

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ADVOCACY DEPOT PLANNER (CADP)

- * This is a position paper from the CAD Workbook ... Winter 1970.
It suggests social postures applicable to other disciplines at
the Community Advocacy Depot.

The CADP functions to defend or advocate the interests of the CAD when he and they together think they need defense and/or prosecution. It is the job of the CADP to link resource and strategy alternatives to objectives. The planner joins the issues at the request of the CAD (through the residents and governing board) when the facts interpreted by the CAD overlook, minimize, and/or negatively affect the best interests of the community.

The defined objectives, priorities, and ultimate strategy of the CAD must, in all cases of conflict, take precedence over those of the planner. The planner can, of course, opt out if selected value systems and defined courses of action cause moral or personal anguish. Let it be stressed, however, that the CAD is not interested in the help of "do-good white liberal planners" or any individual who espouses any type of idealist ideology -- whether it be of the right or left -- that tends to use the poor rather than being used by the poor. Given the complex problems facing the poor, plans premised on ideologies are, at best, irrelevant and at worst, harmful to the specific interests of the poor for they represent unreal, often misplaced, abstractions. The CAD does not need such people or plans.

The CADP has a responsibility to articulate alternatives so as to clearly reflect the impact of decisions pertaining to resource allocations that the CAD has. Further, it is the task of the CADP to assist the CAD in translating the objectives and priorities determined by the policy board into viable programs. This means that it is the responsibility of the CADP to build an organizational structure that can and will support a pattern of systematic, consistent, and persistent collective action. Centralization of authority, differentiation

of structure, and division of labor are needed to effectively bring about "social change". If those elements are not present in the CAD, constructive change will not take place. A problem may be high-lighted, but sustained and focused action toward its solution is not possible. The CAD must have leaders that are delegated the authority to speak for the group, structures that will support their actions, and available knowledge and expertise that will document their actions. Building a structure that can do this is the task of the planner.

As staff functionaries of the CAD, the role of the planner is to carry out such public activities as recruiting, heading ad hoc committees as designated by the CAD, acting as spokesman, and less visible activities in the capacity of technical advisors or consultants. In either case, the function may vary widely from advocate activism to non-direction -- definition being defined by the circumstances. But no matter how the situation molds the involvement of the CADP, it is very important that the planner's role be low key -- characterized by low visibility. There are both pragmatic and substantial reasons for lessening staff visibility to the greatest extent practical and feasible.

Pragmatically, experience has shown that when community organizations engage in controversy with established formal organizations, the target group inevitably seeks to communicate with the staff or sponsor rather than the neighborhood residents themselves.

If the target organization's attempts to reach a staff person in order to forestall, prestructure, or avoid confrontation are successful, then they have in effect virtually denied the existence of the community organization. A high degree of staff visibility facilitates this tendency. If staff visibility is lessened, the attempt at circumvention is still likely to be made, but it is plausible that the target will refer, rather, to the visible community leaders. This is what must happen.

In a practical sense, the development of an effective non-visible staff eliminates the charge that the professional is "a hired gun who represents no one."

The last extremely important role of the CADP is to educate. In effect, the ultimate goal of the non-local professional in the CAD is to "work himself out of a job." It is our hope that as the CAD develops and matures, our role as technical advisors will be taken over by indigenous experts from the community. There is no justification for the presence of non-local staff once the CAD has developed the skills of the professionals.

As technical advisors, one of our greatest responsibilities is to see that the above objective is realized. While it must be recognized that some "professional" positions will be harder to fill than others (the technical skills of an engineer demand more training and 'expertise' than those of a block organizer.), there is no reason to believe that indigenous personnel cannot perform at a high level of competence. (In fact, it is our belief that that indigenous personnel can and will be much more effective.)

A Concluding Statement

It is our belief that the social and political health of the Black Community (the location of the first CAD) can be enhanced if technical assistance and other resources can be provided as part of an extensive and long-range process of community development. The probable pay-offs in increased social awareness, organizational know-how, and political sophistication among those who are destined to play a major role in the future of the area certainly justifies the effort. While still subject to the hazards of goal displacement and co-option, the Community Advocacy Depot is free of some of the other political and organizational constraints that characterize government or private agency programs, and offers a promising structure with the possibility of improving the local environment to benefit residents and at the same time also providing a basis for political action in their interest. The professional planner, acting as an advocate, has an important role to play in this process.

THE ROLE OF AN UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR IN CAD

The philosophy of CAD is similar to cycles and eternal circles. To gain, you must lose; to take, you must give. To instruct, you must learn. To learn, you must instruct. There are no good guys and or bad guys. The roles of the teacher and student interchange and interact. To accept this, the gain then is for all to learn. The loss is time and energy.

The crit can aid members suggesting directions, and alternatives and references or comparisons. The crit has the same role to the student as the student has to the community, as people have to people. Those that have the tools shall educate those that don't. Involvement is the discussion of the 20th Century. A crit shall be involved in the depot and student and project enough to counsel, but not enough to dim student involvement. A student shall be involved in the community and people and problems enough to counsel, but not enough to dim community involvement.

The crit is the counsellor and technical assistant to the student as the student is the counsellor and technical assistant to the community.

What one learns is method-oriented, pattern-oriented. In traditional schooling the context is hypothetical, . . . in CAD the context is people. The CAD is the integration, interaction and assemblage of all that modern education differentiates. CAD is the opportunity.