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INNOVATION IN WELFARE PROGRAMS

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Social Change and Innovation in Welfare

This Conference is taking place at the end of a decade of serious changes in the Australian economy. One of those changes - the enormous increase of Government expenditure on income maintenance programs - has been noted by other speakers. While this expenditure has prevented large groups of Australian people from starving, it has done little to produce the type of social change which harnesses and develops human resources. For example, the Government's response to high rates of unemployment in Australia has been to increase expenditure on unemployment benefits, rather than to introduce innovative programs which create jobs or explore alternative life-styles. A similar response is made by the Government in its programs for care of the aged, where there is huge expenditure on institutions and allowances to keep aged persons in them, and comparatively little on domiciliary services.

In effect, Australian Government welfare programs are remedial and maintain the status quo, they are not designed to experiment and to innovate to find the best way to change the social institutions which govern people's lives. One of the effects of continual exposure to remedial programs is that people, including academics and professionals, become discouraged and begin to believe that change is no longer possible. Consequently, less and less time is spent on innovative programs reinforced by the fact that less and less money is available for them.

This paper is intended to be a reminder of the importance of innovation in welfare programs. It is about the history of one innovation, the developmental approach, which was conceived as part of an anti-poverty demonstration project carried out by the Brotherhood of St Laurence during the period 1972-75. The paper outlines the need which Brotherhood workers perceived was not being filled by its service programs, the change of program which was devised to fill that need, the developmental approach which arose out of the new program, the adoption and diffusion of this approach and the way in which it was changed over time.

Over the years, it has become apparent that the structures of society often prevent individuals, groups, or communities from achieving their maximum potential, and increasing attention has been given to changing the structures which inhibit human growth. To illustrate this point, Galper (11, p.189) uses the example of the way in which the social work commitment to maximising individual choices is limited in a society in which the choices themselves are limited. A further example can be found in poverty studies where it has been stated that "poverty is not an isolated factor arising out of an individual's behaviour, but a widespread condition, imposed and maintained by the basic structures and processes of contemporary society". (6, p.203)

Modern attempts to define social welfare both overseas (27), and in Australia (1), tie social welfare to social change and social development. In these definitions, social welfare is characterized as an instrument for social integration, as a dynamic agent of change, as a redistributive institution, redressing inequities in society by positive discrimination and a greater command over resources for disadvantaged groups.

Thus, both social welfare and social work are linked to social change. This interpretation can be made even when the area of work is within social control agencies, where attempts are made to change social structures to enable people and society to benefit from the human potential they control rather than to brutalize and destroy it. (12)

Whilst social change can be seen to be the objective of most of modern welfare practice, the exact direction and the characteristics of that change are not always explicit. A close examination of some of the most recent initiatives in social welfare reveals, that despite their many differences, the one common factor is that they are all directed towards giving individuals greater power or control over the decisions which affect their lives. Such new initiatives include:

- * action directed towards increasing the income of low-income groups;
- * participation of consumers in the delivery of welfare services;
- * the encouragement of self-help groups;
- * the deprofessionalization of social work and the transference of specific skills to indigenous workers;

- * the regionalization of delivery of services;
- * support for initiatives which identify local needs and attempt to fulfill those needs by local solutions.

Social welfare is one of the many social institutions of which the complex web of society is composed and consequently those initiatives in social welfare which increase the control of people over their own lives have their counterparts in other social institutions. For example, worker participation is a new initiative in the institution of work, citizen participation is a new initiative in town planning, and even in the institution of the law, 'do-it-yourself' kits have appeared.

Rogers & Shoemaker have defined social change as "the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system". (23, p.7) In the welfare system, social change is usually brought about by program change introduced by an organisation to fulfill a new need, or to adapt to an old need which, for a variety of reasons, is perceived differently.¹

Program change, both in the welfare system and in other systems, depends upon innovation. Although the definition of innovation has been elaborated over time, most recent texts appear to start with Barnett's definition:

Any thought, behaviour, or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms. Strictly speaking, every innovation is an idea, or a constellation of ideas; but some innovations by their nature must remain mental organizations only, whereas others may be given overt and tangible expression. (2, p.7)

One of the most recent definitions of an innovation comes from Lin and Zaltman, and includes the idea that the most important characteristic of an innovation is that it is the perception of a person or a social system which decides its newness. This definition is that an innovation is "any idea, practice, or material artefact perceived to be new by the relevant unit of adoption". (17, p.98)

The characteristics of innovations, their adoption and their diffusion have now received the close attention of many social scientists. In particular, case studies abound about the way in which a new product is accepted or rejected and, if accepted, the way in which it is spread throughout large populations and particular systems. Rogers & Shoemaker describe many studies of this type and arrive at a series of generalisations, the most interesting, but not the most surprising of which, is that "change agent success is positively related to the degree to which his program is compatible with clients' needs". One interesting example cited is the attempt to eradicate the incidence of sleeping sickness in northern Nigeria, an attempt which failed because villagers did not understand the relationship between the tsetse fly and the illness. (23, p.238).

Despite the proliferation of texts about the nature of innovation, there is one area which has received scant attention. This area is the study of what happens over time to the idea or the message itself. Such a study provides increased knowledge about the characteristics of innovation and can contribute to social change, either by improving the skills of manipulating those characteristics and so enable intervention in the process of change, or by suggesting strategies which will prevent distortion of the idea or message.

Background: The Previous Work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence with Low-Income Families

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a large, voluntary, social welfare organisation employing approximately 450 people. The organisation was started in 1933 and began to employ professional social workers in 1953. It began with a strong commitment to social action and service to poor people, and still retains that commitment. Until 1972, its program included numerous services to old people; a family counselling service; youth and children's activities; a family planning clinic; and a research and social action unit. The clientele of the organisation was drawn from all areas of Melbourne, with some concentration in the inner suburbs which, at that time, contained many deprived low-income families.

Services to families were delivered through the Social Work Service and the Youth & Children's Centre. During the 1960's, as many as eight youth workers and social workers were employed in these two services. The Social Work Service had an 'open door' policy which resulted in an annual caseload of approximately 600 families, most of whom came to the Brotherhood for financial assistance. The Youth & Children's Centre activities were open and the number of young people who attended was difficult to assess - one indicator was that attendance at adolescent club nights was in the region of 50-60, drawn from a pool of some 300 young people known to the Service.

The following comments of a previous Senior Social Worker aptly described the type of families who used the social services provided by the Brotherhood. The families were mostly "economically socially and personally disadvantaged to a severe, often chronic degree". Many of the "chronic aid seekers have built Brotherhood handouts into their patterns of coping with life". In the Social Work Service, which was staffed by professional social workers, the method of work was casework, using financial and material aid as a tool. (25, p.1)

Casework in the agency was of a very exacting and unrewarding nature: it either consisted of handing out small amounts of money that both client and worker knew could not possibly cover the multitudinous needs of the family, or of spending hours working with a family with infinitesimal rewards in terms of improved functioning and little change to the social or economic condition of the family.

Apart from the pressures of the 'open door' policy, and the many problems for which workers knew there were no solutions, the work was superficial and fragmented. Interviews were not with total families, but with the mothers of the families, who were generally interviewed in the office. It was possible for parents, children and aged members of the same family to be seen at the same time in the agency by workers in different departments, without any consultation or other communication between them. Workers were confused about their goals and how to reach them, and what permanent effects, if any, their efforts were achieving.

The results of the Brotherhood's past projects and research studies, for example, the Family Service Project and 'The Have Nots - A Study of 150 Low-Income Families'² added to the general feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction. The pressure generated by these feelings mounted until barriers between the research, social work and youth departments were overcome and free discussion began to take place.

In terms of organisational theory, the Brotherhood was reaching a state of preparedness for program change. Indicators of this preparedness were the diffusion of uncertainty about methods of work, the level of problem insecurity and challenge, and the fact that the diversity of inputs so necessary for the creation of new ideas was allowed. (26, pp.10-12)

The new program which was devised eventually to fill the needs of low-income people in a new, more appropriate way, was the Family Centre Project.

The Family Centre Project: A Demonstration Anti-Poverty Program

The Family Centre Project was itself an innovation, but as such is not the subject of this paper. Nevertheless, as an aside, there are two features of the Family Centre Project as an innovation which should be noted. Firstly, compared with other welfare programs for the poor, it was immensely costly. Uncommitted money, time, skills and goodwill were all provided by the Brotherhood to establish the new program. This generous allocation of resources confirms a requirement for innovation which has been observed by other program managers, namely that innovative programs require greater resources than established programs. (26, p.10; 14, p.xiv)

The second feature of the Family Centre Project as an innovation was the way in which it acted as a stimulus to further innovation in other welfare programs. Lin and Zaltman identify this characteristic of innovation in the following words: "adoption of an innovation may open avenues to the adoption of other innovations" and label it as the 'gateway capacity'. (17, p.109). For those who are interested in this feature of innovation, the work of Brooke (7) shows that one of the characteristics of the Family Centre Project was its gateway capacity for innovations in other welfare programs.

The Family Centre Project was an experimental program which provided facilities and staff to enable sixty poor families to improve their own social and economic condition through a participatory developmental program, rather than one which was palliative and problem-oriented. A suitable building, a multi-disciplinary staff including voluntary workers, and a generous budget, was provided by the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

The Project was organised around the concept of the provision of resources and opportunities of various kinds to the families, the most important of which was a systematic scheme of income supplementation which guaranteed every family a regular and stable income as a prerequisite for development.

The objective of the program was to demonstrate that changes in the social and economic conditions of the families were a pre-condition to changes in their family and societal relationships, and that it was at changes in the structure of society that social work intervention should be directed. The aim was to help the families view themselves as active participants of society, capable of changing themselves and the environment in which they lived. Within the Centre, the families chose and controlled their own activities and, in so doing, learnt the processes and methods of decision making and change.

Throughout the Project, the emphasis was on the redistribution of resources and power within the program, based on the assumption that such changes were necessary in society if poverty was to be eradicated.

The large staff included social workers, youth workers, welfare workers, teachers and untrained staff; however, staff members were not deployed according to their formal disciplines. Instead, each staff member was allocated a 'resource area' of importance to low-income families, for example, employment, housing, income security, in which to develop expertise which was shared with the families as it became relevant to them. In this way, families were free to make relationships with staff as they wished and were not confined to the conventional one-to-one professional and problem-focussed relationship.

Further modification of the traditional staff/client relationship was achieved by organising the new Project around very unstructured activities in which both staff and families took part. These activities were part of the 'open centre' and often took place in the coffee lounge: a neutral setting shared by families and staff. The 'open centre' was probably one of the most important features which changed the traditional client/staff relationship. Learning groups, social events, camps, outings and social action projects also contributed to changing this relationship.

A Committee of Management was set up within six months of the start of the Project. It consisted of a majority of family members, and although its original function was to manage only the activities in the Centre, at the end of the three year period, it had complete authority over all aspects of decision making. Through all these processes, a gradual breakdown of conventional staff/client roles occurred, and a substantial transfer of roles and skills from staff to families.

Over the three year period of the Project, there was also a growing emphasis on welfare rights, self-help and social action.³ An emphasis which was to be the basis of the Action & Resource Centre for Low-Income Families, the innovation which followed the Family Centre Project and which set out to become a political and social base for the low-income people of Victoria. (21)

An Innovation: The Developmental Approach

In a well-established social welfare agency such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence, it was inevitable that the planners of the Project and the people who were to staff it would look to social work for social theory and methods of working. At that time, social workers were the respected professionals in the welfare field, and the expectation of them was that they would know how to implement the concepts and ideas at the base of the Project. Suddenly, experienced social workers were faced with the humiliating knowledge that they knew nothing about redistribution of resources, participation techniques, consumerism, or even how to change social structures, and that on the whole the traditional methods of social work were useless in helping people to gain more control over their own lives. Professional literature revealed that American schools of social work were already facing this problem, as they attempted to prepare students for the new social work demanded by the various poverty and action programs in the 'sixties. Alfred Kahn (16, p.22) exhorted social work to "free itself from dominance by technique and method dimensions", and Arnold Gurin (13, p.191) reported that new social work curricula would "probably be organised along programmatic lines that are related to major service structures", instead of emphasising traditional social work methods.

Reluctantly, the staff faced the knowledge that they would have to devise new methods of work, and that out of practice might come a new theory that would cut across the artificial barriers imposed by 'technique and method dimensions'. In the past, social work had drawn its best theory from practice, and so using the conceptual skills⁴ which their social work courses had provided, they set about developing a new approach to their work. This approach was the developmental approach.

Thus, the developmental approach was the result of the attempt to conceptualise the differences between traditional social work and the practice of the Project, which was based on the assumptions that the causes of poverty lay in the institutional structure of society and not in the personal defects of individuals, and that society's institutions could be changed in order to reduce inequalities and redistribute resources.

In brief, the developmental approach had three major components. Firstly, that social change could only be achieved by any target group if it had four types of power⁵:

- * power over resources;
- * power over relationships;
- * power over information;
- * power over decision making.

Secondly, that the techniques used to obtain these powers were: participation strategies, self-help mechanisms and deprofessionalisation.⁶

Thirdly, that the following elements were essential to the approach:

- * that it was directed towards change in the institutions of society rather than change in individuals;
- * that it was resource-oriented, rather than problem-oriented;
- * that it led to self-actualisation rather than to stigmatisation of the individual;
- * that it was a means of social change and not a means of social control;
- * that choices about style of living were made freely by participation, and not imposed by professionals;
- * that professional workers were accountable to consumers of services and not to professional colleagues;
- * that decisions about services were made by the consumers of services;
- * that individuals determined their own styles of living rather than their styles of living being decided by discriminatory and discretionary provisions.

This developmental approach produced many structures which in themselves were innovative and alien to social work practice, for example, open files, developmental plans for each family, and the use of staff as resources rather than counsellors.⁷

The history of Brotherhood programs shows that before the Family Centre Project, there was little evidence of the developmental approach except perhaps in Family Day Care,⁸ where elements of the approach appeared, but were not conceptualised, or systematically linked together.

The next section of this paper traces the developmental approach through the subsequent years of the Project and examines some of the reasons for its adoption or non-adoption in other Brotherhood programs.

The Internal Impact of the Developmental Approach

Jack Rothman has identified the structural and functional variables involved in organisational innovativeness. (24, pp.457-476). He submits the following series of generalisations⁹ based on these variables and on existing evidence: that organisations with professional staff structures are more innovative than those without; that organisations with specific, strictly enforced rules are less innovative than those which have few rules and which allow employees' discretion; that innovativeness is inversely related to the degree of centralisation; that size of an organisation does not have a consistent relationship with its innovativeness; that organisations which emphasise quality and not quantity of services are more innovative; that organisations with many linkages to external influences are more innovative; that research conducted in applied settings is more likely to be innovative than research conducted in academic settings.

Regarding the Brotherhood as a collection of program organisations or units, it is possible to test the above generalisations on each of them, and to assess the degree of innovativeness of each unit. Such an analysis of current Brotherhood programs reveals a mixed, although predictable, response to the innovation of the developmental approach. The approach is accepted and incorporated into most new demonstration programs, is ignored by existing services, is used uneasily and often unconsciously in new services and the development of Brotherhood policy.

In a paper of this size, it is impossible to discuss all Brotherhood programs and the way in which the above generalisations are applicable to each program. As it has been suggested¹⁰ that the deprofessionalisation technique used in the developmental approach in the Family Centre Project results in an anti-professional position, it may prove useful to the welfare field to examine whether the staff structure generalisation postulated by Rothman did apply in the Family Centre Project.

Rothman's full generalisation is that organisations with professional staff structures are more innovative than organisations without such structures. Further, that innovativeness is directly related to certain structural elements of the organisation's staff complement which can be identified, the most relevant of which are that the degree of innovativeness is directly related to: the degree of diversity of its professional staff, the number of professionals employed in the program, and the use of para-professionals or indigenous staff for the purpose of making programs more responsive to the needs of low-income populations. (24, pp.457-461)

Rothman has some difficulty with the apparent contradiction between some studies which claim innovativeness depends upon the numbers of professional people involved in a program and those studies which claim that the more indigenous the staff, the more innovative the program. He tends to slide out of the dilemma posed by this contradiction by stating that innovativeness depends on professional knowledge in highly technical organisations and on indigenous para-professionals in organisations working with the poor.

One important finding from the evidence of the Family Centre Project and a study of its staffing structure (4) offers an alternative resolution of Rothman's dilemma. This finding is that the creation, effectiveness and maintenance of the developmental approach in the Project did not depend on either a professional or an indigenous staff structure, but on a staff structure composed of both types of workers, working in a collaborative relationship. When the staff structure and the collaborative relationship changed, the Project ceased to be innovative.

The Project, first as the Family Centre Project, and now as the Action & Resource Centre for Low-Income People has been in existence for almost eight years. The first three years began with 18 employed staff, 11 of whom were professional staff of various types, there were no indigenous staff members; the second three years began with three full-time and two part-time professionals and seven full-time and eight part-time indigenous workers; at the time of writing, that is half-way through the third three-year term, apart from two typists, the Project employs only indigenous workers.¹¹

In the first term, there were many innovations including the developmental approach; in the second term, there were fewer innovations and a dilution of the developmental approach. (8) At the time of writing, there is no evidence of new innovations and the developmental approach is no longer a reality, but simply part of Project rhetoric.¹² In other words, there appeared to be a definite relationship between the innovativeness of the Project and the numbers of professional/indigenous workers on the staff.

It has been suggested frequently that it was not through the particular composition of its staff that the Project achieved its innovativeness, but through the specific characteristics of the two people who were the co-ordinators of the Project for the first two terms of its existence. This hypothesis is supported by many of the academics who study innovation, for example, Rothman states:

We have attempted to indicate certain conditions that can facilitate or remove blocks to innovation. Just as with all other generalizations and guidelines, these need to be carried to fruition by a knowledgeable, dedicated, imaginative individual: a practitioner or change agent who is able to delicately fuse science and art in the interests of creating a social order more conducive to humanistic values.
(24, p.483)

The fact that the developmental approach is being used successfully in another demonstration project with a different co-ordinator, but the same admixture of professional and indigenous inputs used in the same way,¹³ tends to disprove the hypothesis that innovativeness relies on a particular sort of personality of experience.

When other program units of the Brotherhood are examined, it soon becomes apparent that the particular type of staffing structure which promotes innovation exists only in recent demonstration programs. Services which were in existence before the creation of the developmental approach¹⁴ have not changed their staffing structures to include a diversity of professionals or to include consumers.

The above discussion has been an attempt to describe the adoption or non-adoption of one innovation - the developmental approach, by the various programs conducted by the Brotherhood by means of analysing each program in terms of one generalisation known to be associated with innovativeness. All of Rothman's generalisations about innovativeness can be applied in this way and when this is

done, it is clear that innovations are not readily adopted unless programs have a highly decentralized administration, have a balance of professionals and indigenous staff, and are demonstration projects. (24, p.479)

Barriers to innovation, which include resistance from lower level workers, clients and referral agencies, are well documented in the literature and can all be identified in various Brotherhood programs. To pursue this topic is fruitless unless programs are not meeting the needs for which they are designed - innovation is not always required or desirable. (23, p.21) Warren observes that it is naive to assume that 'change' and "its partial synonym, innovation" is ipso facto desirable (28, p.52), and further, by distinguishing between adaptive and innovative change, that not all change is innovative. (28, pp.168 & 169)

A more important task and one which has not been pursued to any great extent by innovation theorists is what actually happens to the new idea or package of ideas as it moves, over time, from one program to another. The way in which the developmental approach was diluted over time in the Family Centre/Action & Resource Centre Project has been described above. It is interesting to trace the idea through two completely different programs and suggest some hypotheses about the changes which occurred to it. The two programs concerned are another Brotherhood program, SPAN: A Community Project for Older and Retired People, and the Local Employment Program (LED) which has recently been approved and recommended for funding by the Victorian Employment Committee.¹⁵

A Case Study of the Course of the Developmental Approach in Two Demonstration Projects

There are three propositions which are important to the diffusion and adoption of an innovation. The first is that the diffusion process takes place over time. Rogers and Shoemaker have pointed out that research into the diffusion process has overemphasized the nature of the innovation rather than what happened to it over time. (23, p.18) The second proposition is that the rate of adoption of an innovation may be related to its partialisation, that is, whether or not it is amenable to trial on a partial basis. (22 & 24). The third proposition is that the introduction of 'innovation packages', that is, a bundle of complex ideas, may result in failure when only one of the innovations is adopted, because all of the innovations in the package depend on their interrelatedness for their individual success. (23, p.153)

These three propositions form a background to the examination of the adoption of the developmental approach in the two demonstration programs mentioned above. The developmental approach is regarded as an innovation package composed of three distinct innovations: the four power concept, a particular set of participation techniques used to introduce the four power concept, and a specific value base.

This study attempts to prove that, in the case of the developmental approach, partialisation of the innovation package dilutes the objectives of the approach although it may hasten adoption of individual innovations. The reason for this effect is that the elements of the developmental approach are so intimately interwoven and dependent upon each other that they cannot individually produce the effects of the total package.

A brief description of the SPAN and LED programs and the way in which they adopted all, or part of, the developmental approach follows. An attempt to develop guidelines for practitioners who wish to introduce the developmental approach into welfare programs, concludes the paper.

SPAN: A COMMUNITY PROJECT FOR OLDER AND RETIRED PEOPLE

After a protracted planning period, the SPAN project began in August, 1978. It was based on a proposal developed by the original co-ordinator of the Family Centre Project and accepted by the Brotherhood Board in October, 1977. The need for a demonstration project in the area of services for the aged arose out of a growing awareness that community attitudes to the aged required changing; that existing schemes for the aged were health-oriented - an emphasis which encouraged dependency; and that the idea of a caring community which linked the needs of the young and the old should be fostered.¹⁶

In an attempt to test out the developmental approach in a different setting, the ex co-ordinator of the Family Centre Project developed a set of objectives for SPAN which included all the elements of the developmental approach previously described. In addition, SPAN formed part of the administrative responsibility of the ex co-ordinator who was thereafter responsible for oversight of the project, including the selection of its staff.

The Project is now half-way through its experimental term and is following much the same pattern of development as the Family Centre Project. Consumers of the Project are beginning to be involved in its decision making and day-to-day operation, and skill-transferring activities form a major part of the work of the consumers. One difference between SPAN and the Family Centre Project is that in SPAN, the social action and community education aspects of the program are developing earlier and at a much faster rate than they did in the Family Centre Project.

Two other important differences between the two programs are a matter of emphasis and style, rather than major departures from the developmental approach. Firstly, the four power requirement for social change is implicit rather than explicit in the project and does not form part of the rhetoric of the consumers. Secondly, amongst the techniques used to develop 'the powers', skill transference rather than deprofessionalisation, preponderates. In the Family Centre Project, skill transference was generally regarded as part of deprofessionalisation - a transfer of skills from professionals to consumers; in SPAN, there is greater emphasis on the developmental idea that all people have skills resulting in transfer of skills from one consumer to another as well as from professionals to consumers.

The broad aims of SPAN which are recorded in its First Progress Report (15, p.33) remain firmly based on the developmental approach. These broad aims are:

- * To assist older people to achieve access to the community's resources, to acquire information, to widen their opportunities to form relationships, and to gain access to the decision-making bodies in the community.
- * To raise the consciousness of older people about the issues raised by the ageing process and, hence, enable them to create new roles for older people in the community.

This brief summary of the SPAN project has attempted to show that it uses the developmental approach in its entirety, taking the view that each of its elements is so intimately related to the others that by itself it cannot produce change in the system of welfare services for the aged. In this project, partialisation as a means of improving the rate of adoption has not been accepted.

It is, however, interesting to note that modifications of the SPAN program are now appearing in the community as recreation programs. These programs partialise the developmental approach and concentrate on the skill-transference technique. While they seek to widen the relationship options of older persons, other more important empowering elements of the two broad aims of SPAN mentioned above are neglected, in particular the social action and community education objectives. Thus, although partialisation appears to have hastened the rate of adoption of the developmental approach, it has also distorted its objectives.

THE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This program has an interesting history which in a very short time has passed through four distinct phases. It originated from a study of Australian Manpower Schemes commissioned by the Victorian Department of Social Welfare in June, 1978, and which resulted in a report entitled 'Disadvantaged Workers & Employment: Policies, Programs & Jobs'. (9) The study brief was to "report on existing manpower programs, and to design and develop new approaches to the training and employment of disadvantaged workers affected by long-term unemployment". (9, p.6) Two recommendations of this report were that:

- * National economic policy should be altered so that a first priority is the creation of employment, rather than the reduction of inflation.
- * The Government should create a large-scale job creation program within which the disadvantaged unemployed worker should have priority access. (9, p.178)

This study was published in February, 1979, and one of its results was a Brotherhood proposal for a pilot project in job creation, entitled a Local Employment Program (LEP). This proposal (19) was sub-headed, "A Proposal for a Pilot Project based on a Developmental Program for the Unemployed Disadvantaged Worker" and leant heavily on the developmental approach emphasizing particularly that unemployment was not the 'fault' of individuals, but a function of economic, social and political forces, and that decentralized decision making was a prerequisite for the success of the program. The following paragraph encapsulates the developmental approach as it was used in this proposal:

In contrast, a developmental approach to unemployment focuses on the actual and potential experience, knowledge and skills of the unemployed. It assumes and focuses on potential for growth. It encourages real, as opposed to token, participation in programs. It recognises that unemployed people are as capable of contributing to society as employed people. In brief, the developmental approach recognises that the only real way in which people can contribute to society is through socially useful and personally satisfying jobs. (19, p.13)

The Brotherhood proposal was submitted to the Victorian Employment Committee which at that time was empowered to distribute funds to programs which might ease the unemployment position. The proposal was accepted for funding with some modification which included joint management of the project. Other modifications revolved around, reducing the cost of the project by providing one instead of four staff, and widening the scope of the project to include the creation of jobs in private as well as public industries and in secondary as well as tertiary industry.

The proposal was rewritten to include these changes and was renamed the Neighbourhood Employment Development Program (NEDP). (20) Although the sections of the proposal which described the developmental approach were left intact, the effect of the changes to the proposal modified the approach considerably.

The inclusion of small business and private enterprise as avenues for job creation diminished the role of the project in equalizing job opportunities for disadvantaged workers, the radical reduction of staff diminished the project's self-actualisation potential and dispensed with opportunities for the unemployed to participate in decision making and the control of the project, and the joint management committee increased the centralisation of decision making.

The report of the study of manpower programs and the NEDP proposals were used as resource documents for a Working Party on Local Employment Development set up by the Victorian Employment Committee. This Working Party produced a document entitled the 'Local Employment Development Report' (LED) which set out a proposal (18) for an Employment Development Program which further partialised and distorted the developmental approach. This proposal outlined a program which made no attempt to empower unem-

ployed persons through participation in decision making or to change social structures to increase employment opportunities. In reality, it is an attempt to rationalize and maximise the use of existing local resources by the development of a tripartite bureaucratic structure which centralizes decision making. Although the proposal still includes the idea of emphasizing opportunities for disadvantaged unemployed workers (18, p.20), these ideas were only included at the insistence of several members of the Working Party who were intimately aware of the developmental approach and its objectives.

This summary of the phases through which the innovation of local employment development based on the developmental approach has passed show not only partialisation of the developmental approach, but the way in which that partialisation has distorted the social change objectives of the approach.

Conclusion: Some Guidelines for Action

The importance of innovation is apparent when the following descriptions of the relationship between innovation and social change are considered:

- * When an innovation is diffused and adopted (either symbolically or behaviourally) by a sufficient number of the relevant units in a social system to register an impact (becoming an integrated part of the normative patterns in the system) it is said that social change has occurred in the system under discussion. (29, p.14)
- * The basic dynamic core of social change, the adoption and diffusion processes, evolves around an innovation. (17, p.94)

If the relationship between innovation and social change is properly understood by change agents, fuller knowledge about the attributes of innovations means that they can be manipulated as "entry points in the social change process". (17, p.114) The developmental approach itself postulates that 'power over information' is one of the necessities for social change!

Introducing an innovation to a new or an existing program is an intervention, if the attributes of that innovation are understood and controlled so that the desired social change is achieved, it becomes a successful intervention.

The case studies above suggest several guidelines about the attributes of the developmental approach innovation which may be useful to practising change agents who are seeking to achieve the type of social change which is the objective of the developmental approach, that is change which gives individuals increased control over their own destinies. Whilst these guidelines refer only to the particular innovation under discussion, it is probable that they will be useful to any practitioner attempting to introduce an innovation which is composed of a set of interdependent ideas.

1. The more distant an innovation is from its original source, the more likely it is to be partialised. The dimensions of distance include time, space, divergence of social systems and the frequency of use.
2. Partialisation enables the adoption of parts of an innovative package, but either distorts, or displaces, the objective of the total package.
3. The content of an innovation is perceived differently by its originator and its adopters, consequently those aspects of an innovation considered most important by its originator are not necessarily those considered most important by its adopters.
4. As the diffusion process continues over time, the 'idea' component¹⁹ of the innovation is diluted or otherwise weakened, particularly when it is adopted by non-professional organisations.

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Notes

1. The process of perceiving an old need in a new way has been described as the performance gap and defined as the discrepancy "between what the organization could do by virtue of a goal-related opportunity in its environment and what it actually does in terms of exploiting that opportunity". (29,p.2)
2. The Family Service Project was a previous Brotherhood of St Laurence innovation. The Project was conducted over a period of five years between 1955 and 1959, and consisted of intensive casework with very deprived low-income families, for example, in 1956 seven Brotherhood social workers were working with 80 families. Families were selected from those living in a temporary housing settlement in Camp Pell and were included in the project if their applications for Housing Commission accommodation were rejected on the grounds of rent arrears and/or living standards. The objective of the Project was to help families become eligible for Housing Commission accommodation.

Judith O'Neill and Rosemary Nairn, The Have-Nots - A Study of 150 Low-Income Families, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne, 1972. This was a study of the clients, and the families they represented, who came to the Social Service Bureau of the Brotherhood in 1967.

3. A detailed and succinct account of the Family Centre Project which draws on the many research and progress reports written about it, can be found in Michael Liffman, Power for the Poor, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978. Michael Liffman was one of the two research workers employed in the Family Centre Project.
4. One interesting observation from the Family Centre Project was that of all the 'helping' disciplines represented on the staff, it was only the social workers (three different social work schools were represented) who knew how to conceptualise their practice knowledge.
5. The concept of power and its distribution has received a lot of attention from sociologists and political scientists, but is a relatively new concept for social work. On the whole, at the time of the Project (1972-75), the concept was repugnant to Australian social workers whose training geared them to consensus and helping people to fit into the status quo rather than changing it.

6. A later refinement of the developmental approach adds skill transference to the list of techniques used to develop the four powers.
7. The open file seems to have captured the imagination of the welfare world and 'pops up' all over Australia from Darwin to Perth. A study of the diffusion of this idea could be quite rewarding.
8. Family Day Care is a Brotherhood service for the care of children whose parents work. The service began as a three year pilot program in 1971, but has now been extended to become a regular part of the Brotherhood's service program. The program utilizes the experiences and skills of local mothers who are at home and willing to care for the children of working mothers in their own homes.
9. Jack Rothman's book Planning and Organizing for Social Change collects community-level research findings and organizes them into conceptual categories which are of relevance to practitioners. In collecting this evidence, study criteria related to systematic and controlled investigation of phenomena were employed to select studies.
10. An Australian Association of Social Workers' Conference was held in Adelaide in May, 1977. Action & Resource Centre family members participated in this Conference by a presentation at a Poverty and Family Life session, and by attendance at workshops and plenary sessions. Family members reported to the author that they had been accused of an anti-professional attitude by leading professional social workers attending the Conference. Indeed, anti-professionalism was part of the rhetoric of some family members, but the deprofessionalisation technique was not designed to have this effect and the relationships of the family members and sympathetic professionals in the field were certainly not anti-professional.
11. For the first seven years of the Project, the staff complement included a group of 'support workers'. These were people who were not indigenous, some of them had specific skills such as typing, but they were not trained professionals. The term 'professional' in this paper is used to describe those persons who have been educated in, and have practised, a particular discipline, for example, social work, teaching or youth work.

12. Since writing this paper, an agreement has been reached between the Action & Resource Centre and the Brotherhood of St Laurence that professional input will be provided by the Brotherhood to assist the Centre members to plan its future.
13. The demonstration project referred to in this paragraph is the SPAN project for older and retired people which is described in a later section of the paper. SPAN is not an acronym, but is meant as a symbol of a bridge because it is believed that older people are in a unique position to cross age, sex and class barriers.
14. One service in existence before the creation of the developmental approach was the Material Aid Service, in which the approach was not used. However, the developmental approach did influence a recent evaluation of the service which has resulted in a program change currently being planned which does use the approach.
15. The Victorian Employment Committee was formed in December, 1979, after a Conference called by the Victorian Premier entitled 'Work for To-morrow'. It is a tripartite committee composed of government, employer and trade union representatives whose main objective is to examine employment matters, develop employment policies and recommend them to the Victorian Government.
16. The need for the SPAN demonstration project was first discussed at a Brotherhood Executive Meeting in November, 1976. This paragraph is a summary of the notes taken at that meeting; the full text of the notes can be found in the first progress report of the SPAN project. (15, p.2)
17. Rogers and Shoemaker (23, p.21) say that an innovation may have two components: an idea component and an object component (that is, the material or physical product aspect of the idea).

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