

OPERATION STREET CORNER

APRIL, 1958

INTRODUCTION

On December 19, 1955, the Board of Trustees of The Educational Alliance decided to embark on an experimental project with pre-delinquent groups. At a time when juvenile delinquency was rising all over the city, the Alliance decided to place a group worker on the streets of the neighborhood to work with teen-age gangs which were beginning to flirt with activities leading to delinquency. These groups had boys (and girls) at loose ends, who felt the world wasn't interested in them or was against them. Frequently the adolescents need for friendship and physical safety in an increasingly tense community situation had led them to affiliate with other gangs whose leadership had definite anti-social tendencies.

When it was initiated, Operation Street Corner was a new type of program. Although street workers had previously been used effectively by the Youth Board to maintain an uneasy truce between established fighting gangs, the use of such workers as a preventive measure among younger age groups was still untried. The staff of the Alliance predicted that such a worker could steer pre-adolescents into more constructive activities before they became enmeshed in the anti-social gang structure of their environment. If this could be demonstrated, they said, the effectiveness of such a worker would be increased many fold and the task of stemming juvenile delinquency would be far less expensive to the community.

The effectiveness of a street worker to curb delinquency in individual cases has now been demonstrated. With further experience, better techniques will certainly be developed but the time has come to make this program a regular part of the Alliance's service to its community. This requires money, about \$10,000 per year for one professional worker and the necessary equipment and staff assistance to aid him in his job.

In 1957 the Ray and Charles Newman Memorial Foundation, Inc. generously contributed \$2,500 toward this program. The balance of the required budget was supplied by the Alliance as part of its continuing research activities, but now it has passed this stage and other sources of funds must be found to supplement the moneys received from the Newman Foundation. Unfortunately, we cannot claim that Operation Street Corner is as effective against J D as Salk vaccine is against Polio, but we firmly believe that it is the best prevention available at the current time.

The following is the current report on Operation Street Corner by Murray Narell, our Street Worker since September, 1957. It forms an excellent companion piece to two previous reports, one on the summer crisis of August and September, 1956, during the first summer of this operation, and the other by Dan Rubenstein on the results of the first year-and-a-quarter of operation given at our October 21, 1957 Board meeting. In the two previous reports, the value of Operation Street Corner was indicated as a stop-gap program in the face of serious gang crises, as well as a means through which individuals and groups were weaned away from becoming "hard core" gang groups. This report gets into the day-to-day operations of this program; it provides a closeup view of the groups and their individual members, their aspirations and their problems. It also reflects the concerns of the Street Worker, Murray Narell and through him, those of all of us connected with the program.

DONALD B. STRAUS
President
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SOMEONE TO CARE

by
MURRAY NARELL

OBJECTIVES

The most urgent objectives of O.S.C. are to prevent physical and serious social injury to the groups and individuals it undertakes to work with, and to the society with which they come in contact. It is apparent that gang fighting, stealing or doing something else which might very well result in a police record might be disastrous. But failing to have the kind of constructive activities and relationships with other boys and girls, as well as with adults, which lead to a satisfactory life experience can be equally unfortunate, both for the individual and his future family, as well as all of society. Thus O.S.C. must not be concerned only with prevention of negative acts, such as gang fighting, vandalism, stealing, delinquent sex acts and driving without a license, it must also try to make possible for those young people it serves activities which will give them necessary prestige, social experience, pleasure, physical activity, learning and leisure time training.

O.S.C. workers are prepared to accept the fact that moving the group from anti-social behavior and activities toward those which will aid normal development is very difficult. This is especially true when a group is so weak that it will only undertake projects which are quite simple. The effectiveness of the worker with the group is a determining factor. This role can be described in a number of ways. He lends his strength to the group, thus giving them confidence. He supports the most positive elements in the group - this may very well actually change the outward behavior of the total group. He persuades the group to forego undesirable behavior and to undertake constructive activities.

Why should these youngsters, who have apparently been operating from an entirely different set of values and attitudes from that of the worker, listen to him and be influenced by him? At first they will not. They greet his early efforts with suspicions, even hostility, and disagreements. The worker is armed, however, with the conviction that these young people are searching for understanding, guidance, warmth and affection, advice, opinions, approval and disapproval from someone they can talk to freely, knowing that they will not be mocked, ridiculed or hurt. They have a great need for a sounding board for the expression of their thoughts and feelings, being secure at all times that what they relate will be accepted with understanding. Even harsh disapproval will be tempered with affection and a continuing deep respect for the individual. The worker who can serve in this capacity can gain their confidence and be the bridge between their world and the standards of our adult society.

How the boys see the worker, their estimate of him and their estimate of how they think he sees them, determines whether or not they will shed their protective armor of seeming toughness and permit an inner look by the worker. It is not only a question of whether or not he is there to help them, but whether they accept him as a person who can be of help. Does he really like

us or is it just a job? Is he sincere, does he mean what he says? Or is he using his superior knowledge to manipulate us? Are we safe in trusting him as a friend? If the boys can answer these questions in a manner satisfactory to themselves, the worker has achieved one of his primary objectives.

FOUR GROUPS

I am now actively involved with four groups. I have a basic schedule of the time I will spend with each group. However, I must be flexible enough to be able to arrange my time so that I am available when needed. There are times when I will see all four groups in one day. Sometimes several days may go by without one group getting any attention whatever, but the general principle is that the boys must at all times feel that I am interested in what they are doing - enough so, that I will at least drop by for a few minutes to see how they are doing. In addition it is important to check frequently so that I will be abreast of any new developments. Thus I may have a scheduled group session in the afternoon, step in at a cellar club of another group before the session, and stop by a corner hangout of a third group on the way to another group session scheduled with a fourth group. In one situation which I considered an emergency, I devoted all but a few hours of my time for several days around difficulties involving but one group and necessarily neglecting the other three.

How any worker uses his time with the group will vary according to the needs of the group and the objectives of the worker. When the worker first starts with the group, even when a previous worker had had a working relationship, a relatively larger amount of time per week is planned. Much of this time is spent in just "hanging around" with a good sprinkling of small talk on every conceivable subject. It is a period in which the worker tries to familiarize himself with the group, the members, their standards, values, interests, ambitions - everything. At the same time he tries to communicate something of himself and the role he intends to play in their group. He does not hesitate to ask questions and clearly indicate he is very much interested in them but at the same time he is sensitized to any indication that there is an intrusion of privacy or reluctance to answer - his signal to stop. There is time and the worker is patient but usually except for the initial period of suspicion, group members are more than willing to talk about themselves - as a matter of fact they are often overwhelmed that someone is interested in them.

A BASIC NEED - SOMEONE TO CARE

It may very well be that here lies a most important catalyst for many members and groups---the discovery that someone cares. Time and time again members will clearly express their lack of confidence in adults and especially adults in authority positions. There pervades most groups a feeling that they are held in poor esteem by the adult world and almost that they are persecuted at every opportunity by tormentors (teachers, police, local businessmen, social agencies, etc.). It is a thrilling experience for those who work with difficult groups to see first surprise and then the grateful, warm reaction of the club to an act which clearly indicates to them that someone - an individual, agency, community group or policeman - went out of their way for them. "Toughs," "punks," "gangs" will lose their crude exterior in the wake of what they feel to be an act done out of concern for them. It is at these times, when the realization that "someone cares" lowers their guard for even just a short while, that

one sees the possibility of breaking through to at least a good part of the group.

It is with this general approach and orientation that the worker goes forth to do battle with the many frustrations, problems and pressures which belabor what our society refers to as "our troubled youth."

THE ROYAL DUKES

The Royal Dukes in September 1957 consisted of a loosely knit group of about 15 Puerto Rican boys ranging in age from about 15 to 17 with one or two older and younger. The community was concerned with them because of their close affiliation with the Dragons - one of the most dangerous fighting gangs in the city. Many of them had actually considered themselves as Dragons and the leader of the Royal Dukes was most chummy with their leader.

Most of their leisure time was spent in a court of a local housing project where several of the boys lived. With the exception of one group fight in August which was allegedly caused by the abuse of someone's younger brother on a trip around Manhattan and resulted in one broken arm, some bruises and, probably exaggerated, injuries to the boys uptown, they had not been in any serious trouble. However, their potential for trouble was rather high. They were not engaging in any activities as a group which might be considered constructive. They had a softball team during the summer which they unhappily reported had lost every game.

Their reputation and success as part of a fighting group was in all probability their chief source of prestige and group strength. Were it not for this, their self-estimate would in all probability be rather low. This is so often indicated by groups that have lost or given up their fighting ability and resulting "rep." They resort to escapes such as narcotics or alcohol.

Like most other groups of their age in the community the Royal Dukes desired a club of their own. After several unsuccessful attempts to obtain such facilities (a broken down apartment, a vacant store, a basement room) the O.S.C. worker was called upon for help.

LOOKING FOR A CLUB HOUSE

The boys would locate a vacancy and the worker would contact the landlord. The assumption was that it would not be rented to the boys unless someone spoke for them. In one case, my influence as well as the youth patrolman in the local precinct, even when we spoke in behalf of the boys, was not sufficient to overcome the fears and reluctance of one owner. Finally, a rather dismal-looking below the street store, in horrible shape was found with the necessary requirement - a landlord who could be convinced that the risks involved were not so great as to overcome his desire for rent and the community service he might very well be performing. In spite of his professed social consciousness he made it quite clear that it was a probationary arrangement, in that he wanted to feel free to call the deal off at any time. Any untoward behavior by the boys such as scrapes with the law, he told them, would result in their having to leave.

The boys were jubilant - they walked on air. They enthusiastically pitched in with the brooms, mops, paint brushes, and carpentry tools. A partition was erected, electric wires hooked up and stretched to all corners of the club, and an artistic paint job performed with the usual stars painted on the ceiling. Furniture was bought from someone's mother on a payment plan, and music was provided by phonographs brought in by various members on a daily basis.

In addition to their president and vice-president, once in their new club house, the group elected a treasurer and dance director. Socials were planned, but because space was limited, only half the members could attend at one time with their girls. Later it was found that crowded conditions were not really a deterrent, and all were invited at the same time. Meetings were held fairly regularly to discuss finances, dues collection, clean-up responsibilities, planning socials and settling problems such as "When should girls be permitted to attend."

The boys now had a second home and for some, perhaps a primary home. At first they never wanted to leave it for either work, school, sleep or food. The lure of the club increased truancy and job absenteeism. Some of the boys actively seeking work suddenly lost interest in this - they no longer had the time. To have a "steady girl" became almost a question of prestige. Mass necking in virtual blackouts became a regular club phenomenon. Keeping track of who was going steady with whom became rather difficult unless one came to the club regularly. Going steady for two days and cheerfully breaking up for new partnerships was not uncommon. This is not to say that the well known anxieties, frustrations, fears and pains of adolescent boy-girl relations were not present. But "breaking up" was seldom followed by hostilities or jealousies. All continued to attend the same club, talk to each other, dance with each other. In some cases the bonds were more lasting and as the initial excitement wore off some couples remained together for months.

DEVELOPING RESPONSIBILITY

I used the period of the search for a clubhouse to get acquainted and to help the group prepare themselves better for operating their club. I tried to have them face the problems that they would probably be confronted with, -- finances, maintenance, rules, and machinery for decision-making. Their enthusiasm, optimism and hopes were not always coupled with an equal amount of realism. Even when the worker raised the questions for examination they were often shrugged off with a "don't worry, the fellows will pay their dues," or "everybody will pitch in to clean up." The fact that the worker was instrumental in helping obtain the club, and the restrictive strings placed upon them by the landlord, were of tremendous assistance in getting group movement. The role of the police in being in a more or less supervisory position, due to community tradition, was also of real help. But most important was the fact that more than anything else the boys wanted to keep their club.

About one month after they rented the club, someone broke the big plate glass windows of the club during the night. It was at this point that they decided to register their club with the police - something that they knew

they had been expected to do when they first started. They asked me to go along. They were pretty sure who had performed the evil deed - some former boy friends of some girls who now came to the club from another area. A minor street skirmish had already taken place one evening when the girls had been walked home. There were those in the club who felt that they must retaliate. There were a few who were reluctant - either they didn't like to fight or feared losing the club, or both. I threw my support with those opposing battle. I told them I disapproved of the idea of fighting and I now spoke with the weight of an accepted club leader. Every conceivable verbal argument was projected in an effort to head off those who were pressing for a fight to defend the honor of the club. I warned: "Some of our members will be injured," "arrests will be made with the accompanying effects on the individual and his family," and "you will probably lose the club." What probably had the most meaning for the group was the fear of losing the club. They well knew that a gang fight would in all probability result in the closing of their club by the police. Hours of discussion and use of the technique of convincing each agitator separately resulted in a general agreement to do nothing. It is my estimate that the influence of some of the stronger members of the club, and my own role were secondary to the harsh reality that conducting a gang fight as a means of protecting their club from further attacks would be self-defeating -- they might lose what they are striving to protect.

TRUANCY

I was very concerned with the question of truancy. I utilized every opportunity I could find to raise the question for discussion with individuals and small groups. It wasn't until there was a full discussion at a regular club meeting, however, that I felt any real progress had been made. This discussion closely followed a talk some of the boys and I had with the local youth policeman. One of the points the patrolman cautioned the boys on was the presence of truants in the club during school hours. One of the boys present raised this at the meeting and called upon me for confirmation. I vigorously supported the member who had proposed that a rule be made that no truants be permitted in the club and that suspension be the fine. In addition I made it clear that it was my feeling that the club should encourage its members to attend school and to try to do well. One member, who felt rather close to me and who had been a habitual truant, voluntarily turned in his club key and following this all those still attending school were asked to do likewise. Here again I felt that logical arguments stressing the future welfare of members were secondary in effectiveness to the points raised regarding the legal violations and the dangers to existence for the club. These realities, pressed home by someone who had their respect and who they felt was operating in their interest, were perhaps more persuasive to the boys than threats by authorities they feared or even hated. For a while there was a sharp decline in absenteeism. Later it became chronic again and varied with other factors such as weather, subway strikes, the fact that High School students were out part of the day due to exams - anything which was a partial excuse or drawing force on them.

In the over-all planning, I gave a great deal of emphasis. I encouraged activities which gave prestige, self-confidence and self-esteem, skills, enjoyment, social experiences and physical activity. Two such activities for example which are being carried out rather successfully by the Royal Dukes are the club basketball team and movie programs.

COURAGE TO PLAY BASKETBALL

There was a general reluctance to having a basketball team - probably due to previous unsuccessful experiences, such as their victoryless softball team. I first invited them to use the gym as a group and they played basketball among themselves. I praised them, gave instructions in fundamentals, and encouraged them to practice, all with a general goal of building up their confidence. In time they decided to try their hand at playing a game. They asked me to be their coach and to schedule games for them. I did this but only with the understanding that the boys would place a major share of the responsibility in the captain of their team. Through careful scheduling of games the boys had several successful experiences. Soon they were booking their own games and inviting their girl friends to watch them. The basketball team became a source of group pride and prestige.

When a group of Negro boys came down from the Bronx to play them, I suggested that following the game the boys invite them to their club for refreshments. I was met with surprised looks but after a little reflection (and no protest) there was agreement. I offered to supply the cookies and the boys supplied the drinks from their new pepsi-cola machine. There was no resentment at giving out free drinks to their visitors that night. Instead there was a feeling of pride in showing off their club, the jukebox and a sense of strength and confidence in that they could be such genial hosts. They fluttered about their guests guaranteeing that no one had been missed by the refreshment committee. Later I was asked by members, "what did they think of our club?"

Following the next game I was occupied with other duties. The next day I was pleased to learn that on their own initiative the visiting team had been invited over to the club for a social session.

HOW THE GROUP HELPED JOE

It can readily be seen that group activities, and therefore, the club which makes these activities possible can be of great help to the development of young people. The importance of the club itself as a social unit to the individual is perhaps a little more difficult to see. This point was dramatically presented one evening to me by two members. Ralph and Joe took me aside and sought my advice and support. A friend of theirs, Joe, had been for some time addicted to narcotics. He had been arrested for some offense regarding a stolen car and subsequently placed on probation while awaiting an opening at Riverside Hospital, where the judge had committed him. He was off drugs but the boys and his sister feared that he might go back to using them. They claimed that the boys he usually "hung out" with were a bad influence on him. If he could be brought to the club and kept away from the other fellows, they felt, he could "go straight." "Do you think it would be all right if we brought Joe to the club?", I was asked. I had reservations due to the possible introduction of drugs to the group through this individual as yet unknown to me. I did not disapprove, agreed to be of help to the boy as asked, and then made a special effort to build a good relationship with him as quickly as possible. Joe soon became an accepted and active member of the club. When he was to report to the hospital he was reluctant but accepted it after interpretation. Whenever, the worker visited him, he constantly inquired about the activities and members of his new

social unit. Unquestionably this made it easier for him to cooperate in therapy. The warm welcome he received upon his return, and his participation in activities were of tremendous help in carrying him through the initial period following his release. All too often there is a return to drugs even after what seems to be fairly successful therapy. The strength of the group and their acceptance supplied him with the much-needed support.

Perhaps equally important in this situation was my role. Being conscious of the problem, I at first offered him friendship and help. I consciously strove to get Joe to become active in the club and activities - saw to it that he would receive an increasing share of the responsibilities for club affairs. While the boy was in the hospital, I served as a liason between him and the group encouraging his friends to write to him and suggesting a warm welcome on his return. In addition, I assisted in the therapy, providing information to the treatment team at the hospital and supporting their work with my talks with him during visits. I was able to serve in similar capacity with Joe's probation officer, family, and therapist following his release.

Joe had come back to a situation in which he was welcome and wanted. His family had received briefing on his needs. His friends were prepared to go out of their way to make him comfortable, I recall, with great satisfaction the discussion I had with the club, in which they consciously assumed the role of helping agents in J's battle to stay off drugs. And he now knew he could rely on an understanding adult, a professional worker who was sincerely interested in him, for help and support when needed. His first request was, "can you help me get a job?" That same day an appointment was made for him at "Vocational Foundation" which specializes in placing boys who have been in trouble.

The entire affair had much significance. The boy's conception of me and my role was deepened, and the realization that I was ready and willing to help him was most important. Joe's family came to appreciate the club assistance. The close cooperation of family, friends and professional workers may thus very well have stopped one human being from going further down the road toward disintegration, and placed him instead on the path which will lead to a constructive existence.

ALFREDO'S STRUGGLE FOR SANITY

Alfredo was still a virtual newcomer to the club when the worker became aware of his problems. He had been coming to the club and participating in whatever was going on. It was on a Monday that Alfredo asked me for help in finding a job. The interview around this disclosed only the beginnings of a thoroughly awful situation. For the past few weeks he had been sleeping on subways, in theatres, and in the clubhouse. When it became bitter cold he was driven to seek shelter at the home of his father whom he disliked intensely. His mother had a room in a friends' home and could not accommodate him. His brothers and sister, all younger, were living in a Home. He was penniless and had hardly eaten anything for days. He had lost his job about a month before due to illness.

Finding no solution to this emergency housing problem the boy had no intention of going back to his father's home and feeling that Alfredo needed friendly companionship as much as anything else, I took him home with me. The

immediate objectives, it seemed were to find housing and a job for Alfredo. The next few days were spent in unsuccessful attempts to do both. There just were no suitable facilities to be found, to accommodate him. I was reluctant to send him to either the Salvation Army or Welfare Dept. shelters. Jobs were scarce and in spite of numerous efforts, several days passed and he was still unemployed. He continued to live with me and the agency subsidized him with food and car fare money.

In the meantime his life history unfolded itself. His father, who was now about 70, had a family in P.R. before he met Alfredo's mother with whom he subsequently had 4 children in P.R. and N.Y. After a running battle, she left him and then the father dropped the children on her doorstep and went back to his wife and other family who now were in N.Y. There followed a long, drawn out Domestic Relations Court case which resulted in the children being placed in a Home with the exception of Alfredo who went to live in a foster home. By this time he was a very disturbed boy of about 14.

About two years later he had been unable to get along any longer with his foster mother and went off on his own. The Big Brother Movement was helpful to him in finding a job and living accommodations. He worked for over 1½ years and lived in a number of cheap rooming houses where he had a good deal of promiscuous sexual and probably homosexual experiences. A severe case of syphilis kept him going to a Social Hygiene Clinic for quite a while. He lost his last job due to what he called a nervous breakdown.

It became apparent that Alfredo needed some kind of psychotherapy, and he was referred to the Community Service Society for diagnosis. The idea of finding a job was dropped until it could be determined if he was in a condition to work. Pending this determination, the Welfare Dept. was called upon for assistance. Due to what was referred to as his nervous condition, special consideration was given to him in that they waived the necessity of his being the required 18 years of age, and the calling upon his parents. His desire to keep them out of the picture was almost violent and he'd rather go back to the streets. Finally, he was housed in Sloane House YMCA and was placed on public assistance.

Almost every step of the way was very difficult. He was suspicious of everyone's intentions and resented any questioning as an intrusion of his privacy - he was sick and tired of everyone wanting to know all about him. He resisted vocational counsellors, Welfare Dept. intake workers, YMCA business managers, and had difficulty in relating to the case worker at CSS. The only one he seemed to trust was me and it was my task to interpret everyone's role and prepare him for every interview.

I and the CSS caseworker agreed after a few weeks that probably the wisest thing would be to have him go to a psychiatric hospital for observation. Through their combined efforts, Alfredo was prepared for this, and I went with him to have him committed. He was convinced that he needed help and in spite of reservations and some fear, he went willingly. Surely his confidence in me was an important factor in his being able to reach this decision.

Once in the hospital it became a problem of having him cooperate fully with those seeking to help him. Before it was the CSS worker who asked too many questions and watched him too closely. Now, he claimed, he did not like the case-worker at Bellevue. Again I had to spend several visits thinking through with

Alfredo what was best for him and how he could best accomplish his ends. After a while he made a good adjustment and expressed a real understanding of his need for treatment -- he readily agreed to go to Rockland State Hospital, where he hopes to get treatment which will enable him to function satisfactorily in the outside world.

While he was at Bellevue I was his liason with his friends and family. Alfredo got to the point where he asked to have his mother come to see him. He overcame his reluctance to have his friends know of his situation and asked to have them told of his whereabouts and urged to visit him.

Helping Alfredo find and then willingly accept treatment was important, but I will still have the task of helping him make an adjustment when he finishes his stay at Rockland State Hospital. Knowing I am there to give him support and having friends to come back to should be a comfort and an incentive to him.

The above case is more difficult and serious than most, but even small everyday problems add up to a great deal of concern, and frustration. Asking the worker what to do about not being able to sleep or telling the worker of a fight with his teacher is an indication that a boy wants some help in working out or thinking through a problem. Unburdening himself may be helpful and either getting information or seeing the question in a new light may often provide a solution. An example of the worker being a source of information was the time when Harry and Ted were bragging to the group of the time they got x-rayed six times in one day for T.B.---they had "fooled" the attendants. The dangers of over-exposure were stressed to an attentive audience.

THE JEFFWAYS GET A HOME OF THEIR OWN

The Jeffways, in the fall of 1957, consisted of about 30 boys whose hangout was a candy store on a corner less than a block from the Edgies. Almost any time during the day and far into the night they could be seen on that same corner just standing, talking and "horsing around." Their most frequent social activity was the big card game in Sheriff Park or in some hallway. Some of the boys were practically addicted to gambling and would only stop when they ran out of money. Their conception of amusement can be illustrated by their group activity one evening about ten of them lifted a sport car onto the sidewalk and spent the rest of the night laughing at their deed.

With the exception of a couple of visits to the gym by a fraction of the boys and attendance at a Youth Board dance, the worker was unable to involve them in activities on a planned basis. Around November, they asked for help in having a club and it was arranged for them to use the New Era facilities which we had available to us. It was projected as a lounge program.

The group was unwilling to form any structure which would permit them to take any real responsibilities for either planning or running the club program. They had a rather dismal experience the previous year in which they had lost a club they were renting, due to their inability to control their own members and to stick together in an effort to keep out undesirable elements. In time their club was taken over by a stronger group. As a result they still felt pessimistic

about their own ability to carry on a program and made it most clear to me that they wanted me to handle the situation - "you make the rules and tell the guys what to do." Their fear of that same neighborhood group still persisted and they did not want to find themselves in a position where they had made rules which they would have to enforce. They preferred having me take the responsibility for keeping the other group out. I had considerable amount of difficulty from time to time but the other group was kept out. Toward the end of the year the fact that the candy store was to be closed and condemned for demolition prompted the boys to seek a club. They were offered an existing club by some older boys who had insufficient members to carry it. There began a period of discussion as to whether or not they should go into it. The general consensus of opinion was that the group could not handle it. The chief argument was that they would be unable to keep out the more aggressive boys of the neighborhood and specifically the same group which took over their club last year. A few boys persisted in their desire to keep the question alive but no one took a really strong position in favor of jumping into it. They called upon me for help--could I have a meeting with them at the Edgies. They tried to have the meeting secret and wanted no word of the discussion to reach the feared group. They expected punishment if it were discovered by the rival group that they would be kept out of the new club.

I did not minimize the inherent dangers and difficulties but emphasized what I considered their rights as citizens to have a club of their own and permit entry only to those whom they wanted. They asked if I could be with them a good deal of the time. I explained my time limitations but assured them that I would give them as much support as possible. I raised the possibility of calling on the police if any real difficulties arose and indicated that I would call on community support for them if they thought the situation warranted it. The sum total of what I said amounted to encouragement but was not put in a way to press for a decision in either direction. It was up to them to decide--if they did, I was there to help.

After several meetings, there was still considerable hesitation but a number of boys committed themselves. In time 17 boys paid the required fee and they took the club. The worker was invited to come as often as he could--the oftener the better. The membership lists were soon closed and it required a full membership meeting to be voted in. The fact that the older boys stayed on with them helped give them confidence in the situation. They pitched in with cleaning up, wall-papering, contacting a juke-box distributor and began making themselves comfortable. They took much pride in their club and in their ability to run it well.

Dancing, talking, watching T.V. and the inevitable card games occupied their time. They have a regular weekly meeting which is fairly well run and which includes a good deal of free discussion. They continue to be reluctant to broaden their activities. They refuse to go to dances (even free ones) to take advantage of free tickets to boxing shows, or organize anything on their own.

They are extremely hostile toward Negroes and even more so toward Puerto Ricans (they are a primarily Jewish group with some Italian members). In any discussion of the question of getting along with these groups, their language becomes most vitriolic. I see this as an area in which much work should be done with the group but feel it will be very difficult in the light of their apparent deep-seated attitudes.

The individual requirements of the members of this group become my responsibility. After many explorations and referrals, Morris and Don get jobs. Then Ted needs one and he is referred to a few sources. When the heavy layoffs start toward the end of the year, Morris and Don are back again. Sol takes me aside and asks me what he can do. "I think I am over-sexed." Phil has a swollen hand and wants me to go to the hospital with him for x-rays. Maybe he just wants to see if I care enough about him to go with him at half past 10 o'clock at night. Billy tells me he is going to quit school and get a job. He's really not sure if he should do it. I suspect he is only thinking out loud hoping to get some help in making a decision. The closer I get to the boys, the better they know me, the more readily do problems come to the surface where they can be examined, discussed and possibly solved.

SUMMARY

The preceding report gives a picture in detail of only a few of the activities of Operation Street Corner. In addition to the groups mentioned in the detailed report, three other groups this year, consisting of about 70 teen-agers, have received the attention of Mr. Narell. One hundred and seventy teen-agers (120 boys and 50 girls) are still under Operation Street Corner supervision, fifteen are now active in the Alliance and three groups, comprising about sixty members, are now in other community centers.

We feel that Operation Street Corner has demonstrated its value. Many gang conflicts have been averted, and many others have been prevented from spreading. Groups have been weaned away from syndicates and have found new satisfactions and a new safety in the community. The Youth Board has been induced to come in to work with the worst hard core gangs largely because we had this program. And most important of all, many boys and girls have had an opportunity to reorganize their lives so as to become happier and more constructive members of society.

Operation Street Corner has still a great deal to do in the light of serious neighborhood problems. There is a newly accelerated growth of narcotic addiction in the teen-age community of the Lower East Side and gang fights are still taking place. The intercultural tension and bad feeling is still high in the area, particularly with continued instability in the community as old housing gets torn down to make way for badly needed new housing. The emotional climate in the community is still very tense. Operation Street Corner gives us an opportunity to continue a vitally needed service.