



**CDP FINAL REPORT : PART I : COVENTRY
AND HILLFIELDS : PROSPERITY AND THE
PERSISTENCE OF INEQUALITY.**



CDP

COVENTRY

The Home Office and City of Coventry
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
in association with
The Institute of Local Government Studies



MARCH 1975

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P R E F A C E

This is Part 1 of CDP's Final Report. (Part 2 is a set of more detailed Background Working Papers.) We do not claim that this is a completely balanced or objective report. We do not try to give a comprehensive account of the whole project, but we select from our experience over the last five years to develop a particular line of argument. Our conclusions are controversial and (in a traditional sense) they cannot be "proved" from the work we have done. Their correctness, or otherwise, has to be judged by the cogency of the analysis and its capacity to explain observed contradictions; the consistency of the strategies which flow from the analysis; and the effectiveness in practice of the lines of action suggested or tried out.

We are aware of the dangers of drawing large-scale interpretations from work in one small neighbourhood. However, we think this is a valid risk to take. There are already voluminous descriptions of all-too-familiar problems of disadvantage within small areas. There is much less in the way of bold thinking about the political and strategic implications. Yet this is what is lacking in the current debate about urban deprivation.

This is an unusual report to come from employees of a local authority. Although some of our comments imply criticism of the Corporation, we would wish to record our admiration for the tolerance and resilience shown by councillors and officers in general, and by our Project Committee in particular, as we have tried to follow our brief. We are particularly grateful for the support of Councillors G.S.N. Richards, George Park (now MP for Coventry NW) and Arthur Waugh Senior, who, as successive leaders of the City Council, in turn have been Chairmen of our Project Committee. We are also grateful for the active involvement and interest in the experiment of the Chief Executive, Mr Terence Gregory, OBE (and prior to him Mr J.D. Hender) and the Chief Officers, especially the City Secretary, Mr Joe Besserman, whose wise advice about the mysteries of local government has helped us at many points. We have enjoyed close collaboration with the Education and Social Services Departments, both with their respective Directors, Robert Aitken and Tom White, and with the Team Leaders we jointly appointed: John Rennie for the Community Education Programme; Brian Gearing (and before him Malcolm Tosh) for the Action Survey of the Elderly; and Ken Whitehouse (and before him Pam Astbury) for the Decentralised Neighbourhood Team.

Our view of the whole situation has been strongly influenced by working alongside Hillfields residents through the Hillfields Community Association, the Information and Opinion Centre and the many residents' groups tackling problems of housing and the environment or legal and income rights. We have been grateful for the continued support and co-operation received from Harry Salmon from the very beginning of the Project. We have also been stimulated by many other colleagues working in Coventry, particularly Melvyn Cairns and Slim Hallett; and more recently by Paul Corrigan, Paul Davies, Andy Friedman and Norman Ginsburg from Warwick University who have helped us with the analysis discussed in the section on Phase 3. Finally we have been supported throughout by our enthusiastic secretarial and administrative team, Rosemary Woodlock, Angela Slater and Rosalind Seaman (and before them, Marlene Fell, Betty Brice and Kathy Thomas).

May 1975

John Benington
Nick Bond
Paul Skelton

It should be made clear that whilst the action and research teams of Coventry CDP have worked closely together on most issues in the past four years, the following report has a general emphasis, a particular interpretation of events and a formulation of Stage 3 which are derived only from the action team. As head of the research team, I cannot support a number of fundamental aspects of the report and must therefore dissociate from it.

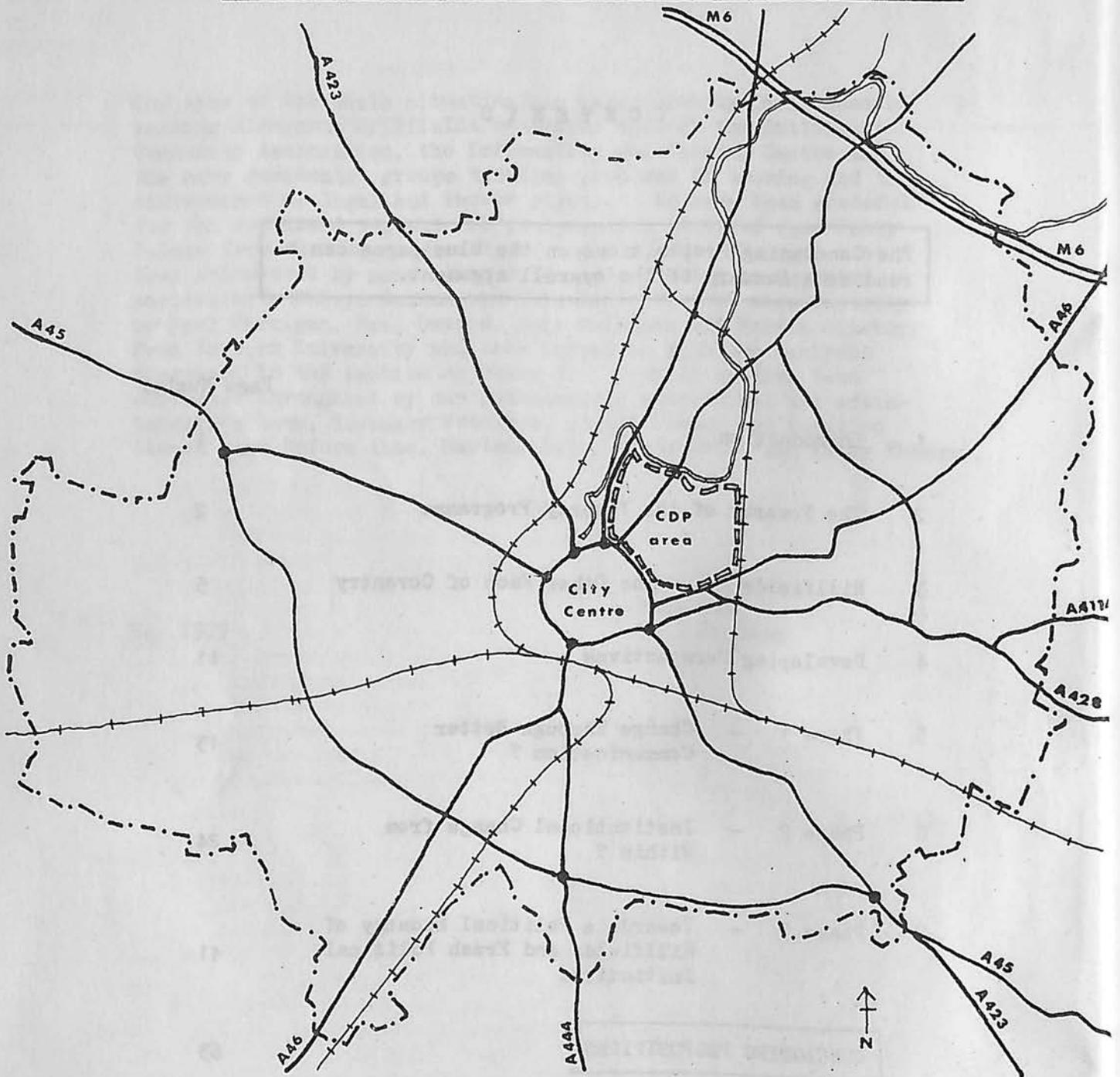
Geoff Sharp

C O N T E N T S

The Concluding Propositions on the blue pages can be read as a summary of the overall argument.

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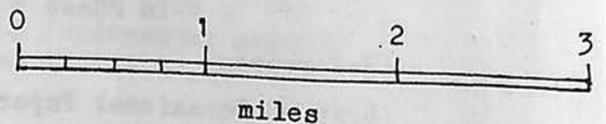
The location of the Project area within the City of Coventry



Key

- · — Coventry City boundary
- ● — Major roads
- + + Railway lines
- ▭ Project boundary of Hillfields
- ≈ Coventry canal

Scale



COVENTRY AND HILLFIELDS:
PROSPERITY AND THE PERSISTENCE OF INEQUALITY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 The ending of the Coventry and Liverpool CDPs in March 1975 marks an important stage in the British poverty programme. Both projects are part of the pilot phase of the national CDP experiment. Their ending completes five years work in what is the first and the largest of the government's action research initiatives in the field of "urban deprivation" (1). This is an important opportunity to take stock of progress and to re-examine some of the government's basic assumptions about urban problems in the light of local findings and experience.
- 1.1 We have not reached our conclusions through armchair research. This has been an action research project. We have seen our job as not merely to describe the situation but to help to change it. We have conducted a wide range of traditional surveys, systematic studies and background analysis. However, none of these can be divorced from our own active involvement in the situation. From the beginning, members of the Team have lived in Hillfields and have joined in and stimulated various forms of community action. We do not claim to be offering neutral findings but to be arguing a case based upon five years' committed work. It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss our report as "propaganda". We did not hold our current views when we started in the Project in 1970. The experience of working in the situation has gradually brought about a fundamental change in our interpretation of, and response to, the problems. This has taken place partly through background analysis; partly through assessing our action programmes; partly through discussions with other CDP teams and others involved in similar fields; but above all through our own personal experience of trying to bring about change through established channels, and then having to account to ourselves for the blockages and biases encountered. Although we will try to refer to some of that experience, our aim in this report is not so much to describe it as to draw on it to contribute to the growing debate about the causes of, and solutions to, urban inequality.

2. THE POVERTY OF THE POVERTY PROGRAMME

- 2.0 The British "poverty programme" has grown rapidly over the past five or six years. The first initiative was taken in 1968 shortly after Enoch Powell's notorious "rivers of blood" speech. In this he raised the spectre of racial ghettos and social and political disruption in the inner city areas. The Prime Minister then announced the setting up of a special Urban Aid Programme to be directed at "areas of serious social deprivation in a number of our cities and towns - often scattered in relatively small pockets" (2).

- 2.1 The national Community Development Project was set up in 1969 as part of the Urban Programme. It was described as "a neighbourhood-based experiment aimed at finding new ways of meeting the needs of people living in areas of high social deprivation". It was to be a selective test-bed for bigger developments by the major spending departments of central government (3).
- 2.2 Five years later although we have yet to see examples of these bigger developments, small-scale action research experimental projects like CDP have been duplicated in a number of other central government departments. They all seem to assume that urban disadvantage can be blamed on:

- i) the personal characteristics of local residents;
- ii) the administrative malfunctions of local government.

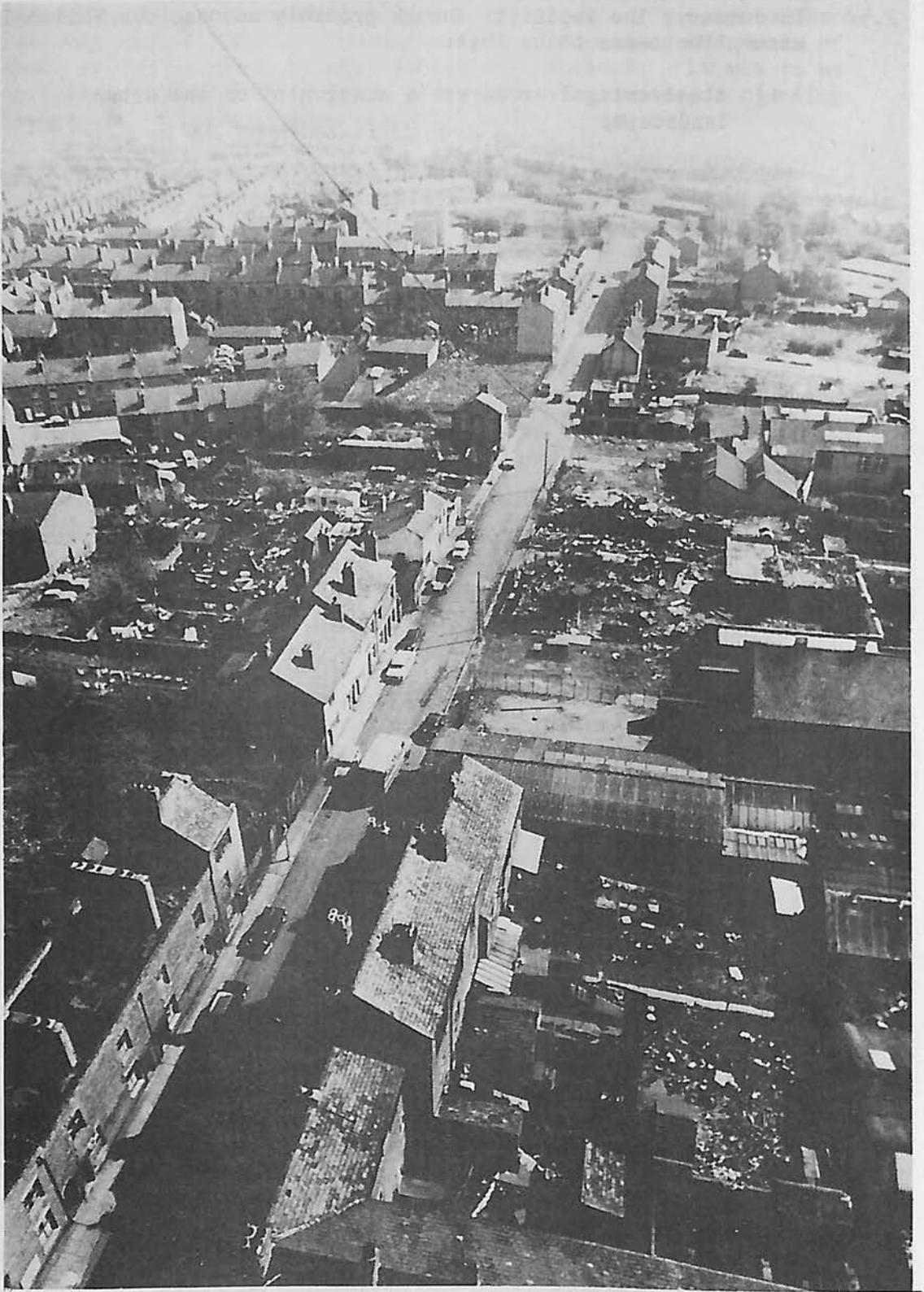
Sir Keith Joseph's Cycle of Deprivation Studies (4) set up jointly between the DHSS and the SSRC illustrates the first of these. The problem is seen as small concentrations of families with special defects (deviancy, apathy, inadequacy or ignorance) - social cripples and lame ducks - who should be helped to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and stand on their own feet again in order to prevent their weaknesses and abnormalities from being transmitted to the next generation. The solution is seen to lie in more self-help within the community and more co-ordinated and relevant social work help.

- 2.3 Peter Walker's Six Towns Studies set up by the D of E (5) and the recent Comprehensive Community Programmes announced by the Home Office (6) illustrate the second set of assumptions: that urban disadvantage arises mainly because of technical incompetence by the local authority - poor planning, unco-ordinated management, insensitive provision of services and inadequate public consultation. The Whitehall solution is to get civil servants, social scientists or private business consultants to prepare guidelines to help local authorities develop more "total approaches" and "comprehensive programmes" for tackling urban problems (7).
- 2.4 These poverty programmes also include the carrot of extra resources from central government. But on closer inspection the carrots turn out to be peanuts. The whole Urban Programme (of which CDP forms only a small part) represents only one-twentieth of 1% of total public expenditure, and only one-tenth of 1% of total social services expenditure. Furthermore, the Urban Programme is not even extra money. It is deducted from the total rate support grant pool available for local authority spending. Although its share of the rate support grant has been increasing slightly since 1971, it is still less than one-third of 1% (8). The Urban Programme is therefore a minute drop in the ocean of urban inequality. Even the £46 million originally allocated for the proposed housing action areas is less than 2% of total housing expenditure (9). General cut-backs in local authority expenditure or new legislation like the Housing Finance Act or the revaluation of the rates can at a stroke take more out of disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged cities than the whole of the extra money put in through these special programmes (10).

2.5 In summary, the implicit, though probably unconscious Whitehall assumption seems to be that:

- i) disadvantaged areas are a minor blot on the urban landscape;
- ii) the problems can be blamed partly on the apathy or abnormality of local residents and partly on the incompetence of local government;
- iii) the solutions lie in self-help and more active participation by local people; and more sensitive services and better communication and co-ordination on the part of the local authority;
- iv) solutions can be found at very little extra cost and that a carrot and stick approach by central government can spur the local authorities to do things better in the future.

2.6 The original model for CDP embraced most of the above assumptions. Along with the other projects our experience at the local level has forced us to question, test and reject them, and finally to radically re-interpret the problem.



The mix of old houses, backyard industry, derelict bomb sites and general environmental mess prevalent in Hillfields before redevelopment. A view of Albert Street prior to its demolition to make way for the Primrose Park private estate.

3. HILLFIELDS - THE OTHER FACE OF COVENTRY

- 3.0 At first sight, Coventry is not the kind of city where you would expect to find one of the pilot projects for the British poverty programme. In 1970 when the Community Development Project began, Coventry was widely regarded as a boom city:
- its population had increased five-fold this century
 - its rate of growth over that period had been faster than any other city in Britain
 - since the end of the second world war its wages had been higher on average than the rest of the country (at least 35% to 40% higher for skilled male engineers)
 - its overall rates of unemployment had been among the lowest in the country
- 3.1 It was also renowned as a pace-making and modern city. Its ambitious programme of reconstruction since the war has been pictured as a Phoenix rising from the ashes of bomb devastation. It was internationally famous for its modern Cathedral, traffic-free shopping precinct, comprehensive ring-road system and award winning housing estates. It was recognised as a pioneer of new forms of local government management and organisation.
- 3.2 Nevertheless even such a prosperous and progressive city has its problems of disadvantage and inequality. There are several groups and localised areas which have not shared in the general bonanza. For example, the older working-class area on the north of the city with its dense industry, congested housing, decaying environment, outworn facilities and cramped open space, all enclosed within a triangle of railway lines, is in striking contrast to the attractive modern conditions enjoyed by other parts of Coventry. The better-off have largely moved out and left behind higher than average proportions of pensioners, other claimants of state benefits (the sick, the unemployed, the unsupported mother), Asian immigrants and unskilled workers.
- 3.3 Hillfields, the area within the railway triangle chosen for the CDP experiment, is in fact within a stone's throw of the modern city centre and literally in the shadow of the £14½ million inner-ring road. Known before the war as a respectable, well-established, cosmopolitan working-class community, by the start of the CDP experiment, the area had been run down badly and had developed a reputation as the city's blackspot: a centre of vice and crime, an area in physical and moral decline. Hillfields had not been neglected by any means; but the Council's plans for its comprehensive redevelopment have been cut back or delayed so often over the previous 25 years that for much of the time it has looked like an enormous abandoned building-site (11).

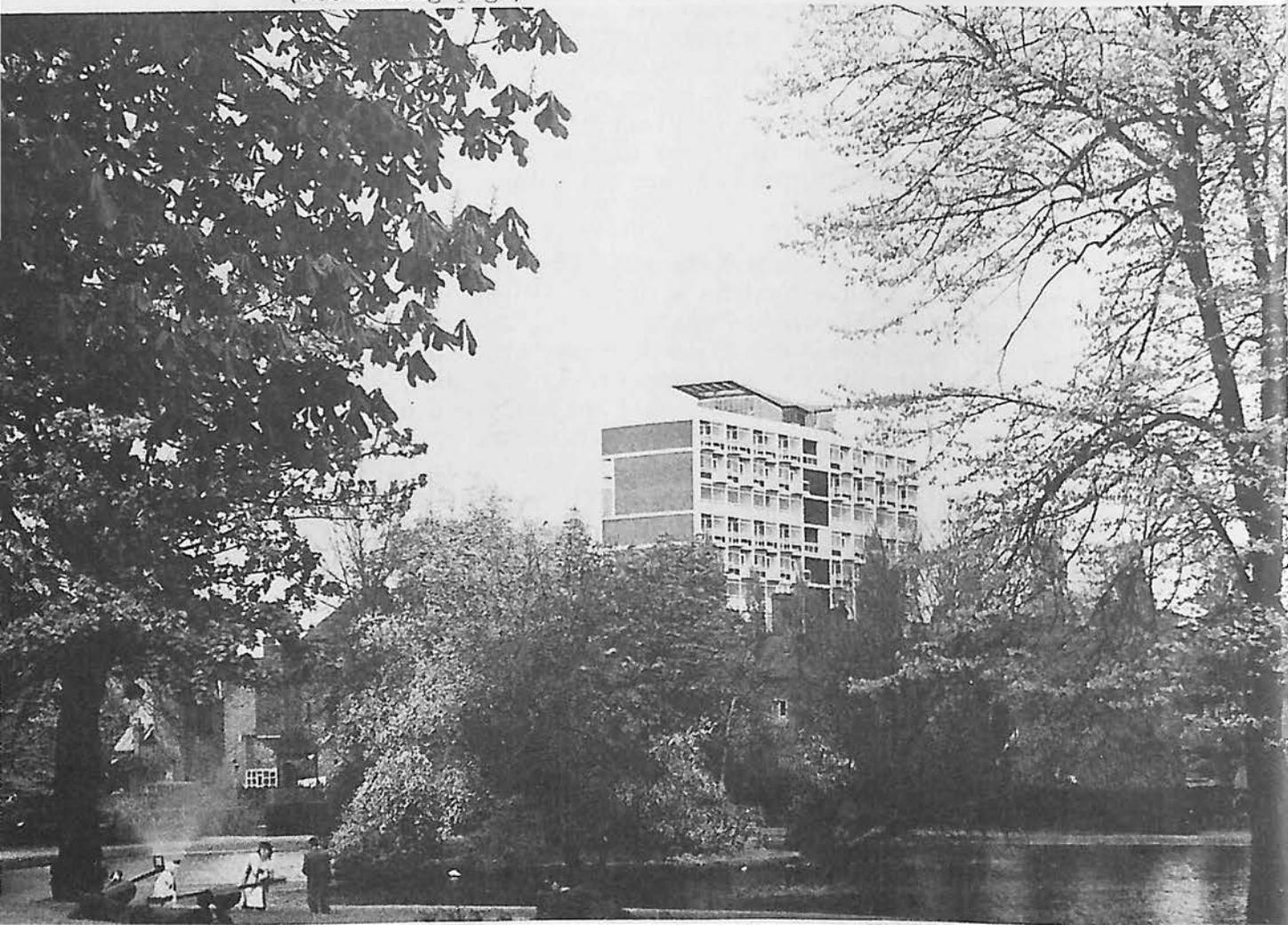


View of the City Centre from Hillfields showing the Ring Road, the Coventry Baths, the Lanchester Polytechnic and Halls of Residence, Coventry Cathedral, and new Council offices.

The New Hillfields Flats - The Planners' Dream

A view of the first block of flats to be built; taken in 1960 from the Swanswell Pool.

(See facing page)



The New Hillfields Flats - The reality of living in the area (1967)
The landscaping around these flats was not completed until 1974.





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View (April 1973) of the Ring Road and part of the City Centre from the middle of the Hillfields Comprehensive Development Area. In the foreground is the Colchester Street/Winchester Street area, the City's pilot General Improvement Area, before environmental improvement.

3.4 The contrast between conditions and opportunities in Hillfields and the rest of Coventry is striking, as the following table for 1971 shows:

Social indicators	Hillfields	Coventry	Mean for Gt. Britain
Proportion of private households without exclusive use of the three basic amenities: hot water, bath and wc.	52.5%	15.9%	20.2%
Proportion of private unfurnished tenants	31.3%	12.0%	17.5%
Proportion of private furnished tenants	10.3%	3.6%	5.1%
Unskilled male manual workers	21.0%	6.0%	8.3%
% of economically active males unemployed but seeking work	7.8%	4.2%	4.5%
% of population with both parents born in the New Commonwealth	31.0%	6.1%	3.6%
0 - 4 year olds	11.2%	8.9%	8.0%
% of population of retirement age	13.8%	12.7%	17.4%
Children from single parent families	14.6%	9.5%	-
Change in population (1961-71)	-10.8%	+8.8%	-

In 1971 nearly half the household heads in Hillfields had a net weekly income (earned or unearned) below £25, while only one quarter had a weekly net income of more than £35. 15% of the local population with an unknown number of dependants were claiming supplementary benefits.

3.5 Coventry itself does not stand out as particularly high in need or poor in resources (12) and although Hillfields is much less well-off than many other sectors of Coventry, it is not in all respects the worst-off area in the city and certainly not grossly underprivileged by national standards (13). The choice of Coventry for a national experiment into multiple-deprivation was criticised publicly at the time (14). However, the persistence of areas of inequality such as Hillfields even in a boom city like Coventry is a clear indication that such problems will not disappear simply as a result of overall economic growth.

Diagram 1

Differing Explanations of Urban Problems

Theoretical Model of Problem	Explanation of the Problem	Location of the Problem	Key Concept	Type of Change Aimed for	Method of Change
Culture of poverty	Problems arising from the internal pathology of deviant groups	In the internal dynamics of deviant groups	Poverty	Better adjusted and less deviant people	Social education and social work treatment of groups
Cycle of deprivation	Problems arising from individual psychological handicaps and inadequacies transmitted from one generation to the next	In the relationships between individuals, families and groups	Deprivation	More integrated self-supporting families	Compensatory social work, support and self-help
Institutional mal-functioning	Problems arising from failures of planning, management or administration	In the relationship between the "dis-advantaged" and the bureaucracy	Disadvantage	More total and co-ordinated approaches by the bureaucracy	Rational social planning
Maldistribution of resources and opportunities	Problems arising from an inequitable distribution of resources	Relationship between the under-privileged and the formal political machine	Under-privilege	Re-allocation of resources	Positive discrimination policies
Structural class conflict	Problems arising from the divisions necessary to maintain an economic system based on private profit	Relationship between the working class and the political and economic structure	Inequality	Re-distribution of power and control	Changes in political consciousness and organisation

4. DEVELOPING PERSPECTIVES

- 4.0 Trying to account for the concentration of overlapping inequalities in Hillfields in the midst of Coventry's affluence has led us through some fundamental shifts in thinking about the nature of urban problems and the kinds of action necessary to tackle them. We can now describe the development of those perspectives fairly clearly, but it is much harder to explain why and how they emerged. It would be misleading to claim that they are simply the logical result of conclusive evidence from our programmes. We have obviously been influenced by a variety of other factors, including our involvement with local residents' groups, inter-project work with other CDP teams, and perhaps above all by the ambiguities of our own position as local government employees, briefed and financed by central government, to act as agents for change on behalf of the disadvantaged.
- 4.1 Whatever the precise combination of influences may have been, the changes in the way we defined the problems and saw the solutions has been a key part of our experience in Coventry. One of the remarkable features of the whole "deprivation industry" is that differing underlying assumptions have not been made at all clear, and there has been a tendency to blanket over conflicting approaches. One of the signs of this is the way basic concepts (e.g. of deprivation, disadvantage, etc.) are used loosely and inter-changeably. We have found it useful for our own clarity to distinguish some of the differing explanations of urban problems along the lines of diagram 1. This is obviously a crude typology as the categories are not logically consistent or exclusive. However, it has proved a useful framework for disentangling some of the basic assumptions which we seem to have made about the problems at different stages. This has more than academic importance as underlying assumptions about the nature of problems clearly influence the strategies adopted.
- 4.2 Diagram 2 is another rough framework we developed (15) to help distinguish different possible strategies. Again the categories are over-simplifications but they expose some important differences in approach to social change:

Diagram 2 Models of Social Change and Possible Strategies

Basic Assumptions Level	Consensus	Pluralism	Structural Conflict
National	SOCIAL PLANNING	NATIONAL LOBBY	NATIONAL PRESSURE
Local	ORGANISATIONAL AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT	LOCAL LOBBY	LOCAL PRESSURE
Grass-Roots	"TRADITIONAL" COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNITY ORGANISATION	COMMUNITY ACTION

- i) Consensus models of social change are based on the assumption that social problems are "malfunctions" which can be cured by adjustments and re-arrangements within the existing operating systems. The problems are defined mainly in terms of failures of co-ordination and communication, and the focus of change is thus on management and administration and the non-participant. The central tactic is debate.
- ii) Pluralist models of social change are based on the assumption that social problems arise from "imbalances" in the democratic and bureaucratic systems. The problems are defined mainly in terms of failures of participation and representation of certain interests in the political process, and the focus of change is thus on politicians, policy-makers and the disenfranchised. The central tactic is bargaining and negotiation.
- iii) Structural Class Conflict models of social change are based on the assumption that social problems arise from a fundamental conflict of interests between groups or classes in society. The problems are defined mainly in terms of inequalities in the distribution of power and the focus of change is thus on the centres of organised power (both private and public). The main tactic is organisation and raising levels of consciousness.

4.3 In the following sections we will try to trace the development of our perspectives through three main phases of work we have undertaken.

1970 and 1971: Exploration of immediate needs within the neighbourhood and a search for remedies to specific local problems identified by residents, first by means of self-help and community action at the neighbourhood level, and second by feeding back these problems to the relevant decision-making bodies in local and central government.

1971 onwards: Analysis of the sources of these problems and the setting up of programmes designed to modify the processes within key government agencies which sustain and reinforce the processes of disadvantage at the local level.

1973 onwards: Assessment of the effectiveness of these programmes in tackling the underlying problems of the Project area, and attempts to understand its overall position and function in relation to the political economy of the city; at the same time working with residents' groups around problems of income and housing, in a joint attempt to learn more about the nature and sources of their problems, through collective action and reflection on that action.

- 4.4 The reality has not been as neat as the above classification suggests of course. The phases of work have overlapped with each other to a considerable extent. Programmes have started at different times and so have reached different stages of development. Some of the earlier programmes have been followed through although they no longer completely reflect our current perspectives and the recent work is inevitably more tentative than the longer-standing. In trying to illustrate an overall theme we are aware of the danger of de-valuing earlier approaches and of over-simplifying the complexities of the actual experience. In spite of the risks, however, we have decided not to try to give a balanced account of each programme here, but to select material to develop our argument as clearly as possible. (A list of the work undertaken in each phase is contained in an appendix, and a synopsis of findings from the main programme is in the accompanying Background Working Papers.)



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Living on a building site: Cleared land, isolated rows of houses, unfinished flats - the half completed environment which has been part of everyday life for Hillfields residents over the past 25 years.

5. PHASE 1 - CHANGE THROUGH BETTER COMMUNICATION ?

5.0 In common with the perspectives on social problems dominant among liberal administrators in this country at the time, it was presumed by the sponsors of CDP that the problems of deprivation in Hillfields and other similar areas arose from a cycle of personal deprivation, a breakdown in the patterns of local community life, and from the unresponsiveness and inaccessibility of the personal support services (16). It was presumed that the solutions would be found in:

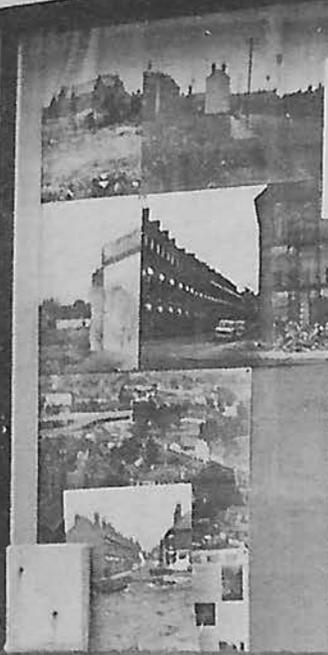
- greater co-ordination of these services at the field level
- the mobilisation of self-help and mutual aid "even among those who experience most difficulty in standing on their own feet"
- and in better communication between these people and local officials

Whilst expressing reservations early on (17) about the validity of these sorts of assumptions, the activities that we undertook during phase 1 of the project were clearly strongly influenced by them. These activities, categorised according to the original Home Office objectives for CDP, are briefly described in Appendix 1.

5.1 From this list of activities it can be seen that our action strategy in phase 1 was based on a simple "participation" model of change involving dialogue (better communication and feedback) between local residents and officials, and consumer representation on local service institutions. The aim was to gain greater influence for disadvantaged groups on policy-making and to develop towards structures which would guarantee them a constitutional right at the key decision-making tables. A number of small-scale initiatives in consumer participation and resident control of resources were attempted (18). The results of these were two-fold: first to encourage slightly more direct communication between some residents and the local authority, with an increase in the flow of information; second to supplement to a small degree the provision of "compensatory" community facilities and to make these more relevant and acceptable to the needs of the vulnerable (e.g. adventure playground, pre-school groups, services for old people) and the level of indigenous community care.

5.2 However, simple "participation" and better feedback about the effects of policies on the local population did not prove successful in bringing about change in the two areas identified by residents and fieldworkers alike as being of crucial importance: namely, housing conditions and the impact of redevelopment; and low income and the failings of the income maintenance system. For example, in the redevelopment field, both local residents and the CDP Team made the Local Authority very well aware of local feelings about the harmful consequences of leaving empty property un-boarded up. In spite of meetings, lengthy reports by CDP and articles in the Hillfields Voice nothing was done about the problem until a group of residents took direct action (19). In the income maintenance field, the experience of the Information and Opinion Centre was that what was needed to deliver the goods for the consumers was not feed-back or better communication but advocacy.

HILLFIELDS INFORMATION & OPINION CENTRE



THE HILLFIELDS INFORMATION & OPINION CENTRE is a project of the Hillfields Community Association. It is a place where you can get information and express your views on the future of Hillfields. We are interested in your views on the future of Hillfields and we would like to hear from you. We will be holding regular meetings and you are invited to attend. We will be holding a public meeting on the 15th of the month and we would like you to attend. We will be holding a public meeting on the 15th of the month and we would like you to attend.

COUNSELLING ON CALL

For 10 years we have had the pleasure of offering counselling services to the residents of Hillfields. We have a team of experienced counsellors who are available to help you with your problems. We offer a free service and we are available to you on a confidential basis. We offer a free service and we are available to you on a confidential basis.

HILLFIELDS NURSERY CENTRE

For 10 years we have had the pleasure of offering counselling services to the residents of Hillfields. We have a team of experienced counsellors who are available to help you with your problems. We offer a free service and we are available to you on a confidential basis. We offer a free service and we are available to you on a confidential basis.

EASE

BOOKS & BOOKS

HOW IS YOUR MONEY BEING SPENT? ARE THE TERMS WHAT YOU WANT?

MINUTES OF ALL CHANGING MEETINGS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION HERE

ARE YOU GETTING YOUR RIGHTS?

YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN:

- Trade Union Advice
- Consumer Advice
- Employment Advice
- Financial Advice
- Health and Safety Advice
- Free Advice 24/7
- Contribution your membership to Hillfields

ANTI-RACISM

The Project began from this office but after a year's work, the management and control of the Centre were handed over to local residents.

- 5.3 Moreover, a proposal to institutionalise the "dialogue" between residents and the Local Authority on a regular basis, through the setting up of a Community Forum (although approved in principle by councillors and chief officers on a number of occasions over two full years of negotiation) was never actually implemented as a result of protracted non-decision making (20).

Conclusions About the Nature of the Problems of Hillfields

- 5.4 The conclusions we drew from our ongoing analysis of the origins of the problems of Hillfields during phase 1 and from our analysis of the impact of our action strategies were as follows:

- i) The thing which distinguished Hillfields most clearly from the rest of the city - namely the lengthy assault of stop-go redevelopment - had nothing to do with the local residents at all. In terms of physical environment, this had resulted in what we came to call "a chain of dereliction": beginning with planning blight and subsequent lack of investment in housing stock over a wide area both in and surrounding the CDA, and ending with large rubble strewn sites and empty unboarded up houses. In social terms, the effect of the decline of the physical environment had been to attract the deviant from outside the area - the prostitutes and vagrants - to depress the ordinary residents and afflict them with uncertainty and to encourage the better-off or those with fewer ties to the area to move out. Citizens of other areas meantime had begun to label Hillfields as an insalubrious area and its inhabitants as problem people - an image reinforced by local press reports about vice and crime in Hillfields - reports which in time attracted further customers for the prostitutes and further complaints to the police.
- ii) In spite of its reputation, Hillfields did not have any abnormal share of deviant, apathetic or "inadequate" families (21). The most obvious problems experienced in the area were very low incomes, with substantial dependence on supplementary benefits, very poor housing and insecurity about the future of the neighbourhood. The area had much higher than average proportions of people in the lower socio-economic groups and from different racial backgrounds. Large sections of the area had also been subjected to major planning intervention since the war. The stresses in the neighbourhood thus affected not just a small deviant or inadequate minority but large sections of the population as a whole. Even where there were symptoms of stress and breakdown these were often directly attributable to the pressures of living in poor housing or on inadequate incomes.



Hillfields Nursery Centre.
The first combined day nursery and nursery school in the country.
Local residents are on its management committee.

- iii) There was no evidence that the problems of the area were attributable to any obvious deterioration in its patterns of community involvement or care (though these patterns had been fragmented in the new flats and in some of the surrounding streets from which old-established residents had moved in the face of blight and dereliction). On the contrary, we were struck by the strength of the informal support systems still existing and those newly developed by the Asian immigrants. These were called into operation particularly during the massive upheavals of clearance and redevelopment. "Apathy" in matters like voting and local elections did not necessarily imply a lack of interest in political questions or the problems experienced by the area's residents. It was rather a reflection of the fact that to many residents it did not seem to make much difference one way or the other, whether or not, or for whom, one voted.
- iv) Few of the problems (except redevelopment) identified by residents, fieldworkers, or ourselves (22) were different in kind from those experienced by large sections of the working-class in other parts of the city, or indeed the country as a whole. They had a particular burden for the Hillfields population because of their combination and concentration. Hillfields clearly could not be treated as an isolated area with peculiar internal problems. Instead it had to be seen as a microcosm of processes which are city-wide and even nation-wide in origin.

Conclusions About Our Action Strategy

5.5 Better "communication" between local residents and local decision makers seemed unlikely by itself to bring about the sort of changes needed to significantly reduce the inequalities experienced by the residents of Hillfields because:

- i) We found no evidence that simple feedback to the policy makers about the effects of their actions or non-actions would result in significant changes of policy. This was most obvious when any redistribution of scarce resources was involved.
- ii) Formal structures to receive feedback (e.g. through agreed participation arrangements) were only likely to be instituted in respect of decision-making institutions with little power to influence the overall distribution of large-scale resources (e.g. play centres). Even in these instances the traditional decision-makers will retain the ultimate control (23).



The beginning of the Hillfields Carnival procession
Summer 1971





The Arthur Street Adventure Playground, 1972.

iii) Residents who involved themselves in this sort of dialogue/participation were likely to have their attention diverted from more fundamental issues since the sort of dialogue situations acceptable to those in authority focus on immediate symptoms rather than underlying causes. Such symptoms (e.g. lack of play provision) are relatively marginal to the underlying forms of disadvantage (low incomes, poor housing) experienced by local residents as are the sorts of solutions available (e.g. adventure playgrounds).

iv) The simple "participation" or "dialogue" model represented an over-simple view of the politics of decision-making in the city.

5.6 Although many of the problems in Hillfields had their roots in the political and economic structure and in central government policy, we assumed that many of these wider pressures were mediated at the local level through government institutions, which either counteracted and compensated for the underlying inequalities or reinforced and perpetuated them. This led us to shift the focus of our study and action away from the neighbourhood as the main source of the problems and the main target of change, and on to the agencies which allocate public resources or provide services at the local level.

5.7 This decision was also influenced by our belief that the official position of CDP gave us a unique opportunity to study these institutions and to develop strategies to influence them from the inside, but reduced our potential in working directly with those experiencing the failing of local and central government institutions in meeting their needs.

6. PHASE 2 - INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FROM WITHIN ?

- 6.0 We defined our aim in this phase of work as "to analyse and attempt to modify those processes within government agencies which sustain and reinforce disadvantage at the local level". Our analysis of the overall dynamics of Hillfields as a spatial concentration of urban inequalities was still very rudimentary at this stage. However, the issues which residents, fieldworkers and our own research had identified during the first phase, allowed us to highlight some key components of the problem for further exploration. On this basis eight main programmes of research and action were set in motion during 1971 and 1972 (see Appendix II).
- 6.1 The strategies we attempted during this phase included the following range:
- i) Funding joint programmes between CDP and existing statutory agencies to develop new forms of "good practice". The main examples in this category are the Community Education Programme and the Decentralised Innovatory Neighbourhood Team (DINT). It was possible to negotiate joint programmes in the fields of education and social services because national reports like Plowden and Seeborn had already tabled the need for new responses to urban inequality in these services. Our aim was that the local test-bed situations would be assessed by the local authority and central government for more general application.
 - ii) The commissioning of outside consultants to introduce new perspectives and incentives for changes in particular fields. This strategy was attempted in fields where the existence or nature of the problem we were concerned about was not necessarily accepted by the agencies responsible. CDP offered to fund the consultancy on a 100% basis, and the only commitment asked of the agencies in question at that stage was to confirm that they saw this as an important problem area and to make staff time available to explore its dimensions with the consultants. Our aim was to introduce new definitions of key problems onto the policy-making agendas of the controlling institutions. The main examples in this category are the Institute for Operational Research study of area improvement policies for the inner city and the Grubb Institute consultancy on the transition from school-life to work-life.
 - iii) Carrying out action research studies ourselves into particular problem areas (e.g. knowledge of rights and extent of unmet need in relation to supplementary benefits) or into the needs of particular client groups (e.g. the elderly). The aim in each case was to document particular problems for the attention of those responsible for the administration of services and to make recommendations as to policy.

iv) In broader fields which affect the policy-making of the local authority as a whole (e.g. urban renewal and policy for priority areas in general) or which involve a radical re-interpretation of the problem, we have tried to bring forward evidence and open up debate about policy. Sometimes this has been through setting up special channels (e.g. inter-agency steering committee for action-survey on the needs of the elderly). Sometimes it has involved opening up new avenues. As a first stage we have sometimes tried informal seminars with councillors, chief officers and civil servants (e.g. on the geographical organisation of the corporate management system for priority areas, and urban renewal and area improvement policies for the inner-city). We have then followed such seminars by discussing draft papers with particular departments, and trying to establish a constituency of support within the local authority, before bringing specific proposals forward to the relevant committee or department (e.g. proposals for a co-ordinated community planning approach to urban renewal; for a community development task force within the corporate management system; and, earlier, for the community forum).

6.2 All these strategies for institutional change promoted (indeed commissioned) from the "inside" could be described as forms of "social planning" (24). They assumed that changes in policy and practice could be brought about by the documentation of evidence about needs and problems (relying heavily on the evidence provided by local people); well-reasoned debate about alternative solutions; and small-scale demonstration projects as pilots for wider developments in government. These assumptions were all implicit in the original description of CDP as "a radical experiment in community development involving local and central government, voluntary agencies and the universities in a concerted search for better solutions to the problem of deprivation than those we now possess". In the following section, our experience in adopting such an approach in each of our areas of work is briefly described.

Conclusions from Income Maintenance and Welfare Rights Work

6.3 Our research studies and issues taken up through our connection with the Hillfields Information Centre resulted in a number of discussions with officials at different levels from the DHSS. It was accepted in general terms, that the problems experienced by callers at the Information Centre indicated failures in the supplementary benefit service to cater for particular needs. However, these failures were generally regarded as individual mistakes, unfortunate lapses in a system that was basically sound.

- 6.4 Our surveys (25) on the other hand indicated fairly conclusively that the problems picked up by the Information Centre were much more than isolated mistakes. We found a serious lack of knowledge of their rights among claimants and serious under-payment of available benefits both for pensioners and those below retirement age. We also found that claimants were highly vulnerable to administrative harassment and mistake due to their absolute dependence on supplementary benefit, their lack of rights, and their lack of knowledge of such rights as they possess (26).
- 6.5 These problems together with recommendations to improve the system have been documented and published and have resulted in discussions with officers of the DHSS at local, regional and national levels, and with a member of the Cabinet Office. We did not press internally for administrative reforms as strongly as we have done in other programmes because our preliminary discussions with officials, and the experience of national pressure groups like the Child Poverty Action Group led us quite early on to doubt the effectiveness of lobbying for change inside the supplementary benefits system. We concluded that we could be more help to claimants, and potential claimants of all means-tested benefits, in the short-term at least, by helping equip them to fight for their rights within the existing system. In the long term our aim was to make available the results of our research, and our analysis of the means-test system of income support (its relationship to low wages; its consequences in the "poverty trap"; its rôle in dividing the working-class) to organisations representing the victims and potential victims of the system (27).

Conclusions from the Decentralised Social Services Team Experiment

- 6.6 The aim of the decentralised innovatory neighbourhood team (DINT) could be summed up as decentralisation for innovation (28). Decentralisation was aimed for in:

- physical terms;
- organisational terms.

Innovation was looked for in the form of:

- new ways of discovering need;
- new ways of meeting need.

- 6.7 Physical decentralisation to a shop-front office has taken place and appears to have led to a worthwhile increase in the accessibility of the service (although staff pressures still limit the hours the office is open to the public) and a generally greater involvement of the social workers in the life of the neighbourhood (both residents' activities and local agencies). Organisational decentralisation has been more slow and more difficult but the DINT experiment contributed to the Department's decision to alter its previous policy of decentralisation to area level units in favour of decentralisation down to smaller neighbourhood district units. There is still some uncertainty about the degree to which district teams have delegated powers to determine local policy in relation to the areas they serve.

This is part of a wider problem about the relationship of decentralised geographical services (e.g. education, housing) to a vertically organised management system. The problem is being tackled in Coventry in relation to planning, but corporate management still has no practical reflection in inter-agency activities at the neighbourhood level.

- 6.8 A number of small-scale initiatives have been attempted, both in discovering need and meeting need. However, the resource fund and the special "innovatory worker" have both proved to be something of a false luxury in a situation where the heaviest pressures come from practical crisis problems (failure to receive supplementary benefit entitlement; housing problems; need for nursery places or child-minding, etc.) and from statutory work. There are obviously many innovations in social work practice which could be attempted in this situation but the opportunity has been undermined by the massive turnover of field staff (83% among generic social workers in DINT between January 1973 and September 1974). This is almost certainly not peculiar to Hillfields or to Coventry but more a reflection of the state of the profession at the present time. As a response to this situation the Team Leader has recruited a number of local residents to work as part of a short-term intake team. They act as advocates on practical problems and also provide some continuity with the neighbourhood. All of these local workers had experience of voluntary work at the Hillfields Information Centre or with other local groups. Their employment has been one of the most successful innovations attempted by DINT. Their local knowledge and forthright approach to meeting their clients' needs have been greatly valued in the office. Local residents have also been recruited as "street wardens" for the isolated housebound elderly. They are paid a small wage from the resource fund and have proved highly effective as a means of meeting the needs of this client group.
- 6.9 Our overall conclusion, however, is that the social services team, even when augmented with extra staff and a small resources fund, has been in no position to compensate for the stresses, or even to adequately alleviate the symptoms, caused to families in Hillfields by low incomes, inadequate housing conditions, overcrowding and poor environment. These cumulative stresses are so pervasive and persistent that it is quite unrealistic to expect Social Services Departments to try to deal with their consequences in the community by providing individual props for the most vulnerable. The majority of the individual problems have common external causes. Unless this is recognised, resources spent in propping up victims of basic deficiencies in our housing and income maintenance system, and compensating them for their deprivation, will inevitably be swallowed up in a bottomless pit of need. Ultimately the solutions lie in an attack on low pay and redistribution through the tax and insurance systems and the provision of adequate housing to everyone as of right.

Conclusions from the Work on the Elderly

6.10 This programme originated as a joint enterprise with the Social Services Department, following concern expressed by a working party of fieldworkers convened by CDP in the exploratory phase. A 100% survey of all Hillfields pensioners, five depth studies, an evaluative follow-up study, and a comparative study have been completed, plus an action programme to tackle needs identified (29). Apart from some of the features specific to old age (e.g. disability, immobility, isolation) and low income, one of the major problems was found to be poor housing (58% lived in accommodation lacking at least one of the three basic amenities and 39% had none of these amenities). However, the follow-up study conducted two years later found that although the level of personal support services had risen significantly almost half the elderly still lacked at least one of the three basic housing amenities, and problems of repairs and redecorations which had been identified remained unresolved. Furthermore despite massive increases in the proportion of individuals receiving personal support services, the demand had increased rather than diminished and the volume of needs remained unchecked. The Team concluded that this was another bottomless pit situation where "more of the same" social services could never keep pace with the continuous and recurring needs. The alternatives to be considered had to be:

- i) attack on the most obvious external problems of income and housing;
- ii) attempts to prevent the onset of dependency and decline which seemed to be set in motion (for unskilled and semi-skilled workers at least) by the loss of money, social status and the opportunity to maintain reciprocal relationships, that come with retirement.

Conclusions from the Community Education Programme

6.11 The Community Education Programme (CEP) (30) has gone some way further in meeting our expectations about change. Unlike the DINT project which was developed within the Department's traditional line management structure, the Community Education Programme introduced a team of "advisers" on the staff of the Department's advisory service but working from the neighbourhood among 13 local schools, on an across-the-board basis.

- i) They seem to have been successful as catalysts, contributing to a raising of teacher morale, some "loosening up" of professional thinking and practice in the schools, more relevant and imaginative curricula, and greater interaction between pupils, teachers, parents and the local neighbourhood.
- ii) The programme has also contributed to a movement of political and professional thinking which has contributed to pressures for an increase in the per capita allowances to schools and has encouraged a new Education Committee policy of positive discrimination towards priority areas and a marginal shift in the Department's resources towards them.



The Decentralised Social Services District Office



Sidney Stringer School and Community College

- iii) Although the local authority's own input of new educational provision has been imaginative (nursery centre, play centre, comprehensive community school) the CEP has still delineated a number of unmet educational needs in the neighbourhood (notably for pre-school provision; language teaching for immigrant pupils and adults; and for informal adult education). However, the responses have been limited so far to developments in provision and changes in practice in the field, and have not resulted in any substantial changes in education policy at the city level or even in departmental organisational structure.
- iv) More importantly, an increasing body of national evidence confirms our long-standing doubts about whether these kinds of educational changes (valuable in themselves) can ever hope to counteract or compensate sufficiently for the inequalities which govern the life-chances and opportunities of children from areas like Hillfields.

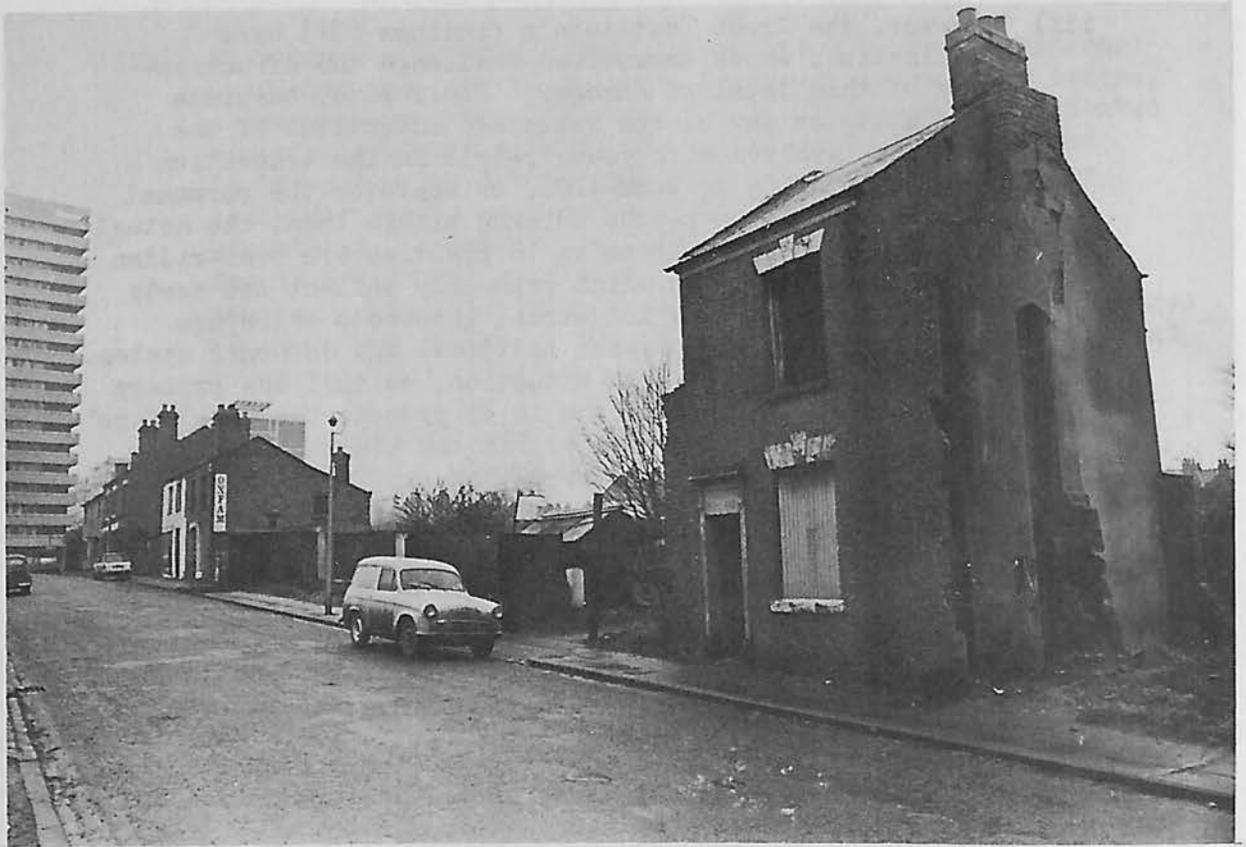
Conclusions from the Transition from School-Life to Work-Life Research

- 6.12 The usual limitation of commissioning outside consultants is that it depends upon winning support for a new definition of the problems, and developing a constituency to take up the proposals to serve, to test and apply them.
- i) In the programme concerned with the transition from school-life to work-life the Grubb Institute put a lot of their effort into this kind of preparation and follow through. The focus of the study was worked out in close consultation with the Home Office, the Central Youth Employment Executive, the Coventry Education Department, the Coventry Youth Employment Service (as it then was), the head teachers and staff of the two schools selected, the Engineering Employers Federation and the managers of the four firms selected. A steering committee involving a range of these interests was set up to maintain the involvement of all those affected by the policy implications of the study, and to take responsibility for following up the findings and recommendations. A full draft report was prepared in January 1973 and was discussed thoroughly with teachers, careers officers, employers, parents and young people, managers of local firms, principal officers in the Education and Youth Employment Services, and councillors on the Education and Youth Employment Committees.
 - ii) Much new thinking has been stimulated and important changes in assumption and practice are beginning to take place in Coventry and in the approach adopted by individual teachers and careers officers and in the vision of some members of the Education and Careers Services as a whole.

- iii) However, the Grubb Institute's findings (31) have implications which themselves challenge the effectiveness of this level of change. Their study suggests that whatever may be the expressed intentions of the agencies involved with young people in the transition from school-life to work-life, or whatever the personal commitments of the people working within them, the actual operations of those agencies in practice are over-ridden by "mercenary" values which primarily reflect the needs of the commercial and industrial interests which are dominant within our present political and economic system. To regain control of this situation, so that the primary effect of state institutions is to promote the "well-fare" of young people developing within the adult community clearly demands something more than simply professional, managerial or organisational re-arrangements.

Conclusions from the Housing and the Environment Programme

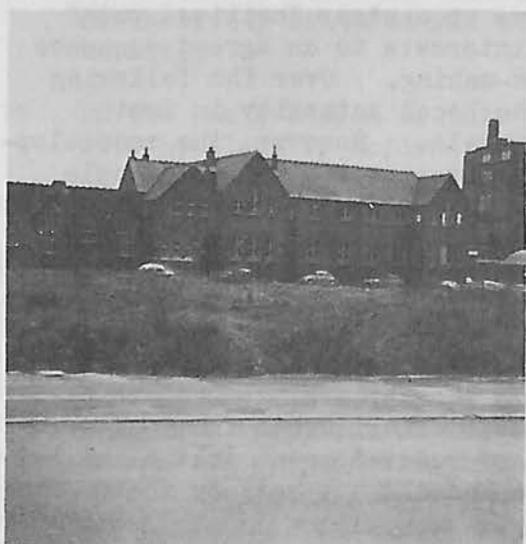
- 6.13 i) The most pressing problems residents brought to our attention in the first phase were all symptoms arising from the physical redevelopment of Hillfields (e.g. boarding-up of derelict property, uncertainty of information, costs of upheaval). We convened an inter-departmental working party of fieldworkers to tackle some of the most immediate problems (e.g. rubbish clearance) and then documented the issues more fully for a co-ordinating group of principal officers from central and local government departments (32). We made a number of proposals for a more "total approach" to the redevelopment process, the key one being the appointment of an overall co-ordinator of operations to be based in the neighbourhood and to be given executive powers to co-ordinate the processes of compulsory purchase, rehousing and demolition, and to maintain a flow of accurate information to all residents. These proposals were rejected by local authority officials as being unnecessary in Coventry given the relatively small scale of the clearance programme.
- ii) Our evidence about the repercussions of the redevelopment process led us to advocate that lessons should be learned from the problems identified in Hillfields and that an integrated "community planning" approach should be attempted in the adjoining Eagle Street Comprehensive Development Area. Our proposals were based upon the principle that where a public authority takes a decision to make a fundamental intervention in people's lives the people affected have certain basic rights: to information, participation and choice in relation to re-location and rehousing. In July 1972 we submitted a detailed report to a working group within the corporate management system (33). We suggested an inter-departmental task group working to a sub-committee with delegated authority to prepare a plan in consultation with residents, local interest groups, councillors and fieldworkers.



Derelict, unsecured houses in Hillfields, 1970.



The Effects of Stop-Go Redevelopment



Southfields School, Hillfields 1975. Front and rear views. Outworn, cramped buildings surrounded by rubble strewn cleared land. The surrounding houses were demolished to make way for new school buildings and playing fields. Finance to provide these is now not available as a result of central government cut-backs.



Hillfields 1975
Small blocks of occupied houses next to derelict land and surrounded by waste land.

The emphasis in our proposals was on maintaining an adequate flow of information between the Council and local people throughout the whole redevelopment process. This was to be achieved by drawing up a clear "critical path" committing all the various interests to an agreed sequence of consultation and decision-making. Over the following months at separate stages the Local Authority in fact adopted a number of our proposals. However, the redevelopment exercise has still been experienced by local people as a hostile intervention, cutting across their own interests. This is partly because without an agreed framework within which to negotiate the common and the conflicting interests involved, the Council has inevitably placed itself in the position of "Them" against "Us". It was not easy, at that stage at least, to conceive of the alternatives, but the fact remains that councillors who appeared to want to plan for the best interests of their constituents found themselves managing a programme of redevelopment that alienated them from those constituents and did not satisfy their interests.

- iii) Some further clues came from the CDP Housing and Environment Programme Discussion Papers (unpublished) and the Institute for Operational Research Study of Area Improvement Policies for the Inner City commissioned by CDP (34). These pointed out the complexity and uncertainty of any attempt to intervene in the housing situation of the older working class areas, because of the large range of factors which lie outside the control of the public sector altogether: mortgage policies and interest rates, the state of the private building industry locally, the conflicting interests and responses of landlords, owner-occupiers and tenants and the involvement of speculators in investment property. The IOR report argued that the existence in Coventry of both a corporate management system and a CDP provided special opportunities for the development of a long term improvement strategy as a means of community development, and for experiment with new methods of communication and local community involvement. For a variety of reasons it proved impossible to mobilise any effective constituency of support behind these proposals either among officers, councillors or central government departments. Ironically, this may have been partly a reflection of the accuracy of the CDP analysis - that the Local Authority's area improvement policies could not hope to match the scale or nature of the need because of a basic lack of sufficient powers and resources to confront the external forces governing the housing market in the inner-city.

Conclusions from Social Priority Planning Programme

- 6.14 From the beginning of the Project in 1970 the CDP was given generous access to the corporate planning and management system, which was just being established at that time. We were invited to attend Chief Officers' meetings concerned not only with CDP items, but also with a wide range of issues relating to urban disadvantage and public participation. We were also involved at middle-management level, in a number of inter-departmental working groups, concerned with the

preparation of material for the City's Structure Plan and the City Policy Plan. It is ironical but perhaps significant that the one area of the management system from which we were continuously and actively excluded was the programme area team concerned with housing.

- 6.15 In the early stages of this programme we were largely preoccupied with problems of information flow and organisational machinery. Although the pattern of political representation in government is based on small geographical areas (wards and constituencies), the structure of local authority committees and departments is based on broad city-wide functions (e.g. education, housing). We noted that this could place constituents and their elected representatives at a disadvantage in relation to technical advisers, because it is officers who are potentially in a stronger position to build up information and proposals about city-wide issues. The administration's treatment of the population as a uniform whole could generalise over conflicting sectional interests (either of wards or of classes of people), and mean that issues are effectively depoliticized, and translated into technical or managerial problems. We criticised corporate management systems for being largely concerned with "top-down" processes which weight decision-making over heavily towards the long-term, the large-scale and the broad-grain. In seminars and discussion papers with elected members and chief officers we floated a number of suggestions for counter-balancing this in Coventry with a "bottom-up" process, rooted in the micro-politics of small areas. However, two specific proposals we put forward - for a Community Forum at the local level, and for a community development task force at the central policy level - were never implemented in spite of long drawn out negotiations. Although each was supported actively by some officers and councillors both proposals appeared to become a shuttlecock between different interest-groups within the Corporation. The batting of the idea to and fro from department to department, committee to committee was probably because of uncertainty about how these new initiatives would challenge the existing rules and patterns of the game. CDP were to a large extent reduced to being impotent bystanders lacking any important means of leverage other than ideas.
- 6.16 Our involvement in the corporate management system also alerted us to the extent to which the local authority's decisions were influenced by external interests and pressures operating largely outside local democratic control:
- i) The pilot GIA in Hillfields provided some small scale examples of this in the extent to which the local authority's response to the collective wishes of the residents in the GIA was delayed or constrained by the conflicting interests of a small local subsidiary of Chrysler UK which said it needed turning space for its lorries, and by a large hotel group which wanted land nearby for a staff hostel.



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The pilot GIA. Houses within the Hillfields CDA saved from demolition. Colchester Street is now closed to traffic. However, Hills Plastics, a subsidiary of Chrysler UK (at the end of the street) used this street to obtain lorry access to their factory and were a source of objection and delay in carrying out the scheme.

ii) More substantially we became aware of the extent to which the overall pattern of allocation of resources in the city over the last 50 years has been strongly influenced:

- a) by the constraints and uncertainties imposed by central government and the wider money markets upon the overall level and nature of capital investment possible in Coventry;
- b) by the pressures for resources arising from the requirements of the expanding car and engineering industries:
 - directly in terms of basic infrastructure for factory production and distribution (roads, sewerage, water, fire services, refuse collection and, pre-1948, electricity and gas); and
 - indirectly in the shape of new housing, schools and community facilities to cater for the rapid recruitment of labour to the city which was necessary to take advantage of the opportunities for volume production;
- c) by the scale of war-time bomb devastation which demanded a massive programme of reconstruction.

6.17 We also came to realise the extent to which the administrative systems in Coventry (and this applies to corporate management in local government generally) had developed largely in response to these external pressures and as a means of handling complex investment decisions. In its methods or organisation, its management techniques and in its administrative philosophy, corporate management seems to be dominated by business assumptions (35).

- i) The forms of organisation which are prevalent in corporate management tend to centralise and unify the officer structure in relation to elected members, and to shift the balance of power and prestige even further towards managerial and technical experts (for whom local government now provides a lucrative career ladder) and away from politicians - except those who subscribe to managerial values.
- ii) The management techniques which have most commonly been introduced as part of corporate management (programme budgeting and operational research) were both originally developed as tools for management in private industry and in the defence industry. They are relevant as methods of co-ordinating long range plans and financial programmes, and for monitoring the production of the local authority's goods and services, and for controlling the budget. It is less easy to see their relevance to the development of political strategy.

- iii) The philosophy of corporate management implies a model of local government as a large financial corporation, to be managed by accountants and planners, with the politicians representing the shareholders, and functioning as an honorary Board of Directors, ratifying the forward plans and broad investment policy.

Conclusions from Phase 2

- 6.18 In some respects the success or failure of these attempts to bring about institutional change "from within" may be partly a record of our own success or failure as a team. However, compared with many other social experiments our opportunities for doing so were enviable. As CDP is not primarily an executive agency, but a catalyst of change in other organisations, its capacity for promoting change depends upon gaining sponsorship from those with executive power in any particular field. Its leverage to stimulate change from within depends upon:
- i) the persuasiveness or otherwise of its analysis of needs and problems, with the backing of research from local universities;
 - ii) the financial incentives arising from its social action budget (about £50,000 p.a.) and the possibility of further calls upon the Urban Programme (attracting 75% grant-aid);
 - iii) any influence arising from its links with the Community Programmes Department of the Home Office, and through that with other central government services.
 - iv) the commitments involved in taking part in "a radical experiment in community development involving local and central government, voluntary agencies and the universities in a concerted search for better solutions to the problem of deprivation than those we now possess".
- 6.19 Nevertheless, it is clear from preceding paragraphs that the leverage which we were able to bring to bear, in practice, and the constituencies of support which we were able to find or to create, inside the administration were insufficient to bring about even relatively minor organisational changes. Chief officers have sometimes argued that CDP has had greater (though slower) influence than we recognise, and that a number of important changes in thinking and practice are now taking place (e.g. the development of a small area perspective within the management system, and in the approach to urban renewal). It is probable that some of the "resistances" to change that we have described are reflections simply of the "dynamic conservatism" characteristic of all large bureaucracies. However, the points at which such structures are found to be malleable, and the points at which they are found to be rigid reveal something about how open to innovation the present administrative system may be and where more radical changes are necessary (36).

- 6.20 The main fields in which we have seen some responses are those of education and social services and there our joint programmes have contributed to some new thinking and to redirection or redeployment of staff in the field. However, even in these cases the changes have been largely limited to changes in practice at the field-level, rather than in the central policy making structures. This may be partly because "people-processing" agencies like education and social services in some ways stand to gain (in the short-term at least) in the resources (e.g. professional manpower) allocated to them as a result of evidence of unmet need. On the other hand there is likely to be much more resistance to change in resource allocating agencies like planning and housing departments. Because they are rationing much scarcer and higher-valued resources (land and housing) evidence about unmet need is likely to create pressures for redistribution within existing priorities, rather than for any increase in the absolute level of resources available to them.
- 6.21 In many fields, CDP's evidence and arguments about needs and problems were often accepted in principle by both politicians and administrators; but (in spite of the central government description of CDP as a pilot project for bigger developments later) we were rarely able in practice either to deliver, or to channel, the scale of extra resources which our analysis implied, or to mobilize sufficient support (from our position within the administration) for redistribution within existing budgets. In these circumstances it was all too easy for CDP to become institutionalized as "the private conscience of the Corporation" providing an instant humanitarian commentary at every stage of decision-making, but impotent to influence the actual outcome on the ground.
- 6.22 It is important to make it clear that in drawing conclusions about the limits and effectiveness of institutional change from within, we are not suggesting that the problems arise primarily from failures of planning, management or administration. We readily acknowledge the technical sophistication and competence within Coventry Corporation. The Corporation has a well-deserved reputation for successfully tackling many of the major problems facing cities since the war: reconstruction of the city centre, traffic-free shopping precincts, new housing estates, and an inner-ring road system. Our experience of working within the management system therefore led us to question why these undoubted skills have not been as effective in solving the Hillfields problem. There has been no shortage of sophisticated plans for the comprehensive physical renewal of the area. It has featured as one of the Council's top priorities for action in every major policy plan since the war. Yet, although some physical redevelopment has taken place, and considerable public money been invested, the whole operation has been protracted over a quarter of a century, and the outcome has not only been piecemeal in physical terms, but ineffective in stemming the social and economic decline of the area.

- 6.23 During the course of our work within phase 2 we had become increasingly aware of the extent to which the fortunes of an area like Hillfields are influenced by forces operating largely outside local democratic control (changing land-values, interest rates in the money markets, the operations of private landlords and speculators, the pattern of central government expenditure and the employment and investment policies of industry). To develop a better analysis and strategy for Hillfields we needed not only to analyse the effect of these forces in detail, but to understand better the relationships between such forces and the local authority, and also to test out what could be done at the local level to bring the situation more directly under the control of local people and their representatives.

7. PHASE 3 - TOWARDS A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HILLFIELDS AND FRESH POLITICAL INITIATIVES

- 7.0 By the beginning of 1973 we had decided that in order to understand better why Hillfields had become run-down and under-developed in a prosperous and progressive city; and in order to explore more fully where one could expect to find hopeful initiatives to break the apparent deadlock of the situation; we needed, in the final phase of the Project:
- i) to investigate more fully the political economy of Coventry in general, and of Hillfields and the poorer working-class areas in particular;
 - ii) to test out what potential for change could be mobilized by organised groups of residents taking initiatives to tackle their own problems when supported with clear information about their situation and serviced by "hard" technical skills.
- 7.1 After a number of attempts to get help with the first category of work, we eventually commissioned a small team of economists and sociologists from Warwick University to begin an analysis of:
- i) The patterns of private industrial investment (particularly capital concentration and technological change) in the four main industries in Coventry and their consequences for different sections of the work force (particularly the unskilled, semi-skilled, working women, and the immigrant) and hence for different geographical areas of the city.
 - ii) The pressures and constraints imposed by central government, private industry and the wider money markets upon the overall level and pattern of investment (particularly the capital programme) in Coventry.

Part of this work was to be carried out in collaboration with the City Treasurer's Department and with the Department of Architecture and Planning. The programme did not get under-way until mid-1974, and a variety of problems prevented us getting access to all the necessary data. This means that our conclusions in this field have to remain fairly tentative at this stage. However, the change in perspective that even preliminary work has opened up for us suggests the value of painting a bold canvas here, even though the detail may still be sketchy, or inaccurate, in places. This section will differ in kind from those about Phases 1 and 2, in that it will aim to move towards some kind of synthesis and overview. This will take a little space to develop, and because its implications are long-term, it will not be easy to give the kind of retrospective assessment attempted in the previous two sections.



Vernon Street, Hillfields (now demolished)
A good example of "top shops" where the ribbon weaving industry flourished.

Industry in Coventry and the Decline of Hillfields (37)

- 7.2 Our study suggests that the fortunes of Hillfields have been tied to the life cycle of two main products - its period of development in the mid 19th century was related to the rise and fall in the ribbon weaving industry while its under-development in the 20th century is related to the needs of the car industry. Both are aspects of exactly the same economic processes.
- 7.3 Hillfields was built between 1820 and 1860 as the city's first suburb and was not joined to the city centre until about 1850. It was known as New Town - a boom community of prosperous ribbon weavers. The ribbon trade fluctuated markedly mostly in response to the whims of European fashion. During times of prosperity the trade spread among the wives of colliers in the villages to the north and north-east of Coventry. Hillfields journeymen were cushioned from trade fluctuations as these villages would be given work mainly when the city could not handle the load and during a recession the village workers would be the first out of work.
- 7.4 During the 1840s and 1850s the ribbon factories in the city centre gradually converted to steam-power and Hillfields felt the pressure of competition through technological innovation. By the early 1850s factory weavers were earning slightly more than Hillfields journeymen and a drift of Hillfields journeymen to ribbon factories and to the watch trade began. In 1860 the protective tariff on foreign ribbons was removed and further competition came from the cotton industries in the north. The ribbon weaving trade slumped and the Hillfields boom town was hit particularly hard. However, the immediate effects of the ribbon weaving slump on the outlying areas were far greater. Their contracts were the first to be cancelled and the immediate depopulation of the weaving villages was much greater than for Coventry.
- 7.5 For the next 20 to 30 years Coventry as a whole was a depressed area and the population of the city fell considerably. Then during the 1880s and 1890s people began moving into Coventry and Hillfields again with the emergence of the new bicycle and sewing machine industries. The "manufacturers" of the bicycle and the sewing machine were at this stage little more than assemblers of components. However, the new markets for bicycles, then motor cycles and finally cars, created opportunities for middle-class entrepreneurs from outside the city to come to invest their capital and their engineering skills. The city teemed with men grouping and re-grouping to exploit the demand, but the ribbon-weavers of Hillfields had inappropriate skills for the new industries which were all based on engineering and metal working.
- 7.6 People who moved into Coventry after the 1880s moved to the newer suburbs if they could afford it. As public transport, bicycles and later, cars, allowed workers to live further from the factories Hillfields' central location no longer represented an attraction in itself. The wealthier people who worked in Coventry began to move to the outlying villages to the south. Furthermore, during the 1920s and 1930s new housing estates were built in suburbs close to the motor car factories.

- 7.7 Hillfields with its large stock of older and cheaper housing increasingly came, therefore, to attract the poorer, unskilled immigrants. Some of these and some of the native Hillfields population managed to increase their earnings to the point where they were able to move out of Hillfields to one of the more attractive newer suburbs. This was relatively easy during the 1940s and 1950s because of the tremendous post-war demand for labour in Coventry. Since then the highest paying jobs in the highest paying industries (cars and aircraft) have not expanded.
- 7.8 Hillfields has thus come to house a heavy concentration of the least well-paid sections of the labour force (the unskilled; semi-skilled; manual public service workers; coloured immigrants) side by side with a residue of the economically dependent (the sick, the unemployed, unsupported mothers and the elderly) who cannot afford to move to more expensive areas. The economic fortunes of Hillfields now depend upon the functions which these sections of the population perform within the present labour market in Coventry (which, as shown above, is heavily dominated by the motor and engineering industries) and on the way the non-productive members of the community are treated by the central and local state.

End of the Boom for the Car Industry ?

- 7.9 Coventry's boom this century has been bound up with the growth of the motor vehicles industry, just as Hillfields' was tied to the rise and fall of the ribbon weaving industry.
- 7.10 Our studies suggest that the peak period in the market for cars in the UK began in the early 1930s and (although interrupted by the war) lasted until the mid-1960s when new car registrations in the UK reached their peak. At the end of the war the backlog of demand for cars and the coincidence of the peak period in home demand with the absence of foreign competition in export markets, resulted in a long period of prosperity for UK car firms.
- 7.11 However, although car production has grown very rapidly since the war, short term fluctuations have always been great. Declines in production have become more severe and more prolonged. The UK has been steadily losing its share of the world market for cars, falling from over 50% in the early 1950s to 13% in 1970 and even lower since. Furthermore, UK producers' share of the home market has also fallen dramatically since the 1950s; over 25% of cars now bought in the UK are imported.
- 7.12 It appears that the growth in ownership of cars in the UK has now begun to decline and that the UK car industry is past the peak of its product-cycle. We would argue that this is not a temporary symptom of the oil crisis or world inflation but a predictable and "normal" phase of capitalist development. The product-cycle for cars in Coventry is following exactly the same logic as that described for ribbons in Hillfields - with similar consequences for firms, the labour force and the wider community.

Concentration and Centralisation of Capital

- 7.13 The main response by car firms to fluctuations in their product markets has been to increase their size, thereby reducing competition and also cutting costs through economies of scale and the introduction of labour-saving technology.
- 7.14 The UK car industry began with the setting up of the Daimler plant in Coventry in 1896. Between then and the early 1920s hundreds of small manufacturers entered the market. In 1920 alone 59 new car firms entered the market in Coventry but by 1931 there were only 11 separate firms left. By 1971 there were only two.
- 7.15 In the world context, UK car firms are still not concentrated and centralised enough to take advantage of the economies of scale possible with modern technology and organisation. Compared with the American and European giants, British Leyland is still not producing a sufficient volume of cars in each model to be viable. It is still a collection of fairly independently organised plants. Further concentration and rationalisation is likely to take place either through state intervention or within the context of the European Common Market.
- 7.16 Production in the car industry has been subject to violent short-term fluctuations in demand resulting in the need to cut production back quickly. The major car firms have achieved this by maintaining a multitude of subcontracting arrangements with smaller engineering firms. British car firms have traditionally purchased a higher proportion of parts and components from outside suppliers than have overseas firms (50% to 65% of the value of a British mass-produced car is bought from outside suppliers compared with 25% to 40% in Japan, Italy, West Germany, France and the USA). In a slump it is relatively costless for large firms to cut back on subcontracts.

What About the Workers ?

- 7.17 The pattern of the product-cycle for cars has had its consequences not just for the firms but also for the labour force and the wider community. In the early stages of development of a product, firms are likely to require highly skilled labour. As production becomes standardised and routinized, the skill content of jobs generally falls, but the degree of supervision and inspection rises. As automation proceeds the work-force may be split into skilled supervisors and unskilled machine minders.
- 7.18 In Coventry, the proportion of skilled manual workers in the labour force fell by 13.1% between 1931 and 1951 (compared with 1.7% in England and Wales). This drastic decline was balanced by a rise in the Coventry proportion of semi-skilled manual workers by 6.0% (compared with a fall of 3.0% in England and Wales), a rise in the proportion of clerical workers by 2.8% (3.5% in England and Wales) and a rise in the Coventry proportion of foremen, supervisors and inspectors by 3.7% (1.6% in England and Wales).

- 7.19 Although since the war the motor industry has expanded enormously the expansion has not been steady. Although Coventry's level of unemployment through the post-war period was well below the national average the rate of unemployment has in fact shown a cyclical pattern with 1956, 1958 and 1962/3 as well defined troughs; unemployment rose to high plateaux in both 1967 and 1971 without fully recovering.
- 7.20 Although the cyclical pattern in Coventry unemployment is relatively mild when compared with the overall country pattern, there are indicators that the stability from 1953 to 1967 in the unemployment figures have masked significant changes in the distribution of employment among different industries. It would seem that the short-term changes in demand for labour in the motor industry have resulted partly in fluctuations in the overall level of unemployment in the city and partly in shifts in employment between the motor industry, the construction industry and to a lesser extent the local authority.
- 7.21 Those workers who are thrown out of their regular employment into less well paying industries or into complete unemployment when the motor industry is experiencing a short-term slump are primarily manual workers and especially unskilled manual workers. This is reflected by the fact that in Coventry in 1971 the unemployment rate among unskilled workers was nearly three times higher than the overall level of unemployment (38).

Hillfields as a Reserve Tank of Labour

- 7.22 Hillfields is directly or indirectly related to the fortunes and behaviour of industry in the city in two main ways:
- i) 40% of the economically active in Hillfields are employed by the 15 largest firms in the city. All but two of these firms are involved in motor vehicle, vehicle component manufacture or machine tools. The proportion of Hillfields workers in these firms (40%) is less than the proportion for Coventry as a whole (54%). However, as a high proportion (41%) of the economically active in Hillfields are classified as unskilled or semi-skilled and as this represents the heaviest concentration in the city of those sections of the work-force (one-sixth of all Coventry unskilled male manual workers) it is likely that the area will be particularly responsive to fluctuations in the demand for such labour by the manufacturing industries.
 - ii) 12% of the economically active in Hillfields, compared with only 7% for Coventry as a whole, are employed by metal and engineering firms other than the 15 largest firms. The links between the smaller engineering firms and the large manufacturers are particularly close and strong in Coventry. Although many of these smaller firms also supply firms outside Coventry, they are closely tied to the fortunes of the major manufacturing firms in the city. The fortunes of Hillfields are thus closely tied up with the changing relationship between the larger firms and the smaller sub-contracting firms in Coventry.



An aerial view of Hillfields taken prior to redevelopment, showing Hills Plastics, a car components manufacturer which employs local people, and which is a subsidiary of Chrysler UK.

- 7.23 There is a general trend within manufacturing industry for the proportion of skilled technical and administrative staff to increase at the expense of the less skilled (39). This will be accentuated by the substitution of capital intensive for labour intensive processes. Manual workers and particularly unskilled manual workers are more at risk of unemployment during periods of general recession than other sections of the work-force. In October 1971, it was estimated that the national unemployment rate for unskilled men was 13.4% when the overall male unemployment rate was 5.2%. However, the differential was even more acute in the engineering industry in Coventry: in December 1971 the ratio of unemployed men to vacancies was 26 : 1 for skilled engineering workers, but 528 : 1 for labourers in engineering and allied trades (40).
- 7.24 Although unskilled workers are relatively expendable to engineering firms, it is essential to be able to re-employ such labour in great quantities very quickly when the market re-expands. It is therefore vital to the firm for such labour to be available in the location where the firm needs it (particularly in view of the short-term immobility of unskilled labour). Our hypothesis is that in Coventry, Hillfields provides that pool of unskilled labour.
- 7.25 The smaller engineering firms are at the mercy of the larger firms in a very similar way to the unskilled, since during a recession it is easier for a large producer to cut back on sub-contracting work than to lay-off its own work-force. Smaller firms are also generally less able to take advantage of expensive technological advances or modern organisational methods. Thus they are less efficient than larger firms and more likely at periods of competition or slump in the market to go out of business or to be taken over by larger firms. The first alternative means certain unemployment for the work-force; the second also often results in redundancies as take-overs by larger firms are usually accompanied by redundancies in the smaller firms being merged. Coventry's economic history has been one of continuous take-over and merger from the bicycle boom onwards. In addition to the three periods of merger in the car industry, there has been the BLMC mergers of the 50s and 60s which produced 14,000 redundancies; contraction of the aircraft industry during the 60s with a loss of 11,000 jobs; the GEC/AEI/English Electric mergers in 1967 and 1968, which created 1,650 redundancies; and finally the prospect of further redundancies in British Leyland following public control.
- 7.26 The profitability of Coventry's industries has depended upon maintaining a reservoir of labour to be siphoned off or into as the market expands or contracts. In Coventry, as in any growth area based around a single industry, there will be competition for labour with the specialised skills necessary. Thus firms will attempt to retain their skilled labour at difficult times and will cut back instead on their unskilled labour and on their sub-contractors. It is essential for industry to be able to take on such labour and such contracts quickly again when the market expands. The unskilled and semi-skilled workers of Hillfields provide a pool of low-paid labour which local firms hire and fire at will as they take

up opportunities for expansion or cushion themselves against cut-backs in demands. Its high proportion of workers in smaller engineering firms also provide the same kind of regulating valve for the larger firms.

- 7.27 Hillfields thus plays an active rôle in alleviating the difficulties of local firms as they adjust to the normal fluctuations of economic development.

The Consequences for the Public Sector

- 7.28 The boom in industry in Coventry has had mixed consequences, not just for the work force but for the local authority and the community as a whole. The rapid expansion of the car industry created heavy pressures both on the city's land and on its finances.
- 7.29 The klondyke growth of the motor and engineering industry in Coventry this century created a massive demand for labour in the city. This was recruited from the depressed areas of the British Isles and later of the New Commonwealth. The growth of the engineering industry was accelerated further by munitions production in both world wars and this created a further demand for labour. The population of the city almost doubled between 1901 and 1921 and again between 1921 and 1940. Between 1921 and 1937 it rose at a rate seven times that of the country as a whole.
- 7.30 This large-scale recruitment of labour put enormous pressure on the city's housing and basic services, particularly in the older areas like Greater Hillfields. Until sufficient new accommodation could be provided, central government had to help finance cottages and hostels near the new factories in the north of the city, but the main costs fell on the local authority. In 1927 it was estimated that 15,000 houses would be needed over the next 10 years if Coventry's supply of housing was to be adequate to cope with population expansion. In addition, it was estimated that 1,000 slum houses would have to be demolished before 1938, but by 1937 it was found that in fact the city was having to meet a demand for about 4,000 houses a year and the rate was still increasing.
- 7.31 Although the private sector could help to meet the urgent demand for housing, the burden of providing other basic services (roads, sewerage, water, gas, electricity, fire and refuse collection services) and community facilities (schools, transport, etc.) largely fell on the local authority.
- 7.32 Bomb damage during the war imposed massive further costs upon the city. With the loss of homes and the further expansion of the population expected after the war, the city had an immense problem of reconstruction. It was estimated that two out of every three properties had been affected and 8,500 houses had been destroyed or irreparably damaged. By 1951 there were still 13,600 on the Corporation's waiting list and further expansion of the city's population was expected with the continued growth of the engineering industry. The rapid growth in population and the scale of bomb devastation together confronted the local authority with impossible choices about priorities. The eventual pattern of investment was determined partly by the continued pressure for expansion from private industry, partly by the level of rate income, partly by the availability of central government grants for particular purposes, and partly by local political choice.

- 7.33 The raising of resources Of course the rateable value of the city had increased with the growth of population and employment but the demand for services outpaced the resources available. Furthermore, the resources available to meet these heavy costs had been seriously reduced by the de-rating of industrial property in the 1930s. During this period the better-off sections of the rate paying population increasingly moved out to the surrounding dormitory villages of Warwickshire (Kenilworth, Warwick, Leamington, Stratford) which had escaped the negative effects of the intrusion of industry. The less well-off working population left behind not only had to meet the high costs of their own needs and those of industry, but also the commuting needs (e.g. car parking, policing, etc.) of the managerial and professional classes getting their livelihood from the city but not contributing to its rates. Coventry's financial base was further weakened by the war time destruction of property. The rateable value of the city slumped to one third of its original figure before the blitz. In order to try to improve its rate-base Coventry asked the 1963 Local Government Boundary Commission to extend its boundaries into the surrounding commuter area. This was not successful. Although Coventry's rateable value increased with the new building development, this did not directly benefit the Council in cash terms, as increases are automatically deducted from the rate deficiency grant received from central government to bring resources up to the national average. In any case new capital building normally brings with it extra calls on supporting services, and therefore revenue costs. In Coventry in the 1960s the basis of rates increased at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ p.a., whereas local authority expenditure on services rose at 8% p.a.(41). In 1973 revaluation of the rates shifted the burden of costs carried within Coventry further on to domestic ratepayers and away from industry and commerce. The swing to the domestic sector in Coventry was 4% compared with the national average of 0.3% . The domestic multiplier for Coventry (2.9) was much higher than the national average (2.56). Even within the domestic sector the highest average increases in Coventry fell on the least desirable Council property compared with the most desirable private property (42).
- 7.34 Capital borrowing The massive job of reconstruction which faced the city after the war has meant that a high proportion of Coventry's fixed capital investment (compared with other local authorities of a similar size) has been concentrated in the post-war period. The sums to be borrowed have, therefore, been large and the interest rates higher. Interest rates on loans have increased significantly since 1945 and this has had a profound effect on the cost of the whole rebuilding operation. (It has been estimated that between 1945 and 1966 approximately £195 million, at 1966 building costs, was spent on reconstruction.)
- 7.35 In the 1950s the Conservative Government removed the protection of the Public Works Loan Board rates of interest on loans, which left local authorities little choice but to turn to the City of London finance market and the international money markets. This has meant that the City Council has had to borrow in the market at interest rates which are increasing continuously due to inflation. For example, in 1973-4 the rate of interest on the Consolidated Loans Fund rose from 7% to an estimated 8.13% costing the City Council an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ million in one year. Interest charges now account for

about one-fifth of the local authority's total expenditure each year. The net loan debt per head of population has increased seven-fold over the last 50 years (43). The fastest rate of increase was between 1926 and 1931 when it doubled.

7.36 The distribution of available resources Thus the framework for public investment in Coventry since the war has been set by:

- i) the pressures of need arising first from the rapid immigration into the city of a young working population (with a high proportion of dependants, especially children); and second from the scale of post-war reconstruction;
- ii) the level of resources available from rates and government grants.

7.37 The city's first development plan after the war reveals not only the scale of the problem but the choice of priorities facing the city. The plan designated three areas of the city for comprehensive development: the central area, Spon End and Hillfields. It also allocated expenditure for major building works as follows:

	First 5 years	Following 15 years	Total
New housing including cost of roads and services	£10mn	£40mn	£50mn
Central area reconstruction	£3½mn	£12mn	£15½mn
Industrial development	£2½mn	£10mn	£12½mn
Schools	£4mn	£6mn	£10mn

The allocation for Spon End and Hillfields CDAs was much less specific than for the central area. Separate amounts were included for the compulsory purchase of small sites, but the costs of new development were now shown separately from the general city-wide allocation for housing, schools, etc.

7.38 In the event, investment in the Hillfields comprehensive development area has not been either comprehensive or sustained. Instead it has been piecemeal and sporadic. The renewal of the area has been re-affirmed as a priority in successive plans (1966 Review Plan, 1973 Structure Plan) but the publication of paper plans without a confident timetable for action on the ground has set in motion a vicious spiral of planning blight, eroding certainty in the area and contributing to its physical, social and economic decline.

7.39 Our work suggests a number of factors contributing to this stop-go rhythm of investment in Hillfields:

i) Central government constraints on urban renewal and redevelopment

Successive economic crises since the 1947 devaluation have led to restraint on public expenditure. In each crisis central government has insisted upon limiting the involvement of local authorities in the purchase of land and property development generally and urban renewal in particular. At each cut-back the Hillfields CDA programme has been "rephased" by the local authority. This caused particularly serious stops, starts and delays throughout the 1960s. The withdrawal in 1958 of a specific grant for dealing with blight also impeded urban renewal.

ii) Central government constraints on house building

Central government has tended to use local government expenditure as a whole and housing expenditure in particular as a short-term regulator within the economy (44). Coventry's housing programme has been turned on and off with each switch of government policy on housing throughout the economic crises of the '40s, '50s and '60s.

iii) The uncertain political priority given to council housing in Coventry

Over the last 30 years Coventry has consistently spent a lower proportion of its budget on housing than is the average for local authorities in England and Wales. When capital expenditure per head is compared, Coventry is found to have exceeded the national average from 1951 to 1958, but to have spent below the average in every year since, with only one exception (1966). This may be partly a reflection of the high levels of capital expenditure in other fields (e.g. schools, city centre, roads) in Coventry since the war. It may partly reflect the preference in Coventry for owner-occupation and the high level of activity of the private sector in this field. But it also must indicate the relatively low priority which the Council (of both parties) has given to investment in housing compared with other fields of activity.

7.40 The consequences for land use and land values in the older areas The consequences for Hillfields and the older areas of Coventry are clear. In spite of repeated plans, the actual programme of investment in the area has not been sufficiently large or rapid or sustained to counteract the scale, the pace, or the cumulative effect of the pressures assailing the community. These can be summarised as:

- i) The intrusion of industry and commerce. The Railway Triangle contains a quarter of the city's housing stock and more than one third of the industry in the city. The 1966 Review Plan substantially increases the acreage allocated to industry, warehousing and roads in the area. Plum sites in the area have already been allocated for office buildings, warehouses and wholesale firms, and there are plans to demolish more houses near to the ring road to provide for light industry.



The utilisation of valuable land in Hillfields.
An old photograph of the City Football Club - still the largest
area of green open space in Hillfields.
It also causes considerable inconvenience to the area.

- ii) The successive waves of immigration into the city. The Railway Triangle area has functioned as the main reception area for newcomers to the city, providing the only large supply of cheap accommodation to rent or buy.
- iii) The utilization of land for a number of city-wide and public services, e.g. football ground, bus depot, central hospital and the ring road. This pattern is continuing at an increasing pace now that land is scarce in the city, involving smaller scale public and private uses, e.g. hostel for hotel staff, proposed post-graduate student hostel, leisure and night life facilities (bingo, cinema, social clubs).
- iv) Planning blight, which has led to economic uncertainty, loss of property values and deterioration in the condition of both housing and the environment. Public labelling then helped to set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the area gradually came to be defined as a "blackspot".

7.41 The programme of investment in Hillfields and other redevelopment areas has been hit particularly badly at times of national economic squeeze or central government cut-backs in local authority finance. The comprehensive development area programme seems to have functioned as a kind of valve, opening and shutting in response to fluctuations in the finance available to the local authority. The combination of these pressures and the fluctuations in the programme of investment together mean that important changes in land use and land value are taking place and the social composition and function of the area is being changed. Some parts of Hillfields are gradually becoming incorporated as an extension of the city centre, while others like housing and shopping are being pushed up-market. The original reception area functions (housing newcomers to the city) and residual area functions (housing long-standing less well-off families) are gradually being transferred to adjoining areas which are themselves now afflicted by the kind of uncertainty and blight that has affected Hillfields over the last 20 years.

7.42 It is arguable that land has now become the city's scarcest resource and future development is likely to take place not by expansion of boundaries, but by changes in ownership and function within existing boundaries. Hillfields and the rest of the older areas occupy prime land near the centre of the city and the inner-ring road and so take on a new scarcity value. The delays and changes in redevelopment since the war have kept Hillfields as a fluid pool of land, able to accommodate a variety of demands from both the private and public sector. The "value" of Hillfields to Coventry now lies not so much in its labour as its land.

Private Capital, the Local State and the Councillor

- 7.43 Up till now this section has largely concentrated on the pressures and constraints imposed on the local authority by external forces outside its direct control. However, local government is not simply a passive victim of such pressures; it performs a number of active functions within the political economy of the city. There have been a number of theoretical studies (45) of the rôle of the national state within advanced capitalist economies. One school of argument is that the state functions to create the conditions in which capital accumulation is possible and profitable by maintaining the "calculability" of the economic environment (e.g. reducing the risks of investment, cushioning the effects of business fluctuations). One of the most straightforward ways in which the state is able to achieve this is through changes in the overall levels and categories of public expenditure. This stimulates or regulates demand, creates or expands markets, and thus stabilizes the consumption and investment outlets required by the private sector for the absorption of surplus. There is persuasive evidence (46) that since the 1950s British capitalism has had a crisis of falling profitability, as a result of increasing international competition and pressure from wages. In this situation state expenditure is particularly important in providing private capital with a predictable market for its products.
- 7.44 Public authorities spend about £1,500 million a year on construction alone. These contracts account for about 60% of the output of the construction industry and 90% of the output of the civil engineering industry (47). In the UK the contracts for building schools, council housing, many roads, children's and old people's homes and many other public buildings are all placed by local government. Capital expenditure represents nearly 30% of total local government expenditure nationally, compared with 5% for central government. It is also far greater in absolute terms - £3,100 million for local government in 1973-4 compared with £834 million for central government (48). Local government thus involves large-scale capital investment and one of its effects is to provide the construction industry with expanded and more predictable markets. Although the construction industry is better protected from international competition than most, it is an industry which is highly vulnerable to fluctuations in market conditions. A firm market is needed before funds are committed. Corporate planning has spurred local authorities into producing forward plans, and ten-year rolling capital programmes, which thus enhance the "calculability" of the market for private building firms, providing them with a firmer agenda of forward work.
- 7.45 The heavy programme of capital works which has been necessary in Coventry, because of the rapid growth in population and the scale of bomb devastation, has obviously had direct outputs for the local community, and for industry, but indirectly it has also provided big business for a limited number of building and civil engineering firms. The local authority's comprehensive forward plans for land-use and for capital expenditure have thus helped to contribute to the "calculability" of the economic environment for private developers and the building industry.

- 7.46 The local authority has also performed a number of active functions on behalf of the engineering industry. In addition to the provision of infrastructure already noted it has also supported and serviced the search for new markets and new contracts for the car and machine tool industries, directly through trade missions, and indirectly through criticism of central government's Industrial Development Certificate policy. Presumably the assumption is that what is good for industry in this respect must be good for the city as a whole. However, our study suggests that the contraction in jobs in Coventry has taken place not because of government regional policy but as part of the "normal" process of concentration and rationalisation of industrial capital and that this has not been equally good for all sections of the city.
- 7.47 In their rôle as workers and trade unionists, many Coventry councillors (of both parties) have seen the need to challenge the "logic" which governs these processes and to demand that the work-force has a say in the decisions which have consequences for their pay and conditions. It is paradoxical that in their rôle as managers of the local authority the same councillors often appear to accept a very different stance in relation to industry and the requirements of the private sector. Yet our tentative analysis of the political economy of Hillfields suggests that the same free market "logic" has had severe consequences for the conditions and quality of life outside the work-place, and for the older working-class areas in particular. The challenge to those forces has tended to come most visibly from those groups in the community who suffer their consequences most directly and acutely.

Possibilities for Fresh Political Initiatives at the Local Level

- 7.48 While we have been trying in the last phase of the Project to reach a better theoretical understanding of the creation, maintenance and decline of Hillfields, in relation to the political economy of the city and the rôle of the local state, at the same time, we have been exploring the potential for change that lies in the hands of the residents of such areas.
- 7.49 Our work with residents' groups during phase 3 has been focussed around two key issues: (i) legal and income rights; and (ii) housing and environment.
- i) Legal and income rights In addition to advice and advocacy on specific problems this programme has attempted to disseminate information about, and understanding of, the issues underlying our income maintenance system, through information leaflets and teach-ins aimed at both community groups and the trade unions. We have offered the services of a solicitor and a welfare rights expert in the following ways:
- a) to individuals who call at weekly surgeries in four neighbourhoods;
 - b) to community groups who are helping claimants and others with legal and income problems;
 - c) to pensioners' rights groups in the city;
 - d) to trade union groups, helping their members to claim their full rights at times of short-time working or strike.



Cleared land and derelict buildings in Arthur Street and lower George Street, Hillfields, 1974.

The subject of court action against the City Council by the Five Ways Residents' Association under Section 99 of the Public Health Act 1936.

ii) Housing and environment We have been able to offer the services of a housing team containing a planner, a public health inspector, a solicitor and a community worker. This has enabled groups to prepare reports on collective demands, alternative plans for general improvement areas and action areas, and has helped other groups collect data about their areas to inform and support their particular campaigns. This has involved work with neighbourhood groups concerned about the following range of issues:

- a) the effects of the Local Authority's Comprehensive Development Area and Action Area plans for particular small areas (49);
- b) campaigns to get streets declared as General Improvement Areas or to influence the kind of improvements which take place once such areas are declared for GIA treatment (50);
- c) action to achieve the scrapping of a major road proposal for the city which had blighted an area of 600 houses for the last 10 years;
- d) groups concerned with more general problems affecting their housing, e.g. spiralling house prices through speculative dealings in the area, the intrusion of industry and other non-conforming uses into residential areas, homelessness and the loss of family houses as a result of change of use by landlords; and environmental nuisances such as derelict buildings and land;
- e) this work has led to the setting up of a tenant controlled housing co-operative and a feasibility study for a Common-Ownership House Improvement Company (51).

7.50 In each of these two programmes we have tried to offer five inter-related services:

- i) Information and intelligence - help to residents in the gathering of information about their own situation (e.g. household surveys, census analyses) and about how decisions affecting their lives are made (e.g. housing finance; local government structures and procedures).
- ii) Hard technical skills - a pool of expertise to be drawn upon by residents and their representatives on a "hire or fire" basis; the range of skills include those of a solicitor, planner, public health inspector and income and welfare rights specialist. The aim is to present the knowledge which such specialists have in a clear and understandable form and to share it as openly and widely as possible, to reduce the dependency of groups on outside experts.
- iii) Community organisation - helping groups and individuals to identify and define the problems they wish to tackle, to organise and develop a constituency, to keep their supporters informed and involved throughout the course of a campaign, and to draw on the experience of other organised groups, both nationally and locally, who are involved with similar issues.

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The pilot GIA - Winchester Street before environmental improvements.





Reproduced with permission of ICA Studios Limited.

The pilot GIA - Winchester Street after environmental improvements.
The proposals for the area were negotiated by the local residents' action group with the City Council.

- iv) Adult education - encouraging mutual learning, by reflecting on the experience of action, and by sharing our own analysis of the concrete issues around which the groups are working.
- v) Administrative support and practical resources - help in the preparation and presentation of newsletters, reports and campaign material plus access to typing, photographic and other resources.

7.51 The lessons we drew from this work with groups are as follows:

- i) Groups of ordinary men and women who have organised collectively to try to improve the circumstances in their local community have been able to gain small but valuable changes. In many cases the collective experience has sharpened their understanding of the nature of their situation and allowed further initiatives to be attempted. However, it has become clear that there are limits to the possibilities for effective change from the neighbourhood base on its own. If the problems experienced in the residential community have the same fundamental sources as those experienced in the work place, then effective action must bridge the gap between community politics and industrial politics. Although we have only very limited experience of such divisions being bridged, where we have seen this beginning to take place the results seem to have been particularly fruitful both for action and for understanding of the issues.
- ii) In addition to the need for broader based alliances and stronger organisation it appears that groups trying to tackle problem issues can be helped by having access to hard information and technical skills. Our experience suggests that it is possible for groups to make effective use of the services of planners, lawyers, public health inspectors, research workers and so on. We have been able to begin to explore various ways in which such skills can be made not only available but accountable to the group tackling a particular issue. Our aim has been to demystify professional knowledge and to try to share it as widely as possible within a local community. The best examples have been where the technical service has not simply suggested some new solution to a group's problem but also provided new information and material for learning about the situation.
- iii) There seem to be few if any agencies which are geared up to providing such a systematic technical and educational service to groups at the local level. The trade unions have traditionally aimed to protect working class interests at the work place while the Labour Party has traditionally sought to achieve this in the wider community through the local authorities and through the machinery of the welfare state. Yet the issues which confront many of the groups we have been working with seem to strain the capacity of the traditional machinery. While the local authorities develop increasingly sophisticated methods of planning and managing their available resources, there seems to have been much less success in making available the local authority's

manpower to disadvantaged groups to help them tackle problems they perceive as important in ways which they find helpful. Similarly while the trade unions develop increasingly effective means of improving pay and conditions at the work-place they seem to be much less effective in servicing their members when retired, redundant or on strike, or members' families in their home environment. More fundamentally, there seem to be few if any agencies at the local level providing the kind of relevant adult education to support groups as they act to take greater responsibility over their local situation and as they face wider questions about the kind of society they want. Members of the action team are proposing to explore these possibilities further through two new organisations which aim to build on the work begun in Hillfields (52).

- a) A Legal and Income Rights Trust, supported by the Home Office and the City Council, through the Urban Programme, but managed by an independent committee involving councillors, trade unionists and residents.
- b) A new kind of community development and adult education agency to be funded by Trusts in the first place, but aiming to operate in association with the wider labour movement, and offering a range of specific services (research; technical skills, e.g. planning, public health, accountancy; adult education and community organisation) to working-class groups.

CONCLUDING PROPOSITIONS1. INTRODUCTION

1.0 The issue which Coventry CDP has had to explore has not been one of gross multiple-deprivation but of inequality. The Project area, Hillfields, does not come high on national rankings for priority areas; it is not even the most disadvantaged area in Coventry. However, its persistence as a run-down neighbourhood, in the middle of a city renowned for its growth and prosperity, raises fundamental questions. The area has not lacked public attention: it has featured as a priority for comprehensive renewal in every major plan published by the Local Authority since the war. A good deal of public money has been invested in trying to improve the physical condition of the housing and the environment and in providing compensatory and additional social and community facilities. However, many residents have protested that these interventions (however well intentioned) have not succeeded in improving their conditions or quality of life and in many cases actually have added to the stresses. The persistence of areas like Hillfields in a prosperous and progressive city like Coventry is a clear indication that neither economic growth, nor enlightened social administration, by themselves, are sufficient to eradicate urban problems.

1.1 During the course of the Project we have explored:

- i) a variety of conflicting interpretations of urban problems;
- ii) a range of different strategies; and
- iii) a number of possible lines of action at different levels.

We have acknowledged that the connections between those categories are not completely coherent, and that they provide three separate but overlapping perspectives. Each will be summarised in turn.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS

2.0 We can no longer accept that the problems of Hillfields can be satisfactorily explained primarily as the result of:

- i) inadequacy, pathology, deviancy or any other personal characteristics of its residents;
- ii) apathy or failure to participate in community activity;
- iii) low take-up of personal support services or poor communication between fieldworkers and residents; or
- iv) technical incompetence or failures in planning, management or administration of local government.

2.1 Few of the problems (except redevelopment) experienced by individuals in Hillfields are different in kind from those experienced by large sections of the working-class in other parts of the city, or indeed the country as a whole (e.g. precarious incomes, insecure housing, etc.) They must be treated therefore as part of that class, not as a separate minority sub-group.

2.2 The spatial concentration of such problems in a small geographical area is not an isolated phenomenon, to be tackled by special remedies, nor even a small pocket left behind by the tides of industrialisation and urbanisation. It is a product of the very same processes which have brought growth and prosperity to other areas and other interest-groups. Indeed we suggest that the growth and prosperity of other sectors of Coventry's life have benefited from the maintenance of Hillfields as a run-down area. In other words it appears to have been advantageous to the development of other parts of Coventry for Hillfields to be underdeveloped, economically.

2.3 We have three main suggestions about how this paradox may have worked itself out within the political economy of Coventry and Hillfields. These are tentative interpretations, suggesting hypotheses for further testing:

- i) The profitability of the car and engineering industries in Coventry has been protected from the fluctuations in demand and in market-conditions (which are characteristic of boom in any luxury consumer durable) by maintaining two kinds of buffer:
 - a) a local reservoir of temporarily unneeded labour (mainly unskilled and semi-skilled) which can be laid off at times of recession and re-employed again quickly when the market re-expands;
 - b) a local network of small firms supplying components on a sub-contract basis, whose contracts can be cut-back during periods of squeeze and increased quickly when demand picks up.

Hillfields provides both these kinds of buffer for local industry because it houses the heaviest concentration of unskilled workers in the city, and because a high proportion of its working population is employed in the smaller engineering firms. (We suspect that similar functions are performed in the local labour market by immigrant workers and working women, particularly part-timers.)

- ii) The growing scarcity of land in the city (as a result of the phenomenal growth in population, arising from the rapid recruitment of migrant labour, to support the boom in the motor industry and munitions production in two world wars) means that future development will have to take place not simply by expansion on to green field sites, but by changes in ownership and land-use within existing boundaries. Hillfields and the rest of the older working-class areas occupy prime land near the centre of the city and so take on a special scarcity value. This results in a potential conflict of interest over their future - retention as a residential community for the existing population or take-over for new uses.

In spite of repeated political declarations of intent to renew Hillfields for Hillfields people, the actual trend of events since the war has been gradually to change the social composition and function of the area. With its

preponderance of older cheaper housing (both for sale and rent) Hillfields has functioned since the war as one of the city's main reception areas for successive waves of migrant workers, who then move on to higher status areas when they become established. Longer-standing Hillfields residents have left the area in the face of planning blight and physical and economic decline. As more housing has been demolished than replaced, Hillfields' functions, first as a reception area and then as a zone of transition, are gradually being transferred to adjoining areas of older housing, to the north and south east of Hillfields. There are now some signs that the fringes of Hillfields are beginning to function as an extension of the crowded commercial and civic centre of Coventry: vacant sites are being taken up for night life and entertainment facilities, wholesale provisions warehouses, hostel for hotel workers, and one or two office blocks.

The effect of protracted delays in house building and improvement thus has been to turn parts of Hillfields into an area of potential replanning - a pool of fluid land use and cleared sites which now provides planners and property developers with an area of welcome flexibility for new development as pressures on land in the city build up.

- iii) Hillfields and the redevelopment areas seem to have functioned as a similar kind of safety valve in response to build-ups of pressure on local authority finances. The pattern of capital investment in Coventry since the war has been determined partly by the continued pressure from industry (directly in the form of infrastructure, and indirectly in the need for houses, schools, etc. for the expanding work-force); partly by the scale of post-war reconstruction; partly by the overall level of resources available from central government grants and rates; partly by constant changes in central government policy and finance for house building and urban renewal; and partly by the high political priority given locally to the city centre and the relatively low priority given to investment in council house building since the late 1950s.

All these factors have affected Hillfields. However, Hillfields has been penalised not so much by the amounts of money put in, as by its stop-go rhythm. Our studies of the Corporation's capital programme suggest that Hillfields has been hit particularly badly at times of national economic squeeze or central government cut-back in local authority expenditure. Central government has increasingly been using local government as a short-term regulator within the economy; but equally the Local Authority appears to have treated the redevelopment programme in Hillfields in a similar way. This seems to be confirmed in the City Policy Plan 1973 when the decision to concentrate investment on areas of redevelopment, new development and general improvement areas was adopted on the grounds that "in the short-term it provided the ability to switch to other

strategies which may reveal themselves as more important. In the long-term therefore it represents the most flexible option."

The stop-go rhythm of public investment in Hillfields and other redevelopment areas has thus acted as a kind of valve for the local authority - helping to regulate and balance the fluctuations in finance available, in response to the impact of cut-backs and controls in central government finance, and uncertainties surrounding borrowing in the private money markets.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGY

3.0 We have suggested above that it may be advantageous, or even necessary, to the growth and prosperity of other sections of Coventry for Hillfields to remain in a state of limbo. Its economic under-development actively helps the development of other sectors by providing the following kinds of buffer against market uncertainties:

- a reservoir of labour for industry
- a valve responding to fluctuations in public investment
- a fluid pool of land, with potential for changes in use

We now go on to draw the following broad implications for strategy from this analysis.

3.1 If the persistence of Hillfields as an under-developed area is functionally related to the political economy of Coventry as a whole (which in turn is related to the political and economic structure of the wider society); and if its existence and that of other similar areas is "advantageous" to the prosperity of other interests in the city; then it is futile to try to tackle the situation simply by minor adjustments to, or re-arrangements in, the managerial, organisational or technical apparatus of the Welfare State. As the root causes of the problem operate largely outside existing democratic control, they cannot be dealt with by tinkering with technical procedures; they demand new kinds of political intervention which reach beyond existing jurisdiction, to claim greater local public control over the situation.

3.2 If, as we have argued, the fortunes of Hillfields have been closely tied to the local housing market, and this in turn is related to the local labour market, then action to reverse those fortunes cannot be effective if it is mounted from a community base alone. Conversely, while the division of labour originates at the work-place, the actions of the state frequently reinforce such divisions in the community. Those who are most exploited at work often also get the worst share of public goods and services - housing, environment, education, etc. The trade union movement has traditionally organised to protect its members' interests at the work-place. It seems to be much less well equipped to help working people outside the work-place. Yet it is clear from our experience in Hillfields that government policies and the conditions in the community where people live can affect their lives and their incomes just as much as what happens on the factory floor. A measure like the Housing Finance Act or the revaluation of the rates can quickly whittle away a wage increase won at work. At times of strike, redundancy or retirement the worker becomes

dependent upon state benefits and is affected by the way they are administered, whilst the proliferation of means-tested benefits to compensate low wage earners can mean that someone at work can actually lose more in income tax and benefits than he gains from a wage rise. The struggle for a better quality of life increasingly has to challenge the false divisions between people's rôle at work as producers, and in the community as consumers. The greatest potential for change may lie in new initiatives which create alliances across the neighbourhood, the factory floor and the local political parties. This would demand radical changes in stance in all three areas.

- 3.3
- i) The traditional local political response to small areas like Hillfields has taken the form of positive discrimination in resources and services to compensate for inadequate incomes housing and environmental conditions. However, our work raises fundamental questions about this approach. Firstly, we have found much evidence that key welfare state services (e.g. means-tested income maintenance services) in many cases are simply failing to deliver the goods to those entitled to them. Secondly, the needs are so basic and enduring that the resources and powers available to local government to compensate for these basic deficiencies, are bound to be inadequate. Without tackling the continuing root causes of the problems, compensation and positive discrimination simply pour down a bottomless pit.
 - ii) The kind of rationing of resources that thus becomes necessary inevitably undermines any notion of services "as of right". The relationship between the providers and allocators of those services on the one hand, and those in need on the other, then becomes that of welfare giver and supplicant. This reinforces rather than compensates for the inequalities and divisions (created by the economic structure) which created the basic deficiencies in income, etc., in the first place.
 - iii) Moreover, policies based upon positive discrimination through welfare goods and services depend for their resources upon a bigger share of a growing cake. In a situation of no growth, or low economic growth, redistribution cannot take place at the margins, but has to challenge the basis on which the cake is currently shared out. However, in a predominantly working-class city like Coventry, only the working-class can lose if redistribution at the local level takes place within the present level of resources. To try to compensate with goods and services will be ineffective unless backed up by a strategy which aims to challenge the basic inequalities in economic opportunity.
 - iv) It is often assumed that economic opportunities can only be influenced at central government level. However, every local authority planning decision or capital building has indirect economic and political consequences. We therefore see the local councils as a potential point of leverage not so much in their traditional rôle as providers of statutory services, so much as in their power to intervene to protect the rights of their citizens, and in their capacity to act politically to challenge other institutions and forces affecting the welfare of the local community.

4. POSSIBLE LINES OF ACTION

4.0 In the previous section we have suggested the following broad principles for strategy to tackle the problems of poorer working-class areas like Hillfields.

- i) Political intervention to claim new areas of public control, as opposed to adjustments within existing technical procedures.
- ii) Political initiatives coming from the local level and aiming to create alliances between the neighbourhood, the factory floor and political parties.
- iii) Government action based less on redistribution of welfare goods and services than on the extension of citizens' rights and economic opportunities through the "externality" effects of its own operations as a political and economic institution.

We now discuss possible lines of action within these broad strategic principles. We do not frame these as "policy recommendations" to particular bodies, but simply sketch in the direction in which initiatives from a variety of bodies might be developed.

4.1 Industrial Capital, the Labour Force and the Local Authority

- i) If our analysis of industry's need for a reservoir of labour is correct, it has implications not just for Hillfields, but for the rest of Coventry, and also other parts of the country whose fortunes are tied directly to the motor industry. Our studies suggest that the motor industry may now be passing the peak period of its product-cycle and may be entering a period of steady decline. The industry may therefore be facing not a temporary slump, but a permanent contraction. If, as seems likely, this leads to a further period of concentration, centralisation, rationalisation and redundancy, Coventry could become the Hillfields of Europe - a reserve tank of expendable labour for a multi-national industry.
- ii) Decisions which affect Coventry's labour force, and the fortunes of the city as a whole are not yet taken entirely in Detroit, but they are certainly taken primarily with regard to industry's profitability rather than the consequences for the local community. Government legislation aims to cater for some of those consequences, but is currently geared largely towards compensating the individual for loss of a job, rather than subsidising the local community for the costs which industrial change imposes (not only in periods of decline and unemployment, but also in the "normal" stages of industrial expansion). Pressing central government to relax its controls on Industrial Development Certificates (IDCs) will not solve the basic problem; the number of engineering jobs in the

West Midlands which have been lost through diversion of employment to other regions is insignificant compared with those lost through the concentration of capital within its existing location (take-overs and rationalisations leading to redundancies; and the substitution of capital-intensive for labour-intensive processes). Broadening the employment structure to give more jobs in the service sector will not help in the short-term either. The kind of jobs recruited, e.g. office work, will not provide realistic alternatives for those made redundant by the motor industry, (though they will help to extend the range of opportunities open to school-leavers).

iii) The strategy therefore should not be concerned so much with attracting new jobs as gaining greater control for the community over the decisions made by, and about, existing industry. The local council's greatest potential for protecting the community's interests here probably lies in alliances with, and services to, the trade unions, which have a more direct relationship to those decisions, and are therefore in a stronger bargaining position. This suggests a number of lines of action that might be taken by local politicians in the current situation:

- Claiming a right to representation alongside the trade unions in all negotiations about the future and possible public ownership of local firms. This should extend to representation on local Boards of Management of British Leyland, Alfred Herbert, Lucas Aerospace or other Coventry firms which may be nationalised.
- Making available to the trade unions the technical skills of the local authority administration (e.g. accountants, economists, computer time) to back up their negotiations over decisions which affect the community.
- Setting up jointly with the trade unions a local industrial intelligence unit to provide better advance information about the likely effect on the work force and on the community of the investment and employment decisions being taken by local firms. Token shareholdings could be considered as a further means of information and influence.
- Deliberately using the Corporation's own role as a major employer in the city to create job alternatives for those sections of the workforce at greatest risk of redundancy (e.g. through rebuilding a strong Direct Works Department).

4.2 Public Investment, Urban Renewal and the Planners

- i) Local authority plans for Hillfields and the older working class areas since the war have largely been concerned with improving the physical condition of the housing stock and

the environment and increasing local social facilities. We have argued that one of the main reasons why the plans, although comprehensive, have not been effective in improving conditions is that the actual programme of investment in the area has fluctuated so wildly that not only has physical redevelopment been piecemeal but planning blight has undermined the economic security of the whole area.

- ii) We have argued that the first priority for all planning strategies for Hillfields should therefore be to restore the economic security of the area. In the short-term this may suggest scrapping all plans which cannot be tied to a precise timetable and using a strategic combination of powers under the Housing Act 1974 to give the whole area definite guarantees of minimum life. In the medium term it might suggest a strategy aimed at bringing as much housing and land as possible in the older areas under direct municipal control. In the longer term, it would suggest attempts in conjunction with other local authorities and allied interest-groups to put the sources of finance for renewal of the older areas onto a more secure and predictable basis. (See later paragraph on public finance)
- iii) In the current economic situation these strategies have implications beyond Hillfields. The renewed pressure from central government to cut back on local authority expenditure is demanding further reshuffling and "rephasing" of forward plans for both the capital and revenue programmes. The uncertainty about these could blight large areas of the city. In a period of crisis there is an argument for scrapping long-term paper plans and concentrating all energy and resources on short-term interventions. These need not always involve the expenditure of money or the provision of services; the immediate political effects of the local authority's planning decisions can sometimes have a more positive influence on a situation than any later implementation of programmes. An example of this "positive living" effect is that we have found that the mere declaration of an area as a General Improvement Area can have a more positive influence on an area by guaranteeing it a secure future of 30 years life, than the relatively small physical improvements which later take place.

4.3 Income support services and citizens' rights

- i) The fact that poor people are over-represented in Hillfields reflects the primary function of the area in the city, i.e. that of housing non-productive members of society (pensioners, the sick, the unemployed, unsupported mothers) and the most expendable section of the Coventry labour force (the unskilled). Successive governments, instead of extending and improving the National Insurance scheme and taking action on low wages, have increasingly come to rely on means-tested benefits to reduce poverty amongst all these categories of people. Moreover, as these means-tested benefits proliferate, the failure to receive full entitlement to them is becoming crucial in determining the living standards of more and more people. If unemployment and short-time working become more common an even larger number of people will be affected by the means-test system.

- ii) However, there is now overwhelming evidence of the failure of the means-test system to ensure that those in poverty receive their rights. The most crucial failure is that of the Supplementary Benefits system since this is the final safety net in our income maintenance strategy. Many of the personal problems faced by individuals and families in areas such as Hillfields are caused or exacerbated by the failure of our income maintenance system to fulfil its declared function. Rather than devoting even more public resources (e.g. social workers) to cope with the symptoms of this failure, the first priority should be to combat the deficiencies of our income support system by taking steps to ensure that all entitled, especially the poor, receive their rights in full.
- iii) It is suggested that if the Council wished to counteract the harmful consequences of the deficiencies of the means-test system for some of the city's most vulnerable citizens it would need to adopt a position which emphasised:
- the rights of all claimants as laid down by Parliament;
 - the rôle of the Local Authority as the protector of the citizen's rights; and
 - the community of interest between the Council, claimants and trades unionists in a situation where increasing unemployment may force more and more workers to claim means-tested benefits.
- iv) In relation to the Supplementary Benefits system this suggests a strategy of:
- supporting the development of public legal services geared towards campaigning, educative and advocacy work (e.g. Coventry District Council's backing for a Legal and Income Rights Trust to develop the work initiated by CDP in this field);
 - promoting the employment (in pilot areas at first) of duty advocates to work in supplementary benefits offices in a manner similar to that of duty solicitors in Magistrates Courts;
 - increased financial support for resident-run information centres and claimants' unions in disadvantaged areas of the city.
- v) Although central government means-test policy is backed up by a commitment to promote full take-up, responsibility for administering a number of important benefits falls on the local authority. However, no means-tested benefit, whether administered by central or local government, reaches more than three-quarters of all those entitled to claim it and many benefits fail to reach even half of those entitled.

One particular procedure open to local authorities which we believe would dramatically increase the take-up of all means-tested benefits would be for the Council to computerize all the benefits it is responsible for administering, so that a single application form could apply to all local authority benefits. From the same application the computer could print out all the nationally administered means-test benefits to which the applicant was entitled. Application campaigns should be mounted and every effort made to make application as routine as possible (e.g. by sending out application forms with rates bills). Local authorities should join together in pressing the central government to pay the full costs of any administrative procedures designed by local government to increase take-up.

- vi) The high costs involved in increasing take-up beyond a certain point as diminishing returns set in need to be acknowledged by the central government. If they are unacceptable it must be recognised that having a system which looks as if it is effectively combatting poverty on paper has become more important than the original object of helping those in need who are entitled. In this case the government should be challenged by all interested parties to develop an alternative system of income support based on:
- a) substantial increases in national insurance benefits;
 - b) the extension of the national insurance scheme to major groups in poverty who are not at present covered, e.g. single parent families, single women caring for their aged dependants, etc;
 - c) an increase in the real value of family allowances;
 - d) reforms of the taxation system as it applies to low income families;
 - e) legislation to introduce a minimum wage.

4.4 Support services for the elderly

As a result of its age structure, Coventry is faced with a massive explosion in its elderly population over the next 10 - 12 years. These numbers may be added to by an increasing number of middle-aged men made redundant and in effect permanently retired. It is argued that in order to cope with the problems of this rapidly increasing section of the population new initiatives will need to be taken by the City Council.

Evidence from extensive research studies carried out in Hillfields has revealed that there is a vast number of elderly people eligible for a whole range of services but failing to receive them; and that there is a large number of elderly people with problems for which no existing service caters. It is argued that Hillfields is not untypical of many areas of Coventry and that the massive input of local authority resources necessary to compensate the elderly for

their inadequate incomes and for the personal problems associated with ageing should encourage the local authority to consider alternative approaches to meeting the needs of the elderly. In particular it is suggested that policies should be developed which aim to defer the onset of dependency amongst the retired and thus reduce the demand for massive expansion of the existing services provided by the local authority. Any such policies should take into account the preliminary findings of research currently being conducted by CDP. This suggests that the provision of an adequate income, the provision of the opportunity to engage in some form of continuous productive physical effort (commensurate with age and physical ability) and the ability to maintain an "exchange relationship" with their world, are crucial to the maintenance of independence and dignity amongst retired working class men.

4.5 Support for young people in the transition from school life to work life

i) Research into the problems of young people, from Hillfields and an adjoining area, in making the transition from school to work resulted in three basic findings:

- The effect of their experience at school is to render young people, at the point of transition into work, highly dependent upon adults rather than equipping them to take responsibility for themselves as young citizens and employees.
- Industry and commerce offer training and support to young people only to the extent that the young employees are expected to prove valuable as contributors to production.
- The Careers Service, despite wishing to be concerned for the personal development and growth of young people, is actually used by all concerned (schools, parents, employers and young people themselves) mainly as an agency to sort young people into available job slots as ordained by employers.

ii) These suggest that more effective support for young people in making the transition from school to work could be provided if the local authority (a) encouraged schools to develop a mechanism for reviewing the effects of their internal organisation on preparing pupils for adult life, and (b) attempted to counter the influence of industrial and commercial values on the lives of young people from disadvantaged areas by initiating the promotion of a Bill to give all young employees under the age of 18 in the city the status of trainees and to require employers who use these to provide training aimed not only at the development of skills but also at social development. The Careers Service should develop into an agency expert in helping other bodies (schools and firms) to understand the problems and approaches to helping young adults as they grow up.

4.6 Public finance

- i) As an instrument for getting extra aid to small urban areas the Urban Programme falls seriously between two stools. On the one hand it is not large enough or strategic enough to tackle either the fundamental economic problems or their social and environmental consequences (it represents only 1/20th of 1% of total public expenditure and less than one third of 1% of the total rate support grant allocation from which it is deducted). On the other hand it is not flexible enough or innovatory enough to give such areas the "rapid and direct help" which it claims allows it to "go directly to the roots of special social need". Almost half the expenditure supported by Urban Aid Phases 1 to 8 went on nursery education - an important area but one in which local authority already had full powers to undertake schemes. A high proportion (c.80%) of approved expenditure has been devoted to capital projects - not always noted for their quick-acting effects on small areas. Finally, the bulk of resources have gone to local authorities (nearly 90%) and not to voluntary organisations (just over 10%). A more effective use of the Urban Programme as a pump-primer for new initiatives would follow the approach in Northern Ireland where the Urban Programme is empowered to fund voluntary and community groups direct, and is not restricted to the 75% grant. However, it is clear that the major resources for urban areas are to be found within the mainstream sources of government finance.
- ii) Local authorities confronted by severe urban problems incur heavy costs, often when their resource-base is also most vulnerable. As far as revenue is concerned there has been some attention to the special pressures facing areas in decline. There has been much less recognition of the costs falling on areas like Coventry dealing with the consequences of rapid industrial growth. The benefits of that growth have been national as well as local, and there is a strong case for a larger share of the costs to be carried nationally also.
- iii) The present system of raising finance does not give local authorities tackling urban problems a fair share of the total taxation raised from their areas. The proposal by the Association of Municipal Authorities for a Local Element of National Taxation (LENT) could be extended to include a redistribution, back to industrial areas, of the finance raised from industry, e.g. through Corporation tax. In Coventry the 1973 Revaluation of the Rates has shifted the burden of local taxation away from industry on to the domestic sector in general, and the least desirable areas in particular. In areas suffering the consequences of industrial growth there are arguments for super-rating of industry in relation to the costs they have imposed on the community, either in terms of demand for infrastructure and services, or pollution and dereliction.

- iv) Central government's use of local government expenditure in general, and housing expenditure in particular, as a short-term regulator in the economy means that there has never been a stable or predictable source of finance for tackling urban problems. The CDP Inter-Project Report to the Layfield Committee suggests the creation of an Urban Needs Pool, as a new specific grant payable to certain local authorities submitting strategic plans for extending economic opportunities in their areas or for comprehensive physical and social reconstruction.

4.7 Neighbourhood democracy

Our work with the Hillfields Community Association, the Information and Opinion Centre, and with a wide range of residents' associations concerned with housing and environmental issues and with legal and income rights, suggests the following principles for action:

- i) Federal or umbrella community bodies are more likely to be effective as a means of promoting and co-ordinating community care schemes (e.g. for the elderly and young people) and as a general sounding-board for some sections of local opinion, than as a vehicle for representing the range of neighbourhood interests.
- ii) Experience does not suggest that it would be helpful to try to interpose another level of formal representation (e.g. Area Committees, Neighbourhood Councils) between local residents and the existing political structures. More fruitful initiatives are likely to come from supporting and servicing local people in making more effective use of the existing channels of representation and from the more fluid organisations which are already active within the local political process.
- iii) One important means of strengthening this level of political involvement is to ensure that such groups have access to hard information and technical skills to service their campaigns. We have been able to begin to explore various ways in which such skills can be made not only available but accountable to the group tackling a particular issue. The best examples have been where professional knowledge has been shared openly and widely within a community and has not only suggested new technical solutions to a group's problem, but has also provided new understanding about the politics of the situation.

- iv) There seem to be few if any agencies which are geared up to providing this kind of systematic technical service and political education to groups at the local level. If the problems experienced in the residential community have the same fundamental sources as those experienced at the work-place, then effective action must bridge the gap between community politics and industrial politics. Yet the issues which confront many of the groups we have been working with evidently strain the capacity of the traditional machinery (e.g. the trade unions and the local authorities) to protect people's rights at work and in the community. The experience we have from work with groups around legal and income rights and housing and environmental issues suggests the need to explore new ways in which knowledge and technical skills can be made available to help groups attempting to understand their situation and to organise to gain greater control over it.

Appendix 1*ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN PHASE 1 OF THE PROJECTCHANGE THROUGH BETTER COMMUNICATION ?Objective 1

(a) To study the needs and aspirations of people living in neighbourhoods with a high incidence of social deprivation

- i) The opening of a shop-front Information and Opinion Centre, to take soundings from those sections of the population who define their needs, problems and aspirations by expressing them verbally.
- ii) Collaborating with a neighbourhood community worker, employed by a voluntary agency, in identifying the range of needs and concerns enacted by other sections of the population by their participation in self-help or pressure groups within the community.
- iii) Establishing and maintaining links with a Fieldwork Forum within which fieldworkers from statutory and voluntary agencies could pool their concerns and act as a sounding-board for the needs of vulnerable sections of the population.
- iv) Undertaking a social survey of 1 in every 6 households in the study area, and more detailed follow-up studies of particular client groups: school leavers, social security claimants and those rehoused in the course of redevelopment.
- v) Regular discussions with Ward Councillors; chief officers of statutory and voluntary agencies; fieldworkers from statutory and voluntary agencies; opinion leaders within the study area.

(b) To help disadvantaged people to find ways of meeting their needs and aspirations

- i) Co-operating with other agencies in improving residents' knowledge of and access to the services, rights and benefits available to them. This has included: an information bulletin distributed monthly by the Corporation's Public Relations Department as a supplement to the neighbourhood newspaper "Hillfields Voice"; a weekly "surgery" at the Information Centre by a rota of Ward Councillors; a weekly legal advice service; a telephone link with the Planning Department; a social services advice session; and training in welfare rights for local residents.
- ii) Acting as a temporary go-between in trying to establish better opportunities for dialogue between residents and the relevant agencies, departments and committees. This has resulted in a proliferation of public meetings, ad hoc consultations and informal discussions between various residents' groups and city councillors and officers.

- iii) Making available through the Project Management Committee "seed money" to support nascent community activities: pre-school play groups, pensioners' luncheon clubs, residents' associations, a neighbourhood newspaper and a summer play programme.
- iv) Offering professional support and advice to residents' groups in clarifying their aims, and in organising themselves to meet those aims.

Objective 2

(a) To help people exercise increased control over their own lives

- i) Inviting community groups to submit to the Project Management Committee bids for grant-aid for activities to be carried out under their own control. This has enabled them to employ a variety of staff (predominantly local residents) to organise activities for the elderly; to open an adventure playground; to run an eight-week summer play scheme; and to give secretarial services to community groups through an umbrella Community Association.
- ii) Transferring management and control of the Information and Opinion Centre to the Hillfields Community Association, who in turn have delegated responsibility to an advisory group of local residents who work as volunteers alongside the local resident who is employed full-time to run the Centre.
- iii) Inviting the Education Department to experiment with new forms of management based on the formation of residents' advisory groups for the New Nursery and Play Centres, and 50% resident representation on the Management Committee responsible for both institutions. There have been a number of difficulties with these structures, but the experience is being drawn upon in developing opportunities for involvement and control in the new Sidney Stringer Community School.

(b) To help enlarge the opportunities of disadvantaged people in directions which they themselves see as desirable

- i) A social survey by the Project among all households in two streets whose potential as a General Improvement Area was under consideration by the Corporation. This established the needs and preferences among residents and helped to modify some of the assumptions previously made by the Corporation about the criteria for selecting improvement areas.
- ii) Discussions with Departments and in the working parties of the new management system about ways in which the expressed and felt needs of consumers might be taken into greater account at earlier stages of the planning and decision making processes which affect them. This is an area which has been explored in a number of government reports but where there has been little testing-out of new mechanisms for consultation and participation in practice. One proposal which has been

under discussion since the beginning of the Project is that of a Community Forum which would enable representatives of the Council (both elected members and officers) to meet regularly for discussion with representatives of different interest groups within the Project area. This has been recommended by the Project Management Committee, but has not so far found general approval within the City Council.

- iii) An enquiry into the needs of homeless men and vagrants was commissioned by the Project Management Committee. The field investigation was carried out by a social worker on secondment from the Probation Service for six months, who in turn reported to an inter-agency working party which has now prepared policy proposals.
- iv) An enquiry into the needs of the elderly has also been commissioned by the Project Management Committee on the basis of concern by the Fieldwork Forum. An inter-agency working party has been set up and in 1972, a comprehensive action survey among a sample of 1,500 old people is to be carried out by CDP in conjunction with the Social Services Department and other agencies.

Appendix 2PROGRAMMES OF WORK SET IN MOTION DURING PHASE 2INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FROM WITHIN ?1. Income Maintenance

- i) Research studies of the knowledge of rights and the extent of unmet need among samples of supplementary benefit claimants.
- ii) A historical critique of the manifest and latent functions of the social security system within a mixed economy welfare state.
- iii) An analysis of the deficiencies of the supplementary benefits system from the perspective of the consumer.

2. Housing and Environment

- i) A report on area improvement policies for the inner-city commissioned from the Institute for Operational Research.
- ii) Work within the local authority to develop proposals for a "community planning" approach to urban renewal:
 - the concept of the declaration of a General Improvement District to allow for a rolling programme of area improvement to prevent the further social, economic and physical decline of Greater Hillfields;
 - a comprehensive approach to the planning of Five Ways, the first "action area" in the city.
- iii) The appointment of a consultant to explore the feasibility of a resident-controlled housing co-operative as a means of taking housing off the speculative investment market and into local community control.
- iv) The provision of planning consultancy and other "hard skills" to groups of residents campaigning for improvements in their housing and environment.

3. Community and Adult Education

- i) A joint programme with the Education Committee, involving the appointment of a Community Education Team to work with 13 local schools:
 - to extend the range and scope of local pre-school provision;
 - to develop curricula and practice more relevant to the needs and values of a multi-racial working-class population;
 - to stimulate greater interaction between schools, homes and the wider community.

- ii) A joint programme with the Education Committee to investigate the needs and opportunities for "detached" adult education work with informal groups in pubs, clubs and other community settings, and with Asian immigrants in their homes, temples and on the factory floor.

4. The Transition from School-Life to Work-Life

Two research and development studies focussed on the agencies (schools, youth employment service and employers) which carry some responsibility for young people during this crucial watershed.

- i) A comparative study of the actual job histories of boys from different racial and social backgrounds, together with an analysis of the rôle of the youth employment service.
- ii) A study commissioned from the Grubb Institute of Behavioural Studies, examining the influences on young people in making the transition from school-life to work-life, and devising ways whereby the existing rôles and structures can be modified to make appropriate resources more available to young people.

5. Needs of the Elderly

- i) A 100% survey of the needs of the elderly in Hillfields carried out with a small action survey team funded by CDP and appointed to the Social Services Department. Urgent needs discovered were presented to statutory bodies or residents' groups for immediate action. The comprehensive survey was followed up by more detailed sample studies of the most critical issues identified in the pilot (income, housing, health, work loss, social contact).
- ii) A detailed study of rôle and status loss experienced by the elderly on retirement, and the part that firms and social agencies play in compounding stereotypes of dependency by the existing structures of service provision.

6. Community Social Services

- i) A joint experiment with the Social Services Committee, involving the decentralisation to a local shop-front office, of an augmented team of social workers, and the provision of an experimental resource fund of £3,000 p.a. to test out the capacity for preventative social work and to develop new ways of discovering and responding to grassroots need.

7. Social Priority Planning

- i) Observation of and involvement in the local authority corporate management system and the basis on which the plans and decisions affecting priority areas were made.
- ii) Proposals for new machinery through which the "top-down" process of corporate management could be counter-balanced by a "bottom-up" process, concerned with across-the-board needs of small geographical areas.

- iii) Preliminary study of local government finance and analysis of the effects on different sections of the population of the revaluation of the rates.
- iv) Preliminary analysis of the rôle of the local state within the economy, and of the ideology behind corporate management.

8. Neighbourhood Work

During this phase we maintained our commitment to the Hillfields neighbourhood mainly through helping to create and support independent "satellite" organisations in the following ways:

- i) An annual grant of some £13,000 to a federation of local community groups (the Hillfields Community Association) to enable them to fund a variety of community initiatives particularly in support of the needs of children, young people and old people. This allowed them to employ a number of local residents and to provide "seed" money for local self-help and action groups.
- ii) Support and advice to the Residents' Advisory Group to which full control and management of the shop-front Information and Opinion Centre was delegated in June 1971.
- iii) Grant-aid to a specially formed agency, the Joint Community Work Committee, to employ an independent community worker.
- iv) Appointment of a solicitor as community lawyer to provide a legal and income rights service to disadvantaged individuals and organised groups.
- v) Provision of planning, legal and income rights expertise to community groups.

Appendix 3EXAMPLES OF WORK WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS IN PHASE 3TOWARDS FRESH POLITICAL INITIATIVES ?1. Hartlepool, Redcar and Stockton Roads Residents' Association

The HRS Residents' Association was formed in 1970 around general environmental and amenity issues in the three streets covered by the Association (140 homes). Shortly afterwards the area was promised General Improvement Area (GIA) status by the City Council, which would secure the life of the houses for at least 30 years, and would include substantial environmental improvements. The residents' committee were delighted; but for two years nothing more was heard. In 1972, the committee asked the team for help in pursuing this promise. A new approach was made to the Council, which responded by declaring a new, far less attractive and cheaper Repair Area policy, which would reduce the security of life for the houses and cut out all environmental work. The committee examined both policies carefully, with technical help from the team, and decided they needed to involve the other residents of the area in any decision. A survey was designed and carried out by the group, which involved all the residents; the information gathered was sufficient to allow the group to produce a declaration report for the City Council, demanding GIA status. The focus then shifted from assimilating and applying technical information, to political action which would represent residents' views to the Council. The CDP housing team was asked to supply a variety of technical information (on, for example, rates, legislation) which was used by residents to support their campaign in bargaining situations. Finally, the area was accorded GIA status. This example shows how residents and professionals can and did learn together to mount a campaign relevant to the specific needs of an area. All came to understand the political nature of technical information; and residents were able to use their new knowledge to press their demands.

2. The Five Ways Residents' Association

The Five Ways area is one of old, war-damaged, working-class housing near the city centre (1100 homes). For 20 years the Local Authority's intention has been to demolish and redevelop the area, but no specific moves were made until December 1973, when a consultative plan was published calling for the demolition of the majority of the houses, enlargement of an industrial site and expansion of school grounds. This plan, which used supposedly technical evaluations of house conditions, demonstrated the Council's commitment to industry and its need to meet statutory educational requirements. It can be seen as a technical solution to issues lying outside the local democratic arena. The local residents' group - poorly organised and unrepresentative - opposed the plan and asked for help from the CDP housing team. The latter was able to offer advice

technical expertise (including house condition surveys, the results of which contrasted strongly with the Local Authority's findings) and organisational help, to enable residents to develop both a representative organisation and an alternative technical plan. Working together, the group drew up questionnaires and organised a 100% survey of an area of 750 houses. Facts and opinions were collected and correlated. The results were compared with a charter of demands finalised earlier in a series of mass meetings. From this combined base an alternative plan for the area was drawn up and presented to the Council. The business of the residents' association was carried out through weekly meetings, attended by 60 - 70 people, which saw one of its major tasks as keeping all the residents informed of progress. The meetings allowed them to take new initiatives, using the facts and technical information at their disposal. The housing team was asked to interpret the responses from the Council and the implications of legislation and national policy. They were also able to provide a commentary describing the local political and economic situation within which groups were working, the activities of other campaigning groups, and the structure and operation of the Local Authority; all of which were discussed in depth with residents. A large number of houses have been saved from demolition, but the campaign will continue until all the fit houses are saved. Solidarity has been maintained and strengthened through the activity of the representative group. The demands on time and input from the team of three workers have been considerable, and it has been realised that such a team can only effectively service a small number of groups of this kind, if it is to fulfil adequately its contract with the groups and a realistic commitment to adult educational aims.

3. Wickmans Limited

When 120 workers from Wickmans (a machine tool firm) went on strike in March 1974, our solicitor and welfare rights worker were contacted by a member of the strike committee for advice on strikers' rights to supplementary benefit. At their suggestion, a small committee of strikers was rapidly formed to advise and assist the other strikers on claiming supplementary benefit. They met this committee at the home of one of the members within a few days of first being approached for advice. At this meeting they provided the committee with leaflets they had prepared on strikers' rights to supplementary benefit and were able to explain these rights and point out some of the commonly held myths about the supplementary benefits system and the importance of an active strikers' committee to ensure that all strikers received their rights in full. At this meeting the committee drafted a short leaflet to give to their fellow strikers encouraging them to claim and giving the names of the committee members to be contacted in case of difficulty. They produced and distributed this leaflet the following day. Over the next couple of weeks we had several telephone conversations with committee members over snags that had arisen over individual claims and were able to clarify the legal questions involved. The committee

organised themselves so that one or other members of the committee was able to be in attendance at the supplementary benefits office most days to deal with individual problems and where necessary they represented their colleagues in negotiations with the SBC management. The combination of their trade union approach to bargaining and their rapidly acquired expertise in the law relating to supplementary benefits made them formidable negotiators. For example, the first week that claimants were due to claim benefit they were told that no special arrangements were being made by the SBC and that all 120 men would have to make individual appointments. They replied that they were bringing down 100 men to claim the next day and that unless the SBC co-operated they would all be asking for form A124 to be given to them. (This is the form explaining how each individual's SBC entitlement is calculated. Every claimant has a right to one if he requests it but the overwhelming majority of claimants are unaware of this right. Its compilation involves a certain amount of extra work by the SBC staff.) The SBC agreed to make special arrangements and opened the office half an hour early the next day to deal with claims from Wickmans. The committee also took up and won cases of hardship where supplementary benefit had been refused to single strikers and applied for and obtained exceptional needs payments to prevent hardship in other cases. They also successfully represented their colleagues at two supplementary benefits appeal tribunals and complained to their MP over the treatment one of their members received from the SBC. They have since agreed to attend any "teach-ins" on strikers' rights to supplementary benefits that we give to other trades unionists to explain the bargaining techniques they developed for ensuring that their colleagues received their rights in full.

Note:

The CDP housing team are working with nine residents' action groups covering 3,000 houses in and around Hillfields. This involves the team in an intensive working relationship with some 200 men and women who form the organised committees for the nine areas. Most action groups meet at least once a fortnight, the result being that the housing team are working to capacity most evenings of the week.

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Further details about the new community development and adult education agency can be obtained from John Benington, 123 Binley Road, Coventry CV3 1HX

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After 31 May 1975, the above reports (except for the one marked *) will
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