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THE COMMUNITY ADVOCACY DEPOT

prepared by

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prepared for

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF HOUSING:

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

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This conference is billed as a "Kaleidoscope on Housing ...". The title indicates a presentation or exchange of scattered information on the spectrum of housing. The list of speakers indicates who is thought to have knowledge or information on housing. The speakers are from government, business, education, and social groups... all are part of organizations. Except in the context of an organization, poor people do not qualify as having information on housing...

What is the effect of information? What is the effect of having information? He, who has information, has an opportunity to affect a situation positively. He may define a problem so that a solution is perceptible. He may use information to design affective courses of action. Or he may be complacent... safe and warm in his knowledge, pleasantly aware of situations and events without needing to affect them. Pacified by knowledge or stimulated by opportunity, the person that has information has a choice of action. The person without information may not be aware of a choice, much less have bases for decision.

What is the effect of being studied? A person may have his problems defined for him. A problem area may be clarified so that he may proceed to change his situation. An alternative course may be illuminated. Or the study may reinforce his inertia, his resistance to change. The study may illuminate the problem in a way that does not offer hope for improvement. The study may reinforce opinions but not stimulate change. Studying a situation changes that situation ... be it for change or resistance for change. Groups should keep this perhaps foremost in mind when interjected themselves into social situations.

People need information. People need information in order to change ... or to maintain status quo, for the factors affecting status quo are changing. Information or knowledge is needed as a base for making decisions, for problem-solving.

Poor people are not in the mainstream of information flow and use. They are not acquainted with interpreting and using information.

CAD seeks information. CAD seeks information on situations and events that will affect poor people and those through which poor people may affect themselves. CAD suggests interpretations and implications of situations and events. CAD advises poor people on the implications of their courses of action. CAD designs alternative courses of action to encourage a choice of direction and experience at decision-making. In sum, the CAD aids poor people's learning how to become a viable part of society.

CAD evolved during the first Urban Renewal Program in Champaign. The project area residents faced a situation of forced change. They did not know how to react. They did not understand urban renewal or any course of action available to them. Citizens approached the University of Illinois and other groups for assistance. Citizens asked the University of Illinois, as the major societal institution in Champaign County and a center of learning, to accept a social responsibility in the plight of the poor people. The university responded by advising community residents through a technical assistance group.

As an outcome of the Urban Renewal Program and the technical assistance, non-profit community groups sponsored all the development projects. Those community continued their interest and activity in urban and housing affairs. Also, CAD became established as

a technical assistance and advocacy service. It became a clearinghouse for information for poor people about urban and housing problems. CAD became the manifestation of the poor people's need and desire for information to improve their situation.

CAD now operates at two scales: the urban scale and the home scale. At the urban scale, CAD helps the people of the Project Illini and Urbana areas to prepare for participation in urban renewal. Urban studies in the Clock St, Spaulding Park, and Rantoul areas will help poor people define problems and participatory solutions. CAD also proposes a Neighborhood Facilities for education and the constructive direction of energies to improve the life situation for poor people. This facility will not be a sink for siphoning off excess energy of militants.

At the home scale, CAD encourages people to own homes through participation in an FHA SECTION 235 home-ownership program. In conjunction, an FHA SECTION 237 credit-counselling program exists. The program is for people who do not qualify for the FHA SECTION 235 interest-subsidy program because of irregular income or poor credit. The program provides counselling for management of income and debt service so that the family can afford to purchase a home through FHA SECTION 235. The Concerned Citizens' Committee, Family Services of Champaign County, Legal Services of Champaign County, and the Urban League of Champaign County sponsor the credit-counselling program. CAD and the Jane Addams Graduate School of Social Work man the program. A comparative study of consumer goods and services will be available to poor people through CAD and this program.

CAD encourages home improvement, but no funds are available. Lenders make more money in areas other than home improvement. CAD, therefore, advises people how to improve their homes with what ever money they have available. CAD also involves itself in Public Housing. CAD aids tenants in their desire for improve-

ment and participation in their living situation. Along with this CAD develops thoughts on the design of the future Public Housing slated for Champaign and Urbana.

In sum, CAD is a technical assistance and advocacy service. It is a physical clearinghouse for information for poor people about urban and housing problems. CAD works with the three items needed to help poor people ... organization, the scale of problems is such that people, especially poor people, cannot afford to attempt solutions on individual bases ... information, poor people need access to and the skills of using information as a basis for directing their energies of self-improvement ... participation, established organizations and do-gooders must accept the premise that poor people's problems are not solved unless the people themselves participated in the solution.