

SOCIAL SERVICES AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

A topic as extensive as that of social services in the Greater Vancouver Regional District raises a very large number of concrete issues and problems, and any group considering them could take a number of different approaches. Given ~~a~~^{the} particular background and composition of this committee, it seemed appropriate that its first working paper should concern itself with citizen participation in connection with an area of social services that seems at this time to represent a significant, unmet community need.

In presenting the findings of the committee, the material is divided into three parts.

Part I. The first part consists of a first-hand description of direct experiences that members of the public have had in trying to meet and identify community needs in the particular area of community care facilities.. The definition of community needs and of ways of meeting them represents the point ~~in~~^{at} which any consideration of social services must begin. All else is secondary to this, including such legislation, administrative and bureaucratic structures, professional functions and regulations ~~that~~^{as} may develop subsequently to provide for funding, licensing, or the maintenance of standards of care.

Part II. The next portion of the working paper provides a description of the administrative and bureaucratic structures with which citizens were involved in their efforts to meet the social services and community needs outlined in the first part. This material was obtained by direct inquiry after some of the difficulties described in the first section had been discussed at some length in the committee. There is

a strong suggestion that this whole decision-making structure is not always entirely visible to the citizen in the community, that it is difficult at times for the citizen in the community to determine with any real accuracy the functions of various individuals in the structure, and finally that, at least from the citizen's point of view, these structures appear to impede as much as they facilitate.

Part III. The final part is concerned both with drawing out the lessons that may be drawn from the concrete experience of the first two sections, and with a more general discussion of citizen participation in social services. It is intended to provide both a commentary and summary of the material presented in the first two parts as well as a general consideration of the issues we shall place these particular experiences in a more general prospective.