To return to the question of action, we have heard Marxists describe grass-roots work as a " flight into action ". The phrase reveals a fundamental weakness in approach, so far tolerated by the Home Office which still concentrates on a correct description but evades the real issues of getting practical rank and file support in the workplace or grass-roots support in the community. An example of this critical weakness is contained in our view of the Batley C.D.P. report 'Batley at Work' . While containing a lengthy and valuable account of the destructive effects of private capital its main practical consequences have been to recommend a further report, a further worker and suggests a debate at levels far removed from the rank and file.

Discussions are taking place in wider, sponsored community work circles about the need to develop a sharper political analysis. Our fear is that although such considerations are long overdue, stress on analysis can be taken as a diversion from the urgent need for working class organisation. This in turn is clearly distinct from welfare/self-help type activities which are themselves a more familiar form of diversion. The false dichotomy between work with working class people and a "realistic" political strategy is very clear. We agree that it is vital to develop a 'realistic strategy'base on a wider political analysis and develop action around key issues such as housing and employment. But this actionmust be firmly rooted in grass roots and rank and file work.

The lessons to be drawn out of the Batley experience are first that control/co-option mechanisms are of fundamental importance and that there are always hidden seducers at work. Secondly, it is clear that the intelligence gathering process is also crucial. As far as community workers are concerned the ability to support grass-roots developments are denied in many sponsored community work situations. The resulting dilemmas can be evaded neither by withdrawing into politically safe activity nor by professional or 'revolutionary' analysis. Control issues must always be fought out. But most of all, despite the tactics of local and central government,it is clear that groups are not dependent on the state. Something will always turn up and even if a lower level of public activity results for a time, local working class people will gradually reinforce their own sense of power and independence by organising at their own level and on their own terms.

kevin ward & richard laver

THE TIMES

Home News.

PLANS TO AID DEPRIVED AREAS FALL FAR SHORT

Times 25.6.75

Draft proposals for a white paper which would fall far short of the Government's intention to tackle energetically deprivation in inner city areas will go soon to Mr Jenkins, the Home Secretary.

The question now is whether he is strong enough to fight for ideas he himself has preached, against the advice of his officials and eventually the Treasury.

The argument in favour of limiting effort is that it is not worth putting up more ambitious proposals, because the Treasury would reject them automatically in today's economic crisis.

In a Fontana paperback, 'What Matters Now', Mr Jenkins argued in 1972 for a development of the urban programme. An eightfold extension of the whole programme would cost only about £120m a year. This is not too heavy a price to pay to attack the manifold squalor in areas where poverty abounds.

The Labour Party Manifesto in October promised: " We shall vigourously pursue policies for the elimination of areas of deprivation which are the most dangerous breeding grounds of juvenile and other crime.

The proposals for the White Paper would not expand the urban programme in the way that many would hope . Instead, the proposals back comprehensive community programmes which, critics say, are an interesting experiment but not the promised onslaught on urban deprivation.

The proposals were announced in July 1974, as a new strategy, though the basic idea was first initiated by Mr Robert Carr, when Home Secretary. The idea has not progressed as quickly as was expected. There is so far no mention of the amount of money available, and the places to be involved have not been named.

The original announcement said the Government proposed to get local authorities and other interests in four or five areas in England and Wales and two in Scotland to start trials of ways of meeting the needs of the most deprived. The bad effects of urban neglect are not confined to racial inequality or the coloured people. The prisons are desperately overcrowded.

Officials argue that money has to be saved somehow, but Mr Jenkins now has to consider clear alternatives. One is to invest more money in the prevention of crime and reduction of racial frustration. The other is a continuing high level of crime among young, race-relations frustration that might become explosive, the building of more prisons and the recruitment of many more policemen.

Acting OUT in the street

Red Ladder was formed in 1968. A group of people involved in the AgitProp Poster Workshop produced, at the request of tenants, a short sketch which was performed for tenants' groups in London, illustrating the tenants' struggle during the GLC rent strike. Red Ladder produced six more plays for tenants on housing and rents, then followed the first of their plays for the Trade Union movement; a play about productivity deals. Red Ladder came into being out of the ferment of the time, in response to the need to elucidate, communicate, and further working-class social and political struggles..

The group has since waged struggles to gain Equity membership and subsidy from the Arts Council, in order to pay the union minima. It has toured the country and performed at the World Youth Festival in Berlin. There are now ten members, and the group maintains equal numbers of men and women. They operate as a democratic collective.

The Plays -political in content and context

Their productions are a response to working-class social and political issues. Performances are for audiences most involved in these issues and the struggles surrounding them. trade union sponsored performances, branch meetings and weekend schools, tenants' groups, community associations and womens' groups... The plays obtain much of their information and inspiration from individual members of such sections of the working-class, and from discussion with audiences. For example, Red Ladder has recently completed a tour of Newcastle, much of which was set up through the Benwell CDP. The group gave performances of "A Woman's Work is Never Done.", a play about the roles of women in society and their oppression at work outside and inside the home. The performances were mostly in social clubs in Benwell, including performances specifically for members of the National Union of Public Employees. The play presented socialist-feminist ideas in an entertaining, non-threatening way and could have been more effective in encouraging union members to take up action on women's issues. At the request of NUPE, the group researched and wrote a new scene into the play, after talking to branch and area officials about the types and conditions of work of NUPE members. School meals workers in NUPE gave information about their experience as women workers in a low-paid "menial" occupation, and the issues they would like to see taken up in the union. A NUPE branch official commented that many women workers had spoken in the discussion after the play, who had never spoken at any branch meeting or even attended a meeting. NUPE hoped to draw more members into an active struggle around the issues presented. Red Ladder hopes to extend this practice of working with trade unions, tenants or community associations, and responding to their needs and ideas. At Telford New Town, two community workers booked the play on women for two performances. They had just initiated a drama group and a women's group and wanted to sharpen the focus and increase enthusiasm for these ongoing community activities. The performances also provided a situation where 'trade union matters' and community issues' could be discussed together.

The basis of Red Ladder's work is the political and social content of the plays. For some groups the performance situation, and the relationship between the performers and the audience are the crucial aspects.

The 'Insideout Overall Company'.

The Insideout Overall Company is the theatre section of Interplay Trust, a community arts group based in Armley, Leeds, since 1970. The theatre is a small mobile group of four or five actors. Their broad policy is to perform to people who don't normally see theatre, in non-theatre situations, evolving and using appropriate forms. This is, indeed, a very broad policy as some 95% of the population don't 'normally see theatre'. The group performs in pre-school playgroups, in parks, on the streets, and in schools and hospitals for the severely subnormal. The latter requires a specialised form of show as many of the children don't respond to language, have very limited memories, are very withdrawn, hyperactive etc. The company has tried to evolve a style which balances the stimulation of theatrical display with opportunities for group and one-to-one participation. Recently they've performed a series of six weekly shows at a local hospital school: each show had the same form into which new material was introduced each week, allowing for a growing sense of confidence and familiarity on both sides.

Such work in institutions is an important part of what the Insideout Overall Company does, but most of their plays are performed on the streets. If five people dress up in strange 1920s clothes and proceed through a town centre announcing that a man is about to ascend into the air purely by the power of human thought, then they'll probably attract a crowd of about a hundred who'll delay their shopping for twenty minutes to see if anyone ever does get airbourne. The play 'The Birdman' was designed to announce and celebrate local festivals and events.

Audiences on the streets of housing estates are mainly children. I.O.C often advertise themselves by means of a rhythm band procession beginning the play when enough kids have appeared. Last summer, for example, 'Gullible's Travels' told of how Gullible got bored with where she was, and took her gang (the audience) off with her 'Somewhere Else'. On her travels round the streets she encountered a selection of bizarre characters: a manic scientist, a bureaucratic traffic warden, a Famous Radio Personality etc. Recently the company has tried to achieve involvement of a different kind. 'The Witch & The Pig' is set in the imaginary 17th century village of Gosset, and tells how the local midwife is brought to trial as a witch through the machinations of the squire and the parson. It is a play which demands a fairly structured situation and in the trial scene the kids testify as to what has happened.

The company liaises with local community workers and play-scheme organisers who help pre-publicize the event and suggest suitable sites in the area. Thus I.O.C is building up a netwrok of connexions in Leeds and other areas to perform to children and adults, so that it becomes, in a broader sense, a community event.

Community Theatre and The Association of Community Theatres

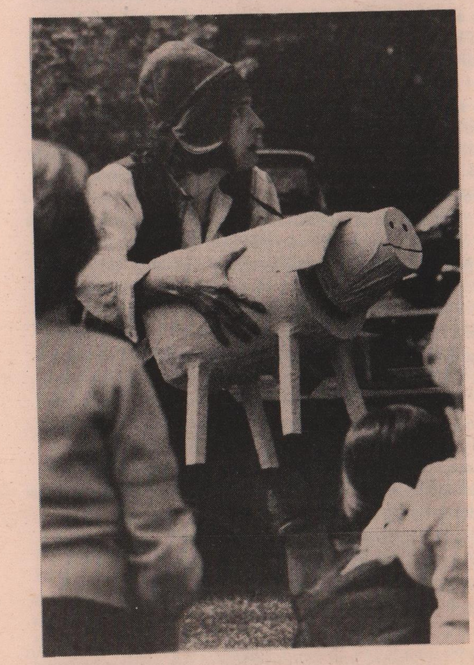
'Community Theatre', then, is an umbrella term encompassing a variety of groups, aims and types of performance. The common factor is the taking of live theatre to the working class in places where they work or spend their leisure time. Groups perform in schools, factories, playgrounds, streets, parks, youth clubs, shopping centres, community centres, social clubs, pubs, and so on, rather than in theatres and arts centres. Moreover, for some groups the content of the shows aims to reflect the political and social interests of the working class.

Eighteen months ago this movement of Community theatre groups crystallised into an association called ' The Association of Community Theatres', which aims to fulfill the following functions:
1. Internally: to facilitate productive communication and co-operation between groups who have common aims and internal structures (usually democratically run co-operatives)
2. To pressurise the Arts Council. This year, from a budget of £25m the Experimental Drama Committee received approximately £450,000, representing a cut-back from the £900,000 estimated by the E.D.C as the absolute minimum for 'fringe' and community theatre. The latter, through TACT and the Independent Theatre Council were demanding £1m to pay minimum union rates to the 700 community theatre workers.
TACT and ITC members are accountable to the Arts Council for every penny of their income and expenditure. Compare the £4m which is creamed off for the 'Big Four' - the National Theatre, the R.S.C, the Royal Opera and the Royal Ballet. TACT fights for a bigger budget, for a situation where we fight together for a larger total subsidy, rather than compete for a pittance.
3. The struggle to pay minimum union rates accords with TACT's to pressureise the actors' union Equity in a number of ways. Many community theatre groups are not unionised, and while we fight the Arts Council to give allgroups enough money to pay the union minimum, we also have to struggle with the union to persuade it to join that fightand and reverse its policy of a pre-entry closed shop, which makes it virtually impossible to get an Equity card.
TACT members also raise ideological issues within Equity over the content of productions that actors perform in anti-working class, racist and sexist shows and plays.

Solidarity

Can we as radical theatre workers work with radical social workers
and community workers to support each other in future?
We are all directly employed by the state; we are caught up in the superstructure of a system which we want to change; we see ourselves as workers and struggle within our unions to win economic gains and to change the prevailing ideologies of our fellow workers; we commonly try to be politically effective in the content of our work with the community.
Radical social workers can utilise our work. A show is a social occasion and provides a good opportunity for people to come together, enjoy themselves and collectively share an experience of social and political issues in a way that is not threatening, oppressive or boring.

You can be of use to us too. Primarily by booking us and organising performances. If you would like to know more about TACT groups, and could possibly organise a performance in a suitable local venue contact the Case Con Editorial Collective who have a list of TACT groups. There is another way in which you can support us; if a group is coming to your area, get your union branch or any other organisation to which you belong to put pressure on your local Arts Association, Trades Council, Union Executive, Council etc to give financial support to performances organised in the area.



Members of Red Ladder Theatre and Interplay Trust

Train - ME Pay - ME

The trouble with most general proposals for community work training (see bibliography) is that they are based on the premise that there is such a thing as community work in and for itself - ' an instrument which can achieve change' - and that there may be good or bad community work accordingly. Training, it is assumed, enables the practitioner to become better at it.

Since I do not believe community work exists, as opposed to the increasing number of community workers (under a variety of titles) who are obviously being employed, I am sceptical about the validity of any training which depends on asserting that it does. Furthermore many of the most unfortunate consequences which may emerge from a development of training programmes, lead to or depend on retaining the central proposition.

Certainly every attempt to define community work for training purposes founders in a welter of grandiose manifestos and commonsense banalities. Little sense can be made of them in either genuinely theoretical nor in practical terms. The gap between theory and practice continues because there can be no theory genuinely consistent with reality. 'Current Issues in Community Work' commented, ingenuously "Rather surprisingly none of the respondents (community work teachers and supervisors) raised any serious queries, uncertainties or desire for more knowledge about the task or tasks for which community work students were being prepared" (p 109). That's right because whatever the reasons for their neglect, they would be hard pressed to know where to start or what to do with what they might find. On the next page: "We were constantly brought up short in discussions about training by this lack of 'hard' information about the knowledge, competence and attitudes demanded by different forms of community work". - You don't look for a myth, you just read about it, write about it and perhaps discuss it.

Community Work is work because people are paid to do it. It is only different from other similar unpaid activities for this reason. There is no body of practice which logically precedes employment, i.e. no one said 'there is a community worker, he does excellent things, let us employ him'. The nature of community work is determined by the nature of employment not the nature of employment by that of community work. Any useful discussion of training must begin with this recognition.

The growth of a minor industry employing community workers is part of the much larger industry created by welfare state policies. In particular it follows three recent trends in the welfare state: 1) the growth of the local government sector of the economy, and the development of corporate management in local government; 2) the adaptation of an increasingly aggressive social work labour force (with professional aspirations) to a new political ethos and changing political conditions; 3) a growing consciousness in the working and middle classes of the specific and local ways in which the welfare state is a political arena and not a benign end-product from which controversy and political struggle can be separated. The first two trends provide the central employment positions for community workers; the third offers various opportunities for alliances, both recognised and clandestine between paid community workers and community activists.

To work out what they want from training community workers must decide where they stand on the politics of the welfare state. If it is seen as nothing more than a capitalist con - trick the position of community worker seems hopelessly contradictory. It must be recognised, however, that the welfare state is both a way of reducing tensions by managing conflict and building charity into the governmental institutions of advanced capitalism and a result of working class struggle for the resources they have produced to use in ways which suit them best. Any genuine and consciously achieved gain of real resources, which does not necessarily mean an increase in numbers of professional workers may prove an advance. Education and training could then be useful in so far as it enabled a worker to see what each situation requires in these terms, and provides him with information and competence to do what is required effectively.

The division of labour which has led to community work employment produces a strange mixture of traditional jobs and new ones. Broadly they all combine the management and distribution of resources with political organisation. This may seem too simple. However an elaboration of these simple conceptualisations is more likely to produce an understanding of complexities than a reformulation in trendy community work terms. For instance management and distribution of resources is part of the brief of workers in voluntary as well as statutory services. Pursuing success in it prevents diversion into participation for participation's sake - the most recent evidence of the bankruptcy of liberal theory

Equally an exploration of the true nature of the relations between material aid and support and a wider political awareness is important. It has been part of the success of advanced industrial capitalism, partly through the use of social workers and professionally conscious officials in the welfare state, that it has narrowed and compartmentalised 'politics' as an activity. Few working class people recognise real politics, and distrusting the spurious variety when they are offered it they become 'apathetic', so we now pay people to encourage it under another name - hoping that it can be kept safe.

If training as a form of further education can help to stem the tide of anti-politics and at the same time make workers effective distributors of resources which have been allocated through political struggle, then it is not an entirely negative activity. There has been some evidence from the United States that longer training for social workers has been a radicalising influence. There are some sections of the CCETSW document (see note at end) which provide

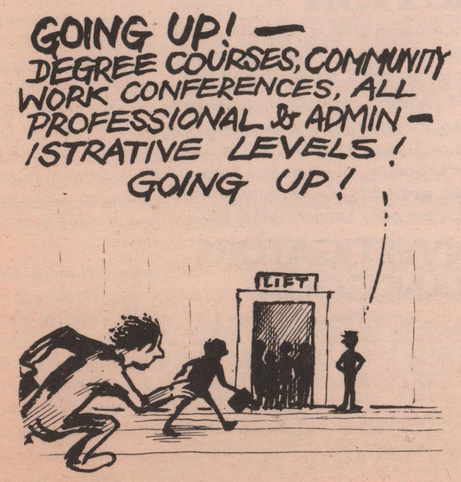
leverage for those who wish to pursue this version of training. A central problem is accepted: " We are discussing the training of workers to set about a job which involves enabling citizens to achieve what should be readily available as of right in a democratic society.."(p 68) Incidentally the groups terms of reference continually dragged them back to the contradictory position of training professionals in some special way.

This implies a limited objective. Community Workers are unlikely to influence events very much. Realism must prevail. This is not to advocate reformism, but to recognise the limited political platform offered by community work as an employment. A similar marginal contribution might be made in training for managerial effectiveness.

Clearly community workers are the personnel managers and public relations men of the welfare state. What they do and can do willstill determine how their terms of reference are interpreted in a part of the system which is still open through lack of definition. Special managerial competence in community work will offer employers (politicians and bureaucrats) opportunities to close it. The development and use of training may help to keep the system relatively open, although genuine and substantial political organisation outside community work is the only way to open it up properly. Radical socialists have always fought for freedom of speech and publication within capitalism for similar reasons (often sleeping with strange bedfellows in the process). Few have seen it as an end in itself.

None of the general proposals for training listed below provide a sufficient basis for the pursuit of these limited ends. As I shallargue later this is because they have been heavily influenced by trainers. But like proposals for community work as such they should be given very little serious attention. They represent no actual training course, and they need not determine what happens on them. Training will come as part of the developing industry. It represents time and resources for community workers that can be used well or ill by recognising the interests whose purposes it may serve.

Training will directly affect four main interests: employers, community workers, trainers, and users - predominantly working class and often defined by a further extension of the word 'client' to include people who don't even know they are receiving services.



A few targets for attack or defence are as follows:
Job Tickets. Here community workers need to avoid an easy alliance between employers and themselves. Bureaucracies require rational grounds on which to appoint candidates. They may use previous attendance at a training course for community work as proof of competence. This must be resisted. Community work training for community work employment must not be elevated to the level of other professional training, but kept at proven organisational capacity and keen interest to do the work in critical imaginative terms. The risk element must remain high in employing community workers and the issue of judged competence seperated from training.

Real & Spurious Anti-Professionalism. This implies rigour and honesty in recognising the users' interests, which I suspect will never be organised in other than token terms. There is no point here in expounding the arguments against professional monopolies and elitism. However there are some important differences between different professions which indicate that community work , in some of its aspects, and social work are qualitatively worse than many. This is familiar ground but one aspect bears directly on training.

In the initial stages of professional formation the central concern has often been mastery over material objects and circumstances. The concrete results of such mastery can have great value for the working class - reducing disease and environmental squalor, building houses and schools, protecting life and limb. The incorporation of professionals into a class society has limited their value and produced new forms of working class subjection. The helping professionals are the final stage, however, of an increasing emphasis on mastery over people and human relations as a central concern.

Frequently discussions with working class activists about professional community workers indicate that they see this distinction clearly. They recognise that mastery of things, by which I include information and arrangements external to their own immediate relations, is the most useful contribution to their activities. Community workers can learn from this, aiming to achieve real competence in some field of the welfare state and in techniques of communication (printing, posters, newspapers etc) rather than in human communications theory. Tangentially this implies that any distinction in training documents between community workers and those whose professional activities include a 'community work dimension' has dangerous implications.

Critical Social Science. Here the fight is with the trainers, or at least many of them and it is for the community worker to recognise his own best interests and those of the user. As in social work trainers are quick to adopt an eclectic, uncritical approach to social science so long as key elements serve to support a professional ideology - in this case those community studies and community theories which re-emerge after every battering by any reputable theorist. Barbara Wooton long ago recognised that social work trainers provided the vanguard for spurious professionalism.

In the Sociological Imagination C. Wright Mills argues the best reason to study social science. Robert Owen almost precisely anticipated his words by arguing that every working man has a right to "learn what he is in relation to past ages, to the period in which he lives, to the circumstances in which he is placed, to the individuals around him and

to furute events". Contemporary schools of social science rarely help. That community workers are among the fortunate few who have access to more time and resources for this than most requires that they insist on the real thing, and campaign for the opportunities to be extended .

Political Organisation & the Dangers of Practical Assessment

It is virtually impossible for the 'practical theory' of community, and practical assessment element in training to avoid exploiting the user, however benignly. There are the obvious dangers in seperating communications, group work, establishing good working relationships, the enabling role etc from explicit political organisation. The political organiser makes his programme explicit; the 'enabler' hides behind his professionalism. No formulation of training programmes has resolved this problem, which is the rotten core of community work theory.

If practical assessment on placement or through in-service training as a basis for qualification and employability tries to be systematic a much worse feature os exploitation emerges. Briefly, the community worker is only interested in its exchange value. He, or she, is using a political engagement blatantly for personal gain. It is straightforward exploitation of the activist's time. When a group of the latter recently criticised community workers for using them by climbing on their backs they were dismissed as unsophisticated lumpen proletariat by some community workers - with a heat which suggested their own awareness of the truth. Here is the central contradiction in the fact that community work is work, in an area which should not require paid work.

Proposals for 'New Careers' training in community work (see CCETSW document) raise this issue particularly sharply. Especially if they continue their work locally, activists cannot or should not avoid being acutely aware of the way in which some aspects of training will separate them from their fellows. Normal professional training and education, of course, does this more slowly by gradually changing the economic position and consciousness of 'successful' working class students.

So perhaps the pursuit of tactical gains through community work training is indeed a wild goose chase. The two basic elements of management and political organisation in community work are an unstable compound to which training might merely add impurities while claiming to act as a catalyst. All successful political movements have depended on organisation, agitation and education. Those concerned to pursue a genuine struggle in the welfare state must decide whether by trying to separate education from the others, community work training inevitably encourages an ersatz substitute for genuine politics.

keith jackson

Three general statements which illustrate the theme of this article are:

1. Community Work & Social Change - Calouste Gulbenkian Study Group. Longmans.
2. Current Issues in Community Work - " " Routledge, Kegan Paul.
3. The Teaching of Community Work - CCETSW Study Group Discussion paper.

The following are more consistent contributions with clearer implications for tactical choices:

4. Knowledge & Skills for Community Work - Association of Community Workers.
5. Training for the New Helping Professions - Community and Youth Work. Josephine Klein, Goldsmiths College.

For Political Activists

The Weston Project

Last autumn twenty-four new students on the Southampton extra-mural CQSW course were dumped on a tatty, vandalised, out-of-town, council estate for their first (concurrent) placement. It was a compulsory experience of a community work scene. Or was it ? Apart from the vogue in community action, case-work in/with groups and the like, one of the tutors' chief motives was, on their own admission, the scarcity of suitable conventional placements in casework agencies at the time. Did tutors also wants to forestall radical criticism or defuse subversive energy right at the start ? Experience suggests that the whole project was conceived as an experiment, a daring innovation, - at whose expense ?

Weston was chosen instead of more obvious sites for community development on the basis of a previous student having done a placement with the local wive's group. This group had since dwindled, and there were twenty-three other students with no particular contact-points in a population of fourteen hundred. The official link-man, an LEA Youth and Community worker, seemed over-worked and depressed even before we arrived. We did not come at his invitation and he got small thanks for the extra work involved. Much of his scepticism about our placement proved justified.

After two weeks of introductory sessions and exploration, we were 'free' to choose our projects and problem-areas, and colleagues from our own group. Even before we had achieved this many of us realised that the placement task was managing ourselves and each other, rather than making contact with the people of Weston. There was scarcely any inter vention by tutors. During a stormy meeting with them our suggested projects were noted and the tutors directed us (in spite of all that 'free choice', self-determination etc.) to their chosen and predictable few projects. There seemed to be an inconvenient shortage of discrete problem-areas, so a few cunning students opted for historical research, liaison and P.R.. A large bureaucracy emerged with very little concrete experience for it's justification. The tutors had organised management meetings of themselves and local officials such as head teachers, with whom we had no contact except through our P.R man.

The tutors' chosen projects were: a 'community' magazine, welfare rights work (a stall by the shops in January), attachment to the Wives' Group, and a survey of conditions and needs in Weston. The survey was so slowly and democratically organised (but less sociologically conceived) that we are still awaiting the results. The county leisure department has shown interest in our findings, if any, and the local people either refused access to us altogether (mostly because they hate Weston anyway) or were very cooperative.

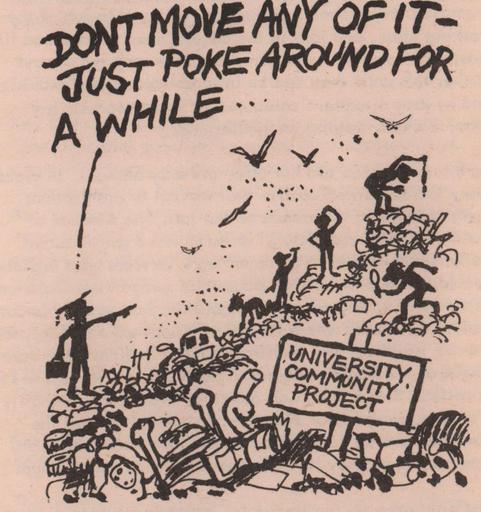
We chose two group-work situations attached uncomfortably to the fourth-year leavers in the local single sex schools; work on amenities for the handicapped, which was considerably hampered by the vacillation and obstruction of the local social services team; youth work in the local Youth and Community Centre and work on drug-abuse. One of our group sat on the Adventure Playground Committee and a few more helped clear ground for it. The local campaigning started and the bulldozers moved in just as we were pulling out of Weston.

One of the notable successes among our projects was the setting up (by door-to-door canvas) of a group for one-parent families. Without the energy and charisma of a very dedicated tutor who has continued this work, this might have been a flash in the pan.

Even with tutors' management meetings and our P.R man, a lot of red tape went flying around during five months with a total commitment of twenty-four students putting in 30 work days. From the outset we felt that such fleeting contact with the people of Weston would be making use of them without giving them anything in return except perhaps an unfulfilled dependency. Tutors guaranteed continuity of our projects where necessary, but we felt unwilling to set up work which would involve a degree of time and work which the tutors when it came to it might not be able to commit.

The community magazine struggles on heavily dependent on students for ideas and hard work. It relied on university subsidies for the first three issues and is perhaps a bit daunting and alien in style.

Some of the loose ends left and bad contacts made in this experience are of our own making. It has been a valuable experience of how hard it is to get through red tape from the outside without agency credentials. We saw the slow process of the emergence of self-help groups, and how taking initiative depends on personality.



Apart from the magazine, and a few souvenirs - 'Are you Getting Enough ?' posters, obsolete DHSS bumph etc - what have we given Weston in return for people's time and effort ? Is 30 days part-time commuting from university a meaningful community work experience? Group-work has its own inherent cons ... can casework be applied to Communities, ? Why wasn't our brief course of lectures in the politics of local government concurrent with the community work placement, and why was the politics lecturer so afraid of discussing CDPs?

Weston was a con for us to manage each other and ourselves at minimum cost to the university or the State.

Beware of cut-price community-cons'.

Rosalie Watson

CASE CON LEADER?

The theme of the Case Con conference at Bristol in May - 'On the Job - What's the Difference?' - raised several issues many of which have now become perennials. The conference aimed to bridge the gap between the professional view of social work and the radical/revolutionary and trade union perspective. This, of course, has always been Case Con's aim. Difficulties arise, when the bridge has been crossed, in finding the right direction to follow and defining Case Con's role in this situation as a leader.

CASE CON has been going for five years and it remains essentially a magazine produced by an editorial collective, two conferences a year, and a handful of local groups in the larger cities and in colleges. As a name it offers a name which attracts lefties in the social services, and, from time to time, the attention of the right-wing national press and various social work comics. The mistake made by the above group is to believe that Case Con can lead a 'revolution on the rates'. Case Con is not a strong, organised group that has the prescription to combat and overcome the cannibal forces of capitalism and the machinery of the state. The Case Con Manifesto states that there are no easy answers in overcoming capitalism. It urges all social workers to organise independently of the state in the interests of the working class, and join in the development of rank and file strength. Case Con groups in themselves may not always further this end, they can be inward-looking and exclusive, and in some situations could cut off social workers from other workers fighting for similar ends.

So the conference did not offer any easy answers. In practice many social workers realise that radical or professional, there is often no difference on the job. The message of the conference was that, in order to make gains, social workers and consumers of social work services must organise, develop links with similar groups and spread their experiences to newly emerging groups. A resolution was passed mandating mandating the EC where Case Con groups exist and support them in whatever way possible. Similar motions have been passed at previous conferences, but there seemed less need to believe that a Case Con group for every local authority is always necessary or desirable. In some situations the Case Con banner needs to be raised, but elsewhere social workers are already in well organised trade union groups.

The arguments on the resolution proposing a more aggressive response to adverse publicity revealed a clear division of opinion. Some argued that because Case Con is essentially an umbrella organisation it could not offer a line to which all supporters would subscribe. Others felt that many of the criticisms of Case Con by the right wing were using the name as a convenient label to attach to the left in social work and that some response had to be made. If the Case Con EC did not counter such attacks it was unlikely anyone else would. In the event the motion on publicity was defeated. Finally, the Conference decided that the next two issues of the magazine should feature Residential Work and New Tricks i.e the new 'therapies' and 'approaches' to social work. This very much carries on the umbrella and educational function that the magazine has displayed in more recent issues.

The great heart searching that has gone on at past conferences about Case Con's role in leading and developing struggles has not altogether disappeared. In past months there has been more militant activity by social workers than ever before. In Islington there has been a sucessful one-day strike by social services workers to 'unfreeze' jobs affected by council cut-back policy. Similar action has been taken in Tower Hamlets because the council's penny-pinching attitudes are leaving area teams without adequate staffing. Liverpool social workers threatened a one-day strike because of comments by a local councillor over the placement of a homeless family in the Holiday Inn Hotel. In Lewisham and Lambeth social workers have leafletted the local community about the cuts in services. The position over standby rotas is that in many areas social workers have withdrawn from them.

The unifying theme in allthese actions are the savage cuts in welfare services. Maintaining services costs money and rank and file workers must fight in order to preserve them. All these actions have been led by rank and file trade unionists, and not by Case Con. Clearly this is the way it should be. Case Con is increasingly unlikely to offer leadership in such struggles, but needs to answer the question of how it should relate to them.

Part of the answer lies in Case Con's audience. Much of the correspondence to the EC comes from students, isolated radical social workers, and overseas social workers. Nearly all of these want to follow the paths trodden by experienced trade unionists in the social services and believe that Case Con should be able to provide this knowledge. Clearly there is a need for this sharing of experience. At the moment the danger is that trade unionists in the social services only seem to be working towards socialism in one local authority. Each rank and file group has to painfully go over ground, covered perhaps many times before, because there is no forum for trade unionists at different levels of development to meet.

The November '75 Case Con Conference in London, with the theme 'The Welfare State Under Attack - Time to Fight Back' will take some first steps in remedying this situation. Activists from different parts of the country will be able to give some glimpses of the possibilities for action. Nobody will leave the conference with guaranteed formulas for sucess. But neither should they feel that all there is to do is either wait for someone to come along and lead, or else sit on their backsides bemoaning their inability to achieve anything. Case Con's function must lie more and more in the area of providing a forum for isolated individuals and organised groups to meet, to politicize the former, to undermine the professional claptrap that abounds in social work circles and introduce all social workers to rank and file trade union activity.

Pete Feldon and Ron Wallace

HYPOCRITESW

Most Case Con readers will find their reading time rather limited and it is probably only a small number who saw an article by Kay Richards, Chairman of BASW, in a tiny 'newspaper' called 'Social Worker and Residential News' dated 7th August. Fewer will have read the article, and I imagine that still fewer are members of BASW.

Entitled '1984: Where Will Social Work Be Then?', it was clearly a statement representing the official 'line' of our Professional Association and as such displayed clearly the hypocrisy of these 'professionals'.

Idealism

How many times have radical social workers been criticised by their 'professional' colleagues for being 'destructive' or 'negative', or for being 'idealistic' with their heads in the clouds? But Kay Richards in her article, boldly states that "It is one of our responsibilities to ensure that in the process (of radical reappraisal of social work) ... we do not lose our idealism and our values." The economic crisis which we are in will apparently be short-lived, for it is the "economic crisis of 1975". No, that does not merit a mention in the Guinness Book of Records for idealism, for Kay Richards excels herself by stating that this crisis "can in the long term be of benefit" by " forcing on social work a radical reappraisal of its activities and role." We are further told that BASW "will have been in the forefrount of this radical reappraisal".

Of what does this radical reappraisal consist? We are given a clue in bold print that "nowhere are the clinging and restrictive hierarchical controls more clearly demonstrated and felt than in the refusal still in many social work departments to permit individual staff to sign their own letters, reports and EVEN MEMORANDA."(my italics).

Thus bureaucracy is one of the knots bedevilling social work today. Another is the low proportion of 'trained' social workers. A third is the rapidity of change in our society. A fourth the "unhelpful polarisation of personal casework and community work". Last but by no means least, is the "danger of community manipulation by the radical community worker" which "is just as great as the danger of client manipulation by the traditional social worker.

Many of us will sleep easier in our beds knowing that these are the only crises facing social work today. Kay Richard's analysis of the economic crisis is that it will make it tough for Social work and social workers in carrying out their increased responsibilities". We should not, of course join in the struggle against restrictive government policies. Herein lies the kernel of Richard's idealism, for apart from mistaking the colossal forest of crisis for the trees of petty bureaucratic rules, she is truly idealistic, not by having lofty aims (which she does not), but by failing to put forward any real programme for achieving her aims. She and most professionals are under a fundamental hallucination that they have real power to bring about change: The 1968'Social Work (Scotland) Act' and the Seebohm induced 1970 Act have, she believes " firmly set social work for the first time in charge of its own destiny." Most field workers will see this to be nonsense.

Furthermore, thanks to BASW, we now have "access to real power and influence in the changing world around us." Where is the result of this power? What, concretely, has been achieved since 1970? We have in fact seen a steady erosion of services. House building has steadily fallen; poverty and unemployment have increased; benefit and pension levels have been eroded. In fact BASW's record is one of continual accomodation to and acceptance of ever-increasing cuts in the social services. Yet she claims that BASW's 'initiative" " has already ensured that the voice of social workers in the UK will be appropriately heard also in the EEC." If this voice is ignored in the UK, it is hardly more likely to be heard in the impersonal bureaucracy of the EEC.

Kay Richard's complacent idealism is in stark contrast to the practical realism of socialists actively involved in struggle against cuts in local authority services, and other manifestations of the economic crises, through their trade unions and political associations.

Futurology

Kay Richards makes wild predictions about the future. "The unhelpful polarisation of personal casework and community work, which is already lessening, will have disappeared in a concerted effort to help individuals and the community make the most effective individual and corporate use of their scarce resources." - All this by 1984, and we will also have massive investment in training and staff development. In Leicestershire, however, the trainee grade and the Training Section of the Department are to be scrapped after this year's intake. Furthermore, new entrants are being told that they will have to wait longer for secondment. It is more probable that training will decrease over the next five years because of the cuts, which will also have the effect of forcing many indepentent, voluntary agencies into closure, thus increasing the bureaucratic load.

The professional's acceptance of the principle of financial cuts means that they will squabble about who will receive what is left. This is likely to increase polarisation. Predicting the future for social work is difficult at the best of times, but it seems unlikely to resemble BASW's forcastings. You can only hope to control destiny when you begin to grasp the relationships between the social forces and the social classes in our society - the fundamental nature in fact of our class society. It seems that the clairvoyants and others of BASW are no nearer to grasping and understanding the process of such forces and classes than at the time of their conception.

Bob O'Hagan

SQUATTING AND THE LAW

The recent hysteria in the press over the question of squatters is the culmination of a mounting campaign over the last few years to reassert property rights as against those who try to cope with homelessness by occupying empty property. There is even a resolution down for the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool this year (Resolution 173) submitted by Bethnal Green and Bow Constituency Labour Party, which " views with alarm the growing national problem of squatting " and considers that " the law concerning squatting rights should be fully reviewed so that full protection can be legally given to owners and tenants of property."

Continued reference in the press and other propaganda to ' the problem of squatting' neatly sidesteps the real point which is that the problem is one of homelessness. Not only are thousands of families and single persons homeless, but they are at the same time confronted with a system which keeps them homeless while thousands of houses owned by private landlords and public authorities, such as local councils, are left empty. When the homeless families take the obvious step of moving into these unoccupied houses they often find that the full weight of the law is brought to bear against them, and that when they are eventually removed destruction squads are sent in to render the houses uninhabitable.

This is not to deny that thousands of squatters are occupying property by arrangement with local councils, and that the squatting movement as a whole has a confused relationship with local authorities. On the one hand licensed squatting does relieve some local councils of pressure on the housing lists, and of the political embarassment of owning empty property; but at the same time the existence of organised squatting challenges the right of local councils to conduct their own housing programmes. As far as private landlords are concerned the relationship is more simple: squats threaten property rights and profits, and squatters should be ruthlessly removed.

The law has played a full role in the recent campaign against squatters. Traditionally it was for the civil courts to decide who was entitled to occupy property, drawing on the very complicated rules of English property law. The right to occupy was based on the concept of 'advers possession' - that is, the courts would decide which of two parties was entitled to occupation as against each other. The usual method of resolving the dispute was for the party in occupation to issue a possession summons following which argument would be heard by a judge and the appropriate order made. This procedure was, of course, designed to deal with ordinary property disputes and could be lengthy.

A new procedure was introduced in 1970 to deal specifically with squatters. Known in the High Court as 'Order 113 Proceedings', and in the County Court as Order 26, it enables owners to apply for a possession order even when they do not know the names of the squatters occupying their property, provided they have taken reasonable steps to discover their names. A possession order can then be granted very speedily. However, the rule was that the procedure laid down in the Orders had to be very strictly complied with, otherwise there was a danger that people with genuine legal claims to occupy the property could be prejudiced. This was confirmed by the Court of Appeal in the case of Mercy in June 1974. Meanwhile in the case of McPhail in the Court of Appeal in May 1973 it had been decided that an owner who had not acquiesced in the presence of squatters in any way could eject them without any need to obtain a court order. This ruling has to be set against the ancient 'Forcible Entry Act - 1381' which made it a crime to force an entry in order, amongst other things, to evict someone in possession. Problems over what is meant by 'possession' and doubts about the legal correctness of the decision in McPhail, caused headaches for even the most agile-minded lawyers, and the whole question was referred to the Law Commission for consideration.

The Law Commission (an independent statutory body which promotes law reform) issued an interim report for discussion on 28th June 1974 (Working Paper 54). The Commission claimed to have been influenced by four factors: the concern of the law to prevent breaches of the peace; the need to ensure that people should not be able to prevent those entitled to property from using it; the fairness of excluding from the operations of the criminal law those who believed in the legality of their remaining on the property; and the undesirability of involving the police in disputes which should be settled in civil proceedings. Their main proposals were that the old offences of forcible entry and detainer should be abolished, as should the new offence of conspiracy to trespass (created by the courts in the infamous Kamara case to convict students occupying the Sierre Leone High Commission), and that they should be replaced by two new offences. These would make it a criminal offence, punishable with imprisonment, to "without lawful authority enter by force adversely to any person in physical occupation ot with the thought to occupt"; and to be unlawfully on property and failing to leave as soon as reasonably practicable after being ordered to leave by a person entitled to occupation".

The second of these two proposed offences would have had the effect of making trespass a crime for the first time in English Law. Apart from the dubious crime of conspiracy to to trespass, trespass was not a criminal offence and still is not unless done with intent to steal, rape or inflict grievous bodily harm or in contravention of a few minor statutory provisions. The reason that trespass has not been criminal is because of the way in which property law developed and because property disputes were for the civil courts to sort out. As they stood the proposals would have made criminal a number of existing legitimate activities such as arguing with a shopkeeper after being asked to leave a shop; workers occupying factories in an industrial dispute; sit-ins by students and, of course continued occupation by unwanted students. They would also have given the police the problem of who was entitled to occupation in a particular situation. The proposals were opposed and criticised from many quarters, including some sections of the police. The T.U.C. also opposed the creation of the second offence and circulated its comments throughout the trade union movement. Clearly bowing under the weight of the opposition the Law Commission let it be known that it was unlikely to proceed with its proposal for the creation of the second offence. The Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law is not convinced that this will happen and has called for the campaign to be continued.

There is no need in this note to recount the correspondence in the press columns in recent weeks. This was sparked off by a letter in tThe Times, the contents of which were later totally disputed by the Metropolitan Police Solicitor. Some other recent legal developments should be noted.

In the case of Wandsworth Borough Council (July 1975), the High Court held that a possession order could be enforced against a person on the premises who was not even party to the proceedings. In the Chancery Division in the same week, Mr. Justice Oliver decided that in the Buston Case that the Court even had a discretion to grant the possession order in Order 113 proceedings. This applies even where the landlord has not followed the strict requirements of the regulations and that it could ignore the decision in Mercy. Meanwhile, attacking from a different angle, Mr. Justice Woodcock decided in the case of the South Western Electricity Board (January 1975) that squatters could not require the supply of electricity to houses they were occupying because they were not in fact "occupiers" for that purpose. This of course paved the way for some local authorities to conspire with Electricity and Gas boards to deprive squatters of these very basic amenities. This very dangerous development would give Boards the power to decide who did and did not havethe right to occupy and would be particularly prejudicial to the health of the young and the elderly, especially as winter approaches. Finally, at least one other local authority, who had obtained a possession order against a squatter attempted to have her imprisoned for the moving into a different unoccupied property.

There is a lot of doubt about the legal powers of the police to intervene in squatting situat ons where no crime has been committed. Very recently the Metropolitan Police have said that they will assist owners of residential furnished property to evict people with no lawful right to be there. The National Council for Civil Liberties has condemned this move to bring the police into purely private disputes and to give them the power to decide who is entitled to occupy property.

It is clear that for so long as homelessness co-exists with large-scale empty housing, there will be squatting. It is equally clear that it would not be practical to imprison all homeless people who squat. Solutions cannot be found by looking to the law, least of all by the criminal law. The solution liesin the creation of a rational house building and allocation policy based on need and not profit. Until then thereshould be no sanctions against people who make use of property that would not otherwise be used and the police should not be given any additional powers to intervene to protect property rights at the expense of the homeless.

Howard Levenson

A Day in the Life

Quoting from this article on social workers was decided on largely to fill up - correction -to illustrate some of the highly ambivalent media publicity about our work. We are familiar with the "general public" who will laud the heroic Jenny Benjamins until they are "in charge" of a Maria Colwell type situation. Then, with only a few subtle qualifications, they will be individually blamed and labelled a failure.:-

"Jenny Benjamin is an unqualified social worker in Gospel Oak ..... She is paid. £46 a week, which is about £16 less than a hospital porter in Inner London can earn, with overtime, for roughly the same hours.

Although the Government can enforce a standstill in spending it can't ordain a standstill in the social changes that increase the demand for Mrs Benjamin's services year by year.

Less money will mean more mistakes....

The logical solution to the problem of money is to make less use of enormously expensive residential facilities and more use of voluntary community action groups and good neighbour schemes. But that would require additional field social workers for supervision. In that respect, paying more people like Jenny Benjamin, not fewer, might be a sensible way of saving money."

The Observer 17th August 1975

We should beware the beguiling flattery of "dedicated" social workers. Despite the sympathetic tones of the "day in the life" type publicity, they make little or no criticism of the ratepayerist faction whose demands for cuts lead to the "disasters" that occur. Under the "vigilant" eye of the media the lot of the social worker is not a happy one. With the "logical" solutions of the media invariably supporting cuts in services we can well do without flattery. With friends like like this....etc.

AN APOLOGY

The Editorial Collective wish to apologise to our Australian comrades who took exception to our decision to publish the "Inside Welfare" story wrong way up.

In response to criticism we recognise the action as puerile and unworthy of Case Con magazine.

We understand that "Inside Welfare" supporters have been experiencing difficulties with the authorities in recent weeks. Case Con sincerely pledges support to the Australian Radical Social Work Movement and urges them to keep fighting.

L.A. Community Workers .....writers or fighters?

Introduction

This article attempts to provide a preliminary political analysis of the role of local authority community workers by synthesising several written contributions to this issue of Case Con by practising L.A community workers, concluding with a practical example from the Borough of Sefton (Nov 74 - June 75) which illustrates many of the major contradictions in this role. (1). The analysis starts by placing community work in its historical context in the development of the welfare state. The Case Con Manifesto (2) includes a perspective on the welfare state as a means of winning over the working class, particularly its militant section, into an acceptance of the capitalist social structure. Within this perspective community work can be seen as a new technique to cover over the more evident open sores of the capitalist urban social structure. The community worker's activist role in assisting the exposure of social needs and the articulation of effective protest at the failure to meet them, may have some progressive possibilities; on the other hand the employing local authorities are not, in practice, 'asking for trouble' when they employ community workers. There seem to be several ways of accomodating this potential conflict of loyalties short of a direct clash:

i) clear managerial control of community workers - diverting them into non-controversial 'safe' areas (e.g. volunteer organisation)

ii) structural isolation of community workers for example within social services departments, preventing them from becoming even an effective lobby.

iii) community workers themselves advancing up the blind alley of 'politicking' and attempting to manipulate the local power elite. This approach is often associated with a paternalistic approach which only undermines the development of effective independent community pressure groups.

Much of the liberal ideology of community work appears to be a series of optimistic and irrelevant cliches ('communication','participation' etc) which deny the class basis of society and the struggle between classes for resources which are the direct focus of community work. 'Effective' community work depends on the political standpoint of the adjudicator - is community work cosmetic public relations, always subservient to councils' current policies, or do community workers grasp the nettle of deciding that their loyalties lie with the local community rather than with their L.A employers who may well be providing seriously deficient services to that local population? It is at this point that a serious political analysis of community work can begin.

The Welfare State (3)

The consolidation of the development of the welfare state in Britain took place critically in the middle and late 1940s, engineered first by the National Government and then by the post-war Labour Government. In the 'never had it so good' era of the 50s the notion that structural inequality was disappearing gained considerable credibility. Associated with this was the idea that 'social problems' were located in a narrow social group whose members had individual failings. An individualistic approach to the solving of social problems was a corollary of this mythology and was accompanied by the professionalisation and extension of the 'welfare' occupations, based on the 'sciences' of psychology and psychiatry. Their function was to identify why, in an affluent society, the 'client' was unable to cope. In the 60s poverty and structural inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income began to be 'rediscovered' and the emphasis on personal pathology began to be called into question.

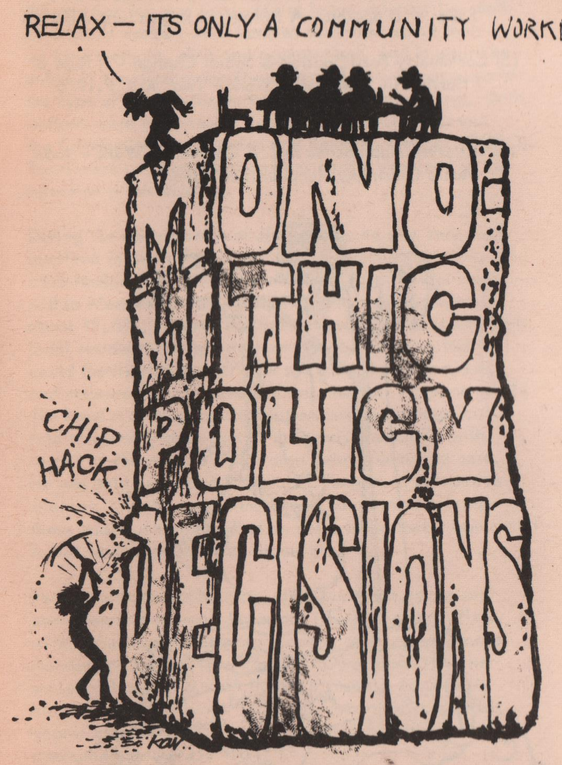
Following American experience the Home Office set up the Urban Aid and CDP Programmes in the late 60s, in an attempt to tackle the growing 'urban problem'. Implicit in this policy decision was the view that poor housing, high unemployment, poverty and social dislocation could not be solved by local financing but by diverting finance and resources from the national exchequer to areas of 'high social need'. Local authorities in Britain followed the Home Office in sponsoring ''community work and community development' as a means of dealing with the urban problem. There is clearly some paradox between the need for increased resouces diverted from taxes and rates, and the emphasis on encouraging community 'self-help'. In the 1968 Seebohm Report, which preceeded the reorganisation of the personal social services, S.S.Ds were similarly envisaged as responding to the changing needs of the local community, and emphasis was placed on such factors as decentralising community based area teams, and community participation in determining service provision.

Participatory Democracy, Lack of Resources, and the State.

Community work represented a departure from the traditional relationship between the councillors and their electorate, and potentially between council officials involved in this work and their 'clientelle'. Thus the ethos of 'representative democracy', elected power groups acting on behalf of their electors, was intended to be supplemented by 'participatory democracy' fostered by paid officials: "The long term aim of community development is the attainment of a 'participatory democracy' where all socio-economic groups insociety are directly involved in policy making, and interest groups can gain access to information and the decision-making process." (4). Quite clearly the implicit contradictions of this 'new solution' were little considered, initially, by the propagators of community work and community development ideology.

In addition to the 'poverty focus' of community work it was also envisaged as a response to the disenchantment with the existing representative democracy structure. Implicit in this perspective is that the (repressive) arm of the welfare state via its paid officials, can serve to encapsulate and diffuse effective, organised working class pressure." By including inauthentically involved, and therefore in reality excluded groups, in the political process, both social control and genuine consensus are increased. This theory is widely shared, if not expressed, among community workers and activists". (5) The critical point is that overall resources are not increased (or actively reduced), and the rewards for 'participation' (encapsulation) are merely token symbolic ones. "(Community workers) may be using participation as a substitute for a real redistribution of resources." (4)

Whilst most of the problems of working class inner city areas where such projects have been concentrated are ones of lack of resources and consequent demoralisation, much of the optimistic liberal ideology of community work emphasises 'communication','information','participation','feedback', most of which do not cost the appropriate local and/or central government authority much more than the salaries of their 'activating'officials, and may even, by the development of community based resources represent a saving in expenditure. In this way the function of commun-ity ity projects envisaged by 'the Council' may well be as a cosmetic for local social problems.



Consensus by Community Work?

Perhaps it is better to consider some of these contradictions by reference to practical examples of community work. A Haringey L.A Community worker points out (6) the contra-dictory aspects of her job description: 'increasing public awareness and understanding of community issues, enabling people to develop qualities of self-awareness, ability to share problems, co-operation and leadership' as well as 'to do nothing contrary to council policy'. She sees in the job both 'activist' and repressive role-elements. The London Borough of Haringey is clearly divided into geograph-ically distinct middle and working class areas. It is in the former rather than the latter where existing community groups are concentrated (a strong ratepayers group, play-schemes, theatre group). The tenants associations in the working class areas appear weak and sometimes reactionary (eg. anti black or 'problem' families). The orientation of community work (outside the SSD) is on 'participation'and 'communication' without much recognition of the objective constraints which can make these merely cant phrases. Perhaps surprisingly it seems that 'the people' are now being more energetically consulted at a time when cut-backs are becoming more and more extensive. Another process observed in Haringey is that protest may become bureaucrat-ised (bought off) and therefore more easily accomodated, and conflict muffled.

Dependency of local groups on community workers does sometimes produce short-term gains, but obviates the long-term need for continuing, independent, organisation in order to fight for a genuine redistribution of resources.

The community worker may also be 'helping to rationalise the local council's priorities, making it apparently more flexible and co-opting those forces which might be in conflict with it.'(6) They are also implicitly involved in selling the local authority's decisions to the people it governs, i.e the community worker is here operat-ing as a broker between governors and governed, dishing out 'public relations'. In Haringey also, having responsibility for controlling community centre funds, community workers tend to be obliged to work more with established community groups, consolidating the existing imbalance of power. Community wide organisations (eg. playschemes) tend to have been dominated by middle class residents and this has worked against those deprived areas where the facilities are most badly needed, reinforcing the status quo in power and resources. The overall effect of community worker intervention here seems to be that powerful local groups, often middle class dominated, are favoured at the expense of others; there is not only no overall increase in resources, but a redistributive process is in operation which works against the poorer, more demoralised and less articulate groups.

Community Work In the L.A Administrative Structure and its Relationship with Local Politics.

Within local authorities community workers may be located in SSDs or other departments. In the former the community worker may be channelled into non-controversial areas like organising volunteers (resources to assist the personal social services), or working with particular client groups with fairly limited short-term goals. Interestingly both the Southwark and Haringey community workers make a strong plea for cws not to become submerged in, for example, SS area teams. Although the cws more structural approach could assist in raising the consciousness of social workers and enable them to percieve the political context of their clients' problems, it may well be that submergence allows far more effective managerial control of their potentially controversial activities. Another more reactionary stance discernible amongst community workers is their belief that they need higher status in order to effectively communicate the community's needs to senior L.A management and councillors. Attaining this would merely divorce them from working class, grass roots struggles and lend increased support to the myth of the effectiveness of 'participation'.

Activism - Loyalty to Whom?

A common theme (4) is the danger of the community worker getting hopelessly enmeshed in the blind alley of attempts at manipulating the local power structure and the limited resource returns this approach seems to yield. The dilemma of the community worker is that effective community work would often, necessarily, help to expose the deficiencies of resource provision, and thus a clear-cut clash of loyalties may always be very close in the day to day practice of community work. The Southwark community workers recognise that " in reality, it is the closely linked group of senior officers, with the councillors of the inner party caucus (monolithically Labour in London's East End), working intimately together, who put down the major policy guidelines. ... It is clear that decisions are made by an inner circle, without reference to other members of the Council, the staff or the public," they recognise " how impotent the (community) worker generally is" in this situation (4). Thus there is a limit to existing opportunities for participation of the people, and this often leads to unconvincing token participation or straight manipulation." Information is usually given where it will facilitate the smooth functioning of the council's machinery, not where it could promote change. .. Too much time is spent working on issues that will placate the agency." The Southwark workers also observe " we feel that community action to date has seldom demonstrated that it can make any significant impact on the fundamentals of resource allocation and power holding" (4)

Conclusion

The conclusion of the Sefton community workers (3) is starkly clear: "That community work is seeking to stimulate people to (examine) common problems, results in the community starting to identify needs and demand resources ..(which) are not at present available to meet the need." This throws light on central and local government resource policies and becomes potentially threatening and explosive for the employing authority. In Sefton the Council leadership and senior officials were clearly influenced by the narrow interests of the ruling political party into an extremely suspicious attitude towards a neighbourhood council which was a focus of the work of one of the two community workers. They appeared to see community work as a means of social appeasement and control, and clamped down when this limitation was exceeded. The authors felt that " council policy would seem to be inadequate, or working against significant sections of the population, viz the working class" (1). In a nearby local authority community workers have been told to keep a 'low profile' until next years elections, because the political party in control of the authority fears the possibility of defeat and believes active community work, by exposing the issues, could assist this.

The dilemma then is clear "community workers must either recognise the constraints and adjust their aims and methods to them, or challenge these insidious limitations on their work"(1). Senior L.A officers indicated that "good community work is keeping bad publicity about the local authority out of the press" and made it clear to the community wotker that he should be working for his employers interests rather than those of the local people. (1)

The picture then is one of community workers being employed to manipulate and control community pressure groups' conscious attitudes towards the allocation of resources, to cool out protest, anger and conflict under the guise of 'communication' and 'participation'. When the gut issue of lack of resources raises its ugly head the community worker has either to keep a 'low profile' or placate the angry population by the use of his/her professional skills. In Sefton the community workers were ousted precisely because of their apparent effectiveness in helping to articulate community needs. Not surprisingly perhaps, the committed community workers of Sefton plan to stay in Sefton to develop their work despite their departure from local authority employment. This seems the most fitting conclusion to this article.

Richard Herne

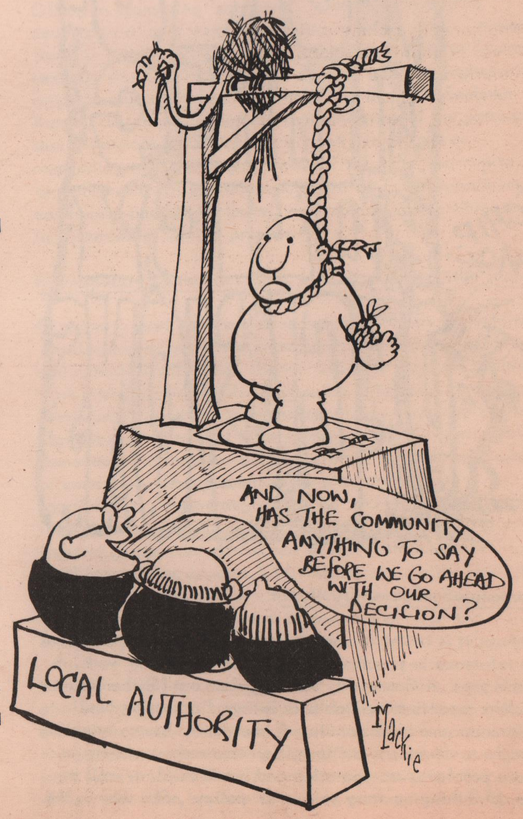
Footnotes

(1) The Sefton Experience (unpublished paper)
(2) Case Con Manifesto

(3) Community Work & Social Services - Seebohm Calls.
D Coleman & A Wiggins (unpublished paper)
Section on the Welfare State.
(4)Article on Constraints on Community Workers in L.A SSDs - D Burkens, A Dufton, D Rogers (unpublished)

(5) Community Participation & Social Change - H Rose & J Hanmer in 'Community Work - Two" R.K.P.1975

(6) Different Approaches in L.A Community Work - Joan Munro (Haringey) (unpublished Paper)



THE SEFTON EXPERIENCE

This report is about how a local authority, the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton, set up community work posts without seriously considering the effects of this. Sefton are now backpedalling furiously to try and rectify the situation and are making life very uncomfortable for the workers and a number of community groups in the area. The experiences of Sefton and their community workers may be instructive for other community work agencies.

Before local government reorganisation the former Borough of Bootle successfully applied for Urban Aid to appoint a community worker. The money was transferred to Sefton Social Services Department and Jim King was appointed in October 1974. The second community worker, Nigel Godfrey, was appointed January 1975. His post was transferred from Housing Department a few months before. The previous holder of the post was considered unsuitable for the position but was persuaded to leave voluntarily. Both community workers were frank at interview about their working methods, aims and expectations, and it would be unfair if the local authority claimed they were unaware of the type of community workers they were appointing. Both workers were interviewed by the Assistant Director and the Community Organisation and Research Officer (CORO). There were no councillors or third parties involved in the selection of candidates.

During the early months of Jim's work, he was very much involved in defining a suitable area in which to work. In consultation with CORO he eventually decided to work within Mersey-Linacre ward which has a population of about 19,000. During the first few months Jim talked with local residents and existing community groups so that he could familiarise himself with the area, identify needs, and measure the aspirations of the people. At no stage did Jim have a written job description but he was explicitly told to identify the needs of the area, especially with regard to the number of children being taken into care. He was told to try and formulate a long-term preventive strategy. For the past 8 months he has worked towards these ends but concluded at an early stage that a traditional social work approach was impossible.

Factors such as bad housing, inadequate education and poor planning were all important issues. Senior officers within the department were concerned about his informal manner and his relationships with councillors and other senior officers. He was allowed a freedom not usually associated with a junior local government officer. This degree of freedom seems essential for a local authority community worker.

These early months were relatively quiet. The second worker Nigel was employed on 27th. January. He was given a job description with a wide brief and few constraints. His prime function was to tackle the many problems of the Edge Lane estate. This was to be done by mobilising and co-ordinating statutory and voluntary resources. He was informed by CORO, a former tenant of the estate that there were many problems and that support and advice to the Tenants' Association, together with welfare rights work, would be important areas to become involved in.

During the early stages of Nigel's work on the estate he felt that there was a considerable amount of concern about the lack of play provision. He therefore worked closely with the existing playgroup and assisted in expanding and improving their services. He also helped form a Playscheme Association whichhsuccessfully sponsored an Easter playscheme. This was the first such project to be run by local residents. He also worked with a group of young people and has assisted in re-forming the weekly discotheque in the community centre.

Problems became apparent when attempts were made to gain access to local authority resources. These included use of vehicles owned by the Social Services department, using local authority buildings which stand empty for most of the week, establishing an effective channel of communication within the department and between other departments. As there was no money available for the community workers to spend on projects, it was important to look at all statutory sources of money. The idea of applying for Urban Aid caused considerable discussion and argument. Three voluntary groups applied for Urban Aid to pay for playschemes. This was granted although it was not policy to support such ventures. In comparison with other local authorities, Sefton has received little money from the Urban Aid Programme but various senior officers view Urban Aid as a way of enticing local authorities to spend money on projects which, realistically, they cannot afford.

Despite discussion at considerable length with CORO, the specialised role of a community worker and its viability within the authority remained in question. At a meeting of the Assistant Director, CORO, Jim and Nigel it was agreed to list all the outstanding problems in an attempt to resolve them.. At about the same time a meeting was held with theDirector to discuss the same problems. Much of the meeting was taken up with discussing Jim's work with the SteeringGroup of Merlin Neighbourhood and the Chief Executive's anxieties about a third tier of local government. In particular the workers were informed that he was concerned about a Liberal and Communist take-over. The Director promised to review policy on the use of vehicles. To the question of information flow, the Director said a meeting had been arranged between Nigel and the Principal Management Officer of the Housing Department and the Housing Manager for Crosby. The Director felt that this was a step in the right direction. In fact, the meeting proved counter-productive because although a number of issues were raised, the end result was basically that Nigel was told to keep out of housing affairs. They knew the problems and were trying to tackle them.

There were further meetings between the Assistant Director, CORO and the community workers. During this period there was evident hostility between the Assistant Director and the CORO. Rather than allowing open discussion, the meetings became directive sessions. The community workers were told to keep on working but not to get involved with any groups who were in conflict with the local authority - although at that time there were no groups in this position ! It was said that ultimately the workers' loyalty must be to the department and not to the people.

The Assistant Director produced a confidential document written by the Chief Executive. It outlined three posible tactics which could be adopted as policy on the not yet constituted Merlin Neighbourhood Council, which Jim had been working with since its inception. The recommendations amounted to blatant non-cooperation. The community workers felt that this was a dangerous over-reaction to the situation. They were told that if Merlin failed that would be the end of community work in the department. Jim was allowed to continue working with Merlin Neighbourhood Council until 14th. May when the Chief Executive ordered a 'search' of all departments to discover what was known about Merlin. From these enquiries it became apparent that the Social Services was openly helping the steering group. As a result of this discovery, the Chief Executive reprimanded the CORO for allowing Jim King to continue working with Merlin and for supplying a small amount of administrative support. Jim was told that he was to have no contact with this group and Social Services could no longer assist it in any way.

The local authority's attitude crystallised around a squat in Brackley Close by a family who had become homeless as a result of their ceiling collapse. One of the posters on the house the squatters had occupied read :" Come Forth Merlin" appealing to the Neighbourhood Council for support. This was interpreted by the local authority that Merlin had promoted and supported the squat. This was not so and at an emergency meeting of the steering group, the committee publicly refuted the allegations and condemned the squat, although pledging support to the family, recognising that this situation highlighted Sefton's inadequate policies on housing and homelessness. Even so, Merlin became an even dirtier word to the local authority and questions were raised as to how a servant of the authority had been allowed to work with such a troublesome group.

New discussions between the Director and Chief Executive focu focussed on the future of community work within a Social Services department. It would seem that at this stage it was decided that community work must be kept strictly within Social Services' objectives. The Assistant Director was asked to write a paper on this. It basically regarded community work as being about prevention within client "communities". This document was apparently held back because it was not specific enough. It was edited and five specific areas of work highlighted - work with old people, including good neighbour and street warden schemes, work with teenagers, liason with playgroups and pram clubs in the form of self-help groups for single parent families and playschemes. The community workers have been informed that these will probably be the base for future community wotk in the authority. The CORO also submitted a paper outlining other approaches to community workers, none of which were accepted.

At this stage the Assistant Director came back fron a CCETSW conference and as a result of this, he had clarified his own ideas on community work within a local authority. He sai d generic community work within a service department was not possible, and that it would either have to be transferred to a non-service department, such as the Chief Executive's Department or the Planning Department, or else be confined to the objectives of service departments. At an impromptu meeting between the Director, Deputy Assistant, CORO and Jim, the Director said that there was to be a change of community work policy within the department to be clarified very soon. A date was provisionally fixed for all senior officials concerned to discuss this. The meeting never occurred.

At another meeting between the community workers and CORO, the latter stated that he thought the community work posts would be moved from the Service Department Section to Field Services Section and the workers would be responsible to the Area Officers, with a new job description. In future work would not be allowed with any groups in conflict with the local authority and community work would be restricted to area team objectives. He added that although the post would be moving he was not sure whether Jim and Nigel would move with them indicating that it would be particularly easy for the department to remove Nigel as he was still within his probationary period. CORO added that he had been informed that he would no longer be involved in Community Work and Research, but would be moved to Field Services Section and involvement in Day Centres. A discussion developed about what was viable community work, the role and responsibilities of the workers, and the possibility of worker involvement in group advocacy, even in a situation of potential conflict. The discussion became increasingly polarised and ended abruptly. CORO commented "I want writers not fighters", and subsequently stated that the die had been cast.

The next week was full of political manoeuvres. Nigel was informed by CORO that he would not be confirmed in his appointment after his probationary period expired. The reason given was that there was a change of policy and that he would be given good references. CORO said he felt guilty about this decision. Nigel was then seen by the Director and told he was being asked to leave because of unsuitability. The Director said that Nigel's views about community work were not consistent with those of the department. This change of attitude presumably occurred because of the implications of admitting in writing that there had been a change in policy.

The conversations and information given to Jim were equally sinister. He was told that he would have to leave at the end of the month. If he refused then he would be made redundant because the department was reverting to a policy of employing Community Liaison Officers. He was told that, if necessary, the Urban Aid grant would be returned to the Home Office. However because of the implications of reporting the facts to the Social Services Committee, and subsequent publicity, this was later changed. He was now going to be removed on disciplinary grounds. The reasons were not stated but he was assured that this could be carried out with a minimum of fuss and delay.

On 30th June Jim resigned from his position as community worker. This was not because of the threats made against him but because of the change in community work policy. The sacking of Nigel and the difficulties of working in the department were secondary reasons.

jim king &

nigel godfrey

IRON FISTS ..... kid gloves

Much of what is written about the new "growth industry" of community work should breed a certain suspicion in that it is at the very least premature if not unrealistic in its optimism. Its failure often is to consider the nature of the state and the reason for the state's sponsorship of certain activities. Without getting into all the theoretical ins and outs of the question it is possible that the "state in capitalist society," (1) is imbued with the values,and pursues the ends of the dominant class in that society; therefore it should surprise no-one that the state's reasons for sponsoring reforms (eg. community work) are not those of the people clamouring for the reforms. At the very least it is possible that the sponsors will be unable to transcend their culture and will unconsciously imbue the reform programme with their own values; on the other hand, they may consciously seek to co-opt the radicals, take the steam out of the movement, in which case the reforms take on the nature of a Marcusian benign repression. Yet many of the writers do not seriously consider these possibilities. Perhaps some consideration of the position in Northern Ireland will illustrate that all that glitters is not gold.

The army is one of the major institutions in Northern Ireland at the present time. In pursuit of law and order its policies are oftenmore widespread in their effects than may at first appear. To be brief: the army, for example, often controls street lighting in many parts of Belfast and elsewhere so as to enable foot patrols to continue unseen. For the same reason you may find that your white-painted gable wall has been painted a darker colour while you were asleep. But what of community work? What are we to make of it when the army the ultimate back-up of the state and its values, is involved?

There are two obvious answers to the question. Firstly, community involvement is good public relations. The regimental band plays for old age pensioners, or a group of teenagers is taken on a weekend adventure camp. Surely there is nothing sinister about such involvement. The most that could be said about it is that it should be called public relations work rather than community work, for it makes a mockery of the term. The Community Development Officers (CDOs) of Northern Irelands now defunct Community Relations Commission often made this point in their reports to their director, Hywel Griffiths (now Professor of Social Administration at the new University of Ulster, Coleraine.) For example, one wrote:-

> "It is reasonable that the army or police should engage in P.R. work; but if this is what it is it should be financed by the Ministry of Defence (Westminster) for the army, or the Ministry of Home Affairs (Stormont) for the police."

The army receives 100% grants under Northern Irelands Social Needs legislation (equivalent to England's Urban Needs legislation) for "community work" projects.

Other CDOs were also critical of the army's whole approach.

"When the army intervenes in a community situation it is to offer concrete help, money buildings, manpower,etc. By so doing it prevents the slow but valuable educative process which takes place when a community itself undertakes to acquire facilities, etc.."

The army had at one time a project called Operation WHAM (Win Hearts and Minds.) Their whole community work approach was about as delicate as a fist in the face as the very word WHAM suggests, and angered the CDOs, who often saw months of patient work ruined overnight. However, most of them were hasty to point out that: "There is nothing sinister about the army's involvement, but rather that its role in community development is short-lived and is not a contribution which will produce a lasting effect," as one CDO wrote.
Griffiths, Director of the Community Development Programme agreed, and continues to do so; there is nothing sinister, he writes recently, but
"Its (the army's) very existence as an all-powerful agency in the community is the antithesis of community development." (2)

But it is such not merely because it is public relations work or because it does things for people, but for other reasons which Griffiths does not mention, and which will be considered eventually.

A second plausible answer to the original question is that community involvement is one way of gathering intelligence. As one police Community Relations Officer put it to me:
"A militant group would ask the army for a bulldozer to clear an area. Instead of saying 'It's not too bad; why don't you get the men together to do it?' they would say, ' sure; bring your mates here tomorrow morning and we'll have the bulldozer here.' So next morning it would be,"Hello Jim. Who's this? Oh, your mate, Frank.' And they'd nip round behind the bulldozer writing down 'Jim, Frank, etc..'"

It should be pointed out that the RUC have their community relations branch. In their literature they claim that it is to keep in contact with people on the ground, for this contact was lost when the police patrols became motorised. They fail to add that the reason for going motorised in the first place was that people were shooting at them, and that the motors were jeeps, not Ford Escorts!

However, for any number of reasons , not the least of which is that the police are themselves 'natives' and have to live here, their community work involvement is more likely to be straight public relations work with a theoretical legitimacy as 'crime prevention' rather than army style intelligence gathering.

So much for the obvious reasons. But together they do not explain the magnitude of the army's involvement. This goes to a high level and is administratively planned for the Belfast area especially. In each police district, for example, there are Community Development Co-ordinating Committees at which the RUC community relations , the army community relations officer and the civil liason officers attend. Nothing sinister went on at these meetings, as evidenced at the minutes. For example, the North Belfast Co-ordinating Committee :-
" accepted that the Committee had no executive function and that its prime purpose was to provide for an organized but informal exchange of views and information among people officially concerned with community relations."

However, a look at the army's overall strategy may point to other motives. Armies are not usually eloquent as to their strategies, especially at times of emergency. But before our present troubles escalated, Brigadier Frank Kitson wrote a book entitled " Low Intensity Operations"(3) in which he laid out what army counter-insurgency should be. As an apparent reward for his work he was made commander of land forces in Northern Ireland and was such during the internment operation of August 1971. He has now moved on to greener pastures, training young officers for the army. There is no doubt that his policies are still very much in force - tactics may have altered given the change in circumstances e.g. the army's present low profile because of the ceasefire but the strategy remains the same.

Kitson, unoriginally, likens the guerilla to a fish in water. He says the fish can be caught by being attacked directly. As this often cannot work, it may be necessary to pollute the water. What this means is a policy of spot checks,

random arrests, aggression etc. to break up the social cohesion of areas, turn communities into mere aggregates where each individual, the guerilla included stand out. However, Kitson continues, this may be counter-productive. He much prefers to win the allegiance of the people away from the insurgents. To this end it is necessary that the army be at the centre of the states' activities :-
" Military officers themselves have to vet action proposed by other departments in pursuance of the government's long-term aims in order to assure that it is not harmful to the operational effort." (p.52.)
The minimum requirements of counter insurgency are " unified planning, centralized control and a single point of responsibility."

This is at central government level but it is also necessary to have local committees made up of government, police and army representatives. Is it a coincidence that such committees were formed in Northern Ireland in 1972, that they were chaired by the local civil liason officers and that these committees still exist? Through these committees local army commanders could vet groups which sought help from the government. Through co-ordination the army could recommend only 'good' groups for grants and help and thus divide the community, for the 'bad' groups not only do not receive help but come to resent the 'good'groups receivingit.

This presumably was the logic behind a comprehensive plan for play facilities drawn up by a Major of the Royal Marine Commandos for Northern Ireland in 1972. There were to be numerous play-groups for the 'good' people of the area, there were to be numerous play-streets (giving children aplace to play and also ensuring that terrorists did not have free movement through the area by car). His aim he explained was :-
" To improve the environment for the children of the area in the short-term with a view in the long-term for the decent people of the area to control affairs and oust the gunmen and terrorists."
In fact, these plans never materialised, nor did the Co-ordinating Committees ever work well. Army sponsorship of anything is an infallible recipe for its failure in many areas. But the point is surely that the army's involvement is not " not sinister ", is more than merely public relations or intelligence gathering but that it is a tool towards the end of isolating the guerrilla. And this is why the army's community work is the very antithesis of community work, for it seeks to divide the community.

For Kitson, reform is atechnique for repression. He says that it is necessary to get abreathing space by promising that concessions will be made if there is a period of calm. Having got such a period it is urgent to implement the concessions, discover and "neutralize genuine subversives" and "associate as many prominent members of the population, especially those who have been engaged in non-violent action, with the government."(p.87.) Co-optation here is not a regrettable outcome but a conscious policy.

It may be argued that Northern Ireland is unique and that therefore none of this is applicable elsewhere in the British Isles. But is the uniqueness an aberration, or is it the exception that proves some sort of rule?

bill rolston

Footnotes

1. See 'State in Capitalist Society' - Ralph Milliband (London. Weiderfield & Nicholson 1969)
2. See 'Carrying on in the Middle of Violent Conflict: Some Observations of Experience in N. Ireland' in 'Community Work - One' - Jones & Mayo RKP 1974
3. 'Low Intensity Operations' - Brigadier Frank Kitson (London. Weiderfield & Nicholson 1969)

SUBVERSIVES

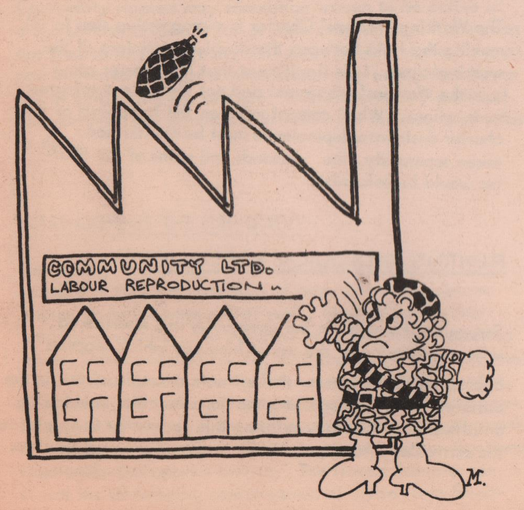
WOMEN in the COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY REDEFINED

Socialist community workers appear to prefer the use of the term 'activist' in spheres of collective, working class struggle, such as Trade Unions, Tenants'Associations etc. These activists believe the term 'community' to be misleading because it denotes a reactionary, bourgeois concept of the stable local unit with common interests, similar to the bourgeois academic definition of the unified society.

Mariarosa Della Costa (1) offers a Marxist definition which reopens the whole perspective for working class struggle and revolutionary organisation. If 'community' is to be defined in Marxist terms then it should be related to the workings of capital. The workplace is the sphere of production, and the sphere of reproduction is the homeplace or community. Reproduction in the home is essentially the reproduction of labour power, which is the servicing of members of the family by the housewife. Since women do not receive a wage for this work certain 'marxists' argue that as house wives they are not directly involved in the working class struggle, which is the struggle of the waged worker.

Mariarosa argues that the relation of the housewife to her family is a capitalist determined social relation which is integral to capitalist production. Her labour reproduces the wage earner for the productive process, thus the working class struggle of the wage earner is interdependent with the struggle of the unwaged housewife. Women as housewives are not auxilliary to capitalism, and not, therefore , auxilliary to the working class struggle. They are part of the struggle and part of the working class.



This Marxist definition of 'community' as first and foremost the home acknowledges woman as the central figure of subversion and working class struggle in the community If we refer to Marx's definition new dimensions become evident, community " as flowing from the class solidarity to be achieved through revolutionary practice" encompasses the struggle of women against their oppressors.

WOMEN THE UNWAGED WORKERS

Housewives are instruments of the capitalist state ideological apparatus, in disciplining and shaping the labour force. This role is supported by sexist and maternal ideologies which emphasise housework and motherhood as specifically 'woman's work'.

The struggle of the housewife is to fight the boss behind her husband by refusing to reproduce labour power. Thus women could participate in the class struggle against capital by rejecting bourgeois ideologies of family and motherhood, and, consequently by refuting their ideological role of disciplining and shaping the labour force. To quote Angela Weir: "We must start from the position that capitalism must pay for the reproduction of its labour power. This means universal, complete and free welfare services - we must oppose all the forces, legal, ideological and material which lock women in domestic labour." (2)

The struggle of women rejects reformist diversions: 'wages for housework' is a reactionary demand, in that its satisfaction would institutionalise and entrench women even more immovably in the home and men in the factory Working for a wage in the workplace exposes women to a double exploitation - in the home and in the workplace. 'Women's work' is an extension of sexist division of labour with all the connotations of inferiority and poor marketability that this entails. If women do work for a wage it is often because of high rents, increasing food costs and the like - ie costs involved in the reproduction of labour. Rather than succumb to wage labour they could refuse to pay their rent, on the basis that their housework labour has already profited capital and capital should therefore bear the cost of the continued reproduction and maintenance of labour.

In their Trade Unions women begin to struggle collectively (indeed waged work itself can have the attraction of a collective experience for the isolated housewife), but collective struggle in the workplace is not a struggle against the full oppression of women in society

Wage struggles or economistic struggles do not necessarily lead to a change in the nature of a woman's life, as Leon Trotsky has documented. If struggles in the workplace are unaccompanied by struggles in the homeplace the total struggle is weakened. I f the interdependence between

unwaged and waged to capital is not recognised and fought then the social relations determined by capital in the family are not challenged. Women are fighting for a freeing of the relationships of men to women from the productive forces of capital. In the Soviet Union this struggle has been lost and women are doubly oppressed by state capitalism.

The struggle focusses on the particular oppression of women in the home and the power relationship between men and women maintained by capital and supporting ideologies. Wage-earning women are affected at work by the sexist ideology and they are also part-time housewives. All women must engage in the struggle in the community.

SUVERSION IN THE COMMUNITY

Women must unite on the basis of the labour power they produce and the social power that this gives them to reject this role and demand the socialisation of domestic tasks.

FIGHTING WELFARE STATE REPRESSION

In the present economic crisis the interests of capital lie in re-inforcing woman's role as a housewife. When there is a shortage of wage-labour, capital may pay more for the reproduction of labour. Nurseries were provided in the war when capital needed women in the factories. However, the socialisation by capital of domestic tasks will be limited because the ideological role of the family is central :-

" The socialisation of pre-school childcare might also reduce competitiveness, individualism and passive acceptance of authoritarianism. In addition eliminating domestic labour further, might undermine male domination, sex divisions within the working class and working class womens' passivity all of which contribute to the political stability of capitalist society." (4)

In this time of increased unemployment, capital reduces expenditure on socialised domestic tasks as it does not need the women as wage earners. Plans for theprovision of day nurseries, old people's homes etc. are cut. Women are encouraged to fulfill the tasks of child care and elderly parent care in the home.

Women must fight the cuts collectively and press for the extension of the Welfare State as part of the wider struggle to demand the socialisation of tasks that were formerly undertaken privately within the home. At the same time women must demand this on their own terms.

Women must also recognise that the Welfare State fulfills a repressive function if its benefits are seen as ends in themselves. Elizabet Wilson (5) has described how the Welfare State operates to bolster up the family and womens' position in the home. She states that women must :-

" ...Firstly do agitational work to extend a true understanding of the real nature of the Welfare State asit is at the moment. They must initiate forms of struggle to extend control over its benefits and fight the sexism of the Welfare State which contributes to their oppression. "

Feminists have been in the forefront of such struggles but as Sheila Rowbotham (6) indicates :-

"...they even, despite the economic conditions of the 1920's and 1930's accomplished some welfare reforms.... they emerged reasonable and liberal but confining the feminists to a series of isolated goals. Feminists meant more reforms, more welfare and equal pay...It was no longer in opposition to the structure and culture of capitalist, male dominated society."

FIGHTING WITH WAGE W ORKERS

Women as a group form a crucial link between the factory and community outside. Only they are in both places - working both in the home and out of it. Their role in the reproduction of labour is integral to production in the factory.

Groups of women can struggle within their trade unions and their husbands' trade unions to demand concessions in the deprived conditions of both home and the workplace. Women are particularly aware of conditions due to their domestic role of maintaining the conditions to reproduce labour. The living conditions of the worker for his reproduction are kept to a minimumby capital - notably in the home but also in the factory. Thus in the film " Blow to Blow ", we see how women organise partly over conditions in their workplace - the intolerable heat and poor facilities.

Militancy by trade unions to improve conditions in the homeplace have been triggered off by women. As far back as 1917 women in Glasgow were striking against rent rises (7) gaining support from trade unions and soldiers at the front. This form of solidarity manifests the interdependence of community and workplace and the double exploitation of the working class. Conversely, activities in the community at times of workplace strikes, organised by women in support of their husbands, make clear the links between home and work and recognise that the common enemy is capital. Support by women in the miners' strike is an example.

The Working Womens' Charter is a progressive step in (8) making the links between the double oppressions of the working class. It is significant that the charter came from the Womens' Movement and not the male dominated trade unions. When campaigning on the ten points of the charter their interdependence must be maintained. If taken separately, the demands and gains of the charter would be reformist.

FIGHTING IDEOLOGICAL REPRESSION

Struggles of women in the community are interlinked with a refutation of the sexist ideology which supports oppression in the home. An extreme example of this is the battered wife. Recognising the importance of developing an alternative ideology refuting this oppression is crucial to the particular interestsof women in the wider struggle. An

alternative ideology will emerge together with the struggle of women in the community, part of which is their rejection of oppression and male domination in social relations.

FIGHTING FOR CONTROL OF OUR BODIES

Control of their bodies will free women fron the exclusivity of domestic labour. Fighting for Free Abortion on Demand is crucial to this end. When we say that we want control of our own bodies we are challenging the domination of capital which has transformed our reproductive organs into instruments for the reproduction of labour. Thus demands for abortion have a subversive significance. Working class women have been denied access to abortion because their work is to reproduce labour both in giving birth to and servicing labour.

BEWARE OF COMMUNITY WORKERS

State supported community work operates from a reactionary concept of community as a social unit and as a locality. It has an essentially oppressive impact on women. Community workers have been employed at a time of crisis and consequent social change. The necessity to capital of maintaining the family and the position of women in it have led to the pathology theory - Seebohm - community work circuit.

When the community worker establishes "mothers" groups they are maintaining the ideology of motherhood and repressing the developing consciousness of women who may be rejecting their exploitation in the home by rejecting domestic tasks. Thus the subversive potential of groups of women in the community is destroyed. Encouraging groups of women to help old people or run playgroups maintains the sexist ideology of womens work and tasks.

The present crisis of capitalism has led to cut-backs in the Welfare State and community workers encourage women to fill the gaps by encouraging neighbourhood self-help and substituting for the statesnueseries and old people's homes which capital no longer wants to pay for. Even activism against these cuts - by the nature of the community workers' task to maintain liberal democracy - leads to concensus and reformist gains.

Community workers may encourage women to be active in a sexist tenants association or claimants union. The women are treated as sex objects, delegated to more domestic tasks and expected to adopt a male way of expressing themselves anf of perceiving the struggle. Male community workers can continue this oppression of women in the way they relate to them.

CASE CONNIE THE SUBVERSIVE

Community workers as women can contribute to the struggle if they are conscious of their own oppression as women in their homes and at work, translating this into subversive activity. As activists wi th facilities - meeting rooms, information and skills, printing etc. - they can make a particular contribution that an unwaged activist cannot. Conversely, they can mitigate against the developing consciousness of women in the community if they are not aware of their own oppression. They can perpetuate the reactionary ideologies that oppress women. The liberal feminist can divert the developing consciousness of women into blind-alley exercises of piecemeal gains.

Community workers as women must struggle in their own workplace against sexist attitudes and oppression. They must redefine community as the homeplace and women as the central subversive figure i n the community and maintain this analysis against reactionary concepts of community. Radical male workers who do not recognise the significance in Marxist analysis of the home in the community must be enlightened for they too contribute to the oppression of women.

The encouragement of the collectivity of women in the community mus t relate to the struggle of women and is not and in itself. Collectivity is a development from the isolation of the housewife towards group subversion but does not automatically lead to subversion and can be diverted to other reformist and reactionary ends.

linda harvey

1. Mariarosa Dalla Costa - The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community.
2. Angela Weir - The Reproduction of Labour Power (in the Womens' Issue of Case Con 15.
3. Leon Trotsky - Women and the Family.
4. Jean Gardiner - Womens' Domestic Labour.
5. Elizabeth Wilson - Women and the Welfare State (Red Rag pamphlet No.2.)
6. Sheila Rowbotham - Womens' Consciousness Man's World.
7. J. Hinton - The First Shop Stewards Movement.
8. See Spare Rib No.27.

TIME OUTSIDE

"The probationer shall lead an industrious life". These words, echoing Victorian values, are still to be found on every probation order handed down from the courts. The implication is clear. One of the pre-requisites for restoration as an honest and useful member of society is regular work. The emphasis on rehabilitation and reparation through work contained in community service orders seems little different from the philosophy which inspired the introduction of probation in 1907. Community service does nothing to change the inhumanity of prison existence but, as an alternative to custody, does prevent certain individuals from going to prison. In another guise the classic dilemma once again confro nts reformers. The degradation of a few individuals is averted but the system remains unchanged. These reservations are a necessary prelude to a critical look at the effectiveness of CSOs so far.

Some important changes in the State's policy towards offenders have taken place in the last decade. For pragmatic rather than philanthropic considerations, greater emphasis has been placed on punishment/treatment in the community. In1966 Roy Jenkins asked the Advisory Council on the Penal System to examine "what changes and additions might be made in the existing range of non-custodial penalties". Three factors prompted the request: Concern was being expressed about the rising number of men and women in custody, often two or three occupied (and still do) cells designed in the nineteenth century for one person; The increasing costs of keeping people in prison (now £40 a week) and supporting any dependants outside; Thirdly, the failure of prison and borstal to prevent recidivism, 70% re-offending withinthree years of release.

After five years of rumination the Advisory Council came up with a few new little numbers, with CSOs the star turn. To the Council the CSO embodied the bourgeois tenet of reformation through work with an element of reparation to society. Moreover the CSO would not incur the cost of keeping an offender locked away. CSOs were incorporated in the Criminal Justice Act 1972. The offender must consent to the order (like probation); he/she must work for between 40 and 240 hours (specified on the order) in his/her leisure time as directed by the community service organiser (a probation officer) within a twelve month period. The order must be made for an imprisonable offence and the offender must be over 17 years of age. No specific offence or age-group is excluded.

The choice of the probation service as the operating agency was fairly natural - agents of the court, links with the community, caring and controlling role, and all that. It was also in line with the greater involvement of the probation service in the penal system which began with the assumption of responsibility for statutory after-care and prison welfare in1966, and continued with the parole function introduced in 1968.

The Home Office asked Inner London, Kent, Nottingham, Shropshire, Durham and South-West Lancashire to set up pilot schemes. My information about the first three, shows significant similarities between the different schemes.

Although the operators of the scheme have explicitly excluded only people heavily addicted to drink or drugs, in practice the range of offences for which CSOs have been made is fairly limited. The list includes theft, burglary, assault, criminal damage, minor drug offences and semi-serious traffic offences (e.g no insurance). The age-range too has been more or less restricted: in Inner London 58% of orders being made on 17 - 21 year olds; nationally 908 of 1190 orders made in the first eighteen months of the scheme's operation were made on persons within the 17 - 25 years age group.

Most schemes operate from a centre where some work can be be done and jobs provided with voluntary organisations. Kent and Nottingham had a great deal of cooperation from local voluntary organisations, but London fared worse with only one in eight of those approached responding.

As for the types of job, community service can conjure up images of rock-breaking outside an old peoples' home. Indeed many of the jobs are manual and practical: making toys, nature conservation, constructing adventure playgrounds etc.. However Nottingham in particular has been successful in finding other tasks: helping with a tenants association and a community newspaper, and organising a junior football team among other things.

It is also worth noting that in the first eighteen months in Nottingham nearly a third of the workers carried on with their tasks after their order had been completed.

The official seal of sucess is thus placed on community service, but what of the reality ?In the work situation there is often a recognition by both parties,i.e offender and voluntary organiser, of each other's humanity and qualities. Through this interaction many offenders have been decategorised from 'criminal' to human being, and have recognised, perhaps for the first time, their own self-worth. But CSOs still have not, in practice, diminished the numbers incarcerated every day. Radical Alternatives to Prison have shown the limitations of CSOs - in 1973 only 256 CSOs were made as opposed to 7700 prison sentences (just 3%). With regard to their effect on recidivism over a third of all orders were rescinded either because of non-compliance or further offences. R.A.P has been in the forefro nt of criticism of CSOs. They describe the scheme as an "increasingly sanction-ridden form of forced labour", and call for more democratically-based forms of work, with offenders choosing their own projects and being paid union rates for the job.

It is appropriate that Dick Pooley who has been working for prisoners' rights with P.R.O.P for a number of years should make the most telling criticism of CSOs: "Community Service Orders serve very little purpose in the general run of things, simply because the wrong type of person is awarded it, whilst those who would gain the most benefit are never considered. I speak of the thousands of unfortunates who are at any time locked-up in the most foul conditions of our prisons, men who would achieve great benefit from being eased back into the community. I know that these men would have a great deal to offer to hospitals, old people, work amongst chronic alchoholics, and all other voluntary agencies crying out for manpower. These poor bastards have spent the best part of their life in prison; These are the people the probation officers should be attempting to help. It is far too easy to select from the court the wife-beaters, gas-meter bandits, estate-window smashers and the like. After all predictables are good for statistics."

Just so, predictables are extremely good for statistics. The limits vis a vis age and offence were remarked upon earlier. It is possible too that a spell on CSOs will provide an opportunity for some probation officers to further career aims. Community Service now has only a marginal relationship to the mainstream of collective action implied in the notion of 'community work'. Individual offenders are encouraged to make out for themselves, and if any collective action began it could be effectively curtailed by threat of sanctions. Nevertheless bourgeois, capitalist reality which pervades our society must be coped with and its purpose recognised before it can be rejected. How many can change anything from inside a prison cell? Community Service has potential for personal and communal growth, education and politicisation. Only, however, if the boundaries of age, offence and types of work are pushed outwards by the individual organisers and the groups working in penal reform. Otherwise CSOs will remain as they are now - just another gimmick.

adrian quinn

BOOK REVIEWS

'Community Work One ' edited by David Jones & Marjorie Mayo. RKP Dec.74. £1.95. 277p.
A review.

This is a collection of 17 papers (of which 10 draw heavily on case-studies of particular communities) which vary enormously in form and depth (and drift and dogma). The editors attribute their 'stylistic promiscuity' (p XV) to the heterogeneous nature of community work. This heavy, well-annotated volume is intended to begin an annual series, providing a forum for debate on several levels. There is no party line and the editors feel that "simplistic formulations may offer workers a seductive security" but are unlikely to fit situations of special human need (p XV).
- Is Case-Con in danger of such seduction,?

In their concern to present an open forum for debate the editors have achieved an uneasy marriage of libertarian case-studies and rousing radical rhetoric. Many papers are based on experiences in London, but community work in Ulster, Glasgow, Coventry, West Yorkshire and the USA is also described. Among the theoretical and general papers John Dearlove's "The Control of Change and the Legitimation of Community Action"(pp 22 - 39) is essential reading. This paper underwrites the editors' chances of providing more than a miscellany of slogans and songs of experience.

Community Work One has four parts of which 1 - 'Change, Conflict and Grassroots ' (six papers) and 1V - 'Strategies for Change - Two Critiques', explore the divergent views on the value of collective action - is political education a sufficient reason for community action ? Can people's power effect political change or is it always contained by existing social structures ? CDPs are criticised for failing to adopt ' a historical view of change' (p276), and the East London Claimants' Union suspects the motives of social workers who refer people to CUs (p 87) - will they be bribed by the SBC into case-working militants out of their struggle to abolish poverty ? Compelling Reading.

Parts 11 - 'Making Services Relevant and Responsive' (seven papers) and 111 - 'Training' (two papers) discuss planning, local authority community workers, new towns, community education and experiments in community training, all within the context of statutory limits to social action. Innocuous liberal conclusions. Where democratising development corporations is suggested (p 158), there needs to be more penetrating analysis. There is light relief from workers of the Albany on 'Community Arts', they define recreation as "recreation of the self from the cog-in-the-machine to the acting individual" (p 180)..from rock-bottom to grass-roots.. and then?..Does action always result from insight?

A measure of insight evidently evolves from practice. John Ward and Jef Smith in the Foreword suggest that "..if one of the hallmarks of a profession is its ability to capture the lessons of practice in the written word, then community work might be said to have come of age with this volume." (p X11) If coming of age is more a question of time than of political maturity, community work has attained professional status. 'Community Work One' is not, however, epoch-making.

Rosalie Watson