

INNOVATIVE FORUMS FORGE NEW LINKS FOR LEADERS

Every other month since last summer, small groups of Chicago leaders, many of them strangers, have retreated to a sylvan setting near Woodstock, Illinois, for two days of frank, unrecorded talks on some of the city's most pressing neighborhood development issues.

As a result of those sessions:

- Several community groups, with seed money from the Wieboldt Foundation, organized five citywide informational workshops to teach neighborhood leaders how they can participate in the city's capital budgeting process;

- The first neighborhood hearings on capital expenditures ever held by the city borrowed freely from ideas city officials gathered at Woodstock;

- A University of Illinois educator has formed partnerships with several local high schools to share resources to help improve the schools;

- The Neighborhood Institute gained GED accreditation for its U.S. Constitution course, through a new liaison with a Chicago high school.

These are only a sampling of outcomes stemming from the Center's Chicago Innovations Forum (CIF), a series of 12 meetings initiated last July to brainstorm issues ranging from school reform to solid waste disposal. Funded by the Scheinfeld Foundation, the forums are being conducted at the Woodstock Conference Center, a rustic, low-key environment catering to small-group meetings.

"The forums are designed to provide the leaders of Chicago neighborhood groups the opportunity to focus on developing issues, meet with other interest groups involved in those issues, and hear from experts who have done research on those issues," explains CIF Co-Director **John McKnight**, CUAPR director of community studies.

These are people who play vital roles in the community, but don't

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HALLETT ADVISES CASTRO ON HAVANA PLAN

Clad in the familiar khakis and army boots, pistol in holster, a greying and genial Fidel Castro welcomed CUAPR Research Associate **Stanley Hallett** and four U.S. colleagues to Havana last December for a week of consultation on the future of that city.

"Figuring out what was really going on there was like peeling off the layers of an onion," said Hallett, who was nonetheless "surprised at how common are the problems of everyday life in the city, once you strip away the rhetoric." The Cuban government had flown the U.S. team to Havana in quest of technical assistance for the city's General Development Plan for the year 2000. Like its U.S. counterparts, the plan encompasses general land use, housing development, transportation, sewage and water, industrial and commercial plant location.

Havana's major problem is to meld its egalitarian society with a physical structure that reflects the old aristocratic social order, Hallett believes. Driving through Havana—where bus rides are 10 cents, and Russian-built Ladas or 1950s DeSotos and Buicks



Fidel Castro (left), with Mary Samario of Berkeley, and Stanley Hallett

with large fins predominate—he was struck by the magnificent old mansions (now primarily government offices) interspersed with ugly highrises and modest smaller dwellings.

In the late 1970s Castro brought in half a dozen industrialized housing systems from Eastern bloc countries. "They're just like our public housing," said Hallett. "There's the same barren land around them and the contrast with the old architecture of Havana is striking. They didn't fit a semi-tropical city like Havana." Realizing this, Castro decided not to import any more housing from these nations.

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GORDON TAPPED FOR GRAD SCHOOL DEANSHIP

Social psychologist **Andrew Gordon** (CUAPR-Sociology) has been appointed an associate dean of the Graduate School for an indefinite term beginning in the fall of 1988. The appointment was announced by Graduate School Dean David Cohen.

Gordon will be one of two new half-time associate deans drawn from the faculty. They will be responsible for admissions, fellowships, student affairs, and curriculum, areas currently administered by Associate Dean William F. Stevens, who will retire at the end of the summer.

"We want to enhance the faculty influence in that office," said Cohen, who wants input on major policy issues and institutional changes from his new appointees. In addition to Gordon's involvement in admissions and student financial aid, Cohen hopes to draw on his broader interests in areas such as information management systems, and comparative analytic studies of other institutions. "Given his level of interest, thoughtfulness, and skills, it's a very very good match," Cohen said.

For his part, Gordon said that under

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CENTERPIECE

JOHN L. MCKNIGHT, CUAPR DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY STUDIES

We hear a lot about our becoming a consumer society. Many think it good to be a client. Yet, to be nothing but a consumer or a client is to occupy a degraded status in our society. We have misguidedly delivered this degradation to many poor people by sentencing them to be consumers and clients without the privileges of creating, solving problems, and producing—in effect, denying them the powers of citizenship.



Americans make a huge investment in the poor community. But by and large, the public and private service delivery systems have not used that investment to

nurture economic development in low-income neighborhoods because they have based their activities on three incorrect propositions:

- Disadvantaged people are mainly deficient;
- Service sector professionals can correct that deficiency;
- Correcting that deficiency is what a "service" is.

In fact, a large industry of people now operates on these three premises. Unless we change these premises of service sector organizations, economic development will have great difficulty taking root in many neighborhoods.

TWO NEIGHBORHOODS

One example helps make the point:

In the 1960s, many new people began appearing in an older, inner-city neighborhood. They conducted neighborhood "needs" surveys in which they learned that severe problems existed in housing, education, jobs, crime, and health. Public policy responded, and more new people appeared.

These new people bore many job descriptions and titles: land clearance experts, weatherization counselors, teachers' aides, school security advisers, civil rights consultants, job developers, case managers, nurses, teenage pregnancy experts, etc.—and administrators and managers to coordinate them.

Every neighborhood inventory of needs sounded reasonable. But when the inventory-taking mainly produced an inundation of professional needs servicers, it had actually created an economic development plan for middle-income people living outside the neighborhood.

A study in 1984 by the Community Service Society of New York City attempted to isolate all public and private dollars allocated specifically for City poor people. When they capitized that amount they found that \$7,000 was appropriated for each poor City resident—about 20% of the population. That translated into about \$28,000 for a family of four, which was near the City's median income level.

Their next findings were even more startling: *Only one-third of those dollars was available in income or income surrogates; two-thirds went for service professionals. And over half of all the dollars went to the health care system.* The seeds of this system that gives poor people services in lieu of income is a focus on deficiencies.

In contrast, one Chicago neighborhood group focused on capacities. Realizing that many residents possessed skills and abilities that no one had even bothered to inventory, its members began knocking on doors and exploring people's life histories. After visiting 80 apartments, they discovered several common work experiences: hospital and nursing home work, work in a motel, or in home care.

They advertised the availability of 50 home health care workers in the nearby middle-class neighborhood. Their phones rang off the hook. Within a few weeks, all 50 were employed within eight blocks of their homes. The women have now formed a mutual support club, planning new ways to handle their child care needs. They are building toward a cooperative business, and plan to use their purchasing power as the support base for developing new community businesses.

PLANNING AHEAD

The deficiency orientation of policymakers in the late 1960s and 1970s produced a major shift in the reality of low-income people. During that time, they were handed massive incentives to enter clienthood in the neighborhoods of our older cities. That disabling identity must be placed squarely on the shoulders of those who designed the programs—people who had a deficiency-focused, therapeutic orientation.

The client- and deficiency-focused system resulted in the misuse of public wealth. Now we are talking again about the possibility that people who are poor are people with capacity, that their problems are economic, and that government has a responsibility to structure opportunities within that understanding.

To move from deficiency- to capacity-oriented policies, we should focus on three issues:

- Designing a serious incentive system that will allow people to shift from service dependency to the private sector without losing income, medical insurance, and child care support.
- Allowing those "welfare" dollars to be used in more versatile and creative ways. Free them to act as an investment in the lives of people, rather than as a grant to maintain a degraded life.
- Unhooking the public spending currently available to the poor from service professionals' control. Low-income people in the community—rather than bureaucrats in Washington or in the United Way—must have free choice to decide how a public investment can lead to their personal liberation. ■