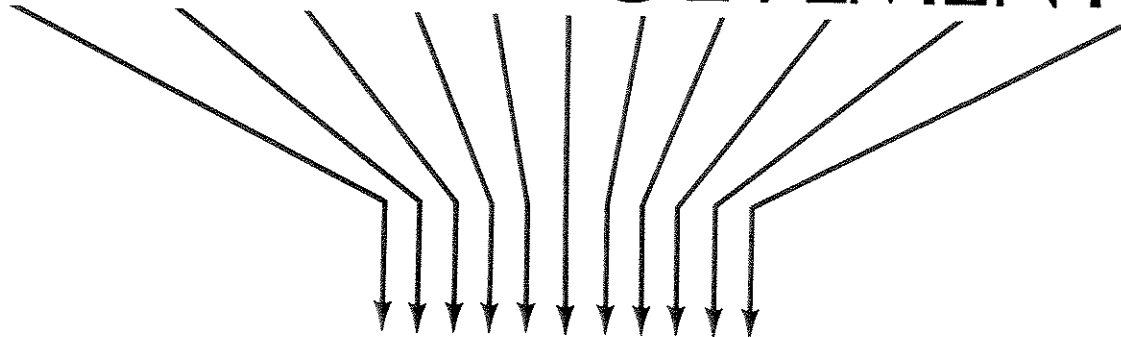


CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT



... CAN WE DEVELOP THE
FULL PEOPLEPOWER OF
DEMOCRACY?

"The people in this town never listen to anybody; we're polarized and paralyzed!"

"There's no way to reach the power elite; and they're the ones who make the important decisions."

"Just about the only growth industry around here is apathy."

Communities across the nation rattle with the cliches of citizens who speak of being deprived and powerless. Far outnumbering the vocal critics, however, are the millions of silent Americans who have unconsciously resigned their role in the process of community decision

making - those who are "too busy" with their own lives, families, and jobs to worry about broad, complex issues they feel they can't control.

Consciously or unconsciously, too many Americans have dropped out of any significant community involvement. They've left governmental and societal issues in the hands of fate and the much maligned politicians and bureaucrats.

Communities Need People

The result in many urban areas has been a breakdown in community effectiveness and a feeling of personal frustration for many citizens.

For purposes of our research mission in citizen involvement, the Kettering Foundation defines an effective community as one that is able to identify and resolve its own problems ... one that uses to full

ON THE COVER

Citizen concerns need leadership and a program of action before they can be of benefit to the community. Understanding how to successfully develop leaders and action programs becomes a vital element of citizen involvement research.



This computer-based information system called PLATO is being studied as a possible means of giving citizens free access to data about their community issues and involving them in community planning.



An effective community depends on the existence of flexible, capable leaders at all levels. Dayton Assistant City Manager Whitney Shartzer is shown discussing the role of cable communications during a conference on cable franchising alternatives.

advantage the potential resources and opportunities of the urban areas . . . where citizens have an open, positive relationship with their institutions . . . where citizens have the means for taking part in decisions that affect them.

In the past three years the Foundation has sponsored various citizen involvement projects in Dayton, Ohio, and elsewhere to get direct experience with the problems citizens and communities have to deal with in this urban age.

Our initial research points to a number of factors that seem necessary for an effective community. There must be enough leadership mobilized for cooperative planning in which all citizens may participate. There must, of course, be a desire for improvement. There must be enough systematic ways of planning for the future and carrying out mutually determined goals. And there must be an adequate system for exchanging information throughout the community and with other urban communities.

An effective community is also economically alive, having a healthy diversity of industries and the capacity to stimulate new ones. Its population is optimistic, alert to opportunities, and ready to meet change with flexibility and to accept new challenges with cooperative effort.

More research on these and other factors that comprise an effective community is planned in order to support the Foundation's efforts

to develop workable models for involving citizens in community decision making.

Involving Citizens Is Critical

The Kettering Foundation's goals in citizen involvement are primarily long-range. After the past three years of study and experimental project research, it's obvious that we have only begun the process of developing better ways to get citizens involved.

We see mounting evidence that one of the most critical issues is the worldwide need to involve a larger share of the people in efforts to solve complex problems of the future.

In terms of our nation's urban

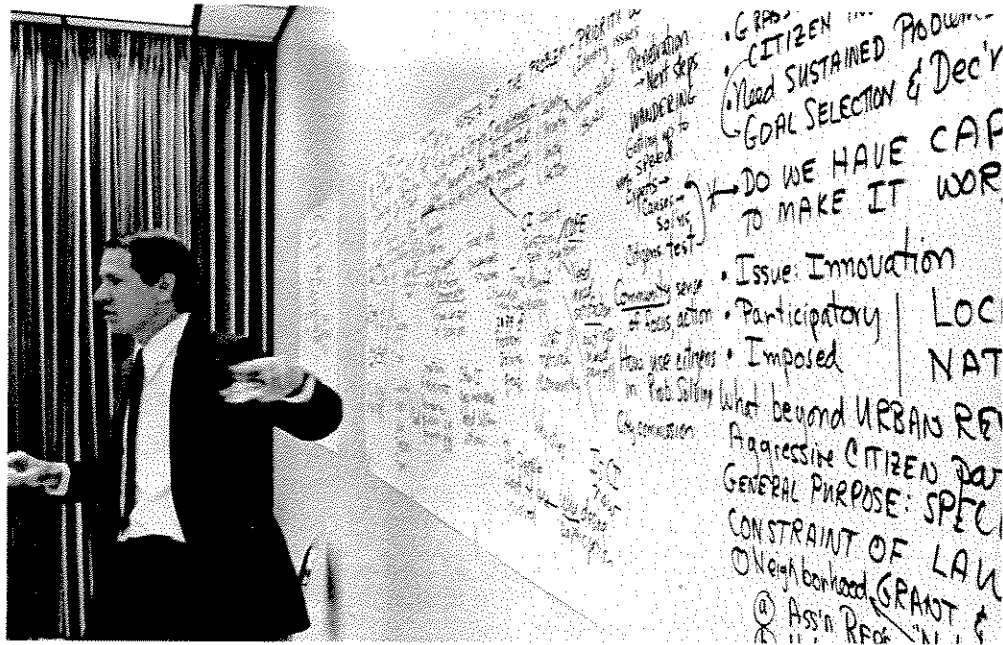
problems, this challenge is already upon us. Consequently, the Foundation has chosen to focus its citizen involvement mission in the area of urban affairs.

Past Projects Prove The Point

Any doubts about the inherent possibilities and potential of citizen involvement that may have existed when the Foundation first began this new mission have been erased by the experience of our early projects.

The Foundation is now into the final months of a three-year experience as the initiating sponsor of the Public Opinion Center (POC) in Dayton. The POC is proving its viability by being fully accountable

Spelling out concepts in the language of citizen involvement research, Geoffrey Ball of Stanford Research Institute talks to a citizens' group about community effectiveness. Ball is one of several researchers working in the area of citizen involvement for the Foundation.



to the community in terms of both its services and its funding support. It has proved to be a useful bridge between citizens and their institutions.

Dayton's Ombudsman project has also succeeded in becoming an effective community-wide agency. It has achieved both local and national acceptance as a constructive system for investigating citizen complaints and giving feedback to institutions.

Our programs to explore alternatives for a community cable communication system in major urban centers have also provided many practical examples of how to involve citizens.

Our experience in supporting efforts by the California-based Involvement Corps to extend its program into Denver and other cities also helped shape the Foundation's present concept of citizen participation.

Each of these programs has in various ways helped us confirm the potential and importance of citizen involvement for America's future.

New Program Will Extend Citizen Involvement Activity

After three years of research and experimental projects in the area of citizen involvement, the Foundation is now preparing to start a program in urban affairs to focus on community leadership and organizational relationships.

We continue to believe that broad citizen involvement in community planning and decision making is vital to solving the nation's urban problems, but we also see that citizen involvement programs rely heavily on the existence

Director Ellsworth Culver (left) and Assistant Director Scooter Akins of the San Francisco headquarters of Involvement Corps are typical of the type of citizen involvement program leaders who will soon begin sharing and exchanging information and ideas through the Foundation's new network project.



of effective leadership and a favorable inter-organizational structure in the community.

In this new research, emphasis will be placed on identifying key leadership roles and patterns of community organization that actively support rather than impede citizen involvement.

To Share Project Success Among Many Communities

Prompted both by the experience of our own projects and by seeing in the course of our own research a number of other successful examples of citizen involvement, the Kettering Foundation is now designing a communication network of citizen involvement program leaders around the nation to stimulate an active exchange of information and ideas.

One of several outstanding programs to involve citizens in community planning is the "Goals for Dallas" program, now in its eighth year. Bryghte D. Godbold, staff director of this program, has been working with the Foundation on plans for the new network.

By setting up such a network among citizen involvement program leaders in various communities, we hope to learn more about the problems of transferring ideas and programs (such as the Dayton Pub-

lic Opinion Center) from one community into others. We hope to learn why previous attempts to transfer even highly successful programs into other communities seldom work out well.

The Foundation plans to couple with this new network an extensive program of research and evaluation of each community project in order to facilitate the information exchange process and to ultimately analyze the value of the network as a means of sharing and spreading successful projects among many communities.

As mentioned, there is still much to be learned about the variables that contribute to an effective community. As we gain more understanding of these factors, the Foundation will look for communities that are successfully developing one or more such factors and are interested in joining in the network for information exchange. With the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence less than three years away, it's encouraging to sense a growing appreciation for the potential power of democracy to serve us in future times as well as it has for the past two centuries.

Getting more citizens more involved in our local, national, and world communities might make it happen.