

R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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CITIES ARE CHANGING.

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THE EFFECT OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN LARGE CITIES ARE DISCUSSED. POPULATION GROWTH IN THE LAST FEW YEARS HAS OCCURRED PRIMARILY IN THE SUBURBS. URBAN RENEWAL HAS REALIGNED AND RELOCATED THE RACES AND THE SOCIAL CLASSES, AND FREEWAY CONSTRUCTION HAS CREATED INTERURBAN STRIPS. CASUALTIES OF THESE CHANGES ARE CROWDING THE MIDDLE NEIGHBORHOODS OF THE CITY, WHERE NEW SLUMS ARE DEVELOPING. AS A RESULT, THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS OF FINANCING, DISTRICTING, AND CULTURE CLASH. BECAUSE SCHOOLS CAN NO LONGER RELY ON REVENUES FROM A SHRINKING PROPERTY TAX BASE, INCREASED FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AND/OR STATE INCOME TAXES WILL BE NECESSARY. INTERDISTRICT COMPETITION SHOULD BE ERADICATED, AND MORE THAN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION IS NEEDED TO MINIMIZE THE CULTURE CLASH. (ALTHOUGH THE ARTICLE APPLIES TO LARGE U.S. CITIES IN GENERAL, EXAMPLES ARE DRAWN FROM CONDITIONS IN DETROIT.) THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP," VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1, OCTOBER 1967. (AF)

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1967-68 Theme—Search for Direction in Education

Social Class and Urbanization

Theme Articles

Editorials		
"Search for Direction in Education"	Robert R. Leeper	3
"Cities, People—and Schools"	Muriel Crosby	7
✓The Plight of the Inner-city	Charles Galloway	15 - 05202 E
✓Cities Are Changing	Mel Ravitz	19 - 05204 E
✓Ghetto Schools—An American Tragedy	Clare A. Broadhead	24 - 05203 E
✓How Parents View Urban Education	Morrison F. Warren	28 - 05205 E
✓Decentralization and Urban Schools	Mark R. Shedd	32 - 05200 E
✓Impact of Social Class	Jack Meltzer	37 - 05201 E

Of Special Interest

Self-insight—and the Student Mass In-service Education?	Sheila Schwartz	45
	Harold E. Tannenbaum and Archie Lacey	51
"Osmosis"—The New Supervision The Business Management Role of the Curriculum Director	William C. Jordan	54
	Alfred L. Papillon	63

Features

From the Executive Secretary		
"In-service Education: Balance and Thrust"	Leslee J. Bishop	10
Letters to the Editor		
"Reply to a Review"	Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Engelmann	12
"Response by the Reviewer"	James L. Hymes, Jr.	14
Innovations in Education		
"A Curriculum for Children in the Moon Port Schools"	Floyd W. Hessler	69
Research in Review		
"Research Supplement: An Announcement"	James Raths	80
"A Problem of Validity in Curriculum Research"	Harry O. Hall and Charles Dziuban	81
Selected for Review	Curtis Paul Ramsey, William B. Ragan, Dorothy P. Oldendorf	93
News Notes	Alexander Frazier	105
Index to Advertisers		112

UD 005 204



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The schools alone cannot refashion both people and their environment and instill needed confidence and hope. This is a challenge to the whole urban community.

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AN ELEMENTARY, but essential, postulate for survival in both the natural and social worlds is the need for the organization or the system to adapt to its ever changing environment. History is filled with examples of species, societies and systems that failed to observe this immutable law and became its victims.

In recent years the physical and social environments of the American city have changed profoundly. No longer is the city just the city; it is rather the metropolitan region, or metroplex, vast in expanse, high in population, nucleated administratively. These changes affect the functioning of the city's institutions, including its school system.

To understand the problems confronting the public schools now and in the years ahead, it is imperative to appreciate the changing urban environment.

Perhaps the foremost urban change is population growth. Although the population of the central city itself has stabilized, the population of the urban region has increased sharply since the end of World War II. Growth has occurred primarily in the suburbs, and that is where it will continue in the years ahead. For example, the slightly more than four million people of the Detroit region will become five million by 1975, and will burgeon to seven million by the year 2000.

October 1967

CITIES

ARE

CHANGING

MEL RAVITZ

Councilman, Detroit Common Council
and Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Related to this regional increase and redistribution of population is the fact that the space between metropolitan areas is becoming increasingly urbanized. What has for some time been evident along the north Atlantic seaboard is occurring now with great frequency in many parts of the American hinterland. Extensive interurban strips are developing as one metropolitan area merges with another, especially along major transportation routes.

Another physical fact of the changing urban region is the construction of multi-fingered freeways carving the community into multiple islands, each

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separated from others by broad bands of concrete. This consequence of free-way construction on the cohesion of the urban region has yet to be measured, but there is no doubt that it further subdivides an already anonymous, rootless population.

Casualties of Urban Renewal

Still another relevant change in urban centers is that wrought by the instrument of urban renewal. Dating back to the Housing Act of 1949, with appropriate modifications over the years, Congress has provided the money to clear large blighted tracts of the inner city. In this process of urban renewal, with its attendant displacement, relocation and replacement of population, an ecological revolution has been taking place. An interesting, new realignment of peoples by racial and social class types is resulting both from the pressures of displacement and relocation and from the many careful efforts to maintain lines of segregation.

The traditional, old inner-core slum area is being remade. In Detroit, for example, in addition to the new, middle and upper middle income luxury housing being built in the city's core area, a large medical corridor is under development, the city's major university, Wayne State, is carrying forward a significant University City expansion, and Detroit's cultural center is being revitalized and enlarged. Likewise, several light industrial parks have been built and more are planned.

The people who traditionally have lived in the core of the central city are being displaced. Only a very few low income housing units, either public or private, are proposed for this inner-core

area, and these only belatedly in response to an urgent need for rehousing facilities. To be sure, two of Detroit's largest public housing projects are located in the inner core, but these were placed there originally in order to contain Negroes. In recent years, these two housing projects have had an influx of both senior citizens and married university students.

By and large, the inner city population is still mixed. It contains both large numbers of Negro and white poor who continue to live in the city's remaining blighted structures, as well as a growing number of new residents, of both races, but mostly white, who have moved into the new glass and steel renewal units. The heavily Negro inner city is changing as the new residents move in. In the next few years, if urban renewal and expressway construction continue, and if the new housing built there is mainly for the middle class, the racial and social class population shifts will appear even more pronounced.

The people displaced from the city's inner-core area are moving to the only other place they can go. Cut off from the suburbs as many are by the invisible, but nevertheless very real, segregation line, these casualties of urban renewal and freeway construction are crowding into the middle neighborhoods of the city to find the only housing available to them. There new slums are festering as a result of overcrowding, inadequate code enforcement, lack of recreation sites, and the exploitation of property by some slumlords together with the unfortunate housekeeping habits of some tenants.

Once the center of the white middle class and then, more recently, of the