

DILEMMAS OF THE CITY

September, 1967

The Community Relations Commission, since February, 1967 has held 29 meetings and has heard from more than 350 private citizens and officials, including the Superintendent of schools, City Director of parks and Director of recreation, The Atlanta Housing Authority, and spokesman for the Independent Food Dealers, The President of the Atlanta branch of NAACP, The President of the affiliate of the SCLC. These meetings have been well reported in the press and have resulted in some changes which were within the limits of authority and resources of the officials. We find, however, that many wrongs are beyond the legal and financial limits of present public policies and it is the dilemmas created by these limitations that the following reports illustrate. For convenience, they are divided into separate topics, but they illustrate the interplay of each on the others and again and again point up that the unit of concern is a human being.

Dilemmas in City Services: There is continuous call for more of all services --- streets paved, sidewalks paved, trash picked up, garbage collected, police assigned to street beats, houses inspected -----. Trash and garbage collections -- the sanitary department is about 100 workers short. Why? Some say the salary scale, beginning at \$276 or \$300 a month is not a drawing card for a family man. Another difficulty is that the pay period is two weeks, (the first check sometimes takes longer to be processed) and a head of a family looking for work often cannot afford to wait two or three weeks to pay rent, buy food, clothes, bus tokens. He does better standing on the corner of Decatur street and working by the day, doing the same job at the same rate of pay. Irresponsible? Shiftless? But would we as citizens condone the sanitary department paying him two weeks wages in advance? Another problem for the sanitary department is that many have listened and heeded lectures on self-respect and ambition and are not content to collect trash as a permanent career.

Fringe benefits are not much inducement for city employment. The city civil service is not under social security, and under the city's plan of benefits, not until an employee has worked for 10 years is his family entitled to any pension provisions comparable to social security in case of his death.

Another problem is the child labor laws, designed to prevent exploitation of child labor, but there are jobs which 14 to 18 year olds might like to do as a temporary measure which they are prohibited by law from doing.

Streets: Priority is given by the Construction Department to thoroughfares, but this little help to people who have few streets in their neighborhoods that go through to those thoroughfares, particularly those dependent on public transportation. How would you set priority in a street construction program?

Sewers: The building boom of which we are all so proud has increased the areas which are paved, which in turn has increased the need for storm sewers to the point it is estimated that it would cost \$30,000,000 to meet the needs. This is bad enough where cars drive through the water, but, again where there are many residents who do not have cars and must walk to bus stops, where children must walk to school or rely on public transportation, the problem is intensified. How should we balance emergency and long-term systematic improvement?

Parks & Recreation: Atlanta spends about \$6 per person per year on parks and recreation, slightly lower than the Georgia State average. Dalton, Georgia and Statesboro, Georgia spend about \$8. per person. Parks and facilities of the city are used and enjoyed by residents of Metropolitan Atlanta and beyond, who contribute nothing to their cost. A well equipped community center, without the land, costs over \$200,000. The Decatur-DeKalb YMCA in 1960 cost a total of \$656,000 plus \$50,000 for the land. For the past 2 summers, the city has received additional operating funds from OEO and EDA. In both cases, the appropriations were not approved until June, and people were hired to start work on

faith. Those programs closed the end of August, with the opening of school.

Given funds to spend, the Parks and Recreation department is confronted with a choice of buying land, developing land already owned, or hiring people to staff the developments. For example, to have a softball league of neighborhood teams in a community park, instead of 1 community team as a part of a city league, requires more workers, either paid or volunteers, and in the areas that need volunteers most, there are fewer adults with free time and energy to help. Same goes for Boy Scouts, Gray Y and the rest. Do we plan for what we can pay for? Do we count on volunteers? Do we re-think the jobs and hire younger people, instigate training programs? Who would pay for those?

Police: Not enough police to prevent things from happening, too many when things do happen. That's the opinion most often expressed at CRC meetings. The success of officers assigned to the EDA Centers emphasizes the repeated requests for "a beat policeman", a person "who will know us". Presently Atlanta police are assigned to large areas, to patrol in cars, which make the force more mobile. Charges of police brutality are taken up by the Police Committee of the Board of Aldermen, who some claim will "naturally" support the police. But isn't it natural for a department to support its own staff? And yet how does the public protect itself against the mutual protection of members of a bureaucracy?, whether it be a police force, a school staff, a public housing staff or what? On the other hand, how can a single police officer, etc., be reassured of lack of reprisal if he raises questions? How do we get sympathy and understanding, protection and fairness on both sides?

In all these cases, money may not cure all ills, but it seems necessary to cure any. The CRC is scheduling a meeting with the Fulton County legislative delegation to put before them the case of the need for additional sources of revenue for the city's general operating budget.

Dilemmas in Public Housing: Four facts immediately contribute to dilemmas in public housing.

1. The Atlanta Housing Authority must obtain enough from rents to operate the projects. The City & U. S. Governments participate in financing the building but there are no subsidies for operating the projects.
2. Some rent must be paid by every tenant. Therefore those in need, who have no income whatsoever, cannot be served by public housing, under present policies.
3. Public housing is no resource for emergency housing. The only such resource in Atlanta is the Salvation Army, which houses and takes individuals for a brief time in extreme emergencies, but does not house families together. Women and children under 12 go to one center, men to another.
4. Housing policies exclude some in greatest need for help, such as families of prisoners, serving felony sentences and mothers with illegitimate children under 1 year old.

Misconceptions about these on the part of the general public often result in criticism of the Housing Authority Staff, who must operate within these policies.

Other limiting policies are those requiring "security deposits" and a month's rent in advance and charges for repairs. Since rent is based on family income, increase in income means increase in rent. This is particularly self-defeating when a new member of the family goes to work and his added income, often sought to pay for education or other improvements, results in rent increases. This reflects not the opinion of the housing staff but a public policy.

Another policy, which is within the jurisdiction of the Atlanta Housing Authority, is that of excluding from public housing families of prison inmates and women with illegitimate children under one year old. The policy does not remove from the community the problems of illegitimacy

or providing decent, sanitary housing for the persons involved. It does reflect a realistic concern for public opinion about public housing and what the community will stand for. If we do not agree with such restrictions on public housing, then it is up to us, the community to have them changed. But even with restrictions, in 1966 there was a back-log of 1500 applications for public housing in Atlanta. As of September 25, 1967 in all Atlanta Housing Authority projects there was a total of 17 vacancies (and these must be filled by the proper size family for the size of the unit).

Dilemmas in Non-public Housing: In spite of code requirements and inspections, in 1960, 163,405 (10% of all city housing units) were in the slum category. In the first place, inspections are part of a process. When inspectors find code violations, the owner is contacted and given time (30 days? 60 days?) to make repairs. If not, the case is reported to the Better Housing Commission and the Housing Court. The owner must make repairs with a stated time or pay a fine. What is "reasonable time" to find a contractor, let the contract, make repairs? What protection is there against an increase in rent when repairs are made? What protection is there against eviction because of complaints? If repairs are not made and rent is withheld, the renter can be evicted. If repairs are not made and rent is paid, what protection does the renter have? Move. "He can move" is the usual answer. There is a shortage of low and middle cost housing for sale and for rent in the city, and those available to Negroes are fewer than those available overall. It costs money to pay for moving. There are specialized restrictions on various property. Some places won't take children, some places won't take unmarried women, some places won't take divorcees, and some places won't take 9 children --- even for \$90.00 a month. So if you have 3 rooms for your 9 children for \$90.00 a month, you're likely to stay there even if they are cold and ratty. No steady job, no credit references, and on welfare. Husband in jail. There's little choice for such families.

Race is an important factor still, no matter what the income. In one part of town, apartments close to a Negro neighborhood were asked if they would take Negroes as tenants, and none said yes.

High rents for substandard housing: This often turns out to be public housing in that the rent money in many cases comes from welfare allotments, so that we the public are subsidizing the slums. The Department of Family & Children Services, whose clients, many of these clients are, cannot produce homes. The allotment for rent must come out of the total family allotment, the maximum for which is \$154.00 in Georgia, regardless of how many children there are. This is with no father at home. If he is present, the family is not eligible for Aid to dependant children, no matter how little he earns (unless he qualifies as physically disabled). The Georgia legislature could enact legislation to implement the Unemployed Parent provisions of the federal law. This would use primarily federal money but would require some additional and county money. The State Board of Family & Childrens Services, appointed by the Governor, and the legislature would have to authorize the program and appropriate the money, which would permit men looking for work to stay at home with their families.

The EDA has no money to pay moving costs and rent. Its resources are limited to existing public housing and other housing for rent from private owners.

Why are people allowed to live in these substandard houses? Aren't the landlords and the tenants both violating the law? Some of the worst areas are in that sort of limbo between "planning" and "having something done". The planning may be for urban renewal, model neighborhood, etc., but these are long involved processes, and meanwhile things are left pretty much as they are, waiting, waiting and deteriorating.

For example, in one slum area which has been approved by the City Planning Department and the Aldermanic Board for urban renewal, everybody is waiting now for the next phase, for the U. S. Department of HUD to approve the actual plans, appropriate the money, etc. ----- Once this has been done, tenant-residents will receive grants for their property. So it appears to be to their advantage to wait. The Inspection Department requires minimum compliance since most of the buildings will be bought by the city and demolished. But UR office in the area says the earliest possibly for the Urban Renewal program to begin to move people out of

these slums will be 6 months. So they face another winter, with little heat, no hot water, leaks, utterly miserable living conditions. If they move now, they do it on their own ----- and where are there vacancies they can afford or where will they be accepted as tenants or buyers (because of income, family, race, etc.) ?

Dilemmas in Evictions: Other families just a little higher in income face rents higher than their incomes warrant for new, cheaply constructed, poorly maintained apartments, where eviction is an automatic process when rents are not paid on time. Few of these units (many with hundreds of families) have resident managers, and it is difficult to find someone to whom to make complaints or pay back-rent. Substandard conditions and lack of repairs are not legal grounds for withholding rent in Georgia. You complain, and nothing happens except that you maybe given notice to leave. The frustration of trying to deal with nameless, faceless landlords, often just a street address, adds to the overall despair. It takes energy, know-how, time and courage to pierce the anonymity of a corporation and someone who can speak and is willing to speak, even to listen.

Neighborhood Stabilization: In efforts for "neighborhood stabilization", we are confronted with more dilemmas and paradoxes. By neighborhood stabilization we mean achieving and maintaining a viable balance between white and Negro residents. So this means if the neighborhood is all white or all Negro, some moving should take place, but at a certain point (what point?) the moving and selling should stop. How do Negroes get "started" in a new neighborhood? What is the part of real estate dealers? At what point do we encourage Negroes to move in and what point do we discourage them? What does it take to make whites stay? (Reassurance about schools, as much as anything, we are told.) How do we relieve pressure on the area now "in transition"?

It is evident that any area concerned cannot "save itself". It is also evident that it cannot be "saved" by isolated, localized action. If any area, and in this case, southwest Atlanta, is to become and remain racially integrated, there must be choices of comparable housing values in other areas available to Negroes, buyers and renters so they do not all end up in one spot. There is no law requiring segregation but under present practices, Negroes are not free to choose from the entire metro area as whites are. They have trouble finding a real estate agent to show them property outside present Negro neighborhoods. The real estate agent has trouble getting "white" property to show. The Negro buyer has trouble getting financing of such property. Some predict that open occupancy legislation for Atlanta would scare whites to move outside of the city limits even faster than they are now. What are the prospects of getting open occupancy legislation or practices in the metro area? What sort of national legislation will help Atlanta from being a Negro city surrounded by white suburbs? What would be the results if it were?

Dilemmas in Jobs - Training & Employment: Most discussions of urban problems end with a statement to the effect that "the important thing is jobs". Jobs keep people busy. Jobs give people money. Jobs give people stability. Jobs keep families together. Jobs give people a stake in the community.

How does Atlanta Stand: In the first place, it must be clearly understood that there are no new public programs designed primarily to put people to work. The new programs are designed either to train people or to give social services, so individuals can care for children, take jobs, etc., but once the training has been given and the social services have been provided, the fact of whether there is a job is up to the normal system of ongoing public and private programs which hire people. Either private industry or ongoing public programs must produce the jobs. Many of the new public programs provide additional jobs, but more for professional or skilled persons than for the "jobless". EOA cannot produce jobs, except for those employed by "the program". The Georgia State Employment Service cannot produce jobs. There is much talk about "job development", about the need for lowering professional standards, for giving on-the-job training, but the persons who advocate such changes seldom adopt them themselves, and there are few examples of success.

How realistic are our admonitions (usually to others) to make the job fit the person who is looking for employment. One dilemma is that all the surveys and all comments by job counselors confirm the fact, that

the majority of those looking for work are female, the majority of those are Negro, either very young with no experience, or 30 or 40, with perhaps a high school diploma but no "marketable skills". On the other hand, in spite of federal laws against discrimination based on sex, the great majority of job orders are for males, males with experience and males with skills. To what extent Negroes in Atlanta are denied jobs because they are Negroes needs to be determined, but it is a fact that a higher percentage of those looking for jobs are Negro, and that of those persons with jobs, a higher percentage of whites have good jobs (professional, managerial, etc.). Years of discrimination because of race have resulted in Negroes being less qualified according to standards set by whites for whites. Do we continue to apply qualifications which exclude Negroes (such as experience which they have been unable to get) or do we hire "qualifiable" Negroes and give them a chance to qualify on the job? The August list of vacancies for the City of Atlanta Personnel department, for example, lists only 6 out of 29 categories which require no experience.

Are there enough jobs to go around? Are there more people than jobs or more jobs than people? The Georgia State Employment Offices in Metro Atlanta as of July 31, 1967 had 649 job orders ("a slack season" a spokesman said). At the same time, there were 11,324 "active applicants" (5,874 female).

Negroes who are working earn less than whites. When the head of the household, male or female, makes a marginal salary, teenage children, or younger children, must go to work to provide for themselves and/or to contribute to the family income. An increase in adult incomes might ease the need for teenage jobs. There are, for example, approximately 1000 families in one Atlanta public housing project being supported by women who earn their families' living at domestic service, for which the average rate is \$8.00 a day with no prospect of promotion, no future, no fringe benefits, lucky if social security is paid. Employment to a teenage member of such a family becomes a necessity unless somehow the family income is increased. Men and women with families work for us, the public, at full time, permanent jobs at the "poverty" level (e.g., maids at Grady hospital at \$1.08 an hour; male nursing assistants at \$1.29 an hour, increases within the last few years). Further increases will require increased public funds. Whom do we encourage to take these jobs? Whom should we encourage to take these jobs?

Dilemmas in Training: What about training programs? Some cost; others pay trainees. How closely does the vocational education program (as reflected in the new \$9,000,000 Atlanta Trade School) reflect present and future job markets? All courses there do not require high school education but they require aptitude tests and fees, though small, and costs of materials, small enough if you have it, but to a family with no margin, it might as well be \$1000.

Some training programs are specifically for young people. The Neighborhood Youth Corps gives "training jobs" both in and out of school, but the record of post-NYC employment quantity-wise is not impressive. From October '66 through July '67, of 620 out-of-school NYC trainees in Atlanta, 98 were placed in fulltime jobs (most of which were training related). Often the job pays little more than the "training" did (\$1.50 an hour). Furthermore, the training allowance does not count on family income, etc., whereas "earned income" does. (A side effect of training allowances, which give self-respect and dignity and independence to the young, is the resentment on the part of some adult worker such as custodians and cooks at seeing an NYC trainee "earn" about as much as they are paid straight wages. This could destroy rather than strengthen a family.)

Again, the vocational education department nor the NYC can produce permanent jobs. How realistic is the training? What about the family? Should all young people be encouraged to work? Should all mothers be encouraged to work?

The MDTA programs also have suffered from lack of jobs into which trainees could move. Here race plus sex has compounded the problem again, with most jobs calling for males with experience, and skills still uncommon among Negroes. As of August, 1967, the Atlanta office GSFS had no MDTA training programs to which applicants could be assigned.

The new \$4,570,793 Atlanta Concentrated Employment Program (ACEP) is another opportunity for training, restricted to low-income areas of the city. The first group of 252 began August 14, 1967. It is expected to enroll 100 every 2 weeks for a training period of 8 - 16 weeks. To be eligible you must live in one of the 5 areas (Price, Pittsburg, Summerhill-Mechanicsville, Nash-Washington, or West-End), be 16 or older and presently "below the poverty level". 98% of the first 200 are females. The living allowance for a head of household is \$35.00 to \$56.00 a week and for a non-head of household, \$20.00 a week. Like other training programs it includes pre-vocational, orientation, and other supporting social services. It is designed to train for existing or new jobs, but it cannot guarantee a job or produce one.

Dilemmas in Education: School buildings in one part of town converted to special programs as the school population moves out. School buildings in other parts of town with double enrollment as the school population moves in. Effect on schools of zoning changes -- apartments bring many new children for school. Cumbersome and lengthy process of bond issues to finance new buildings. Pre-kindergarten "headstart" programs with low pupil-teacher ratio feeding pupils into schools with large classes and double sessions. Double session, which means $\frac{1}{2}$ school day, doing away with lunch for children to whom lunch is the best meal of the day and for many a free meal. $\frac{1}{2}$ day for some 8th graders in high school (those credits do not figure in graduation requirements), but 13 and 14 year olds can't work -- it's against the law in many instances. (When school opened in August more than 7000 pupils, all of whom are Negro, were on what is commonly described as "double session".

With school day cut in half, what does a 1st grader, 2nd grader, 7th grader, 8th grader, 11th grader do the rest of the day? There's no room at school to stay. There is likely to be little room at home and even less likely to be an adult at home to supervise, to chauffeur, to play, to guide, to help with studies, to encourage, to listen.

These are some of the Dilemmas of the City. We cannot hold a welfare worker responsible for inadequate housing of welfare clients when we limit her resources to \$154.00 a month. We cannot hold a public housing manager responsible for keeping tenants who cannot pay even minimum rent when we do not give him public money to operate on. We cannot hold training supervisors responsible for lack of jobs.

Agreed we need new innovative programs, but programs that spend more money, not less and programs that provide actual economic opportunity, i.e., jobs. A few basic misconceptions stand in the way of innovative programs. One misconception is that our current social services, even with the additional "new programs" are adequate. A second misconception is that when "even more money" has not solved the problems, that "money is not the answer". More money may not insure successes, but there is little likelihood of success without it. The most effective uses of public money may be debated but the needs are enormous, widespread and urgent and can be met only by massive, simultaneous programs.

Teachers, doctors, dentist, recreation workers, planners and the like spend money. If we are to have enough of the kinds of services they provide, we must be prepared to spend more money, much more. Some of this will create jobs but that is not the prime purpose nor the criterion of success of social service programs or training programs.

The other misconception is that social services and training guarantee jobs and income, and/or guarantee access to capital. You can have everybody healthy, all the babies in a day care center, the would-be workers trained, but unless there is a productive job available, none of this brings in family income. Anti-poverty programs today train some people. They take care of some children. They take some to the hospital, to the employment office. But they do not produce jobs (nor do they produce houses). They do not produce the opportunity to make a man, a woman, a young person self-supporting, unless he is fortunate enough to be hired as a staff member of one of the "programs". They can ready him to take advantage of the opportunity, but until the community provides it, he will have to wait. There were in Atlanta

during the month of July more than 11,000 waiting, registered for jobs with the Employment Services.

Self-helping is not the same as self-generating. Self-help programs require something to start with, something to help. A credit union is not much help if each member needs to borrow \$50.00 and can hardly put in \$5.00 (if you work by the day and miss two days and don't have money for rent and food, borrowing from a loan shark at high interest and "service" charges may not be good business, but what is the alternative?) A civic association with no members who own property or have any margin of income cannot come up with "seed money", loans or fees for technical assistance. Indeed it is hard for them to produce the minimum amount to get the help necessary to apply for grants, etc.

Training, counsel, sympathy, recreation, social services all have their places but in our money economy, none of these is a substitute for money. Indeed a minimum income is necessary to take advantage even of "free" services. As has been said, one has to have a boot before he can have a boot strap. Dozens of people with no boots still comes out no boot straps. Zero multiplied by "infinity" is still zero.

Another notion which is misleading is that the problems can be "taken one at a time". Chances are a child growing up in a good house in a good neighborhood will go to a good school and get a good job; chances are a poor house in a poor neighborhood will go to a poor school and get a poor job. House, school, neighborhood, family conditions, health are all parts of a whole, and the whole is a human being.

The decisions which result in school and houses and jobs, or no schools and no houses and no jobs are matters of public policy. The fact that the decisions are complex and difficult does not alter the fact that they must be made, and that we are all helping to make them, like it or not. The democratic process is still the same. The burden of responsible citizenship is not likely to become lighter.

Detailed Reports of the meetings which have pointed up these dilemmas provide an interesting Diary of Atlanta. These, and other information such as questions and answers on Housing are available from the CRC office.

The record from February, 1967 through August, 1967, is:

Neighborhood Meetings	Number	Approx Attendance	App. Spoke
	11	1000	250
Special CRC "Hearings" at City Hall	7	650	100
Special CRC Meetings	4	60	
Regular CRC Meetings	<u>7</u>	<u>250 Visitors</u>	<u>30</u>
	29	1960	380

Approximately 800 requests have been processed through the office. Detailed minutes of all meetings and 10 Neighborhood Profiles have been widely circulated, plus special reports such as Dixie Hills, Housing, etc.

The Community Relations Commission of the City of Atlanta, appointed by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, meets the 4th Friday of each month, at 1:30 P.M., in Committee Room #2, City Hall. The public is invited and citizens are urged to bring to the attention of the Commission matters pertaining to its functions and duties, which outlined in the Ordinance, include:

"To foster mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect among all economic, social religious, and ethnic groups in the City.

To help make it possible for each citizen, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry, to develop his talents and abilities without limitation.

To aid in permitting the City of Atlanta to benefit from the fullest realization of its human resources.

To investigate, discourage and seek to prevent discriminatory practices against any individual because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry.

To attempt to act as conciliator in controversies involving human relations."

In between meetings, individuals and groups are invited to visit or telephone the Commission office (522-4463, Ext 433) to report matters of interest and to obtain information and assistance on specific subjects.

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