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A study of the planned involvement of neighborhood residents in policy making in three settlement houses in Boston.

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Boston University

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Boston University
A STUDY OF THE PLANNED INVOLVEMENT OF
NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS IN POLICY MAKING
IN THREE SETTLEMENT HOUSES IN BOSTON

A Thesis

Submitted by
Morton Friedenberg
(B.S., Temple University, 1942)
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service
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Chapter I

Introduction

An inherent belief in the tenets of democracy is based on many assumptions. One of these, which is basic to the objectives of social work, is that people should be helped to do for themselves. While recognizing the importance of dependency needs in the human makeup, the concentration in case work treatment as well as in group work goals is continuously focused on the strengthening of the ability to self-direct oneself, alone or together with others, toward a more satisfying relationship with the environment.

This relationship results from the twofold adjustment involving a realistic acceptance of environmental limitations by the individual on the one hand, and on the other hand the planning for changes in the environment to provide more realistically for the needs of those who inhabit it. It is the application of this latter adaptive technique to one limited area within the field of group work that provides the basis for the inquiry to be reported here.

A law of physics states that a body at rest tends to stay at rest unless acted upon by some outside force. Whether such a law might have application to the minds of men is worth considering. The recent Greater Boston Community Survey has in a very real sense provided the
outside force to set in motion the bodies of some social agencies in Boston which may have been at rest for a time. Its Report on Recreation and Group Work Services stated:

The development of qualities of good citizenship and the promotion of neighborly association and civic responsibility are requirements for any agency organizing and directing programs of play, recreation and group experience.¹

It further points out the importance of neighborhood houses and settlements providing opportunities for adult participation in "honest discussion of community requirements and problems". The Survey concludes this section of the report with the following concrete recommendation as a guide for future action:

Each neighborhood house or settlement should accept as one of its responsibilities the provision of opportunities for adults resident in the area in which the agency is located, to participate in policy-making discussion affecting the program in such area. These opportunities should be provided either through membership on the Board of the neighborhood house or settlement; or through service on such agency's Advisory Committee.²

This recommendation met with mixed reactions from the people connected with the various agencies concerned. Interest has been felt by the Group Work and Recreation Division of the United Community Services of Greater Boston,

¹ Lewis R. Barrett, Greater Boston Community Survey Report on Recreation and Group Work Services, p.16
² Ibid., p.129
sponsors of the Survey, in determining the degree to which
the recommendation has been implemented by the settlements
during the three years since it was made. This study is
being undertaken in an effort to shed light on this question.
It also seems important to determine the factors inherent in
local settlement board structure which have stood in the way
of such modifications prior to the recommendation—-that
actually made the recommendation necessary at all.

Some dangers resulting from the failure to pursue such
course are pointed out by Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland:

A cultural lag is evident in many agencies, that
is the structure conforms to the old philosophy
while the purposes and objectives are in tune
with the new. Such a situation frequently means
an indefiniteness of purpose and confusion as to
the methods by which the agency proposes to serve
its members.

The advantages to be derived from procedures in line
with the Survey recommendation are pointed out by Louis M.
Blumenthal:

The enlistment of cooperation on the broadest
possible base assures the uncovering of all
related issues, brings about a fuller exchange
of ideas, arouses a sense of common purpose and
responsibility, and provides opportunities for
education through participation.

It is the purpose of this study to determine by first
hand investigation of agencies, which have had some experience

3 Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland, Social Group
Work Practice, p.589
4 Louis M. Blumenthal, Administration of Group Work
in working toward the objectives of Recommendation #50 of the Greater Boston Community Survey, some of the problems encountered in the process. It is hoped that practical techniques of overcoming obstacles may be uncovered which will prove helpful to other agencies desiring to comply with the proposal. It will serve too as a sort of stock-taking of progress since the recommendation and as an indication of the distance yet to be traveled.

In pursuance of these purposes it is necessary to delineate the area of inquiry in terms of specific information sought, the most fruitful sources of such information, and the procedures to be employed in the process. It is also necessary to recognize in advance two major limitations to any definitive analysis or conclusions. 

Questions To Be Considered

The major questions to be studied in determining the degree and manner of involving neighbors and members in the management of selected settlements in Boston are the following:

1. What is the degree of acceptance and application by the Boards of Directors and Executives of the principle of neighborhood participation in agency policy making?

2. What are the problems to be encountered in the transitional process and what steps have been or can be taken to deal with them?
3. By what means and to what degree should such changes in the composition of the policy making bodies be pursued?

4. What are the essential qualifications of a good board member, and how does first hand knowledge of the neighborhood served by the agency rank among those qualifications?

5. What bearing does the manner of selecting board members and their tenure in office have on the extension of democratic participation?

Scope of Inquiry

In only a few Boston Settlements has a conscious and active effort been made to proceed with the transitional process recommended. Three of those, which have had some experience in this process, have been studied as to the problems encountered and the progress made; and the findings are herewith presented in some detail. These agencies are the Olivia James House, Roxbury Neighborhood House, and Hecht House. They will hereafter be referred to as Agency A, Agency B, and Agency C, not respectively.

These agencies are located in quite different settings which are described in detail in Chapter III. The study covered a period of about three months during the winter of 1951-52.
Sources of Data and Method of Procedure

The desired information has been sought at its source—within the three agencies themselves. Prior to the study of the agencies, it was necessary to become familiar with the characteristics of the areas in which they are located. Population and sociological studies prepared by the Research Division of the United Community Services provided much of this background information. Material prepared by the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Houses and other recognized authorities in the settlement field provided some standards of measurement which could be applied.

With the active cooperation of the headworkers of each settlement, further knowledge of the neighborhoods, of the history of each agency, the agencies' policies and objectives, their program, and their boards and committee structures all helped to round out the pictures. With the further help of the headworkers, personal contact was established with board members of the respective agencies.

In order to avoid the burdensome and annoying necessity of board members filling out lengthy questionnaires, it was decided to employ instead a series of guiding questions to be used only during personal interviews. Such interviews were held with the headworkers of each settlement and with a number of board members. Care was taken to include both the newer board members from the neighborhood and the older ones from
outside. The total number and their distribution by agencies is described in Chapter IV.

Limitations

Not many houses have active board members both from the neighborhood and from outside, and therefore the sources of experiential information are extremely limited. For this reason the inquiry was confined in such a way as to preclude the possibility of broad general conclusions. Instead the findings will be limited to an analysis of the problem areas and the ways in which they have been approached. It is hoped that help may be derived from the successes and failures to date so that modifications may lead to additional and more fruitful progress in the future.

Another limitation is the subjective nature of some of the material to be studied. In such an inquiry, the attitudes - expressed and unexpressed - are of importance equal to the facts of actual change that may have taken place. An attempt will be made to show the relationship as objectively as possible between the principle that is espoused and the actual facts and attitudes that may be uncovered.
CHAPTER II
HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SETTLEMENTS

History

The movement which later gave birth to settlement houses throughout England and America began in London with the founding of Toynbee Hall in 1884. The inspiration for it went back to 1854 when a group of Cambridge University men, joined later by churchmen, collegians and workingmen, established the London Working Men's College.

In July of 1884, the University Settlement Association was formed with the following stated purpose:

... as a means whereby the thought, energy, and public spirit of the University may be brought into the direct presence of the social and economic problems of our time.

In 1886 the University Settlement in New York became the first settlement in the United States, according to Frederick Soule writing in the Social Work Yearbook for 1947. A direct outgrowth of the English movement, settlements soon spread to all the larger American cities. Dr. Stanton Coit in New York, Jane Addams in Chicago, and Robert A. Woods in Boston were among the early pioneers. Within two decades there were fifty houses in some twenty cities.

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South End House in 1891 became the first of some twenty-five settlements to be established in Boston in the following forty years. By 1910 every congested area of the city boasted of at least one house. Federations were formed in the South End in 1899 and in the North and West Ends by 1905. A city-wide federation subsequently emerged and became known as the United Settlements of Greater Boston.

Today there are some 250 settlements in all the important industrial cities of the United States. Each differs in some respects from the others because each is geared to the needs and characteristics of the immediate neighborhood served. Yet they share a common heritage as forces for uniting effort for the betterment of local social conditions.

Both in England and America, the movement grew out of the efforts of clergymen, teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, economists and later of psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers to study in laboratory fashion the problems of each area and to work through various means to solve these problems. These men and women frequently "settled" among the people with whom they worked and through several waves of immigration came to grips with such problems as naturalization, sanitation, industrial conditions, child care, health, housing, vocational training and a host of other areas of concern.
Frederick J. Soule describes the founders of the settlement movement in the following words: "Theirs was a swelling stream of comment on human needs. Altogether these pioneers roused the conscience of the nation."

Settlement houses, community centers, and group work agencies in general have an early history characterized by volunteer boards managing every aspect of administration and service without a professional staff. In writing of this Clarence King says:

Most social welfare movements were originally fostered by boards of citizens, acting directly without staff. More recently skilled professional staffs have been engaged to work under the direction of boards. One school of thought now contends that the board was never anything but a necessary evil, a means of securing funds from wealthy givers. Now that much of social work is soon to be governmental, runs the argument, the board will be unnecessary, as abundant funds will be forthcoming from that mysterious alchemy known as taxation.

Board members of this earlier type were impelled, by religious convictions, by desire for social prestige, by concern for human deprivation, and by a variety of other personal motivations, to give time and money to help meet certain social needs of residents in less privileged neighborhoods. This form of leadership derived its meaning from thinking similar to that expressed by Frederick Ellsworth Wolf who defined it as the "Art, Science, or Gift by which

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2 Clarence King, Organizing for Community Action
a man is enabled and privileged to direct the Thoughts, Plans and Actions of his fellow-men." This paternalistic approach with stress on "directing" others seems to be an anachronism in this age when so much emphasis is placed on the democratic sharing of leadership.

Occasionally these volunteers, and frequently the professionals who later succeeded them, "settled" in the neighborhood in order to know its problems at first hand. While desirable in motive, this attempt to absorb the coloration of the community was basically unrealistic. Many factors worked against the blending of such unlike educational, cultural, social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

Later, as paid workers took over the actual operational responsibilities, board members, almost invariably people of some means and social standing, continued to fulfill the roles of financing and policy making. Removed physically and by life situations from the scene of operation, such a board relied almost completely upon the paid executive for information and direction concerning the neighborhood's problems and aspirations and plans for serving its needs. This absentee kind of management had both advantages and disadvantages.

As specialization and professionalization have advanced in the field of group work, the values to individual growth
inherent in the democratic techniques of self-government have been generally recognized. Now well established as a fundamental method in attaining sound group work objectives in face to face groups, the application of the same techniques of self-government on the administrative level appeals to many as logical and desirable. This would appear to be especially applicable in neighborhood agencies which resemble in many ways the intimate characteristics of the face to face group.

In recent writings on the subject, stress has been laid on a new approach to settlement management involving the neighbor or client. Grace Coyle points this out when she says:

Most of all however, in these days any organization hoping to help a neighborhood to develop constructive and effective organizations must go at it in a completely democratic spirit. The "uplift" spirit in every social agency must give way to mutual and equal sharing of social responsibility.

The organization of the people in a neighborhood to meet their own needs, improve their own conditions or set up neighborhood activities for themselves is something the settlement should be uniquely equipped to do.3

Philosophy

The basic philosophy which all settlements share is an abiding concern in the welfare of the individuals they serve. As a means of serving them best, the settlements traditionally

3 Grace Coyle, Group Experience and Democratic Values, p. 109, p. 111
focus their attention upon the smaller units of democracy - the individual, the family, the small group, and the neighborhood. In the home or in the agency, the neighborhood is the primary base of operation.

Many settlements have pioneered in neighborhood planning for constructive social action through planning committees and local neighborhood participation toward the development of the capabilities of the individual and the improvement of the environment in which these individuals lived.

With missionary zeal, settlement workers have looked upon their work not as a program of activities or even of neighborhood service but as a way of life. Their philosophy, stemming as it does from religious origins, lays heavy emphasis upon neighborly cooperation as a means of raising the ideals of life, of deepening spiritual values, and of fostering harmony among all classes and cultural groups, while at the same time achieving a higher level of material comfort.

Many people feel today that the rapid disappearance of foreign born groups from our population, with which settlements were largely occupied in their early days; the enormous expansion of social horizons, resulting from modern developments in transportation and communication; the assumption of vast welfare services by various levels of government; and the rise of a whole network of organizations to serve the specialized needs and interests of individuals have all con-
tributed toward removing from settlements their primary reason for being. Nevertheless, the ardor of the deeply committed settlement worker continues undiminished.

More and more in recent years the settlements themselves have come to acknowledge the need for developing and utilizing neighborhood leadership in their own planning.

In Cleveland a recent move was adopted to federate several agencies into the Neighborhood Settlement Association of Cleveland. In its first annual report, it refers to a new approach to management as follows:

As far as the organization of settlement work is concerned, we recognize that the original settlement functioned around the personality of its headworker, usually the founder... In many ways the headworker was the settlement... His, is today, an administrative job, some parts of which can be done more efficiently by a central administrator... We have seen in the first nine months of our operation the soundness of this theory.

...local citizen participation in policy making has been increased by the formation of autonomous Advisory Boards in each of the new service units. 4

In 1950, a summary of group discussions among Boston settlement workers stated:

...it must be recognized that there is a change in settlement concepts of leadership and administration. Boards today, with new vigor, are adding thoughtful social planning to trusteeship. Increasingly their ranks include neighborhood representatives who work side by side with technical experts, contributing local experiences.

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4 The Neighborhood Settlement Association of Cleveland, Inc. Annual Report for 1949
...out of the soil of neighborly association grows cooperative effort, which is the germ of democracy and the hope of social progress.5

Recent changes in settlement philosophy reflective of the need to involve local people in planning is revealed in the criteria for admission set forth for agency membership in the National Federation of Settlements in 1940:

So far as possible, the major population groups served by the settlement should be represented on board and staff...efforts (should be made) to discover and give effect to special potentialities and abilities in local population groups.6

In addressing the 41st Conference of the National Federation of Settlements, Clyde Murray, its President, set forth his basic philosophy concerning the relationship of democracy to the neighborhood work when he said:

We believe that in order to make democracy a living reality to the American people we must secure the active participation of every citizen in planning for the betterment of his home, his group and his neighborhood. Democracy must be learned in the smaller units of group life. It cannot become real to people through preachments or through recital of slogans.7

Another expression of the latest settlement philosophy is this:

5 Frederick J. Soule, Social Settlements in Greater Boston Neighborhoods, p. 14, p. 16
6 National Federation of Settlements, Criteria for Membership, 1940
7 Clyde Murray, New Horizons for the Settlement Movement, 1944
Settlements view themselves as constructive and reconstructive rather than therapeutic agencies. Their objective is not to make people happier with their lot but to be effective in improving their environment. The focus of the work of the settlement is community well being.8

These expressions of the past and changing present philosophy of the settlement movement serve as a frame of reference in which to view the recent moves to emphasize neighbor participation in policy making.

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8 Fern Colburn, from an unpublished study made for the Washington D.C. Federation of Settlements, 1951
CHAPTER III
DESCRIPTION OF AGENCIES STUDIED

Each settlement has its own unique history directly related to the neighborhood served. To place the agencies in their proper setting, the descriptions of the various areas are summarized below. The following sociological data were summarized from a report of the Greater Boston Community Council based on an analysis of 1940 census figures and subsequent study material.¹

Olivia James House

Olivia James House is located in the section of South Boston known as Telegraph Hill and serves a clientele predominantly Catholic of Italian, Irish and Lithuanian parentage. South Boston was formerly an attractive residential area, with some small sections remaining so today. The immediate neighborhood served by the house is made up largely of small and crowded low rent homes and apartments occupied by families with a high rate of juvenile delinquency and of Aid to Dependent Children, and relatively low educational level and earning capacity.

The house began in 1902 as the South Boston Day Nursery. In 1912, after the erection of the present building, its

¹ Boston Neighborhood Comparison of Favorability, 1945
name was changed to the South Boston Neighborhood House. Gradually a full scale settlement program developed. In 1935 the legacy of Mrs. Olivia James provided facilities for activities more in keeping with neighborhood needs. An annex in the City Point section of South Boston was opened in 1945.

About five years ago the first neighbors were added to the board. From that time to the present a total of four neighborhood residents and one neighborhood business man have been included on the board. The remaining eighteen of the twenty-three member board live in such places as Canton, Milton, Concord, Lincoln, and Wellesley. Of this total, two neighbors and six or eight others play the most active role in board matters.

Telegraph Hill ranks forty-second in a composite of favorability factors among sixty-three Boston neighborhoods. In economic security, it ranks forty-first; in educational achievement, fifty-fourth; in health it is thirty-ninth; in housing, forty-fourth; and in social breakdown, it is thirty-fifth. In all respects it was, in 1945, below the median of all Boston neighborhoods in favorability, however the rates of juvenile delinquency and infant deaths showed a marked improvement in 1950.

Roxbury Neighborhood House

Roxbury Neighborhood House serves the section of Roxbury
known as Dudley Street East, which is populated largely by Catholics of Italian, Canadian and Irish parentage, with a sizeable recent influx of Negroes. It is bordered by a large industrial and commercial area with very few good homes. Most families that are economically able have moved out of the neighborhood. A ten year old Federal housing project is close by. The families remaining in the neighborhood are able to maintain only a very low standard of living. With the recent coming of a number of Negro families, racial conflicts are apparent and seem to be on the increase.

In 1878, a day nursery known as the Children's House was founded on Albany Street. This later developed into the Roxbury Neighborhood House. Many children's and parents' activities rapidly developed and, in 1895, the agency moved to its present location and adopted the name it still bears. Through the years it has provided activities for all ages and many neighborhood services to reinforce the home, the school and the church.

In spite of the expressed desire to add neighbors to the Board, little progress has been made in that direction. During the past three years the nearest approach to neighbors was the addition of a neighborhood priest, a neighborhood businessman, and a former resident of the area who some years ago moved to Dorchester. No one intimately associated with the neighborhood, through family residence in it, has ever been
a member of the Board.

The neighborhood of Dudley Street East, in 1945, ranked fifty-seventh of sixty-three neighborhoods in composite favorability. It is near the lowest of all Boston areas in every factor contributing to wholesome family life. In economic security it ranks sixty-first; in educational achievement it is fiftieth; in health, fifty-sixth; in housing, fiftieth; and in social breakdown it ranks fifty-seventh. By 1950, the infant and general death rate as well as juvenile delinquency had shown a substantial improvement.

Hecht Neighborhood House

Hecht Neighborhood House is located within the area of Dorchester known as Franklin Park and serves a clientele almost exclusively Jewish. This is the predominant population group in the area with parentage largely from Eastern Europe. It is a neighborhood mainly of apartments of fairly high rentals, with an above average educational level, a high proportion of professional, small business, and white collar workers, and a relatively low rate of delinquency and mortality. There are several large parks in the area. Hecht House began as the Hebrew Industrial School for Girls in 1939 in the West End. At about 1921 it became the Hecht Neighborhood House. In 1936, it moved to Dorchester and expanded its program to include a variety of neighborhood and membership activities for children and youth. Beginning in 1944, a con-
sious involvement of neighborhood adults in activities and on the board of directors was begun. This resulted in 1949 in a radical change in philosophy and structure to those more typical of a Jewish Community Center than of a settlement house.

Franklin Park, as a neighborhood, ranks high as one of the more favorable ones in the city. Of the sixty-three, it rates a composite score ranking it as the fourteenth most favorable. In 1945 it stood seventeenth in economic security; nineteenth in educational achievement; sixth in health standards; eleventh in housing; and is eighth most favorable in social breakdown factors. In 1950 the number of juvenile court appearances had been reduced drastically and the infant mortality rate had increased somewhat.
### TABLE I

**FAVORABILITY RATINGS**

**COMPARSED WITH SIXTY-THREE BOSTON NEIGHBORHOODS**

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<th>Franklin Park</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Composite Rating</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>2. Economic Security</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Educational</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
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<td>4. Health</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Housing</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Social Breakdown</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
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Factors included in:

2. Aid to Dependent Children, Dependent Aid, Old Age Assistance, and Unemployment

3. Median school year, and advanced schooling

4. Death rate, infant mortality, tuberculosis deaths, tuberculous new cases.

5. Crowding, density, median rants


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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Since the settlements studied were selected because of the fact that each had attempted the involvement of neighbors in board functions to some degree, the questions to be considered relate to the extent and the effectiveness of this involvement. They shared this purpose in common, but great variations were revealed as to the complete acceptance of the principle and the effort expended to implement it in practice.

In such a question, attitudes and opinions must be related to facts. Twelve people in all were interviewed, for about an hour each. This included three headworkers and nine board members. Of the board members interviewed, two had never lived in the neighborhood, four had always lived there, one had grown up there and had moved away, two were business men in the neighborhood, and one was a local parish priest. Included among them were all three board presidents and other members of varying degrees of active participation.

In one agency, the headworker, one outside board member, two neighborhood residents, and a local business man living away from the neighborhood were interviewed. In another agency, the headworker, one outside board member, a local parish priest, and a former neighborhood resident were interviewed. There are no board members who presently live nearby
and use the house. In the third agency, interviews were held with the headworker and with two board members, both of whom live in the neighborhood. The interviewer was advised that none of the more active board members reside outside the area served by the agency.

Degree of Acceptance and Integration of Neighbors by Older Board Members

In response to questions concerning the desirability and feasibility of carrying out Survey Recommendation #50, approval was unanimously expressed as to desirability, with support varying from moderate to enthusiastic. A few expressed some doubts as to the feasibility of involving very many neighbors or involving them in the board positions of greatest responsibility.

One person, a teacher, expressed the conviction that "Democracy is stronger as we educate people to share community responsibility". One headworker was convinced that "Adults don't like to have things done for them always. They want opportunities for leadership but will stay away unless given a chance". The thought was expressed by two board members that the board was merely a figurehead group, in any case, and that the agency would do better to let the staff run things on their own. Another felt that neighbors and outside residents could never mix and that to attempt a mixture was a mere "fraud". He thought a complete separa-
tion of the two groups was best and suggested that each should serve as a "spotlight" aimed from different points but directed upon the same spot, thereby eliminating shadows without shining in each other's eyes.

The old concept of charity and of doing for others shows up here too. One president was convinced that outside board members had done well for the neighborhood or else there would have been more vociferous complaints. A neighborhood board member resented having the agency thought of as serving only slum dwellers and charity cases. In this connection, a headworker recounted an incident in which a fur coat was found in the cloakroom by a visiting board member who demanded that the owner be found and ejected forthwith as being undeserving of the house's services.

**Proportion of Board from Neighborhood**

When asked what proportion of the board members should live in the neighborhood, the interviewees gave answers ranging from "a few", as token representation, to "almost all". Even the man who felt that neighbors could not work effectively with "outsiders" did not say that neighbors ought to be excluded completely.

The actual situation at the time of the study revealed the following: Agency A drew about 20% of its board from the neighborhood. In the case of Agency B, none are truly neighborhood residents. About 12% of the board had some
personal knowledge as a former resident, local business man, etc. In Agency G, about 90% of Board lives nearby.

It was generally agreed by all those interviewed that a balance ought to be maintained so as not to lose the benefits to be gained from the backgrounds of both neighborhood people and outsiders. This factor was the one stressed most often since it was recognized by all that each group has unique contributions to make and that the agency would be the loser if it were completely denied the services of either.

**Advantages of Neighbors on Board**

The advantages of involving neighbors on the board were expressed in many ways by headworkers and by neighborhood and outside board members alike. Thinking seemed to center around three types of benefits.

The first was a recognition that able people may be found in every setting if actively searched for and encouraged to develop their capabilities through various stages of preparation for actual board service. Further, they will welcome opportunities, if sincerely offered, to do for themselves with their friends rather than have others do for them.

Secondly, it was felt that the educational values for both old and new board members are very real if the principles of democracy are to be taken seriously.

The third point stresses the feeling that no one can
know and express the needs of the neighborhood as well as those who live in it and share its problems.

**Advantages of Board Members from Outside the Neighborhood**

At the same time very real values were acknowledged in retaining the active interest and participation of the old board members. Mainly they centered around three points. The one that seemed most important to those who were interviewed was the ability of this group, through personal, social and business connections, to gain ready access to funds and special management and technical skills.

The second point stressed was the knowledge held by this group of other agencies and city wide planning problems which helped to interpret the settlement and to relate its planning to the broad community.

Finally, some felt it important to have the objective, detached thinking of people not intimately involved with the problems and personalities of the neighbors.

**Problems in Involving Neighbors**

In considering the desirability of drawing neighbors onto the board, a number of problems were recognized as obstacles that would have to be overcome in accomplishing this. Indeed some of them might make the whole idea unfeasible. The problem most frequently expressed centered around the character of the neighborhoods in which the settlements are
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion expressed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Local people have abilities and talents which should be made use of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All adults seek opportunities for leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Only neighbors can truly reflect neighborhood thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Helps counteract the feeling that neighborhood is composed exclusively of slums and underprivileged people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Knowledge of local problems and attitudes is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adults prefer to do things for themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Old members of the board are stimulated to visit the house more to keep as informed as the neighbors are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Democracy is stronger as we educate people to share community responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Neighbors can better influence boards directly than second-handedly through headworker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H-Headworker  N-Neighborhood Board Member
O-Outside Board Member
# TABLE III

**EXPRESSED ADVANTAGES IN RETAINING BOARD MEMBERS FROM OUTSIDE THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion expressed by</th>
<th>1. Personal and business contacts provide access to funds not otherwise available</th>
<th>H, O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Prestige in community enhances job of interpretation of services and needs</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Experience in dealing with problems of management</td>
<td>N, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Knowledge of city wide problems helps relate agency services to city wide planning</td>
<td>N, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Contacts with other settlement boards bring in fresh ideas</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Provide needed technical skills (legal, accounting, budgeting, engineering, etc.)</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Detached attitude free of involvement in individual problems</td>
<td>O, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Link to the past provides valuable continuity</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H-Headworker  N-Neighborhood Board Member  O-Outside Board Member
located. Since Agency A and Agency B are in areas that are among the disadvantaged from a socio-economic point of view, it was felt by some that they offered very little in the way of human material to draw from.

Those who remain in the vicinity of these two houses are generally unskilled workers with no knowledge of management problems. They are frequently unaware of broader civic matters and are said to have little sense of social responsibility. Almost invariably they lack valuable contacts with sources of funds and specialized skills, and the prestige and social standing that command attention. This was not as true of Agency C.

Perhaps even more important obstacles are those that derive from subtle qualities of personal relationships. In various ways, references were made to the "invisible barriers" that exist between neighborhood people and those from outside. This results from the completely dissimilar worlds from which they come, a fact which colors attitudes toward life, the economic realities, the manner of dress, the ability to articulate thoughts, and many other characteristics. In such a framework, a meeting of minds is difficult. Free and easy discussion is often frustrated. Feelings of inadequacies and of resentment at real and imagined acts of snobbishness easily arise. Some feared that this might lead to loss of interest by the old members of the board. In the
case of Agency C, few board members from outside the neighborhood remain on the board after about seven years of conscious involvement of neighbors.

Relationships of neighbors to each other and neighbors to the headworkers are also important. The danger was expressed that the selection of certain neighbors might tend to build up exaggerated loyalties and support for staff members. One headworker expressed annoyance with neighbors who come into the house to gossip or nose about and take up too much time of the staff and feared that this would be further aggravated if more were on the board. Several felt a risk was involved in choosing neighborhood people who might be part of a clique which was resented by others who were not chosen. This might result in neighborhood schisms.

A third area of concern revolved around the problem of maintaining anonymity of case material used to illustrate needs and plans which are discussed at board meetings. Both confidentiality and the effectiveness of planning might be jeopardized thereby.

Whether the fears described in the preceding two paragraphs would actually materialize cannot yet be determined. Thus far there is too little experience to provide a fair test. Out of the slight experience at hand, no instances were actually cited where these particular dangers had become realities.
# TABLE IV

**EXPRESSED CONSIDERATIONS LIMITING NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION ON BOARDS OF DIRECTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion expressed by</th>
<th>1. Neighbors lack knowledge of broad community planning problems needed as a point of reference</th>
<th>O, H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Neighbors have limited education and management experience</td>
<td>O, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Presence of neighbors makes it difficult to discuss specific case material because confidentiality cannot be maintained</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Neighbors may provide unwarranted and exaggerated support for professional workers</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Most neighborhood people lack influence needed when dealing with directors of trusts and central funds</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Difficult for old board members to recognize potential contribution of local people</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. If chosen unwisely, neighbors on board may create schism in neighborhood</td>
<td>O, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Old board members sometimes act &quot;superior&quot;</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Influx of neighbors may lead to loss of interest by valuable old members</td>
<td>O, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Neighbors may spend so much time in house as to interfere with work of staff</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H**-Headworker  
**N**-Neighborhood Board Member  
**O**-Outside Board Member
Neighbors as Officers

As one measure of the extent to which neighbors would really be acceptable to the present board members, the inter­viewees were asked if they thought the officers of the board might eventually be drawn from the neighborhood. In the case of Agency C this was not only thought to be desirable but is already an accomplished fact. In the case of the others, there were mixed reactions. In Agencies A and B, there have never been officers living in the neighborhood.

The two presidents, from outside the neighborhood, were divided in their opinion as were the neighborhood board mem­bers themselves. One person pointed out that since funds came from outside the neighborhood, for the most part, officers must also come from outside. Another felt that influence counts for so much that "big shots" rather than neighbors ought to be the officers. Curiously, the board member who felt that neighbors could not be integrated into the board answered "yes" to this question. Either he really meant "no" or else he is thoroughly confused in his own thinking on this subject. The interviewer was unable to clarify the feelings of this person.

Conditions Which Limit Neighborhood Participation

As important as the acceptance of the idea of participat­ing neighbors are the factors which facilitate or thwart real participation. Some of the intangible feelings that affect
this have already been referred to. In addition there are actual practices which play an important part.

The basic problem in Agencies A and B is the lack of first hand contact between the old board members and neighborhood people generally. This makes it extremely difficult to choose wisely the neighbors who have the most to contribute to a board. When asked directly, most board members and head-workers of these two houses admitted that they had not cultivated enough opportunities for contact between the two groups.

One of the most telling pieces of evidence which tends to negate in practice the acceptance of the theory of neighborhood involvement is the manner in which board meetings are held in Agencies A and B. These two boards have all but two or three a year during the daytime making it virtually impossible for housekeeping mothers or working fathers from the neighborhood to attend. Again, all but two or three meetings a year are held in board rooms of banks or other downtown business offices which present psychological barriers or discouraging inconveniences for neighborhood people. In the case of Agency C, all board meetings are held in the evening at the house.

An extremely important fact, which was borne out by indirect references rather than by direct answers to questions, was the practice of reaching important decisions prior to
actual board meetings. This was frequently done in private consultations among the headworker and a select few of the board members of the outside group.

One neighborhood board member called special attention to the rubber-stamp character of the board with almost no questioning or discussion of pre-made decisions. She said, "We just sit and listen. We don't do much. I only go to make a quorum." Several others admitted a total ignorance as to when and by whom decisions were made concerning such things as nominees, budgets, committees, program policies, etc.

This might well account for the fact that some board members had not attended a meeting for more than a year and that rarely did more than fifty percent of all board members in Agencies A and B attend a meeting at any one time.

In Agency A the average attendance is seven to nine out of a board of twenty-three members. Board members attend an average of four meetings each per year. In the case of Agency B, there is an average attendance of eleven out of twenty-four board members at their meetings. Little concern was expressed over the fact that some board members rarely if ever attend. Taking such absences as a matter of course seems actually to encourage absenteeism.

The general lack of knowledge, by some of those interviewed, of such basic questions as how board members are chosen, when boards meet, whether or not there are board
committees, etc., was most revealing of lack of interest or of opportunities to satisfy that interest. This was especially true of the newer board members whose interest has to be consciously stimulated and cultivated if it is to be developed at all.

Changes in Attitudes Resulting from Neighborhood Involvement

From the limited experiences with a new type of board, it is important to evaluate the changes in attitudes, on the part of each group toward the other, which have resulted from the involvement of neighborhood people. Some of those interviewed could detect no changes either because they felt that no differences in attitudes ever existed between neighbors and outsiders or because they were not acute enough to be aware of them.

One headworker recalled the strong hostility of old board members in the beginning to any contact with neighbors to say nothing of allowing them to share in management. In Agency C, the outsiders would have nothing to do with local women who were encouraged by staff to develop separate but parallel auxiliary groups. The differences in social status and the philosophy of charity work were the main obstacles. As the strength of the local group increased and the others got used to the idea, a merger was finally achieved even though some of the original group lost interest and dropped out.
Everyone interviewed agreed that the boards were better informed than before and that new ideas had come to their attention even though many were thwarted for lack of funds to implement them. In one case attention was called to the change in degree of mutual acceptance which had to precede—rather than follow—the addition of neighbors to the old members of the board. This was facilitated by the two groups working together on committees where it was felt that mixing was easier.

One neighbor, after three years on the board, still felt a strong sense of frustration at the dominance of what she called "the Beacon Hill crowd". Another on the same board revealed the absence of real change when she expressed a desire to share and contribute fully in the work of the agency and yet was completely unperturbed in acknowledging her ignorance of what was going on and her almost complete lack of involvement. Most of those interviewed could not be very specific about any noticeable changes.

Preparation for Service on the Board

It was agreed by everyone that, prior to the inclusion of neighbors on the board, conscious preparation was needed for that eventuality. Active involvement in some phase of the work of the house and the neighborhood was recognized as the best beginning point. One board member had been a house member as a child, three had been volunteer group leaders,
three or four had helped in neighborhood efforts such as Community Chest, and others had helped on special projects. In most cases it was agreed that a good source of board members ought to be those who were active in parent groups or adult activities of the house, though this was not the case with those now on the boards of Agencies A and B.

Everyone interviewed felt that the channel providing the best possibilities for preparation was the one least developed, namely, involvement on active board committees. There were some such committees, though they were few in number and usually dealt with programming only and not with questions of policy. Several successful neighborhood projects were cited, such as Roxbury Day, street races, garbage collection, etc., in which neighbors and board members had worked successfully together.

Through active committees, neighbors may gain insight into agency problems, acquire experience in planning and decision making, and at the same time get to know personally those who are already on the board. Also from such experiences they may be groomed as agency representatives on neighborhood councils, and city wide committees in order to obtain familiarity with problems of broader community planning.

At least one president thought all this was a little unnecessary because the headworker had handled things adequately and the neighbors had rarely asked for anything or
made any suggestions. In spite of her expressed desire to use the ideas and abilities of neighbors, this attitude would seem to contradict that desire.

As to what orientation of new board members might be helpful, the board members themselves agreed this would be good but were vague about just what was needed. They spoke only of general familiarity with program, staff and policies.

The headworkers were more specific. One suggested only that new people on the board ought to come in and visit around more; the others cited steps that they had actually taken. One furnished the board with copies of a recent study of the agency, copies of various program materials, a general statement of settlement purposes, and also planned "come and see" occasions, to meet the staff and members. Another headworker prepared a kit of materials including a copy of the by-laws, a history of the agency, a copy of the budget, a pamphlet on the duties of board members, and other materials. This headworker thought that a more formal Board Institute might also be helpful. They all agreed that much more could and should be done.

Qualities of a Constructive Board Member

If the selection of board members is to be made wisely, thought has to be given to the characteristics a constructive board member ought to possess. In response to a question
seeking opinions as to what these qualities ought to be, a high degree of unanimity was revealed. A check list of characteristics was offered with additions invited. This check list was constructed by the interviewer, drawing somewhat on the material presented by Benjamin Rabinowitz in his pamphlet on boards and their responsibilities.¹

Almost everyone stressed an understanding of the work and the desire to advance it as being paramount. Related to this and second in number of selections was a first-hand knowledge of the neighborhood and house members. This was checked as often by those who did not have such knowledge as by those who did. Another qualification that was emphasized was the readiness to give time and service. This was felt to be important in spite of apparent willingness to accept without question the fact that many members do not currently exhibit such a quality.

As a reflection of her own point of view, one member said, "I'm concerned about the human element; let someone else stress the need for raising money." Another said, "All you need is horsesense. Everything else flows from that." One headworker was most concerned with a person's general background and special skills. Another one emphasized the need for a feeling for people and their problems. Several board

¹ Benjamin Rabinowitz, Boards of Directors, Committees and Their Responsibilities
members mentioned the declining importance of the ability to raise money for the agency since financing now is done largely through central funds.

Selection of Board Members

The whole process of wisely involving neighbors, or anyone with a contribution to make, on a board is dependent in a large measure upon the care with which the selection is made. Who should choose? Should responsibility be that of a small nominations committee, of handpicking by the headworker or the president, of choosing a "representative" from adult groups in the house, of a vote by all adult participants in the agency, or of some combination of these? Again opinions and practices vary.

In Agency C the process has developed through several evolutionary stages. At first the board was absentee and self-perpetuating. Gradually accepting the idea of neighborhood participation, the board handpicked likely people and later even elected one of these neighborhood people to the presidency. As the agency stimulated extensive adult programming and much neighborhood committee work, it added more and more neighbors to the board. Finally, formalized changes in structure and membership were incorporated into a new set of by-laws which guaranteed every adult member (participant) a vote in the selection of board members. The result is that almost all of the board now comes from the neighborhood.
**TABLE V**

**DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Number of Interviewees Selecting Each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. An understanding of the work of the agency and a desire to advance it</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A first hand knowledge of the neighborhood and agency participants</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A readiness to give time and service</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. An ability to give specialized skills to the work of the agency</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The power to influence public opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. An ability to raise money for the agency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The ability to represent broad city-wide thinking and planning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Personal prestige to add to the agency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A high degree of civic consciousness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The qualities representative of neighborhood participants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Experience in business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. An ability to give money to the agency</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
although some outside members have been retained for the valuable special contributions they can render.

In Agencies A and B, a totally different picture prevails. In both cases the boards are self-perpetuating, for the most part, with an occasional addition or replacement as the need arises. In practice, the choice is made by the headworker or a board member suggesting a name to be approved by a nominations committee and/or by the board.

Many of those interviewed were very vague or completely ignorant of the selective process in operation. When asked if neighbors should be encouraged to share in the choice, one neighborhood board member thought the board would resist this. Several thought neighbors might recommend candidates to the board and that parent groups should be consulted or even be asked to choose a representative to serve for a year at a time. One president feared that it might be awkward to invite suggestions and then have to say "no". Another board member was afraid of the consequences of inviting a neighbor onto the board and asked, "What if it doesn't work?".

In view of the low state of readiness of neighbors to serve on the board, a headworker felt that the risks were greater than the potential gains of having the neighbors choose. The hope was expressed that, after some preparation, parent groups might eventually share in the selection; but in the meantime the choice should be made by the board itself.
By and large, new members are selected from among the personal acquaintances of the current board members. Frequently the perpetuation of family lines stemming from the original founders is a dominant factor in the choice. These factors tend to make boards an ingrown group sharing common social and business outlooks and lacking the stimulation of new ideas and diverse points of view.

Tenure of Board Members

Agency C differs radically from the other two in that it has broken with tradition and now incorporates into its by-laws a provision for limited terms and a system of rotation for board members. Following an early history similar to the other agencies, it formalized, in 1949, a procedure for electing board members for a three year term, after which a year must elapse before reelection is permitted. This allows for replacing, at intervals, those who have lost interest or for other reasons do not give beneficial service. In order not to lose the contributions of good members whose terms have expired, an effort is made to involve them in important committee work and perhaps to reelect them to the board later.

In settlements A and B, tenures of service are unlimited, and as a rule last for life or until a voluntary resignation is accepted. In one agency, the average length of service of all current board members is about fifteen years. The president of one house has served for forty-five years as a
member and as president for seventeen years. In another agency, the average length of service is also fifteen years and the current president has been in office for five years.

When asked if they thought that rotation would be desirable in order to replace a member of limited value, two differing opinions were expressed. Some, including both headworkers and both presidents, thought it unnecessary and probably unwise. The neighborhood members generally thought it would be helpful and suggested terms ranging from two to six years. Without limited tenure, Agency B has added or replaced one or two members each year. Agency A has added about seven new members in the past fourteen years.

As a result of unlimited tenure and the absence of rotation, Agency A has changed only one board member each two years. Agency B has changed about three every two years. By constitutional requirement, Agency C must change seven each year. If changing board composition is a device for bringing in helpful new ideas and involving neighbors on the board, a serious question arises as to whether Agencies A and B can accomplish this with the current rate of change.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to examine the degree of acceptance and implementation by the older board members of the principle of optimum involvement of neighborhood residents in policy making and management in three settlements in Boston. These three had consciously embarked upon efforts toward this end. Therefore their experiences should provide fruitful material for others to make use of when they are ready to do likewise.

The desire to include participants in planning is a logical extension of the educational objectives of settlements. Since it is agreed by all that we learn by doing, then the learning of citizenship responsibilities can well be enhanced by this form of democratic participation.

Since, in addition, one basic objective of social work is the alteration of society to serve better those who live in it, this provides an excellent opportunity to further the sound goals of community planning. There is ample documentation of this principle in the literature of the field. The impetus for its implementation in Boston was provided by the recommendation of the Greater Boston Community Survey which emphasized the use of neighbors on boards of settlements.

Since that recommendation was made, there has been no
study to determine to what extent it has been applied in practice in local settlements. That inquiry is attempted here.

Before proceeding to analyze the data gathered at interviews with headworkers and board members, from in and outside the neighborhoods, the history and philosophy of the settlement movement were briefly traced. In addition, the background of each agency and the socio-economic setting in which each operates was described.

General conclusions are difficult to arrive at on the basis of only three agencies studied. However, since these have had more experience than many others in dealing with the questions under consideration, much valuable insight has been gained into the nature of the problems faced not only by them, but by other settlements which may attempt to achieve the same objectives.

The two facts which stand out above all others are the immense lag between the theory and a full acceptance of the theory and the even greater disparity between acceptance of the theory and the extent to which it has been put into practice, for whatever reasons. The opinions and attitudes of those interviewed were most revealing when considering how difficult it has been to alter the practices in Agencies A and B even though there is acceptance of the principle.
This came out clearly in regard to the acceptance of Survey Recommendation #50. Everyone agreed that it was desirable, but many thought it unfeasible. Generally the neighbors were inclined to think it more workable than either headworkers or board members from outside the neighborhood. Even those who thought the plan good revealed the difficulties in completely accepting the idea by their answers to more specific questions later on. There remains a strong element of the old concept of charity and of doing for those unable to do for themselves.

It is necessary before all else to interpret to those who are earlier board members the appreciable gains which can be derived from the involvement of neighbors and/or participating members in the management of the agencies. This involves first of all, after the principle is accepted, certain changes in the structure to allow for the inclusion on the board, by whatever selective process is in use, of people who represent the neighborhood served by virtue of their interests and place of residence. It involves more than that however. It calls for an active desire and effort to involve the newcomers in fact as well as in theory in the actual making of decisions based on free and full discussion by all. Only then can an agency really profit from the full potential contributions of the newcomers and the newcomers really benefit from learning by doing.
As to the number of neighbors who should be on the boards, thinking varied from "none" to "all". It was generally agreed that local people should be balanced by outsiders so as to retain the values of both.

Inherent advantages as well as disadvantages of neighborhood involvement were recognized. One set of gains was based on the philosophical premise that there are good qualities to be found in every group of human beings if discovered and stimulated. Another was the educational value which would contribute to the enrichment of democratic life. The third, a more immediate consideration, was the acknowledgement that no one knows and can express neighborhood needs as well as local residents.

While recognizing these unique values arising from the use of the talents of neighborhood people, strong feeling was expressed over the gains to be derived from retaining outside members on the boards. Mainly these gains centered around the ability of this group to provide access to funds and managerial skills, their familiarity with problems of social planning, and their ability to view neighborhood problems with greater detachment and objectivity.

Many practical obstacles were expressed as standing in the way of the active involvement of neighbors on boards. It was generally felt by those interviewed that the particular neighborhoods being served by Agencies A and B did not
offer many people from whom to choose who would have abilities as board members.

Another subtle, but very real, obstacle emerged as neighbors and outsiders began to reveal their feelings, sometimes unconsciously, each about the other group. Such remarks as "invisible barrier", "that Beacon Hill crowd", "all able people have moved from the neighborhood", "attempts to mix the two groups are a fraud", "the board is a closed club", etc. expressed by various board members, were indicative of these attitudes. This situation stands as a real barrier to the blending of the two groups into a unified board.

The relationship of different neighborhood groups among themselves seemed an important consideration in regard to the choice of specific board members. However, the ability to achieve unity around individual neighborhood projects would indicate that this problem is more apparent than real. Some staff concern over the intrusion of "nosy" neighbors into the day to day operation of the agency can probably be overcome if diplomacy and accepted professional techniques are employed in dealing with such possibilities.

In regard to the eventual use of neighbors as officers, feeling was divided but generally opposed the idea except in Agency C. Again this was a reflection of the importance attached to prestige and experience in dealing with matters of management and broader community contacts. Few seemed opti-
mistic about the possibilities of bringing neighbors to a point in their development to provide this kind of leadership. Here again some difficulty was revealed in gaining full acceptance of the theory that a high degree of innate ability resides in some individuals of every group.

Much of the evidence gathered would cast serious questions upon the complete acceptance of the whole idea of involving neighbors. Many of the actual board practices which discourage such participation will probably have to be altered if acceptance of the principle is to have real meaning. In the cases of Agencies A and B, all but one or two board meetings a year are held at times and in places which preclude the likelihood of neighbors attending.

Few opportunities are cultivated in Agencies A and B for the physical meeting of local and outside people, to say nothing of a meeting of minds. If, as several board members indicated, the tendency to decide important issues outside of meetings among a small group usually not including local people is true, then changes would seem indicated. Ignored by some, resented by others, these practices seem to result in a diminution of active participation by board members of both types. Poor board attendance, many inactive committees, and limited knowledge of neighborhood people and problems point up the importance of these practices in detracting from the benefits of the fullest board participation.
In contrast to this, Agency C has stimulated a sense of real ownership by placing neighbors in positions of supreme responsibility for policies and program, along with staff. The flourishing Men's Association and a Women's Association, alongside the Board itself and its active committees would seem to prove the soundness of neighbor involvement not only in planning but in deriving personal satisfactions from the program itself.

Some positive results have emerged in Agencies A and B from the efforts thus far made to blend the two groups. Familiarity has bred more respect for the contributions each can make. Most interviewees felt that the boards were somewhat better informed than formerly. Success in limited projects may encourage joint efforts toward dealing with more complicated problems. Both groups have been impelled to visit the agencies more and learn more about them at first hand.

It was agreed that preparation for board services should precede actual election. Participation in programs of parent or other adult groups, service on committees, volunteer leadership, etc. were mentioned as good preparation. Again theory and practice differed somewhat since few board members in Agencies A and B have actually been drawn from such backgrounds. Furthermore, little effort has been directed toward encouraging neighbors to share in such
experiences as preparation for eventual board service.
Planned orientation for all board members was thought to be
good practice and some positive work has been done on this
by headworkers. Obviously more needs to be done.

In considering the kinds of qualifications good board
members ought to have, the tendency was to enumerate those
that are ideal rather than those that current board members
have given strong evidence of possessing. The three quali-
fications stressed were 1) first-hand knowledge of neigh-
borhood and participants, 2) understanding fully the agency's
work, and 3) readiness to give time and service. Those
qualities chosen as least important were 1) ability to give
money, 2) business experience, 3) community prestige, and 4)
a high degree of civic consciousness.

The manner of selecting board members, with the exception
of Agency G where the neighbor-members really make the choice,
is a hand picking process. These boards are self-perpetuating
and have not yet made much progress in involving neighbors
even though token representation may be present. This ap-
ppears to be the result of two things. First, there is little
familiarity with neighborhood people able to serve on the
board. The second, and even more important reason, is the
fear of making a poor choice or rather the belief that there
is little to choose from.
The complexion of the boards of Agencies A and B has remained relatively unchanged for some years. In these two houses the average tenure is fifteen years with terms, in practice, extending for life or until voluntary resignation. On the average these two houses make no more than one change each per year. New talent and new ideas, from the neighborhood or from anywhere, cannot easily be acquired in such a manner.

Until the value of new blood is acknowledged and provisions made for systematic alterations in board personnel, this will undoubtedly continue to be the case. A serious question arises as to the possibility of implementing the desire to broaden the base of planning as long as the present practices prevail. To the extent that they do prevail, real democratic participation will probably be thwarted, and the significant involvement of neighborhood people on boards will be frustrated.

What does all this add up to?

In Agencies A and B there is the need for more than a theoretical belief in the idea of utilizing neighborhood people on boards. When it is remembered that these are among the more advanced of local settlements in their acceptance of the notion, the situation assumes considerable significance. The fact seems to be that some doubt still lingers that the old way of managing settlements from afar
should be altered in favor of democratic neighborhood participation. Coupled with that is the feeling that it is realistically doubtful that many neighbors can be found who are capable of doing the job and therefore the effort to find them is perhaps doomed to failure.

After interviewing a number of board and staff people in Agencies A and B, a number of questions arise as possible explanations for the relatively small amount of real change. Can it be that the possibilities here for democratic growth are not fully appreciated? Is there reluctance, perhaps unconscious, to share the social and civic prestige of board membership? Is there lack of clarity about the settlement's responsibility for organizing neighborhood people in the manner described by Grace Coyle in Chapter II? Or is it simply that boards, like the best intentioned individuals, are caught up in the inertia of long established ways of doing things?

In view of this situation, one of two possibilities suggests itself. One is that the theories espoused by authorities in the field of social work and social planning are based on unsound assumptions and reach unsound conclusions. If this is so, then it is truly hopeless ever to expect that underprivileged groups can provide human material competent to share in agency management or in democratic
civic leadership generally.

Belief in the essential worth of every individual, the fundamental basis of the Judaeo-Christian religion which gave birth and inspiration to the settlement movement, is in distinct contradiction to this possibility. Findings in the case of only two agencies would hardly be a basis for questioning the validity of this belief as it applies to settlements. However it does point up the need for further and more careful investigation to determine whether settlements can still justify their earlier belief in the possibilities of neighborhood self-improvement.

The other, and more likely explanation for the present situation, in the opinion of the writer, is that techniques have not yet been sufficiently developed in Boston at least to make full use of the capabilities of neighbors in settlements or citizens in our civic life generally. Specifically in Boston settlements, this implies a responsibility for social planning bodies and for settlement boards to examine frankly and honestly their own thinking and their own practices in regard to this problem.

To be effective in achieving the goal they espouse, systematic planning must arise from this self-examination which might realistically lead toward effectuating the principle of neighborhood involvement in agency management.
Until this is done there is little likelihood that Survey
Recommendation #50 can ever be fully implemented.

This is not a goal easily or quickly to be achieved.
An immediate start in this direction, however, would seem to
be in order not only as a means of accomplishing the object-
ives here being considered. Much more importantly, it can
serve as a means of contributing positively toward the ful-
fillment of the desire we all share of making our American
democracy a strong and virile thing and the lives of its
citizens a richer and more satisfying kind of experience.

The challenge is great and real. Only time, careful
thinking, and courageous effort will tell if it can be met.

Approved:

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Dean
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APPENDIX
GUIDE QUESTIONS
FOR INTERVIEWS WITH BOARD MEMBERS AND EXECUTIVES

1. Do you think Recommendation #50 (after reading it) is desirable? Is it feasible?
2. Can you mention some advantages in including neighborhood people on your board? Some disadvantages?
3. What are some of the problems involved in adding neighbors to the board?
4. Have there been any significant changes in attitudes on the part of the old or the new board members as a result of the changes that have been made?
5. About how many neighbors should be on the board?
6. Should board officers eventually be neighborhood people?
7. How can neighbors be involved in agency work other than as board members?
8. How should board members be chosen? Should neighbors share in making the choice?
9. Should board terms be limited? Should there be rotation of board members?
10. What would you consider the most important qualifications a board member ought to have?
11. Does a board member need to have a lot of first-hand knowledge of the neighborhood?
12. Do you think new board members should be given some special preparation or orientation for their work?
13. Are there special contributions a neighborhood board member can make? Are there special contributions a board member from outside the neighborhood can make?
14. What are the best ways to bring neighborhood problems to the attention of the board?
15. How long have your present board members been on the board?
16. How long has your president been in office?

17. How many board members have you? What is the average attendance at board meetings? How often do most board members come to meetings?

18. How many and how active are your board committees?

19. How many people really share in major decisions?

20. Is there danger that neighborhood board members may intrude too much in the daily operation of the agency?