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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION AGENTS

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When President Margarida Maria Souto Filgueira of ABESS requested that I lecture on this subject I was inclined to ask to be relieved of the responsibility. In translation the phrase is "Community Development and Organization Agents." In most discussions the Community Organization Agent or Specialist comes within the defined province of the social work profession and the community development agent or specialist falls within a separate category broader than social work.

My disinclination was influenced by the fact that for many years I have disagreed sharply with the North American social workers who have endeavored to equate social work community organization and community development. Many of them contend that social work training is adequate preparation for community development work. However recalling the work of Dona Lourdes Santos in Natal and the Brazilian Social workers role in the favelas in São Paulo reported in the December, 1962 issue of "Americas" my misgivings seemed parochial in this setting. Furthermore, this is to the best of my knowledge the first time any National Association of schools of social work has seriously devoted a special meeting and this much time to the subject of the C.D.O.

I

I do not stand alone in holding the view that social work community organization, at least in the United States, has both assets and liabilities in connection with community development. Dr. Arthur Dunham 1/ lists nine assets:

- "1. He has considerable understanding of the dynamics of individual and group behavior and of community life.

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1/ Recently retired professor of community organization, School of Social Work, University of Michigan.

2. He is trained to work with people on a cooperative, participative, non-authoritative basis. He should be able to work with widely different varieties of individuals and groups.
3. It is part of his professional philosophy to start where people are, to respect the rights of self-determination (within the general framework of community and society), and to serve as an enabler, resource, consultant and creative participant rather than as a decision-maker, autocratic director or official public leader.
4. He is trained for program operation - and community development is operational.
5. He is accustomed to using a problem-solving approach, with its successive "steps": recognition of need, analysis, planning, action, evaluation.
6. His equipment normally includes skills important for community development. Among these are: (1) fact-finding, surveys and studies; (2) planning and program development; (3) conference, group process and committee operation; (4) organization and administration; (5) communication, verbal and written, education, interpretation, public relations, participation in meetings of various sorts; (6) negotiation and social action.
7. He should have a good working knowledge of types of community resources, governmental and voluntary, and of community power structure.
8. He is accustomed to liaison relationships with other agencies and organizations.
9. He is frequently a "generalist" in community organization rather than a specialist in some one area or aspect of community organization."

I cannot agree with all of Dr. Dunham's points. The social worker has considerable understanding of the dynamics of individual and group behavior, but how much does he know about the dynamics of community life? He may have some knowledge of the community of his clientele - but does he understand the dynamics of the community as a whole? His knowledge of community resources, governmental and non-governmental, is related usually to the social services. In our discussions here I wonder how many knew of or have considered the community development potential of such an organization as the

Junior Chamber of Commerce?

Dr. Dunham suggests some of the liabilities of the community organization worker in community development:

- "1. He frequently lacks an adequate social science background.
2. He usually lacks adequate orientation to the nature, background, concepts and principles of community development as distinguished from the traditional types of community welfare organization...
3. His training and experience in community organization may have been primarily in such specialized areas as joint fund-raising, research or public relations, or certain highly specialized areas in health and welfare planning...
4. He often lacks adequate knowledge of other fields of community life outside of health, welfare and recreation - for example, industry and commerce, education, public health, housing, public administration and organized religion.
5. He usually lacks systematic training or experience in adult education, which is likely to be a major element in community development.
6. Social work as a profession is not well understood, and community organization is the least understood specialization in social work. The worker usually has to start from scratch (if not farther back!) in trying to interpret what he is trying to do and how he may be able to help. It is usually more difficult to interpret a generalist than a specialist job.
7. Social work as a profession has relatively low prestige as compared with older and more established professions.
8. Many of the concepts and methods of the community organization worker are not scientifically tested for validity and effectiveness. In this respect, the community organization worker may suffer by comparison with older and more established professions.
9. The community organization worker is usually familiar with liaison relationships with other organizations, but he is

unlikely to have had experience as a member of an interprofessional team. Yet the team relationship is frequently an important aspect of community development."

I wish to underscore some limitations set forth by Dr. Dunham and add a few of my own:

1. Social work has been primarily palliative. It is concerned with the "worthy poor."
2. Social work is not sufficiently identified with broad socio-economic planning and action.
3. In some instances there has been overriding emphasis on casework and specialization.
4. Until recently community development has been rural oriented.
5. Social work does not view the community as a whole.
6. Supervised field work which is an integral part of training is not geared to community development.

How many of these limitations and assets are applicable to Brazilian Social Workers? It is probable that Brazilian Social Work in contrast with that in other countries may not have all of these problems because it has not become overspecialized.

II

Who are the C.D.O. agents? They may be social workers but seldom have been in the past because of the rural and agricultural orientation of community development. Community development first came to international attention in the rural village setting. In Asia, particularly in India, the multi-purpose village level worker came into being in 1952. He was usually a village young man given upwards to eighteen months training with strong emphasis on agriculture and agricultural extension methods. Variations of the village multi-purpose worker are being used in several countries. Under the strong leadership of the late President Magsaysay young college graduates were attracted to the program in the Philippines.

In the former British and French territories particularly in Africa the village worker served as a "promoter" or mass education worker.

Other types of C.D.O. agents have emerged to meet the needs of particular countries. In Venezuela as the result of orientation and indoctrination local governmental officials are serving as "indirect" C.D.O. agents and enlisting the support of concerned local departments. In El Salvador a new program is being launched by a semi-autonomous unit in the Ministry of Education with specially trained C.D.O. team leaders.

III

Today there is an increasingly apparent need for urban community development C.D.O.'s. We are on the horizon of developing a new type of C.D.O. agent for the city. This has been done for villages. The type of training provided village oriented workers, including the infusion of the U.S. agricultural extension approach is inappropriate for urban areas.

It is in the urban area that social work may make its major contribution to community development. Such a direct pattern of operation as an adaptation of the "settlement house" is feasible. In the United States the social service group worker and community organization specialists are being used in urban renewal programs. As yet we have not produced a community development agent. However as a result of increasing concern with the "grey areas" of cities and such problems as juvenile delinquency sizable foundation and federal grants have been made to assess problems and "experiment". There are other recent moves including the establishment two years ago of an interdisciplinary community development center at the University of Missouri which I shall refer to later.

In Brazil, probably more so than in my country and many others the social worker is beginning to function as a community development agent. The pressing reality of the Northeast has moved social work, even in rural areas, into such action programs as rural unions and cooperatives. In Brazil's cities social workers are moving into urban community development as key members of teams or as leaders in the favela action programs.

I have been asked to comment on the reason for team work. The answer seems obvious. No one discipline is qualified to respond to the needs expressed by the people themselves. The social worker may help evaluate the situation and help organize the community. If the principles of beginning where the people are and of responding to the needs they express health, education, sanitation, public works and other technical personnel may be needed on the teams.

I have been asked to comment on who should be on the team. And what should be team training for action. Here again urban experience is limited and has varied. An urban team may include as a nucleus a physical planner, and architect, a sociologist and a social worker trained as a community development agent. Experience suggests others representing various aspects of urban life such as public health, adult education and public works personnel undoubtedly should be included in the planning as well as the action.

What should be the team training for action? Ideally there should be some joint orientation and joint pre-service field experience. However from a practical point of view it is probable that much of the team training will grow out of on the job experience and the development of mutual understanding and respect for one another's contributions and limitations. In this area there is a need for jointly developed community case material to be used for pre-service and in-service training.

What should be the social workers responsibilities in the team at the various levels and phases of the program? What should be the specific participation of the social worker in the community? Each of these questions posed by Dona Margarida Maria merits serious consideration and is worthy of a lecture.

Although what is being said here is largely conjecture and should be taken as tentative it is essential that we face up to such questions. A time of social revolution calls for a revolution in ideas including those relevant to the training and participation of social workers in the present reality.

What should be the social workers responsibility in the team at various levels and phases of the program? What should be the specific participation of the social worker in the community? The first answer is dependent on what the Brazilian social worker has to offer and the second answer is dependent on the philosophy of Brazilian social work. An outsider may offer some reassurance but the answers to be honest must emerge from your Brazilian experience and the vision

reflected by groups such as this one.

IV

I wish to close with a few observations directed at the specifics of training for C.D.O.'s, raise a few questions and make one recommendation to ABESS.

The breadth of training required for community development is suggested in the curriculum of a recently established two year graduate course at the University of Missouri:

"FIRST YEAR

Social Psychology of Community Life;
 Economic Organization of the Community;
 Political Organization of the Community;
 Social Organization of the Community;
 Techniques of Social Investigation (First Semester);
 Principles of Community Development (First Semester);
 Seminar in Community Development I (Second Semester);
 Action Research (Second Semester);
 Elective (First Semester);
 Elective (Second Semester);

SECOND YEAR

FIRST SEMESTER:

Field Practice;
 Research;

SECOND SEMESTER:

Cultural Anthropology and the Community;
Community and Area Planning;
Social Policy and Institutional Resources;
Seminar in Community Development II;
Elective."

Graduate training in community development with strong emphasis on agriculture and the rural sectors is now being offered by the University of the Philippines. The salient features of the program include:

- " - Exposure of the students to the theoretical underpinnings of community development and other related development activities, including the basic postulates and research findings of the various social science disciplines and their applicability to such development activities.
- Exposure of the students to insights into certain crucial areas affecting development, such as local government, leadership, communications, motivations, economics, innovations, culture change, and administration.
- Emphasis on the developmental problems of emerging cultures.
- Increasing the students' awareness of the pragmatic aspects of actual development operations through seminars and other discussion sessions with active practitioners in the government as well as outside of it.
- For the students who are without practical experience in community development work, internship with field workers.
- Provision of an opportunity for analytic and creative thinking through the students' exposure to practical research methodology and through the opportunity to undertake significant and independent study in the course of thesis preparation.

The Philippine list of Curricular offerings include:

- Community development. Comparative community development; Rural government; Agricultural communications; Research Methods in Agricultural Education; Social Psychology; Rural Sociology; Principles of rural leadership; Community Survey and program planning; Comparative local government; Planning and administration of community development; Special topics in social and cultural change; Audio-Visual Service; Principles of administration and supervision; Adult education in agriculture; Educational sociology; Evaluation in extension; Group dynamics; Seminar on problems of community development; Land economics; Farm Management; Agricultural policy; Advanced agricultural economics; Public problems in agricultural economics; Public problems in agriculture."

Because community development is "fashionable" and because of a variety of pressures several short six and ten week training courses have been established in many countries. Although such courses lack depth and frequently tend to confuse they merit careful study.

In planning C.D.O. training I hope Brazilian social workers will study and adapt experience from many parts of the world ranging from the French to the Indians experience and, include study of such curriculum as that developed in the social administration program of University College in Swansea-England.

It is difficult to find a balance in training C.D.O. agents. A general course should encompass human ecology (the study of P.O.E.T., people, organization, environment and technology) and ekistics, the study of the human settlement. In addition C.D.O. agents with prior training in social work require training in statistics and research methods now offered by several schools of social work plus courses in economics and adult education including group dynamics which are not now a part of social work training.

I shall close with one or two questions to ABESS. Should all the member schools train C.D.O. agents? Should there be more emphasis on quality?

Finally a recommendation:

It is recommended as one action to be taken at this seminar that A.B.E.S. (Brazilian Association of Schools of Social Work) be asked to establish and activate at an early date a community development curriculum committee.