



CDP FINAL REPORT: PART 2
BACKGROUND WORKING PAPERS



CDP

COVENTRY

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



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P R E F A C E

These Background Working Papers form the second section of Coventry CDP's Final Report. They do not describe all aspects of the Project's work nor do they draw links or conclusions (though one attempt to do this is in the first volume). They were originally prepared as Draft Discussion Papers, to open up key areas of our thinking and findings about urban disadvantage, for informal discussion with local MPs, councillors, Corporation officers, the Home Office, the remaining CDP teams and others who have been involved with us in this five year action-research experiment. These consultations took place during January and February 1975 and we have taken account of comment and criticism received, in preparing this revised version for publication. Insofar as suggestions for policy are made in these papers they are mainly directed at the local authority and not at central government, our aim being to stimulate thinking about what might be done at the local level in the light of the problems described.

These Working Papers are based on a number of fuller reports (listed inside the back cover) prepared by full-time members of Coventry CDP and others whose work has been commissioned and supported by CDP funds. This volume has been edited by a core group from the headquarters CDP Team, so although the essential content of each section remains the responsibility of its original author (as named on the Contents page) its form and presentation do not.

We recognise that the work and ideas contained in each section reflect different pathways and stages of development. As a consequence some remain more tentative than others. We hope that by exposing them in this provisional form it will be possible to stimulate debate, comment and criticism on the major issues, without becoming over-preoccupied with minor detail.

We acknowledge that these ideas derive from work which we have carried out with a wider group of people not only in Coventry but within the national CDP experiment: particularly Ian Breach, Helen Brown, Melvyn Cairns, Paul Corrigan, Paul Davies, Brian Gearing, Slim Hallett, Sol Picciotto, Bruce Rowley, Allen Torrance and Robert Zara, together with many local residents, councillors and officers of Coventry District Council; and our colleagues in other CDP teams. Statistics and diagrams have been collated by Lisa Carter, and the secretarial and clerical burden of the whole enterprise has been carried by Rosalind Seaman, Angela Slater and Rosemary Woodlock.

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1 COVENTRY C.D.P. AND
THE GOVERNMENT'S POVERTY PROGRAMME

1. AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE STOCK

The ending of the Coventry and Liverpool Community Development Projects (CDP) 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 (1). 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. This is an important opportunity to take stock of progress and to re-examine some of the government's basic assumptions in the light of local findings and experience.

The Origins of the Poverty Programme

- 1.1 The British "poverty" programme has grown rapidly over the past five or six years. Small scale action-research projects have proliferated as central government's popular formula for responding to urban deprivation. 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. They require special help to meet their social needs and to bring their physical services to an adequate level" (2).

The Poverty of the Poverty Programme

- 1.2 The Urban Programme was spawned outside the main channels of government policy and expenditure. It was allocated only minute resources. Total expenditure over its first five years amounts to less than £20 million. This is 1/20th of 1% of total public expenditure (3). Moreover, it was not even extra money for local areas. The Urban Programme allocation is deducted from the total rate support grant pool available for local authority spending. It involves minimum redistribution even between local authorities. Although its share of the general rate support grant fund has been increasing slightly since 1971, it is still less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of 1%. Minor adjustments in the formula for the rate support grant or the revaluation of the rates (4), or legislation like the Housing Finance Act 1972 can, at a stroke, take more money out of disadvantaged areas than the whole of the money put in through the Urban Programme.

(1) The other 10 Projects are based in Southwark, Glamorgan, Newham, Batley, Paisley, Newcastle, Cumberland, Birmingham, Tynemouth and Oldham.

(2) House of Commons Hansard, vol. 769, cols 40-49 (July 22nd 1968).

(3) Meacher, M., "The Politics of Positive Discrimination" in "Positive Discrimination and Inequality" Fabian Research Series 314, March 1974.

(4) Carter, L. and Bond, N., "Revaluing the Rates - Who Gains, Who Loses" Municipal Review, January 1974.

The New Ingredient - Action Research

- 1.3 The national Community Development Project (CDP) was set up as part of the Urban Programme in 1969. 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". The new ingredients were to be:

- (a) action-research
- (b) focus on a small area
- (c) involvement of a range of public agencies
- (d) self-help and involvement of the community.

CDP was to be a selective and inexpensive test-bed for bigger developments by the major spending departments of central government (5).

The Need to Take Stock

- 1.4 However, small-scale experimental projects like CDP have been duplicated in a number of central government departments since: the Cycle of Deprivation Studies set up by Sir Keith Joseph in the Department of Health and Social Security in 1972; and the Six Towns Studies promoted by Peter Walker in the Department of the Environment in 1972. Finally in 1974, the Home Office set up an Urban Deprivation Unit to co-ordinate all these overlapping experiments. However, this has already added to the confusion by promoting a new programme of its own - the Comprehensive Community Programmes which are to be given trial runs in five or six selected local authorities! It is remarkable that all these programmes have begun without waiting for the findings or experience of any of the previous ones (6).

2. THE ORIGINAL CDP PRESCRIPTION

- 2.0 The original model for CDP contained a number of basic assumptions about urban deprivation which have recurred in later parts of the poverty programme but which experience in Coventry and collaboration with other CDP teams has forced us to question and reject.

Personal and Family Inadequacy

- 2.1 The experiment was based on a belief that the problem of urban deprivation concerned small concentrations of people caught on a treadmill of personal and family problems which demanded special treatment:

(5) "Because there are so far no known and tried solutions to (urban problems) which can be described and offered for general application, the proper course is to admit that this is so, and to attack them in an experimental framework, so structured and documented that successful approaches can be identified and followed up".
CDP, "Objectives and Strategy" page 1, Home Office, September 1970.

(6) Although an Anglo-American Conference was held to evaluate American experience of experiments in social policy, it did not influence the British CDP design - see CDP, "Experiments in Social Policy and their Evaluation", Report of Conference at Ditchley Park, 29-31 October 1969.

"Although the social services cater reasonably well for the majority, they are much less effective for a minority who are caught up in a chain-reaction of related social problems. An example of the kind of vicious circle in which this kind of family could be trapped is ill-health, financial difficulty, children suffering from deprivation, consequent delinquency, inability of the children to adjust to adult life, unstable marriages, emotional problems, ill-health - and the cycle begins again" (7).

Deviant Behaviour

- 2.2 Some of the early documents (8) imply that the problem is seen not just as the existence of concentrations of social cripples who need help but also of a deviant sub-class whose behaviour has to be changed and controlled. Local teams were provided with guidelines for research which suggested that they should measure a number of indicators of problems in the local community. Among these were improvements in personal health care; improved nutritional habits; improved personal hygiene; increased use of family planning; reduction in damage to houses; reductions in neglect, ill treatment and cruelty to children; reduction in the number of evictions made necessary by anti-social or bad neighbour behaviour; and reductions in abuse of social services, fraud and voluntary unemployment. The treatment prescribed was an increased dose of the existing services or a better mixing of the ingredients with a better bedside manner.
- 2.3 Hillfields was chosen by the local authority and accepted by the Home Office with this kind of defective family behaviour in mind. It is a multi-racial inner-city neighbourhood, undergoing extensive but protracted redevelopment; known before the war as a respectable working-class and cosmopolitan community, the area had gradually developed a reputation as the city's black spot - a centre of vice and crime, an area of physical and moral decline. Within this area, an inner core of 26 streets with a population of 5,700 was originally selected as the focus for the Project's attention. Among the problems which were noted in confirming the local authority's choice of this area were its "bad name" and "bad appearance": a whole variety of examples were listed - drug-taking, meths drinking, vandalism and prostitution, dilapidated housing, refuse, rubbish and rats, sleazy cafes, a high proportion of immigrants, high absenteeism from school and high take-up of free school meals.

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- (7) Press Release on CDP, "A Major Experiment in Improving the Social Services for Those Most in Need", page 1, 16 July 1969.
- (8) CDP - "Objectives and Strategy" Annex A, Home Office, September 1970.

Co-ordination and Communication

- 2.4 One solution to these problems was believed to lie in better co-ordination and better communication. Better co-ordination was to be of two kinds. First in the delivery of the personal support services to make them "more accessible and intelligible to the poor and severely deprived"; and second in the patterns of neighbourhood community organisation and community care "to surmount the twin obstacles of fragmentation and depersonalisation in modern society" (9).
- 2.5 The co-ordination of services was to involve "bringing together the work of all the social services under the leadership of a special project team" (10). The original CDP documents suggest that the members of this team would be largely from the personal support services and would be drawn from the field level. For example, the CDP Project Director in Coventry was originally appointed to lead a team made up of child care officer, probation officer, education welfare officer, mental welfare officer and a disablement resettlement officer. Links were also to be established with the local police, supplementary benefits office and voluntary agencies including the Family Planning Association.
- 2.6 The tighter co-ordination and integration of the neighbourhood community was to be attempted by trying to "mobilise untapped resources of self-help and mutual aid existing among people in the community, even among those who experience most difficulty in standing on their own feet" (10). Other early Home Office documents describe the aim of CDP as "to reduce the dependence of such families on difficult and costly forms of help" (10) thus revealing the mixture of moral and financial motives which lay behind the notion of self-help.
- 2.7 Better communication between such families and local decision makers was to be achieved partly by the team working from a neighbourhood base; and partly by the creation of a local steering group for each project, with representatives from all participant organisations (local and central government, voluntary agencies and the community) to act as "a channel through which the community is able to obtain access to the agencies controlling the resources". The assumption behind this is that "among families suffering from multiple deprivation there is a great deal more need than is known to the social services and the gap between actual and expressed needs is caused to a large extent by inadequate communication" (11). The implication of this seems to be that it is the scale of need rather than the kind of need which remains unknown - its quantity rather than its quality. However, policy change within agencies was also envisaged.

(9) Coventry Evening Telegraph - "Plan to Help Hillfields", 15 July 1969, Report of Home Office talk.

(10) Press Release by Home Office on CDP, 16 July 1969.

(11) CDP - "Objectives and Strategy" Home Office, September 1970.

3. A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE PROBLEMS

- 3.0 The first months of the project in Coventry were spent getting to know the area. In the absence of the research team for the first year, the exploration began by getting involved in the life and activity of the neighbourhood in different ways (e.g. opening a shop-front Information Centre, working with residents' associations, and calling together a forum of local fieldworkers). This forced us to question many of the original assumptions about the causes of problems in Hillfields and to reject the suggested solutions.
- 3.1 In spite of its reputation, Hillfields did not seem to have any abnormal share of families with personal or psychological handicaps or deviant patterns of behaviour. This was confirmed by census data; and other social indicators revealed that Hillfields was by no means the only, or even the most seriously disadvantaged area in the city. A "malaise" study which examined the distribution of 13 variables concerned with personal or family pathology, showed that many areas of the city scored higher than Hillfields, which in fact was not significantly different in this respect from the Coventry average (12).
- 3.2 There was little evidence that the problems found in the area resulted from any obvious deterioration in the values and patterns of community life. Even the highly publicised phenomenon of prostitution in Hillfields could not be taken to mean a deterioration in community values. Its practitioners and clients were drawn from outside Hillfields in increasing numbers as adverse publicity and attention were given to the phenomenon. Similar self-fulfilling prophecies could be seen to apply to the labelling of the area in other ways, particularly in relation to planning blight and decay.
- 3.3 It became clear from contact with residents' groups and with callers at the Information and Opinion Centre that local people disagreed strongly with local agencies about the nature of their needs and aspirations. Residents did not see the solution to the area's problems as more of the personal support services, so much as drastic changes in official policies and procedures towards their neighbourhood. The past history of relationships between the locality and the authorities did not lead residents to believe that better communications or round-table discussions would lead to improvement in their conditions. They saw the problem as their powerlessness to influence the decisions which affected their lives, their homes, and their area in the directions they wanted. The solutions, therefore, could not be found simply in re-arrangements in the delivery of services in the field, but demanded changes in the political and administrative processes which influenced the overall distribution of resources, opportunities, costs and benefits in the city.

(12) Telford, A., "Social Indicators: Their Role in Developing an Understanding of Stress", Final Year Dissertation, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry, 1974.

3.4 The most obvious problems experienced by local people were very low incomes with substantial dependence on supplementary benefits, very poor housing and insecurity about the future of their 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 interventions since the war. The stresses in this neighbourhood thus affected not just a small deviant minority but large sections of the population as a whole. Few of the problems (except redevelopment) 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 mainly because of their combination and concentration. Even where personal or social handicaps were apparent it was sensible to assume that these were the product of the severe external pressures to which local people were subject - at least until those factors had been eliminated.

4. AN ALTERNATIVE PRESCRIPTION

4.0 We, therefore, came to the conclusion that Hillfields could not be treated as an isolated area with peculiar internal problems, nor as a special case for priority treatment. Instead it had to be seen as a cross-section of the life of Coventry as a whole. In Hillfields we were confronted by the symptoms of the impact of national and local policies and procedures upon one older working-class area and one section of the city's population. It was clearly impossible to tackle the situation through the personal support services alone without taking account of the external problems of income and housing; or through the delivery of services at the field level alone, without taking into account city-wide processes of resource allocation, planning and management. It was also impossible to tackle the situation adequately while restricting attention to a few streets in isolation.

4.1 This forced us radically to modify the design and organisation of the experiment. The changes we proposed were adopted by the Home Office and the original model of the national experiment modified:

- i) We moved away from the arrangement of the project as a new-style executive agency (co-ordinating the delivery of the personal support services in the field) towards a view of the project as a catalyst (examining key problems in a number of service areas, and stimulating change at a variety of levels). This also seemed more consistent with the project's experimental status and limited life.
- ii) We extended the boundaries of the study area beyond the original core of 26 "problem" streets, to include the whole of Greater Hillfields - a population of 19,000.

iii) We rejected the original proposal for a Local Steering Group to act as a grand parliament bringing together and co-ordinating all interests in the Project area. We replaced it by a Project Committee which aimed to locate and focus the realities of political and financial control (13).

4.2 This challenge to the initial assumptions of the national experiment also led us in Coventry to shift the focus of study away from the neighbourhood as the main source of the problems and on to the agencies which allocate resources and provide services at the local level. Our understanding of the overall dynamics of the area was still very rudimentary at this stage. The evidence we built up from analysis of census and survey material was complemented by the picture which emerged from exploratory work within the neighbourhood.

i) The issues identified by the callers at the Information and Opinion Centre during the twelve months after its opening, fell conclusively into three major categories: housing problems, problems connected with redevelopment, and welfare rights matters. Underlying each of these was a need for basic information about plans affecting them, services available, and eligibility for certain rights and benefits.

ii) The issues which appeared to concern neighbourhood groups and associations most were the future of their homes and the state of the physical environment; pre-school provision; play facilities; the needs of the elderly; community and social facilities.

iii) The issues which pre-occupied fieldworkers from the area were the relevance of the educational process to the social and cultural diversity of the population; the problems and processes undergone by young people in making the transition from school to work; the needs of vagrants and homeless men; the needs of the elderly, particularly during redevelopment; and physical environmental problems in general.

4.3 We therefore selected the following key areas for programmes of action-research (14).

- i) Income Support Services and Citizens' Rights
- ii) Support Services for the Elderly
- iii) Support for young people in the transition from school-life to work-life
- iv) Planning, Housing and Environment
- v) Industry
- vi) Local Government and Corporate Management

(13) The Project Management Committee consists of the Chairmen of relevant local authority committees, plus representatives from the Home Office and major voluntary agencies committing resources to the Project.

(14) Other fields of CDP work not reported here (e.g. neighbourhood work; joint programmes with Education and Social Services Departments) are discussed in the first volume of our Final Report.

4.4 A large part of our work has thus concentrated on the functioning of the government institutions and agencies which administer the needs of, or have consequences for, the disadvantaged. As we have worked we have been forced increasingly to recognise the importance of the wider economic and political processes in which the problems of Hillfields have arisen. This has made us focus increasingly on factors affecting public and private investment in the older working-class areas of the city. Although our studies of these issues began only very late in the life of the Project they have influenced our ideas quite considerably. Some of the core material is contained within the following sections on Planning and Industry. We have also begun to explore the functioning of the local state within the political economy of the city and some of these perspectives are sketched in in the section on Local Government and Corporate Management. The failure of the national state to provide an adequate system of income maintenance for the non-productive members of society and the most expendable sections of the work-force (the old, the unsupported mothers, the low-paid, the unemployed and the sick) is illustrated with reference to Hillfields in Section 3. The impossibility of the local state ever being able to compensate for these fundamental inequalities is illustrated in relation to the elderly in Hillfields in Section 4.

2 PLANNING IN COVENTRY AND THE DECLINE OF HILLFIELDS

1. SNAPSHOTS OF THE AREA

- 1.0 Hillfields is in many ways a typical inner-city neighbourhood. It lies within a triangle of railway lines which enclose all the older working-class areas of the city. Hillfields itself was Coventry's first suburb and was developed in two main stages: 1820 - 1860 and 1890 - 1914. It still retains large areas of two-storey terraced housing dating back to the second of these stages. The many small workshops and factories amongst the housing cause traffic hazards, noise and pollution and the neighbourhood is lacking in facilities and open space. The area was badly damaged during the war and bomb sites are still a prominent feature in many streets. War damage caused to the area resulted in extensive Council plans for the comprehensive redevelopment of parts of Hillfields (3000 houses).
- 1.1 The rebuilding of Hillfields began in 1959 and has been continuing, with interruptions, ever since. However, development has not always been comprehensive; isolated houses have been closed or demolished on public health grounds or as a spasmodic part of the planned clearance programme. The derelict land and houses left behind by both the war and the operations of the Local Authority are an eyesore and a danger to human life and a constant source for complaint from local people. They help to give the area an atmosphere of general decay and obsolescence.
- 1.2 To this air of decay has been added the feeling of living in the middle of a gigantic building site. Over the past 15 years local people have faced the upheaval of street by street demolition of houses and the rebuilding of a large scheme of high-rise Corporation flats, a private estate, new schools and shops. Redevelopment has also imposed many changes on the composition and nature of the area.

Environmental Conditions

- 1.3 In 1969 the Department of Architecture and Planning carried out a 10% sample housing survey of the oldest housing in the city. The survey found that St Michael's Ward (which includes most of Hillfields) had the highest degree of environmental deprivation in the city (see figure 2.0). Some 96% of 2560 dwellings in the area were affected by at least one of the following environmental problems or deficiencies
- i) lack of children's play space
 - ii) lack of garaging and off street car parking space
 - iii) traffic hazards, especially from traffic passing through the area
 - iv) pollution and noise especially from industry and traffic
 - v) lack of public open space
 - vi) poor visual environment, especially derelict land
 - vii) lack of everyday facilities such as public transport and shops
 - viii) dominance of industry in housing areas

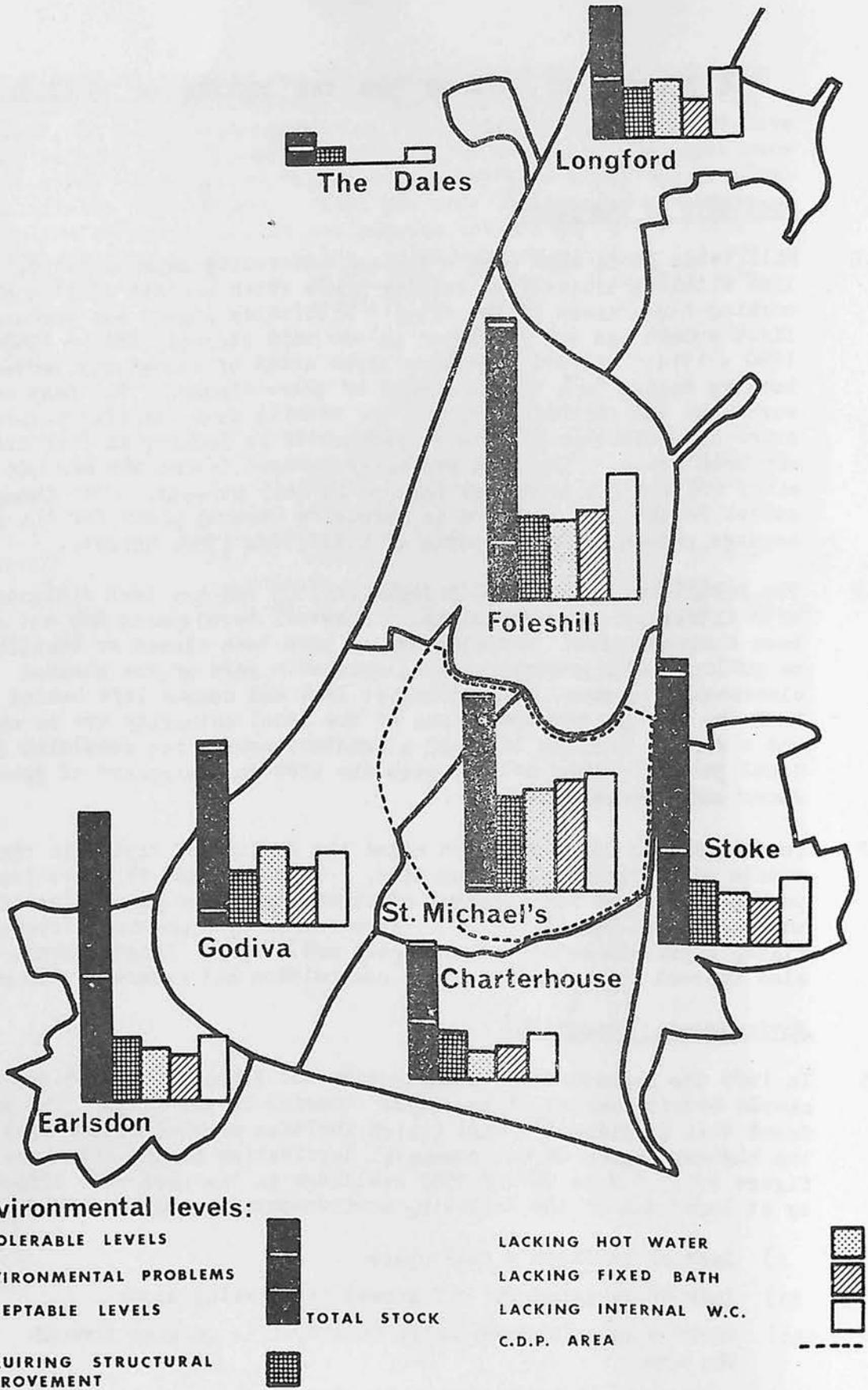


Figure 2.0 Structural & environmental conditions & lack of facilities, July, 1970

Source: Internal report on the Housing Survey and the Recommendations of the Housing Working Party, October 1970.

Table 1

Lack of Household Amenities in Hillfields Compared with Coventry
in 1961, 1966 and 1971

Household Amenities	Percentage of Households					
	1961		1966		1971	
	Hillfields	Coventry	Hillfields	Coventry	Hillfields	Coventry
Sharing or Lacking W.C.	14.6	5.1	11.9	3.3	46.1*	12.9*
Shared or no Bath	63.1	17.2	64.8	12.6	44.8	8.3
Shared or no Hot Water	72.7	24.5	60.2	16.6	39.1	9.0
Exclusive Use of All Amenities	20.4	73.1	24.3	75.3	47.5	84.1

SOURCE: Census 1971, Small Area Statistics, Household Tables.

Housing Conditions

- 1.4 Since the war substantial changes have taken place to the housing conditions of Hillfields. Although some housing redevelopment has taken place in Hillfields, the older housing that remains is generally in poor condition. Less than half (48%) of all households in Hillfields have exclusive use of the three basic amenities: hot water, bath and w.c. This contrasts strikingly with the position in Coventry as a whole where 84% of households have all three amenities despite the fact that demolition has been a significant factor in reducing the proportion of houses in Hillfields lacking amenities (see table 1).
- 1.5 When tenure is compared with lack of amenities it can be seen that it is the owner-occupiers who more frequently have all the basic amenities. Even though a significant proportion of Hillfields has been rebuilt with relatively modern flats, tenants are worse off in terms of amenities. This suggests a concentration of the problem in the privately rented sector (see Appendix 1).
- 1.6 There is also a relationship between length of residence in Hillfields and the lack of amenities in the area. Residents who have lived in the area for at least 20 years are more likely to be lacking basic amenities in their homes. The figures also tend to suggest that short-stay households, possibly in private rented furnished accommodation, are also deprived of basic amenities (see Appendix 2).

Housing Tenure

- 1.7 The majority of households in Hillfields rent their homes. This has been the case since the war; however, drastic and significant changes have taken place in the landlord-tenant relationship from a situation of 50% privately rented unfurnished tenancies in 1961 to one of only 31% in 1971. This decline in private renting has been offset by the increase in Council tenancies in the area from 5% in 1961 to 23% in 1971. This rapid change in the tenure pattern of Hillfields has been a result of the Council demolition of privately rented property and its replacement with Council flats and houses. Owner occupation has not increased as rapidly as in the city as a whole (see table 2).

Table 2 Household tenure in Hillfields compared with Coventry in 1961, 1966 and 1971

Tenure group	Percentage of Households					
	1961		1966		1971	
	H'flds	Cov'y	H'flds	Cov'y	H'flds	Cov'y
Owner-occupiers	33.0	53.7	36.4	57.7	36.0	59.7
Council tenants	4.8	22.5	8.8	22.5	22.5	24.6
Private unfurnished tenants	50.3	18.0	44.6	14.9	31.1	12.0
Private furnished tenants	7.9	3.1	6.3	2.8	10.3	3.6
Total tenants	63.0	43.6	59.7	40.2	64.0	40.2

Source: Census data.

- 1.8 When Hillfields is compared with Coventry the most striking feature is the high percentage of privately rented furnished tenancies (10%). The incidence of privately rented furnished tenancies has increased in Hillfields over the last 10 years even though substantial numbers of older houses have been demolished. This would indicate that the older houses were increasingly being used by landlords as investments to avoid the controls of the Rent Acts (before the 1974 Rent Act) and to exploit the increasing number of people who are using Hillfields as a source of relatively cheap housing for a limited period only (see table 2).

Social Structure

- 1.9 This bias in the housing structure of Hillfields has produced a biased social structure since it is suited to the needs of specific groups of people. The large amount of relatively cheap, privately rented accommodation has attracted a lower-paid, transient population unable or not wanting to buy their own homes and ineligible for Council dwellings (see table 3).

Table 3 Length of residence at present home

	No. in sample	%
NR	1	0.13)
Less than 6 months	58	7.62)
6 months - 2 years	121	16.31)
2 - 5 years	211	28.44)
6 - 10 years	98	13.21)
11 - 20 years	78	10.51)
21 - 30 years	87	11.73)
31 - 40 years	49	6.60)
More than 40 years	39	5.26)

Source: 1 in 6 Survey of Hillfields, 1971

In 1971, 14.2% of residents had moved into the Local Authority area within the previous five years (compared with 8.9% in Coventry) (1). Surveys show a high turnover rate in local schools (more than 20% at Southfields and 15 - 19% at John Gulson School in 1972 (2). There

(1) Census 1971, Small Area Statistics, Household Tables

(2) School records 1972 school year quoted in Coventry Corporation Key Decision Area Report on "The Under Fives", August 1973.

is, however, a core of long-term residents in Hillfields, many of them elderly (3). Although the age structure of Hillfields is not markedly different from that of Coventry (4), there are slightly more children under school age (11.2% compared with 8.9%) and slightly more elderly people (13.8% compared with 12.7% over retirement age) (see Appendix 3). There is also a disproportionate number of single parent families in Hillfields: 14.6% of all dependent children have only one parent compared with 9.5% in Coventry (5). The presence of poorer families is indicated by the fact that in 1971 40% of Hillfields school children were receiving free school meals (6).

- 1.10 Many of the newcomers to Hillfields are immigrants. Their proportions have risen dramatically from 1961 (9.8% born outside the British Isles) to 1971 (25.1%) (7). In 1971, 31.0% of Hillfields' residents had both parents born in the New Commonwealth (mainly in India) compared with only 6.1% in Coventry as a whole. In the schools in Hillfields 35% to 55% are immigrants (8).

2. PLANNING AND THE DECLINE OF HILLFIELDS

- 2.0 The nature of the housing stock and the physical environment of Hillfields have been described in the introduction to this report. These conditions have now persisted for some 35 years in spite of the Council's intention (first expressed as long ago as 1944) to comprehensively redevelop and revitalise the whole neighbourhood. In the following paragraphs the effect of the Council's plans and policies on Hillfields since 1940 is considered.

Areas of Extensive War Damage

- 2.1 By the end of 1940 the city had suffered extensively from war damage. Hillfields took a large share of the punishment and in all 13 acres of the area were reduced to ruins and had to be cleared. The extent of the bomb damage in Coventry presented the City Council with an emergency situation. The pressure on housing from an ever increasing population was brought to crisis point by the bombing; it was estimated that repairs were needed to two-thirds of the total housing stock and 2000 houses had been destroyed or irreparably damaged (9). The city centre had also suffered devastation. As a result the Council set up a City Redevelopment Committee to prepare a "central area redevelopment plan". By February 1941 the Committee had adopted a redevelopment scheme which was confined to the city centre. Even in a peace-time economy the scale of reconstruction needed would have been beyond the resources of the city to provide efficiently and quickly. Emergency measures to tackle reconstruction were hindered by a lack of powers to purchase vacant sites and derelict property. It was not until September 1943 that the City Redevelopment Committee finally approved a "Reconstruction Area"

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- (3) CDP 1 in 6 Survey, Eagle Street Survey, Department of Architecture and Planning. 1973.
 (4) Census 1971, Small Area Statistics, Household Tables.
 (5) Census 1971, Small Area Statistics, 10% Sample.
 (6) Calculated from figures supplied to CDP by Coventry Education Department in 1971.
 (7) Census 1961; 1971, Small Area Statistics, Population Tables.
 (8) Coventry Corporation Key Decision Area Report "The Under Fives" August 1973.
 (9) Richardson, K., "Twentieth Century Coventry", London Macmillan 1972 (page 84 and chapter 10, section 3)

plan for an area of 383 acres based on the 1941 scheme and the proposed legislation for compulsory purchase powers. By 1944 it was proposed that this area should be an "Area of Extensive War Damage" under the new 1944 Town and Country Planning Act.

The Choice Between the City Centre and Hillfields

- 2.2 In March 1945, after negotiations with the Chamber of Commerce, the proposed "Area of Extensive War Damage" was enlarged to 452 acres, including a route for the inner ring road. At the Public Enquiry into the redevelopment scheme for the proposed "Area of Extensive War Damage" (January 1946) the conflicts of priorities confronting the city were voiced. A number of councillors and others pressed for Hillfields also to be declared an "Area of Extensive War Damage" to prevent further blight and decline. On 21 February 1946 the City Redevelopment Committee (10) considered the following resolution passed by the Council on 5 February 1946:

"That the Committee be asked to take into consideration the desirability of submitting an application to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning to declare immediately Harnall and All Saints Wards (known as the Hillfields area) as 'Area of Extensive War Damage No. 2' It was reported that the area of the above wards is 513 acres and . . . resolved that the Committee are of the opinion that it would be mistaken policy to attempt at this stage, when so much effort has to be devoted to the preparatory work for Area No. 1 (the city centre), to commence work on another and larger area."

The Committee felt that it would be more advantageous to use the other provisions of the planning legislation in order to deal with these other admittedly severely war damaged areas. However, on 5 March 1946 the Committee were asked to reconsider this question once more by the Council but again declared themselves against it.

The Eventual Plans for Hillfields

- 2.3 Plans for the treatment of Hillfields were not formulated until the City's 1951 Development Plan was produced. In this Plan three Comprehensive Development Areas (CDAs) were designated, the city centre Spon End and Hillfields. The Plan envisaged a capital investment programme of £12 million on the reconstruction of the city centre over the following 15 years, but was much less specific about the finance or the timetable for Spon End and Hillfields. Only 54 dwellings in the Hillfields Comprehensive Development Area (2.5% of the total number of dwellings in the CDA) were classified as "unfit for human habitation" and although the planners suggested that "on the whole the residential streets present a drab and depressing appearance", it was concluded that "the bulk of the property could not be classified as a slum" (11). This is an important point: the planners were clearly arguing that the condition of the houses alone was not sufficient to justify the redevelopment of Hillfields. The

(10) Richardson, K., op. cit.

(11) City of Coventry 1951 Development Plan, page 149, Coventry City Council, 1952.

main reasons given for designating Hillfields as a CDA were the war damage, the age and density of the dwellings and the need to rationalise the industrial and residential zones. Their arguments for comprehensive development were based on the assumption that what remained of Hillfields was obsolete in terms of existing planning standards and ideals.

The Planners' Dream Becomes a Nightmare

- 2.4 However as months turned into years and the 1951 plans for comprehensive redevelopment were not implemented, Hillfields became steadily undermined physically, economically and socially by the lack of sustained investment and the planning blight hanging over the area. Gradually a mood of resignation and despair developed as the neighbourhood was continuously neglected and services were run down. The promise to Hillfields was one of wholesale renewal: a genuine housing and environmental improvement which would materially benefit the community. The local press, in 1951, had hailed the plans for Hillfields as "bold measures for arresting the blight in the area . . . and when the old houses have been pulled down new houses and flats will spring up in pleasant surroundings giving light, air and cleanliness to an area now suffering from blight". Twelve years later, in 1963, this vision seemed to be fading into the future and the press headlines had changed to commenting "The Hillfields of Tomorrow . . . will be just a Planners' Dream for 20 years". The growing reality in Hillfields was one of spasmodic action, and increasing uncertainty and anxiety amongst local people. By 1961 the blight had established itself sufficiently for the City Council to estimate that 53% of the housing in Hillfields would become "unfit for human habitation" over the following five years.

The New Hillfields Begins to Take Shape

- 2.5 The redevelopment programme for the area gradually increased momentum in the mid to late 1960s. The 1966 Review Plan (12) acknowledged that "the pace of redevelopment in Hillfields and Spon End has been slower than intended because of financial limitation and land acquisition problems". But by the beginning of the CDP in 1970, twelve blocks of high-rise flats and an old people's home had been opened; and a new RC primary school, a nursery centre and play centre were all nearing completion. Compulsory purchase orders were also being prepared for the demolition of a further 146 dwellings by 1971 to allow for the building of Sidney Stringer School; 30 sheltered flat-lets for old people; 125 houses for private ownership; and a small private shopping development. Many Hillfields residents had already been forced to relocate due to the war damage sustained to their homes, often moving only a few streets. Some had been uprooted again to be placed in a half completed environment sometimes several storeys high (13). Others were clearly going to have to leave Hillfields altogether whether they wished to or not.

(12) City of Coventry Review Plan 1966, Analysis and Written Statement Coventry City Council 1967.

(13) Almost 10 years elapsed before the high-rise flats were provided with play areas and garages and the area surrounding them paved and grassed, as the photograph opposite illustrates.

The New Hillfields Begins to Take Shape



Whose Hillfields ?

- 2.6 Clearly the Hillfields of the future could expect to be very well endowed with community facilities, but facilities for whom? The 1966 Review Plan states that "the intention has been to rebuild at approximately the density of the existing development in an attempt to retain the communities living in those areas, and to complete the project within the 1951 Plan period ending in 1971". This seems to imply an acceptance at that stage that the Hillfields community was worth retaining and that the redevelopment should be programmed to achieve this.
- 2.7 However, when the CDP began early in 1970 we became aware that under the existing plans a high proportion of the existing population was likely to have to move to other parts of the City. The phasing then proposed did not allow for a planned programme of rolling redevelopment, whereby residents living in houses to be demolished, could be rehoused in new houses in the same area built on previously cleared land. Indeed the only alternative Council accommodation, already available in Hillfields, consisted of bedsitters and one and two bedroomed flats, which meant that mature families could not be offered rehousing in the area. The Housing Committee said that Hillfields' residents relocated elsewhere would be able to apply for transfer back to the area if they so wished once the redevelopment was complete. However, a change in political control of the Council (from Labour to Conservative 1967 - 1972) since this promise was made resulted in more private houses being built than Council houses (as opposed to flats) which has precluded those on lower incomes from being able to return even if they wished. Even now, in 1975, the Council is still not in a position to honour this promise, since the bulk of the land cleared since 1970 is still vacant and only 28 Council houses for families have been built in the area. (It is expected that approximately 325 dwellings will be under construction by April 1976.

The Changing Face of Hillfields

- 2.8 The replanning of Hillfields since the war has had the effect of fragmenting Hillfields as a traditional working class residential neighbourhood. The traditional function and culture of the area is gradually being eroded by developments which are influenced more by the overall planning needs of the city than by a commitment to stabilize and consolidate the existing community structure. In spite of above-average provision of social facilities (e.g. nursery centre, play centre, community school) the overall trend is to alter the social balance of the area. Many small, second-hand and exchange shops have been demolished to make way for a proposed shopping centre with few and larger supermarket units. Houses and land on the fringes of the area have been appropriated for uses which would normally be found in the city centre, e.g. bingo club, Salvation Army Hostel, staff hostel for a city centre hotel and the proposed development of land for offices in Lower Ford Street. The building of the ring road on the southern edge of the area has led to the appropriation of land for wholesale warehouses (Volmax, Linnells) and further houses are to be demolished for light industry (Lower Ford Street). If plans for the city's urban motorway network go ahead, yet more land in Hillfields will be taken (Gosford Spur road proposals).

- 2.9 A scheme for private housing development in the area was announced in May 1969, after the Conservatives gained control of the City Council, specifically as an attempt "to change the face of Hillfields" and to achieve "a better balanced community in the district"(14). The aim was described as being to attract to the area young couples, single professional and business people, and families who wanted a modern home within easy reach of the city centre; the hope was that "we may yet see Hillfields become once again the fashionable off-centre residential area of the city".
- 2.10 This represented a substantial change of policy towards Hillfields and reflected the deterioration in the reputation of the area since the war. The neighbourhood, before the war, was being described in the press as "a respectable working-class area", "a yeoman community", "the backbone of the city", "the salt of Coventry"; and immediately after the war was "the victim of blitz and blight", but as the post-war redevelopment plans succumbed to further delays in Hillfields, the labels began to change to "a forgotten twilight area", "a Dickensian slum" and finally to "prostitutes' paradise" and "Coventry's square mile of vice and crime" (15).

The Effects of Planning Blight

- 2.11 Our work suggests that the deteriorating reputation of the area since the war as a "blackspot" had had less to do with any change in the composition or the behaviour of the local population, than with the creation of a vicious circle whereby planning proposals led to planning blight, and removal of incentives to maintain the condition of houses. This then led to rapid decay in the housing stock and the eventual need to demolish isolated unfit properties which in turn, together with the Council's demolition programme, led to damage to the general appearance of the neighbourhood.
- 2.12 We have found that many Hillfields residents agree with this description and feel strongly that the neighbourhood's post-war reputation as "a problem area" must be blamed on the way in which redevelopment has taken place. They argue that "the problems of Hillfields" are in fact not so much the problems of local people at all but the problems of the city. This diagnosis, first put forward by CDP in 1970 (16) received official recognition from the Corporation in 1972 when their report stated (17):

"It is significant that 20 years after their original inclusion in the Plan large areas are still being acquired and substantial redevelopment has still to be carried out, particularly in Hillfields area where the lack of progress has resulted in vacant sites becoming eyesores and land being used for tipping and fly parking giving the area a depressing and run down appearance. There is no doubt that this decline in the environment has aggravated the multiple social problems experienced in the Inner Areas of the City."

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- (14) Quotes from Chairman of Planning Committee at the time in Coventry Evening Telegraph, May 1969.
- (15) Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17 June 1969.
- (16) CDP report to meeting of Chief Officers, July 1970, and Services Co-ordinating Group, November 1970.
- (17) City of Coventry "Comprehensive Development Area - Future Clearance Project", Department of Architecture and Planning, Land Resource and Programme Division, March 1972.



Arthur Street, Hillfields : 1971

THE EFFECTS OF
PLANNING BLIGHT

Oxford Street,
Hillfields :
1975



2.13 It is apparent from the history that a large proportion of those living in Hillfields have survived for three decades of uncertainty and two decades under specific or general threat of being forcibly rehoused. Many local people feel that they have lived in the worst of all worlds for a substantial proportion of their lives. The result has been a high level of anxiety and resentment of authority which has led to a strong feeling that the removal of people from their homes by compulsory purchase is an illegitimate activity by the City Council without the prior consent of those involved. (See photographs on previous page.)

5. THE INFLUENCES OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE INDUSTRY, THE HOUSING MARKET AND FINANCE CAPITAL

3.0 We have argued that the housing and environmental problems of Hillfields have not been created by the people who live there but by the existence of plans, their stop-go implementation and the operations of the Local Authority. However, although many residents feel that the Council has created, or at least perpetuated, many of these problems, we need to acknowledge that the Council itself has been subject to a variety of constraints and powerful influences, which have affected the implementation of its plans for redevelopment and house building. Some of these constraints and influences are illustrated in the following examples drawn from our study of the City Council's minutes from 1945 to the present day.

Central Government Constraints on Redevelopment Plans

3.1 As early as January 1941, the Council sent a deputation to Whitehall to complain about the inadequacy of the planning and redevelopment powers of the Local Authority to tackle the massive problem of reconstruction which faced the city. Nevertheless, the 1944 and 1947 Town and Country Planning Acts never allowed the Council the degree of control which it obviously wanted (18). Hence the final Declaratory Order for the "Area of Extensive War Damage" made in 1947 was for 274 acres of the city centre, compared with the 452 acres requested by the Council.

3.2 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. These interventions have profoundly affected the Council's plans for the rebuilding of the city centre. The Conservative government of the early 1950s seems to have been particularly keen to support private development at the expense of municipal development. For example, in 1954 loan sanction was refused for the municipal development of large blocks of land in the Upper Precinct, so that the Council were obliged to accept the offer of a property company to develop these blocks. Again in 1957, the central government "requested" that the Council negotiate with private developers over the development of further large sites in the Precinct.

(18) Hodgkinson, G., "Sent to Coventry", Maxwell, 1970.



Five Ways Residents' Association Protest March, 3rd September 1974, against the Council's plans to demolish their houses and in support of their plan to save the area.

- 3.3 In addition to the effects of Central Government cutbacks in local authority expenditure upon urban renewal in the City, one particular planning decision by the Secretary of State affected Hillfields quite dramatically. In 1954 at the Public Enquiry into the 1951 Development Plan, the Corporation faced an objection from Singer Motors over the proposal to resite their foundry in Paynes Lane which was in a residential zone in the Plan. The Secretary of State upheld Singer's appeal and this led the Council to draw up new plans for Hillfields CDA with an increased industrial zone and a decreased residential zone. It also led to the scrapping of plans for council housing to be started in 1955 in Gilbert Street. The foundry has since moved, but this decision has had a lasting effect on the land uses in the CDA and this part of the CDA is still awaiting redevelopment.
- 3.4 In the early 1960s the CDA programme appears to have been continually held up by Central Government financial stringencies. In 1960 and 1961 there were urgent negotiations with Central Government over the cost of the Hillfields CDA in particular. The programme was to be rephased several times and the Council obviously felt that extra subsidies for redevelopment should have been given. In the cutbacks of 1968, following devaluation, the whole CDA programme was severely rephased delaying for five years the demolition of large parts of Hillfields. The reasons given by the Conservative Council were the need for "balance of financial commitment" in the CDA programme in the light of the economic crisis. The most recent cuts in Central Government capital expenditure have led to further rephasing of the redevelopment and renewal programme.

Central Government Constraints on House Building Plans

- 3.5 Coventry's housing programme was delayed in the late 1940s by the devaluation crisis, but the early 1950s saw the programme get off the ground with the encouragement of the new Conservative Government in 1951. This was achieved by cutting standards for new council houses, experimenting with maisonettes, flats and non-traditional building methods, e.g. the "no fines" system of house construction used at Wood End, and by encouraging the large scale contracting out to building corporations (Wimpey, Laing, Costain and Taylor Woodrow).
- 3.6 Coventry made the most of Central Government's encouragement to build for general needs, but in the mid 1950s there was a reversal of government policy. Local authorities were now to be encouraged to build for special needs only (the old, disabled and slum clearance). General needs housing was to be supplied by private enterprise and the private rented sector, with the aid of the decontrol of rents and the removal of security of tenure brought about by the 1957 Rent Act. There was therefore a sharp fall in council house building in Coventry from the peak of 2018 completions in 1956 to 171 completions in 1963 as a direct result of Central Government action. (See figure 2.1). Moreover the building of high-rise council flats in redevelopment areas was largely a result of Coventry's deciding to take full advantage of the extra government subsidies for high-rise building.

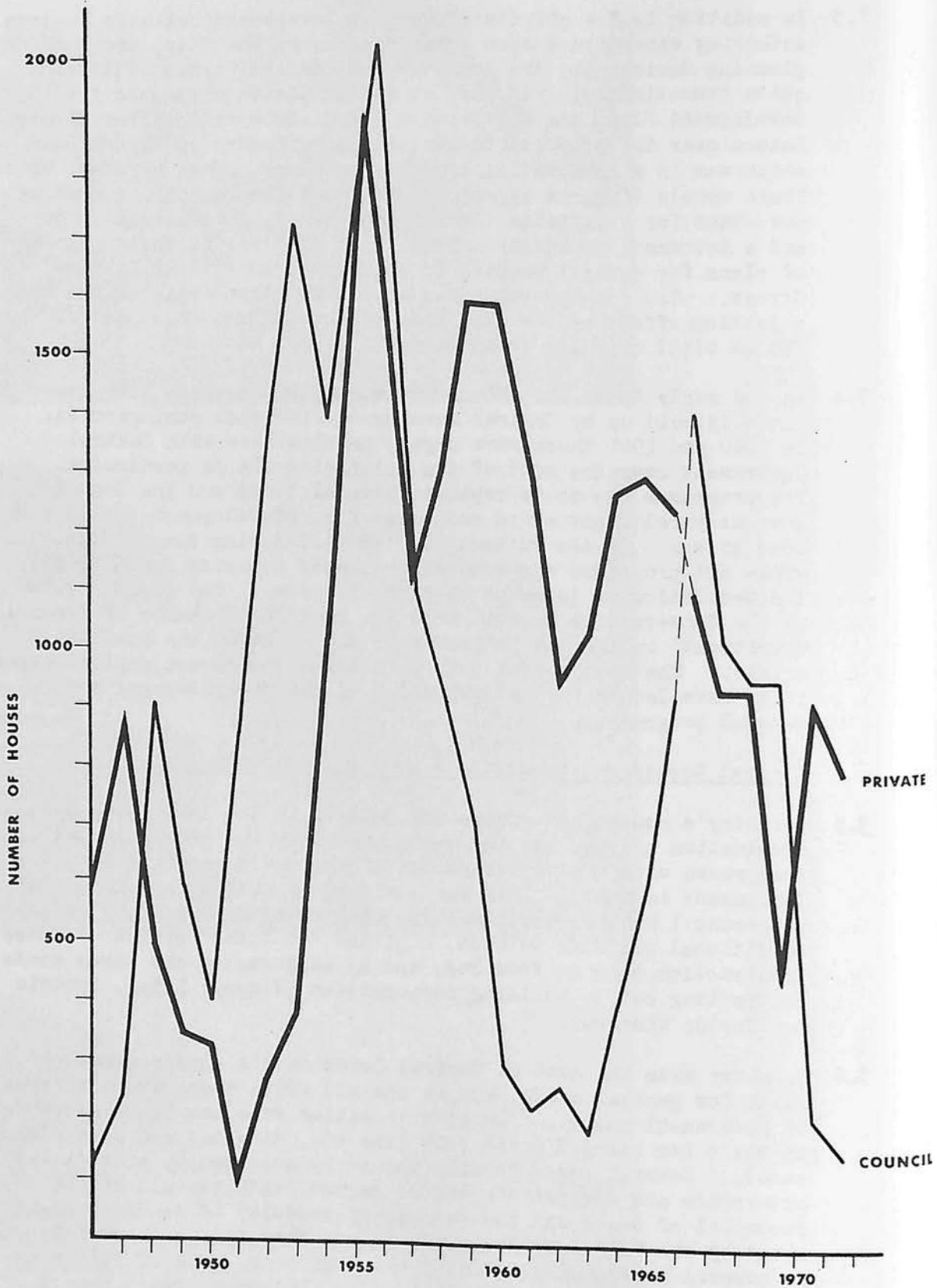


Figure 2.1 Number of houses built in Coventry since the war

- 3.7 In the mid 1960s there was a revival of council house building for general needs (with the new Labour Government), increasing homelessness and a rising waiting list in Coventry. The Parker Morris Report advocated higher standards of building which were implemented in estates such as Willenhall Wood and Ernsford Grange but no house building (as opposed to high-rise flats) took place in Hillfields during this period. In 1967 there was the second devaluation crisis and the "cost yardstick" was introduced in July of that year together with a cutback in loan sanctions for new council house building. This coincided with the new Conservative Council's decision to end council house building and encourage private developments in the CDAs, for example, Primrose Park Estate in Hillfields.
- 3.8 In recent years Government policy has encouraged local authorities to tackle their housing problems through the municipalisation of older houses, the stepping up of the number of housing advances on mortgage, rehabilitation and repair of houses, area improvement and the promotion of voluntary housing through housing associations. However the combination of inflation and the current rigid cost yardsticks mean that the future of new council house building in Hillfields and Coventry seem still to be in the balance, although there are a number of important new building schemes in the pipeline sponsored by the City Council (19).

The Influence of Private Industry

- 3.9 The state of local industry and the labour market has been a crucial constraint on both redevelopment plans and house building in the city. The rapid growth of the motor and engineering industries in the first half of this century created a massive demand for labour in Coventry. This was recruited from the depressed areas of the British Isles. The growth was accelerated further by munitions production in both wars and this created a further demand for labour. As a result the population of the city almost doubled between 1901 and 1921 and again between 1921 and 1940 and has continued to grow since. This rapid and large scale immigration from the UK and the Commonwealth, which was largely to meet the needs of private industry, put enormous pressure on the resources and services of the City Council. The Local Authority not only had to provide facilities such as schools and social services for the incoming population; it also had to provide housing. Furthermore, the City Council carried much of the cost of providing the basic infrastructure (roads, sewerage, water, electricity, gas) needed by industry to support its phenomenal and profitable expansions. In such a situation the costs of providing new services usually outpace the income available from rates and it was understandable that the City Council should choose to concentrate on those priorities where central government grants were most favourable, e.g. for new council house building and the renewal of the city centre. However, the giving of investment priority to the building of new housing estates and the reconstruction of the city centre has been one of the major factors underlying the 30 years of protracted delay in implementing the redevelopment plans for Hillfields.

(19) South West Action Area at Westwood Heath announced in February 1975 - a 170 acre site which is expected to house 7500 people in 2500 houses. The Housing Corporation and housing associations have been invited to take part in the development. The anticipated completions for municipal housing in the city for 1975/76 are 248 and for 1976/77 are 560.

- 3.10 These pressures have tended to mean that, particularly in times of economic crisis and cutback, public investment in the redevelopment of Hillfields has suffered. Moreover, the demand for housing from the continuous influx of workers into the city together with the increasing numbers of students at the Lanchester Polytechnic and Warwick University, has increased the pressure on areas of older housing such as Hillfields to provide furnished and unfurnished rented accommodation.

The Influence of the Housing Market

- 3.11 The influence of the private housing market on the operations of the City Council has been a significant factor on the implementation of plans for Hillfields. The demolition of Hillfields has increased the decline in the supply of privately rented houses in the city. Even though the number of private rented units in Hillfields has declined it still contains the highest concentration of privately rented accommodation in the city (20). This has resulted in the Council's having to deal with large numbers of individual land owners and landlords in its redevelopment and improvement programmes. Acquiring land was a problem in the implementation of the earlier parts of the Hillfields CDA.
- 3.12 There have been other factors contributing to the overall pressure on working-class housing in Hillfields. The waiting list for council houses has continued to grow and is still at a very high level. The decreasing supply of rented accommodation was further aggravated by the decision made by the Conservative Council to stop building council houses in the city in 1971 (see figure 2.1). There has also been a steady decline in the number of new houses built in the city (see figure 2.1). These pressures have been compounded recently by the rapid inflation of house prices and mortgage interest rates and the crisis in the Building Societies. All of these factors have caused a new threat to the older working-class areas through investment and speculation in older houses. Even the Financial Times has been encouraging readers to invest in "the marginal neighbourhoods where considerable profit potential is yet to be realised" (21).
- 3.13 Over the last year speculation for financial gain has increasingly determined how housing accommodation which has come onto the market is being used in Hillfields. This has caused the anomalous situation of a substantial number of houses being kept empty (they are more valuable empty than with sitting tenants) at a time when homelessness is on the increase. There have been a number of examples of houses being purchased, improved with grants from the Council and sold at a high percentage profit (22). The City Council has recently launched a vigorous policy of buying housing and giving financial help to housing associations as a means of taking housing out of

(20) Although the security of tenure given to unfurnished tenants by the 1966 Rent Act led to increasing numbers of houses being converted into furnished houses and flats for rent.

(21) Financial Times "Coming up in the world", 13 January 1973.

(22) This practice has been dealt with by the new powers and conditions of the Housing Act 1974.

the speculative market. However, our experience suggests that in spite of the Council's best attempts the interests of private capital in the older parts of the city cannot be challenged and controlled adequately by the present powers and procedures available to the Local Authority. Houses have been sold over tenants heads to property investment companies while the Council have been negotiating with the landlords. The same properties have later been sold to the Council (presumably at a higher price). The whole process created anxiety and uncertainty for the tenants (23).

- 3.14 The state of the building industry itself is a further constraint. This factor was felt particularly severely after the war when the local building industry had to compete for labour with the booming engineering industry. This was mentioned as an important constraint on housing and redevelopment in both the 1951 Development Plan and the 1966 Development Plan Review. The situation was eased by Coventry responding to this situation by experimenting with the use of non-traditional building methods, by the use of large corporate contractors and the extension of the Direct Works Department. The recent effects of inflation in the prices of materials and labour are too well known to need emphasis, e.g. the delay on the Adderley Street/Jesmond Road council houses in Hillfields. The building industry may also affect attempts by local authorities to use new methods to beat the house building problem. The extensive problems of damp, experienced by Coventry and other cities, in post-war council housing are attributable to bad design, poor construction and inadequate materials (24) as well as the cutting of standards for house building by the Conservative Government. More recently there have been problems with obtaining builders to do house improvement and repair work. Some builders have carried out poor building work (mainly for landlords) which has received approval for grant aid (25).

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- (23) The example given is of houses in Hartlepool Road and Stoney Stanton Road. Similar outcomes have occurred when a local estate agent (who also runs a local housing association) has been in competition for houses. Also negotiation between the City Football Club and the Council over houses owned by the Club which they wished to demolish for a directors' carpark; the Gosford Green Residents' Association objected to losing the houses and pressed the Council to purchase them.
- (24) Shelter Report, "Coventry Council Houses: The New Slums", December 1973.
- (25) The Local Authority has failed to make full use of the controls available to safeguard the interests of private tenants in the pilot GIA. Cases have been brought to our attention over the last year by the Winchester St/Colchester St Residents' Group where a Council grant had been given for what turned out to be bordering on shoddy work. In all cases a detailed survey report by an independent qualified inspector was obtained by the Residents' Group and Ward Councillors were informed.

The Influence of Finance Capital

- 3.15 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) had 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 (26).
- 3.16 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. In addition, the City Council has had to borrow in the market at interest rates which are increasing continuously due to inflation. For example, in 1973-74, the rate of interest on the Consolidated Loans Fund rose from 7% to an estimated 8.13% costing the City Council an extra £½ million in one year.
- 3.17 It is apparent that the City Council has to some extent been the victim of constraints and influences, which have significantly affected the Council's priorities and programmes. Whether the Local Authority should have taken more initiative to combat and allow for these influences will be discussed later. Certainly the Council did not accept the constraints imposed by these influences after the war. Insufficient account of the impact of the above factors on plans and the consequences for those living under their threat appears also to be called into question. This raises the issue of whether sufficient account is being taken of the lessons of this history in current policies, plans and programmes and current politics.

4. CURRENT POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

4.0 We have argued so far that:

- i) The problem has been caused by the plans and procedures adopted by or available to the City Council since the war.
- ii) Central government, private industry, the housing market, the building industry, finance capital and the state of the national economy have all influenced the plans and the Local Authority.
- iii) However, the Local Authority has not anticipated or countered these influences in formulating its plans.
- iv) The result of these factors has been a sustained and damaging level of uncertainty and insecurity in Hillfields for the last 35 years.

(26) It has been estimated that between 1945 and 1966 approximately £195 million at 1966 building costs was spent on reconstruction. City of Coventry Review Plan 1966 - Analysis and Statement, Coventry City Council 1967 (p. 208).

- 4.1 In the light of this let us examine our experience of current policies and plans and the prospects for the future of plans for the older areas in the city. How effective are the current and proposed policies in combatting the consequences of this legacy of uncertainty and insecurity ?

Redevelopment Policy, Plans and Procedures

- 4.2 The past plans to redevelop Hillfields have had far reaching social and financial repercussions and superimposed many short term stresses on those involved (27). The existence of "comprehensive plans" on paper has actually accelerated the decline of the area because an accurate timetable for action on the ground has never been sustained. This has led to planning blight over a large area. Where plans have been implemented the renewal of the physical fabric has often disrupted the social fabric (28). We were left in no doubt at the beginning of the Project, in 1970, that the stress of living in the throes of clearance and redevelopment and the repercussions of the process were overwhelmingly the most important problems identified by local people (29). It led us to say at that time that the physical environment of Hillfields was the focus and symbol for a great deal of bitter resentment and distrust of the Council (30).
- 4.3 Since the Council has gradually come to place an increasing emphasis on house and area improvement as opposed to demolition as a means of tackling the housing and environmental problems of the area. This change in emphasis has resulted from a number of factors including new government legislation and advice, the activities of local residents' groups and the recognition by local politicians of some of the harmful and unintended consequences of programmes of comprehensive redevelopment. However, the changeover from a policy of redevelopment to one of area improvement is proving to be a long and protracted one for the Local Authority. In 1970 the CDP, in

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- (27) Our surveys of Jenner Street (50 households) and Brook Street (80 households) Clearance Areas in early 1971 confirmed that residents lacked knowledge of their rights to objection and well-maintained payments, removal expenses and compensation; official communications were not understood; demolition dates were not known. It led us to conclude that few residents were prepared for the change ahead of them and that the whole process was causing considerable anxiety and confusion to all involved.
- (28) For example, a resettlement survey of 66 households (August-September 1971) rehoused from Sackville Street and Vine Street showed $\frac{2}{3}$ were still dissatisfied with the move, even after having lived in their new homes for more than nine months.
- (29) On opening the Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre on 1 June 1970, some 62% (418 callers) of all the enquiries and complaints were about derelict property, rehousing, repairs, public health, refuse and public amenities. See CDP Occasional Paper 2.
- (30) CDP report to the Services Co-ordinating Group and the meeting of Chief Officers, July and November 1970 (page 3).

conjunction with the Corporation and local residents, had already argued and received Council approval for the exclusion of two streets of houses in the centre of the Hillfields CDA for the purpose of declaring them the first GIA in the city (31). This exercise plus our further work with other residents' groups (32) has confirmed that the majority of houses currently proposed for clearance have a life of over 10 years as they stand, that they are structurally sound and capable of repair and improvement at "reasonable expense".

- 4.4 As late as 1972 a report (33), produced by the Local Authority, contained a reassessment of the clearance programme in Coventry to reduce the level of expenditure by half from £8½ million to £4 million over 10 years. This was achieved not by reassessing the need to demolish all the houses in the programme but by re-programming and putting back demolition dates. In 1973 we argued in evidence to the Structure Plan Examination in Public that a reduction of the proposed demolition of 5700 houses should be made in view of the shortage of cheap rented accommodation and evidence of increasing homelessness in the city. The Examination Panel agreed with this view (34). Nevertheless at the present time central Hillfields remains carved up into a patchwork of small clearance areas which have been re-timetabled several times over the last five years (35). All are within a stone's throw of each other but the expected programme for their demolition stretches uncertainly over different time periods into the future. Many of the houses are no worse or no better than those in the General Improvement Areas already declared (36). Their demolition would appear to be in direct

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- (31) Skelton, P., "The Winchester Street/Colchester Street Area Report" on the results of the social survey and analysis of improvement potential. CDP September 1971
- (32) The Five Ways Residents' Association covers the Eagle Street CDA and Action Area - an independent house condition survey of the houses the Corporation proposed to demolish carried out in 1973 by a freelance public health inspector showed that 90% of houses could be improved. See "A Future for Five Ways", Five Ways Residents' Association Report, February 1974.
- (33) City of Coventry, "Comprehensive Development Areas - Future Clearance Programme", Dept of Architecture and Planning, Land Resource and Programme Division, March 1972.
- (34) City of Coventry Structure Plan 1973 Examination in Public - Report of the Panel, 1974.
- (35) Oxford Street (42 houses to be demolished, post 1981), Vauxhall Street (17 houses to be demolished, March 1978), Vine Street (44 houses to be demolished, September 1979), Lower Ford Street (80 houses to be demolished, 1976 and 1977), Hood Street (21 houses to be demolished, March 1977).
- (36) Certainly these houses are no worse than houses recently purchased by the City Council in Canterbury Street, Hillfields. Proceedings of Housing Committee, Minutes of Council Meeting 11 February 1975.

conflict with the central government's current advice (37).

- 4.5 We have argued that the compulsory purchase and demolition of the oldest housing, typically inhabited by low income households (38) and newcomers to the city, has resulted in important changes of land use and land value in Hillfields. We noted earlier that cheap terraced housing, small shops, workshops and backyard firms have been replaced by one and two bedroom high-rise flats, large commercial interests and the gradual appropriation of land for city-wide and social services uses, e.g. wholesale warehousing, leisure and nightlife facilities, the ring road, hostels and the proposed office development, family rehabilitation centre. This has been linked with planned change in the form of more expensive shops, private housing and social welfare facilities. The result has not only been the depopulation of Hillfields (39) but also changes in the social composition and function of the area. Hillfields is gradually becoming an extension of the city centre in some respects. Its original functions as a reception area (housing newcomers to the city) and residual area (housing the traditional working class family of long standing in the area) are gradually transferring to adjoining older housing areas (40). This process has decreased the choices available to the worst off in the city; a situation which, if it continues, may have increasing impact and importance if the economic future of Coventry moves towards a situation of no growth or even decline.

Improvement and Repair Policy

- 4.6 Since the Housing Act 1969 Coventry's housing and planning policies have increasingly been directed in principle towards a programme of house repair and improvement in association with general improvement areas. Therefore in 1970 the City Council authorised "the implementation of a pilot scheme of General Improvement Areas (GIAs) . . . as a first step in a continuing programme of area improvement with a

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- (37) Department of Environment Circular 13/75 "Housing Act 1974 - Renewal Strategies", January 1975. In Hillfields because of the particular local situation this circular represents an important shift of emphasis in housing policy. However, nationally it has to be seen as a move towards a reduction in expenditure on housing by the government.
- (38) In 1971 nearly half the household heads in Hillfields had a net weekly income (earned or unearned) below £25, while only a quarter had a weekly net income of more than £35. 15% of the local population were having to depend on state benefits, CDP 1 in 6 Household Survey 1971.
- (39) The population of Hillfields declined from 19,121 in 1961 to 15,029 in 1971 as a result of rehousing families outside the area. Source: 1961 and 1971 Census Population Tables, Small Area Statistics.
- (40) There are signs that Foleshill to the north and the Gulson area to the south east of Hillfields are emerging as a replica of the earlier Hillfields.

view to preventing the decay of older dwellings in the city" (41). The City Council estimated that 8500 houses would benefit from GIA policies (42). Some five years later the city declared only three GIAs covering a mere 600 houses. Only the pilot GIA is nearing completion. All three GIAs in Hillfields and the organised residents' groups involved have been supported and advised by CDP. In fact residents' groups have been the prime initiators of two of the declarations (43).

- 4.7 Two research studies have used the pilot GIA scheme as a basis for analysing implications for the future GIA programme in terms of manpower, organisation, planning and management. On the basis of the first of these studies of the pilot GIA in 1971 it was concluded that:

"clearly some more rapid, less expensive, more effective and more widespread type of rehabilitation procedure will be necessary if the present process is not going to come too late for some parts of the city". (44)

In 1972 the second operational research study argued for a more flexible and adaptive response from the Local Authority in its dealings with residents and its approach to future GIAs, given the complexity and intensity of exchanges which had to take place for the GIA policy to work (45)

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- (41) Proceedings of Committees (Minute 91) to meeting of City Council, 1 December 1970.
- (42) Report on Housing Survey and recommendations of the Housing Working Party to Chief Officers October 1970. City of Coventry Structure Plan 1973 - Written Statement, page 44. The 8,500 houses for GIA treatment were part of an overall policy which also included 10,500 houses for Repair Area treatment pending decisions to implement GIAs.
- (43) Winchester Street/Colchester Street Area Report referred to earlier and "The HRS Residents' Association Report for the Declaration of Hartlepool Road, Redcar Road, and Stockton Road as a General Improvement Area", April 1972.
- (44) Duncan, T.L., unpublished "Interim Study Report of the progress and of the methods of procedure adopted by Coventry Corporation to implement a pilot GIA under Part II of the Housing Act 1969" November 1971. Later published in Duncan, T.L., "Housing Improvement Policies in England and Wales", Centre for Urban and Regional Studies Research Memorandum No. 28, January 1974, page 189.
- (45) Carter, K.C., et al., "Area Improvement Policies for the Inner City", Institute for Operational Research, July 1972, CDP Occasional Paper No. 6, October 1972.

13/9/74



Mr. Stan Batchelor (left), secretary, and Mr. Daryl Shaw, chairman of the HRS Residents' Association of Hillfields, Coventry, with the plan their association has put to Coventry City Council to save their area from decay.



COUN. Patrick Tynan received two petitions before last night's Coventry city council meeting

Here Mr. M. Wileman presents one from the Five-Ways Residents Association, while members of Bird Grove Residents Association wait their turn in the background.

Both organisations were requesting improvements in their areas.

13/2/74

4.8 With experience of the pilot GIA to draw upon and the benefit of two research studies, plus an in depth involvement in three GIAs, it is possible to make some observations on the Local Authority's programme of retention and improvement of houses rather than their redevelopment as carried out so far:

- i) The extensive reliance by the City Council on compulsory repair notices under Section 9(1) and 9(1A) of the Housing Act 1957 is resented by many people and does not meet the needs of local people for increased security to offset years of uncertainty (46).
- ii) There is little to be gained by naming the same area a GIA and a Planning Action Area (47). Unnecessary fears of planning blight are bound to arise from the combination of these procedures. Moreover, a Planning Action Area requires the preparation of a formal local plan by the City Council. The lengthy procedure involved, super-imposed on the normal GIA procedure, can only be a cause of delay and so of uncertainty and further blight.
- iii) Greater powers of control are required to prevent property speculation in GIAs especially to enable compulsory purchase and speedier conveyancing to the ownership of the Council (48).
- iv) The guarantee of a 30 year future for an area has been more important to the residents involved in all three areas so far declared than the availability of a small amount of money for environmental improvements. The latter is often seen by them merely as a bonus on top of the basic gain in security (49).

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- (46) The HRS, Five Ways and Park Street Residents' Associations have actively campaigned against "Repair Area" policies (compulsory repair notices issued on an area basis). This policy has been experienced by them as unhelpful, oppressive and a hostile intervention into people's lives by the Local Authority. Instead they have campaigned for GIA status and the use of repair notices only at the request of a tenant suffering poor housing conditions and without basic amenities.
 - (47) The Bird Grove GIA is within the Eagle Street Action Area. There is still a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion within the Local Authority and in the city, e.g. estate agents, builders, etc., as to the aims of area improvement as opposed to a Planning Action Area which in turn serves to confuse local people and lead to contradictory information and beliefs. (The declaration of Housing Action Areas will serve to increase this confusion.)
 - (48) See paragraph 3.13 and footnotes for details.
 - (49) Thornton, C., "The Meaning of Improvement", unpublished thesis, Dept of Urban and Regional Planning, Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry, April 1971 - this study used the residents of the HRS area as its sample to test out the meaning of improvement to local people through the semantic differential technique.

- v) In spite of the substantial outlay of manpower and capital the GIA programme as presently conceived and at present rates of progress will give security and superficial environmental treatment to only a few small pockets of older housing in the city. Large areas of older housing in need of a positive housing policy remain outside the proposed series of small GIAs.
- vi) More comprehensive and larger GIAs should be used to secure the future of whole districts. We believe these would also combat speculation in housing. The timing of declarations should also not have to wait for the detailed proposals for each area to be worked out first (50).

4.9 Nevertheless with these comments in mind and the experience to date and the current financial climate we would suggest that:

- i) the future of larger areas of the railway triangle than hitherto could be secured by the declaration of more and larger GIAs;
- ii) a "do-it-yourself" method of cosmetic treatment should be explored with local people to provide an immediate visual improvement to these areas, e.g. plant tubs, painting schemes, new street furniture (51);
- iii) some areas may even forego such spending to secure a guaranteed future and 60% grant aid towards house improvement and repair (52);
- iv) some of the manpower released from detailed design and negotiation could then be deployed in promoting GIA policy with residents in the older areas and with estate agents, builders and building societies in the city.

(50) Duncan, T., op. cit.

(51) The underground works in a GIA are the most costly aspects; they also take most time and there is no visual impact made on an area. Local residents may need to lobby the statutory authorities for this work in the same way as they would the Local Authority. The statutory undertakers ought to receive special government subsidy for this work.

(52) This view of GIAs accepts that the available resources (i.e. a fixed £200 per dwelling standard for environmental improvements in GIAs) are reducing in purchasing power due to inflation. As a result the environmental spending standard is not sufficient to tackle environmental problems such as non-conforming industrial and commercial uses in residential areas. It can only provide at best a superficial "cosmetic" treatment for an area. This should be recognised in preparing GIA plans for the future.

4.10 The recent addition of the Housing Act 1974 to the statute book has introduced and extended the geographical priority area notions of a GIA. Housing Action Areas (HAAs) and Priority Neighbourhoods have already been considered by the Local Authority (53). In relation to these policies we are acutely aware of the particular housing situation of Coventry. The new 1974 Housing Act powers have been designed with the housing problems of London and the large conurbations in mind. Given the arguments contained in this paper about the relatively good structural quality of Coventry's older housing and the primary need for economic security then we would urge that a policy decision be taken at the outset to use HAAs in Coventry to promote security first and foremost and encourage the inflow and use of private capital expenditure. At present the Act and the Circulars to the Act are ambiguous, arguing that an HAA may be used both as a holding operation for an area pending demolition and clearance or as a means of providing for the eventual declaration of the area as a GIA. In the Coventry situation such ambiguity could cause the HAA policy to fall between the two stools, thus reducing the impact that such a policy could make in promoting security if quickly followed up by a GIA. We urge that HAAs are used selectively, in the areas with the poorest housing conditions, where incomes are known to be low, and where insecurity, uncertainty and blight are at present the greatest, with the aim of saving and securing these areas for the future, e.g. the Five Ways area and Gulson area. We also urge consideration of a more limited time span for HAAs than five years (certainly no more than two to three years) plus the communal use of any money for improvements to curtilages, e.g. small cost schemes for maximum visual impact - house painting, etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.0 We have argued from the history of planning and housing in Hillfields that the pattern of public investment in Coventry since the war has been determined by a combination of:

- i) local political priority being given to the rebuilding of the city centre, providing new council estates to house the rapidly expanding population attracted to the city by the needs of industry;
- ii) the availability of central government grants and other capital loans;
- iii) the continued pressure from the historical location, expansion and growth of private industry.

(53) Proceedings of Housing Committee to Council Meeting 11 February 1975, Minute 248 - six Housing Action Areas are being considered pending consultations with the Department of the Environment, the Housing Corporation, and owners and residents likely to be affected. The Government White Paper on public expenditure (January 1975) makes it clear that housing expenditure is to be substantially cut-back.

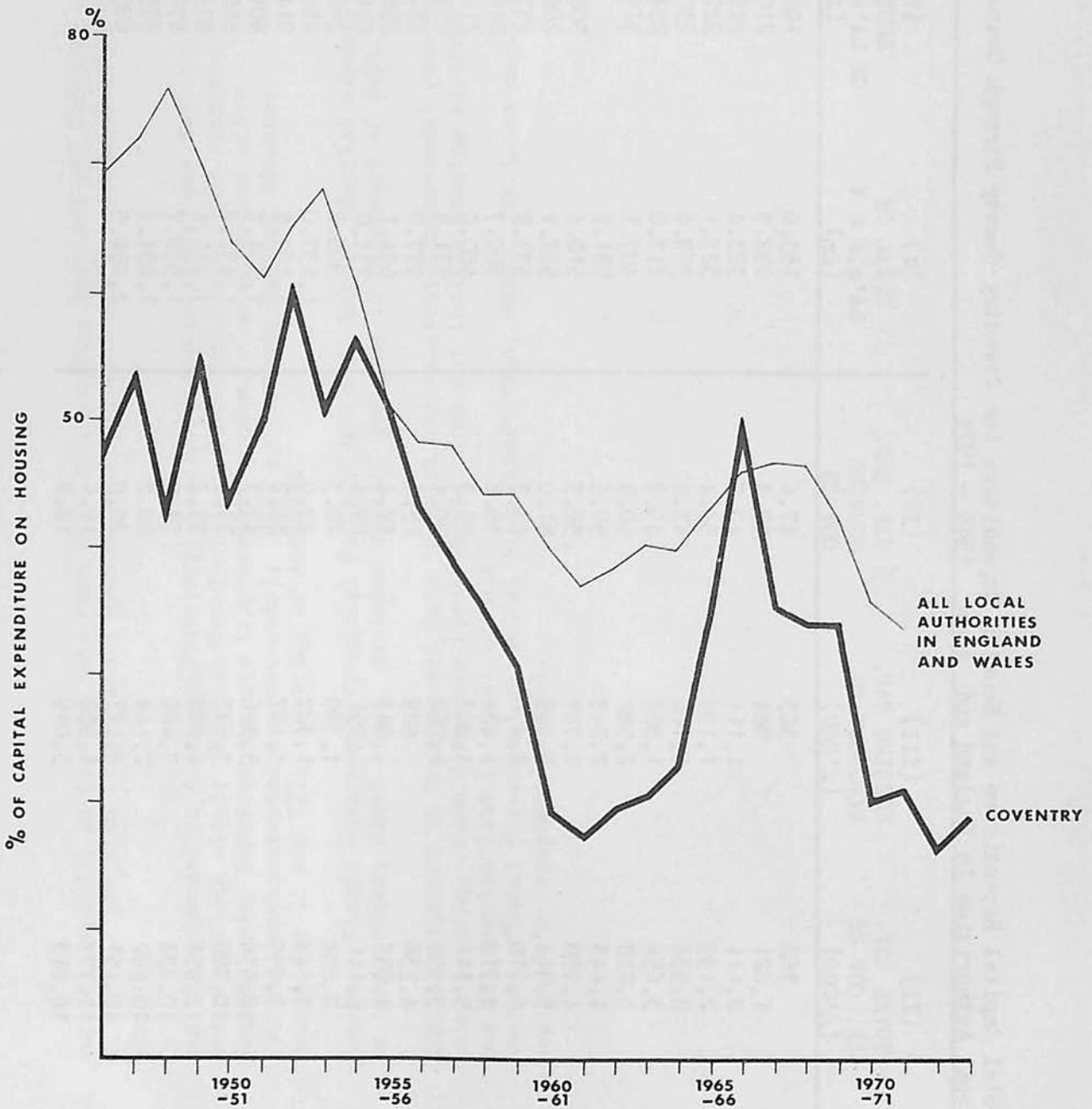


Figure 2.2 % of capital expenditure spent on housing in Coventry & in all L.A.s in England & Wales

TABLE 4

Total Capital Expenditure and Housing Expenditure for Coventry County Borough Council Compared With
Local Authorities in England and Wales 1946 - 1974

(I) YEAR	(II) TOTAL CAP. EXP. COV CB (£'000)	(III) HOUSING CAP. EXP. COV CB (£'000)	(IV) % CAP. EXP. HOUSING COV CB	(V) TOTAL CE LA's, E & W (£m)	(VI) HOUSING CE LA's, E & W (£m)	(VII) % CE ON HOUSING LA's, E & W
1946-47	762	363	47.6	153.8	106.8	69.5
1947-48	1,621	864	53.3	292.3	210.5	72.0
1948-49	2,611	1,111	42.5	323.4	245.3	75.8
1949-50	2,199	1,196	54.4	323.1	222.7	70.2
1950-51	2,534	1,106	43.6	359.6	230.4	64.1
1951-52	3,656	1,822	49.9	417.0	254.6	61.1
1952-53	4,228	2,582	60.5	487.1	319.2	65.5
1953-54	4,443	2,243	50.6	531.5		
1954-55	4,958	2,787	56.3	510.4	308.5	60.4
1955-56	5,716	2,915	51.0	522.1	266.8	51.2
1956-57	5,718	2,476	43.3	533.5	257.6	48.2
1957-58	4,719	1,834	38.8	500.7	240.0	48.0
1958-59	5,111	1,803	35.3	480.6	212.5	44.2
1959-60	3,992	1,062	30.4	531.5	235.1	44.2
1960-61	4,336	829	19.2	577.0	232.1	40.2
1961-62	4,855	846	17.4	694.1	258.2	37.2
1962-63	5,141	991	19.4	734.0	281.8	38.4
1963-64	6,894	1,399	20.3	905.8	365.1	40.3
1964-65	7,543	1,727	22.9	1,137.0	454.9	40.0
1965-66	9,099	3,107	34.2	1,197.5	514.3	43.0
1966-67	10,936	5,396	49.3	1,304.3	601.2	46.1
1967-68	10,385	3,657	35.2	1,432.2	668.0	46.6
1968-69	12,056	4,088	33.9	1,461.4	675.7	46.3
1969-70	10,234	3,466	33.9	1,580.7	670.3	42.4
1970-71	10,592	2,144	20.2	1,894.3	679.1	35.8
1971-72	10,451	2,177	20.8	2,054.9	689.8	33.6
1972-73	11,777	1,952	16.6			
1973-74	16,013	3,019	18.8			

NOTES:

Column II: Capital expended on General Rate Fund Services, Trading Services and deferred charges on capital projects (improvement grants, smoke control etc.); excludes all Housing Advances.

Column III: Capital expended on Housing (Statutory) (includes acquisitions, new dwellings, modernisations etc.); Housing Non-Statutory (includes hostels and caravans); Housing under Deferred Charges (improvement grants, slum clearance after 1965-66, environmental improvements); does not include Housing Advances.
Source for II and III: Abstract of Accounts.

Column V: Source: "Local Government Financial Statistics" MHLG, HMSO. Capital expenditure on land, works, plant etc.; excludes capital assigned to repayment of debt.

Column VI: Capital expended on housing and land to which HRA relates; improvement grants; other housing; slum clearance (post 1965); does not include Housing Advances nor SDA acquisitions (a small anomaly).
Source: "Local Government Financial Statistics" MHLG, HMSO. Excludes capital assigned to repayment of debt.

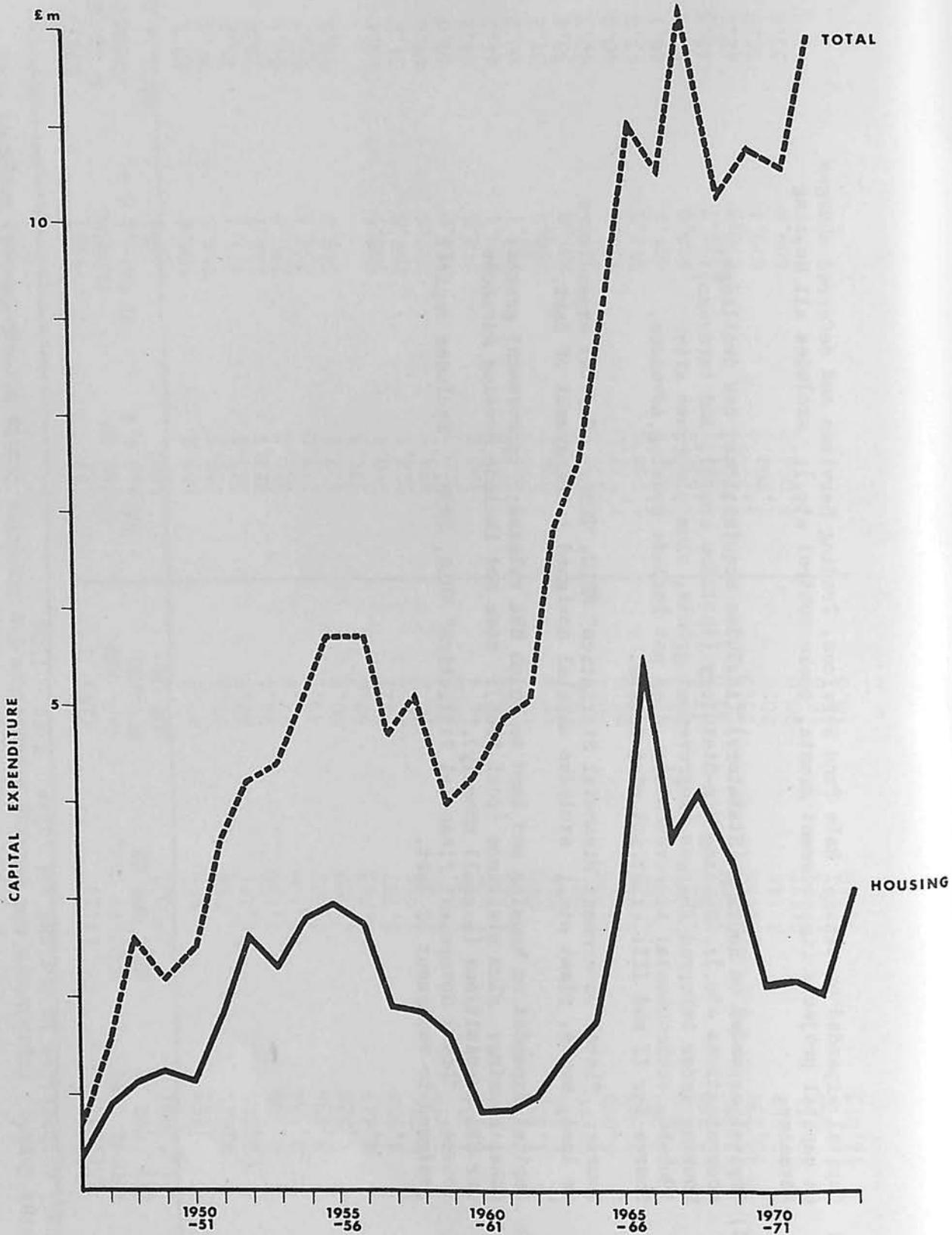


Figure 2.3 Total capital expenditure & capital expenditure on housing in Coventry

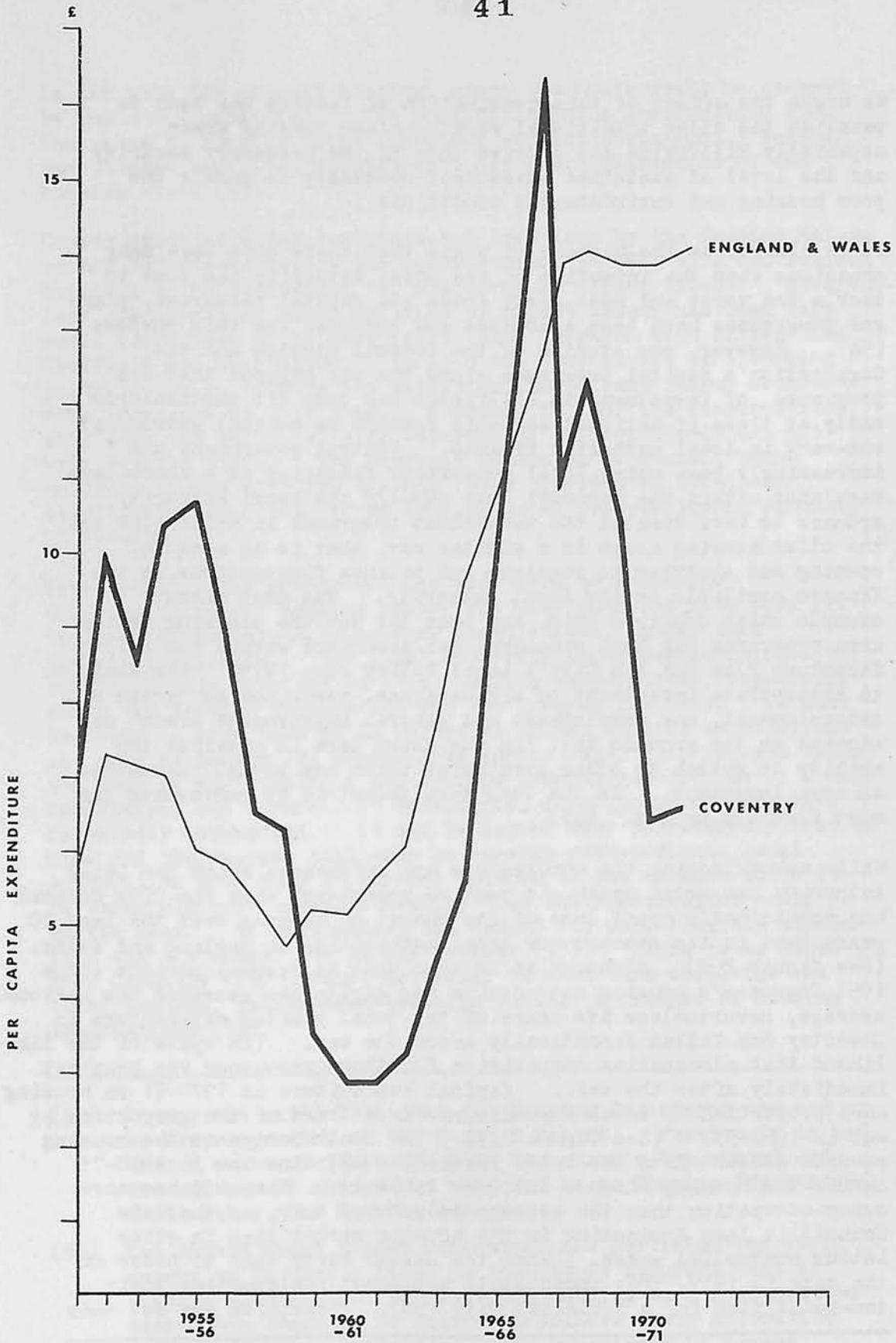


Figure 2.4 Capital expenditure per head on housing in Coventry

We argue the effect of this combination of factors has been to penalise the older traditional working-class housing areas especially Hillfields and deprive them of the necessary security and the level of sustained investment necessary to tackle the poor housing and environmental conditions.

- 5.1 It is clear from the history of plans that there have been many occasions when the intention of the Local Authority has been to tackle the worst and most needy areas and capital resources, plans and programmes have been allocated and prepared for this purpose (54). However, our studies of the Council Minutes and the Corporation's capital programme since the war suggest that the programme of investment in Hillfields has been hit particularly badly at times of national economic squeeze or central government cut-back in local authority finance. Central government has increasingly been using local government financing as a short-term regulator within the economy; but equally the local authority appears to have treated the investment programme in Hillfields and the older housing areas in a similar way, that is as a valve, opening and shutting to regulate and balance fluctuations in the finance available to the Local Authority. The most recent example which confirms this, has been the way the planning action area programme has been conceived and described within the 1973 Structure Plan and the City's Local Policy Plan 1973. The decision to concentrate investment on action areas, described as "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." (55)
- 5.2 While acknowledging the constraints and influences which the Local Authority has acted under, it must be remembered that the City Council has consistently spent less of its budget on housing over the last 30 years than is the average for local authorities in England and Wales. (See figure 2.2) Although it is true that in several periods since 1951 Coventry's housing expenditure per capita has exceeded the national average, nevertheless its share of the total capital expenditure in Coventry has fallen dramatically since the war. (In spite of the likelihood that alternative competition for those resources was heaviest immediately after the war.) Capital expenditure in 1970-71 on housing as a proportion of total expenditure was a third of the proportion it was in 1952-53. (See figure 2.3) The contribution to the housing revenue account from the rates reached an all time low in 1970-71 before the Housing Finance Act (see table 4). The city has more owner-occupation than the average industrial city, so that the Council is less dominating in the housing market than in other Labour controlled areas. When the Labour Party came to power in the city in 1937, they immediately set about implementing their ten-point plan for a Socialist City (56). Provision was not made

(54) 1951 Development Plan, 1966 Review Plan.

(55) City of Coventry Local Policy Plan. This case was argued by CDP in Examination in Public of Structure Plan, November-December 1973.

(56) Hodgkinson, G., "Sent to Coventry", Maxwell 1970.

in the plan for council housing, since the costs would be covered by rents and subsidies. The possibility of a contribution from the rates to housing being increased was not envisaged. Neither were planned municipal developments nor municipalisation of the housing stock (57).

5.3 Construction of a few dwellings had been done by the Housing Maintenance Department before the establishment in 1951 of a centralised Building Works Department for all works by direct labour. Nevertheless the amount of house building by direct labour has been very small (less than 5% in most years) when compared with cities like Sheffield and Manchester. In 1966 the Council set up a working party to try to improve the situation, and direct labour contracts were increased at this time. However, in 1967 the Conservatives shut down the Building Works Department; direct labour has not been revived since. The proposed expansion of council house building in the city for the mid 1970s provides an excellent opportunity for direct works housing to be re-established strongly in Coventry.

5.4 More recently the government has done much to encourage the "voluntary" housing sector and many councils have seen fit to involve themselves in housing associations, rather than municipal building. The local authority is of course obliged to be financially involved in local housing associations, especially since the Housing Finance Act and the Housing Act 1974. It must be borne in mind that to an important extent housing associations act as a mechanism for channelling public funds into private hands and that by any standards the average housing association is a very inefficient and paternalist enterprise, as official studies have repeatedly emphasised. It may be argued very persuasively that to head off the current challenge by housing associations, local authorities will have to respond to some of the demands which it is being claimed (unrealistically) that the associations could better meet. In particular, the demand for more flexible allocation and the demand for tenant control (58). It is to be hoped that Coventry City Council are ready to meet this challenge and these demands, rather than becoming totally a manager of housing associations (59).

(57) It was not until 1955 that the Housing Department was set up at the suggestion of the O and M Report. Previously it had been a section within the City Treasurer's Department and the officer in charge was referred to as Housing Superintendent rather than Housing Manager.

(58) The debate about tenant management and participation would appear to be partly false in that it is apparent that if tenants take control of their own housing on a co-operative basis then there is no reason to believe their allocation will be any more restricted. An experiment in tenant control has been supported by CDP. The Triangle Tenants' Union has applied for registration to the Housing Corporation as a co-operative housing association. (See forthcoming CDP Occasional Paper.)

(59) The City Council have established a Housing Association Liaison Committee for this purpose in 1974.

- 5.5 We believe that the local authority has had neither the powers nor the resources to tackle the economic root causes of the housing and environmental problems of the oldest parts of Coventry. Without these powers and resources the economic and physical repercussions and social costs of producing long term plans which are never carried out will become even more significant than they have been in the past. The national economic situation with the pressure to cut-back local government expenditure is demanding further reshuffling and "rephasing" of forward plans for the capital and revenue programmes (60). The uncertainty about these could blight large areas of older working class housing in the city. In a period of crisis there is an argument for scrapping all long term paper plans and concentrating all energy and resources into immediate action on the ground. Political and strategic intervention can and has to take more direct and rapid forms than sophisticated plans would suggest. We believe that in the long term nothing short of the "public control" of the Railway Triangle will be enough to tackle the housing and environmental problems of that area. In the short term whatever plans are proposed should aim at creating maximum confidence amongst residents in their security and that of their neighbourhood. Any such plans would need to promote this feeling even if they were not implemented.
- 5.6 We are increasingly aware of the ways in which the Local Authority's housing and planning policies have been continually undermined by national economic crises, central government financial constraints and the demands of private industry and private capital in the city. To cope with the problems of housing and environment effectively, local government investment and initiative has to be increased substantially; new forms of local control over any increased investment must be explored with those it is intended to benefit; the speed and scale of improvement needs to be stepped up; and more importantly the operations of private industry and private capital investment need to be more accountable to democratically elected representatives and the whole community if local authorities are not to fall victim to their influences.

(60) Government White Paper on Public Expenditure, January 1975.

Appendix 1

HOT WATER					
Tenure	No		Yes		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Owner-Occupier	81	30.7	175	66.5	263
Tenants	195	41.4	260	54.8	474
NR	3	-	2	-	5
TOTAL	279	37.6	438	58.7	742

INSIDE W.C.					
Tenure	No		Yes		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Owner-Occupier	98	37.2	158	60.1	263
Tenants	240	50.6	209	44.1	474
NR	3	-	1	-	5
TOTAL	341	45.9	368	49.5	742

BATH					
Tenure	No		Yes		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Owner-Occupier	84	31.9	171	65.0	263
Tenants	219	46.2	226	47.6	474
NR	4	-	1	-	5
TOTAL	307	41.3	398	53.5	742

SOURCE: 1 in 6 Survey 1971 of Hillfields by CDP Research Team

Appendix 2

HOT WATER

Length of residence	No		Yes		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Less than 6 mths	23	39.6	27	46.5	58
6 mths < 2 yrs	43	35.5	71	58.6	121
2 - 5 yrs	64	30.3	141	66.8	211
6 - 10 yrs	26	26.5	68	69.3	98
11 - 20 yrs	25	32.0	52	66.6	78
21 - 30 yrs	50	57.4	37	42.5	87
31 - 40 yrs	24	48.9	25	51.0	49
41 yrs +	24	61.5	14	35.8	39
No reply	0	-	1	100.0	1
TOTAL	279	37.6	436	58.7	742

INSIDE W.C.

Length of residence	No		Yes		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Less than 6 mths	24	41.3	24	41.3	58
6 mths < 2 yrs	52	42.9	62	51.2	121
2 - 5 yrs	67	31.7	133	63.0	211
6 - 10 yrs	44	44.8	51	52.0	98
11 - 20 yrs	35	44.8	42	53.8	78
21 - 30 yrs	56	64.3	31	35.6	87
31 - 40 yrs	33	67.3	16	32.6	49
41 yrs +	29	74.3	9	23.0	39
No reply	1	100.0	0	-	1
TOTAL	341	46.3	368	49.5	742

BATH

Length of residence	No		Yes		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Less than 6 mths	18	31.0	26	44.8	58
6 mths < 2 yrs	56	46.2	61	50.4	121
2 - 5 yrs	63	29.8	135	63.9	211
6 - 10 yrs	33	33.6	60	61.2	98
11 - 20 yrs	28	35.8	49	62.8	78
21 - 30 yrs	51	58.6	36	41.3	87
31 - 40 yrs	30	61.2	19	38.7	49
41 yrs +	28	71.7	10	25.6	39
No reply	0	-	1	100.0	1
TOTAL	307	41.3	397	53.5	742

SOURCE: 1 in 6 Survey 1971 of Hillfields by CDP Research Team

Appendix 3

Age Structure of Population in Hillfields and Coventry - 1961, 1966, 1971

Years	Age in Years	Hillfields		Coventry	
		No.	%	No.	%
1961	0 - 4	1,658	8.7	26,909	8.8
	5 - 14	2,412	12.6	47,858	15.7
	15 - 59	11,936	62.4	190,654	62.4
	60 - 64	1,028	5.4	13,677	5.4
	65 +	2,087	10.9	26,423	8.6
		<u>19,121</u>		<u>305,521</u>	
1966	0 - 4	2,000	10.3	32,200	9.8
	5 - 14	3,130	16.1	51,570	15.7
	15 - 59	11,600	59.7	200,240	60.9
	60 - 64	840	4.3	15,970	4.8
	65 +	1,860	9.6	29,000	8.8
		<u>19,430</u>		<u>328,980</u>	
1971	0 - 4	1,680	11.2	29,872	8.9
	5 - 14	2,346	15.6	57,194	17.1
	15 - 59	8,462	56.3	196,767	58.7
	60 - 64	847	5.6	17,365	5.2
	65 +	1,694	11.3	34,037	10.1
		<u>15,029</u>		<u>335,235</u>	

Percentage of Population of Retirement Age in Hillfields and Coventry in 1961, 1966, 1971

Years	<u>Hillfields</u>	<u>Coventry</u>
1961	13.8	11.0
1966	11.6	11.3
1971	13.8	12.7

SOURCE: Census data

3 INCOME SUPPORT SERVICES AND CITIZENS' RIGHTS

THE EXTENT OF POVERTY IN HILLFIELDS

One of the major groups with low incomes in this country is those who are forced to depend entirely, or almost entirely, upon state benefits. In 1971, 15% of the population of Hillfields was claiming supplementary benefit (1). A larger proportion of the total population is obviously dependent upon supplementary benefit. In the country as a whole, the proportion claiming supplementary benefit is only 5% (2). The reason for the larger percentage of claimants of supplementary benefit in Hillfields is not that there is a higher percentage of the feckless in Hillfields than in the country as a whole, but is related to the reasons why people are forced to claim supplementary benefit generally.

- 1 Broadly speaking people have to claim supplementary benefit either because
 - i) although belonging to an insured category, National Insurance benefits are insufficient to bring their income up to the supplementary benefits level (the poverty line), the most notorious example being retirement pensioners, almost 2 million of whom are claiming supplementary benefit;
 - ii) although belonging to an insured category, they fail to satisfy the qualifying contribution conditions, e.g. the chronic sick; the long-term unemployed;
 - iii) they belong to a category of persons not covered by the National Insurance scheme (e.g. the congenitally disabled; the unsupported mother).

- .2 All these categories of people are over-represented in Hillfields. Thus whilst the percentage of retirement pensioners in Hillfields is roughly the same as that in the city as a whole, 42% are forced to claim supplementary benefit to bring their retirement pensions up to the poverty line (1) as opposed to 28% in the country as a whole (3). This reflects the high percentage of working class pensioners in Hillfields. Working class pensioners tend to have been employed in jobs which have not provided occupational pension schemes (or the pensions involved are very low) and which have not provided sufficient income for the pensioners during their working life to have provided themselves with a private income from their investments.

- .3 Similarly, there is a higher proportion of the population dependent upon unemployment benefit in Hillfields than in the rest of the city. In 1971, the unemployment rate in Hillfields was 7.8% compared with

(1) "1 In 6 Household Survey of Hillfields", CDP, June 1971.

(2) In November 1971, 2,909,000 people were claiming supplementary benefit in Great Britain. Department of Health and Social Security Annual Report 1971, Cmnd 5019, HMSO.

(3) Department of Health and Social Security Annual Report 1972, Cmnd 5352, HMSO.

a Coventry figure of 4.2% (4). Almost certainly this is not an indication that there is a greater proportion of lazy workers in Hillfields but a reflection of the fact that there is a higher proportion of unskilled workers in Hillfields than in the city as a whole (20.6% of Hillfields' male workers are unskilled compared with only 5.7% of Coventry's male workers) and that it is more difficult for the unskilled to find employment. For example, in Coventry in December 1971 there were 26 skilled engineering workers unemployed for every skilled engineering vacancy, whereas there were 150 unskilled labourers unemployed for every unskilled labouring vacancy (5).

- 1.4 Other vulnerable groups who have to rely on state benefits are also over-represented in Hillfields. In 1971 twice the proportion of Hillfields' workers were dependent upon sickness benefit than in the city as a whole (2.3% as against 1.0%). Similarly there is a higher proportion of lone parents (mainly mothers) in Hillfields compared to the city as a whole (14.6% of Hillfields' children have only one parent compared with only 9.5% of Coventry's children as a whole). Again this cannot be taken as an indication of a tendency for Hillfields mothers to be widowed or deserted by their husbands more frequently than other mothers in the city. It is much more likely to reflect the nature of the housing stock in Hillfields (large numbers of one and two bedroom Corporation flats and the largest proportion of privately rented accommodation in the city) as well as the letting policy of the Housing Department and the activities of Coventry Churches Housing Association (6). A large proportion of these lone parents will be dependent upon supplementary benefit (nationally the proportion of fatherless families dependent on supplementary benefit is approximately 50%) (7).
- 1.5 In addition to those people who are poor because they are dependent upon state benefits, there is also a large number of low wage earners who are poor enough to be entitled to one or more means-tested benefits. In the country as a whole there may be as many as 10 million people in households in which the head of the household is entitled to one or more of these benefits: almost one-fifth of the whole population (8). It is probable that only a minority of these receive all the benefits to which they are entitled and that the rest are suffering unnecessary hardship as a result.
- 1.6 In Hillfields the proportion of the population entitled to one or more means-tested benefits is unknown. Almost certainly it is substantially larger than the national average because of the over-representation in Hillfields of the victims of our inadequate system of national insurance (referred to above) and low wage earners. A measure of widespread poverty amongst families in Hillfields is that in 1971 40% of the children attending Hillfields schools were

(4) 1971 Census. All other figures quoted below refer to the 1971 Census unless otherwise stated.

(5) Hill, M.J., et al., "Men Out Of Work", Cambridge University Press 1973.

(6) This housing association specialises in providing accommodation for unsupported mothers and has a considerable number of properties in Hillfields.

(7) Report of the Committee of One Parent Families, Cmnd 5629, HMSO.

(8) Estimate based on figures in Lister, R. "Take-Up of Means-Tested Benefits", Poverty Pamphlet No. 18, CPAG 1974.

receiving free school dinners (9), making more than half of the children at Hillfields schools from families poor enough to qualify for free school meals (i.e. assuming the take-up to be in line with the national average of between 70% and 80%). This compares with a Coventry average of 10% of school children receiving free school meals (10).

2. THE INCOME MAINTENANCE SYSTEM

2.0 The most significant features of our income maintenance system and its relationship to poverty since the implementation of the Beveridge proposals in the legislation of the late 1940s, have been:

i) The failure of the national insurance system to provide insured persons with incomes above the poverty line, e.g. the standard rate of retirement pension is still less than the rate of supplementary benefit (the official poverty line) - often as much as £5 or £6 below when rent and rates are taken into account.

ii) The failure to extend the system to cover certain major categories of those in poverty, e.g. the disabled, single parent families and single women caring for their aged relatives.

iii) The continuation of low wages as a major cause of poverty.

2.1 Rather than take action on these fronts, successive governments have increasingly come to rely on means-tested benefits to bolster up national insurance benefits to the poverty level; to fill the gaps left in the national insurance system and to compensate for low wages. This had had consequences both for the poor and for local authorities.

2.2 These consequences will be considered in the light of our experience in Hillfields and Coventry, first in relation to the supplementary benefits system, which is run by the Central Government, and then in relation to all the other means-tested benefits, many of which are administered by the Local Authority.

3. THE SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS SYSTEM

3.0 The supplementary benefits system exists as the final safety net in our income maintenance strategy. The scale rates for benefit provide a minimum level of income below which the state considers no one should fall. Consequently, anyone who slips through this safety net, even partially, will be forced to exist below the official poverty line. The supplementary benefits system fails in its purpose, therefore, (and is a direct cause of hardship) to the extent to which those entitled to receive help through the system fail to receive their rights.

(9) Calculated from figures supplied to CDP by Coventry Education Department in 1971.

(10) City of Coventry Corporate Planning Survey Reports, Vols 1 and 2.

The Size of the Problem

- 3.1 Problems relating to rights in relation to the supplementary benefits system have become an increasingly significant part of the work of the Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre (11) and the Community Lawyer (12). The first report of the Hillfields Information Centre in May 1971 indicated that only 13% of callers had supplementary benefit problems. By March 1974, this had increased to 47%. Similarly, the first report of the Community Lawyer in September 1973 showed that only 15% of his clients had supplementary benefit problems but by June 1974 the proportion had increased to 28%. These percentages represent approximately 1,000 cases a year. They do not of course include the supplementary benefit problems encountered by the Willenhall Information Shop, the Foleshill Information Centre, the Wood End Community Association, the 17 Social Services Teams, the Probation Department, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and other agencies in the city.

The Nature of the Problem

- 3.2 The rules governing entitlement to supplementary benefit are complex (the standard work explaining how the Supplementary Benefits Commission (SBC) administers the scheme is 223 pages long) and give large areas of discretion to the Commission to reduce or stop benefit and to meet exceptional needs. Furthermore, a vast number of claims are processed weekly. There is, therefore, abundant scope for maladministration and for ignorance of entitlement amongst claimants and potential claimants.
- 3.3 The problems brought to the Hillfields Information Centre, the Community Lawyer, and other agencies with which we are associated, have fallen broadly into the following categories:
- i) The failure of the system to meet special needs and prevent hardship through the discretionary system of exceptional needs payments.
- 3.4 Exceptional needs payments are lump sum grants or additional weekly payments made to supplementary benefit recipients at the discretion of the SBC. They are intended to meet either essential expenses which are not provided for in the normal weekly benefit rates or to prevent hardship due to exceptional circumstances. The extent of the failure of this system to meet these aims is indicated by our research which has shown that approximately one-third of all claimants under pension age, and between one-third and a half of claimants over pension age, at any one time, have exceptional needs which the system of exceptional needs payments is designed to meet but which

(11) The Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre was opened by CDP in June 1970 and is now staffed entirely by local residents. See Bond, N., "The Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre - The Evolution of a Social Agency Controlled by Local Residents", CDP (Coventry) Occasional Paper No. 2, 1972.

(12) A Community Lawyer was appointed to Coventry CDP in April 1973 to explore ways and means whereby a legal service can become an instrument of betterment for disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities.

are not being met by the SBC (13).

- 3.5 The result of this failure is that claimants with exceptional needs (e.g. for extra heating because of illness) suffer either because their need is not met or because they meet it out of their standard benefit and so have to go without other essentials (e.g. food). The officially expressed policy of the SBC to rely on the claimant to inform them of special needs clearly depends completely on the claimant knowing of his right to claim exceptional needs payments for such things as essential items of household equipment or special diets and how to do so. Our research studies bear out the experience of the Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre and Community Lawyer and indicate that the SBC has failed hopelessly to convey to claimants that they have the right to claim these grants. Our studies show that nearly 70% of claimants under pension age had no idea how to apply for these grants and that 80% of claimants over pension age had insufficient knowledge of their right to claim these grants to enable them to do so.

ii) Underpayment of benefit

- 3.6 Underpayment of benefit due to administrative error and inefficiency is, of course, potentially extremely serious as the consequence is that those who are underpaid are forced to try to exist below the official poverty line. Our research indicated that 12.5% of all claimants under pension age were being underpaid and that 95% did not know how to check if their benefit was correctly calculated or not. This latter fact is hardly surprising when one considers the complexity of the scheme; the fact that no claimant is given a statement of how his benefit is calculated unless he specifically requests it (not one claimant in our sample even knew they had this right - no official communication they receive ever tells them of it); and the fact that explanatory leaflets are not on display in the supplementary benefits office.

iii) Wrongful refusal of benefit

- 3.7 We have examples of this occurring through administrative error. For example, a mentally unfit man was refused benefit under the "four week rule" even though it later emerged that the SBC itself had noted on his record that he was clearly mentally ill (14). In

(13) See Bond, N., "Knowledge of Rights and Extent of Unmet Need Amongst Recipients of Supplementary Benefit" and Gearing, B. and Sharp, G., "Exceptional Needs Payments and the Elderly", CDP (Coventry) Occasional Papers Nos. 4 and 10.

(14) Under the "four week rule" fit claimants under 45 in areas where the SBC considered suitable jobs to be available were told that their benefit would cease after four weeks. Recent national research has indicated that approximately 55,000 mentally or physically unfit claimants have had their benefit terminated under this rule since 1968 even though the rule should not have been applied to the mentally or physically unfit. See Meacher, M., "Scrounging on the Welfare", Arrow Books, 1974.

this particular example, the man concerned had to give up his lodgings and was forced to "sleep rough" for several weeks in the winter before coming to our notice. Claimants known to us have also, in effect, been refused benefit wrongfully through incorrect information being given to them by the SBC (e.g. you cannot claim benefit if you do not have an address; you cannot claim for a dependant if you are a single striker); and to force the claimant to take affiliation proceedings against the putative father of one of her children against her will (e.g. "we will not pay you any benefit unless you take affiliation proceedings"). Since supplementary benefit is the final safety net, wrongful refusal of benefit can be disastrous. In the last example the result was that the mother concerned was evicted from her accommodation as she could not pay her rent. It is not unknown for claimants, whose benefit has been refused, to turn to crime. It has recently been calculated that nationally since 1968 some 27,000 claimants resorted to crime for the first time in their lives following the application of the four week rule. Many of them had no idea how to contest the application of this rule (15).

iv) Failure to pay benefit on the due date

- 3.8 Since the level of supplementary benefit is based on subsistence level needs, by the end of a week a claimant's benefit is invariably all spent. If a Giro arrives just one day late, the consequences can be disastrous. Officers of the SBC, instead of leaning over backwards to remedy the mistake, are often obstructive. At best, it can take several hours activity to persuade them to make a counter payment of the Giro and not send it through the post so making it yet another day late. At worst, it can take several days.
- 3.9 The following diary of what happened to a claimant who was not paid benefit on the day it was due to him illustrates the powerlessness of claimants (and social workers) when faced with the bureaucratic machinery of the supplementary benefits system. At the time of this experience the claimant had been in receipt of supplementary benefit to top up his unemployment benefit for some time.

Wednesday No Giro arrived in the post.
 Received a visitor from the Supplementary Benefit Office. He said my unemployment money had run out but the SBC would make it up.
 Signed on at the Labour Exchange at 2 p.m. as usual.
 Went to the Supplementary Benefits Office. Interviewing officer told me the visitor who had called on me this morning would report back later in the day with my papers and I would get a Giro the next day.

Thursday No Giro arrived.
 Went to Supplementary Benefits Office. The interviewing officer said the visiting officer had just come in with my papers and a Giro would be sent to me by post. After dinner my wife went to the Supplementary Benefits Office to ask if they could pay her the Giro over the counter as we had no money.
 They refused.

(15) Meacher, M., "Scrounging on the Welfare", Arrow Books, 1974.

- Friday A Giro for £6.50 arrived in the post - less than half of my proper money. By this time I owed nearly that much and had to pay it back.
Went to the Supplementary Benefits Office. Was told that a Giro for the rest of my money would be put in the post and I would get it the next day.
Went to Social Services and asked them to ask the SBC if I could pick the Giro up as I needed the money for the weekend. Social Services rang the Supplementary Benefits Office but they refused to let me call to collect the Giro.
- Saturday No Giro arrived.
Rang Social Services Duty Officer. A social worker brought in some food to see us over the weekend.
- Monday No Giro in the post.
Went to Hillfields Information Centre. Worker there rang up the Supplementary Benefits Office. They said they had a Giro ready to post. Worker said we would call and pick it up.
Arrived together at Supplementary Benefits Office. Said we had come to collect a Giro. The person we saw said there was no Giro waiting and we would have to make another statement. Did this and asked for the Giro. The officer said we could not have one unless we saw the supervisor. We could not see him until 1.15. Went to Supplementary Benefits Office at 1.15. The person on the desk said the supervisor would not see us.
Left the Supplementary Benefits Office and 'phoned the Supplementary Benefit Headquarters in London, the Regional Office in Birmingham and the local manager to complain.
The local manager finally said I could pick the Giro up at 3.45.
Went to Supplementary Benefits Office again.
Finally received Giro at 4.35.

v) Administrative harassment of claimants

- 3.10 This usually occurs as a result of a combination of insensitivity and inefficiency on the part of the SBC and the widespread ignorance of rights amongst claimants. For example, a sick, elderly man being made to report every day to the Supplementary Benefits Office as a condition of receiving supplementary benefit; a girl, eight months pregnant, being made to sign on at the Labour Exchange every week as a condition of receiving supplementary benefit; a man aged 63 with a totally disabled, bedbound wife, not being told that he need not sign on at the Labour Exchange at all and he would still receive supplementary benefit. A man who started work after a number of interviews with an unemployment review officer and claimed a week's benefit as he was working a week in hand, was told by an officer of the Commission that he would receive no benefit unless he claimed in person, thus pressurising him to have time off work. A young, unmarried mother who applied for a special needs grant to buy bedding and household equipment so that she could move into a council flat was promised a visitor to assess her needs. She did not receive one for five weeks in spite of repeated telephone calls and visits to the SBC. As a result, she

had to pay rent on two homes and wait in the empty council flat all day for five weeks expecting a visitor.

3.11 A woman who moved from her mother's house to a council house who reported the resulting £3 or so increase in rent did not receive the corresponding increase in supplementary benefit for her rent or for her change in status in spite of repeated telephone calls and visits to the SBC. She was afraid to get behind with her rent and so paid it regularly, thus leaving her £5.45 a week below the official poverty line and very agitated and distressed for over five weeks.

vi) Failure to claim supplementary benefit at all even though entitled

3.12 There are two main categories:

- a) The unemployed or sick whose unemployment benefit or sickness benefit is less than their supplementary benefit entitlement but who are not aware of this. A study of unemployed men in Coventry in 1971 found that 18% of them had incomes £1 or more, less than the supplementary benefit scale rates, i.e. they were not claiming benefit to which they were entitled (16).
- b) Retirement pensioners whose retirement pension plus all other sources of income is in total less than their supplementary benefit entitlement. There are estimated to be approximately 1 million of these in Great Britain - a ninth of all pensioners (17). If the same ratio applies to Coventry, this would indicate that there are somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 in the city. Many of these must be suffering considerable hardship as they are trying to exist below the official poverty line.

3.13 When examples of the failure of the system are brought to the attention of the Supplementary Benefits Commission, officials are usually prepared to admit that given the volume of work there are bound to be a few "unfortunate exceptions" to the rule that the vast majority of those eligible for supplementary benefit generally receive what they are entitled to. However, our work over the last five years has convinced us that in the older working-class areas those who fail to receive their full entitlement are not a few unfortunate exceptions but a sizeable minority, perhaps almost a half, of the poorest and most vulnerable sections of our society (66% of all those forced to depend upon supplementary benefit are pensioners; 13% unemployed; 10% sick and disabled; 10% unsupported mothers - divorced, separated, widowed and unmarried). There is no reason to believe that local officers in Coventry are any worse or better than anywhere else. We are convinced it is the system itself which is at fault, not the way it is operated.

(16) Hill, M.J., op. cit.

(17) Department of Health and Social Security letter to Mr Brian Sedgemore, MP, as reported in "The Times", 8 July 1974.

4. OTHER MEANS-TESTED BENEFITSThe Problem of Take-Up

- 4.0 Since the late '40s local authorities have increasingly been required to administer means-tested benefits by the central government and many have also developed means-tested benefits voluntarily in an attempt to mitigate some of the harmful consequences of poverty in their areas.
- 4.1 At least eight means-tested benefits of major importance are now administered by local authorities (rent rebates, rent allowances, rate rebates, free school meals, education maintenance allowances, school uniform grants, essential school clothing, student grants). Also, the central government is responsible for the administration of a number of important means-tested benefits (family income supplement, free welfare milk, free prescriptions, etc.) in addition to supplementary benefit.
- 4.2 As these benefits proliferate and more and more people become entitled to them, the failure to receive such benefits is becoming crucial in determining the living standard of more and more poor people, especially as research has indicated that the worst off (or at least those in the lower socio-economic groups) are least likely to claim them (18). Although there are no figures available on the take-up of these benefits in Coventry, nothing in our experience would suggest that the position is very different to that nationally where no means-tested benefit has a take-up rate of more than 75% and the take-up rate for many may be as low as 25% (19). This is in marked contrast to the take-up of universal benefits such as family allowances where the take-up rate is virtually 100% and of non-means-tested benefits such as the attendance allowances where take-up has exceeded all expectations (20).

The Causes of Low Take-Up

- 4.3 There has now been a substantial amount of research into the reasons why those entitled fail to take up means-tested benefits. Broadly speaking this evidence suggests that there are four main reasons of differing importance for different benefits:
- i) Pride - a feeling of wanting to manage without "charity". Dislike of the means-test, i.e. fear of stigma; having to prove that one is poor enough to qualify.
 - ii) Ignorance - i.e. failure to appreciate one is entitled to a certain benefit. (Hardly surprising now there are over 40 means-tested benefits with different conditions for eligibility.)

- (18) Meacher, M., "Rate Rebates: A Study of the Effectiveness of Means Tests", Poverty Research Series No. 1, CPAG.
- (19) Lister, R., "Take-Up of Means-Tested Benefits: A Study of the Effectiveness of Means-Tests", Poverty Pamphlet No. 18, 1974.
- (20) Lister, R., op. cit.

- iii) Difficulties associated with getting the correct application form for a given benefit, filling it in correctly, producing proof of earnings where this is required, etc.
- iv) Apathy, i.e. the feeling it is not worth all the bother - especially if the amount of benefit to which one is entitled is small or unlikely to recur very often, e.g. reclaiming the cost of a prescription.
- 4.4 In spite of the inherent problems associated with means-tested benefits to the extent that they do reach those who qualify for them they represent a redistribution of income in favour of the worst-off (the major exception to this being the special case of University grants which go predominantly to the middle-class). We have not felt it to have been worthwhile to have repeated research projects on the take-up of all means-tested benefits in Hillfields only to prove yet again that they are ineffective in concentrating help on those most in need. We regard this as proved beyond doubt (21).
- 4.5 Each week many cases of people failing to obtain means-tested benefits to which they are entitled come to the attention of the Community Lawyer, the Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre and the other advice services we are associated with. Often such cases come to light when the initial problem that prompted the client to call has to do with debt. All too often such cases reveal people who are not receiving one or more benefits to which they are entitled - often representing a loss of several pounds a week. All too often, too, such cases are known to social workers but they have failed to spot their entitlement.
- 4.6 An extreme example was of a woman who visited the Wood End legal advice surgery recently whose husband had been off work sick for several months. She was entitled to (but not claiming) free school meals for her four children, a large rent and rate rebate and exemption from prescription charges (she had been paying up to £1 a week for these). In total this represented a loss in income of between £6 and £7 a week. We of course ensure that in all such cases that come to our attention all the benefits to which the claimant is entitled, are applied for. However, since no means-tested benefits are paid retrospectively (except in highly exceptional circumstances in the case of supplementary benefit) our actions can only affect the future of the claimant concerned. Obviously it is of vital importance that anyone who becomes entitled should claim as soon as possible after becoming entitled.
5. MEANS-TESTED BENEFITS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY: A NEW APPROACH
- 5.0 The problems outlined in the previous section reflect the inherent defects of means-tested benefits. They also reflect the fact that the corporate management system of the local authority has failed to develop a corporate concern and a corporate approach to the problems caused to a large section of the citizens of Coventry by the central government's increasing reliance on means-tested benefits to combat poverty. As a result, the Council has developed no strategy to

(21) Lister, R., op. cit.

assist claimants and potential claimants of supplementary benefit to secure their full entitlement other than providing limited assistance to some of the minority of these people who happen to be the clients of the Social Services Department and by supporting the small scale legal and income rights programme initiated by CDP. With regard to the benefit administered by the Local Authority itself, the old departmental divisions still exist. Claimants of one benefit are not automatically told of their right to other benefits and given all the necessary application forms; application forms for many benefits are not easily accessible (e.g. application forms for free school meals, education maintenance allowances, school uniform grants and necessitous clothing grants are not available in schools and anyone wishing to claim is compelled to make the journey to the Council House); no special efforts are made by the Local Authority (except in the case of rate rebates and rent rebates and allowances) to publicise the qualifying income conditions for the benefits it administers or to encourage application.

- 5.1 In making the following suggestions for new initiatives by the Council in relation to the rights of citizens to supplementary benefit and other means-tested benefits we are assuming that the present Council holds the view that everyone entitled, especially the poorest, should receive all the benefits they are entitled to.

The City Council and the Supplementary Benefits System

- 5.2 The failings of this system are a direct cause of hardship and anguish to thousands of Coventry's most vulnerable citizens. To counteract its failure as far as possible (and at the same time to exert the sort of pressure on it which might help convince the government that the whole system needs to be drastically changed) it will be necessary for the Council to adopt a position in relation to the SBC which emphasises:

- i) the rights of all claimants as laid down by Parliament;
- ii) the rôle of the local authority as the protector of its citizens' rights; and
- iii) the community of interests between the Council and trades unionists in a situation where increasing unemployment may force more and more workers to claim supplementary benefit.

- 5.3 If the Council wanted to adopt such a position it would involve the provision of an accessible campaigning, educative and advocacy service with the resources to take effective steps to:

- i) increase the take-up of supplementary benefit amongst the retired, the sick, the unemployed, and those involved in trades disputes;
- ii) increase the claiming of exceptional needs payments amongst supplementary benefits claimants with exceptional needs;
- iii) provide an advocacy service for all claimants in dispute with the SBC who would not otherwise have access to such a service.

To be effective the accessibility of such a service to supplementary

benefit claimants and organisations representing them would be of the highest importance.

- 5.4 It is not immediately apparent whether any existing or newly created local authority department could successfully undertake such work involving as it must, total commitment to claimants (including claimants on strike) and at some stages, the possibility of open conflict with the SBC. However, such a programme has been successfully attempted, albeit on a small scale, through the income and legal rights work undertaken by CDP in co-operation with resident-run information centres and other organisations of the victims of the supplementary benefits system, e.g. pensioners' groups, workers engaged in trade disputes and newly formed claimants' unions.
- 5.5 If the Council wished to discharge part of any obligation it felt to protect its citizens' rights in relation to supplementary benefit through the continuing work of the proposed Legal and Income Rights Trust (22), the Trust would need to develop its campaigning, educative and advocacy work through the medium of such resident-run information centres and by other means. These centres have proved to be extremely successful in attracting supplementary benefit claimants and in providing a focal point for the development of expertise in the supplementary benefit field amongst local residents. More such centres would need to be created (funded by the Council or by the Trust) and each would need at least one full-time worker (who would be trained by the Trust) in addition to any local voluntary help which experience suggests would be likely to be forthcoming. (Of course, the precise relationship between these centres and the Trust would need to be worked out in some detail.) From such centres, local campaigns could be mounted (e.g. to increase the take-up of heating additions amongst the elderly) from a position of local knowledge and concern. The cost of running such centres is extremely low at approximately £3,500 a year: about the same cost as involved in appointing one social worker.
- 5.6 Further points of access to claimants would also need to be developed by any agency charged with protecting the rights of supplementary benefit claimants. A pioneering step would be to make a member of staff available at the two supplementary benefit offices in Coventry in order to pick up dissatisfied claimants who get as far as the offices on their own initiative. Such an appointment, first proposed in the Beveridge Report but never implemented, would be similar to the appointment of duty solicitors available in Magistrates Courts and would be consistent with developments in legal practice aimed at bringing the protection of the law to those in need of such protection. Permission to take this step as a follow-up experiment to CDP might be sought by the Home Office at the request of the Trust and the City Council. In addition such an agency would also need to liaise very closely with organised labour in the city as we have found that trades unionists who become involved in claiming supplementary benefit during strikes are often surprisingly ignorant of their rights. More importantly we have found them to be extremely effective in claiming their rights and advising their fellows once they become fully aware of their legal position.

(22) This independent Trust is to continue the legal and income rights work instituted by CDP and is to be funded jointly by the City Council and the Home Office. See Bond, N. and Zara, R. "The CDP Legal and Income Rights Programme", CDP (Coventry) Occasional Paper No. 12, April 1975.

The City Council and Other Means-Tested Benefits

5.7 Policies which aim to increase the take-up of means-tested benefits administered by the local authority (and thereby to increase the efficiency of the system in redistributing income in favour of the worst-off) must aim at reducing the obstacles to take-up inherent in the means-test itself and in the complexity of the present system. However, because of the inherent defects in the means-test system even the adoption of new administrative policies could never ensure a 100% take-up of benefits; but at least they would reflect a political determination to do whatever can be done to ensure that as few citizens as possible suffer as a result of the present system. In the present economic climate, with the possibility of redundancies and short-time working in Coventry increasing, the take-up of means-tested benefits could be crucial in determining the standard of living of even more of Coventry's citizens than at present.

i) The computerization of local authority means-tested benefits

5.8 It is our opinion that the single most important step that could be taken by the local authority to increase take-up would be the computerization of all the benefits administered by the Council. One of the greatest defects in the present system of administration is that someone who claims (and is entitled to) one benefit may well be entitled to others but, because applications for each benefit involve a different means-test and a different method of calculating entitlement and are dealt with by different departments, he is not told what other benefits he is entitled to when he sends in his original application form (23). If he does not know, he may never apply. Obviously if there were a single simple means-test and a single method of calculating entitlement a single application form could constitute an application for all benefits. Unfortunately, this process of simplification is not possible because, amongst other things, many of the means-tests are laid down by central government and cannot be altered by the local authority.

5.9 Computerization could solve this problem. As long ago as last Spring we informed the officers of the Corporation concerned with community health and well-being of a pilot project undertaken at Edinburgh University. This has shown that it is feasible to produce a single comprehensive questionnaire which, when completed, could be fed into the computer and used as a single application form for all benefits administered by the local authority. The computer could also print all the benefits administered by the central government to which the applicant was entitled to.

5.10 Computerization itself would, we believe, lead to a marked increase in take-up and could have far-reaching effects on the lives of poor people in the city. However, it is important to remember that even a computerized system involving a single application form could not completely overcome the general defects of means-tested benefits which are related to the reluctance of certain claimants to submit themselves to a means-test to prove themselves to be poor enough to be entitled. Nor would such a system, by itself, do anything to persuade those who hold a mistaken belief that they are not entitled to any benefits at all to apply. Clearly it would be necessary to mount campaigns aimed at encouraging application.

(23) This problem will be slightly eased by the Council's decision to amalgamate the claim forms for rent and rate rebates from April 1st 1975.

5.11 Some campaigns aimed at specific target groups could obviously be mounted by the Local Authority itself, for example, seeking out, with the co-operation of Head Teachers, of all those school children staying at school after 16 whose parents might be eligible for education maintenance allowances. Other potential claimants could be encouraged to apply in a more routine manner by ensuring that social workers, health visitors and other Corporation officials in touch with potential claimants provided them with the comprehensive application form. On the other hand, more general campaigns aimed at low wage earners (as opposed to the retired or the unemployed or the sick) would need the close co-operation of the trade unions. It might reasonably be hoped that the more common and routine application became the more any stigma associated with claiming means-tested benefits might be reduced.

ii) Some implications of computerization

5.12 If the Local Authority computer facilities are to be used in this way to benefit directly the least well off in the city then it would require an important political decision (24).

5.13 Taking action to increase the effectiveness of the means-tested system of combatting poverty through computerization will obviously incur costs. As against these costs, there will obviously be considerable savings of staff time in calculating and administering all the Local Authority means-tested benefits manually. The costs will be of three kinds:

- a) the costs of computerization (i.e. allocating staff time to the development of this project);
- b) the costs of mounting application campaigns;
- c) the costs involved in paying out more benefits (25) (assuming computerization results in increased take-up).

6. CONCLUSION

6.0 Whatever the Council decides in relation to any responsibility it may feel to protect the rights of supplementary benefits claimants, it could certainly take a decision as to whether or not the Corporation's computer should be used to increase the take-up of Local Authority administered benefits. It could certainly ask the corporate management system to provide it with a quarterly graph of take-up of all means-tested benefits administered by the Corporation and expect that numbers should be steadily rising, leaving the management system to experiment with ways of ensuring this and to report back on the costs incurred.

(24) It is understood that following our representations, a feasibility study into the computerization of local authority administered benefits has now been authorised.

(25) Most of these costs will be met by the central government either as a direct grant (e.g. in the case of rent and rate rebates) or in increased rate support grant as in the case of free school meals.

6.1 Finally, the adoption of the computerization proposals could be used by the Council not only to improve the take-up rate of benefits locally but also to challenge the whole idea that means-tested benefits are effective in dealing with poverty. For example, by itself or in concert with other local authorities, the Council could take up a stance in relation to central government along the following lines:

If the government wants us as local authorities to administer all these means-tested benefits and wants them to go to all those who are entitled and especially to go to the worst off, then the government must pay the full costs of our administrative procedures designed to ensure this.

6.2 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 all 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:

- i) substantial increases in national insurance benefits;
- ii) 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;
- iii) an increase in the real value of family allowances;
- iv) reforms of the taxation system as it applies to low income families;
- v) legislation to introduce a minimum wage.

4 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 In the early months of the Project residents and fieldworkers both expressed concern about the elderly as a vulnerable group in the area. The proportion of elderly people in Hillfields has decreased over the last 10 years so that it is now little higher than the Coventry average. However it was recognised (1) that the retired population of Hillfields was being subject to particular stresses as a result of the redevelopment of the area, and of the general housing conditions. More centrally we came to appreciate that the elderly of Hillfields represented, in microcosm, the general dilemma of older people in Coventry as a whole and society at large.
- 1.1 Already one in six (nearly 9 million) of the population of Britain is over retirement age. Even if there is no lowering of the retirement age the next 10 years will see a substantial increase in the number of retired both as a proportion of the whole population and in relation to the working population. Not only are the numbers of retired people growing, but the numbers of the very old, the over 85s, are growing even faster.
- 1.2 So far Coventry, with its post-war influx of young workers, has escaped the full brunt of the problem. From a situation where the retired represented only 12.7% of its population in 1971, Coventry will face a massive elderly explosion within the next 10 - 12 years by when, it is predicted, the retired will reach a staggering 19%. And even this figure may be added to by numbers of men in effect prematurely retired as a consequence of redundancy.
- 1.3 Faced with the enormity of the situation where almost 1 in 5 of its citizens will become potentially vulnerable, Coventry must begin to evolve realistic strategies to cope with the dilemmas of its older citizens. We believe that fresh stock must be taken of the situation of the elderly and new political initiatives made towards ensuring a better life for these citizens with more viable support services - viable not only in their relevance for the elderly, but also to ensure the most relevant and economic organisation of these services.

(1) Fieldwork Forum: Report of the Working Party on the Needs of the Elderly in Hillfields, 1970.

1.4 We believe that such initiative is currently blocked by a number of factors:

- i) A lack of access to comprehensive, objective information about the size, scope and nature of the problem.
- ii) Lack of knowledge about the failures and shortcomings of the existing services for the elderly.
- iii) The persistent dominance of old ideas and practice which narrows the view of the elderly, and the nature and range of their needs.

We wish to explore these factors, in some detail, as a precursor to raising a discussion about alternative strategies. This exploration is based on studies carried out by Coventry CDP, in some collaboration with the Social Services Department, and focussed in the main on Hillfields. It is not argued that the elderly of Hillfields are exactly typical of the retired in Coventry as a whole, but we would insist that they are similar to those in many other areas of Coventry and present the problem for the city in clear relief.

1.5 The present system of support services for the elderly come broadly under four headings:

- i) Social Services - which include the provision of Home Help Services, Mobile Meals, Social Work, Aids, Day Care, Social and Luncheon Clubs, Sheltered Accommodation, Residential Accommodation and Chiropody.
- ii) Housing - in so far as the Local Authority accepts some responsibility to see that the elderly are adequately housed in suitable accommodation to meet their needs.
- iii) Income Support Services - focussed on the role of the Supplementary Benefits Commission, in compensating for inadequate retirement pensions and in meeting need arising from exceptional circumstances.
- iv) Health Service - general practitioner and specialised medical service, health visitors, general hospital services and psychiatric care facilities.

Whilst we would support the contention that all these sectors are inseparably interwoven in the lives and situations of the elderly (thus for example, shortage of money might lead to greater dependence on social service and in turn lead to health deterioration) we have decided to examine the first three service sectors.

1.6 Broadly speaking the Social Service sector relates its provision to national guidelines for standards and rates per thousand of its local elderly population. This provision rate is modified locally by a number of marginal factors, although primarily controlled by financial resources rather than by the evidence of need. In the Income Support field the Supplementary Benefits Commission has a statutory obligation to provide a pension supplement in well defined circumstances upon application from the claimant, but this clear commitment becomes blurred and uncertain as one moves to the area of discretionary exceptional needs payments. Housing has fewer guidelines and little statutory commitment of particular relevance to the elderly. In our view the development of these support service sectors, at the local level, and any interconnection between them is not advised by any comprehensive study of the elderly themselves and their needs.

2. EVIDENCE OF THE SIZE AND SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

2.0 The action/survey of all the elderly in Hillfields, carried out in collaboration with the Social Services Department in 1972, was a first attempt to begin to sketch in some of the picture of the size, scope and nature of the needs of the retired. The survey of 1227 elderly persons took a rapid, somewhat cursory, look at the circumstances and problems of these pensioners. Where needs were identified for which appropriate services already existed these were followed-up and action taken in an effort to remedy the situation. What emerges from this study contrasts strongly with the cool official picture of the rates of service provision and their projections for the future. They make somewhat hollow the high sounding statutory obligation of the Supplementary Benefits Commission and confirm the impenetrability of the mists of discretionary additions. The findings throw into stark relief the limitations of the housing sector in making any significant contribution to the well-being of the elderly who live in the older houses of Hillfields. Finally the survey raises some questions about the present ordering of priorities in the provision of services and about the whole logic of existing service provision and the inter-relationship between the different service sectors.

2.1 Of the 1227 persons interviewed a very large number lived in situations of considerable stress and difficulty, for which there was no available service remedy. For example:

- i) 716 (58%) lived in accommodation which lacked at least one of the basic household amenities of inside toilet, running hot water or bath. 478 (39%) had none of these provisions.
- ii) 533 (43%) were unable to get out of their houses to do all their own shopping, and of these 294 (24%) had insufficient mobility to do any of their shopping at all.
- iii) 193 (16%) went for intervals of at least one month before they received a visit from a friend, neighbour or relative. For some few, 72 (6%), the interval was more than one year.

- 2.2 However more than two thirds of those interviewed were identified as having some specific need which existing services might potentially alleviate. Some of these are mentioned below:
- i) Of the 526 pensioners in receipt of supplementary pensions, 137 were referred to the Supplementary Benefits Commission as having some shortfall in their statutory rights and/or were thought to qualify for exceptional circumstances payments from the Supplementary Benefits Commission but had failed to receive them. The Supplementary Benefits Commission recognised the legitimacy of the need in 134 cases and made appropriate payment.
 - ii) 199 expressed a need for sheltered accommodation - though only 21 felt themselves in need of residential accommodation care.
 - iii) Whilst 202 were receiving service aids (bath hand rails, walking aids, etc.) 49 of them wanted additional aids and a further 84 who had received no help wanted an aid of some kind.
 - iv) 391 of the pensioners were unable to carry out the simple task of cutting their own toenails, and although 233 were receiving chiropody service, 188 who were not had need for it.
 - v) Although 151 pensioners were in receipt of Home Help assistance, 49 of these wanted additional assistance and a further 39 expressed a need for this service.
- 2.3 At the time of the survey only 64 persons claimed that they were being visited by a social worker, which suggests that the vast majority of these problems would have remained unrecognised.
- 2.4 If we begin to multiply the extent of problems and needs identified from a mere 1227 in this study by a figure to represent the elderly in likely similar circumstances in Coventry, we are faced with a range and number of problems which far transcends the boundaries of present official scope and estimates of provision.
- 2.5 Two years after the action/survey was completed a follow-up study was made of a 1 in 4 random sample of these elderly in Hillfields. During this two years the population had been the focus of much attention and service intervention. As a consequence the elderly of Hillfields were found to have benefitted by a very substantial increase in service provision (home helps; meals on wheels; aids and adaptations, etc). Yet despite this service improvement the level of demand for services had increased rather than diminished, and the volume of needs continued unchecked. Additionally many aspects of adverse life circumstances (inadequate housing quality; loneliness and isolation, etc) remained unchanged and uninfluenced by all that had gone on in the intervening two years.

3. SOME FAILURES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF EXISTING SERVICES

3.0 The previous section has attempted to raise the general issue of the lack of detailed information about the circumstances of the elderly. Without this sort of information it is difficult to raise any serious question or challenge to the existing level of personal service provision for the elderly. With such additional information questioning becomes possible and relevant and allows scope for alternatives to be considered.

3.1 In this section, we summarise some of our studies which have looked in greater detail at some of the problems experienced by the elderly in relation to income maintenance and housing. These studies have identified a number of serious problems or shortcomings. These services were chosen for study not because of their own particular or peculiar failings but because they represent differing aspects of the total service provision dilemma, and from which some general lessons might be drawn.

The Failings of the Supplementary Benefits Commission

3.2 As the standard rate of retirement pension is (and has consistently been) less than the level of supplementary benefit, a substantial proportion of the elderly are forced to claim a supplementary pension from the Supplementary Benefits Commission to bring their income up to the level regarded by the Government as the minimum acceptable. Nationally some 30% of pensioners are dependent on supplementary benefits with substantially more (about another 10%) being eligible for this provision but not claiming it. In Hillfields, with its concentration of working class citizens, the proportion of elderly in receipt of the pension supplement is 42%.

3.3 The supplementary benefit is set at a level to ensure an income to provide the basic necessities of life - and no more. For particular contingencies, the Commission is empowered to pay a discretionary weekly addition to cover essential recurring expenditure for such things as extra heating, special diet and laundry expenses. The Supplementary Benefits Commission is also empowered and expected to make 'exceptional needs payments' of lump sum grants to cover exceptional needs such as fares to visit relatives in hospital, money to buy essential items of household equipment (bedding, furnishing, etc) and to meet certain debts where hardship would result if the debt were not met, and, in specific circumstances, money for clothing.

3.4 This total Supplementary Benefits package provides an income level "below which no one should fall" and it is therefore crucial to know whether or not pensioners in receipt of a supplementary pension do receive their full entitlement to all its provisions and whether they know of all aspects of the service. Already in the brief interviews of the 1227 elderly of Hillfields it was found that one in every four of those on supplementary pensions had a legitimate claim for some increase in their entitlement from the Commission.

- 3.5 To look at this problem in more detail a further study was carried out of 96 randomly selected supplementary pensioners in Hillfields. The study examined their knowledge of weekly additions and exceptional needs payments and, following as closely as possible the criteria of the Supplementary Benefits Commission itself, identified those who appeared to have legitimate claim against the Commission for more money to complete their full entitlement to a level of income "below which no one should fall". From this intensive study the following features emerged:
- i) 80 of the 96 supplementary pensioners interviewed had insufficient knowledge of weekly additions and exceptional needs payments to allow them to claim for this provision. This is particularly significant as it is the expressed policy of the Supplementary Benefits Commission not to look for exceptional circumstances themselves but to wait until a claimant applies for an exceptional needs grant before evaluating the need.
 - ii) Of the 96 persons interviewed 13 were found to be currently underpaid on their basic supplement. Underpayment ranged from five pence to one pound per week.
 - iii) Seven persons were found to need, and were granted, weekly additions ranging from 10 - 60 pence per week. (This was before the new heating allowance regulations, introduced in 1972, which made a very large number of supplementary pensioners entitled to heating additions.)
 - iv) Of the 71 who were eligible for exceptional needs payments (that is those supplementary pensioners with very limited savings) well over half (41) were identified as having need. 37 applications were made to the Commission (4 persons refused to apply because of anxiety or pride) and of these, 34 were granted payments.
 - v) In all, almost exactly one half of the 96 pensioners interviewed had their financial position improved (in some cases by more than one claim) to bring them to the basic level agreed as necessary for their well-being.
- 3.6 It should be remembered that a few months previously these 96 formed part of a total of 526 pensioners who were screened and one quarter of them found to be entitled to increases in their benefit rights. It should be stressed also that the number of claimants helped and the amounts they obtained were controlled by the limits of the study which deliberately attempted to work within the normal procedures adopted by Supplementary Benefit officers. Had the enquiries been more stringent; had a greater range of possible claims been made; had decisions refusing claims been challenged by appeal, (the elderly were found to be extremely reluctant to use the appeal procedure), then it seems likely that considerably more pensioners may have received Exceptional Needs Payments.

- 3.7 This study confirms a picture of very widespread ignorance of the supplementary pension provision amongst the elderly and of a very considerable shortfall in the distribution of the full entitlements from this service.

Housing Problems - Decoration, Repair and Rehousing

- 3.8 Of the elderly in Hillfields we have seen (above) that a sizeable proportion live in houses that lack many of the basic amenities regarded as an essential for several decades. But, during the survey of the Hillfields pensioners, other housing problems were revealed. A number of elderly were found to live in houses which were in dire need of redecoration and repair to make them tolerable to live in. Some other pensioners wanted to move from their present homes to sheltered accommodation or to more convenient and manageable houses. Where these needs were found to be extreme and pressing, action was initiated to try to remedy these situations. Eighteen months later a sample of these pensioners on whose behalf the relevant service had been contacted and promises of action received, were re-visited to discover how their housing situation had improved. What follows is a brief resumé of the findings of these follow-up visits.

i) Redecoration

- 3.9 The problem for 20 pensioners had been an urgent and long-standing need for some part of their homes to be redecorated. Initially a number of avenues had been explored by the action team to locate a service or organisation which would undertake the task of redecorating the homes of those elderly who had neither the finance nor capacity to cope with the problems themselves. For those in council house accommodation the relevant service was thought to be the Housing Department who stated that they were able to redecorate their property only on a cycle of "at least 18 years". For these pensioners, like those who had private landlords or owned their own homes, the responsibility for redecoration rested squarely on their own shoulders.
- 3.10 The only source of help that could be identified for these needs was voluntary effort. 18 were therefore referred directly to the Council of Social Service, one to the Hillfields Community Association and the other to the Hillfields Information and Opinion Centre. After a lapse of 18 months only six of these housing decoration jobs were completed and to the satisfaction of the householder. Some of the remainder had been started and not finished, for some, no one had arrived to do the job and a complex of other reasons contributed to the neglect of the remainder.
- 3.11 We thus have a situation where less than one-third of this particular housing need, identified amongst the elderly poor, was effectively resolved. The only resource of help currently available for this need (namely voluntary service) does not have the resources, skills and organisation to enable it to deal in any meaningful degree with the size and scope of this problem.

ii) Repairs

- 3.12 27 pensioners were re-visited who had established a need for repairs to their home. Most of the needed repair work was of a relatively minor kind - repairing or replacing window frames, doors, roof tiles, chimney stacks - but some was more substantial, involving making good and retaining the ravages of excessive dampness. Some two thirds of these householders were in receipt of a supplementary pension.
- 3.13 12 of these 27 pensioners were in local authority housing and their problem had been referred to the appropriate section within the Housing Department and promises of action obtained.
- 3.14 Regarding the 13 who were in privately rented accommodation - attempts were made to contact the landlord and persuade him to carry out the needed repairs. This contact seldom produced any satisfaction and the matter was usually referred to the Public Health Department.
- 3.15 18 months later only 14 of the 27 repair problems had been resolved satisfactorily and some of these had taken an inordinate length of time. Of the 12 council tenancies, 5 had the repair problem still outstanding. The private tenants had fared even worse - about a half were still locked in long drawn out negotiations with their landlord and/or the Public Health Department.
- 3.16 Many tenants from both housing sectors had been pitched into an administrative jungle where identifying and keeping track of those responsible was daunting as their needs were referred back and forth between individuals and organisation. The elderly, in general, lack the tenacity and skill necessary to understand and take part in this bewildering process. For many the reality was that nothing adequate is available to provide quickly and simply for a very basic need.

iii) Rehousing

- 3.17 The service provision picture becomes a little brighter when we examine the fate of 23 elderly who were revisited to discover their success in resolving their need to be rehoused.
- 3.18 14 of the 23 specifically wanted to move into sheltered accommodation and of these 10 were happily established in their new sheltered homes 18 months later. It should be emphasised however that their need was identified coincidentally with the completion of the building of a number of sheltered houses in Hillfields and considerable pressure was brought to bear on the Social Services and Housing Departments to allocate these homes to elderly people in need from Hillfields. Those whose similar need is identified in the future may not be so fortunate so quickly.

3.19 The fortunes of the 9 who wished to be rehoused in local authority council houses were not so positive. After 18 months only 2 had been given alternative accommodation. In spite of extreme efforts in some cases by the Action Team to press the real priority of these clients, it was found that pressure was of little avail in a situation where the housing waiting list in Coventry is very long.

3.20 In this examination of some aspects of housing services for the elderly, we find a significant shortfall in the provision of facilities to ensure a safe, decent and appropriate roof over the heads of senior citizens. Here there is a lack of statute, lack of facilities, administrative complexity and dependence on inadequate voluntary effort which conspire to ensure that genuine need amongst the elderly continues to be only partially met and often to a relatively poor standard.

4. DOMINANCE OF OLD IDEAS AND PRACTICE

4.0 It is probably fair to say that basically our society views old age with a mixture of general mild abhorrence and particular charitable sympathy. This mixture has helped to ensure a slow and minimal growth of expenditure and services on behalf of the elderly. At the present time the type of service development that has emerged is bounded and warped by a charitable sympathy which sees retirement as the onset of incompetence and inevitable and progressive decline, to be dealt with by relieving the consequent symptoms of pain and destitution at home, and eventually committing them to institutional care.

4.1 This brief analysis may seem unduly harsh, but if we look at the development of service provision for the elderly we can see little evidence that the type and structure of these services has been informed by the views of the elderly themselves or by any analysis which looks more broadly and deeply at the nature of retirement, the needs of the elderly and the ageing experience itself.

4.2 Coventry CDP has begun a study which may make some contribution to an alternative analysis. Although it has its origin in a brief enquiry carried out in Hillfields, this main study transcends the neighbourhood boundary (as does the problem itself). This study focusses upon men and their retirement by questioning large numbers of men coming up to retirement in the occupations represented by Jaguar cars, GEC and a local coal mine, as well as a substantial number of men who have retired from those occupations.

4.3 Whilst the study is still in progress and detailed conclusions cannot be drawn, one central and relevant theme already emerges with great clarity. A substantial proportion of retired men, from this "working class" situation, have achieved a remarkably fruitful and self-satisfying adaptation to the retirement situation. For many the period of retirement provides greater satisfaction and fulfilment than the years at formal work. But for this positive adaptation certain definite conditions must be present:

- i) Firstly the retired man must have the security of adequate financial resources. For most men in our study this was achieved by a basic pension plus works pension and/or significant savings. This allowed the man to carry on within the general standards of his pre-retirement years, but with an acceptance of economies, and an ability to maintain his independence and esteem by paying his way where appropriate and taking care of his own needs and bills.

- ii) There is a definite need for the man to engage in some activity or pursuit which possesses certain essential ingredients that were contained in the work situation itself. In the men's own terms the present technological environment appears to have progressively eroded their hard won craft skills of earlier years. Thus their consequent emphasis on the meaning of their work in the latter years of employment is focussed upon continuous and productive occupation of time. Part of this continuous productive activity has to do with the maintenance of physical effort believed necessary to maintain the healthy functioning of the body and mind. But, even more importantly, it is to maintain (and even enhance) the 'exchange relationship' embodied in the work situation. Thus continuous productive effort is given not only in exchange for monetary payment but, more crucially, in exchange for regard and respect of family and peers. Thus in the transition of retirement the man is allowed (and allows himself) readily to give up his formal work providing he takes up a central task which involves a degree of continuous productive effort commensurate with his present age and capacity. This seems to be central in maintaining the status and fulfilment of retired men. For most of the retired men of our study this adjustment was achieved by taking an activity which has previously been a leisure pursuit and transferring it to a central life concern to become a more fulfilling experience than 'work' had been. Thus for example, men can set about employing their own time in such things as decorating, metal work, shoe repairing, gardening (often with a recently purchased greenhouse) etc. These activities are used not only to expend energy but also to develop a service or product which may be of intrinsic value to others although the primary function of which is to maintain regard and respect from family and friends. We have thus found that retirement is a matter of deliberate modification rather than complete and traumatic substitution.

- 4.4 Some men, in our study, have returned to the work situation after retirement. They have usually taken low skilled jobs on a part-time basis. For most of these men the return to work has been forced either by lack of money or because they did not have available any former leisure activity or skill to fulfill the need for continuous and productive activity. Only rarely did we find retired men seeking re-employment for something intrinsically valuable to him in the work situation or the work activity itself.
- 4.5 Whilst this study has concentrated on men (2) who have retired in the relatively recent past, and from particular occupational groups, we believe that the findings which are emerging have implications for the adjustment in older retirement years and for all other occupations. For older men it seems important that they continue to have available to them opportunities which fit within the need for persistent and productive activity commensurate with their years and which continue to symbolise their independence, status and self regard.
- 4.6 Thus far we have only begun the process of making broader and deeper analyses of retirement and the ageing process but even at this stage, factors are beginning to emerge which may suggest a basis for considering more relevant alternative provision for the elderly, as a counter balance to the excessive preoccupation with the provision of services based on notion of the irreversible deterioration due to the ageing processes. We believe not only that the existing ideology and provision of services may be a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', but that they fail to take account of the need for an essential exchange relationship in the dealings of the elderly with their world. Present services have no element of reciprocity. Through providing alternative services based on the factors of the need for an adequate income and an exchange relationship it may be possible to defer dependency, inhibit rapid deterioration and thus reduce the demand for massive expansion of the existing service structure.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.0 On the basis of studies primarily carried out in Hillfields, we have tried to show something of the dilemma of the elderly in our society and in particular of the situation which has to be faced if there is real concern to develop effective and relevant services provision for the elderly.

(2) We also believe that the underlying thesis from this study may be relevant in considering the adjustment of women in their post retirement years, even though their opportunity for maintaining the exchange relationship role (of house-keeper and a resource for their children) may usually extend for some time beyond the arbitrary cut-off point of the retirement age.

5.1 These studies have shown that:

- i) the range and number of problems and needs that exist amongst the retired population in Coventry far exceeds the present and predicted facilities for identifying and dealing with these needs;
- ii) in those services investigated, knowledge of the service provision is scant amongst those eligible to receive it;
- iii) complexity and the daunting nature of authority ensure that few elderly will persist in making their legitimate claims to the service;
- iv) the services themselves have gaps and shortcomings which allow the needs of the elderly to go unmet;
- v) it may be possible to consider other implications about the needs of the elderly in developing and restructuring services.

5.2 These studies are not unique and their findings are supported in whole or in part by similar studies carried out in other parts of the country. They do not in themselves provide the details of the blueprint for relevant developments or alternatives to present services for the elderly. Nor are these findings the only kind of facts that have to be heeded in preparing alternatives; economic, statutory and political constraints have to be juggled and balanced in the deliberations. But these researches may provide a stimulus to a debate on alternatives in the following framework:

- i) If we accept, for the moment, the existing service structure as given, then one of its major dilemmas is the lack of adequate identification mechanisms to locate the vast hordes of the elderly who are eligible for these services but do not receive them. Nor is this a once and for all identification process for our work has shown that these needs are continuous and recurrent. Allied to this is the necessity to overcome the problem of lack of knowledge of services in a population whose ability to retain information for any time is generally very poor.
- ii) It is of little avail to identify need if the services themselves are inadequate or subject to failures or confusion. The services and their pathways to provision must be subject to present and continuous scrutiny to identify shortcomings.

- iii) In the current context of service philosophy we must examine the range of needs that have been identified and for which no service structure is available and thereby determine what additions to service should be provided.
- iv) The massive input that would be required to implement any of the above, should give pause to consider whether alternative conceptions of service philosophy and provision might not now be timely.

In particular we would want to urge that central to this philosophy should be the commitment to maintain the independence and dignity of those retired. It is suggested that much of this may be achieved by ensuring an adequate income in retirement and opportunities to develop and maintain self-directed purposeful and productive activities through the retirement years. We believe that these two simple steps alone could reduce and defer the present level of dependence on the existing service provision, apart from the benefit in human terms that would accrue to the elderly themselves.

- 5.3 But this is only a first step in a comprehensive review of our elderly and their needs. What is needed as a next step is the joining together of the Council, the Trade Unions, Industry and the Community to explore further the problems of and solutions to the needs of the elderly in the light of the massive increase in their numbers which is predicted over the next 10 to 12 years.

5 SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL LIFE TO WORK LIFE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.0 In our first year of exploration in Hillfields, concern was expressed by fieldworkers about the numbers of adolescents frequenting the many Hillfields cafés and coffee bars both during the day time and in the evenings. It was thought that some of these were truanting from school and that the older ones were probably unemployed. These impressions were confirmed by a short investigation carried out by a young unemployed man from Hillfields funded by CDP. At this time unemployment amongst young people in Coventry was relatively rare although it was discovered that a disproportionate number of unemployed young people lived in Hillfields. It was alleged by some local residents and young people themselves that it was more difficult for Hillfields youngsters to obtain jobs than for those outside the area because of the bad reputation of the area and the predominance of immigrants amongst the adolescent population.

1.1 In order to investigate the problems of the transition from school to work for Hillfields young people, two studies were carried out. The first attempted to compare the experiences of a group of white Hillfields school leavers, a group of immigrant Hillfields school leavers and a group of school leavers from outside Hillfields (1). This study revealed the frequency of job-changing among school leavers in the first three years after leaving school; this tendency was most marked amongst white young people from Hillfields. During this period it also became apparent that Coventry was entering a major slump and shake-out of labour. The effects of this upon young people are illustrated by the fact that since 1969, the average monthly number of unemployed boys and girls aged 15 to 17 (inclusive) in the city was as follows:

1969 - 190	1972 - 694
1970 - 225	1973 - 370
1971 - 468	

It can be seen that even though unemployment amongst young people was declining in 1973 (following the Coventry recession of 1971-72) it was still more than twice as high as in 1969.

1.2 The second study was carried out for CDP by the Grubb Institute and concentrated on the whole area of the transition from school

(1) Brown, Helen - "The Transition from School to Work", CDP (Coventry) Occasional Paper No. 8, October 1972.

life to work life (2). It forms the basis of the following section. It should be noted that the study involved detailed interviews with pupils, staff and parents from two secondary schools (one which served Hillfields children and one which served a large working class estate in an adjoining part of the city) as well as with young employees and managers of several large firms known to employ considerable numbers of school leavers, and careers staff from the Careers Service. No significant differences were found between the school serving the Hillfields area and the other one.

2. FINDINGS INTERPRETED

- 2.0 There were three basic findings from the project. They are stated here briefly and will be elaborated later in this paper.
- i) In the secondary schools studied, the effect of their experience was to render young people, at the point of transition into work, highly dependent on adults rather than equipping them to take responsibility for themselves as young citizens and employees. Yet many of the adults on whom they depended were not in a position to give appropriate guidance. This was especially noticeable as regards young people from immigrant families.
 - ii) In the industrial and commercial firms studied, training and support were only offered to young people to the extent that they were expected to prove valuable as contributors to production. Firms were seldom in a position to afford time and energy on supporting the less skilled, nor did they know what to do for them in this respect.
 - iii) The Careers Service, despite wishing to be concerned for the personal development and growth of young people, was mainly used by all concerned - schools, parents, employers and young people themselves - as an agency to sort young people into available job slots as ordained by employers.
- 2.1 These findings suggest that the overall process linking the education system to the employment system can be understood in the light of the following interpretation:

The dominant factor influencing the experience of young men and women in the transition from education to employment in Coventry appeared to be the needs of the structure of industrial employment as perceived by schools, rather than the needs of young people developing towards adulthood. Schools appeared to be

(2) This paper is a digest of a longer discussion report of the complete action/research study and incorporates ideas developed in discussion of that report with the schools and firms involved, some members of the Coventry Education Committee, education department advisers, the Engineering Employers Association and the Careers Service. This report will be published later in 1975, and will be available from John Bazalgette, Grubb Institute, E.W.R. Centre, Cloudesley Street, Islington, London N.1.

organised and run, not so much in order to equip young people to deal with the realities of adult life and employment, but upon assumptions which rejected those realities. This had detrimental effects upon the development of all young people, but most of all on those least well equipped and supported. Those from immigrant families, who were least familiar with the local social environment, demonstrated the problem most clearly, but it was not confined to them. Those who entered the lower regions of existing employment structures were most exposed to the demands of the industrial and commercial systems which overrode the developmental needs of young people. It appeared that the schools and firms (in pursuit of survival in their own terms without reference to the needs of young adults as persons) tended unwittingly to reinforce the processes which maintain Hillfields as an area of disadvantage.

- 2.2 The implication of this is that any changes of policy intended to improve the provision for young men and women in their growth towards adulthood, must realistically grapple with the problem of making human needs predominate over commercial and industrial needs, yet to do this without denying present commercial and industrial realities. This applies as much to schools and other parts of the education system as it does to the employment system. Where schools and colleges fail to help young people to work out ways of relating to the organisations of which they are members, whatever their stated intentions, they unconsciously support the negative aspects of the materialist system which they claim to reject.

3. EVIDENCE IN SCHOOLS

The Transition

- 3.0 In both schools studied we found that pupils and staff behaved as if they shared a belief that work in Coventry principally amounted to work on the track, with high wages as the only compensation for boredom, frustration and depersonalisation. Other forms of employment were seldom taken into full account. School life was talked of and justified by contrasting it with such employment, the school being seen as caring for individuals as persons, and as being the place where human values prevailed. Methods of organising schools, the pursuit of exams, the general system of rewards and punishments, the strong encouragement to all pupils to stay on at school or in further education, were all justified either by being contrasted with industrial employment as it was believed to be, or in terms of providing an escape from it. In both schools many teachers made the assumption that most of their pupils came from unsatisfactory homes and that the school had therefore a duty to provide alternative experiences which made up for this. Systems of linking school life to family life were crude and unimaginative, apparently fulfilling the task of keeping parents away from schools except at times of crisis.

- 3.1 The result of making these assumptions about the badness of the world outside school was to make it difficult for teachers to be realistic in their evaluation of the effects of their actions upon the pupils in their schools and therefore to be professional in what they were doing. In particular they adopted organisational practices which actually had, in the long run, adverse effects upon those who were in their charge, especially upon those least well equipped in terms of personal or family resources. For example in the comprehensive school studied, the option system, which aimed at giving wide choices of subject to fourth formers, had the effect of making pupils feel isolated - even alienated - from the school and from each other, and created a situation where it was almost impossible for any member of staff to know where any pupil would be at a given time. Truancy, which is difficult even to detect in such conditions, was running at between 25 and 30%. Those who aimed to take exams had some support; those who were leaving had little.
- 3.2 Young people emerged from school ill-prepared for what they would actually find in employment. They were frequently immaturely dependent, frightened and anxious to avoid trouble. They had mainly learned to try to fit into unknown situations with as little fuss as possible, but also with little originality or initiative. In fact, because they were so ill-prepared many of them appeared to their employers as lazy, ill-disciplined and unreliable. Yet very few teachers could appreciate the school's responsibility in creating this situation because they had never assessed the effect of the way the school was organised on the development of the pupils, e.g. the option system was never examined from this point of view; it was simply taken for granted as good in itself, needing no further justification.

School Life as a Preparation for Work Life

- 3.3 What is learned at school about how to behave towards those in authority, how to take initiatives in an organisation, how to work with colleagues and others and how to organise one's life in order to ensure that one's own long-term interests are preserved, are all carried over into the young person's adult working life, whether or not time and thought are given to them. Our research was intended to discover to what extent the experiences of young people in school (besides taking exams) equipped them to be discriminating as they entered employment, enabling them to work out how to behave in their own best long-term interests, and how to make the best use of their school experience in the new situation they had entered. What we found was that the principal effect of experience in the two schools studied was to shield young people from the environment and deprive them of ways of understanding what they were encountering, thus making them so dependent that when they entered employment they were absorbed into the various kinds of vacancies that existed, not because they were the best but because they did not know what else to do other than follow the direction in which the systems pointed them.

In fact, experience of school appeared to diminish young people's capacity to think and act responsibly once they got to work, making them vulnerable to the pressures and demands of the existing employment structure determined as it is by operational rather than human needs.

- 3.4 A point which caused us considerable concern was the extent to which the adults in the best place to support and guide a young employee - his parents - had progressively had their sense of authority and power eroded over the years. Thus a young person's lack of personal resources was not likely to be compensated for by parental support except in the case of very determined and knowledgeable parents. Those left most vulnerable at this point were the young people whose parents were unfamiliar with the local structure of opportunity and sources of help. These included many immigrants. Thus any racial prejudice which we encountered was by default rather than by overt discrimination.

4. EVIDENCE IN EMPLOYMENT

- 4.0 A large engineering company, a large electrical engineering company, a small engineering workshop and a departmental store were studied. All four employed young men at different levels of skill, including apprentices, management trainees and semi- and unskilled workers. Three of them also employed girls, two of them in very large numbers and at a similar range of job levels to the young men. All of the firms employed young men and women from inside the Railway Triangle and from the two schools.
- 4.1 In all four firms management was principally concerned about operational efficiency. Meeting the needs of developing young adults was subordinated whenever there was a clash of priorities. What emerged was that employers did not know how to support the personal development of a young employee, except in the context of developing a skill which the firm in question valued for its own future. Thus an apprentice would have time and trouble taken over his whole development, whatever sized firm he might be with. By contrast a machine operator would get the barest of technical instruction and haphazard personal supervision; a sales assistant would be no better supported.
- 4.2 Managers were almost universally critical of the lack of what they called "discipline" amongst young employees. They were worried by their immaturity, their unreliability and their frequent rudeness. They blamed schools for their failure to teach what they regarded as the basics a young adult should know, yet they did not know what they could do, once a young worker had entered employment, to make up for this failure; nor had any firm made a direct attempt to communicate its concern to any school. Instead, we found that firms were becoming increasingly reluctant to take on anyone below the age of 18, except as apprentices, and some had even reduced the numbers of these drastically in recent years. This policy was justified on the grounds of the high outlay in wages, other expenses, and the time and trouble involved.

- 4.3 In none of the firms we studied did we find trades unions taking up the specific interests of young employees. As a result we found that the majority of young men and women we met were more hostile to unions than they were to management.
- 4.4 Yet all this needed to be seen in the context of the experience of young employees. They came into employment feeling frightened, immature and anxious about their capacity to cope in the new situation. These feelings arose, partly from the reality of the problem of going into a new situation, but more importantly because they expected work to be a nasty experience, with brutal managers making unreasonable and unintelligible demands upon them. Expecting to be treated like children, they were surprised to find that the basic demand on them was to be adults. Most of them recognised that this was a fundamentally better demand to encounter than the pressures towards childishness they had experienced at school. The majority looked back on their school experience as unintelligible and irrelevant. They felt that having learned to read, write and do elementary arithmetic, the rest of their school experience had been a waste of time.
- 4.5 When the organisation for work was compared with organisation in schools, the most striking contrast was in the stability of working groups and the closeness of the relationship between employees and supervisors in the work situation. In schools, either the "supervisors" changed every hour or so, or else the whole working group and the supervisor changed leading to disrupted relationships throughout the day. In even the worst working situations the basic level of security was much greater than in either of the schools we studied. Besides this, the fact that all employees were paid was a sign of being valued, unparalleled for pupils, however much time and trouble teachers might take.

5. COMPARING SCHOOL LIFE WITH WORK LIFE

- 5.0 The essential differences between the experience of school life and work life can be set out in a simplified manner in tabular form.

<u>School</u>	<u>Employment</u>
working groups of 25-30 members in most cases	working groups of 5-15 in most cases
groups made up of members all the same age, with the exception of the supervisor	groups made up of members of different ages
frequently changing supervisors, (i.e. about every 35-60 mins)	same supervisor all the time

SchoolEmployment

change of colleagues every 35-60 mins (true in one location studied but not the other)

same colleagues day-by-day

working as individuals

working in teams

normally distant relationship with supervisors because of above factors

normally close contact with supervisor because of above factors

supervisors and group members disagreed on the aims and objectives of the organisation (supervisors talked of maturity, appreciation of good things of life etc; group members talked about qualifications)

supervisors and group members agreed about aims and objectives of the organisation (to make a profit). They did not necessarily like these but agreed about what they were

no generally acceptable way whereby group members could challenge the aims and views of the supervisors - even when they were seriously believed to be wrong by group members or those concerned for their interest

agreed procedures whereby disputes with supervisors could be taken up without conflict necessarily getting out of hand, i.e. trades unions or other representative systems

attendance enforced by law

attendance not enforced by law

not paid for attendance

paid for attendance

role associated with childhood

role associated with adulthood

6. CAREERS SERVICE

- 6.0 We did not study the Careers Service in a direct fashion. However, we did examine what view was held of the Careers Service by teachers, employers, parents and young people in order to give an indication of the demands which might be made by those who approached the Service. These demands were likely to be factors controlling what the Service could achieve in practice. We found that all sections of our study principally looked upon the Careers Service as an employment agency. Although the staff of the Service wanted to be involved in guidance and counselling, through a variety of activities with schools and young people, what they achieved was a placement service which competed with a number of other similar agencies including the advertisement columns of the local papers.

- 6.1 Our conclusion about the actual function of the Careers Service corporately, distinct from the aspirations of its staff, was that it acted as an agency sorting young people into the jobs offered to them by the existing employment system. The Service was given only minimal opportunity to affect the preparation of young adults for leaving school and the ways in which they were received into employment. Even schools and employers having difficulty in the above two areas were found to be unlikely to consult the careers staff to help design better systems than they already operated, though they may try to pass on a troublesome individual.
7. WHAT CAN BE DONE ?
- 7.0 To restate our basic interpretation, the needs of young people from this inner-city area of Coventry in transition to adulthood were unconsciously subordinated to the apparent needs of the employment system in Coventry. This was as much done by the schools as it was done by the employment system itself, though the schools were unaware of the fact that this was what they were doing.
- 7.1 It will be clear from all that has been said so far that the problem under examination is not one which can be tackled simply by increasing resources. We are principally pointing to the failure of the education service to equip young people for what they will find when they enter the adult world, especially the world of work. What is called for is a policy which demands that the organisation, curriculum and pastoral work bear a real relationship to the facts of life in the environment. This includes the environment of work, and also that of family and general citizenship.
- 7.2 We believe we have uncovered a need in the education service for support in finding new directions and making new priorities, which will enable teachers and others associated with the job of helping young people growing up to struggle more realistically with the difficulties of entering the world of employment.
8. IMPLICATIONS FOR LAYMEN INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATION SERVICE
- 8.0 One area for consideration is the role of governing bodies and elected members of the education committee. In a sense these are the persons who, because of their position carry a responsibility for being the guardians of the futures of the pupils in the schools, speaking on their behalf to the professionals in the education system and ensuring that the skills of the professionals are deployed effectively in the long-term interests of the pupils. Teachers and education officers work within their system and need the support of others to help them maintain their bearings. Governors and elected members are in a position to do this because they represent the life and development of their local communities.

- 8.1 Members of the Education Committee and school governors thus have a part to play in this by examining all actions and proposals put to them in terms of this question:

In what way does the action proposed prepare the young people for taking up a full adult role in society ?

- 8.2 To join with professional educators in working at the answers to such a question elected members must draw on their own experience of the problems and tensions of taking responsible roles in society. "Psychological" or "educational" answers given by professionals need to be matched against practical experience of what life is like in the factories, shops and offices of Coventry. In the end the practical evaluation of education made by every young man and woman is the extent to which it helps him or her to tackle the problems of living in the world as it is, not as schools imagine it to be. Where the answers to such a question are not energetically pursued, the effect - judging from this project - is to produce young men and young women who are morosely conformist, talking in school mainly about getting qualifications and in work about getting more money.
- 8.3 This approach means that the "layness" of the member or governor is the greatest asset which he has to offer to help schools find their direction. "Not knowing" and "not understanding" is the resource which helps the interests of young people to be kept in full view. This in no way undermines the professionalism of teachers, in fact it effectively enhances it.
- 8.4 Put in practical terms, what this means is that each school should be pressed by its governors to express its aims and objectives at regular intervals, to explain these to the governors, and at intervals agreed with the staff, to evaluate how far those aims have been achieved. In this way the governors can act as the guardians of the long-term functions of a school because they do not need to get caught up in the hurly-burly of daily life in the school, where day-to-day crises can easily overtake longer term policies.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- 9.0 The internal organisation for class-work and pastoral care is of fundamental importance in providing the conditions under which learning is helped or hampered. In addition, it seems that truancy and vandalism are also influenced by the same factors. The methods of internal organisation of a school need to be examined in the light of their effects upon pupils and teachers. In particular organisational methods need to be so designed as to help pupils to understand the aims and objectives of the school set against an understanding of the environment, and to work out their own

aspirations in the light of those. It is also necessary for new methods of organisation to be evolved which produce appropriate stability in relationships between teachers and pupils, and pupils and pupils to support their growth towards adulthood.

- 9.1 This can be done by asking how far particular organisational structures help the growth of appropriate understanding of the use of authority, the acquisition of habits of work which are congruent with what will be found in the working world and the development of a capacity to be autonomous. This will involve examining the size and stability of working groups and their aims. It was evident that neither of the two schools studied in this project did little of value in these respects, particularly when the facts of life outside school were taken into consideration.
- 9.2 To support the kind of development outlined above, a policy needs to be adopted which helps teachers gain insight into the working environment, which can then help to strengthen them in their work inside the school. Such a policy was adopted by Coventry in 1971, but has since got submerged in the pressures of ROSLA and local government reorganisation. This was the practice of setting up exchanges between schools and employment situations for senior teachers and managers. This policy, properly carried through, is potentially a vital way of helping schools and firms understand what each is doing to equip young people with a greater understanding of the problems of development towards adulthood. It would be a wise policy for the city to adopt to have 25% of the staff of all secondary schools taking part in such exchanges over the next five years and for every school to have at least one person from employment - not necessarily only managers - trades unionists would also have much to contribute - attached to a school each term. It would be important for many schools to have had the Head involved in such an exchange.
- 9.3 Parents, because of their close everyday contact with their children, are in the position best suited to giving advice and helping understanding. In this project we found that schools organised themselves in ways which wasted the resources of parents, creating misunderstanding, hostility and breakdown of communication between parents and schools. This points to the need for schools to evolve effective ways of supporting parents so that they are better equipped to help their sons and daughters in transition. Some preliminary work has already been done by the Careers Service in Coventry which could provide the basis for further development.

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL

- 10.0 The City Council cannot influence directly the systems by which young people are received into employment. The most effective

way to ensure that the interests of young people's development are not subordinated to those of the productive system would be to give their needs legal backing. It is worth the city considering a Local Bill to give all young employees under the age of 18 the status of trainees and requiring employers who use them to provide training of an acceptable type aimed not only at the development of skills but also social development. There are many questions yet to be answered about how to do this, but with the Training Services Agency's interest in young workers, the possibility of experimentation could get considerable support. It is also true that certain employers' associations are concerned about the problem and might well cooperate. It would be important that full union backing were also obtained.

- 10.1 A scheme has been discussed with the Careers Service whereby those who do not gain apprenticeships, but whose early working life might involve job-changing and experimentation, could be supported by creating an "employment association", which they could join. This would form groups of between 12 and 15 young people aged between 16 and 20, each group being given as a tutor an experienced shopfloor worker. Groups would meet weekly to design and carry through a programme involving discussion of working experience, training in skills, information about educational opportunities at college or elsewhere, discussion about job-changing and taking up new jobs. Tutors could themselves be organised into networks which support them and keep them informed about training and job opportunities. Such a scheme could be operated by the Employers Associations and the unions working together. The aim is to provide flexible, appropriate personal support over a period of 3-4 years which would bring opportunities into the grasp of those who fail to win apprenticeships and who at present tend either to drift through a series of unsatisfying jobs, interspersed with periods of unemployment, or else get trapped in one place without being able to rescue themselves in their own long-term interests. Funds for such a scheme could come from industrial training boards or the Training Services Agency (4).
- 10.2 If the City Council took the initiative in encouraging such a scheme to be developed it would show its concern for all its young people. It could be of similar importance to its present practice of giving the Freedom of the City to apprentices at the completion of their time.

Careers Service

- 10.3 All the above proposals require support from an agency which is not sunk in the day-to-day operational problems of schools and firms. Such an agency would need to develop skills and real expertise in helping other bodies to understand the problems and approaches to helping young adults as they grow up. It would not focus principally upon guiding young people but on equipping teachers, parents and employers (who are all already guiding young adults) to do their job better. In most instances, Coventry Careers Service is

(4) A discussion paper, developing some of these proposals, has been prepared, by the Grubb Institute, for the Engineering Industry Training Board.

already doing the kinds of work envisaged, but with many handicaps and constraints both internal and external.

- 10.4 Detailed proposals of activities which the Careers Service staff could engage in have already been discussed with them and are outlined elsewhere. However, any fundamental change in the role of the Careers Service based on placing the developmental needs of young men and women above the needs of the employment system would have to be examined and accepted by the Council. Such a fundamental change in the Careers Service would not involve it in giving more guidance to young people but in ensuring that the education they receive and the employment they take up gives serious consideration to grappling with the basic problem of making technological and industrial demands subordinate to human needs.
- 10.5 One area where some special development needs to take place is in work with young people from immigrant families. At present many of them are not receiving the best support from their parents because their fathers and mothers do not understand the social and employment situations facing their sons and daughters. Coventry Careers Service could provide a most important service to these families if a specialist were appointed to make work with immigrants more sensitive to the special problems they encounter. This would best be done by appointing an officer whose function would be to ensure that the rest of the staff who deal with immigrants understand what they need to know about helping immigrants in this transitional stage and put that knowledge into practice.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.0 This paper is not intended to deal comprehensively with a complex project. It has sought to expose the elements of the problem of the relationship between education and employment and the transition of young people from one to the other. The main argument has been that the present cycle, where the demands of the industrial system, both real and imagined, are the main influences on what happens, needs to be broken. It appears that the schools and employers in an inner-city area such as Hillfields pursue policies which have the effect of reinforcing the problems of such an area, maintaining a situation of disadvantage from which the residents are largely prevented from escaping. It has been suggested that the City Council can take major initiatives in doing this, especially using the Careers Service as a lever. It does not overlook the economic power of the system, nor the extent to which industrialism permeates everyone's thinking. In the end (as is argued in the other papers in this report) major shifts in social structures, values, understanding and responsibility need to take place. Understanding backed by action can begin to further these in a number of ways on carefully defined fronts. From this project it appears that the transition from education to employment is one of those fronts.

6 INDUSTRY IN COVENTRY AND THE DECLINE OF HILLFIELDS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 Coventry has certainly not been an underprivileged area; in fact, it has been a showpiece of British advanced technology and prosperity throughout this century. Coventry has become known as a centre for highly paid, skilled engineers and, until recently, its unemployment rate has been well below the national average. The picture of Hillfields is very different. (See table 6.1 and Appendix 1)

	<u>Hillfields</u>		<u>Coventry</u>	
	Males & Females	Males	Males & Females	Males
	&		&	
Unskilled manual workers (1)	19	21	7	6
Personal service, semi-skilled (1)	27	24	23	22
Non-manual workers (1)	15	8	27	15
Foremen, skilled manual workers (1)	30	40	30	43
Professional workers (1)	1	2	3	4
Employers, managers (1)	3	3	6	8
Unemployed (1)	8		4	
Employed by Chrysler and British Leyland (2)	16		21	
Employed by 15 largest firms in Coventry (2)	40		54	
Employed by metal and engineering firms other than the 15 largest firms in Coventry (2)	12		7	

NB All figures are rounded up to nearest whole figure.

- (1) 1971 Census (Ward Library), Table 23.
 (2) CDP "1 in 6 Household Survey of Hillfields", May-June 1971 and Coventry Minimum List Headings (Census).

- 1.1 Hillfields has fewer employers, managers, professional workers, foremen and skilled male manual workers, and far more unskilled male manual workers. It has had a much higher level of unemployment than Coventry or Britain. In addition, the proportion of Hillfields people who work for the traditionally high paying, large-scale, car firms is lower than for Coventry, as is the proportion employed by the 15 largest firms in the city. In view of this it is not surprising that surveys conducted in Hillfields have consistently shown a low level of household income (3).
- 1.2 Our research indicates that this contrast cannot be explained in terms of the personal characteristics of the people who live there. Hillfields is a natural and "normal" phenomenon of modern economic development. The under-development of a Hillfields is an integral part of the development of a Coventry. If Hillfields were not situated right next to Coventry city centre, something much like Hillfields would have been located nearby.
2. THE CHANGING FUNCTION OF HILLFIELDS
- 2.0 During the early years of Hillfields' existence, the silk ribbon trade was flourishing in the post-Napoleonic wars boom. For those who moved to the new suburb, Hillfields represented a step up the social ladder. The proportion of skilled weavers owning their own looms was high in Coventry (56% of those in the trade) and much higher in Hillfields. Most first-hand journeymen worked for manufacturers (or masters) but they all worked at home with their output subcontracted on a weekly basis.
- 2.1 Before its final decline in the 1860s, the fortunes of the ribbon trade fluctuated markedly. During times of prosperity the trade spread among 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. Even when they did work, village weavers were paid less than city weavers for their ribbons. Differentials of over 50% for first-hand journeymen's earnings between the countryside and Coventry were common (4).
- 2.2 During the 1840s and 50s 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.
- 2.3 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. In the slump

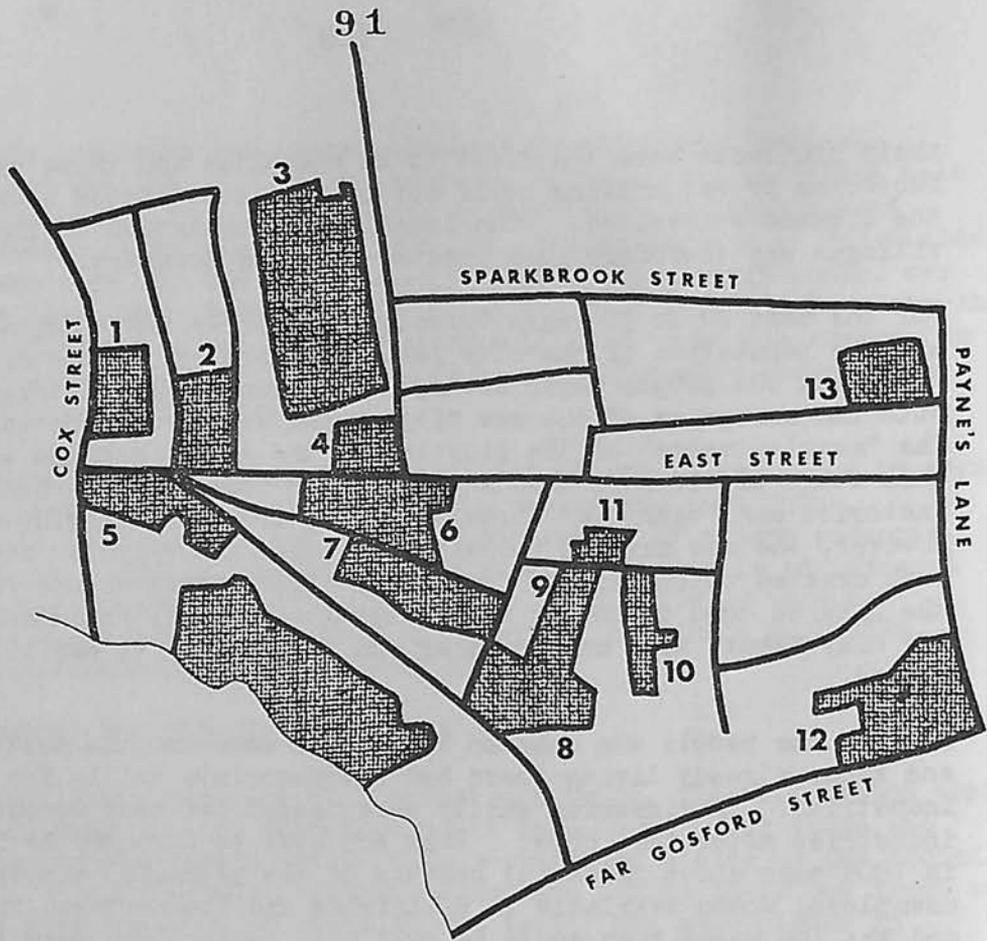
(3) CDP "1 in 6 Household Survey of Hillfields", May-June 1971 and Department of Architecture and Planning Eagle Street Action Area Survey, 1972.

(4) Prest, J., "The Industrial Revolution in Coventry", Oxford University Press, 1960.

their contracts were the first to be cancelled and there weaving factories or watchmaking could not provide substitutes because of the distances involved. The immediate depopulation of the weaving villages was therefore much greater than for Coventry.

- 2.4 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 90s 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. Many small factories and "backyard" firms sprang up around Hillfields (Figure 6.1). 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.
- 2.5 But now the people who came to Hillfields were not the most skilled and those already living there had inappropriate skills for the new industries. Engineering skills were needed for most Coventry industries after the 1880s. Even the move to Coventry by Courtaulds in 1905 came about primarily because of the plentiful supply of unemployed women available in Hillfields and the northern villages and the low wages they could be paid (5), rather than because of their weaving skills.
- 2.6 People who moved into Coventry after the 1880s moved to the newer suburbs if they could afford it. As 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 (the Bell Green area near the Austin Morris works, built privately between the wars and by the Council after the war, and Whoberley and Allesley near Standard Triumph built between the wars).
- 2.7 Hillfields 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 50s because of the tremendous post-war demand for labour in Coventry. However, since the late 1950s, the highest paying jobs in the highest paying industries (motor-car and aircraft) have not expanded as rapidly as previously and upward mobility and outward migration have been more restricted.
- 2.8 Hillfields now has a much higher proportion of unskilled and unemployed workers than the rest of Coventry. Although many Hillfields people are employed in car factories (and in the other 13 major firms in Coventry) the proportions are less than the Coventry average (Table 6.1); and there is probably a higher than average proportion of

(5) Allen, G.C., "Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country 1860 - 1927", George Allen & Unwin, London, 1929.
 Coleman, D.C., "Courtaulds: An Economic and Social History", Vol. II, Oxford University Press, 1969.



site	use in 1896	use in 1906	use in 1951	use in 1968
1	-	chemical works	chemical works	electrical wholesaler
2	Taylor, Cooper & Bednell	?	Coventry Glass	Coventry Glass
3	Singer & Co.	Singer & Co.	Singer & Co.	Hills, Precision printer, bookbinder
4	Antifriction Ball Co.	Raglan Cycles	-	G.E.C.
5a	Bayless, Thomas & Co.	Excelsior Cycles	-	G.E.C.
b	Bayless, Thomas & Co.	Stevengraph Silk Works	-	G.E.C.
6	Cycle Components Manufacturing Co.	?	Singer & Co.	G.E.C.
7	Pneumatic Tyre Co.	Dunlop	electrical engineer	G.E.C.
8	Humber & Co.	Humber & Co.	electrical engineer	G.E.C.
9	Auto Machinery Co.	?	electrical engineer	G.E.C.
10	Premier Cycle Co.	Premier Cycle Co.	?	G.E.C.
11	Coventry Plating Co.	Coventry Plating Co.	?	G.E.C.
12	Townend Bros.	Coronet Motor Works	engineering works	-
13	-	Sparkbrook Cycle Works	Singer Motors	Coventry Tubes

note: all the concerns listed in 1896 were engaged in the bicycle industry.

source: Geographical Association, Coventry Branch, "Urban Field Studies for Coventry Schools", 1970.

Figure 6.1 Changing use of industrial sites in Hillfields, 1896-1968

unskilled, manual workers amongst them in view of the fact that the proportion of unskilled male manual workers in Hillfields is almost four times the Coventry average. In contrast a higher proportion, 12%, of Hillfields workers are employed in the smaller metal and engineering firms compared with 7% for the Coventry labour-force as a whole. Many of these smaller firms do sub-contracting work for the car firms or have other close linkages with the motor vehicles industry.

2.9 Our hypothesis is that during recessions Hillfields people are more likely to be laid off or unemployed than others. This is partly because of the high proportion of unskilled workers in Hillfields and partly because of the high proportion of Hillfields workers in small engineering firms which do subcontracting work for the larger car, aircraft and electrical engineering firms.

- i) During a recession unskilled workers as a category are particularly vulnerable to lay-offs. For example, 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% (6). In particular there is evidence that in car firms the proportion of non-manual to manual workers rises in recessions as unskilled manual workers are the first to be laid off (7). This is reflected in the fact that in the 1971 recession in Coventry there were 26 skilled unemployed engineering workers for every skilled engineering vacancy and 528 unemployed unskilled manual workers for every unskilled manual vacancy in engineering and allied trades (6). Although unskilled manual workers as well as unskilled clerical and semi-skilled manual workers are relatively expendable to the firm, it is essential for the firm 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 labour).
- ii) Workers in small engineering firms which make components, or do subcontract work for the larger firms, will also be at special risk during times of squeeze or economic uncertainty. This is because it is easier for large producers to cut back on subcontracted work than to lay-off large numbers of their own workers. But it is equally vital for the large producers to be able to increase rapidly their supply of components from subcontractors when markets re-expand.

(6) Hill, M.J., et al. "Men Out of Work" - A study of unemployment in three English towns (including Coventry). Cambridge University Press. 1973.

(7) Rhys (1972) shows that in car firms generally the proportion of non-manual to manual workers rises in recessions as unskilled manual workers are the first to be laid-off.

- 2.10 Thus the relationships which develop between large and small firms, and between firms and particular sections of the labour force, as firms adjust to market forces, link the development of certain areas with the progressive under-development of others. Areas or communities associated with large proportions of unskilled manual workers, concentrations of workers employed by declining industries, or simply inefficient or relatively small firms, can become reservoirs of relatively expendable labour for the larger, more efficient and expanding firms or for the relatively expendable small firms sub-contracted to larger firms. The stability, and to some extent the prosperity of the expanding firms depends upon their relationship with small firms and expendable sections of the labour force. The stability, and to some extent the prosperity, of prosperous areas thus depends upon nearby deprived areas.
- 2.11 In Coventry, Hillfields (and perhaps certain other areas with similar labour characteristics) illustrate this relationship. In some ways therefore, Hillfields has come to relate to the rest of Coventry in a manner similar to that in which Foleshill and other outlying villages related to Hillfields over a hundred years ago.

3. LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT: THE PRODUCT CYCLE AND THE MOTOR INDUSTRY IN COVENTRY

- 3.0 In order to understand the industrial situation in Coventry today, it is necessary to have some understanding of the long term pattern of market forces which is common to many products (the product cycle). This pattern is one of initial slow development followed by a period of very rapid expansion, followed by a levelling off of demand and finally a long, slow period of decline. This product cycle may vary widely in overall length and relative time required for each stage. It is particularly apparent in the production of technologically advanced consumer durables, products in which Coventry has specialised for many years.
- 3.1 The product cycle will be used to examine the long term trend of the motor industry and the interaction between market forces, firms and the labour force in Coventry. It is explained by reference to figure 6.2. Curve A represents typical growth in the percentage of the population owning an expensive item such as a bicycle or a car. Ownership grows slowly at first during the Experimental Period (Period 1); growth then accelerates as ownership becomes more common among richer people. The new product is now properly a Luxury Product (Period 2). Experimentation in design still goes on during Period 2, but by the Peak Period (Period 3) the design becomes stabilised. The Peak Period may be further sub-divided into an acceleration and a deceleration period (Periods 3a and 3b).
- 3.2 For motor-cars the Peak Period began in the United Kingdom around 1933 but was interrupted by the war. During Period 4 the growth in ownership declines and during the final Period 5, ownership is stagnant or declines (Curve B). Curve C represents the growth of ownership derived from Curve A by taking the growth in Curve A per year. This curve then will very roughly represent the main trend of sales of the industry producing the product. In figure 6.2, D shows the actual pattern of new car registrations in the UK, which reached their peak in the mid-'60s.

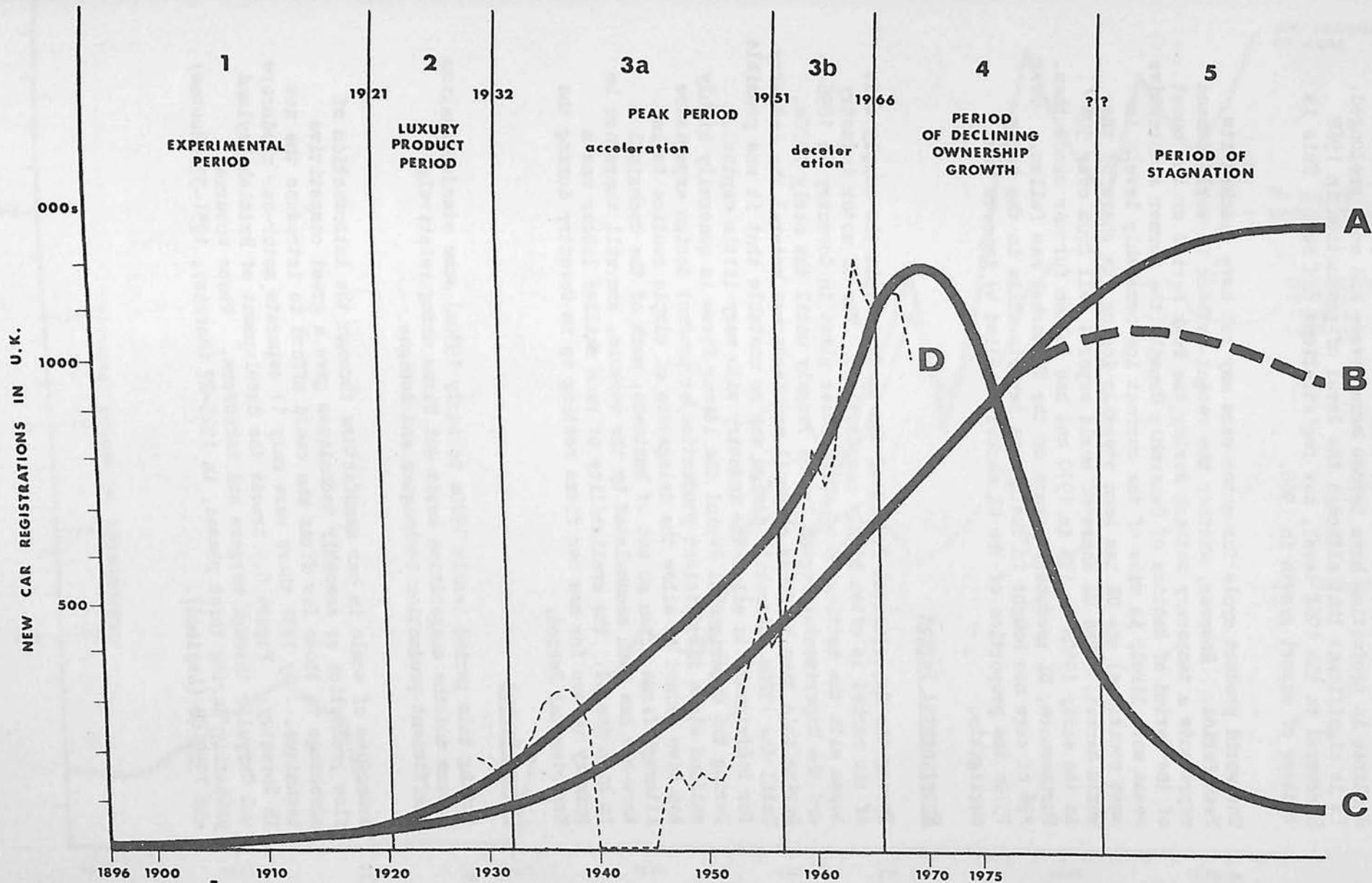


Figure 6.2 Product cycle for cars in the U.K.

- 3.3 Total UK production and exports of cars is shown in figure 6.3. Although car production has grown very quickly since the war, short-term fluctuations have always been great. The graph indicates that declines in production have become more severe and more prolonged. It is significant that although the level of production in 1968 recovered to the 1964 level, new registrations did not. This is because of export growth in 1968.
- 3.4 The world product cycle for motor-cars may not have reached its Peak Period. However, whether the recent setback in world demand represents a temporary setback during the Peak Period or the onset of the Period of Decline of Ownership Growth (the former alternative seems more likely in view of the current low ownership levels in most countries) the UK has been steadily losing its share of the world market. The UK share of world exports fell from over 50% in the early 1950s to 13% in 1970 and has fallen further since then. Furthermore, UK producers' share of the UK market has fallen. Over 25% of cars now bought in the UK are imports while in the early 1950s the proportion of the UK market supplied by imports was negligible.

Experimental Period

- 3.5 During the Experimental Period of the product cycle the supply side of the market is often highly competitive. The UK motor industry began with the setting up of the Daimler plant in Coventry in 1896 and the Experimental Period lasted roughly until the early 1920s. During this time hundreds of small manufacturers entered the industry. Until the 1920s automobile design was so unstable that it was possible for individuals to enter the industry with very little capital. During the Experimental Period the labour force is generally highly skilled since insufficient production or product design experience has been gained to allow the delegation of simple routine tasks. Although firms often go out of business, much of the technical know-how has been accumulated by the workers, who will therefore be in high demand. The availability of such skilled labour was a primary reason for new car firms setting up in Coventry during the Experimental Period.

Luxury Period

- 3.6 During this period (early 1920s to early 1930s) some standardisation occurs and the competition weeds out firms using relatively inefficient production techniques and designs.
- 3.7 Economies of scale in car manufacture through the introduction of flow production or assembly techniques gave a great competitive advantage to those few firms who could afford to introduce the new technique. By 1931 there were only 11 separate motor-car producers in Coventry. Figure 6.4 traces the development of British Leyland and Chrysler through mergers and takeovers. These occurred primarily during three phases, in 1923-27 (Morris), 1931-37 (Rootes) and 1959-68 (Leyland).

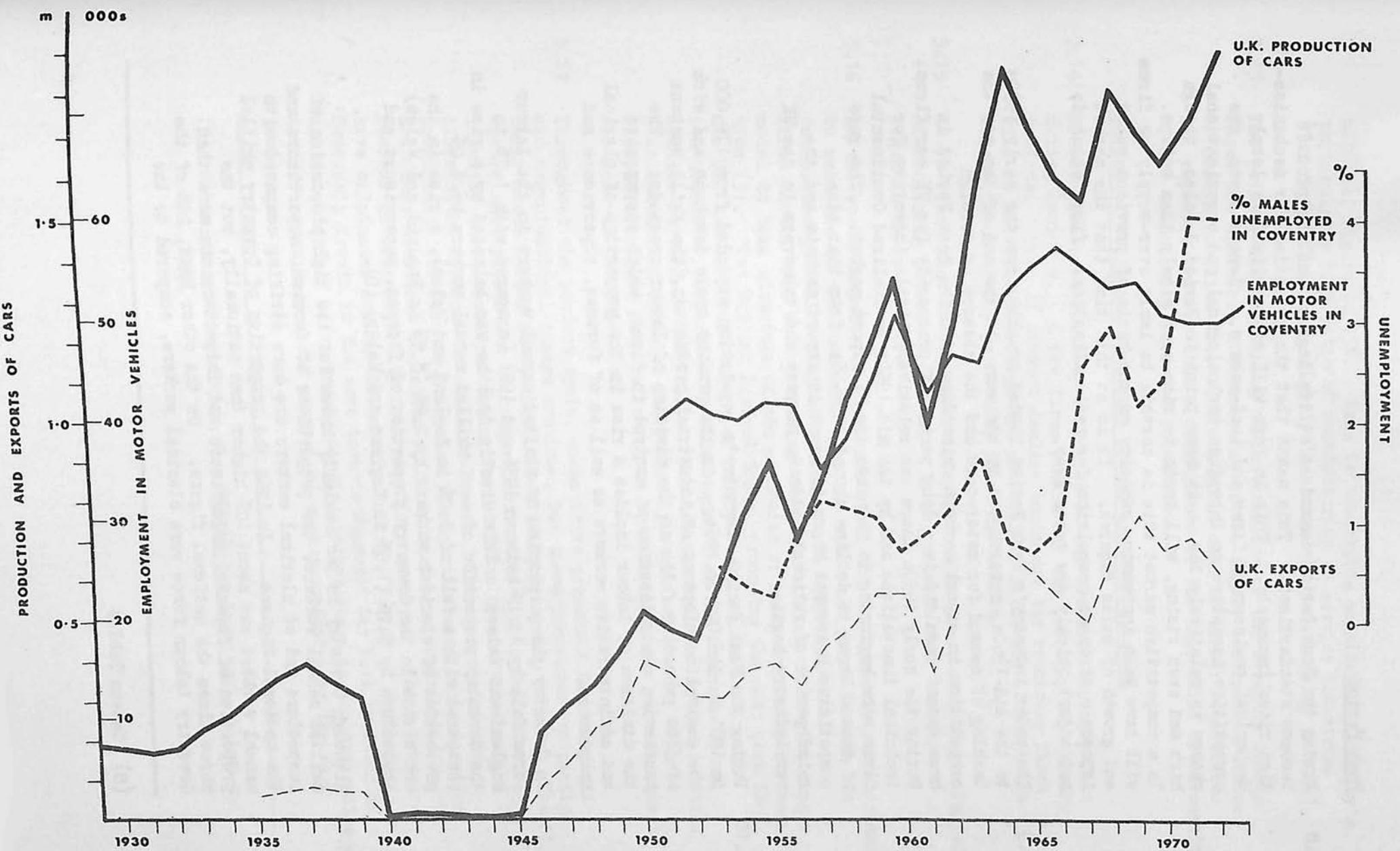


Figure 6.3 U.K. car production & Coventry employment

Peak Period

- 3.8 During the Peak Period demand is at its highest and the product becomes standardised. This means that the potential for mechanisation rises immensely. This in turn will often stimulate local mechanical engineering firms and tool-makers. Nevertheless, the competitive incentive to introduce technological and organisational change is relatively low. At some point in Period 3 sales, though high and even rising, will begin to rise more slowly than before. In a competitive market this is certain to imply over-supply as firms will have been increasing capacity on the basis of previous sales and growth of sales figures. It is at this time that the market imposes a stronger compulsion for rationalisation; firms which do not adjust quickly are taken over.
- 3.9 The motor industry's Peak Period lasted roughly from the early 1930s to the mid-1960s, interrupted by the war. At the end of the war the backlog of demand for motor-cars and the absence of foreign competition in export markets coinciding with the Peak Period in home demand resulted in a long period of prosperity for UK car firms. During the early 1950s there was relatively little incentive for technical innovations and by the mid-1950s revitalized Continental firms were beginning to cut into the UK export market. The rate of demand began to decline around 1956-58; from that time competitive pressures began to mount in export markets and the third period of rationalisations, mergers and takeovers in the UK car industry began.
- 3.10 During the Peak Period, Coventry's population expanded from 179,000 in 1931 to 316,000 in 1964. As the product cycle develops and with the general development of industrial production, the skill content of jobs generally falls as the division of labour proceeds. The increasing centralisation of control in firms, which accompanies the division of labour implies a rise in the proportion of clerical and administrative workers as well as of foremen, supervisors and inspectors.
- 3.11 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) (8).
- 3.12 Although Coventry is particularly known for its high proportion of skilled manual workers, the proportions of foremen, supervisors and inspectors and of clerical workers are more striking compared with the national figures. In 1966 the proportion of Coventry skilled manual workers was about 10% higher than nationally, but the proportion of foremen, supervisors and inspectors was more than three times the national figure. On the other hand, 14% of the Coventry labour force were clerical workers, compared to the

(8) Census Tables

national figure of 15%. This is remarkable considering Coventry's particularly high ratio of manufacturing to service industries (7 : 3 for Coventry, slightly less than 5 : 5 nationally in 1966).

- 3.13 The primary distinguishing characteristics of the Coventry labour force are therefore a consequence of the highly centralised nature of her firms which necessitate a great deal of worker supervision and paperwork rather than a consequence of the high skill requirements of her technically advanced industries.

Period of Declining Ownership Growth and Stabilisation

- 3.14 Market pressures build up in Period 3b and are most strongly felt during Period 4. A few firms remain and may probably earn steady profits. Even if product decline continues the remaining firms will be sufficiently large and powerful to diversify although the labour force of any particular plant may suffer.
- 3.15 It is clear that the UK motor industry has at least entered the Period of Declining Ownership Growth. It is probable that the period began in the mid-1960s.
- 3.16 In the world context, UK firms are still not sufficiently concentrated to make use of the economies of scale which are possible with the techniques generally available today. In 1959 individual car firms should have been producing about 1 million units of a single model to take advantage of the economies of scale available at that time (9). Yet British Leyland today, producing the most cars in the UK, has an annual output of barely 1 million units for all its models. Compared with Volkswagon, Fiat and American firms, British Leyland is too small. Furthermore British Leyland is still a collection of somewhat independently organised plants. These difficulties have been reflected in British Leyland's recent request for central government aid.
- 3.17 Throughout the product cycle, competitive pressures for technical and organisational change continue, but these pressures are particularly acute during the period of Declining Ownership Growth. The use of mass production techniques and automation in the car industry which developed during Period 3 has necessitated and allowed the increase in scale of firms. This has opened the possibility for further economies through increased centralisation and finer divisions of labour which in turn have contributed to the removal of responsibility from shopfloor workers. These pressures have culminated during the motor industry's Period of Declining Ownership Growth in the move towards Measured Day Work by firms in a system which may be viewed as simply another stage in the centralisation of organisation and removal of worker control over the work process.

(9) Silberston, A. and Maxcy, G., "The Motor Industry", Allen and Unwin, 1959.

3.18 Coincident with the period of Declining Ownership Growth in the motor industry, Coventry's prosperity also began to crumble. In 1967 Coventry's level of unemployment increased to double the average figure for the early 1960s when it was 2.2%, and since then the average level of unemployment has been well above the 1967 figure.

4. THE PRODUCT CYCLE AND THE PROSPERITY OF COVENTRY AND HILLFIELDS

4.0 Coventry has been fortunate for almost 90 years in concentrating on products which have been in their Peak Periods. As one product has entered its period of Declining Ownership Growth and Stagnation, another important product has been easily available to Coventry firms. The motor cycle and motor car industries grew out of the bicycle industry which was passing out of its Peak Period just before the First World War. Car production was held up during the last war, but the aircraft industry more than made up for the loss of production. To some extent Coventry's long-term pattern of steady prosperity and full employment has masked a cyclical pattern of development and decline in successive industries.

4.1 During these product cycles in technically complex finished products, a core of relatively small engineering firms has developed in Coventry supplying the larger bicycle, car and aircraft firms with parts and components. Although many of these smaller firms also supply firms outside Coventry, they are closely tied to the fortunes of major manufacturing firms in the city. So far the long term trend in Coventry's major industries has been favourable to these smaller firms.

4.2 However, production in the car industry (see figure 6.3) 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 (10). 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 on subcontracts.

4.3 Figure 6.3 also shows the fairly close relation between fluctuations in motor-car production, fluctuations in employment in the Coventry motor industry and fluctuations in Coventry's overall level of male unemployment.

4.4 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 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

(10) During the early 1950s the proportion of subcontracting work declined when some large car firms took over many of their suppliers to ensure steady input flows. This trend fell off after the mid-1950s.

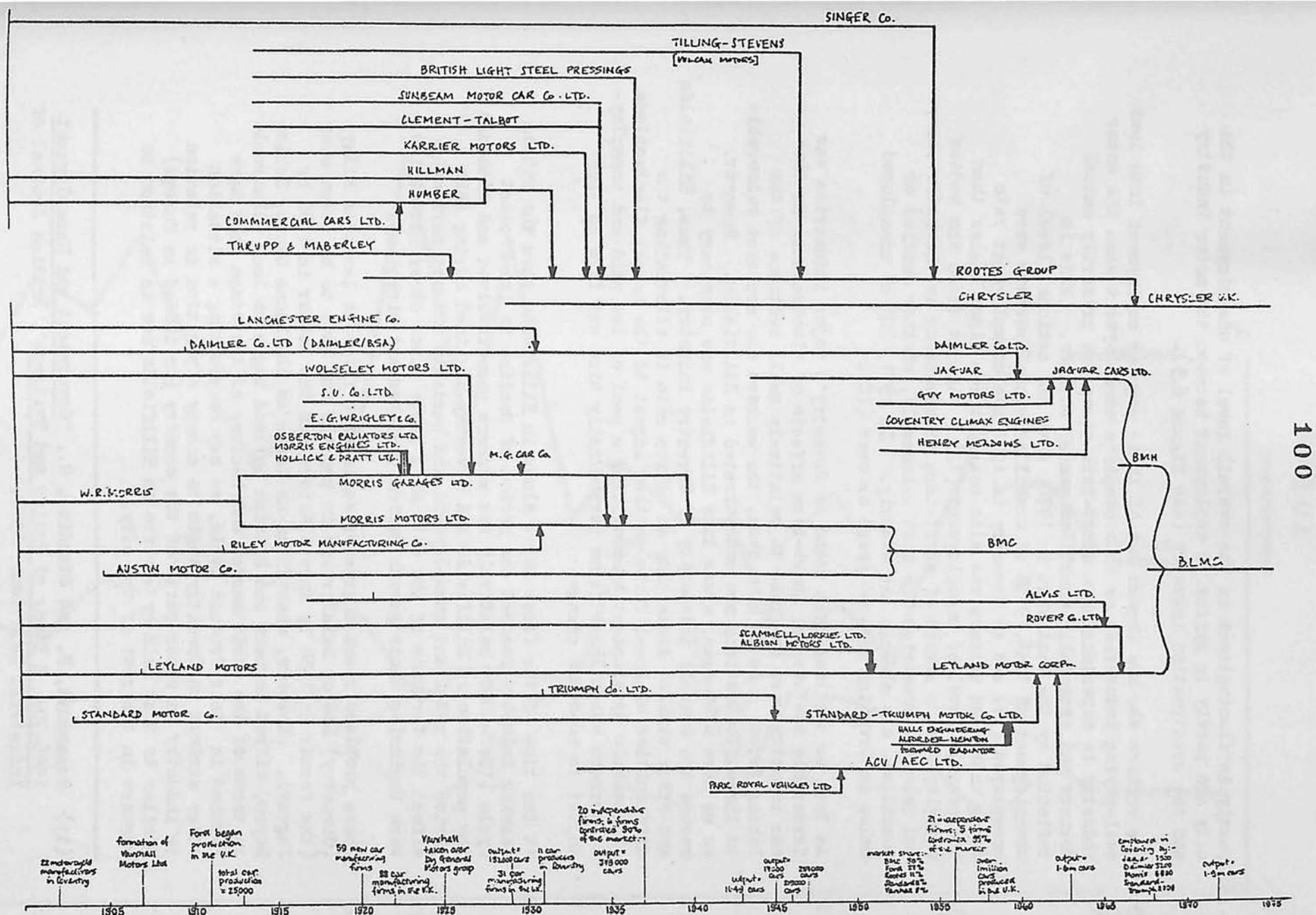


Figure 6.4 Take-overs & mergers in the car industry

partly in fluctuations in the overall level of unemployment in the city and partly in shifts in employment between the motor industry and the construction industry (see figure 6.5).

- 4.5 The 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 1970, with the national level of unemployment of 3.6%, 9.3% of unskilled manual workers were unemployed (11) and in Coventry in 1971 the unemployment rate among unskilled workers was also nearly three times higher than the overall level of unemployment (12). Amongst those who become unemployed as a result of short-term fluctuations in the motor-car and related industries the most vulnerable, whether skilled or unskilled, are clearly the elderly. In 1971, 20% of unemployed males in Coventry were 60 years or over (12).
- 4.6 As long as the long-term trend in Coventry's major industries was favourable the harmful short-term effects of fluctuations in the car industry were confined to relatively small sections of the labour force. As we have seen, the workers who are most vulnerable to these fluctuations are concentrated in Hillfields. However, as we have also seen, areas like Hillfields are necessary to ensure the overall prosperity of Coventry industry. Thus, Hillfields and other similar areas play an active rôle in alleviating the difficulties of local firms as they adjust to the normal fluctuations of economic development by providing a pool of low paid and unemployed workers which local firms periodically hire and fire as they adjust to economic change.
- 4.7 At the time of the first major slump in Hillfields when the ribbon weaving industry reached the period of Decline in its Product Cycle (1860-1880) relatively few workers were involved and although the population of Hillfields and Coventry declined during this period the resultant unemployment and hardship did not seriously affect the fortunes of the city as a whole since other industries were beginning their growth period (watches and bicycles).
- 4.8 These problems reach a greater scale when firms as large as Riley (Coventry) Ltd or Daimler are in trouble and have to be taken over (the former in 1938 by Morris Motors and the latter in 1960 by Jaguar). However, when firms as large as the Lucas Group, Rolls-Royce, Alfred Herbert and British Leyland begin to look vulnerable in terms of the world market and because of the stage they have reached in their Product Cycle, we may be reaching a situation where workers in Coventry begin to occupy a position in relation to industry in other parts of the country (or indeed in Europe) similar to that held by workers in Hillfields now in relation to workers in the rest of the city.

(11) Bosanquet, N. and Standing, G., "Government and Unemployment 1966-70: A Study of Policy and Evidence", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 1972.

(12) Hill, M.J., et al., 1973

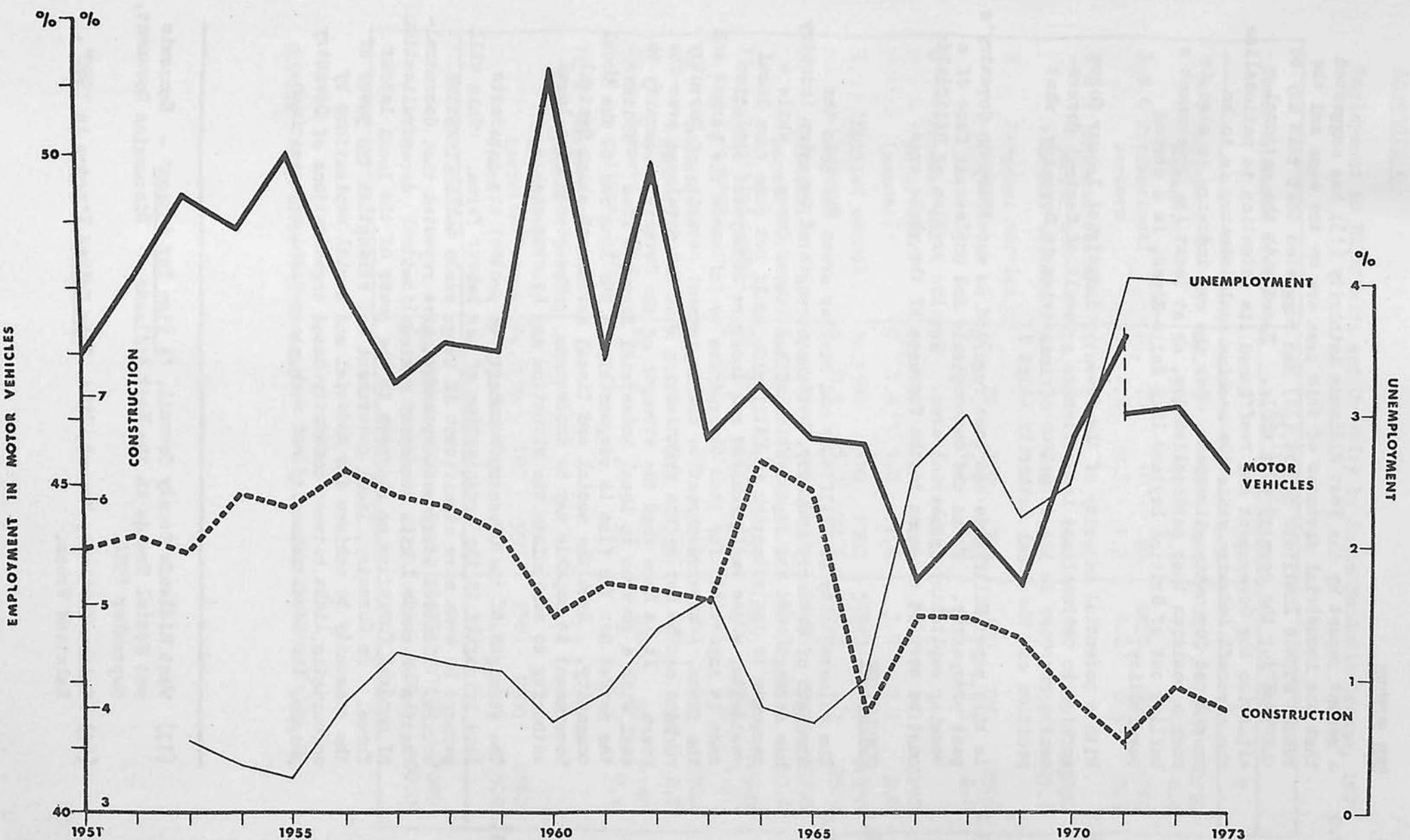


Figure 6.5 Short-term fluctuations in male employment in Coventry

5. THE FUTURE

- 5.0 A recent report by the West Midlands Authority (13) has suggested that the industrial fortunes of this area are on the wane and the recent Hudson Institute Report (14) has suggested that this may be the case for the country as a whole. Faced with the national situation the Government has reaffirmed its intention to nationalise the aircraft industry while the machine tool industry is to be considered for nationalisation. Now the car industry is also in such a position that nationalisation, or at least the Government's bailing out of British Leyland like Rolls-Royce, is a strong possibility.
- 5.1 With a potential majority of the Coventry industrial labour force working in nationalised industries as a result of Central Government's response to the situation of industries in Coventry, what position can the Local Authority adopt ?
- 5.2 In this paper Hillfields has been regarded as necessary to Coventry's past prosperity. It is the unacceptable and unpleasant face of a booming capitalist industrial area. Now the problem of Hillfields must be seen in relation to the fortunes of the whole area.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.0 The vulnerability of Hillfields and similar areas has been the strength of Coventry industry, but the strength of Coventry industry has strengthened the organisation of her labour force. While a response to the situation in Hillfields could not come from local residents, whose small numbers and insecure employment situation made it impossible for them to organise to influence the market and the firms, a massive threat to the employment security of Coventry workers can be met by the organisation that has developed over the years. It is here that the strength of the Coventry community to deal with a reverse in local industrial fortunes lies. Neither the market nor the firm is responsible in the long run to the local community. Even the social and fiscal reforms of which Central Government is capable may be inadequate. The powers of a local authority to manipulate the situation may be even weaker.
- 6.1 The strength of the Coventry community to protect its interests lies primarily in the organisation of her labour force. This will perhaps be even more significant if large scale nationalisation occurs. Central Government spokesmen have repeated that decentralisation of control will accompany nationalisation: decentralisation of control favouring an increase in the power of the local labour force. In Coventry, local government can strengthen the power of the community to achieve its material and social aspirations by encouraging links between community-based organisations of Coventry people, the local authority and work place-based organisations.

(13) West Midlands County Council, "A Time for Action" - Economic and Social Trends in the West Midlands - Discussion Document, September 1974.

(14) Hudson Institute Report, 1974. "The United Kingdom in 1980", Halstead Press.

Appendix 1

Employment in Hillfields and Coventry by Socio-Economic Groups, 1971

Socio-Economic Group	Hillfields			Coventry		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
1 & 2 Employers & Managers	No. 150	90	240	8170	2100	10270
	% 3.2	4.1	3.4	7.9	3.6	6.4
3 & 4 Professional workers	No. 70	10	80	4430	280	4710
	% 1.5	0.5	1.2	4.2	0.5	2.9
5 & 6 Intermediate & junior non-manual workers	No. 360	680	1040	15900	27990	43890
	% 7.6	30.8	15.1	15.3	48.5	27.1
7 Personal service workers	No. 20	310	330	430	7080	7510
	% 0.4	14.1	4.8	0.4	12.3	4.6
8 Foremen and supervisors (manual)	No. 90	20	110	3760	450	4210
	% 1.9	1.0	1.6	3.6	0.8	2.6
9 Skilled manual workers	No. 1590	110	1700	37640	3590	41230
	% 33.8	5.0	24.6	36.3	6.3	25.6
10 Semi-skilled manual workers	No. 1100	420	1520	22190	7580	29770
	% 23.4	19.0	22.0	21.3	13.1	18.4
11 Unskilled manual workers	No. 970	330	1300	6000	5310	11310
	% 20.6	15.0	18.8	5.8	9.2	7.0
12 Own account workers	No. 190	50	240	3050	710	3760
	% 4.0	2.3	3.5	2.9	1.2	2.3
13 & 14 Farmers & agricultural workers	No. -	-	-	100	60	160
	% -	-	-	-	0.2	0.1
16 & 17 Members of armed forces & persons in inadequately described occupations.	No. 170	180	350	2360	2500	4860
	% 3.6	8.2	5.1	2.3	4.3	3.0
	No. 4710	2200	6910	104030	57650	161680
	% 100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE : 1971 Census (10% sample) Small Area Statistics, Table 23.

**7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT BECOMES BIG BUSINESS -
CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND THE POLITICS
OF URBAN PROBLEMS**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 It is fashionable in central government to blame the continuing existence of urban problems on the technical incompetence of local authorities. Peter Walker's Six Towns Studies and the Comprehensive Community Programmes recently announced by the Home Office both assume that urban problems arise from poor planning, unco-ordinated management or insensitive provision of services at the local level. 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" or "comprehensive programmes" for tackling urban problems. These are usually based on "corporate planning" in one form or another.
- 1.1 It would be difficult to accuse Coventry Corporation of mismanagement or failure to plan properly. In fact Coventry has pioneered several new forms of administration, planning and management in local government: organisation and methods in the 1950's, operational research in the mid-60's, and corporate planning and management in 1969 (well before the Central Government Bains Committee recommended it to all local authorities). Many of these new approaches have now been taken up and developed extensively in the public sector. Coventry has also shown that it can make its management tools deliver the goods. It has designed and coordinated programmes to tackle some of the major problems facing cities since the war. It has developed a reputation for being first in the field in many aspects of local government practice. In fact Coventry is probably as sophisticated as any local authority in its managerial and technical skills. It is therefore a good place to assess the extent to which "total approaches" or "comprehensive programmes" based upon corporate management are a relevant strategy for tackling urban problems.
- 1.2 Over the past five years, CDP has been given generous access to the corporate planning and management system in Coventry. This has confirmed for us that it is an effective and sophisticated system for co-ordinating long-range plans and controlling the local authority's budget. However, it has also led us to question why it has not been equally effective as an instrument for tackling the Hillfields problem. In the early stages of the Project we saw the problem largely as one of organisation and managerial procedure. We criticised the corporate management system for being entirely a "top-down" process which weighted decision-making over-heavily towards the long-term, the large-scale and the broad-

grain (1). However recent developments in Coventry and elsewhere (2) have begun to counter-balance this with a "bottom-up" process which builds up a perspective on the needs of small geographical areas. However, our personal experience of being involved in the management system and of trying to work within it to deal with some of the issues raised for us in Hillfields, began to suggest that the problem was not simply about managerial re-arrangements, but more fundamentally about the basic assumptions and values being acted upon within local government, in relation to urban inequality.

- 1.3 My comments may seem critical of Coventry. However, I do not believe that the problems are in any way peculiar to Coventry (3). Coventry is probably as efficient and impressive in its approach to decision-making as any local authority. However corporate management is a wider phenomenon. It is an approach to decision-making which is being promoted not only in local and central government but also by a new and rapidly growing breed of technocrats in industry and commerce throughout the West. It has recently become popular within parts of central government's poverty programme and is being widely recommended to local authorities as a tool for tackling urban problems (4). Our experience prompts us to raise questions about the kinds of analysis and the kinds of solutions which corporate management can be expected to provide; and about the relevance of these for tackling urban inequality.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BECOMES BIG BUSINESS

- 2.0 In order to understand corporate management it is necessary to look at the boom in local government expenditure in Britain since the war. Between 1948 and 1968 local government's share of the Gross National Product (G.N.P.) doubled, its revenue expenditure quadrupled, and its capital expenditure quintupled - all in real terms (5).

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- (1) Benington, J. and Skelton, P., Public Participation in Decision-Making by Governments in "Government and Programme Budgeting", Institute for Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, 1973.
- (2) For examples see reports of the Area Management Workshops run by the School for Advanced Urban Studies, Bristol University, in 1974 and 1975.
- (3) Coventry CDP's association with the Institute for Local Government Studies at Birmingham University has given us access to a wide range of literature on corporate management, and personal contacts with its practitioners in many local authorities.
- (4) For example, The Sunderland Study Vol. 2, Tackling Urban Problems: A Working Guide by McKinsey and Co. for the Department of the Environment, 1973.
- (5) Local Government Financial Statistics, HMSO.

- 2.1 The U.K. has one of the highest ratios of public expenditure to G.N.P. among advanced western capitalist countries: over 50% in 1971 (6). It is particularly distinctive in the proportion of this (nearly a third) managed at the local level. Local government spending has been growing twice as fast as the national economy and much faster than public expenditure as a whole: during the '60s while G.N.P. increased by 80% and total public expenditure increased by 120%, local government expenditure shot up by 170%. With a total annual expenditure nearing £10,000 million and employing 10% of the total working population (7), local government has become big business in its own right.
- 2.2 It has been argued that in monopoly capitalist situations one of the functions performed by the state is to maintain the "calculability" of the economic and social environment by creating and expanding markets and by satisfying certain community needs (8). There is persuasive evidence that since the 1950's British capitalism has had a crisis of falling profitability as a result of increasing international competition and pressure from wages (9). In this situation state expenditure is important in providing private capital with a predictable market for its products.
- 2.3 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 (10). In the U.K. 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 (7). 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.

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- (6) Barrett Brown, M., "From Labourism to Socialism", Spokesman Books, 1972.
- (7) Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Local Government Finance; Association of Municipal Authorities, 1975; also, British Labour Statistics, DEP and Economic Trends, C.S.O.
- (8) Baran, P. and Sweezy, P., "Monopoly Capital", Pelican, 1968.
- (9) Glyn, A. and Sutcliffe, B., "British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze", Penguin, 1972.
- (10) Hood, C., "The Rise and Rise of the British Quango", New Society, 16.8.73.

- 2.4 It is the boom in local authority capital building which has laid the way for the kind of "private accumulation" which has come to light through the Poulson scandal. However, to focus on "scandals" of this kind can be misleading in suggesting that the main problem is one of corruption. The more complex structural inter-relationships between the local state and the private sector are better illuminated by looking at the normal situation. Coventry provides valuable raw material for a case-study of local government's effect in maintaining the conditions in which investment by the private sector is both profitable and calculable. This can be illustrated both in relation to international capital (the motor engineering industry) and more localised capital (the building and construction industry).

3. CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAPITAL AND THE LOCAL STATE IN COVENTRY

- 3.0 Two main factors help to explain the Klondike boom in both the private and public sectors of Coventry's economy since the war:

- i) the rapid growth in population, recruited in the first instance to meet the labour needs of the engineering industry and to boost munitions production in two world wars;
- ii) the scale of bomb devastation during the second war which demanded a massive programme of reconstruction and ironically created opportunities for new building and comprehensive development unrivalled outside New Town situations.

- 3.1 These two factors have resulted in a heavy programme of capital works in Coventry since the war. It is estimated that the total public and private investment in major building and civil engineering construction in Coventry between 1945 and 1966 amounted to £195 million (at 1966 building costs)(11). By 1973 the Corporation's annual turnover had reached nearly £70 million, with a capital programme ranging between £10 million and £15 million per year for each of the next five years, and total net expenditure running at well over £30 million per year. Apart from its direct outputs for the local community, one of the ways in which this expenditure can be regarded is as "social capital" (12) contributing to profitable private accumulation on the one hand by

(11) Development Plan Review, Coventry Corporation, 1966.

(12) O'Connor, J., "The Fiscal Crisis of the State", St Martin's Press (New York) 1973.

the engineering industry, and on the other by the construction industry. In the case of the engineering industry, the local state has provided much of the basic infrastructure (roads, sewerage, water, electricity, gas) needed by industry to support its phenomenal and profitable expansion. In addition the local authority has had to provide housing, public transport, schools, and health and social support services for the expanding population, and to create the conditions in the community necessary to maintain the health and general "satisfaction" of the labour force. In the case of the construction industry the local authority's contracts for the new housing estates, the inner-ring road system, the traffic-free shopping precinct, new schools and community facilities have amounted to a firm, forward agenda of big business for a number of building and civil engineering firms.

- 3.2 For the last 90 years the city has acted as a storage-tank for labour to service the profitable boom in the vehicle and machine-tool engineering industries. Those industries have now almost saturated and exhausted their markets in the West, and face a major crisis in profitability. The city may all too soon become a massive pool for redundant and unemployed labour, a memorial to a spent phase of capitalism (13). The local authorities have so far tended to support and service the engineering industry in its search for new markets and new profit-making contracts (e.g. trade missions of local industrialists led by the Lord Mayor and other prominent councillors, to Germany, Russia and China) and to blame Central Government policy on Industrial Development Certificates for diverting jobs away from the West Midlands (14). Presumably the assumption is that industry in Coventry depends upon full order-books and that what is good for industry in this respect must be good for the city as a whole. However, 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. It may be more important to challenge the "logic" which governs that process and to demand that decisions about the future of jobs take into account the consequences for the local residential and working community and not just the profitability of the firm.
- 3.3 The expansion of industry and of the labour force has also put increasing pressure on Coventry's land resources. It is now predicted that Coventry will run out of building land within its own boundaries in the next 15 years (15). In this situation the older inner-city areas develop a new scarcity value. The council's

(13) See Section 6 of these Working Papers.

(14) A Time for Action; Economic and Social Trends in the West Midlands. Two Discussion Documents published by the West Midlands County Council, September 1974, February 1975.

(15) City of Coventry Corporate Planning Survey Report 1973 and Local Policy Plan, Synopsis of Change 1974.

intervention through compulsory purchase and redevelopment exposes major conflicts of interest over the ownership and use of land in the inner-city. The traditional role of the inner areas (providing a supply of relatively cheap housing for newcomers to the city and for lower paid and lower-status workers in both the manufacturing and service sectors) is now being challenged by pressures to perform further central area functions (providing sites for a central hospital, health centre, office blocks, a hostel for hotel workers, and night-life entertainment). The original reception area functions of Hillfields are increasingly being fulfilled by other areas of older housing further away from the city centre. With the fiercer competition over the ownership and use of land, and for the use of the building industry's machinery and labour, it is increasingly the large investment companies which can most easily afford to undertake development in the inner-city. While lucrative office blocks and hotels spring up rapidly, the public sector faces crippling costs and interest charges, which contribute to the difficulties of building sufficient council housing to match the needs of those who cannot compete in the private housing market. The local authority unwittingly contributes to the "calculability" of the economic environment for private developers, by co-ordinating the assembly of land for development (16).

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

4.0 The recent re-organisation of local government into larger metropolitan and county units can be partly understood as a shift in the state apparatus to accommodate changes in national and local capital. The strengthening of the regional and metropolitan levels of government (implicit in both the 1974 re-organisation and the Crowther Committee's recommendations) means that responsibility for "strategic" planning is now shifted to a tier above local government. This is likely to have the following consequences.

- a) Focus on the larger planning units is likely to conceal a number of the inequalities which are apparent when finer-grain information is used. Conflicts of interest which are becoming more visible and explicit at the local government level may be given less prominence when looked at from a new plateau of "strategic" generality.
- b) As responsibility for the new "Structure Plans" lies with this "upper" tier of government, major decisions about the allocation of land, the development of industry and employment, and the dispersion of population will be made

(16) The Community Land Bill 1975 will, if anything, reinforce the local authorities in this role. In the absence of resources to develop the land themselves, the local authorities will be under pressure to turn to private developers and the form of development offering the highest commercial return and the greatest rise in development value.

at a further remove from the consequences of such decisions. The local authorities will continue to face the repercussions of wider movements of this kind, with even less possibility of the political connections being made between symptoms (e.g. homelessness, blight, etc) and underlying structural causes. "Strategic Planning" at this level of government can easily remove issues from open political debate by dealing with them at such a macro-level and over such a long time-scale (e.g. 10 years forward plans) that they are treated largely as complex technical calculations. Nevertheless, such decisions have major implications for the economic and physical environment and advance certain interests at the expense of others.

- c) The removal of strategic issues of this kind into the upper levels of metropolitan and regional government allows new sets of relationships to be developed between public and private interests. To some extent there has always been informal negotiation between the captains of industry and the managers of government; but these are increasingly being routinised as part of the formal process of government. Special units are being established to service such relationships at the metropolitan and local level (17).

Local government re-organisation makes it possible for bigger firms whose interests cut across local authority boundaries to "reconcile" their forward plans and negotiate their needs for land, planning permissions and roads over a wider metropolitan area of government.

5. CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND THE CORPORATE STATE

- 5.0 The growth in local government's responsibilities and expenditure has also been accompanied by widespread changes in management techniques and organisation. These fall under the general label of "corporate management". The basic proposition behind corporate management is that in order to tackle complex community problems local government must now be organised and managed not as a series of separate services but as a corporate whole.

(17) For example, in their recommendations on a new management structure for Sheffield City Council, Urwick Orr and Partners suggested an economic unit to "ensure an effective channel of communication with industry and commerce regarding likely future needs and developments".

5.1 Corporate Management commonly takes the following main forms:

- a) The creation of a Central Policy and Resources Committee to provide co-ordination in the Council's policies, plans and priorities.
- b) The appointment of a Chief Executive to act as leader of the officers of the local authority, and principal adviser to the Council on matters of general policy.
- c) The setting up of a management system usually based, directly or indirectly, upon the American concept of P.P.B.S. (Planning, Programming and Budgeting Systems).

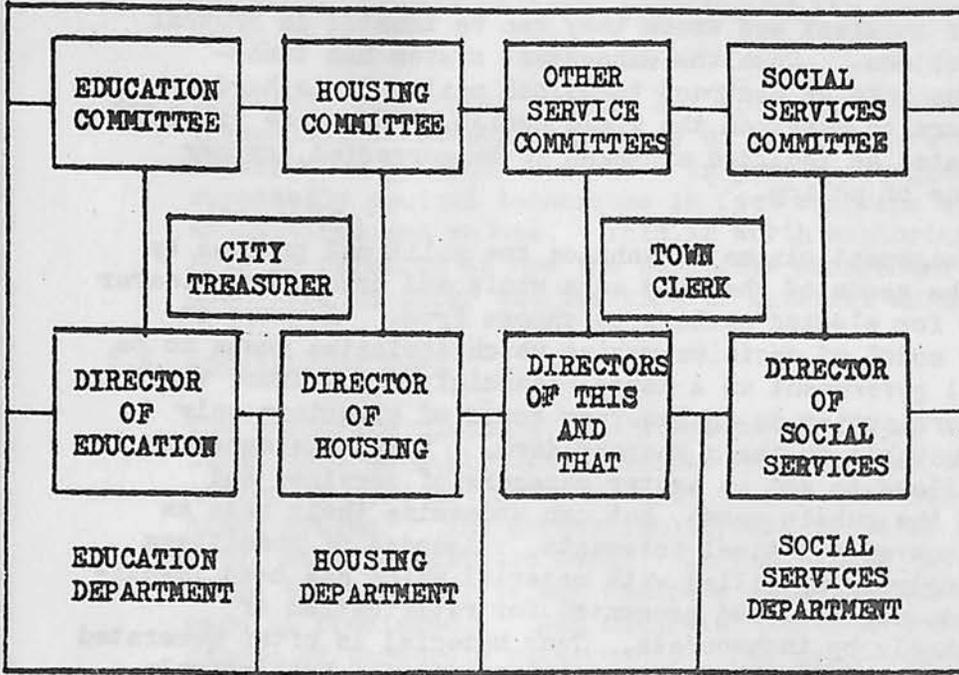
5.2 Contradictions for the Councillor

The organisational changes which take place under corporate management tend to centralise political and managerial control in local government. The traditional pattern (diagram 1) resulted in a number of dispersed centres of power in decision-making. The new pattern (diagram 2) centralises power around the Chief Executive and the Board of Chief Officers on the one hand, and the leader of the Council and the Policy Committee on the other. This tends to cream off a new (or at least a different) "managerial elite" from within both the officer and councillor structures. In practice the use of increasingly sophisticated management techniques often means a shift in the balance of power towards managerial and technical "experts" and even further away from politicians - except those who succumb to managerial values.

- 5.3 The councillor has always been in a very contradictory organisational position in local government. He is elected to represent the interests of a small geographical area. He is also a member of a political party with commitments to collective interests in the wider residential and industrial community. But once elected he is appointed to serve on a series of committees which are organised not around any of these political interests but around corporation departments (e.g. education, housing, social services). These are concerned with the provision of city-wide services, and by and large they treat the city as a uniform whole. Sectional interests (either of wards or of classes of people) are generally subordinated to those of "the general population".
- 5.4 The organisation of council committees in this way can put the councillor at a disadvantage in relation to his technical advisers. The councillor has specialist knowledge about the ward he represents and about the overall needs of other groups whose interest he shares. It is officers who are in a stronger position to build up information about a department's services in general city-wide terms. This picture will be built up largely through desk research (analysis of survey data, forecasting of trends, etc), not through the political representation of concrete needs. The effect can be to generalise the issues to a point where conflicts of interest

Diagram 1

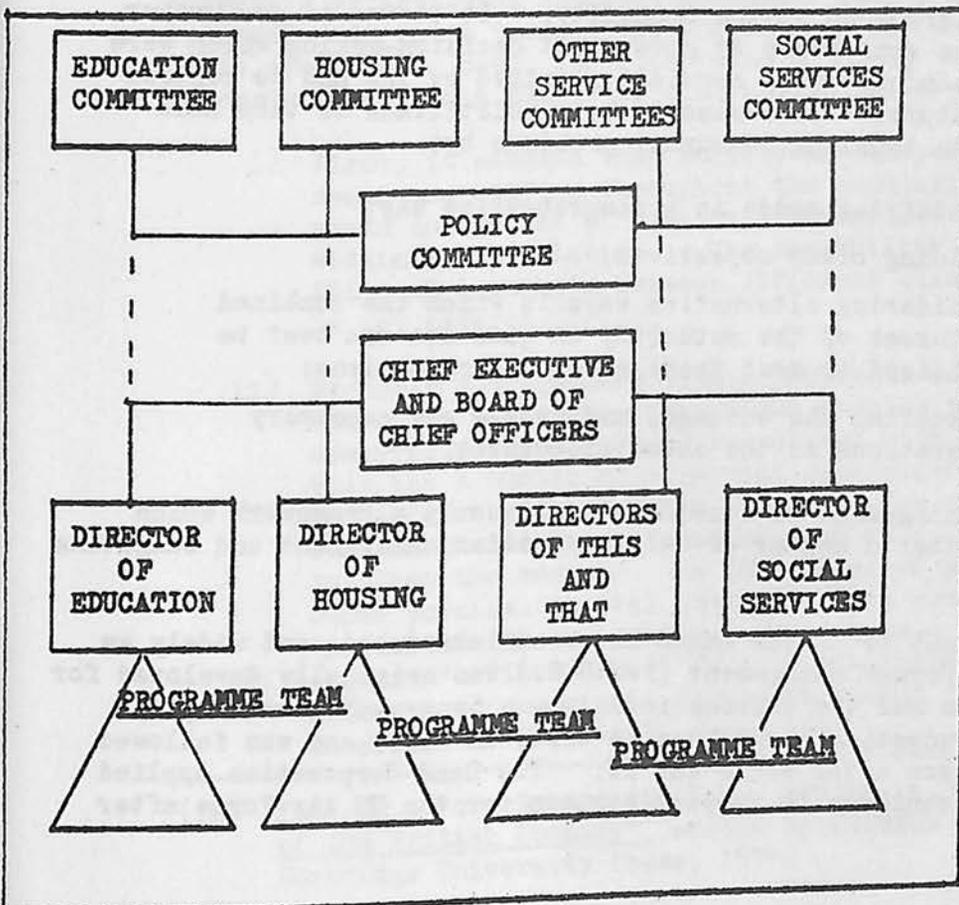
Traditional Local Authority Structure



Town Clerk and City Treasurer in advisory and co-ordinating roles. Town Clerk may be primus inter pares, but has little or no directorial power as such.

Diagram 2

Typical Corporate Management Structure for Local Authority



Centralisation and co-ordination of members and officer structure at a number of levels, concentrating control at a central node of Policy Committee and Chief Executive.

are no longer apparent and where they can be treated as neutral technical problems. Once the management system has translated an issue into an abstract technical matter it is harder for councillors to question the grand design. Concrete problems are then treated as isolated mistakes to be corrected, rather than questions of policy.

- 5.5 Corporate management claims to enhance the political process by looking at the needs of the city as a whole and presenting clearer alternatives for elected members to choose from. However in practice the model of decision-making which dominates seems to be that of local government as a large financial corporation, with the councillors acting as an Honorary Board of Directors only loosely accountable to their shareholders. Corporate management helps councillors to act as better managers of services and guardians of the public purse, but can undermine their role as representatives of political interests. Agendas of committees are increasingly being filled with material which has been identified, defined, analysed and presented for ratification or decision entirely by technocrats. Such material is often generated not by any initiative from the politicians at all, but entirely from within the comprehensive logic of corporate management. It is important to examine the assumptions behind this internal logic.

6. THE MAKING OF MANAGERIAL MYTHS

- 6.0 Corporate planning claims to be a more rational and ordered method of tackling problems in the community. It claims to go further than previous approaches to government decision-making which were limited to administering services required by law and to controlling expenditure. It claims to help politicians to take more initiative in tackling community problems by:

- i) identifying needs in a comprehensive way;
- ii) deciding clear objectives;
- iii) considering alternative ways in which the combined resources of the authority in question can best be mobilised to meet those needs and objectives;
- iv) monitoring the outcome, and making any necessary alterations in the above procedures.

Corporate management in itself is really only a framework which brings together a number of fairly familiar management and budgeting techniques.

- 6.1 The management technique which has been introduced most widely as part of corporate management (P.P.B.S.) was originally developed for big business and the defence industry. General Motors adopted programme budgeting techniques as early as 1924, and was followed by Ford Motors after World War II. The Rand Corporation applied P.P.B.S. techniques to weapons systems for the US Air Force after

World War II, and from 1961 onwards, they were extensively taken up for long-range military planning by the American Department of Defense.

6.2 Corporate management and the P.P.B.S. are neither good nor bad in themselves. However our study of their literature and our observation of their operation in practice suggests that these supposedly neutral techniques in fact enshrine some distinctive assumptions and values. This is worth exploring in some detail both in relation to how the corporate management process is described on paper and the kind of material which it produces.

6.3 Identifying Need

The corporate planning literature seems to see identification of needs more as a problem of measurement than of definition. The notion of need is rarely related to any explicit theory about the urban system. The assumption appears to be of a general consensus about what constitutes need. In fact "need" in practice is often taken to refer not to any concrete situation at all, but simply to gaps in provision. "Gap analysis" has even entered the technical jargon of corporate management. The gap is seen as the difference between existing provision and "the standard" set for that provision. Standards are set by statute (e.g. one school place for every child between the ages of 5 to 16); or by government recommendation (e.g. the Ministry of Transport standards for street lighting of highway maintenance). However, required standards in many services are in effect often a reflection of professional pressure or sectional interest groups. Such standards are often expressed in ratio terms (e.g. one library for every 50,000 people.) This approach to need, far from being a purely technical matter, clearly enshrines a number of distinctive value-judgements.

- i) First, it assumes that society is homogeneous, and that needs are uniform throughout the population. Broad-grain categories of need fail to reflect the inequalities within the population. The possibility of a basic conflict of interests between different classes within society is not catered for.
- ii) Secondly the pressure within corporate management is to determine needs in a form which enables them to be measured for purposes of comparison with other needs. This has a number of important consequences. Quantity is easier to measure than quality; the physical and the economic easier to measure, and attach money values to, than the social. As the values of property and other physical capital items are more readily quantifiable than those of social capital (e.g. the value of a person's "investment" in a neighbourhood), this approach to needs will always be biased towards the interests of the middle class (18).

(18) Pahl, R., Poverty and the Urban System in "Spatial Problems of the British Economy", edited by Chisholm & Manners, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

- iii) Thirdly the definition of need as the gap between existing provision and the professional/technical standard could easily become both inflationary and reactionary. Because needs are estimated in terms of ratios, e.g. home helps per 1000 population, the effect is to divert attention away from the concrete problem-situation on to the range of available services and solutions. The "need" in this case is assumed to be for home-helps. This is the need as defined by the department and not necessarily the customer's preferred solution (e.g. money to employ domestic help) to the problem as he or she experiences it. Measurement of need in these terms thus tends to advance the interests of the department or the profession in question. In many fields of local authority expenditure "gap analysis" is measuring an almost bottomless pit (e.g. the needs of the elderly). It provides sophisticated ammunition for service departments to bargain for more staff or bigger budgets. The effect can be to increase professional empires without necessarily supplying better solutions to needs and problems.

6.4 Deciding Objectives

One of the first stages in the setting up of any corporate management system is deciding objectives. This is clearly a political act. However the way objectives are formulated within corporate management almost seems designed to "depoliticise" the whole process.

- i) The objectives specified in most corporate plans are almost entirely non-contentious. In many cases they are expressed as Utopian Ideals with which it would be impossible for anyone, of any political or moral persuasion, to disagree: e.g. "To assist in achieving and maintaining the optimum standard of community health and well-being for people in the city"; and "To enrich the lives of the people by the optimum personal development of each individual in the community". To which the congregation - of any political denomination - must naturally reply "Amen".
- ii) In most authorities the objectives are not even generated within the political system. They are prepared in detail entirely by Officers and submitted to councillors for ratification in their final draft form. The practice of working from the top down, from a priori statements of macro goals and objectives, predetermines a consensual view of the social system. This obscures the conflicts of interest which would be apparent if the exercise began in the political process.

- iii) However it is clear that in spite of the rhetoric, the working "objectives" of corporate management systems are not expressions of political goals at all (19). They are simply standards or targets of achievement required for management control purposes. In management terms the purpose of setting objectives is to help rationalise and control the disparate and overlapping activities of various departments and to measure the levels and rates of production of the corporation's goods and services. The Coventry Management Handbook makes this clear when it advises that if the achievement of an objective cannot be measured, the objective should be changed until it can (20).

6.5 Considering Alternatives

One of the main claims of corporate management is that it helps to sharpen up political choice by systematically analysing alternative policy-solutions. The search can be either for more effective ways of tackling problems within a given amount of money, or for more efficient and economic ways of carrying out a given programme. Current approaches include systematic techniques like issue analysis, cost benefit analysis and value analysis as well as more speculative "lateral-thinking" techniques like brainstorming, Delphi, alternative futures, and gaming simulation. Evaluation, which criticises certain programmes and proposes to replace them with others, is manifestly a political activity. But the array of alternatives brought forward for political consideration will have been filtered already through professional presuppositions, stereotypes and value judgements.

- i) One possible effect is to exclude alternatives which work against the interests of the local government officer-system as a whole. Policy analysis of this kind is sometimes conducted by special units within a Treasurer's, Town Clerk's or Chief Executive's department. In these cases there may be some questioning of the expenditure of service departments, particularly those like education and social services which are expanding rapidly. However, the need to maintain working alliances between the different departments will normally ensure that there is no radical disturbance of the status quo. (This may be slightly less true in central government. The Treasury, the Cabinet Office and the Central Policy Review staff have developed

(19) An example of a political goal might be "to municipalise all private rented housing in the city".

(20) The Management Handbook of the City of Coventry 1972, paras 2.5.13 and 2.6.13.

management exercises like PESC (Public Expenditure Survey Committee) and PAR (Programme Analysis and Review) which allow some questioning of other department's programmes). However, in many ways different local authority departments have vested interests in common. Central and local government provide the context for the development and expansion of a number of professions. Many of the growth areas in local government are very labour-intensive (55% of the total costs of local government are wages and salaries). Corporate management has extended the career ladder by creating a new supreme profession with opportunities for salaries as lucrative as cabinet ministers, top civil servants and many in big business. It would be quite natural if solutions which erode the role of the professional did not readily come high on the list of alternatives considered !

- ii) The range of alternatives presented to elected members is restricted not just by the more obvious interests of the departments and professions, but also by the value-systems of the technocrat. The new mandarins of corporate management are not exempt from Karl Mannheim's criticisms that "the fundamental tendency of all bureaucratic thought is to turn all problems of politics into problems of administration" (21). Problems are translated into technical terms which are then susceptible to analysis by one or other of the analytical techniques. The effect is to depoliticise issues (22).

(21) Mannheim, K., "Ideology and Utopia", New York 1936.

(22) "... the welfare state technician finds justification for his special and prominent social status in his "science", specifically in the claim that social science can support a technology of social tinkering on a domestic or international scale. He then takes a further step, proceeding, in a familiar way, to claim universal validity for what is in fact a class interest; he argues that the special condition on which its claims to power and authority are based are, in fact, the general conditions through which alone modern society can be saved; that social tinkering within a welfare state framework must replace the commitment to the "total ideologies" of the past, ideologies which were concerned with a transformation of society. Having found his position of power, having achieved security and affluence, he has no further need for ideologies that look to radical change". Chomsky, N., "American Power and the New Mandarins", Penguin 1969.

6.6 Monitoring Outcome

The shift of emphasis in local government from measuring inputs to measuring outcomes is an important development. The traditional annual budget may have been relevant in checking how much it was costing to provide certain statutory services but it was little help in assessing how far the local authority was meeting needs or tackling problems. However, even "the monitoring of outcome" by corporate management systems generally turn out in practice to mean something very different from the impact of a service upon the needs identified in the community, or even upon the needs of an individual recipient. The difficulty of assessing outcome in this political sense, has led officers to look for statistical measures of "intermediate output" instead. This means no more than the activity rate achieved in a particular service (e.g. so many careers interviews held in a year). Corporate management seems to have developed no adequate system, in the older working-class areas at least, for checking who gets the services it delivers, the quality of the services actually received on the ground, or the effectiveness of the services in meeting needs and objectives. The effort of corporate management has gone more into measuring productivity than ensuring quality control.

7. THE BIAS OF VALUES IN CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

- 7.0 It is now important to test whether and how the values enshrined in the philosophy of corporate management in fact influence the actual product. This can best be illustrated by discussing some aspects of the city's master plan, the Local Policy Plan 1973. This is the first major product of the corporate planning approach in Coventry. It is based upon a detailed survey of problems and opportunities facing the city.
- 7.1 One of the central assumptions within the Local Policy Plan is that what is good for industry is good for the city, and vice versa.

"Industry, commerce and shopping are the basic elements in the economy of the city, providing essential local services and the stimulus for growth and continuing vitality. The growth of modern manufacturing industries has been the stimulus for the rapid population increase and continuing prosperity that the city has experienced this century. . . . The prosperity of commerce and industry is, therefore, crucial for the city's future well-being. The city council can play an important part by making land available, providing essential services and infrastructure, influencing the skills available within the labour force and promoting the 'image' of the city".

7.2 This line of argument is in direct contrast to our own.

- i) That the expansion and prosperity of industry has not in fact resulted in prosperity for "the city" as a whole but only for certain sections of the population.
- ii) That the prosperity of those sections has been at the direct expense of other sections of the population.
- iii) That some of the worst consequences have been systematically suffered by those sections of the community concentrated in the older working-class areas (the unskilled, the semi-skilled, the immigrants).
- iv) That heavy costs have also been carried by the city council which has had to service industry's expansion both directly (by providing roads, sewerage, water and parking facilities) and indirectly (by housing the work-force, training the next generation of workers, and by supporting the casualties - the elderly, the unemployed, the sick and the redundant).
- v) That the distorted age-structure in Coventry is a direct result of the kind of labour recruited to the city by industry (e.g. single or young married working men in the inter-war and post-war period; and female immigrant labour) and that the city is now having to carry delayed costs in the pressure for expansion of educational and social services (pre-school provision, old people's homes, etc). The burden of these problems is going to increase in the current economic and industrial crisis with the growing number of older men made redundant or retired early, and the growing number of young people unable to find work. The city is having to support its growing proportion of dependants from a less secure financial base both in terms of government finance, rate income, and family incomes and capacity to pay rates.

7.3 This basic difference of view about the way in which the fortunes of the city are bound up with the fortunes of industry leads to a number of other differences in interpretation about problems the city is facing.

i) Employment opportunities

7.4 The main problem over employment is seen as one of "imbalance" between the manufacturing and service sectors. The solution proposed is to try to recruit more service jobs, particularly office work. Although diversification has been aimed mainly at broadening the range of job opportunities for school leavers, we question whether office jobs provide a realistic

alternative to people who have been made redundant from manufacturing industries. In our view an increase in office jobs is more likely to increase the problems for the city by recruiting a new influx of workers and putting further pressure on housing. A more relevant strategy for the council would be to seek more information about the investment and employment plans being made by the major manufacturing industries in the city, and to work towards a greater say by the council in those decisions which are clearly going to impose costs on the community.

ii) Population

- 7.5 The Policy Plan anticipates an increase in the total population of the city between 1971 and 1986, and sees its level of growth being limited by the capacity for housing in the city. Our study of Hillfields suggests that, in the past, the labour market has been a stronger influence on the growth of the city's population than the housing market. The city has suffered the consequences of industry's demands for labour and therefore for housing before. Although the planners' projections of population have been very accurate in the past, in the current economic situation the council would be in a better position to predict changes in population and to take more control over the situation if it had an analysis of the decisions about investment and employment being made by the city's major firms.

iii) Finance

- 7.6 The Plan is based on a sophisticated survey of the economic situation at both national and local levels. However, it emerges that in effect this is not so much an attempt to understand the economic sources of problems as a question of "marketing intelligence": forecasting the climate affecting the "demand" for the corporation's products, or the ability of consumers ("particularly domestic rate-payers") to pay. The financial survey is also concerned with comparing Coventry's activity-rate and performance (rates of growth of expenditure, expenditure per head) with those of competitors in the same field (average County Borough expenditure nationally and in the West Midlands region).

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.0 Corporate management, like any other administrative tool, is neither good nor bad in itself. However our observation of its operation in local government suggests that its organisation and procedures are in practice dominated by business assumptions. Its organisation is based on a model of local government as a large financial corporation, with the councillors in the role of an Honorary Board of Directors representing the shareholder-voters, and taking responsibility for the corporation's broad investment policy. Its procedures are geared towards the co-ordination of long-range corporate plans and forward capital programmes; the monitoring of the production of the local authority's goods and services; and control of the budget.

8.1 These are appropriate tools in so far as local government has in fact become "big business" in the scale of its turnover, its capital and revenue investment, and its employment. However we have suggested in the first part of this paper that in addition to providing direct services to the local community, one of the indirect effects of local government expenditure is to maintain the "calculability" of the economic environment for private investment. Corporate management serves the indirect function well, acting as a means of sophisticated communication about forward investment plans between the local corporation and the world of local industry and commerce. It seems less relevant as a means of expressing problems as they are experienced by other communities of interest (e.g. residents, trade unions, councillors). It serves the councillor well in his role as guardian and manager of the public purse, but less well in his responsibilities for providing for the needs of citizens in general, and for the non-productive sections of the community in particular.

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Also see:

- "The HRS Residents' Association Report
Declaration Report for a Proposed General Improvement Area in the
Hartlepool Road, Redcar Road, Stockton Road area of Hillfields,
Coventry" April 1973
- "A Future for Five Ways
A Petition Report Presented to Coventry City Council by the Five Ways
Residents' Association" February 1974
- "Into the Community, No. 2" - Learning in Leisure Series.
Shows the work of the HRS Residents' Association. BBC Films 1973