BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE PROJECT REPORT

The Family Centre Project

SIXTH PROGRESS REPORT
February 1975 — November 1975

67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, 3065

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PROJECT REPORT

THE FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT

Sixth Progress Report

February - November 1975

67 Brunswick Street,   Concetta Benn,
Fitzroy, Vic., 3065   March, 1976.

FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the sixth and final report of the first
three year phase of the Family Centre Project of the Brother-
hood of St Laurence. It should be read in conjunction with
the previous five reports or at least with the fourth and
fifth reports; the fourth report contains a synopsis of the
three preceding reports. As the inevitabilities of time and
pressure may make such a task impossible for some readers this
report should be read in the context of the following over-
riding idea.

The Family Centre was set up as a six year demonstration
project by the Brotherhood of St Laurence because, after
many years of work with low-income people, its staff had
reached the belief that poverty was caused by the institutional
structure of society and not by the personal inadequacies of
poor people. In its first three year phase the Project set
out to provide opportunities through participation for the
poor to enable them to gain power, not only to escape from
poverty, but to help achieve significant social changes in
society.

This particular report deals with a plan devised by its
Co-ordinator for the second three year phase of the Project
and the changes made to that plan by the family members and
staff. It is a process account of the way in which the plan
was modified and the beginning of its implementation. Out of
the complex and voluminous range of evidence available two
social innovations are choosen for lengthy discussion.
These are, the use and development of indigenous workers in
the Project, and the devolution of power from professional
staff to the family centre members.

The selection of evidence, its analysis and interpretations
are made by the Co-ordinator on the basis of professional
judgement and personal philosophy. No doubt another person,
particularly a family centre member, would analyse and
interpret the evidence in a different way. But that is the
fascination of social evidence, factual material is rarely
available, even in a project as heavily documented as the
Family Centre Project. True objectivity is impossible and
perhaps all that can be hoped for is honesty. This is an
honest account of the events that took place during the
final year of the first phase of the Family Centre Project.

SECTION 1 : THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The fifth progress report of the Family Centre Project
consisted of an examination of each of the Project's six
objectives and an assessment, based on both quantitative and
qualitative evidence, of the degree to which each objective
had been fulfilled. This examination took place at the end
of the first two years of the Project and it revealed that
the resource and participatory objectives of the Project
were being met by different family members to varying degrees.
At least 20 of the 60 original families were taking advantage
of the considerable resources available to them - they were
changing both their own social and economic condition and
also the structures of the Centre. These families were
rapidly learning the skills of decision-making and partic-
ipation and were slowly gaining confidence in their own
ability.

On the other hand it was discovered that the social action
and research objectives were hardly being fulfilled by any
family member and that the families were neither communicating
their knowledge about poverty to the total community nor
using it for collective action on behalf of themselves or
other low-income people.

Out of these realizations the Co-ordinator proposed a plan
for the second three-year phase of the Project which was to
begin in January 1976. The underlying philosophy and aims of
this plan were :

> 1. To provide the facilities for low-income people to
>   attempt to redistribute the resources of the
>   community.
>
> 2. To provide facilities to service low-income self-
>   help groups and to encourage their formation.
>
> 3. To co-ordinate information and service in each
>   resource area important to low-income people -
>   e.g. employment, education, social security etc.
>
> 4. To stimulate social action by low-income people
>   through a process of consciousness-raising.
>   Action to be based on information collected in
>   resource areas.

Structures for implementation of these aims formed part of
the plan. It was suggested that the Family Centre Project
become a Community Resource and Action Centre for all low-
income people, to be comprised of three units - a resource
unit, an action unit and a co-ordinating unit.

The Resource Unit was to be responsible for the provision of
resources which poor people lack and which would attract
them to the Centre. These resources were to be of two
types - existing community resources which were isolated in
the community and struggling to exist by themselves, or new
resources to be suggested by the Family Centre Project
experience, and which could be planned and staffed by family
members, e.g. a transport or an occasional child-minding
resource.

The Action Unit was to become responsible for consciousness-
raising activities in the Centre and in the community, was
to assist in the development of new self-help groups, and was
to attempt to increase the effectiveness of the delivery of
services to poor people. This Unit was to offer consultation
and facilities to new self-help groups in the community or
to services arising out of the Centre. Part of this con-
sultation was to be to offer expert advice on how to obtain
funds for self-help groups and the Centre itself, e.g.
developing a submission whereby the resources in the Resource
Unit could be staffed by unemployed people through some form
of Support Work scheme.

The purpose of the Co-ordinating Unit was to be to tie
together the work of the other two units in order to achieve
the long-term goal of the Centre, that is the redistribution
of the resources of the community. This unit was to have
two main functions - the provision and maintenance of
physical and support facilities in the Centre, and the
integration of the work of the other two units.

Over a period of one month this plan was consciously used by
the professional staff of the Project as a focus for dis-
cussion of the future of the Project and the form it would
take in its second three-year phase. Although alternatives
to the Co-ordinator's plan were discussed, the discussions
were half-hearted. In a sense the families allowed the plan
to be imposed on them, probably because their previous
experience had shown them they could trust the Co-ordinator

to plan in their best interests. In the end the Co-
ordinator's plan was accepted with three important
modifications.

Firstly, the families agreed that they wished to open the
Centre to all low-income people but that they wished to do
this very gradually so that the identity of the original
group of 60 families would be maintained. There was
naturally, also a selfish fear of sharing their resources
and of outside groups of people taking over the Centre. It
was decided that if they gradually added to the membership
from their own network of friends and relatives their fears
might prove to be groundless.

Secondly, that resources for low-income people which did
not already exist in the community should be provided by the
Centre and that these lacking resources could be identified
by family members sharing their knowledge and skills through
social action in the community.

Thirdly, that the Centre should be mostly staffed by paid
Family Centre members and/or the income supplement should
continue so that members could work in the Centre and the
community without the pressures imposed by inadequate
income.

Implicit in the discussion process was the idea that steps
should be taken to implement the new plan immediately
instead of making an abrupt change at the end of 1975.

This report will detail the slow steps which were taken by
staff and families to implement the families' wishes for the
next phase of the Project. As mentioned in the introduction
this report is written from the Co-ordinator's viewpoint
whose own judgement and philosophy will obviously influence
the selection of evidence contained in it and the interpret-
ations made on the basis of that evidence.

The period under consideration is February - November 1975.
In the second week of November the Project celebrated its
third birthday. At this time a Council of family members
formally operated the Project, twelve Family Centre members
were employed as staff, a new Co-ordinator was appointed,
and the income supplement was about to be terminated. Limits

on the control of the Project by the Council were that finance was still provided by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and that whenever professional workers were to be appointed to the Project, they would be hired and fired by the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

These changes present such a different picture from that at the beginning of the Project that it is difficult to recognise the same group of people. It is indeed a far cry from the 60 deprived isolated families who first came together in the old Mission Home behind the Brotherhood, and who were quite fearful about "the new gimmick" the social workers had in store for them.

SECTION 11 : IMPLEMENTING THE NEW PLAN

TIME CHART OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENTS BETWEEN

FEBRUARY AND NOVEMBER 1975.

DATE	SIGNIFICANT EVENT
January 1975	At the end of January 1975 the management structure of the Centre consisted of a Management Committee, Staff meetings and the Co-ordinator. The Management Committee was composed of eight family members, one staff member and one volunteer, its function was to manage the activities area of the program; all other aspects of the program were managed by the staff or the Co-ordinator. At this time only one family member was employed - his job was that of a domestic worker.
17/2/75	First family member appointed to staff as a resource worker.
20/2/75	Petition to Management Committee demanding that this Committee manage all aspects of Centre program. Committee sets up sub-committee to examine continuation of income supplement.
24/2/75	General meeting of family members to consider plans for the future as presented in the Fifth Progress Report.
27/2/75	Management Committee sets up a sub-committee to recommend a new management structure.
3/3/75	General meeting of families to consider continuation of income supplement, at the end of the first three years, and how this might be achieved. Consensus of this meeting was that income supplement should not be continued.

6/3/75	Sub-committee on new structure presents report to Management Committee, approved, subject to referendum of families.
11/3/75	Referendum letter to all families.
17/3/75	Two more family members appointed to staff as resource workers.
20/3/75	Results of referendum. Management structure to now consist of three staff members, three family centre member staff members, three family centre members. This committee to be appointed for 12 months and manage entire program.
24/3/75	Another family centre member appointed to staff.
8/4/75	A series of eight training sessions set up by professional staff for family members.
17/4/75	Report of sub-committee on income supplement recommends its continuation - report referred to Brotherhood of St Laurence Executive.
21/4/75	Membership of Centre extended by Co-ordinator.
2/5/75	Election of new Committee to carry out new management structure.
5/5/75	Another family member appointed to staff (now one domestic worker and five resource workers).
7/5/75	First meeting of new committee. A standing committee structure for carrying out functions recommended by Co-ordinator and accepted. Management Committee renamed Family Centre Council.
13/5/75	Letter from Executive Director, Brotherhood of St Laurence, explaining that no possibility of Brotherhood of St Laurence continuing income supplement but offering support to Centre in efforts to obtain funds for the purpose elsewhere.

26/5/75	Family Centre Council sets up its standing committees - to be made up of family members, professional staff to act only as resources. For the first time an outside community group requested use of Centre building. Council begins to think about extension of membership, agrees to discuss the idea of community and its electorate.
9/6/75	Staff persuaded Council that question of community and future membership should be discussed by full membership. Council sets up a special sub-committee to examine reports from all resource workers about the future of their areas at the end of the first three years of the Project. Council seriously takes over staff selection and deployment through its Staffing and Programming standing committee.
23/6/75	General meeting of family members to discuss question of community and future membership of Centre. Eligibility and criteria for future membership decided. Three more family members appointed to staff.
24/6/75	Camp proposed to reduce growing divisiveness between family member staff and non-staff.
14/7/75	First new family proposed for membership. From here on new members were proposed at almost every Council meeting.
28/7/75	General meeting to discuss a draft Constitution for Council.
5/8/75	Report of sub-committee on the future of resource areas accepted. Professional staff start another eight session training program for family members.
22/8/75	Council resolves to change Constitution to remove professional staff - resolution precipitated by heated argument over the payment of office bearers on Council who were not staff members. General meeting to be called to consider consitutional change on 18/9/75.

2/9/75	Referral of second new family by a welfare agency - quota of ten such referrals set.
8/9/75	Council decides professional and family member staff should meet separately, rejects presence of Co-ordinator at family staff meeting.
18/9/75	General meeting to discuss constitutional change to remove professional staff from Council. Resolution agreed to, notice of further motion given which would result in removal of all paid staff from Council, including family members.
22/9/75	Two more family members added to staff, making a total of eleven family members on staff. Council defines 'low-income' family. Need for definition arose out of one new proposed family as being regarded as too 'well-off'.
24/9/75	Professional staff rejects idea of separate staff meetings as divisive and indicative of deteriorating team work. Eleventh new family added to membership - very few of the new families take part in Centre activities.
6/10/75	Separate family staff meeting requests paper on group work from Co-ordinator. Name of Centre changed to Action and Resource Centre for Low-income Families (A.R.C.), to fit in with new functions in second phase of Project.
9/10/75	General meeting to discuss constitutional change to remove all paid staff from Council. Motion passed resulted in removal of so many Council members constitution necessitated dissolution of Council, and an entire new election.
20/10/75	New Co-ordinator commences duty.
28/10/75	Draft Contract between Action and Resource Centre and the Brotherhood of St. Laurence completed - referred to Brotherhood of

Laurence for discussion (the plan for the future had recommended autonomy for the Action and Resource Centre, the contract was designed to achieve this.)

6/11/75 Election of new Council - 19 nominations received for nine positions - 57 family members voted - for the first time professional staff and volunteers ineligible to vote.

The most interesting feature of the discussion process which resulted in a plan for the future of the Project was that the plan stayed intact and suffered only minor modifications - modifications which seemed to be dictated by emotional needs rather than planning abilities, for example, the desire for the original group of 60 families to stay intact.

Superficially it appeared that neither the staff or families noted that the recommendations paid little attention to the power structure within the Centre which would be most appropriate to the implementation of the plan. Naively the Co-ordinator had hoped that a more co-operative rather than competing governing structure would emerge from the very nature of the plan and only made vague reference to a Co-ordinating Committee to govern the Centre.[1]

Throughout the whole discussion period in January 1975, only two open references were made to the governing structure of the new centre. The first of these was in material distributed to family members by an activist member in which he wrote :

"How is the Management Committee (which is our Political Representative) going to be structured, and what will be its responsibility?"[2]

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1. See "The Family Centre Project - Fifth Progress Report", Brotherhood of St Laurence, March 1975, p. 29.

2. Ibid, Appendix E.

The second reference was made in one small group discussion held during the last meeting to finalize the plans. This group discussed a possible co-ordinating committee and suggested it should be composed in the following way :

> One-third paid staff
>
> One-third original family members
>
> One-third new family members.

Despite this apparent lack of attention to a major aspect of the new plan activists in the Centre were working to ensure that the power of the family members was maintained and extended. These moves were directed to family members taking over management functions currently performed by professional staff. Towards the end of the discussion period a petition signed by twenty-nine family members was forwarded to the Management Committee meeting on 20/2/75. The petition contained the following statement :

> "We feel that the Management Committee should now start to represent us, the Family Members, in all facets of the management of the Centre".

The Management Committee picked up other rather unimportant items in the petition e.g. that staff be requested to change their meeting times, but neglected to make any decisions about extending the control of the Project to the Management Committee.

The matter was discussed at the staff meeting on 24/2/75 as part of the usual report from the Management Committee. In an attempt to abort a power struggle between professional staff and family members the Co-ordinator introduced the idea of co-operation rather than competition between families and staff. The Co-ordinator suggested that the Centre should have only one governing body made up of equal numbers of professional staff and family members, which would manage every aspect of the Centre. This idea was introduced to the next Management Committee meeting on 27/2/75 which responded by setting up a sub-committee of two family members and one staff member to make recommendations about a new form of management structure. This process resulted in a completely

new management structure consisting of 3 professional staff, 3 indigenous staff and 3 family centre members.

The continued devolution of power from staff to family members is discussed in the next section of this report. The details of the incident are mentioned in this context simply because no mention of the imminent power struggle between professional staff and the family members was made during general discussions with the families about the plans for the future. Consequently, the plan and the modifications suggested by the families which are contained in the Fifth Progress Report, gave no hint of the bid for power and control by some family members which was taking place behind the scenes.

Perhaps this whole process is a commentary on the faults of planning by experts and the imposition of those plans on the poor so that they will accept goals set by the planners even if those goals are against their own interests.[3]   However,

> "The acid test of participation with power is when the planners cannot prevent proposals which they disapprove being put into action."[4]

This incident is clear evidence that the families have attained power in the Centre, and were thus well able to introduce new elements to the plan for the future, elements which had been deliberately kept implicit.

The rest of this section of the report deals with the modifications to the plan which the families had openly suggested - the slow opening of the Centre to all low-income people, the provision of new resources, the sharing of their knowledge and skills through social action in the community, the employment of family members as staff and the continuation of the income supplement.

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3.   KRAUSE, Elliott A.   "Functions of a bureaucratic ideology: "Citizen participation"" in Social Problems, Vol. 16,   No. 2,   Fall 1968.

4.   BENN, Concetta. "The Family Centre Project" in LANSBURY, R., BRYSON, L., BENN, C. Social policy - the new frontiers, Victorian Fabian Pamphlet, November 1974.

MEMBERSHIP

The decision to gradually open up the Centre by adding new families from their own network of friends and relatives was not acted upon immediately. The families ambivalence about losing their group identity of sharing their resources and their fear of takeover is expressed in this tardiness. The opportunity to re-open the discussion arose when nominations were called for the election of the new management com- mittee. One teenager who had previously been a family centre member and had lost his membership by virtue of changes in his family structure wished to nominate.

Up until this time all decisions about membership had been entirely made by the professional staff of the Project according to a set of criteria worked out at the beginning of the Project. Although the position of this young man was discussed at a staff meeting with many family centre members present it seemed to be insoluable. The matter was referred to the Co-ordinator for decision (a fairly frequent happen- ing when consensus could not be reached). The Co-ordinator made the decision, to readmit the young man and that part of his family with whom he had contact, in terms of the need to extend the membership of the Project.[5] It is interesting to note that the memo announcing the decision of the Co- ordinator did not consult the Management Committee but was almost a directive to them. This type of action was symptomatic of many staff decisions in the period just before staff decision-making powers were transferred to the Management Committee.

It was almost two months after the election of the new Management Committee before family centre members freely began to propose new members. In this two months the main principle of membership which was discussed was: "What is our community?"

The question of membership and the community from which it would be drawn was first raised at a Family Centre Council meeting (the new name for the Management Committee) on 26/5/75 in response to a question from the Brotherhood of St Laurence Executive meeting. The Council deferred the

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5. See memo in Appendix A.

question until its meeting on 17/6/75. The staff fearful that neither they nor the general membership would have the opportunity to take part in this decision discussed the matter thoroughly at their staff meeting on 9/6/75. They decided to request the Council to hold a general meeting of all family centre members to discuss this most important question : What is our community? or "What is our electorate?" Council approved this request and a general meeting was held on 23/6/75.

A summary of the general meeting indicated that the membership thought the Centre should be for all low-income people in the Melbourne area and that there should be a difference between members and those people who used the facilities of the Centre. The Council referred the small group reports from the meeting to its Community Relations and Social Action standing committee which made the following recommendation :

The community we work with shall be :

low-income people;

families not individuals;

motivated to take part in the activites and life of the Centre.

This recommendation, in its concentration on deprived families rather than individuals reflected the original set of criteria laid down by the Brotherhood of St Laurence Social Work Service when selecting the original 60 families for the Project.

Through a series of mishaps this recommendation was never formally approved by the Council but was informally accepted by both families and staff and subsequently used as the criteria for membership. A membership form[6] using these criteria was later prepared by a staff member and used to propose new members to the Council. As this form contained information about the income of the family, the applications

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6. Membership Form - See Appendix B.

for membership were entrusted to the Co-ordinator.[7]

These membership moves for new membership obviously still worried some family members because quite soon after this process a camp was proposed at a Council meeting for all family members who actively worked in the Centre. The purpose of the camp was to produce cohesiveness between active, original, family members, and to reduce divisiveness between family member staff and other family members who worked in the Centre.

At the Council meeting on 14/7/75 the first new family was proposed for membership. This proposal encouraged other families and by November 1975, 16 new families had been admitted to membership. All but two of these new families were proposed by the original families. The other two were proposed by outside welfare agencies. After an approach from a large Melbourne hospital to admit a family to membership the Council decided they would set a quota of ten such families and worked out a procedure to introduce them to the Centre.[8]

As more and more new families were introduced the Council realized it had no definition of low-income. The lack of a definition was precipitated at a Council meeting on 22/9/75

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7. Confidentiality became a persistant and real problem in the Centre as more and more family members became staff. There was a feeling of mistrust about family members knowing each others business - a quite unreal feeling as they told each other anyway. Perhaps the distrust stemmed from fear of the written record.

8. These families were home visited by two Council members accompanied by the referring person. Criteria for membership was discussed with them and if they met these criteria they were invited to the Centre. On their first visit to the Centre the new family was accompanied by a Council member who had seen them at home. This Council member introduced them to other families in the Centre. For a few weeks the Council member ensured the new family was not neglected.

by the proposal of a new family, one of whose members was
an activist in the local community. In an attempt to ex-
clude this person from the Centre some Council members
claimed he was 'too well off'. Fears of being taken over
by outside interests were eventually dispelled and the
following definition was approved :

> "That low-income, be self-defined by the person applying
> to join and by being a member of the network of a
> family who is already a member of the Project, and
> people referred by outside agencies."

The very words of the definition spell out the heavy input
of the professional staff on the Council. At the same
meeting it was decided that a family could propose as many
new families as they wished.

The only other significant fact about extension of the
membership of the Project during this period is the actual
involvement of the new members in the life of the Project.
Apart from casual involvement in social functions only three
of the seventeen new families became actively involved in
Project affairs. This factor worried the Council to the
extent that on 2/9/75 they asked the Staffing and Program-
ming Standing Committee to consider the appointment of a
'link-up' family member to the staff before the end of the
year to involve new members. Eventually such an appointment
was made; two family members were each appointed on a half-
time basis, one to work with adults and one to work with
adolescents.

These facts about the gradual extension of the membership
seem to indicate that it would not have occurred but for the
heavy expert input and encouragement of the professional staff.

SHARING RESOURCES AND SKILLS AND SOCIAL ACTION

The development of new resources for poor people within the
Centre required an assessment of existing resources, this
assessment consumed a great deal of time and effort within
the Centre. On the 26/5/75 each resource worker was asked
by the Council to write a paper on his resource area and to

give his opinion about the desirability of continuing it.
The need for this assessment was engendered by a discussion
of the Project's future plans by the Brotherhood of St
Laurence Executive which commented on the undesirability of
duplicating resources which already existed in the com-
munity.

The resource papers were referred by the Council to a
special sub-committee set up on 9/6/75 which was requested
to recommend on the viability of each resource area. The
sub-committee submitted a lengthy report which viewed the
problem from the point of view of establishing a Resource
Unit in 1976. The principles, goals and criteria for the
Resource Unit[9] were laid down, and an opinion expressed on
the need to continue the existing resource areas.

In the view of the sub-committee resource areas to be
continued were :

        Employment

        Social Security

        Budgeting and Credit Counselling

        Children's Services - (a) Skill learning program,
                              - (b) Child-minding,
                              - (c) Holiday Hosts.

        Adolescent Program

        Social Activities.

Resource areas to be discontinued, because they overlapped
other existing community services were :

        Health

        Legal

        Housing

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9.   See Appendix C.

New resource areas to be considered were :

      Transport

      Home Management

      Adult Education.

These recommendations were accepted by the Council on 5/8/75, which meant this whole process had taken almost three months. Since that date no effort has been made to introduce new resource areas and second thoughts are well under way about the areas which it was suggested should be discontinued.[10] On 5/11/75 Council decided that the Housing and Health resource areas should be reconsidered and asked the relevant workers to submit further papers.

In terms of their physical facilities, the building etc, the Council moved much more quickly to share its resources. Early in April a request was received from a Housing group for use of a meeting room. This was the first of many requests for such facilities, all of which were granted. Requests for use of the child-minding facilities, the Bulk Food store and some typing help for a self-help group were also readily agreed to.

The only other development of resources was in the employment area. A self-help employment service available to any low-income unemployed person to assist other low-income people was designed by the employment resource worker. He sought extra funds for a six month pilot program from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, was granted them, and the service began during November. An earlier proposal to provide a Trade Instructor in the workshop/garage to assist people to learn new marketable skills also reached finality during this period through the work of the Co-ordinator and the employment resource workers.

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10. This is not unrelated to the vested interests of the employees involved.

There are many ways in which the slow development of new
resources in this period can be viewed. It can be seen as
careful planning, as evidence of the rigidity of family
centre members, or as an indicator of their reluctance to
share their resources with other low income people. Perhaps
it was a mixture of all these factors complicated even
further by the predictable length of time it took for the
new Council to acustom itself to the full responsibility of
managing the entire Project and by the fact much of the
planning work in this area was carried out by family centre
members.

The sharing of the skills and knowledge obtained in the
Project with the community generally, and with low-income
people in particular, has always been a feature of the
Project. Originally talks and papers in the community were
given only by the professional staff and all arrangements
made through the Co-ordinator. This began to change during
1974 as family members gained confidence and were prepared
to share their special knowledge with other people.

During the first two years of the Project media contact with
the families was actively discouraged to prevent labelling
and stigmatization of the families. Gradually family
members were encouraged to attend meetings where the staff
were speaking and quite soon were actively speaking for
themselves. Nevertheless selection of families and arrange-
ments were all still made through professional staff members.

This situation continued until the appointment of the new
Family Centre Council in May 1975. For a while speaking
engagements and media contacts continued to be made through
professional staff members and in fact they almost con-
sciously used these arrangements to maintain some of the
power lost to them through the new management structure.
Somehow, at staff meetings when these matters were dis-
cussed, the arrangements were made without thought of
referral to the Council and as an afterthought the Council
would be informed. At the end of July the Co-ordinator
began to deflect all such calls and correspondence to the
Chairman of the Council and consciously reminded staff it
was not their responsibility to make these arrangements.

After this the only conflict which occured was around a specific request for a professional speaker for a professional seminar; the organisers refused to accept members of the 'client' group. This occasion presented a perfect opportunity to point out that there were some professional skills which had not been transferred to family centre members, if indeed they wanted them. A special paper[11] was written by the Co-ordinator and presented to the Council meeting. Unfortunately, this paper did not produce the conflict situation which the Co-ordinator intended and was meekly accepted. The Co-ordinator had planned to antagonise the Council so much with this paper that the Council would use it as a vehicle to exert their power and to establish the boundaries of their management functions.

Whilst the struggle over speaking and media engagements was taking place, those family centre members employed in the various resource areas were slowly joining and becoming active in community groups associated with their area of knowledge and work. Family centre members joined the Housing Commission Tenants Union[12], Shelter, the Community Consumer Co-operative, the NOW Centre in Coburg and other relevant self-help organisations.

The Family Centre Council on 20/5/75 realizing the importance of these groups in imparting knowledge and taking part in social action requested its Community Relations and Social Action Standing Committee to timetable on the notice board in the Centre all important community meetings and to see they were attended.

It was sometimes difficult to know whether family centre workers joined these groups on their own initiative through their work contacts, were encouraged to join by the Family Centre Council initiative or whether they were encouraged to do so by the professional people who taught them their

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11. See Appendix D.

12. Negotiations are currently underway to house the
     H.C.T.U. in the Centre Building.

expertise.[13] Certainly there are known instances of all these situations. The way in which these people joined community groups is probably irrelevant, the important fact is they began to join and are doing so increasingly. Perhaps the most significant fact to note is that very few family centre members, with some notable exceptions, joined such groups until they were actually employed in the Centre.

It is difficult to separate the imparting of knowledge and skills from social action endeavours. However, some clear examples of joining other community groups in social action and of separate Family Centre initiatives do exist. Family Centre members have taken part in protest demonstrations about the delivery of Social Service Benefits, about the inadequacy of child care arrangements in this State, and about Housing Commission treatment of low-income families. Within the Centre a great deal of media contact around the unemployed as 'bludgers and dole cheats' was made.[14] Another important initiative (half-way between imparting knowledge and social action) was that the Social Security resource worker was requested to write a pamphlet for the Department of Social Security which could be issued to low-income people. This pamphlet has already been distributed to voluntary agencies by the Department of Social Security and is written in such a way that it is perfectly clear, simple and understandable to beneficiaries.

During the last election campaign, opportunities for social action were gained by requests through the Brotherhood of St Laurence by Mr. M. Fraser and Mr. D. Chipp to visit the Centre, and by an internal campaign to register all family centre members on the electoral roll.[15]

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13. It should be remembered that the method of transferring skills used in the Centre was to place a family centre member worker alongside a professional worker for some time before they worked alone.

14. See Appendix E - The first press release issued by the Family Centre as distinct from the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

15. It will be no surprise to people familiar with low-income groups that very few of them actually vote. This may be a function of housing mobility but is more likely to be an expression of hopelessness and feelings of lack of power to affect decisions.

EMPLOYMENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND INCOME SUPPLEMENT

The first family centre member to be employed in the Project
was a domestic worker. Although the staff had frequently
discussed the idea of indigenous workers they were of the
opinion that family members were not yet skilled enough
for the task. Consequently the employment of a family
member as the domestic worker did not arise out of any high-
minded principle of participation. He was employed simply
because the staff establishment was increased to include
such a person. During a staff meeting when the duties and
responsibilities of a domestic worker were being discussed a
staff member observed that many of the family centre members
did have the required skills for this job and suggested they
should be encouraged to apply for the job when it was
advertised in the daily newspapers. In other words family
members were not to be excluded from applying for the job
but they were to take their chances in the open market.

Several family members applied for the job and the selection
of one of them was no accident. Neither was it an accident
that a teenage male was chosen for the position. The Co-
ordinator realized the participatory potential of employing
a family member and wanted to utilize the opportunity of
breaking down sex role and 'young people' prejudices within
the Centre.

This appointment was also different in another way. For the
first time the Co-ordinator requested the Management Com-
mittee to provide one of their members to assist in the
selection process. Previously it had been common practice
for the Co-ordinator to ask a relevant professional worker
to assist her in the task of selecting new staff. At this
time of course all hiring and firing of staff was the
responsibility of the Co-ordinator. This procedure con-
tinued until the new Family Centre Council appointed a
Programming and Staffing Committee (which met for the first
time on 9/6/75) one of whose responsibilities was to appoint
a selection panel for each new staff appointment.

The notion of appointing Family Centre members to the staff
as a participatory device gathered momentum during the
period of discussion of the future plans in January 1975.

It was clear that some family members understood this device and approved of it. However, it should be noted that some did not approve then and still do not approve. As there was a vacancy in the professional staff establishment at this time the staff decided to employ another family centre member and to fill all future vacancies with family members. At this time only two clear guidelines were laid down; firstly, that a family member should be involved in the worker's selection and secondly the family member worker should be placed under the supervision of a professional worker.

During the period covered by this report twelve family members were employed in the Centre[16] and only one of them had found the task distasteful (unfortunately the male teenager). A list of these workers, their dates of employment and their tasks are contained in Appendix F. It will be noted that seven of them were appointed before the Coordinator's role as employer was abrogated.

The theoretical and operational implications of the employment of indigenous workers are so important that a separate section of this report is devoted to a discussion of them. In terms of the families' wishes for the future that the Centre should be staffed by family members they were well on the way to being fulfilled before the second phase of the Project. Indeed budget plans for the period January-June 1976 were based on the employment of only two professionals.

The families efforts to continue the income supplement were not so successful and perhaps these two aspects of income security are not unrelated.

It will be remembered that in discussing plans for the future the families thought that the income supplement should continue for the next phase of the Project so that family members could work in the Centre and the community without the pressure of inadequate income. Although there certainly was no consensus on this view (some regarded the income supplement as a 'crutch') it was supported by a strong lobby and was mentioned in the petition to the Management Committee presented on 20/2/75.

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16. Two more family members were appointed two weeks after the period covered by this Report. It should be noted that most of these jobs were part-time. (See Appendix F.)

The reaction of the Management Committee to the petition was to set up a special sub-committee to examine tactics for the continuation of income supplement. At the same time a meeting of families to consider the administration of income supplement had been planned for some weeks and was to take place on 3/3/75. The administrator of the income supplement seeing 'the main chance' astutely turned this meeting into a discussion of the future of income supplement. It is interesting that attendance was poor at this meeting and those who did attend expressed the opinion that income supplement should be terminated at the end of the year. In an attempt to have a more representative opinion expressed on the sub-committee the Co-ordinator suggested that the sub-committee should be chosen from the general meeting rather than consist of the 'lobbyists' selected by the Management Committee. This suggestion was very firmly rejected by the Management Committee - an interesting little 'power play'.

The sub-committee took over two months to report back to the Management Committee.[17] One speculation is that the employment of family members took the 'steam' out of the income security argument. Another is that it took some time to find the professional help which the very words of the report indicate was obtained - low-income people just do not use phrases like 'workers for change' or 'guaranteed income'. In any case the report was little more than a well-argued demand for the continuation of income supplement.

The sub-committee report was referred to the Brotherhood of St Laurence Executive. The Executive Director replied on 9/5/75[18] that he understood the case which the sub-committee had presented, but the Brotherhood of St Laurence had never guaranteed the income supplement for more than three years and that the families understood this. He then suggested various ways in which the Family Centre Project as an autonomous body might find the funds to continue the income supplement. He also suggested that 'jobs for the poor' might be a desirable alternative to income supplement.

At this point any activity in the Project about income supplement ceased. The reasons for the cessation of this

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17. Report is contained in Appendix G.

18. See Appendix G.

activity are probably related to two major factors. Firstly more family members were employed in the Project and less family members were in receipt of the income supplement. The change in the number of families receiving income supplement between February and November 1975 (the period covered by this report) is quite significant, the numbers had exactly halved. In the month of February an average of 38 families/week had received income supplement whilst in the month of November this had been reduced to an average of 19 families/week. In case this change is thought to be a seasonal one it should be noted that in the very month the sub-committee presented their report (May) an average of 34 families/week received income supplement whilst 18 families/ week received income supplement during the month of October. In fact since the collection of figures concerning income supplement began in March 1974, there has been a slow but steady decline in the number of families who received it. This decline cannot be only attributed to the income supplement program. During this period the Australian Government made significant increases in the pension and benefit rates. However there is still enough evidence to suggest that one of the objectives of the Project had been attained - that indeed it is possible for poor families to change their economic condition, given adequate resources.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *   *   *   *</p>

This section has attempted to present the processes involved in implementing the plans for the future which the families themselves presented when discussing the Co-ordinator's ideal plan. The evidence collected suggests that this interim phase between the old and the new Project has been full of exciting change and movement. It is perhaps disappointing that plans for the establishment of the Resource and Social Action Units are still in their infancy but no doubt this interim phase has prepared the ground.

The next section of this report is a discussion of the two most important innovations that took place during this period. They are the introduction of indigenous workers and the devolution of power from the professional staff to the family centre members. It is during this period that the families assumed formal control of the Project's affairs and became the policy-makers for every aspect of the Project.

SECTION 111 : IMPORTANT INNOVATIONS

INDIGENOUS WORKERS

The American anti-poverty program literature abounds with
references to indigenous workers working in participatory
Community Action organisations. Their role, function,
characteristics and training are described at length. It has
been difficult to find a description of a program, like the
Family Centre Project which has revolved around the slow
change over from a fully professionalized program to an
action program mainly staffed and controlled by its partic-
ipants.

The processes which have taken place during this changeover
provide interesting insights into the relationships between
professional and indigenous workers and poses critical
questions about the motivation of policy-makers who are
moving towards the employment of indigenous workers in
welfare programs.

In looking at the last of these two issues it is necessary
to return to the original aims of the Brotherhood of St
Laurence in starting the Family Centre Project. The basic
assumption underlying the Project was that poverty was
caused by the nature of the institutional structure of
society and not by personal defects located in particular
individuals. It was realized that improving the agency's
services concentrated on the inadequacies of the poor
instead of the social institutions which created poverty. A
program was required which would provide opportunities
through participation for the poor to enable them to gain
power, not only to escape from poverty but to help achieve
significant social changes which would eliminate poverty
from society.[19]

From this point of view the strategy of the employment of
indigenous workers can be seen as a participatory device in
an action program to help build up a new political force to

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19.   DUBEY,   Sumati.   "Community action programs and citizen
         participation: issues and confusions" in Social
         Work,   Vol. 15,   No. 10,   January 1970.

bring about social change. Or more simply, indigenous workers, provided they are not bogged down with service delivery or personal crisis intervention, can be significant change agents in their own community.

It has been said that the employment of indigenous workers is really co-option, a more subtle form of social control, and that it

> "attempts to defuse potentially explosive opponents by incorporating them into the structure of the organisation, of the system, which they oppose and inducing them to identify with and subject themselves to the rewards and punishments which the organisation bestows."[20]

This argument continues logically with the proposition that such programs divert concern away from institutional change, and maintains the status quo. The history outlined above of the Family Centre Council's attempt to force the Brotherhood of St Laurence to continue the income supplement, tends to support this argument. How much conflict would have been engendered in the Project if the indigenous workers program had not been introduced and the income supplement terminated?

It is true that working in paid employment in the welfare system does give people a stake in maintaining that system, and indeed within the Centre co-option was a real force against change. For example the resistance of some family member staff when the constitutional change to remove them from the Family Centre Council was proposed. However, with regard to external change in the community this argument neglects the objectives of the Family Centre Project which are clearly directed towards institutional change in society. The very notion of the Action Unit in the new three year plan belies any idea of being diverted from attempts to change society.

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20.   STATMAN, Jim.   "Community mental health as a pacification
         program" in ANGEL, Jerome (Ed.) The radical
         therapist, Ballantine Books, New York, 1971,
         p. 210-218.

The realisation that helping with personal problems can
cloud the vision of a world without poverty and the need
for institutional change, is contained in the following
statement of one family member :

> "Regarding the personal problems, this has happened
> over the last few weeks. Had I had time to think about
> it, I would not have got as involved as I did, there
> was no-one else available. It was not proper work.
> There were a lot of lessons to be learnt. You can get
> too bogged down. I fully intend recording what I have
> learnt."[21]

The question can still be asked why indigenous workers are
employed and not just professionals who think in terms of
institutional change. There is still the nagging thought
that 'jobs for the poor' is just another alternative to
financial aid or the income supplement.

Many and varied reasons are given by experienced program
directors for their preference in employing poor people to
help other poor people change society. The most important
reason, is of course, that participation in welfare programs,
or any other program which affects a person's life, is his
right. This right is acknowledged by most directors of
participatory programs for poor people. Assuming this basic
tenent, perhaps the next most common argument is that such
employment opens up new career opportunities for unskilled
people who, with some in-service training, and the possibility
of a career ladder, can become upwardly mobile escaping
poverty altogether. A frequent addition to this argument is
that the indigenous worker acts as a 'bridge' or mediator
between the agency and the poor community.

Berman and Haug argue that the bridging function of indigenous
workers is short-lived as they soon become contaminated by
the status and power of their positions and loose identity
with their own community. They say :

> ". . . if upward movement on the career ladder is taken

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21. Verbatim Staff Minutes, 20/10/75.

seriously, the community bridging function may be endangered."[22]

Other authors feel this does not matter, that the indigenous worker does not need to identify with the poor so long as he remains committed to their causes.

Another common argument for the value of indigenous workers is that they are more in touch with and more sensitive to the life styles of poor people, understand their value systems, and consequently can produce more innovative solutions to the problems of poor people and identify their needs more adequately. Some authors claim that co-operation between 'like and like' is one of the values of low-income groups and that poor people are thus more accessible to indigenous workers.

Looking at these two arguments, from the Project experience, reveals some interesting differences. It has not been evident that the indigenous workers have lost their identity with the families by virtue of their employed status - some have been tempted but have been taught to continually look into themselves for such changes, that to lose their identity is not necessarily desirable. This lesson has been re-inforced by the fact that there is no career ladder in the Project - all indigenous workers are employed at the same level and at the same rate of pay. One or two people have been tempted to move to other jobs in the welfare field but on the whole do not yet feel they have gained enough experience. If status and power have influenced the identity of family members it has not been through their employment but through their positions in the management structure of the Project. This will be discussed in a later section of this report.

There is no doubt that indigenous workers understand the value systems of other poor people better than do middle-class professionals. Two instances of difference in value systems are illustrated below.

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22.   BERMAN,   G. and HAUG,   M.   "New careers : bridges or ladders" in Social Work,   July 1973.

The following verbatim exchange between staff and family members took place at a staff meeting on 5/5/75 :

1st F.C.M.	:	Generally on Friday nights the whole staff have been involved with helping to run the night and on Friday the Committee was flatout with the supper, and it did leave gaps. It was pretty bad with so many children. It made it very difficult to keep control. We could not contain people in the hall. The supper had to be brought up from the kitchen.
Staff member:		I think it is very difficult to expect young children to be in this environment and for it to go smoothly.
2nd F.C.M.	:	How many people will come when you cannot take children?
1st F.C.M.	:	I don't think you can bar the kids.
Staff member:		It was a bun fight.
1st F.C.M.	:	If parents want to bring their kids, good on them. The parents have to be responsible.
Co-ordinator:		There are a couple of sets of values floating around. One is the middle-class value of children not going to evening outings, and one is the value of the families taking the kids wherever they go. If that is what they want; that is what they should have. They should be responsible for their own children.

The second instance concerned the Management Committee's request to the staff to stop sexual activity between teen-agers in the Centre. The discussion ranged over a period of two weeks and was never resolved because the staff did not

regard 'petting' as harmful sexual activity and refused to inhibit the teenagers., The family members' view was quite different, although they seemed afraid to intervene (which was not surprising in view of the violent behaviour of some teenagers towards the adult family centre members). The important difference in values was that staff regarded the behaviour of the teenagers as purely experimental and the family members regarded it as harmful behaviour and resented the staff 'laughing at them'.

However, one important factor is always left out of these discussions about the different values of professionals and low-income people. This factor is the actual presence of two sets of values in the same setting. This does not always lead to conflict but can present all involved, particularly children, with the opportunity to select and choose their own values from both sets presented to them. It also represents one of the most important learning experiences for young professionals. It is one thing to read about different value systems and it is yet another to work with them. Facing a different value system each day also forces people to examine their own value system and sometimes change it! Professionals too can still learn.

Another important element in the employment of indigenous workers is the way in which it helps them to personally develop. Certainly it provides all the mechanisms for developing social competance, and, if work is supervised, the opportunity for self-awareness and protection against 'projection', the old bugbear of casework. Above all is the notion of the 'helper' principle.[23] This is the concept that people who help others often profit more themselves, this is thought to particularly apply to low-income people. To quote Riessman :

> ". . . the initial helping role may be furnishing minimal help to the recipient, but may be highly beneficial to the helper, who in turn becomes more efficient, better motivated, and reaches a new stage in helping skill."

23. RIESSMAN, Frank. "The 'helper' therapy principle" in Social Work, Vol. 10, No. 2.

The idea of the helping principle has not been lost on family member workers, certainly they know they feel better if they are helping others and they do learn from the experience. As one family member worker said at a recent staff meeting :

> "Sometimes you have to hold a persons hand to learn something yourself. I learnt this a few weeks ago about one particular problem and the sorts of things I should never do. I would not have learnt this if I had not held his hand."[24]

Above all, the experience of the Project has indicated that family members working in a helping occupation 'enhances the self-image of low-income persons: it provides them with psychological support, and they themselves report considerable satisfaction in the job."[25] There have been noticeable differences in the confidence of many people working in the Project particularly in men with previous bad employment records. One particular family member has changed from a very shy person unable to speak in public into a confident public speaker able to address a meeting of several hundred people. Before she began working in the Project such an experience would have been quite impossible for this woman.

One of the negative personal aspects for the indigenous worker is what Riessman[26] describes as role ambiguity or lack of role identity. He becomes a highly marginal person - no longer a member of the poor community nor a professional welfare worker. Riessman claims that this role ambiguity produces anxiety and can be reduced by phasing of tasks, developing group support and providing specific training. The professionals in the Project predicted a high level of anxiety in the indigenous workers and introduced all the mechanisms described by Riessman. The result was certainly to allay the anxiety of the marginal position of the worker but also produced a massive anti-professional kickback.

24.　Verbatim Staff Meeting Minutes - 7/7/75.

25.　BRAGER, George. "The indigenous worker : a new approach to the social work technician" in Social Work, Vol. 10, No. 2.

26.　RIESSMAN, Op. Cit.

Anti-professionalism is just one stage in the development of
the Project's indigenous workers. There are many stages in
this development and all are related to the relationship
between the professionals and the family member workers.
Certainly the relationship between the two groups did change
drastically and is indicated in the following quotes from
family members at staff meetings.

2/6/75 : "It did give the clients greater access to
staff. About twelve months before we started
people talked about a staff member who would
never smile. Everyone is equal here now."

24/9/75: "There is a division. You can feel the
difference between professional staff and me.
There is a big division. I don't think they
have it in their guts yet that we are taking
over. They don't think we can do our job
properly."

In summary the various learning stages are set out below and
will be used as one concept in the development of a partic-
ipation continuum in a future study. It should not be
assumed that family member workers moved through these
developmental stages in a simple forward progression. Some
workers spent long periods of time 'fixed' in one stage,
others moved backwards and forwards through the various
stages, others showed elements of several stages at the one
time, and some skipped certain stages. However, all these
stages of development, are, or have been, evident in the
work of family member staff.

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS WORKERS

1. IMPOSITION - Professional knowledge is imposed on
family worker who passively accepts
these ideas.

2. INVOLVEMENT - Professional supervises family worker
who becomes involved in learning skills.

3. SLAVISH COPYING - Professional used as a model by
family worker. Professionals vested with

a level of knowledge and authority that, bv association, makes family worker feel powerful. Family worker attempts to work as a professional, identifying completely.

4. EXPLORATION - Family worker begins to understand the inadequacy of professional knowledge and skills. He finds his priorities are different from that of the professional worker.

5. REBELLIOUSNESS - Family worker attempts to define his role and achieve higher status. Professional's response is to doubt family worker's real ability. Strong anti-professional expression from family worker who rejects supervision.

6. DISCRIMINATION - Family worker selects the knowledge and skills he wishes to obtain from the professional - begins to emerge as an independent worker. Professional responds by desperately looking for new skills to teach the family worker.

7. COLLABORATION - Family worker develops his own new ideas and concepts, he produces innovative solutions to old problems. Professional respects his competence and ability and responds as a consultant or resource rather than a supervisor or teacher. They work co-operatively.

Although it may sound paternalistic these stages of development are not unlike those of the social development of a child. Perhaps it is wise to remember that the depressed life style (including the bad nutrition and education) of many low-income people does stunt social development. It does not seem too far fetched to speculate that being freed from insecurity, many of these people have been enabled to continue their social development.

At the end of the first three year phase of the Project most family member workers were somewhere between phases five and

seven in their development as workers in the Project. Rebelliousness and rejection of professionals is very evident in the following quotation from verbatim staff minutes :

6/5/75 :   A professional staff member reporting on a
            meeting with another agency said : "Someone
            asked her (a family member) if she was going
            to start a family centre, how she would go
            about starting it. She said 'I wouldn't
            employ any social workers'."

24/9/75:

1st Professional : I wonder if there is a tendency
            of professional staff to contribute their
            experiences; do you see this as a feeling on
            our part that you cannot do the job?

1st Family worker : I think it is good if people show
            me things.

2nd Family worker : Isn't it our place to join the
            professionals? We can't divide ourselves.

2nd Professional : The way the problem is coming
            out in this discussion it looks as though
            professional staff cannot do the right thing
            either way. If we keep a distance you say we
            are dividing, and if we become involved you
            feel we are taking over.

3rd Family worker : Family members are helping create
            this division. We have excluded professional
            staff from Council.

2nd Family worker : It is family members and family
            member staff who are creating this.

On the other hand the need for professional expertise was being acknowledged towards the end of the period under consideration. The Council decision that the holiday host

program could only be administered by a professional social worker (5/8/75) and the request of the family member staff for a special paper from the Co-ordinator on the functions of a group worker (6/10/75) are both evidence of discrimination and ability to know their own limitations.

This discussion has been concerned with the relationship between the professional and family member workers in the Project. It has been hypothesized that this relationship is not static, but has been evolving and changing since the first family member was employed in October 1974, and had reached the stage by November 1975 whereby some family members are quite capable of staffing and managing the Project so that it achieves its aim of social change for low-income people.

THE DEVOLUTION OF POWER

Most discussions of anti-poverty programs in America state that a vital feature of participation is the involvement of the poor in planning, policy-making, and program operation. This pattern of participation is usually eulogised, and it is often gravely stated that it is very rare and perhaps impossible, particularly in the light of the vested interests of agencies and professionals.

Since the beginning of this year the family members have attained this privileged position, although, as the following process account will indicate, not without difficulty. At the time of writing the process of taking over the above functions had just been completed. The Family Centre Council not only completely manages the Project, but is now composed only of family members who are not workers. A recent general meeting of the families passed a constitutional amendment which prohibited anyone employed by the Project from acting as a member of the managing body, this amendment included family member workers. To refer back to the ability of indigenous people to pose innovative solutions to difficult problems, this amendment was suggested by a family member and not a member of the professional staff.

The importance of the Project's management structure to the objective of social change has always been a difficult

concept for people outside the Project to fully understand.
It is only when it is remembered that the Project has always
been regarded as a micro community that it becomes relevant.
If the family member can understand and participate in the
politics of the Project then he is more able to understand
and participate in the politics of the macro community. The
involvement in the management structure of the Project has
taught family members about elections, lobbying, manipul-
ation, petitions, committee procedure and above all the
dynamics of power. He will carry this knowledge with him
for the rest of his life and hopefully will communicate it
to others like himself - in effect it is part of a con-
sciousness raising exercise not unlike that of Friere in the
literacy area.

Charles Levy,[27] in an important article on participation
denies that change can be achieved by institutional partici-
pation because participants by definition are operating
within the framework of existing institutional objectives.
Levy claims that to be effective participants must generate
power outside the agency, for example, by setting up welfare
rights organisations. In most situations Levy's comments
would be most accurate but in an organisation whose stated
aims are social change, a definite and well organised
structure may well assist these aims.

In February of this year the management structure of the
Project consisted of a Management Committee, composed of
eight family members, one staff member, and one volunteer.
The function of the Management Committee was to manage the
activities in the Project including by this time, the budget
set aside for activities. All other aspects of the Project
were managed by the Co-ordinator in conjunction with the
professional staff - these included staffing, membership,
control of building and facilities, and liaison with the
Brotherhood of St Laurence and other agencies.

The 'future plan' discussions held in February this year
sparked off a real lobby which was quite determined to gain
control of the Project. The staff capitalized on this lobby
and suggested a single managing body for the Project to the

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27. LEVY, Charles. "Power through participation: the royal
road to social change" in Social Work, Vol. 15,
No. 3.

Management Committee. In no time at all a sub-committee had been formed to make recommendations about a new structure.[28]

The sub-committee recommended that the new committee should be composed of three professional workers, three employed family members and three family members not employed in the Project. It also recommended that the new committee should manage all facets of the Project. The sub-committee also recommended that the opinion of all family members should be asked about these recommendations. A referendum letter (see Appendix I) was sent to every family, but not to staff members or volunteers. With some argument and difficulty the professional staff finally obtained a vote in this referendum. This was one of the first signs of an on-going power struggle initiated by a strong activist lobby of family members and it is suspected some members of the professional staff.[29]

Many professional staff members felt most threatened by the prospect of having family members as their employers, and there were serious discussions at staff meetings about the meaning of this change. This threatened feeling became even more obvious at a later time when all professional staff were removed from the Management Committee.

Whilst awaiting the results of the referendum decision-making in the Project became a very difficult process. The Management Committee acted as if it already had full control and questioned many of the staff decisions, whilst the staff

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28. Report of sub-committee on New Management Structure - See Appendix H.

29. Professional staff frequently acted in conjunction with this lobby 'behind closed doors'. It is somewhat difficult to understand this sort of activity in the face of the openness in relationships between staff. A superficial analysis could suggest conspiratorial personalities. However a deeper examination reveals that the personal ideologies and motivation of individual professional staff members differed greatly. One indicator of these differences was the frequent conflict between them on issues such as consumer control or the role of the professional worker.

seemed to be immobilized by the impending change and seemed
unable to make decisions at all. The Co-ordinator reinforced
the staff indecision by choosing this time to request the
help of the Management Committee in the redeployment of one
member of the clerical staff. Another indicator of the
staff anxiety was the decision to reduce the number of staff
meetings each week as 'these would no longer by needed'.
The differences between staff and family member's attitudes
also emerged in a most surprising way at this time. Family
members thought that the Management Committee should meet in
a voluntary capacity in their own time, whilst professional
staff thought that it should meet in the employer's time.
Yet another example of the power struggle going on between
professionals and family members at this time was the
criticism of the Co-ordinator by the Management Committee
for appointing a family member to the staff temporarily, the
records show that the Co-ordinator was extraordinarily
angered by this criticism.

The recommendations about the new management structure were
approved by the families and an election held on 2/5/75.
The new committee met for the first time on 7/5/75. Further
evidence of the on-going power struggle was that this meet-
ing was presented with a prepared agenda by the Co-ordinator
which included an outline of a structure for management
which consisted of a series of standing committees to make
recommendations on each facet of the Project's management.
Most analysts would regard this initiative as a fait accompli,
the Co-ordinator regarded it as a necessary professional
input which was designed to teach family members new skills,
and to spread the power of the new committee over more
people. Perhaps these were rationalisations but in this
time of immobilising indecision the ship seemed to need a
firm hand.

For some time after the election of the new committee the
staff continued to make decisions as if the committee did
not exist. They decided who should visit other agencies,
how the building should be used, and they made arbitrary
changes in the program of activities. It could be suggested
that this was necessary as it took the new committee some
time to set up its standing committees, determine their
responsibilities, decide their membership, and get them
functioning. Another interpretation is that the professional

staff were ignoring the new Committee, and establishing their power and superiority.

As the standing committees began to work the professional staff acted more subtley to retain their power. Each standing committee had attached to it professional workers as resources, and it was fairly obvious from the type of recommendations that emerged from them, that the professional staff had shifted their power base. It is perhaps no accident that the Co-ordinator was a resource person for three of the six standing committees. The charitable interpretation is, of course, that the Co-ordinator had more knowledge and skill to transfer to the family members. This power ploy was noted by some family members and it is interesting that they lost no time in copying it when family member staff were removed from the managing committee.

Despite this shifting power base the professional staff were still able to subvert the Council's decisions whenever they thought serious decisions had to be made. The mechanisms used to achieve this were the mystification of knowledge, superior political ability, and the remnants of the old professional authority.

The power struggle between the professional staff and the Family Centre Council continued for many months but in the end the Family Centre Council triumphed, helped by the apathy and the diminished numbers of professional staff, who by this time were moving out of the Project. The struggle about where the coffee lounge should be located is a perfect but lengthy example of the power moves between the two groups, eventually it was located exactly where the families wanted it, a location quite unrelated to the needs of the program.

It was at this stage that the professional staff suddenly decided the families did not have enough knowledge to run the Project, or in terms of the developmental chart above, the Councillors (mostly family workers) had reached the discrimination stage of their development. Two training sessions were set up to enable the staff to transfer their skills to the families.[30]

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30. Outlines of these training sessions are contained in Appendix J.

During this period the Constitution and Contract Standing
Committee of the Council, drafted a formal Constitution and
called a general meeting to discuss it. Whilst the major
input to this standing committee came from the professional
staff it was a worthwhile learning experience for some
family members who used their knowledge later to draw up a
contract between the Project and the Brotherhood of St
Laurence. This contract was part of the Co-ordinator's plan
for the future and was designed to achieve autonomy for the
Project. The draft Constitution was approved by the general
meeting. Although it formalised still further the manage-
ment structure of the Project it also served to make the
Family Centre Council more tangible to both staff and
families.

The situation continued in much the same way until a fairly
explosive but open Council meeting where the professional
staff members were accused of inhibiting discussions.
Family members on the Council said quite openly that they
talked more easily together in the absence of the pro-
fessionals and would often make completely different
decisions if they were meeting alone. Finally, one of the
professional workers moved a resolution that the composition
of the Council should be changed and the professional staff
removed. This, of course, was part of the rebelliousness
phase of the indigenous workers' development and was once
again the work of the activist lobby, who quickly followed
the resolution with a petition. The following exchange took
place at a staff meeting on 25/8/75.

    Student : It matters to me that people want to suddenly
           change the composition of the Council. Do
           they feel decisions are being blocked?

    1st F.C.M. : It is not the Council it is pressure
           from the families.

    2nd F.C.M. : I think if we look at it there has been
           a great step taken forward. They are not
           happy just to see staff making decisions.

    3rd F.C.M. : There is a general feeling amongst
           families that the Council is not working for
           them. Because of the professional staff

> members. Family members should start running
> it now. They used to be in small groups
> saying things, but now it is an overall
> group. They want more changes.

At this point the family member workers decided they wished
to hold separate staff meetings (another aspect of the anti-
professional feeling). Determined efforts to have the Co-
ordinator present at their meetings to provide continuity of
overall programming was rejected. The family member staff
felt they wished to develop cohesiveness. When it was pointed
out that the development of cohesiveness was probably
dependent on the skills of a professional group worker the
idea was accepted but the Co-ordinator still rejected. It
was decided the new Co-ordinator when he was appointed could
be part of the group and meanwhile his place would be taken
by one of the research workers. Quite obviously the Co-
ordinator was one of the people who inhibited discussion!

The general meeting to change the Constitution was held on
18/9/75. Twenty-eight people attended the meeting and a
majority of six agreed to the change. During the meeting a
member of the activist lobby suggested that not only pro-
fessional staff but family member staff should be removed
from Council.

It was explained that this required another Constitutional
change. He followed his suggestion by a notice of motion to
change the Constitution at the next Family Centre Council
meeting. A general meeting was called on 9/10/75 which was
attended by twenty-five family members, by this time pro-
fessional staff, students and volunteers were forbidden to
vote by the Constitutional amendment at the last general
meeting. The motion to remove all paid staff from the
Council was won by nine votes, despite a rigorous campaign
conducted by the family member staff on the Council.[31]
As five of the current Council members were paid employees
it was not possible to replace them by a by-election so the
Council was completely dissolved.

Whilst awaiting the new election date the remaining pro-
fessional staff once again expressed their anxiety about

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31. It is perhaps poetic justice that this was the same
    group of people which had been the instigators of the
    previous constitutional change which deprived pro-
    fessional staff of representation on the Council.

their lack of power and immediately set up another training
session for the new Council members. Family member staff who
had been Councillors, reflected this anxiety by asking
questions about the timing of the change and their own
ability to transfer their knowledge and experience to new
Councillors. These feelings were expressed at a staff
meeting on 20/10/75 by a family staff member in the follow-
ing way :

> "I don't think changing the constitution again and back
> tracking is the right step. It has come a bit too
> early, but we have done it and we have to stick with
> it. The real concern is whether the people with ex-
> perience have the ability to teach others. I have
> learnt but have never had to teach others."

The anxiety about the new Council was on the whole unfounded.
Nineteen nominations were received and a healthy election
campaign took place. Fifty-seven family members voted in the
election. The election took place on 6/11/75 and the new
committee assumed it's duties as this report is being
written.

This process account of the changes in the management
structure of the Project has shown the slow devolution of
power from the staff to the family members. It's most
interesting features are the way family members learnt to
gain power slowly and within a proper constitutional frame-
work, and the response of the staff to their rapidly in-
creasing powerlessness. Power, even democratic power, is
heady stuff as has been mentioned in previous reports.
It is to be hoped that family members will use their power
to achieve social change for all low-income people, and
not simply to gratify their own needs.

SECTION IV : ACTION AND RESOURCE CENTRE - SOME PREDICTABLE
              PROBLEMS

In January 1976 the second three year phase of the Family
Centre Project will begin. During 1975 the structure of the
Project has been changed to provide an action and resource
centre for all low-income people (A.R.C.). However, the
original philosophy and objectives of the Project have not
changed. It is still based on the philosophy that the
causes of poverty lie in the institutional structure of
society and not in the inadequacies of poor people. Its
main objective is still the redistribution of the resources
of the community through institutional change brought about
by the radical reform of existing institutions. The
position adopted in the Project concerning the relationship
between reform and social change is that the processes of
reform do not inevitably preserve a basically flawed social
system but can contribute to radical change and the sub-
stantial alteration of society.[32]

Currently, the basic assumption underlying the new Centre is
that enough of the original 350 people involved in the
Project have developed sufficient skills and knowledge to
help other members of low-income groups to join them in
reaching the objectives of the new Centre. On this assumption
A.R.C. will have only two professional staff members[33]
who will be expected to work as consultants rather than
teachers or supervisors. As the future of the Centre seems
to revolve around this basic assumption, this section of the
report examines it in detail.

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32. Charles Grosser who is an exponent of this view calls it
    'significant tokenism'. His arguments in favour of it
    can be found in the following work -

    GROSSER, Charles F. New directions in community organ-
         ization: from enabling to advocacy, Praeger Publish-
         ers, New York, 1973.

33. The two professionals will be the Co-ordinator and
    someone with proven social action skills. The need for
    a social action expert arose out of an examination of
    the objectives of the Project carried out in the Fifth
    Progress Report. This examination revealed that little
    progress had been made in fulfilling the social action
    objectives of the Project.

In view of the heavy professional contribution described in the preceding pages of this report it is reasonable to question the basic assumption in the previous paragraph and its corollary that the professional staff should be reduced to two members. A quick scanning of the previous sections of this report show that very little change was achieved unless a professional staff member precipitated it.[34] The means used were many and varied, for example, the setting up of artificial conflict situations, ensuring that all family members' views were heard, presenting alternative solutions to difficult problems, transferring needed skills. Although family member staff had some of these skills, they either could not or did not wish to share them.

Related to this difficulty in sharing skills is one fear expressed by many people outside the Project, including the Brotherhood of St Laurence Executive. This fear is that the Project would end up being managed by an elite, not an elite of professionals but an elite of family centre member staff. Although some family members predicted this problem and attempted to avoid it by ensuring that the Council was made up of non-staff family members, the situation is still precarious.

There is no doubt that the family member staff are the most skilled and knowledgeable group amongst the family members. If they begin to resent the direction of less able people on the Council it would be quite simple for them to engineer yet another constitutional change which placed control of the Centre firmly in their hands. If this happens it will mean that the participatory objectives of the Project are forgotten and an hierarchical organisation will develop again, the only difference being that the 'top dogs' will be family member staff instead of professional staff. Such an elite of family

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34. Indeed the whole idea of A.R.C. arose from the Co-ordinator's examination, at the end of two years, of the degree to which the Project's objectives had been fulfilled. Without this examination and the professional input it entailed it is quite possible that the Project would now be simply a social resource for low-income people. At the end of two years the family members, on the whole, were concentrating on personal and social development and were utilizing the resources of the Project for these purposes, almost completely neglecting the social change objectives of the Project.

members may not be so dedicated as were the professional
elite, to participation, to sharing skills and resources, to
the transfer of power, and to the other objectives of the
Project.

It will be one of the roles of the two professionals to act
as the watchdogs of participation and co-operative effort
towards institutional change. In order to perform this task
they will need to be ideologically committed to the ob-
jectives of the Project and to the developmental model of
operation which seeks to spread decision making power over
all low-income people. Basic to this ideological commitment
is a genuine belief in the potential of low-income people,
and a dogged faith that the goals of the Project will be
achieved. As Arnold Kaufman writes in the following quote
the importance of the self-fulfilling prophecy should never
be forgotten.

> "The likelihood that a goal will be achieved often
> depends on whether it is believed to be possible. Faith
> in the practicality of an aim is a condition of one's
> determination to pursue that aim which is in turn an
> important condition of successful effort. Hence, the
> very rejection of a political goal as 'impossible' or
> 'impractical' or 'unrealistic' tends to be a self-
> fulfilling prophecy. The difference between what is
> possible and what is impossible is often the will
> to believe."[35]

In order to ensure that the transfer of skills continues it
may be necessary in the future for the two professional
workers to be prepared to fill gaps in the transferring of
skills which are left by the inability or resistance of
family member workers. Political and social skills are not
inherent in people they must be learnt, and learning requires
teachers. Of course, people learn best from their equals,
people of their own background and value system, but if that
is not possible a sympathetic and committed professional is
the next best teacher.

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35. KAUFMAN, Arnold. The radical liberal, Atherton
        Press, New York, 1968.

Another area in which experience so far has indicated that
there will be a need for an objective professional contri-
bution is opening up the centre to new low-income people.
Despite the altruistic words of the family members that they
must share their good fortune with other low-income people,
their actions belie their words. So far the appointment of
family members as link-up persons with uninterested old
members and the incoming new members has not worked. A new
family member has to be persistent indeed to break the
barriers to the Centre's activities which are erected by the
original families. Sometimes the barriers are subtle and
perhaps not always consciously realized by the original
family members. Some of the mechanisms used are : gossiping
about new members, 'closing ranks' whenever new members
appear, and withholding information.

Do family member staff have the ability to recognise the
contributory potential of new members, to introduce them
unobtrusively to the Centre's resources, to teach them
participatory skills, to help old members accept them and
share their knowledge and opportunities? Currently few
family member staff show ability in this area and some still
need help to recognise that their vested interests are the
main barrier to the involvement of new people in the Centre's
activities.

Apart from the specific duties outlined in their job des-
criptions these are some of the tasks which will face the
two professional workers in the Centre. Is this too large
an undertaking for two people?

The notion of limiting professional input to two people was
part of the Co-ordinator's original plan. During discussions
about the future those family members in the 'rebellious'
stage of their social development resented and resisted the
idea of any professional input at all. The idea was only
preserved by the intervention of those family members who
had either reached the 'discrimination' and 'collaborative'
stages of their development plus those who had not developed
at all and were still dependent on professionals.

Although some of these unfinished tasks were predicted by
the Co-ordinator when the plan for the future was laid down
early in 1975, the Co-ordinator believed, and still believes,
that two professional people will provide enough input to

assist the families to develop the Centre along the lines
envisaged. It is the quality rather than the quantity of
the professional input which seems to be most important. The
task does not seem impossible for two people provided they
are committed to the objectives of the Centre, they believe
in the ability of the family members, they are trusted by
the family members, and are prepared to work as equal
members of the staff team who happen to have professional
skills to contribute to the Centre's work.[36]

To sum up, it has been predicted that the basic assumption
of the new Centre, viz. that there are a sufficient number
of the original family members skilled enough to meet the
objectives of the Centre, will only be proven if these
members are able to share their skills and knowledge with
other low-income people. Apart from their specific roles as
Co-ordinator and social action expert, the inclusion of the
two professional people in the Centre is a safeguard to
ensure that this sharing does take place and that part-
icipation in decision making remains the raison d'etre of
the Project.

Despite these reservations about the future, the Family
Centre Project was a brave attempt to help low-income people
grasp some measure of power over their own lives. For some
twenty of the sixty families this objective was achieved.[37]
Such results are excellent for a welfare program, and were

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36. Grosser (Op. Cit. p. 173) when discussing the pro-
    fessional skills required in community organisations
    lists them in the following way 'organising techniques,
    a knowledge of how to deal with large bureaucracies,
    contacts with a variety of nonlocal sources of influence
    and information, skill in organisational management,
    knowledge of interpersonal behaviour, and an outsider's
    perspective and position.' Grosser in other sections of
    this work, indicates that these skills can and should
    be transferred to indigenous people.

37. For more detailed results of the measure of effectiveness
    of the Project the research reports of the Project's
    research workers, Michael Liffman and Jan Salmon, should
    be consulted. These works also point out that whilst
    only twenty families were able to move out of the poverty
    situation many more family members realised other ob-
    jectives of the Project such as learning new skills,
    and personal and social development.

well worth the time, effort, and finance expended to achieve
them. This demonstration project has proved that given
sufficient resources some poor families can move out of
poverty. The task of A.R.C. is to help to bring about the
institutional change in our society which will make
poverty simply a bad dream of the past for all low-income
people.

APPENDIX A

MEMO TO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FROM CO-ORDINATOR WHICH INITIATED THE
EXTENSION OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT:

CB:JT   24th April,   1975.

The Secretary,
Committee of Management,
FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT.

At last Monday morning's meeting of staff and Family Centre members, I
was asked to solve a problem in relation to Family Centre membership.
This request for my decision was quite appropriate because it has always
been the perogative of staff to make decisions about who will be Family
Centre members.

While I expect this task will belong to the new Committee structure, it
became important to make a decision about one family at this time.

The problem was raised by Paul Roberts who, some months ago, was a
Family Centre member and is not now a Family Centre member, because his
family structure has changed. Paul wished to nominate for the new
Committee, but was not sure whether he could do so because of this
position. In view of this situation, and the fact that we will be
moving to an open Centre next year, I thought it might be a good idea if
we created a new category of Family Centre member - in other words, that
we start to open the Centre up gradually straight away.

I felt there should be a category which allowed families well known to
us to become Family Centre members and have all the rights and oppor-
tunities of the Family Centre members, except for income supplement and
for research purposes. In other words, Paul Roberts and his Dad, and
Brothers and Sisters would become Family Centre members and be able to
nominate for the Committee, use all the facilities of the Centre, but
would not be able to have income supplement, and would not be counted as
one of the Families in Michael's and Jan's research work.

This letter is to inform you that I have set up this new category of
Family Centre member and have notified Paul that he may now nominate for
the new Committee. I am rather pleased with this new idea, as it

(APPENDIX A cont'd)

solves our problem in relation to Paul (who I think we already all
accept as a Family Centre member) and also opens the way for the future.

There could be, for instance, some other Families well known to us who
may be able to join us in the Centre in every way except for the income
supplement and research.

In order to inform all Family Centre members of this new category, I
will have this letter published in the next Family Centre Bulletin.

Yours sincerely,

C. Benn (Mrs.)
Co-ordinator,
FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT.

APPENDIX B

FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name: .... Age: ....

....

Address: ....

....

....

Names and Ages of Children:

....

....

....

....

Name of Family Member Introducing New Member:

....

Source of Income and Amount (Wages, Pension etc.)

....

Special interests or ways in which new member would like to contribute to the work of the Centre:

....

....

....

....

....

APPENDIX C

Report to Council from Ad hoc Committee to look at Resources in
the Centre in 1976.

The experience of the Family Centre Project has shown that if
poor people have access to resources and power over those resources,
they are then able to change and make better lives for themselves and
their families.

Principles of the Resource Unit.

1. Providing resources that are needed by low-income families and
   which are not available anywhere else.

2. A sharing of the resources of the Family Centre with a larger
   group of people.

3. Changing the resource areas as low-income families' needs change
   and as the community changes.

4. To provide resources for both primary and secondary needs. (Primary
   needs are:- food, somewhere to live, money, self-esteem etc.
   Secondary needs are:- education, social activities, holidays etc.)
   Because both are important if families are to live full lives.

Goals of the Resource Unit.

To provide:-

1. Information and referral services regarding all social welfare
   and other public services.

2. A liaison between low-income families and community services.

3. To interpret these services to low-income families and, where
   necessary, to advocate on behalf of families.

4. To work with people to develop programmes in response to the needs
   identified (e.g. child minding, emergency transport, home manage-
   ment, use of telephones, letter, typing service, etc.)

5. Time limited, supportive counselling around problems in daily
   living.

6. Identification of community needs and inadequate services to
   provide material for the social action unit to take different
   kinds of action to change society.

(APPENDIX C cont'd)

Criteria for a Resource Area.

1. Low-income families need it.

2. It doesn't exist anywhere else.

3. The resource workers can provide it adequately.

4. Not require large capital outlay, as all resource areas must be able to change to something else quickly when the service is started by someone else.

APPENDIX D

FAMILY CENTRE COUNCIL MEETING - 16th SEPTEMBER, 1975.

BACKGROUND NOTE FOR AGENDA ITEM NUMBER 4.2:

As I will be unable to attend the Family Centre Council Meeting on
Tuesday 16th September, I have written this note to explain the
reasons for my discussion to approach the professional staff only to
undertake the task at the Children's Hospital Seminar on Wednesday
29th October.

The question seems to be who should choose professional staff to give
talks at professional seminars when the request is for a professional
speaker.

I should explain that Dr. Howard Williams from the Children's
Hospital requested me to undertake this talk. As I had other commit-
ments on the particular day, I asked at the Monday meeting which
professional would care to replace me. I am of the opinion that this
was a legitimate procedure, because I believe only professional people
are able to decide who has the ability to undertake a professional task.
I also believe that Family Centre members should choose other Family
Centre members for particular jobs.

This idea is not new. It is based on the notion that only a peer (i.e.
somebody of the same skills and background) is capable of selecting
amongst their own group. I do not believe that I have the skill to
choose a doctor to do a medical job, or a lawyer to do a legal job.
Such decisions should be made by other doctors and other lawyers.

There seems to be a mistaken idea amongst Family Centre members that
because some professional skills have been transferred to Family Centre
members, they now have all the skills of the professional. So far, we
have taught Family Centre members how to work in resource areas, how to
work on Committees, and some social action and research skills. These
are just a very small part of the professional job.

As an example of what I am talking about, I have listed a few of the
jobs that I personally have been asked to do in the last few months as
a professional member of the Family Centre Project. I have not referred
any of these jobs to the Family Centre Council, or to the Brotherhood
of St Laurence (my employer) because I believe that the decision to
accept these jobs or not is my own decision as a professional person.
If I cannot meet the request, I believe I should seek my own replace-

(APPENDIX D cont'd)

ment, and have done so wherever necessary.

1. Writing of references for other professional people in the Project.

2. To undertake curriculum planning for new welfare courses in Universities or Colleges of Advanced Education.

3. To write a theoretical paper for the Social Workers' Conference on the Development Model in the Family Centre Project.

4. To chair a meeting for the Victoria Institute of Colleges of Heads of Government Departments and Professors of Child Psychology to decide whether a Child Development Centre should be set up at the Preston Institute of Technology.

5. To chair a research steering committee for the Social Welfare Commissionfor a study on Field Work Resources for Social Work and Welfare Courses.

6. To be the speaker at the V.C.O.S.S. Annual General Meeting -Topic: 'The Future cf Social Welfare in Australia.'

7. To take part in the University of Melbourne's Social Planning Courses as a resource person to advise on social welfare programme implementation and administration.

8. To give the keynote address at a Housing Seminar in Tasmania organized by the Housing Commission of Tasmania.

9. To write a technical paper on the Family Centre Project for the U.N.E.S.C.O. Habitat Conference. This paper will be included in the Australian National Report to the Conference which will be held in Canada in June, 1976.

10. To be a speaker at a seminar to be held at the Children's Hospital. This seminar will revolve around an American Professor whose area of expertise is Community Development and deprived children. (This is the task which I was unable to undertake and asked for volunteers from the professional staff to do for me at the Monday meeting.)

I think if the Family Centre Council examines these jobs listed above, they will realize that Family Centre members do not have the expertise

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(APPENDIX D cont'd)

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I think if the Family Centre Council examines these jobs listed above, they will realize that Family Centre members do not have the expertise

(APPENDIX D cont'd)

to undertake them, and also that Family Centre members would not really
know who would be best to do them if I cannot.

It must be remembered that the first three years of the Project relied
heavily on professional expertise, and that part of the first three
years' job was to transfer as much of that expertise to Family Centre
members as possible. The bits that have been transferred are the bits
that would enable Family Centre members to run the Project as a resource
and social action centre. The theory building, group work, administrative
and community development skills of a professional have not yet been
transferred, and there is some doubt whether they are needed if the
Project is to be deprofessionalized.

In other words, many of the above jobs will not be referred to the
Project when it no longer contains professionals. As the Project will
have professionals as Co-ordinator and Social Action Expert in the next
three years, I expect requests like the above will be still received. I
am of the opinion that if a professional is requested to undertake a
professional task, then the decision whould be made by him as to whether
he accepts it or not. Many requests for speakers etc. of course are not
for professionals, and all these should be referred to the Family Centre
Council. This is what I do at the moment, and I think should continue
to be done.

I hope you will take these thoughts into consideration when discussing
the above agenda item.

                                                    Connie Benn.

APPENDIX E

PRESS RELEASE   25th July, 1975.

HAMER PUTS DOWN THE UNEMPLOYED

The Family Centre Council of the Brotherhood of St Laurence has
criticized the Victorian Premier, Mr. Hamer, for his comments about
the unemployed, made to the Liberal Party State Council on Sunday 27th
July, 1975.

The Chairman of the Family Centre Council, Mr. Bob Williams said that
'Mr. Hamer seems to be implying that unemployment benefits are too high
and that the unemployed do not want to work.'

Mr. Hamer's comments are not only mischievous but are also inaccurate
and ignorant.

Firstly, Mr. Hamer is unaware that the present unemployment benefit
levels are below the poverty line.'

Secondly, Department of Labour statistics clearly prove there are not
enough jobs for unemployed.

Thirdly, whilst proposing the need to increase productivity, Mr. Hamer
seems to forget that the purpose of productivity is to enable social
progress.

Finally, unemployed benefits are the right of the unemployed.

Mr. Bob Williams said that 'Mr. Hamer's comments are inconsistent with
the Liberal Party's Council's plans to set up a Committee on Poverty."

Australia does owe a living to those who cannot find work.

For further information, contact Mr. Bob Williams,
                                 Chairman of the Family Centre Council,
                                 Telephone: 41-4151.
              After hours: Jan Salmon,
                                 Telephone 337-6450.

The Family Centre Council is the organizing body for the Brotherhood
of St Laurence Family Centre Project. The Family Centre Project sets
out to provide resources for low-income families and to improve the
social and economic circumstances of low-income families.

APPENDIX F

FAMILY CENTRE MEMBERS EMPLOYED AS STAFF AT 1/11/75

Name	Date of Appointment	Job Description	Hours of Work
Ray Walters	30/10/74–13/12/74	Domestic Worker	20 hours
Dot Emery	10/2/75	" "	20 "
Pauline Windler	17/2/75	Social Security Resource	20 "
Bob Williams	17/3/75	Employment and Social Action Resource	40 "
Maureen Wolf	17/3/75	Housing Resource	20 "
Vicky Young	24/3/75	Adolescent Worker	16 "
Judy Cassar	5/5/75	Credit & Debt Resource	20 "
Sue Stewart	23/6/75	Bulk Buying Resource	20 "
Chris Williams	23/6/75	Child Minding Resource	20 "
Sandy Bowtell	23/6/75	Child Minding Resource	20 "
Jenny Fichtenbaum	22/9/75	Health Resource	20 "
Bob Long	22/9/75	Employment Resource	20 "

APPENDIX G

10.4.75

REPORT FROM INCOME SUPPLEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE:

The fifth report is saying "now is the time to move out into the community", to help people use the resources of the Centre, and tell, them of their rights as people, and help them use the institutions (like Social Security) in a way that gets the best service.

These are skills the Project has given to 60 families. If the Project is to have its full impact on the life of all poor people then 60 families have to start to share, tell and teach their friends and neighbours.

Everyone will do this in a different way. A few will be able to be paid workers and run specific resources areas, but most will do the work by bringing new people into contact with the Centre, showing them where, what and how. As the knowledge from the first three years is passed on, more people will be concerned about issues like:
                        * the work test
                        * 5 kids before you can have a Commission home
                        * lack of emergency accommodation
                        * no income security,
and will want to do something about it.

The role of the workers who are in the Social Action unit will be to help these people get down on paper exactly what they want to change, so everyone in the group knows and understands - and then these workers (or activists) will advise the group on the tactics to use to get what they want.

Now, the job of changing the community is a very big one. We don't think 10 or 15 people can do it. But 30-60 people can make a better go of it.

If all the family members are to help in this Project - and they want to - then they must have security. The B.S.L. has said over and over again it expects the 60 families to have gained skills from the Project which they will share with the community. There won't be time for sharing if people have to return to going the rounds of the agencies for survival.

It has been often said that the basic problem with the poor is the

(APPENDIX G cont'd)

lack of money. How then can we improve community resources without this
basic need which you are going to take away from us:

The B.S.L. has aimed this program at improving the situation of the
powerless poor. It has said that by guaranteeing a set regular income
through the income supplement scheme, people in this Project could gain
power over resources; power over decision-making, power over relation-
ships, power over information.

It is with this power that we can help to change the community. But
how powerful or real is temporary power, and does the B.S.L. mean to
take away the power it has given?

Workers for change must have a guaranteed income. A guaranteed
income for a group of people who are going to be working with poor
people like themselves. Working to get a guaranteed income for everyone.

SUB COMMITTEE.

KEVIN SHEPPARD
DOT PEILLON
EVELYN MUNDY.

May 9, 1975.

COMMENT ON REPORT FROM FAMILY CENTRE SUB-COMMITTEE

This report summarises the new directions that are proposed for the
Family Centre and emphasises that the central purpose of the second
phase will be to enable the families who have gained skills from the
Project to share with the community.

The report points out that the ability to share resources and skills
will depend on staff and Family Centre members having time to devote to
these tasks. This means that they must either receive an income as
staff members or have some other source of income such as the Family
Income Supplement to give them a degree of security and the opportunity
to devote at least some of their time to the work of the Centre.

The report argues a case for the continuation of the Family Income
Supplement and asks "does the B.S.L. mean to take away the power it has
given".

(APPENDIX G cont'd)

From the very beginning of the Project, it was recognised that lack of a
regular and adequate income is a central cause of poverty. Obvious as
this is, it has seldom been recognised in antipoverty programs. Accept-
ance of this view, resulted in a commitment to provide a Family Income
Supplement for the first three years of the Project. It was made quite
clear that the guarantee could not extend beyond this period and I know
that Family Centre members have acknowledged this all along.

From the reports of the Project, it seems to us that a number of
families have been able to improve and stabilise their income situation
by having obtained more regular paid jobs and/or stabilising their
housing situation. However, we certainly realise that, for many families,
there is still a need for a regular and guaranteed source of income and
it is quite understandable that this issue should be raised regardless
of the understanding about the limits and length of time the Brotherhood
could guaranteee to provide the funds required for the income supple-
ment.

Half the cost of the Income Supplement has been met by the Australian
Government Department of Social Security. Their reason for providing
the subsidy was that it would provide essential resources for an ex-
perimental project from which information could be gathered as to the
effects of a family income supplement. This agreement was limited to
the first three years of the Project.

It would be difficult for the Brotherhood to ask for further funds.
There seem to be two other possibilities; the first is that the Com-
mittee of the Family Centre, which will have its own identity and
autonomy, could make an approach for continuation of a subsidy for a
family income supplement. The other possibility would be for the Family
Centre to apply to the Australian Government for funds to employ ad-
ditional Family Centre staff members. This 'jobs for the poor' approach
might be more successful as it is on the lines of the Australian Govern-
ment's commitment to creating and financing job opportunities for
unemployed people through R.E.D. (Regional Employment Development)
Scheme.

The Brotherhood would be prepared to support either of these proposals,
but it would be necessary to back them with as much information as
possible. Some of this is already at hand and the reports that are
expected to come from the Centre in the next few months should give
added weight to any proposal.

<div align="right">- DAVID SCOTT.</div>

APPENDIX H

<u>FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT</u>

4th March, 1975.

<u>Sub-Committee to look at possible changes in structure of Management Committee.</u>

Present: Bob Williams, Pauline Windler, Joan Benjamin.

Committee was set up following staff suggestion to Managment Committee to re-structure the committee to enable formation of one organisation to run all aspects of the Centre rather than two groups as there are at present. Staff also suggested that the new grouping consist of five staff and five family members.

Sub-committee agreed to look at the following areas:-

1. Method of election

2. Composition of committee

3. Role of committee

4. Office bearers on committee

5. Term of office.

1. <u>Method of election.</u>

To continue to use proportional representation as the type of election procedure.

2. <u>Composition of committee.</u>

3 professional workers

3 paid workers (family members)

3 family (members)

1 co-ordinator with no voting powers, but who is responsible to B.S.L.

This last position would be appointed, not elected. The co-ordinator of the Project would fill this position.

(APPENDIX H cont'd)

3.   Role of committee would be to make all decisions affecting all facets of the running of the Centre.

4.   Office Bearers of new committee.

Sub-committee felt that this should be determined by the new committee after it is elected.

5.   Term of Office to be for twelve months.

Sub-committee also discussed steps towards the introduction of this new structure:-

1.   Presentation to Management Committee. If recommendations are accepted then:-

2.   Letters to be sent to all F.C. members asking them to accept the recommendations. A reply-paid envelope to be enclosed.

3.   If membership indicates acceptance, then nominations to be called and election date set.

Possible time schedule - 6 weeks.

March 6th - Management Committee decide on recommendations.

March 11th - Letters posted.

March 20th - Replies assessed by Management Committee if endorsed.

April 2nd - Nominations open.

There is a camp from April 16th to 21st.

April 25 - Election.

APPENDIX I

<u>REFERENDUM LETTER TO PROJECT FAMILIES TO SEEK ·APPROVAL FOR</u>
<u>PROPOSALS FOR A NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE IN THE CENTRE</u>:

<u>BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE</u>
<u>. FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT</u>

11th March, 1975.

Dear,

In the past few weeks family members have agreed to change the Centre
next year. The Management Committee now feels that the Management
Committee will also need to change, so that the Centre can prepare
for these changes. Prepare for families to have a much greater say
in the way the Centre runs. The staff asked the Management Committee
to consider having one group of people to make decisions ... a group of
both staff and families.

The Management Committee feels that everyone should know about this
new step, think carefully about it and tell us, your Management Com-
mittee, what you think about it all.

Would you please tick yes or no on the list below, and let us have your
answer in the return address envelope as soon as possible. Because if
you think it is a good idea, we will have to call an election and open
nominations very soon.

Yours sincerely,

The Management Committee.

---

1.   New Management Committee to consist of -

3 professional staff,

3 family member staff,

3 family members.

(This would mean 3 of the present staff and 3 from the family members
who now have paid jobs in the Centre, and 3 family centre members).

These people to be elected by family members and staff and one co-
ordinator with no voting powers but who is responsible to B.S.L. This

(APPENDIX I cont'd)

person would be the Co-ordinator of the Project and would be appointed, not elected.

YES ___

NO ___

2.   This committee would make ALL decisions affecting the Centre.

YES ___

NO ___

3.   This committee will be elected for twelve months.

YES ___

NO ___

RETURN TO JOAN BENJAMIN

RESULTS OF REFERENDUM

The proposals contained in this referendum were recommended by a sub-committee of the Mangement Committee. The sub-committee was comprised of two family centre members and one member of the professional staff. The report and recommendations of the sub-committee were approved by the Management Committee on 6/3/75. The report included steps for imple-mentation of the proposed change and a timing schedule.

Forty-five family members responded to the referendum letter. The results of the referendum were:

Question	Yes	No	No Answer	Total
1. Membership of Committee	38	4	3	45
2. All decisions by Committee	38	5	2	45
3. Committee elected for 12 months	36	4	5	45

On 20/3/75, the Management Committee discussed the results of the refer-endum and decided to adopt the new structure. The election date for the new committee was set for 2/5/75.

APPENDIX J

FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT

May 29, 1975.

TRAINING SESSIONS   April 8th - June 3rd.

The following is a summary of discussions held at the Family Centre. The sessions were set up in response to requests from family members and staff, to develop a greater understanding of the issues with which the Family Centre Project staff will be increasingly involved.

The following is a statement of the areas which were covered -

1. Poverty - some general concepts - introduced by Michael Liffman and A. Press.

2. Economic Inequality - Bob Jolly, A.C.T.U. Research Officer.

3. Levels of government in Australia and the disadvantages of present welfare structures - Jill Williams.

4. Social Action; general principles - strategies and tactics - A. Press.

5. Social Action; general principles and how they apply to local issues - Colin Benjamin.

6. Video Tape Viewing -

    (a) Inner Sydney Resident Action Groups - Submission to Government Enquiry into Human Relations.

    (b) Tape done for Flemington Housing Commission Tenants Union.

7. How to write a submission - presented by Jan Salmon.

8. An evaluation of the training sessions.

The sessions were attended by staff, family member staff (who constituted the core group), family members and social work students Those attending were:

Judy Cassar,	Les Hope,	Connie Benn,
Pauline Windler,	Pat Parker,	Bob Long,

(APPENDIX J cont'd)

Bob Williams,	Dot Peillon,	Ray Parker,
Maureen Wolf,	Carol Ride,	John Mowat,
Steve Wolf,	Jill Williams,	Joan Benjamin
Paula Walsh,	Helen Fowler,	Joan Keir.

FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT

PRACTICAL SKILLS COURSE
AUGUST, 6 - SEPTEMBER, 24, 1975

August, 6	10.30 a.m.	Using telephones	- Mary d'Aprano Joan Benjamin
		Writing letters	- Judy Till
August, 13	10.30 a.m.	Report writing	- Jan Salmon
August, 27	10.30 a.m.	Filing	- Joan Benjamin Norma Hampton
		Referrals	- Jill Williams

August, 27	10.30 a.m.	Recording, data
		  collection,
		  monitoring
			- Michael Liffman

Sept., 3	10.30 a.m.	Conducting meetings	- Robert Williams Joan Benjamin
Sept., 10	10.30 a.m.	Interviewing	- Jill Williams
Sept., 17	10.30 a.m.	Talking in Public	
Sept., 24	10.30 a.m.	Evaluation.	