

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM
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CITIES, JOBS & HOUSES

In the major cities of the United States, tenements swarm with children, schools are overcrowded and understaffed, and people are out of work. Apathy overcomes many. For others, frustration erupts into violence.

The heart of the city's problems is the isolation of the people of its slums from the benefits of the rest of the metropolitan area. Discrimination in employment, zoning restrictions, discriminatory real estate practices, local tax structures, political boundaries — all protect the affluent from the claims of the impoverished.



The slum's problems are perpetuated by powerlessness. Negro leaders recognize that freedom cannot exist without equality and that political and economic power are essential parts of equality. They are appealing to their people to take pride in blackness and unite in effective action. The challenge to Negroes to overcome fear and paralysis is accompanied by a challenge to the white community to overcome its fear and intransigence. These challenges must be met.

The American Friends Service Committee struggles against exclusion of any minority from the mainstream of American society. Its programs in the cities concentrate on getting people to recognize their own problems and take initiative in dealing with them. The programs search for new ways both to break down barriers and to build self-reliance — ways that can be copied and adapted by other groups in other cities.

LANDLORDS AND TENANTS WORK TOGETHER

In Boston, concerned with the problems of welfare tenants, the Service Committee is bringing together tenants, small landlords, and the welfare department to find solutions to the problems of apartments without heat, garbage that stands uncollected, falling plaster, rats, and roaches.

In Chicago the Service Committee's staff has been working with the Chicago Freedom Movement headed by Martin Luther King. Block clubs organized by the Service Committee have been converted to locals of the Union To End Slums. Contracts are negotiated between landlords and tenants, specifying the responsibilities of each. If negotiation fails, the tenants may resort to a rent strike in which rent is held in escrow by the bargaining agent.

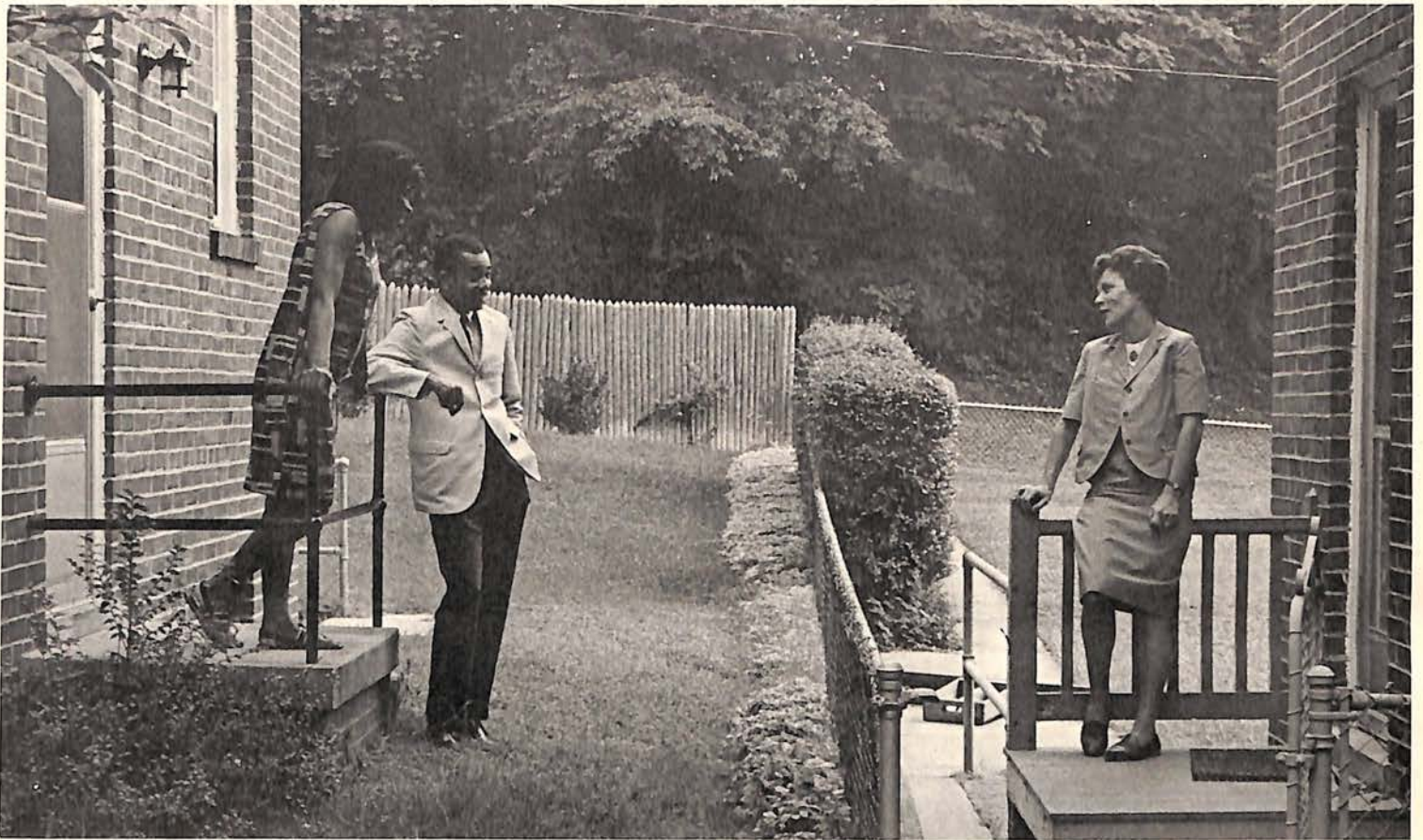
Working in a depressed community in Pasadena, California, the Service Committee has helped organize a businessmen's council, which is working on upgrading businesses and supplying new



jobs. The staff has started youth programs for drop-outs and has helped form a young adult group to work on recreational programs and activities for young people. It has started an interfamily visiting program with churches in the area to give families a chance to know people and places outside their own neighborhoods.

A new program in West Oakland is trying to establish communication among groups in the community, and between them and groups outside the area. Distrust of the surrounding world is so high that any meaningful communication is difficult. Seminars are being planned to bring West Oakland residents and outsiders together in a neutral atmosphere where they can explore mutual problems. The final emphasis of the program will be to stimulate the interest and efforts of the wider community in the problems of the people of West Oakland.

In a densely populated area of San Francisco, the Service Committee got together parents who had complaints about the elementary school, and this group became known as the School Committee. They decided the logical place to work for changes was the PTA, but the principal had repeatedly refused to allow PTA meetings at night when working parents could attend. School officials continued to discourage them. They petitioned the superintendent, with copies to the press. Now, for the first time in the history of the school, there are PTA meetings at night, and a parent has even been elected treasurer.



EMPLOYMENT LINKED TO HOUSING

Programs in San Francisco; Richmond, Indiana; and a new program to start in Atlanta link two of the Service Committee's concerns — equal employment and fair housing. A man's ability to find a job, and an employer's ability to hire him, may depend on his being able to live in the vicinity of the plant. The Committee feels that it is not enough to make employment open to all regardless of race, but that housing must be made available as well, and close to the job. Staff members found one government bureau in the suburbs of Washington that must send a bus into the city every day to pick up twenty secretaries because racial discrimination prevents them from living near the bureau. Many firms with government contracts have equal employment policies. The Service Committee works with personnel people and executives of these companies to help them secure housing in the community for qualified applicants of a minority group.

MANY PATHS TO FAIR HOUSING TRIED

In 1951 the Service Committee responded to a crisis that developed in Cicero, Illinois, following the move of a Negro family into a previously

all-white area. Since then the Committee has been increasingly involved in the drive to bring about equal opportunity in housing, believing that members of any group should be able to freely rent or buy in the neighborhood in which they want to live.

In New York; Philadelphia; Chicago; Xenia, Ohio; and Muncie, Indiana, the staff of the Committee's housing program works with buyers, sellers, builders, the real estate industry, government agencies, concerned citizens and organizations, and members of the nonwhite community to open more areas for nonsegregated living and to create a receptive atmosphere for minorities moving into all-white communities. Staff members sponsor housing discussions on TV and radio, set up listing services to bring together the minority buyer and the willing seller. They escort families to local brokers to assure equal service, initiate community education campaigns, organize "good neighbor" pledge drives, and hold buyers' conferences to inform minority families of their legal rights and to provide them with homebuying information and encouragement.

The Committee has helped form fair housing councils, organized surveys of community attitudes, and supported nondiscriminatory housing legislation. It is now mobilizing

Negro buyers and renters to take advantage of new openings and to confront real estate brokers with the need to change discriminatory practices.

The Philadelphia Metropolitan Housing Program works with the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration in developing an affirmative policy of nondiscrimination. The present practices of these agencies and others are tested. Information is obtained on new developments built with FHA money and on foreclosures of FHA and VA mortgages. A range of approaches to the Negro community is tested, so that home seekers can learn of housing opportunities throughout the metropolitan area.

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