



NAGEL PLAZA NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Portrait of Progress at Nagel Plaza.

open housing legislation and support of local referendums. It has objectively investigated a number of governmental agencies, their actions and their policies, which are believed to contribute to the state of alienation and the distrust of authority.

The Committee and its staff have served as an open channel of communications in a frequently divided community, providing some means by which requests, demands and other information can be transmitted.

The New Detroit Committee is no longer unique.

Many other such urban groupings and coalitions are coming into being across the United States.

New Detroit remains closely watched, however, as representing what can be expected from a citizen-based coalition, given the best of intentions and resources.

It has been said: "The urban coalition is facing its first test in the City of Detroit."

Although not by choice, the New Detroit Committee has come to mirror national resolve.

It accepts that challenge,

and looks forward to the future with confidence.

III: NINE MONTHS OF ACTION

Since the New Detroit Committee was formed in July of 1967, more than 50 individual projects or endeavors have been undertaken by the committee and its staff members.

Most have produced some accomplishment. Many have been surprisingly successful. Whatever their results to date, almost all have led the Committee to suggest responsibility for future action.

Successful or unsuccessful, the important thing is that the Committee has pursued its role as causer and catalyst.

Many projects were initiated and spearheaded by subcommittees. Others were referred to existing public or private agencies which were already working on comparable projects, or were prepared to handle new ones. In most instances, the New Detroit Committee received enthusiastic co-operation and support, and stands ready to aid these agencies until the job is done.

Many of these projects also permitted the Committee to compute costs, and to identify sources of necessary funding, which will be covered later in detail in a subsequent report.

The following section will undertake to highlight in abbreviated form some of the things that have been happening in each of the eight central areas of New Detroit Committee concern.

HOUSING

The Problem: How to bring dignity into the lives of thousands who now know only blight and decay through the construction of new homes within the means of lower income people and the rehabilitation of substandard housing units.

There are at least 100,000 substandard housing units in the Detroit Metropolitan area, 75,000 of them within the City of Detroit, most of them occupied by Negroes.

The residents of these "homes" are trapped by a lack of mortgage funds barring rehabilitation or replacement, by segregated housing patterns which permit even the least desirable of these units to re-

main marketable, and by low family incomes which do not permit purchase or rental of adequate housing without some form of subsidy.

For these reasons, the ability to improve their living conditions has passed out of the hands of most inner city residents.

In the view of the New Detroit Committee, this condition and the feeling of hopelessness that accompanies it are prime causes of long-standing civil unrest.

The Committee, therefore, directed a major portion of its attention and resources to the subject of housing. While this problem cannot be solved overnight, it is in this area that the Committee anticipates significant progress and, in turn, significant results.

The New Detroit Committee feels the solution to the community's housing problems rest to a great extent with the Metropolitan Detroit Citizens Development Authority.

The MDCDA is working toward the creation of \$500 million worth of new and rehabilitated housing. It is committed to the belief that

community progress cannot be achieved unless there is adequate housing for all.

MDCDA's major undertaking to this point has been Elmwood Park II, 18 acres of land designated for the construction of homes for moderate and low-income families. Sponsored by Ralph Bunche Homes, Inc., with the assistance of the Foundation for Cooperative Housing, the project will feature mixed housing with below-market interest rate mortgages, rent supplements and public housing leasebacks. Provisions have been made for day-school nurseries, a commercial center and a library. Special planning has been made to accommodate the elderly.

MDCDA is also sponsoring, with the H. F. Campbell Co., the demonstration of a new low-cost construction technique on a 1.1-acre section of the old Nagel Playfield. The new technique involves the use of cement blocks joined together with epoxy rather than the more traditional mortar. Some 26 units are now being built.

Plans are now being developed, in co-operation with the Virginia Park Rehabilitation Association and the Virginia Park Service Corporation, for the rehabilitation of four apartment buildings totaling 188 units.

The New Detroit Committee believes that the Phoenix Homes Project, designed to determine the possibility of building modular, mass-produced homes for inner city families, could represent an important breakthrough in the low-cost housing field, and represents grass roots participation at its best. As a major breakthrough in construction techniques, this could provide a significant reduction in monthly expenses over an extended mortgage. The project is co-sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit

and the Positive Neighborhood Action Committee. The New Detroit Committee, which will follow developments closely in this important project, hopes it will be able to provide assistance and encouragement to future endeavors of this type.

The New Detroit Committee supports the principle of open occupancy in Michigan. Acting as individuals and as representatives of their organizations, Committee members and staffers have worked consistently for open housing, and will continue to do so, despite intensive criticism.

Although open occupancy will have little effect on the many who lack the financial resources to buy homes, it will affect those who do. Whatever the case, this state must recognize its responsibility to open doors too long shut, both literally and figuratively. Hopefully, by the time of this reading, such action will have been taken. Recent action at the federal level should not forestall this important step in Michigan. The New Detroit Committee staff is also developing plans to help implement such laws when they are eventually developed.

As a related symbol of progress in this area, the New Detroit Committee by formal resolution suggests that the phrase "Equal Opportunity Owner," like the phrase "Equal Opportunity Employer" come into wide-scale use in housing owned or controlled by Michigan concerns and institutions.

Even though new construction and fair housing opportunity are essential, great numbers of people still depend on the city's large supply of substandard homes.

The spread of blight and urban rot must be arrested and improvements made. The Michigan State Housing Code, for instance, fragmentally enforced at best, is half a century old and is as much obstacle as help in achieving modern housing standards.



Better code enforcement must be a priority goal. A comprehensive analysis of present codes and enforcement problems has been completed with New Detroit help, and proposals for code revision and enforcement have been prepared for submission to the State Legislature.

In rental housing, New Detroit has found tenants have too few rights, with present law landlord-oriented. Tenancy is a mutual-performance contract with both landlord and tenant supposedly assuming equal responsibilities. Present law prevents tenants, however, from seeking adequate redress of grievances without the threat of eviction. As a consequence, maintenance standards have dropped, and rental profits have risen.

provement produce gains in almost every other sector.

No area of concern has such a wide and pervasive influence on the various aspects of inner city economic life as does education.

In a modern technological society, the lack of a proper education has a crippling effect in life. Improvement in all other sectors has little meaning without a commensurate improvement in the level of education available in the inner city.

The area of need in education is so broad as to encompass every aspect of the field from pre-school to post-secondary school development.

As the Detroit Public School System recognizes, an appropriate level of education is not being maintained in Detroit.

based on varying degrees of need. Those who have been the victims of deprivation must be given the opportunity—and society its opportunity—to make up these very severe educational deficiencies.

The New Detroit Committee has suggested the study of a year-round school program. The concept of the ten-month school is being increasingly questioned. The Committee wishes to determine if the public school system were operated throughout the year with students attending three out of four quarters on a rotating basis, school facilities would be increased, thus helping to relieve overcrowded conditions in many inner city schools. The New Detroit Committee will seek funds for a comprehensive study of this plan

Long overdue attention must be given to post-secondary school educational opportunities.

Although the community college concept is one of the most promising tools for progress, Wayne County has only three such colleges, and effective as they may be, the New Detroit Committee feels they are not equipped or designed to meet the heavy demands.

The Committee, therefore, urges that voters seek local and state financial support for Wayne County Community Colleges with special emphasis on inner city needs. It also recommends the private funding of an extension center as promptly as possible, to handle basic education programs, college parallel and transfer programs, career training and high school diploma programs. The New Detroit Committee is presently studying detailed plans for this program, and may recommend lending its own resources to the initial financing of the extension center.

The Committee also recommends that the public schools be so structured as to permit a greater degree of community involvement in the planning and implementation of educational decisions. The Committee believes such involvement will create more positive attitudes toward the schools on the part of parents, which should be reflected in the scholastic performance of the children. Such participation will also provide a continuing check by which school programs can be made more relevant and responsive. The New Detroit Committee is prepared to provide funds for the study of such decision-making.

EMPLOYMENT

The Problem: How to produce jobs and effective employment opportunity for the employed and unemployed and an upgraded standard of living in the inner city.

The New Detroit Committee early recognized that unem-



Jobs in the Making; Hiring the Hard Core Unemployed.

The New Detroit Committee urges the legislature to establish appropriate tenant rights without jeopardizing the position of the honest landlord. When such a law is passed, tenants should be informed of their rights. The New Detroit Committee also plans to take steps to see that enforcement procedures are promptly and equitably applied.

EDUCATION

The Problem: How to improve the quality of inner city education, and through such an im-

The lack of a long-term solution to the school system's chronic financial difficulties raises serious doubt if the schools can even maintain their current level of service, let alone meet the expanding needs of the community. The best motives in the world have little meaning unless they are backed by adequate financial resources necessary to make them a reality.

The New Detroit Committee believes the school system must adopt an approach toward education to provide students with varying degrees of help

to determine its feasibility.

Shortly after the July riots, the New Detroit Committee began to seek ways to encourage business and industry to become partners with inner city high schools, and to put business resources and talents to work solving inner city problems. These efforts have resulted in several programs of high significance and potential. Both the Michigan Bell Telephone Company and the Chrysler Corporation have already undertaken ambitious and encouraging programs of this type.

ployment was one problem requiring careful and immediate attention.

It was no secret that chronic unemployment was a serious cause of discontent, and that statistics showed a much higher rate of unemployment among Negroes than among whites.

With the heads of some of Detroit's largest employers as part of its membership, the New Detroit Committee decided it had an unparalleled opportunity to attack the problem of inner city employment.

Joining forces with the Manpower Development Committee of the Greater Detroit Board of Commerce, the New Detroit Committee aided in starting a program of inner

city job recruitment. One immediate result of the joint efforts was the establishment of an inner city job recruitment center at Twelfth and Clairmount, next to the scene of the "blind pig" raid which set off the July riots. At last count, 1,700 of the "hard-core" unemployed had been placed in jobs through this center alone.

Companies like Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, J. L. Hudson and Michigan Bell have all become involved in special programs of inner city hiring. Most recent reports, at the time of this writing, indicate that an estimated 12,000 of the so-called "hard-core unemployed" have been hired

by Detroit area firms. This has been coupled with an encouragingly high rate of retention, which, in the experience of several firms, more than matches retention rates through their regular channels of employment.

The New Detroit Committee has also concentrated efforts aimed at placing Negroes in building trade unions apprenticeship programs, in working with the Michigan Employment Security Commission to make it a more significant agency for hiring the unemployed, and with the Volunteer Placement Corps to offer counseling and placement to high school seniors within the inner city. The Committee will lend its efforts to raising the funds needed to continue the work of the Volunteer Placement Corps.

The New Detroit Committee, after surveying 22 companies, learned that too often applicants are being evaluated on the basis of standards, such as physical appearance or marital status, that have little or nothing to do with their abilities or potentials.

The Committee has urged employers to reassess their hiring practices, and design them so they are aimed at retaining, rather than rejecting.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Problem: How to encourage total participation and solutions.

The New Detroit Committee realizes the struggle to improve the quality of inner city life calls for the recognition of the value of the involvement of people working within their own organizations.

Because of this, both financial and other aid has been provided to inner city community organizations by the New Detroit Committee.

To coordinate the activities of more than 20 separate inner city groups, the Detroit Council of Organizations was



formed in August, 1967. The DCO has as its goal to "mold the Negro community into a positive force that is uncompromising in its struggle to win full freedom and justice for the Negro people, but whose struggles are based on the realities of American life" and to "promote and encourage meaningful interaction and dialogue between the Negro community and other liberal forces and groups in the larger community."

The DCO is already publishing a newsletter, developing three neighborhood service centers, and planning a Career Development and Manpower Program, two Day Care and Child Development Centers and other projects. Partial funding for the projects has already been pledged by the New Detroit Committee. A citizens' fund drive and other private and government sources will provide additional funds.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Problem: How to develop economically the inner city society has scorned as an economic desert.

One of the most effective and lasting means of getting at the roots of poverty is to encourage the economic development of what has been until now an economically blighted area, the inner city.

If the inner city is developed economically, the New Detroit Committee believes it will provide a broader economic base,



A Major Hope: Economic Development.