

September, 1962

LONG-RANGE PROGRAMMING TO IMPROVE INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN SKOKIE: II

This statement complements the one presented to the Skokie Human Relations Commission in April 1962.

Goals: The goals of any long-range programming in human relations must coincide with the purposes and functions of the ordinance of June 13, 1961, establishing the Commission.

In addition, such goals must be realistic by not aiming at complete acculturation among different groups and not seeking to achieve a single set of beliefs and patterns of behavior. Additionally, on the negative side, the goals of a program should be to reduce prejudice and discrimination, to counteract fear and tension, and to avoid conflict.

On the positive side, the goals should be a development of tolerance and cooperation, a mature acceptance of the distinctive differences between groups, and an increase of interaction and communication among groups, and an increase and growth of shared values and traditions.

It must be recognized that the subtle, almost intangible, nature of human relations does not allow for easy measurement of achievement.

Means: A program of action must give attention to the two crucial aspects of intergroup relations:

- 1) the attitudes of people in the community;
- 2) the social situations of the community, where relations between groups are based.

Such a program must assess (a) the immediate and remote requirements relevant to attitude and situation, (b) the institutional structure (for strong and weak points), and (c) strategic considerations in choosing means related to goals.

Taking (a) first, it appears that the most immediate requirements are to reduce latent Jewish-Gentile tension and to allay fears among whites regarding future migration of non-whites to Skokie; a program dealing with these matters involving attitude and situation must be aimed at the existing institutional structure among adults in somewhat indirect terms, including stress on general community welfare and self-interest. The future requirements dictate the need for a comprehensive long-range intergroup education program in all types and levels of schools. The indirect and immediate carry-over of such a program to parents and other adults in the community should not be overlooked. This will probably be the most important phase of any long-range planning.

In regard to (b), the institutions that will lend themselves most readily to assisting with such a program are education and religion. The institution that is at present most crucial (and most committed) to good group relations is the village government. The institution that will be most needed in respect to present influence is the business community, particularly the real estate, banking, building and related interests.

Happily, the newspapers have been generally most responsible, helpful, and cooperative in handling touchy human relations topics. Their continued cooperation is vital.

It must be frankly recognized that the potential among most religious leaders in the community remains largely that -- potential -- despite the impressive work of some religious leaders in several critical situations. There is a pressing need to involve others in the near future.

A good base for enlisting the aid of educators already exists. School board officials and PTA officials are likewise important for their key roles in establishing policy and influencing policy, respectively. Their present activity (e.g., on the Niles/Human Relations Council ^{Township} ~~Committee~~) serves as a logical introduction to their participation in more formalized programs of intergroup education.

The business community cannot reasonably be expected to devote any great amount of time and energy in pursuing a nebulous idea like "good intergroup relations"; any program in this area must be off-the-record, pragmatic, and concentrated if it is to be of any value.

Education: In turning to the matter of strategy (c), it appears that the most important program in ultimate terms is to be aimed directly at the teachers and students of the community--and, as noted, indirectly at the parents and other adults. To this end, an extensive bibliographic guide has been prepared to assist both the elementary and secondary teachers. It is recommended that: (1) early efforts be made to consult with school officials to develop a program of several study days or workshop days for groups of teachers in the community schools; (2) following such a program for teachers, efforts be made to effect intergroup relations projects and programs in the various classes on a long-range basis, in conjunction with intergroup specialists; (3) to assist in achieving hoped-for results, a survey by volunteers (N.T.H.R.C. perhaps) should be made of the holdings of books in intergroup relations, both in the public library and school libraries. Marked deficiencies should then be called to the librarians' attention.

Religion: Among religious leaders, human relations problems in the community must increasingly be shared and worked on together. They and key lay leaders should be encouraged to promote programs and/or discussions of intergroup matters in the various formal and informal groups revolving around the church or temple. It is assumed that discussion groups, intra-religious or inter-religious, will be composed of the most mature and informed members.

The forthcoming NCCJ volume, Chicago Dialogue, can well serve as a basis for discussion within or across denominational lines. The topics proposed for discussion are:

1. Church-State and American Society
2. Public Aid and Parochial Schools
3. Responsible Parenthood and Public Policy
4. Censorship-Public Morality and Personal Freedom
5. Sunday Closing Laws--The Religious Dimension
6. Religion and the Public Schools
7. The Display of Religious Symbols on Public Property
8. The Religious Issue and Politics
9. Changing Patterns in Interreligious Relations

Business: Selected leaders representing real estate, banking, building, and related activities can be invited by the Village President to attend two concentrated, off-the-record briefing sessions in the not-too-distant future.

Recognized real estate experts like John Ducey and Anthony Downs, Jr., can be invited to speak briefly on race and property values, then answer questions at the first session. The Chicago Urban League's Housing Specialist, Warren Lehman, at the second meeting, can be invited to discuss the League's housing policy and his estimate of Negro migration to the suburbs--which, incidentally, would be surprising and reassuring to Skokie's businessmen involved in real estate. From time to time in the future, other similar briefings could be scheduled as needed.

Government: The indispensable role of the Police Department in dealing with critical human relations situations requires some regular "refresher course" to complement the more detailed four-session course in human relations sponsored by the Commission last year. Once or twice a year the entire Police Department should have a program devoted to human relations (speakers, movies, panels, etc.) in order to try to motivate the officers positively in human relations matters and to reinforce their awareness of the official policy of the village government.

Other Village Groups: Civic, fraternal, homeowners', PTA, and other organizations in Skokie should be sought out wherever possible to enlist their assistance in furthering the aims of this Commission. Program chairmen and officers of local groups can be apprised of the possibilities of scheduling human relations programs for their groups.

Some Final Considerations: To achieve these goals on a long-range basis, the Commission members can only do the possible. The cooperation of voluntary groups can only be solicited; it cannot be ordered or compelled. The Village of Skokie will move only as far and as fast in human relations as the people of Skokie are willing to move.

A sub-committee of the Commission should be given the responsibility of establishing liaison with the institutions and groups noted above for the purpose of encouraging, stimulating, and assisting those various bodies to begin developing appropriate plans of their own to promote intergroup understanding and good will among their members.

That sub-committee in turn should make a start in long-range programming by utilizing the help of Skokie people in the Niles Township Human Relations Committee to assist in the demanding work ahead.

Council

Respectfully submitted,
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