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POLICE-COMMUNITY ALERT COUNCIL

FINAL REPORT 2

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE - OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

GRANT No. 218

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR - MANPOWER ADMINISTRATION

GRANT No. 92-09-67-18

June 15, 1967 through September 15, 1967

CONDUCTED by: WASHINGTON URBAN LEAGUE, INC.
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JUL 30 1980

ACQUISITIONS

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POLICE COMMUNITY ALERT COUNCIL

Throughout Summer 1967 -- a summer that saw Newark and Detroit explode in flames and racial strife hit almost 150 other American communities -- the Washington Urban League maintained a network of "Police-Community Alert Councils" in seven troubled neighborhoods in the District of Columbia.

Supported by a combined grant of \$56,497 from the U. S. Department of Justice (Office of Law Enforcement Assistance: \$25,357) and the U. S. Department of Labor (Office of Manpower Planning, Evaluation and Research: \$31,140), the project joined the efforts of a 30-man field staff and the volunteer Alert Councils to avert serious clashes between police and ghetto youth.

The program contributed significantly -- probably vitally -- to the uneasy armistice between police and a hostile black community throughout the summer.

It brought legal assistance and fair treatment to persons involved in police incidents which threatened to fan into larger outbreaks.

It provided some additional opportunities for dialogue between police officials and community representatives (without, disappointingly, major youth involvement in many precincts):

It helped a small number of youth find better jobs.

It did not move the Washington Community measureably toward sustained improvement in police-community relations.

This report is the story of that three-month effort.

ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

Washington is a typical American city. Much of our Negro population suffers from unemployment (especially among youth), sub-standard housing, poor educational opportunity, family disintegration, high crime rates, overt and subtle racial discrimination. Police-community relations in most ghetto neighborhoods are poor.

By early May, 1967, the Washington Urban League felt that the city faced the prospect of serious rioting during the summer. There had been no significant progress around the city's major problems. In addition, special summer youth programs were being planned and funded at even lesser levels than in previous years.

There was already an ominous atmosphere of declining police-community relations. Several serious incidents, including a policeman's slaying of a Northeast area youth, had already grated raw community nerves. The highest echelons of the Metropolitan Police Department were not setting a positive community-oriented tone for the men on the beat. In addition, the MPD's Community Relations Unit was severely understaffed. The high police officials most respected by the ghetto were either on the point of retirement or incapacitated by illness.

Faced with an impending crisis, the Urban League took action. Sterling Tucker, WUL's Executive Director, Rev. Channing Phillips of Lincoln Temple Congregational Church, and Walter Williams, chairman, Rebels with a Cause, organized a meeting Saturday, May 27th of neighborhood and youth group leaders, several police officials and representatives from other branches of the city government.

Fifty-seven persons attended (attachment #1). Discussion was heated but ended in basic endorsement of a draft proposal for the Police-Community Alert Council network (attachment #2) prepared by Urban League staff.

This draft was the result of a broad range of discussions held by Lonnie King (Leadership Development Project Director) and David Rusk (Associate Director for Program) with several important groups and individuals prior to the meeting. The talks concentrated on the staff and citizen leadership of the United Planning Organization's network of Neighborhood Development Centers (NDC), the staff and youth leadership of the Neighborhood Development Youth Centers (NDYC), the Recreation Department's Roving Leaders, the Commissioner's Council on Human Relations Staff (CCHR), and the Neighborhood Legal Services Project (NLSF).

In reality, these talks were negotiations; the shape of the basic proposal changed little as a result of the process. Each group, however, represented an important constituency. Their early involvement in the program resulted in:

- 1) a generally favorable climate toward what could have been a very divisive and controversial proposal;
- 2) their direct involvement in the recruitment and selection of field staff -- the make-or-break point of the program;
- 3) for many, continued involvement either through professional services (e.g. CCHR, NLSP) or as volunteer leadership.

A second meeting of the over-all group Saturday, June 10th confirmed final details and, in essence, resulted in their acceptance of active roles to recruit and select staff and form the leadership core of the Alert Councils. Without this degree of community involvement the Police-Community Alert Council program could not have succeeded. It did lead, on the whole, to excellent choices for the twenty-three "field coordinators" (street workers). It did help create a positive community climate in which they worked. Since the substantial successes of the program came directly from the field staff's work, these conditions were essential.

Following the June 10th meeting, WUL received permission from the Labor Department and Justice Department to move forward.

SUMMARY - PROJECT OUTLINE

The final draft expanded the program's target area to eight inner-city police precincts: Northwest Washington (#2, #10 and #13), Southeast (#5), Northeast (#9 and #12) and Anacostia (#14).

In each area the program would have two operating arms:

a) The Police Community Alert Council - composed of youth leaders (including "rumblers", if possible), grass roots adult leadership, and some of the more traditional community leadership, the Council would form a communications link with the local police station, a forum to voice and discuss joint problems. In addition, council members would be available as community intervenors to cool down potential clashes between police and youth.

b) The "field workers" (two-three to a precinct) - circulating through their neighborhood, assessing problems, intervening in tense situations, referring youth to manpower programs and recreation activities, the field workers would be a safety valve for growing community tension.

The neighborhood efforts would be backed up by city-wide support consisting of:

a) a seven-man central staff - to organize and provide staff services to the Alert Councils; to supervise the field workers; to maintain a constant central communications office, ready to send help to any tension spots; to follow-up on job referrals;

b) a volunteer legal staff recruited by Neighborhood Legal Services Project, an OEO-funded program.

c) a \$5,000 bail bond and collateral fund provided by the Urban League to release persons jailed in incidents, (when their continued incarceration would exaggerate community tension).

FIRST STEPS - STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

With summer already upon the city, first priority was assigned to recruiting and training staff and putting them into the field. Secondary attention was paid to the organization of Alert Councils (with predictable results).

To direct the central office the Urban League assigned its Leadership Development Project Director, Lonnie C. King, and his secretary full-time to the PCAC project. Five young men, all current college students with varying degrees of community organization and civil rights experience, were hired to man the Communications Center.

The field workers presented a different recruitment problem. They had to have unique skills: total familiarity with their neighborhood, ready access to local youth, recognized leadership skills. To discern these qualities in applicants in a dozen different neighborhoods throughout Washington was patently beyond the Urban League's ability. Thus, the project turned that decision over to the community itself.

From Monday through Friday, June 12th - 16th in each target precinct selection panels met to interview and choose applicants. The nucleus of each selection panel was neighborhood leadership who had already been involved in the planning. The selection committee in the Second Precinct, for example, consisted of the community youth organizer and three other staff from the local Neighborhood Development Youth Center; the assistant director of BonaBond, an ex-convicts' self-help organization; a junior high school counselor; and a WUL staff member.

By the end of the week all but one of the posts had been filled. The typical field worker was 20-21 years old; single; no children; a high school drop-out; several arrests but no serious convictions; and had worked previously either as a janitor, unskilled laborer or as an anti-poverty worker.

In general, he was already a leader in his own circle prior to coming to work for the project. He possessed a general dislike for authority and expressed a complete feeling of alienation from the white power structure. He had little liking for the police and other law enforcement agencies. His attitudes thus mirrored the feelings of his neighborhood.

Why had they come to the program? In part, they were motivated by a sense of community concern; almost all voiced a desire to help their community. There was little prior knowledge of or personal commitment to the Urban League. A major factor, however, must be the money. With one exception the salary was the best each had ever earned. For this reason the program was able to attract several experienced, first class neighborhood workers from other anti-poverty programs for the duration of the summer.

STAFF TRAINING PROGRAM

The staff training program (Monday June 19 - Thursday, June 22) was essentially a hybrid of training experiences of the United Planning Organization, the Urban League, and the Commissioners Council on Human Relations. The Council provided most of the training which included some 47 hours of discussion and instruction spread out over five days.

MONDAY AM - Introduction: Purposes of Program

PM - Presentation - Neighborhood Legal Services Project

TUESDAY AM - Semantics of Human Relations
Overview of Washington's Social Problems

PM - Films and Discussion - Human Relations Subjects

WEDNESDAY AM - Laws, Policies and Practices Affecting Police-Community Relations

PM - Presentation - MPD Police Community Relations Unit

THURSDAY AM - Case Studies: Police-Community Incidents

PM - " " " " "

FRIDAY AM - Procedures and Mechanics of Field Operations

PM - Detailed Orientation - Cooperating Manpower Programs

A basic goal of the overall-all training program was to emphasize the need for objectivity in the worker. Several sessions made major contributions to this process.

Monday afternoon Julian Dugas and Lorenzo Jacobs explained the purposes and operations of the Neighborhood Legal Services Project (NLSP), the program's cooperating legal arm. They discussed at length the community's various rights and legal safeguards, including the right to counsel, the right to assemble, and various rights and privileges regarding arrests.

The information was essential and invaluable. It gave the field workers awareness of rights they never knew they had and that were being violated daily in one form or another. The field workers had felt that, out in their neighborhoods, they were not equipped to give any legal guidance; they now felt better prepared to inform their neighbors of basic rights and safeguards. The discussion brought to light the extent to which the general public is unaware of their constitutional protections.

Another key session was the movies on "Human Relations Subjects" -- an exercise in visual aids which may have been imperative for our trainees, many of whom were not academically inclined. The films, presented by the Council, sought to explain the origins of prejudice. It also explained why certain persons attempt to foster racial myths and stereotypes.

The effect of the films on the trainees was excellent. During the discussion the group demonstrated a better grasp of the complexities of prejudice. They appeared more willing to view a prejudiced person with a more objective eye. They began to develop a more objective view of the policeman on the beat and to understand why he might be so ready to stereotype black residents and vice versa. This session was a big step toward developing the objectivity that was so badly needed.

Following an informal visit Tuesday afternoon, Captain Robert Hough, commander of the Second Precinct, participated Wednesday in another session "Laws, Policies and Practices Affecting Police Community Relations." On both occasions the captain expressed his willingness to cooperate and answer various questions regarding police community relations. (Hough also encouraged several of his privates to talk informally with the trainees during this week. Hough's responsiveness and personal initiative must be compared with the headquarter's generally negative attitude.)

These were the first opportunities during the program that the trainees could confront a police officer with some of the problems in police-community relations. The captain was very responsive and made the trainees aware that there were police officers as concerned about their community as they themselves.

The last day was devoted to the project's operational details. Work schedules were established. Reporting procedures were set forth. The responsibilities of the field workers and the communications center coordinators were defined.

The final session was a briefing on city manpower programs, with particular emphasis on the UPO Neighborhood Employment Network, the Urban League's OJT project, and the Washington Concentrated Employment Program. Specific information was given each field coordinator about the programs and location of neighborhood offices appropriate for their precinct. Procedures regarding job referral and follow-up were outlined. Finally each precinct team was given a series of appointments the next week when they would personally visit their employment centers and establish direct contact with placement officers.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Field operations had three objectives: (1) to maintain the field worker's presence in the community at critical times, (2) to provide a system of effective supervision and support for field workers, and (3) to provide the community with a 24-hour contact point.

Assignments for field workers followed the general schedule outlined in the proposal. Three-man teams were assigned to the seven target precincts. (Precinct 5, a cooler spot, was never organized; its two slots were filled by senior field workers used as "swing men" for trouble spots.)

The teams worked from 4:00 PM to 1:00 AM Monday through Thursday, and 4:00 PM to 3:00 AM Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Off days were arranged for Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday night so that each man worked a six-day week (approximately 60-65 hours).

From the outset the intention to staff the communications center around the clock was abandoned. The early morning to mid-afternoon hours were "slack time". Thus, rather than misuse manpower the Urban League arranged for the Communications Center telephone to be automatically tied into Lonnie King's home telephone whenever the communication center was unstaffed.

The Communications Center was established at the Urban League's offices at 1009 New Jersey Avenue N.W. Special telephone lines were installed to supplement WUL's regular telephone lines. (This special line was given only to staff and community leadership directly tied into the system.)

The four Communication Center coordinators shared staffing the center and providing field supervision. Three of the coordinators each carried a specific responsibility for field supervision of two or three precinct teams. The fourth bore the major brunt of manning the center and filled in for the other three on their off days.

Each day the field workers would report for work at a standard contact point. Most often these were UPO's Neighborhood Development Youth Centers. The NDYC directors would sign them in and brief them on any community affairs or events they should know. From their field stations workers would report by telephone to the communications center and be logged in.

Throughout the summer workers were required to check in by telephone every couple hours to the Communications Center. In general, they developed regular neighborhood beats so that the Center could anticipate where they would be for message drops.

In addition, five workers were equipped with "Bell Boys", a special belt pack which, when dialed from a normal telephone, would ring in the field. Throughout the summer key field workers were summoned to call in to the Communications Center by the Bell Boys. (These also created community suspicion, however, since youth on the street often felt that our workers were "snitchers" being contacted by the police or some other element of the power structure.)

An important element of supervision, however, was the direct presence in the field of the central staff. Through coordinated use of the four Communications Center coordinators, the director and his assistant, the project was able to provide a field supervisor every evening to cover groupings of target precincts. This allowed the project to know better where our workers were and to follow up their activities.

CAPSULE HISTORIES — SELECTED INCIDENTS

What follow are several capsule histories of incidents and conflicts which could have led to serious outbreaks of violence. There were more than a dozen such incidents through the summer which the program was instrumental in defusing.

June 30th — Wheeler Road

Late Friday afternoon, June 30th, the police arrested three young women who lived in a public housing project near the Wheeler Road shopping center. (This neighborhood has been the scene of the original grievances which had resulted in the Eleventh Precinct Disturbance, August 11, 1966.)

By the time the worker at the scene called in, the neighborhood was rife by rumors of police brutality. There were reports that the women had been beaten up, one to the point of hospitalization. The neighborhood's young toughs were urging each other to take retaliation in their own hands.

By the time Lonnie King and several additional field workers arrived, there were three knots of people, numbering more than 100, assembled at different street corners around the shopping center. Field workers went into each group, trying to sift out rumor from fact. A giant rumor mill was in progress.

Lonnie King quickly decided that the problem must be gotten off the streets and into a controlled meeting, where the facts could be presented. He contacted the police and found that all three women had been released and were being returned to the neighborhood. Mr. King visited one of the women's mother, who was agreeable to seeing the problem discussed in such a meeting. The meeting was subsequently begun around 6:30 PM at the Consumer Action Center.

Throughout this period Worker X had been working to counteract "John Smith", a known troublemaker who had helped to inflame the previous year's Eleventh Precinct Disturbance. Worker X, who had known "John Smith" since both were very young, talked with him repeatedly to calm him down. Several times "John Smith" was able to assemble crowds, urging them to rock cars passing through the area or begin throwing rocks. Each time Worker X was able to counteract "Smith's" influence and channel the crowd's energies toward the meeting.

Tension increased when the youngest of the arrested women, a popular anti-poverty youth worker, claimed that one of the arresting officers had fondled her on the way to the station house. A Negro Police-Community Relations Unit officer tried to calm the crowd but was booed down. (By this time Ruth Bates Harris, Julian Dugas, Captain of the Eleventh Precinct, and a Deputy Chief had all been called and were arriving on the scene.)

The crowd had no confidence in the normal police misconduct complaint procedure or any other system of redress connected with the District Government. Finally they agreed to let the U.S. District Attorney handle the charges if he would come directly out to the neighborhood.

Mr. King called David Bress, the U.S. District Attorney, who agreed to come out to the meeting and hear the complaints. Arriving about 10:00 PM, he immediately began to hear individual testimony. Sometime after midnight he announced that the hearings would be continued the next morning (Saturday) with the complainants (represented by Neighborhood Legal Services), police officers and any other witnesses scheduled to testify.

The crowd, mollified by the direct intervention of the U.S. District Attorney, broke up and dispersed. (Throughout the evening Worker X had stuck with "John Smith" to counteract any rumors he might start.)

Full day hearings were held July 1st and 5th. To date no final decisions have been announced by the U.S. District Attorney's office.

July 24 — Kalorama Road

Earlier in the week two young Negro men were killed by the proprietor of a delicatessen on 13th and Kalorama Road as they attempted to rob his store. The two dead men were popular in the area. The rumor mill immediately went to work to convert them into martyrs.

The day of the funeral (July 24) a meeting was organized at The New Thing to plan possible retaliation. Moderate adult leaders, including Lonnie King and Sterling Tucker, were banned from the meeting. However, a number of the project's field workers attended the meeting (not having been identified as Urban League workers).

Many in the group pledged to burn down the delicatessen that night or undertake other acts of retaliation. WUL staff tried to sift out all the rumors; they emphasized especially that the dead men were not killed by a white policeman but by a black store-owner. Through their familiarity with many of the group's ring leaders, they were able to quell what could have developed into a very explosive situation. As the meeting broke up indecisively, the staff split up and spent the rest of the night with different potential trouble-makers.

The success of this effort can be measured by the fact that the threats were never carried out.

July 31 — Lower Shaw Area

In the aftermath of Newark and Detroit the city became almost hysterical with rumors of impending riots the last week of July. The rumor mill crested Thursday, July 27, when H. "Rap" Brown addressed an impromptu rally of almost 1,000 people. Despite multiple rumors of trouble planned for the weekend the weekend passed without incident.

At approximately 7:45 PM Monday evening, however, Worker A reported that he had "heard on the vine" that there was going to be some trouble near Ninth and N Streets N.W. He left to cover the area.

At 10:45 PM Worker B and Worker C both reported that a number of youths gathered near Seventh and N Streets N.W. had apparently broken the window of a liquor store and were now trying to set fire to some of the small stores. Both went to work to break up the group. The Communications Center began to shift workers from other precincts into the lower Shaw area.

Shortly thereafter the Communications Center also began to contact Julian Dugas, Ruth Bates Harris and other community leaders who had been working throughout the summer with the project. Most were at a community crisis meeting convened by the Urban League that evening at Turner Memorial Methodist Church a few blocks away.

At 11:30 PM David Rusk called into the Communications Center to report at least a half dozen fire engines heading up Georgia Avenue. A major fire had broken out at a used furniture store on Georgia Avenue.

At 12:30 AM, Worker B reported a shooting in the area of Ninth and C Streets N.W., as the result of a fight between three or four people. A crowd had gathered but had been dispersed. The Communications Center re-assigned Workers B and D to the Seventh and N Streets N.W. area, where there were reports that the same group of troublemakers were trying to set fires.

By 12:45 AM Workers B, C, and D had succeeded in dispersing the group. (Later events showed that the crowd merely left because it was part of their "hit-and-run" strategy.)

At 1:15 AM Worker D reported that many young kids were still at the scene of the major fire, interfering with the firemen. (One tried to drive on one of the fire trucks; several were chased by the police but released.) Worker D attempted to get the boys to go home. At this point the police had begun moving through the area making arrests.

Shortly thereafter, Worker E reported that 50 to 75 youths were running up and down 14th Street N.W. breaking plate glass windows. The police were just arriving on the scene.

By this time Lonnie King had arrived at the Thirteenth Police Precinct where a large crowd had gathered, angry about some of the recent arrests. The police had closed off 14th Street N.W. and swept down it, arresting those still on the street. Three had just taken their sister home; another was returning from his cook's job. A number had been arrested at a bus stop, while they allegedly were waiting for a bus. In all, some 25 men were being held at the Precinct Station.

Julian Dugas, Luke Moore (the U.S. Marshall), and Lonnie King assessed the situation and decided that the best course was to get the persons released and back to their homes. John Jacob, WUL's associate director, was called to bring the bail bond funds from the Urban League's offices. For \$340 the Urban League bailed out 15 young men, all charged with "disorderly; failure to move." Others were bailed out by friends and family. By 7:15 AM, all persons had been released.

While waiting for Jacob's arrival, Lonnie King obtained permission from the First Officer to talk to both arrestees and crowd to calm them down. The station house was filled with the noise of people banging on cell doors and shouting obscenities. King had calmed down both crowd and arrestees, assuring them that help was on the way.

Throughout the early morning hours all Urban League workers remained in the area, working with different groups, urging them not to set more fires and to go home. They were also able to bring to the scene of vandalism many citizens who had been cooperating with the program. By 2:00 AM the fire-setting and window-breaking had crested. When dawn broke, only a number of broken store windows and smudges from unsuccessful fires testified to Washington's close escape.

In the follow-up evaluation most workers felt that the incidents had been designed merely to antagonize and frustrate the police department rather than to set off a full-scale riot.

LEGAL SERVICES

From the outset of the program the basic legal arm was the Neighborhood Legal Services Project, an OEO-funded program headed by Julian Dugas. On more than a dozen different occasions the project had to call upon Dugas and Neighborhood Legal Services for legal assistance.

The cooperation and support of NLSP was excellent—as far as it went. NLSP provided ready support at any hour, anywhere...but their ability to stay with a case and represent victims was limited by their OEO guidelines.

NLSP could not assist adults or youth whose family income fell above the poverty program ceilings. NLSP tended not to provide service to those who might live outside the target areas. Others were embittered by repeated referrals to different neighborhood offices. Most important, NLSP lawyers could not represent persons charged with felonies.

What the program required was a large roster of volunteer lawyers on call, who would handle any case the project had to deal with. The early plans, worked out with Dugas, called for the recruitment of such a corps of volunteer lawyers. However, this was never achieved. Legal assistance came from the NLSP staff—available at all hours, willing, competent, but limited in what they could take on. By the time the project recognized fully these limitations there was not sufficient time left in the summer to merit developing a volunteer pool.

BAIL BOND

As a part of the program the Washington Urban League set aside \$5,000 to pay bail bond fees and post collateral for persons jailed in police-community incidents. A necessary condition, however, was that the funds should only be used when failure to release a person would contribute to increased community tension.

Since bail bond and collateral had to be posted in cash, the money was kept locked in the Urban League's safe. Its use was controlled by WUL's Associate Director for Administration.

Three times during the project WUL dipped into this fund. The first time the project posted \$100 collateral for the release of one of our own workers. He was arrested at 3:00 AM after coming off duty, while changing buses at the Federal Triangle. The police claimed they had earlier seen him steal a car. In the League's opinion the charge was false and another evidence of harrassment of our workers by officers of a certain precinct.

As noted above, \$340 was used to post collateral for fifteen men arrested during the July 31 disturbance.

Finally, in mid-August WUL posted another \$100 to release a PRIDE, Inc. worker charged with assaulting a milk truck driver near Thompson Dairy. (The charges were subsequently dropped when PRIDE, Inc. was able to prove the arrested youth had been working in a nearby alley with his squad at the time of the incident.)

Although the funds were not extensively used, the ability to get persons out of jail worked to reduce tensions in a number of different incidents.

JOB OUTREACH AND REFERRAL

The projects' signal failure was the collapse of the plan to refer youthful job seekers to meaningful manpower programs. The original prospectus called for the project to refer an average of 100 youth a week to manpower programs the first half of the summer; fifty youth per week thereafter. In all, however, 175 youths were referred during the summer with only 48 eventually finding employment and training.

The failure, nevertheless, was not so much that of the Police-Community Alert Council Program as it was another demonstration of the community's employment and manpower program shortcomings.

The field workers were briefed on the different UPO, USES, WUL, OIC and other manpower programs. Each field worker made a personal visit during his first week on the job to the local neighborhood manpower office. Each carried with him a pocketbook listing offices, telephone numbers, names of counselors and other data. The field workers did follow through on reporting referrals to the central office. The Communications Center did follow up these reports to ascertain whether the referral youth was interviewed at the manpower center, and what had been done with his case.

The basic problem was: no jobs. Almost all the 175 referrals were made in the first week. When the youth arrived at the centers, they were told there were no jobs...they would have to wait...they would be contacted later...ad nauseum. Within two weeks the field workers stopped trying to push job referrals. Their own credibility was being hurt by referring youth to yet another dead end.

Several factors contributed to this problem:

(1) The outpouring of youth at the outset of the summer had snapped up all available summer jobs. The Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Youth Opportunities Campaign were quickly oversubscribed. (In fact, the Police-Community Alert Council's first action—during the week of training—was to calm down and organize an angry crowd of more than 500 youth demanding jobs at the Near Northeast Neighborhood Employment Center.)

(2) New and existing manpower programs provide too few job opportunities for the numbers of people whom such a referral system as the twenty-three field workers could produce. In fact, most manpower programs are able to meet their recruitment needs through their own contacts and resources. There is often no lack of bodies. There is only a lack of specific bodies bearing the specific skills or attributes or availability which many job orders and training programs seem to require. Thus, for example, the Washington Concentrated Employment Program got underway in early July. However, WCEP did not appreciably expand job and training opportunities available as seen from the field. In its first weeks WCEP seemed to fill its available slots from its own recruitment resources without need of those whom WUL's field workers might refer. (The same can be said of WUL's On-The-Job Training Project and other programs. There is no dearth of applicants for those programs which accept low levels of employability or trainability. Recruitment problems begin as requirements rise.)

(3) A mid-summer freeze on jobs in private industry set in. In some mysterious fashion, when wide-spread rioting broke out in Newark and Detroit, private job sources around town began to dry up. Suddenly, by late July

neither UPO or the Urban League or any other program could come up with jobs from the private sector. WUI employment staff sensed a hardening of employer attitudes, and implicit "damned-if-I'll-give-any-more-jobs-to-rioters" attitude.

The funding of PRIDE, Inc. the first weeks of August helped. It did not provide all the jobs—even temporary jobs—which were needed. However, it did employ 1,100 youth who otherwise had spent a frustrating summer.

Alert Council staff had been supplied with advance information about PRIDE, Inc. They made many referrals during PRIDE's two-day hiring drive. However, it is impossible to document how many youth found their way into PRIDE, Inc. through these referrals.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Police Community Alert Council program "worked". It did reduce tensions, provide non-violent alternatives for the expression of grievances, bring tangible legal and other assistance to aggrieved persons and provide the youth community with greater information about job opportunities, recreation programs and other activities.

Throughout this report we have sought to point out candidly the project's strengths and weaknesses. Key factors -- such as the vital importance of community selection of field workers --- have been emphasized repeatedly. In essence, the project's basic structure was effective and workable. However, with the benefit of a summer's experience the Urban League can draw these lessons for the future.

1. First and foremost, the full cooperation of the Metropolitan Police Department is essential. This the project lacked. The attitude of the chief's office was at best neutral and non-committal. Support from different precincts varied from actual harrassment of workers by men on the beat to actively calling WUL's field workers to the scene of sensitive incidents in lieu of police personnel.

Without greater cooperation the Police-Community Alert Councils run the danger of being reduced to impotent discussion groups. Indeed, this occurred to several councils and was a principal reason for the general lack of youth involvement. Numbers of youth did come to the early meetings, but dropped out, feeling that the councils were just "rapping".

The council's basic purpose was to act as a method of communication bridging the gap between police and local community. There can be no communication when one side is absent. In addition, the councils must establish their own credibility, through being able to get grievances resolved and reforms initiated. The tactical choices are cooperation or confrontation. The Police-Community Alert Councils sought to produce change through cooperation. Communication and progress was frustrated, however, by the lack of police involvement in many precincts.

At headquarters level, and in the majority of precincts, both field staff and council volunteers received little official recognition from police officials which would strengthen their ability to act as community mediators. In fact, in one precinct the reverse occurred: staff were harrassed. The sense of special status would have increased volunteer commitment to the Alert Councils and their eagerness to participate.

2. Any serious efforts to launch reforms and improvements in police-community relations must be guaranteed a longer lifetime. From the outset the project was open to the charge that it was just an anti-riot program, despite its protestations about promoting long-term changes. In retrospect, given the project's lack of long-term achievements, the charge was justified.

The Urban League does not believe in sustaining permanent structures. However, the short term prospects of the funded program left the incipient

councils very insecure, unsure of both their role and their future. Whereas tension-relieving activities may be primarily a riot season function, they should develop within the framework of a year-round program of police-community relations.

3. The ability of the field worker to "deliver" for their peers must be strengthened. The more actual help and services the field worker can provide the less he will appear to be a "snitcher" to the neighborhood youth. Without appearing to be a police stooge, he must have the stature in the eyes of the police to step into difficult situations and extract his people. He must be able to mobilize free legal representation. Above all, he must help ghetto youth get jobs. (The project's plans recognized this need; the city's manpower programs were unable to fulfill it.)

More than any other factor job patronage is the name of the youth game in Washington, D. C. Rufus Mayfield was catapulted into local prominence when through PRIDE, INC., he and his group were handed 1100 jobs to parcel out to ghetto youth.

In early June WUL staff made a half-hearted attempt to get a quota of WCEP slots reserved for direct Police-Community Alert Council placements. This fell through. However, a direct piece of the action of a flexible program like WCEP would be essential. A "piece of the action" must go beyond the ability to refer applicants hopefully for special consideration. Ideally, the field worker should have the on-the-spot power to place applicants in programs. (PRIDE, INC., supervisors had this "sidewalk recruitment" power, converting them into very powerful influences in their neighborhoods.)

4. Additional steps must be taken to strengthen field supervision. With such a decentralized program, operating in a dozen different neighborhoods and employing young men whose previous work history has often built rather casual work habits, inevitably the Police Community Alert Council faced difficulty. The ratio of supervisory to field personnel was sufficient. More effective supervision would require:

- a) harder-nosed supervisors who would be less ready to make allowances for their men; and
- b) more effective field communications.

On this latter point, equipping each staff member with a police-patrolman type walkie-talkie would have been well-worth the expense. Walkie-talkies would have permitted instant communication between the field worker and communications center. Equally as important, it would have provided a more effective method of checking out the field staff and their whereabouts. (Having asked a field worker his location, a supervisor always then has the option of going out to check it.)

Given the amount of man-hours that may have gone into "goofing off", funds spent for more sophisticated communications than pay phones and a few Bell Boys would have perhaps paid for themselves.

POLICE COMMUNITY ALERT COUNCILS

The eight (ultimately seven) Police-Community Alert Councils were viewed initially as the major action arm of program--vehicles for community involvement and leverage for basic reforms. In reality, the councils' work was secondary to the work of the project staff. Of the eight target precincts one was discarded from the outset (Precinct 5); in the remaining seven only five organizations came into being.

As discussed earlier, organization of the Alert Councils was not neglected. The entire planning process -- including the May 27th and June 10th meetings -- was designed to build broader involvement of neighborhood-level youth and adult leadership. In each target precinct citizens whom the Urban League expected might form the nucleus of each council interviewed and hired that neighborhood's field workers. However, early emphasis had to be placed upon training and putting into the field the network of street workers. It was not until July 3rd that the pro tem chairmen of each council met with Sterling Tucker to discuss the program.

From that point onward the history and accomplishments of the various Alert Councils differed greatly.

The Second Precinct: Located in the Shaw area, the Second Precinct is Washington's "showcase" for unemployment, poverty, wretched housing, community disintegration.

Nevertheless, WUL did not anticipate major problems in organizing Second Precinct Police Community Alert Council:

1) WUL itself had administered for two years the neighborhood anti-poverty program in much of the Second Precinct. The Urban League Neighborhood Development Center had developed excellent ties with grassroots leadership and knowledge of the community.

2) The other half of the precinct was the territory of UPO's Neighborhood Development Center #1. Cooperation had been excellent in the selection of workers.

3) The local station house was headed by one of the city's three Negro captains. Relations were excellent, and the captain and his men had participated directly in the training sessions.

In actuality, the Second Precinct never got off the ground due to problems within the "family." /Footnote: By mid-July the pro tem chairman had withdrawn, personally disillusioned with the program. He felt that the program had failed with regard to an incident at Seaton Place, N.W. A number of young men and women had been arrested in a police raid. The police claimed the youth were distributing stolen cigarettes; the youth, that they were eating chicken in the alley. Numerous eye-witnesses charged that the police had beaten the youth in making the arrests. The staff were on the scene shortly thereafter and found no community commotion. The following day, after the youth were released, a hearing was arranged and legal counsel recruited. However, problems developed around the legal assistance. First, the Neighborhood Legal Services Project lawyers split up the cases and dragged them out. Secondly, (as was proper) NLSP considered their first obligation to the interests of their clients. Thus, whereas community leadership wanted actions brought against the police, NLSP quietly interred the cases and had most charges dropped. The true source of the pro tem chairman's disillusionment was probably the legal follow-up rather than the project staffs' actions, but no such differentiation was made./ A residuum of

suspicion and bitterness remained among some community leaders and Urban League Neighborhood Center staff. At the same time the project, seeking to work through these established channels, did not open up alternative routes for community participation.

The problem could have been resolved through some sustained attention by the Urban League. It was not. As a result the Second Precinct Alert Council died aborning.

The Ninth Precinct: The Ninth Precinct lies in Northeast Washington behind the Capitol Hill area. In recent years it has rapidly begun to resemble the older poverty neighborhoods in Northwest, as blight and the concentration of greater numbers of poor families have increased.

By mid-July an active group of nine-ten adult community leaders had formed and elected a permanent chairman. The group developed into one of the program's most active and interested councils (although there was never significant youth participation.) Of all the councils, the Ninth Precinct was the most eager to continue its activities year-round.

The Tenth Precinct: The Tenth Precinct lies in the Upper Cardoza area. Since Lonnie King had formerly been Executive Director of Change, Inc., the neighborhood's anti-poverty center, the project worked closely with Change, Inc. The council itself was headed by an officer of Change, Inc.'s Board of Directors, a local postal employee, and a community organization staff member. The Alert Council was built upon the existing Police-Community Relations Commission at Change, Inc. About a dozen adults met weekly to discuss community problems and dissect rumors. Although the summer passed without major incidents in the precinct, the entire council membership was on full alert during a week of local school site demonstrations.

The Eleventh Precinct: The Eleventh Precinct (Anacostia-Congress Heights) was the scene of a minor disturbance the previous summer. Long pegged by the press as a trouble spot, it passed through a relatively cool summer. Headed by an employee of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, this council also had a steady membership of a dozen people (with varying levels of youth participation).

The Twelfth Precinct: The Twelfth Precinct is the least poverty-stricken of all the target neighborhoods. Headed by a local real estate man, the Twelfth Precinct devoted its energies to closing down a neighborhood girlie movie house (which was a constant trouble spot). Also, the council began to work on neighborhood problems in boarder areas of employment opportunity, housing conditions, etc.

The Thirteenth Precinct: Right on the heart of the Cardoza area, and chaired by UPO's Director of Youth Programs, the Thirteenth Precinct Alert Council was the project's most active in police-community relations. Throughout the summer it had approximately fourteen constant members, including five or six youth leaders. Under dynamic leadership it was molded into a cohesive group.

Poor relations with the station house was the principle problem. Early in the program one of the field workers was arrested while on his beat for disorderly conduct. An immediate visit by the council brought his release. (Subsequently the captain commended the worker for a "good job" but still refused to expunge the police blotter of the arrest.) Another time the council secured the release of a man and woman accused of tampering with a locked car; the community, in turn, spread the rumor that the police had beaten both badly. A series of council complaints finally brought about the transfer of a policeman with a particularly bad community reputation.

The Fourteenth Precinct: In the Far Northeast the project was caught in the crossfire between competing groups of community leadership. A basic split existed in the Far Northeast between the established (and well-organized) civic associations and ministerial alliances and the anti-poverty program's citizens structure. In addition, both groups -- very xenophobic -- take occasional potshots at the Urban League.

Thus, after several weeks of meetings and probings, the PCAC organizer concluded "The interest of these established leaders is not to work cooperatively with the rest of the community, according to the objectives of the Police Community Alert Council, but to continue to control the community to maintain the status quo." As a result, when by late July the project was still unable to draw together an incipient council, the attempt was abandoned.

END