


1970

A Critical Analysis of Selected Problems of a Small All-Negro Town in the Arkansas Delta

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PROBLEMS OF A SMALL
ALL-NEGRO TOWN IN THE ARKANSAS DELTA

ALL-NEGRO TOWN IN THE ARKANSAS DELTA

A Thesis

Presented to the
School of Graduate Studies
Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Lacy Kirk Solomon

May 1970

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PROBLEMS OF A SMALL
ALL-NEGRO TOWN IN THE ARKANSAS DELTA

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isolated the Negro even when he lived in the city limits of a particular city. The fact that Negroes were unemployable, unwell-to-do, and, at times, unskilled in White sections of town, caused them to live in all-Negro sections and subdivisions. The White power structure gave the communities a certain amount of freedom. The Negro business was located in these sections, and Negro politicians were restricted to the area. When the Negro settlement was outside a city limit, it was expedient to incorporate into a town. Incorporation made certain corporate powers available. The state "Turn Back" was a source of revenue.

Much was said about the cause of the underdeveloped condition of Mitchellville. The township was the subject of much criticism on the part of the residents. The white citizenry had a certain amount of the answer "they" who sought only to exploit their fellow townspeople. The citizens themselves were in

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On United States Highway 65 South, forty miles from Pine Bluff, is Mitchellville, Arkansas. All-Negro towns and settlements are predominantly found in the Southern part of the United States. The pattern of Southern segregation isolated the Negro even when he lived in the city limits of a particular city. The fact that Negroes were uncomfortable, unwelcome, and, at times, unsafe in White sections of town, caused them to live in all-Negro sections and communities. The White power structure gave the communities a certain amount of freedom. The Negro business was located in these sections, and Negro policemen were assigned to the area. When the Negro settlement was outside a city limit, it was expedient to incorporate into a town. Incorporation made certain corporate powers available. The state "Turn Back" was a source of revenue.

Much was said about the cause of the underdeveloped condition of Mitchellville. The leadership was the subject of much criticism on the part of the residents. One would often hear of the unknown "they" who sought only to exploit their fellow townspeople. The citizens themselves came in

for criticism. The surrounding White community and the White attitude in general was considered responsible for this underdevelopment.

Mitchellville was very optimistic. The question was, what was the basis of this optimism? Was this hope built on a realistic appraisal of the situation? Was it built on the sinking sand of pity and handouts from the federal government?

Mitchellville's project of improvement and development started with Mrs. Daisy Bates of Little Rock, Arkansas, in connection with the OEO Rural Training Program. Mrs. Bates discussed her plans with Dr. Bob Riley, Chairman of the Political Science Department at Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. The plans for developing Mitchellville were worthy and ambitious. One of the first steps taken was a survey of the town. In order for this survey to be taken it was necessary to have a group of volunteers who were willing to work in an unpleasant situation. Volunteers served better in such a survey because poor people were rather suspicious of those who made a living by "taking care" of them. This attitude seemed especially true with poor Negroes. Such an attitude had its roots in the history of the Negro and his treatment at the hands of persons who were supposed to be concerned about his welfare. Volunteers were necessary because money was not

available for such a survey. The volunteers needed to be able to do the job as professionals.

In a meeting with Dr. Riley, Mrs. Bates found the answer to the pressing personnel need for the survey. Dr. Riley was optimistic about the youth of America, and felt that the university students with whom he worked were willing and even anxious to be of service to a worthy goal. Dr. Riley organized a group of his students for the Mitchellville survey. This group met the qualifications for such a survey. They had that particular adventurous spirit of youth which made them willing to tackle a job that was difficult. They were young and generally conservatively dressed which gave them a better entry into the homes and confidence of some of the residents. They were volunteers, which indicated that they had good motives, since they were not doing the job "for money." The surveyors had certain necessary skills since they were students. Many of them had particular interests in such work.

Dr. Riley felt that the student generation would be interested and desirous of participating in the project at Mitchellville.¹

This conviction was borne out on December 2, 1967, a rainy cold Saturday when twenty-one student volunteers

¹Interview with Dr. Riley, October, 1967. Permission to quote secured.

made the one-hundred mile trip to Mitchellville to take the survey. They certainly could have picked a better day, heavy rain gave way to a cutting cold wind, but the students remained faithful to their tasks and creditably concluded the survey. Several conclusions resulted from this experience: (1) That presented a task and a challenge the student volunteers would find it desirable to be of service when a demonstrated need arose. (2) That student volunteers demonstrated a high degree of resourcefulness and flexibility when dealing with a public that was uncertain of their motives. (3) That college student volunteers have a disarming and helpful attitude which helps to allay suspicion and distrust and facilitates interaction between dissimilar groups. (4) That student volunteers are cheerful, pleasant and seemingly unaware of the difficulties which beset some paid groups or persons who might be known to have a selfish interest. (5) That students volunteer still respond to a constructive chance to serve. They desire to give and be of service.²

After evaluating the results of the survey by the Ouachita students, Mrs. Bates and Dr. Riley were encouraged by the response of the townspeople and their pride and practical attitude. The term "pride" did not mean haughtiness, nor arrogance. This pride was best summed up in a statement by the Mayor of Mitchellville, Charles Kelly, in the Pine Bluff Commercial, January 5, 1969. Mayor Kelly said, "We want our folks to know what it means to try to do the best they can for themselves."³ Yet the problem was, how could this pride be put to work? The survey pointed to a group of

²Daisy Bates, "OEO Bootstraps Project" (Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas, 1968), p. 3. (Unpublished.)

³Pine Bluff Commercial, January 5, 1969.

people who wanted to do things for themselves, but who were unable to do so alone.

Mrs. Bates and Dr. Riley proposed the idea of developing a flexible, informal, in-service experimental program to see how the citizens of Mitchellville would respond to a student-led effort of improvement for the town. The program was to be student-led, but the ideas were to come from the citizens of Mitchellville. Dr. Riley, Mrs. Bates, and the student leaders made a concerted effort to assure the people of the town the opportunity to communicate their needs and desires so that the finished product would be Mitchellville's Program. Soliciting the ideas of the people of the town was vital to the success of the program. This was not some frivolous amenity, because in the final analysis the people of the town determined the success of the program. Since the citizens participated in the plans, they understood them better, identified with them more, and promoted with them with greater vigor.

George A. Works and Simon O. Lesser were of the opinion that rural people could and should participate in the plans for their community:

Rural people themselves . . . must assume primary responsibility for planning the kind of civilization they want and for bringing it into being. The institutions and facilities they establish, develop, and control are more likely to be effective and permanent

than those established by outside sources, and they strengthen the fabric of democracy instead of weakening it, as paternalism does.⁴

In setting up the program a list of objectives were presented as follows:

1. To make an assessment of the problems and needs of a community.
2. Develop meaningful programs and processes to improve the economic conditions of the community.
3. To motivate and to convey a sense of hope and aspiration to members of the local community toward economic self-sufficiency.
4. To arouse and enlist local, state, and national agencies and institutions with the view of making the combined resources of these entities available to Mitchellville for its economic development.
5. To improve educational opportunities, health, housing, recreation, and general cultural conditions of the area.
6. To demonstrate the potential of local state and national agencies in giving practical help to deprived communities.
7. To provide an opportunity for involving institutions of higher learning on real problem situations as a means of having education related to the problems and needs of society.
8. To encourage development of local enterprises and industry as a means of providing employment for the area.⁵

⁴George A. Works and Simon O. Lesser, Rural America Today (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 411.

⁵Daisy Bates, "OEO Bootstraps Project" (Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas, 1968), p. 6. (Mimeographed.)

The whole program was projected to implement the objectives.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. Mitchellville, Arkansas was a small town, noticeably underdeveloped. The purpose of this study was to select a few of the problems of this small all-Negro town, and to critically analyze them as to causes and solution.

The possibility of development in a rural community was of great-concern in this study. The matter of race relations was considered because Mitchellville was all-Negro. The problems of development, with their solution, could be of great importance to other small towns.

Significance of the study. The town of Mitchellville had many obstacles to surmount. In order to overcome the difficulties of development, the problems had to be determined. The fact that many other small towns had similar problems justified a critical analysis of Mitchellville.

The great need for development of the rural areas of America found some expression in Mitchellville. The study of the methods used in Mitchellville helped to show the veracity of some concepts of development. The methods of development brought to light in this study were significant,

and the effort on the part of the federal government to alleviate problems in this small town deserved to be told.

A study of Mitchellville was significant because in it one saw the picture of much of America--deprived of much of its birthright, but still hopeful and proud.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Underdeveloped. The term "underdeveloped" referred to a situation where certain needed and expected facilities did not exist, or was at such a level as to be considered useless. Underdeveloped was a term that applied to inanimate objects such as streets, sewers, street lights, jails, swimming pools, municipal offices, and housing. Certain other nonphysical objects like programs, plans, prospective, and even municipal leadership fell in the category of underdeveloped.

Compensatory education. The term "compensatory education" as used here pertained to the formal and informal programs of discussion and training in areas that were considered to be of primary interest and benefit to youth as well as the whole community. Compensatory education referred to units of education that were designed to offset certain deficiencies in the community. A list of the items discussed indicated areas that were of interest to the adult

community, as well as to the youth. Some items discussed were (1) citizenship responsibilities, (2) sex education, (3) basic art, (4) physical fitness, (5) etiquette, (6) clothing, and (7) child psychology.

Negative forces. The term "negative forces" referred primarily to those attitudes and reactions in interpersonal relationships which were detrimental to amiable personal relationship, and to the success of any constructive program. Some negative forces mentioned were (1) jealousy, (2) fear, (3) pettiness, (4) selfishness, (5) ignorance, (6) poverty, discrimination, (7) racism, (8) substandard housing, and (9) inadequate plans for development.

Positive forces. The term "positive forces" pertained to those forces in interpersonal relationships that were necessary for the success of a program of activities. These were forces of personalities, such as: (1) cooperation, (2) understanding, (3) fair play, (4) loyalty, (5) dedication, (6) federal government assistance, (7) OEO Self-help Project, (8) Ouachita Student Survey, and (9) community action.

Citizenship motivation. The term "citizenship motivation" referred to that activity on the part of the leaders of a community to stimulate the interest and

participation of the community as a whole in community betterment. This motivation came when the community leaders communicated the fact that something needed to be done, something could be done and something was being done about developing the town.

Community improvement. The term "community improvement" referred to the involvement of the people of Mitchellville in the activities of development. The idea of community improvement was seen as being necessary to add a lasting quality to development, regardless of the amount of outside help.

Institutional leadership. The term "institutional leadership" referred to that leadership that was regularly elected or appointed to carry out the vital but routine functions of the institutions of society.

Situational leadership. The term "situational leadership" pertained to that leadership which was necessitated by some unusual situation in a community. Situational leadership is generally not a permanent part of the community.

Black Revolution. The term "Black Revolution" pertained to a drastic change in the attitude of the Negro toward himself and toward the White race.

III. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study consisted of a critical analysis of selected problems of the town of Mitchellville. The fact that so many problems presented themselves made it necessary to select only a few. A preliminary observation of the problems of the town of Mitchellville indicated that they were rooted in events, traditions, and actions of the past. In order to see the problems in the proper perspective, background information was necessary. The background information consisted of a brief history of the settlement and the incorporation of Mitchellville. Some of the vital influences on the community in its early stages were included.

This study sought to deal with some of the basic problems, such as the lack of jobs, streets and substandard housing, as well as citizen motivation. The role of the OEO Project in Mitchellville was of great interest in this study.

An analytical study of the problems of the town was conducted employing the technique of personal interviews, reports, observations, surveys, and research.

The selective chronological pattern of this study began with the settlement of the community, later called

Mitchellville, and continued through the incorporation of the town of Mitchellville to December 1, 1969.

IV. SOURCES AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The sources of information used in this study consisted of books, periodicals, mimeographed materials, newspapers, personal surveys, and personal interviews. The books, periodicals and newspapers came from the Riley Library of Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas; the John Brown Watson Library of A. M. & N. College, Pine Bluff, Arkansas; and the personal library of L. K. Solomon, Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The mimeographed material came from the office of the OEO Self-Help Project at Mitchellville. The survey reports came from the Political Science Department of Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

A lack of printed materials on the subject required that the field-study method be employed. First a general survey was made of the town by the students from the Political Science Department of Ouachita Baptist University. Much information was gained by interviewing the residents in their homes. Observation of the town meetings provided another source of information.

The material of this study was divided into eight chapters. Chapter I presented the introduction, statement

of the problem, significance of the study, definition of terms used, and the delimitations of the study. Chapter II presented the problem of analyzing the town of Mitchellville. In this chapter a brief history of Mitchellville was given, along with some vital influences on the town. Chapter III presented a brief discussion of some general problems that demanded solution in Mitchellville, as well as in other small towns. Chapter IV considered citizenship motivation as to need, technique, and results in Mitchellville. Chapter V presented issues of community development. The primary concern of this chapter was tangible development such as streets, housing, sewage, jobs and annexed land. Chapter VI considered the impact of politics and the different ways that it affected the development of Mitchellville. Both positive and negative forces were emphasized. A brief discussion of law enforcement by a black police force in a black town was also presented. Chapter VII presented the problem related to citizenship development by adult education, compensatory education and recreation. Chapter VIII presented certain conclusions verified by the study, as well as suggested recommendations for solution to the problems.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEMS OF ANALYSIS

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background information on the physical aspect of Mitchellville was found in a report prepared by the Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the Desha County Soil and Water Conservation District on March 15, 1968.

Land Use Plan: A general land use plan has not been developed or filed in the Desha County Courthouse at Arkansas City.

If the town is to progress in an orderly manner, it should have a plan for the best future utilization of land and to improve the circulation within its boundaries.

Open Spaces: As can be observed from the accompanying plat, the housing is scattered, leaving spaces of variable sizes. The largest spaces are located in the northwest corner and in the southwest corner. The scattered development and confused street system will require expensive sewage and utility installations. Therefore, it would be much better to create beautifully landscaped "superblocks," the interior of which could be community space created by pooling together the backyards which could be used to create a varied sequence of areas for active and passive recreation for all ages.

A cluster plan would produce about the same number of lots, with more open space for recreation and pedestrians, less street and utility footage.

The "Public Road" which cuts the town in half and carries a lot of heavy vehicular traffic at the present time could be closed at one end and thereby permit only limited access.⁶

According to this report, Mitchellville measured ninety gross acres.

Industry in Mitchellville was severely limited. The Puryear family of Dumas, Arkansas, owned and operated the Puryear Wood Products Co., Inc., located in the city limits of Mitchellville. The Dumas Grain Dryer was located adjacent to the town. Two grocery stores and a cafe were in operation. -

The public buildings consisted of the city hall, the community center and the jail. The city hall, a small frame building, was dedicated in July, 1965. The only rooms in the city hall were a small waiting room, and the office of the mayor, which served as the office of the city clerk and the council room. The community center was of frame construction with brick imitation siding, and served as a multipurpose building. The sewing classes and art classes were held in the community center. The jail, constructed of cinder blocks, was the only building in town that was not of

⁶Desha County Soil and Water Conservation District, Soil Conservation Service Report (Desha County, Arkansas: March 15, 1969).

frame construction. Since the jail was not equipped to house prisoners, it was used as a storage house.

The Baptist church building was in good condition and of recent construction. The Baptist Association headquarters (tabernacle) consisted of a cafeteria-type structure which was used when the annual session of the Watson Association convened. The wood for the stoves and heaters was secured from the wood mill. The price of wood varied according to the supply and demand, because the majority of the residents of Mitchellville used wood-burning stoves for cooking and heating. Old fashioned kerosene lamps were used by some families. Septic tanks were used by some of the residents, but most families used the old fashioned and unsanitary outhouse. The level of sanitation was even lower prior to the installation of the water department. The residents drank from shallow wells in the vicinity of the privies.

Mitchellville had typical flat delta topography, with a very slight grade of approximately one foot per mile. To the north and northeast of Mitchellville was United States Highway 65. To the west was Old Highway 65. To the south is a strip of land 1,200 feet wide separating Mitchellville from the town of Dumas.⁷

⁷Ibid.

II. THE LOCATION

Mitchellville was located on Highway 65 South in southeast Arkansas, in the Mississippi River Delta. Signs of urbanization were not visible as one approached the town. The city's water tower, with the name Mitchellville written on it, loomed a block off the highway. A wood mill with many stacks of lumber was very much a part of the scenery. A large grain drying plant was visible as one approached Mitchellville from the north.

III. THE POPULATION

A unique fact about Mitchellville was the all-Negro population. According to a 1964 special census, the population was 527 persons. The residents were generally in the low income bracket. Municipal records showed 94 male household heads and 28 female household heads. Forty-two families in Mitchellville had an income of over \$3,000 per year. Sixty-two families were on welfare in some form.

IV. THE HISTORY OF MITCHELLVILLE

Any one who visited Mitchellville and talked to the people about their plans for development became interested in the history of the incorporated town and in the community before incorporation. The question was often asked about

the motive for the move to become a town. The individuals who were moving forces behind the early activities of the town were subjects of discussion. A study of the early forces was especially necessary because of certain implications of collusion between the Puryear Wood Products Company, the moderator of the Watson Baptist Association, Reverend Mitchell (for whom the town was named), and Mayor Charles Kelly.

Historical information on the town of Mitchellville was helpful because of a natural curiosity about an all-Negro town. The implications of collusion were made in a report by Bob Brousseau, Special Technical Assistance Program Specialist, Training and Assistance Division, OEO. The report was made to Theodore Berry by Ira Kaye.

John A. Baker, a native of Arkansas and Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, asked for information on the Mitchellville history. The inquiry was made by the Desha County, Arkansas, Office of Farmers Home Administration.

The community, later to be called Mitchellville, began during World War II. In 1944, the Watson Baptist District Association, under the leadership of Reverend Mitchell, purchased thirty-seven and one-half acres of land from the local school district. The school district received the land from the United States Government following the

deactivation of a National Youth Administration facility. This made the Watson Baptist District Association the largest single land owner in the town. The remainder of the town site was purchased by private individuals. Reverend Mitchell and Charles Kelly were among the private individuals who purchased land in the town site. The town site was subdivided into lots to be sold to Negro families. The size of the lots was 50 by 125 feet. The original price was \$50 per lot. Most of the families who moved to the community came from plantations in Desha and Lincoln Counties. The people who came to the community built or moved small houses on their lots. These people had become too old to be of value on the plantations, or had been displaced as farm laborers by mechanization.

The vision of the leadership of the Watson Baptist Association was observed when it set aside five and one-half acres of the town site for industrial use. The parcel of land for industry remained idle for thirteen years. In 1952 the Puryear Wood Products Company leased the site for a wood products mill. The mill manufactured door and window frames for retail.

An interview with Lynn O. Puryear, Vice-president of the Puryear Wood Products Company, was the source of much of the information on the relation between the company and Mitchellville.

According to Puryear, one reason for locating the mill facility in Mitchellville was its convenience to the Puryear family lumber and building supply retail store in Dumas. Another favorable consideration was an 8,000 square foot concrete slab remaining from the operation of the National Youth Administration facility. The machinery for the mill was set on the concrete slab. The mill started manufacturing hardwood furniture parts. In 1960, the company went through a program of expansion which was financed with private capital. In 1963 another expansion program was financed by a \$180,000 industrial bond issue, authorized by the newly incorporated town of Mitchellville.⁸ Charges of collusion between certain town leaders and the company were made. These accusations were especially forceful since the date of incorporation and the date of the vote on the bond issue were so close together. The charge, however, was denied vociferously by Puryear.⁹

The Watson Baptist Association leased the industrial site to Mitchellville for a sum of \$650 per year. This same

⁸Interview with Lynn O. Puryear, February, 1969

⁹Ibid.

site was leased to the Puryear Wood Products Company for a sum of \$2,044 per month, which was used to service the \$180,000 industrial bond.¹⁰ At first sight this bond issue transaction seemed to be a big undertaking for the inexperienced officials of Mitchellville. A check into the transactions indicated that the bonds were not the responsibility of the town, but of the company. A provision of trust indentured by the National Bank of Commerce of Pine Bluff, Arkansas and the town of Mitchellville indicated that the bonds were not the general obligation of the city, but of the company. This kind of transaction was made possible by Act Nine of the Arkansas General Assembly, approved January 21, 1960.¹¹

The 1957 agreement with the company had a special clause providing for a preference to Negroes in the hiring policy. The Negro preference clause was eliminated from the 1963 leases because of its illegality under civil rights legislation. The clause in the 1957 lease was clearly discriminatory. The irony of the situation was that this discrimination was in favor of Negroes, at least on paper.

¹⁰Desha County, Arkansas Office of Farmers Home Administration, Brousseau Report (Desha County, Arkansas: January, 1968).

¹¹Ibid.

On What led the officials of the company to include a clause in its lease that would discriminate in favor of Negroes? Was the Mitchellville site valuable enough to cause a White company to write into the lease a clause that would discriminate in favor of Negroes? Reverend Mitchell indicated in an interview that he suggested this clause.¹² A check into the provisions of the 1957 lease showed that no legal provisions were made to enforce the discriminating clause. The fact that the payroll carried twenty-nine Negroes and twenty Whites indicated that this clause was not just propaganda. This transaction anticipated the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in its effort to get more employment for Negroes.¹³

Desha County records showed that Mitchellville was incorporated on May 24, 1963, upon petition of thirty residents of the community. Why did these thirty residents take it upon themselves to petition for incorporation?

¹²Interview with Reverend John Mitchell, July, 1969. Permission to quote secured.

¹³Any effort to give preferential treatment to Negroes, no matter what the reasoning, would encounter stiff opposition from many people. A business magazine Nation's Business took issue with such practices in an article entitled "Where Civil Rights Law Is Going Wrong," November, 1965.

On the basis of interviews the town was incorporated for the following reasons:

1. Publicity value of a predominantly Negro owned and governed town,
2. To enable the community to function as a municipality,
3. Provide citizenship training to the residents and give them the benefits of services ordinarily provided by a municipality, and most importantly,
4. Make the town eligible to receive state "turn back" out of state revenue.¹⁴

Records on file at the City Hall in Mitchellville showed "turn-back" from the state as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Street Fund</u>	<u>General Fund</u>
1964	\$1,395.53	\$ 727.67
1965	4,566.05	1,433.10
1966	5,270.00	1,727.46
1967	6,680.20	1,959.65
1968	3,395.54	1,238.65

A franchise tax against Arkansas Power and Light Company amounted to \$588.42 in 1967. Occupation Tax on \$50,000 per year was levied against Puryear Company, 5 per cent on the cafe, and 10 per cent on Pitts and Kellys Grocery Stores.¹⁵

¹⁴Desha County, Arkansas Office of Farmers Home Administration, Brousseau Report (Desha County, Arkansas: January, 1968).

¹⁵Daisy Bates, "OEO Bootstraps Project" (Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas, 1968), p. 3. (Mimeographed.)

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS DEMANDING SOLUTIONS

I. BASIC PROBLEMS OF SMALL TOWNS

A problem of the small town was identity. The small town had to recognize the vital place it played on the American scene, as a small town; a small town that tried to act like it was a large city would fail to appreciate its possibilities, and would "become frustrated because of its size."¹⁶ The small town searching for identity had to recognize its vital relation to the countryside.

The rural progress cause hangs on the fortunes of the little towns. Their interests need radical redirection countryward. Let the town become rurally minded and it will tap fresh streams of purpose and find vast reinforcement for its own struggle. The big, romantic, beautiful country, the home of most of the American people, the cradle of its ancient virtues, the seedbed of social permanencies and strength, the source of daily bread for us all--the country is infinitely worth redeeming.¹⁷

The small town played a vital role in giving leadership to the rural areas around it, and thereby enriched the total quality of America.

¹⁶Harlon P. Douglas, The Little Town (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 48.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 48-49.

Lloyd Cook presents most of the elements of the small town when he defines it as

. . . a population aggregate, inhabiting a contiguous territory, integrated through common experience, possessing a number of basic service institutions, conscious of its local unity, and able to act in a corporate capacity.¹⁸

The basic problems of Mitchellville were the same as other small towns. The differences were that the town was all-Negro, and the intensity of the problems were multiplied. The problems were multiplied by, what the Johnson Commission on Violence called, a "racist society."¹⁹ Small all-Negro towns like Mitchellville were affected by the Black Revolution in a negative way.

Ironically, the Black Revolution was not a boon to the all-Negro town. The Black Revolution was basically a protest against the "establishment." No town can be successful without an establishment. The Black Revolution made the task of the Negro town official more difficult because it demanded that the black official deliver the results of an establishment even as he attempted to destroy it. The Black Revolution did not take pride in the all-Negro town

¹⁸Lloyd Allen Cook, Community Backgrounds in Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938), p. 26.

¹⁹President Lyndon B. Johnson's Commission on Violence in the United States, 1968.

because this was looked on as an imitation of the White man's procedures.

The officials of Mitchellville and other all-Negro towns were forced to work harder to make significant accomplishments, since they were thrown into the limelight by the Black Revolution. Such an environment was discouraging to some all-Negro towns.

An article in the Pine Bluff Commercial, January 5, 1969, indicated that the "soul" towns of the nation were losing heart. A quick glance was taken of six all-Negro towns: (1) Mount Bayou, Mississippi; (2) Hubson City, Alabama; (3) Mitchellville, Arkansas; (4) Howardville, Missouri; (5) Kinloch, Missouri; and (6) Idlewild, Michigan.²⁰ In the article one noticed great pride on the part of the leaders of the towns, a sense of hope, big problems in housing and jobs, and an absence of civil right demonstration, as one commonly thinks of them.

Wayland J. Hayes, in his book The Small Community Looks Ahead, listed a number of problems that applied to Mitchellville.

1. Indifference of the population to group and community relationships.

²⁰Pine Bluff Commercial, January 5, 1969.

2. A minimum of communication between people, with few visits and little conversation. No group meetings or newspaper, and few or no radios.
3. Low morale. There is little or no sense of the past, and certainly no pride in past achievements or much loyalty to the community.
4. No leadership and no group basis for development of leadership.
5. No social services or agencies, such as churches and schools.
6. Social groups other than families nonexistent.
7. Illiteracy widespread.
8. Belief in magic and superstition general.
9. Natural resources are undeveloped and agriculture is crude or virtually nonexistent. Since there is a low cash income, the inhabitants rely for subsistence mainly on a minimum of vegetable gardening, hunting, fishing, picking wild berries, nuts, fruits and other products of woods and fields.
10. Squatter or tenant property relations, accompanied by disinterest in ownership of personal property and careless use of land.
11. No political awareness or activity.
12. Little interest in remunerative work, consequently the people are slovenly, apathetic and inefficient.
13. Little recreation--few or no community facilities for the use of leisure time.
14. Relatively little disease, delinquency, crime, etc., because of isolation, immobility, and inactivity.

15. Little or no sense of art--practically no handicrafts, or group esthetic expression.²¹

II. SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

Shortly after the survey was made by the students from Ouachita, Dr. Riley and Mrs. Bates discussed goals. A representative of the Farmers Home Administration told the people of Mitchellville what his agency could do to help solve the housing problem. His solution was to provide low cost housing loans which could be paid back in small monthly notes. Mrs. Bates was careful to point out that, "when working with the poor, you can't promise them something you can't deliver."²²

Setting realistic goals minimized the possibility of the citizens being frustrated because of failure to reach a goal that was set too high in the first place. Realistic goals referred to possible and necessary goals. Setting a goal that was easily attainable, but unnecessary, was seen as an unrealistic goal. The set goals of the Mitchellville project were:

1. An assessment of the needs and problems of the community.

²¹Wayland J. Hayes, The Small Community Looks Ahead (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), p. 11.

²²The Arkansas [Little Rock] Gazette, January 7, 1968.

2. Providing education and training consistent with the needs of the community.
3. Providing for recreation, physical fitness, and health.
4. Providing information on the practical every day problems of members of the community both young and old.
5. Improvement of housing, sewerage, streets, and sanitation.
6. Cultural enrichment locally as well as through field trips to the Art Center, and other relevant places.
7. Encouragement in developing local enterprises and industry as a means to employment.
8. Development of vocational skills through referrals if not practical to develop locally.²³

III. SETTING PRIORITIES

The needs at Mitchellville were so numerous that one had an inclination to try to do everything at first. A pressing need existed for jobs, housing, sewer, streets, recreation, city plans, information on city government, finance, and citizenship motivation.

The survey by the students from Ouachita substantiated the presence of the needs. The order in which the different problems were attacked was determined from a practical standpoint. The first sign that something was about to

²³Daisy Bates, "OEO Bootstraps Project" (Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas, 1968), p. 7. (Mimeographed.)

begin was the setting up of recreational equipment. Good will was generated in the community by this gesture because it met an obvious need. When the entree was assured, the project leaders directed their attention to citizenship motivation. The residents had lived in the underdeveloped town for so long that they were unmotivated. The citizens were led to see that their town needed to be developed and that it could be developed.

The job and housing problem received special attention after the citizens were motivated to become involved in the efforts of improvement. The streets needed improvement. The leaders of the project decided that the sewer needed to be installed before improving the streets. The streets would have to be torn up to install the sewer; this would have been a waste of time and money.

IV. CLARIFYING RELATIONSHIPS

Another problem in Mitchellville was certain divisive questions. A real need existed to set the record straight on some of the questions. In order to clear up some of the questions, interviews were held with Mayor Kelly, Mrs. Bates, Will Pitman, Mrs. Ada Belle Johnson, Len Gordon, Reverend Mitchell, and Jerry Brasfield.

Several versions of how Mitchellville came to the attention of Mrs. Bates were heard. The talks with

Mrs. Johnson, an active NAACP member, and Mrs. Bates showed that the NAACP was not called in because the citizens felt that they were being exploited by the city fathers or any one else.²⁴ The NAACP was called in to help Alex Dobbs in his campaign for mayor, which he lost.²⁵ A NAACP chapter was organized in Mitchellville by Alex Dobbs in the winter of 1966 because this was the condition on which Mrs. Bates agreed to speak.²⁶

Mrs. Bates' arrival produced many surprises. The first sight of the town caused a feeling of disgust in Mrs. Bates. This feeling was increased when her automobile was bogged down in the muddy streets. The speech that followed was not about the NAACP; it was about Mitchellville and its run-down condition. She pointed her finger, not at the city officials nor the "White devils" but at the citizens.²⁷ The speech conceivably cost Alex Dobbs the election, but the encounter led to the OEO self-help project, with Mrs. Bates, as director.

²⁴Interview with Mrs. Ada Johnson, November, 1969. Permission to quote secured.

²⁵Interview with Mrs. Bates, November, 1969. Permission to quote secured.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

The amount of cooperation between Mrs. Bates and certain personalities in and around the town was the subject of discussion. From all indications, observations and interviews, Mrs. Bates and the Mayor worked together. This does not mean that they did not disagree on many points. They worked together because each felt that the other was concerned about the town. Mayor Kelly sold the land to the city for the community facility building.²⁸ While no income tax return form of Mayor Kelly was found, the opinion of the interviewees was that his income was considerably less than the \$10,000 that some have claimed.²⁹

Details of the relationship between Mitchellville and the Puryear Wood Products Company were given in Chapter II, but the status of the \$180,000 bond needed clearing up. The bond was paid off by the company before it left Mitchellville.³⁰

A conflict in leadership existed between Mrs. Bates and Reverend Mitchell. Both personalities expressed disapproval of the other's technique and motive. Mrs. Bates

²⁸Interview with Gus Carrol, October, 1969.

²⁹Interview with Mrs. Bates, 1969.

³⁰Interview with Mayor Kelly, July, 1969.

³¹Interview with Mrs. Bates, 1969.

stated that, "the White power structure controlled Mitchellville through Reverend Mitchell."³¹

CHAPTER IV

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The formation of any project in Mitchellville required a motivated citizenry. An informed people should be a motivated people. In order to keep the citizens informed, meetings were held in the community center. The center consisted of one room plus a storage area. The room was an abandoned store which was rented from a private individual. Attendance was small at first, but eventually the center was filled to capacity. The meetings enhanced the confidence of the people in the leaders and the project itself.

The nature of the open meetings added to the motivation of the people. The meetings were not pre-planned by the city administration or by the leaders of the WDC projects. Everybody could participate in the discussion and plan. The resulting spontaneity of the meeting motivated confused participants. The motivation of some present was to get projects on the persons in office. The "throw-the-bomb-out" slogan was present but was not very strong. Even since the project had seemed most discreetly, the over-all

³¹Interview with Mrs. Bates, 1969. to make Mitchellville a better place.

CHAPTER IV

CITIZENSHIP MOTIVATION

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The nature of the town meetings added to the motivation of the people. The meetings were not pre-planned by the city administration or by the leaders of the OEO project. Everybody could participate in the discussion and plans. The resulting spontaneity of the meeting sometimes confused participants. The motivation of some present was to put pressure on the persons in office. The "throw-the-bums-out" element was present but was not very strong. Even when the situation seemed most disorderly, the over-all purpose of the meetings remained secure--to make Mitchellville a better place.

Citizenship motivation came in Mitchellville when the residents were able to see clearly that something needed to be done about developing their town, and that something could be done. The leaders of the OEO project followed a suggestion by E. Gordon Ericksen in his book Urban Behavior. Ericksen suggested that

The job of city planners in a democracy is to help the citizens choose more wisely by informing them of the implications and mutual compatibility of the various goals that are being considered.³²

Information on city government was a pressing need of the administration of Mitchellville as well as the citizens. This information increased the efficiency of city government as well as the general interest and appreciation of city officials.

Information was needed to complement the enthusiasm and determination of the people of Mitchellville. The lack of information had its repercussions in the area of personal relations between the town leaders and some of the residents. An interview with Will Pitman, owner and operator of Pitman Grocery Store in Mitchellville, indicated the strain on the interpersonal relations. Pitman stated that "city hall was not open in its dealings, nor is it concerned about

³²E. Gordon Ericksen, Urban Behavior (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 444.

the citizens."³³ He further stated that city hall treated the residents like White city officials generally treated Negroes.

Some of the residents could see that certain goals were not being reached even though they had no more information than the town leaders. Certain resources were available to the town, but were not used because of lack of information on the part of the town leaders. According to the Arkansas Gazette, January 7, 1968, an examination of the municipal status revealed that "Mitchellville was taxing its citizens only one-half of what it was permitted to tax by state law."³⁴

In order to facilitate the dissemination of information on city government, Dr. Riley organized and taught a class in city government. Although the class was open to anyone, special attention was given to training the city officials in the skills of city government. The class was successful because the need was recognized by the members of the community themselves. Mayor Kelly, at eighty-nine years of age, would have to retire soon. The plan to instruct the

³³Interview with Will Pitman, November, 1968. Permission to quote secured.

³⁴News item in the Arkansas [Little Rock] Gazette, January 7, 1968.

young adults in the procedures of city government was worthy. Many things were taught, such as city taxation, millage assessment, tax collection, duties and responsibilities of the mayor and city council, and selection of committees.

The class was actually a remedial class in city government, and played a vital role in the motivation of the citizens. The class served the cause of citizenship motivation in at least four ways: (1) it served as a unifying influence for the town, (2) it served to identify the citizens with each other and with the town officials, (3) it helped point out town goals, and (4) it made necessary information available for more efficient city government.

The unifying influence of the class made the effort worthwhile. The town was small, all-Negro, underdeveloped, and poverty stricken. All of the residents needed to work together toward a common goal; yet this unity of purpose was not present. The reason for this lack of unity was not easy to identify. Some felt that the residents were simply being exploited by some of the Negro leaders and/or Whites. Others believed that Negroes were just unconcerned. The most compelling reason was that no goal or long-range plan for the town had been set by the town fathers. This lack of planning was caused, to a great extent, by a lack of information on what goals were to be set. In coming together for

the study the members of the class were placed in a real situation where they had something in common. All of them were seeking to learn about municipal government. The class was run on a tight schedule, but time was allotted for members of the class to participate in the discussion. A real effort was made by the class leader to help the class see how the subject matter related to their own town.

As the class progressed some of the opposing factions came to the realization that all the citizens of Mitchellville had the common problem of an undeveloped town, and the common goal of improvement. The fact that any citizen could come to the class was helpful because it helped residents of the town to identify with the town officials. This kind of identification was needed in order for the officers of the town to get the necessary support in their efforts to improve the town.

The class served not only as a unifying influence, and a force for identification; it also pointed out some possible goals for the town, along with ways of reaching the goals.

Some important items from the subject matter of the class were presented in order to show their relevancy to Mitchellville.

Dr. Riley used the Handbook for Arkansas Municipal Officials in teaching the class in city government. Much of

the information in the handbook was of a general nature and required specific application to the Mitchellville situation. The Police Department, the Fire Department, and the Health Department were given special attention.

After listing and giving the general responsibilities of the different departments, Dr. Riley sought to point out some specific duties. This information was necessary because some of the officers were not aware of their duties. Since officials were unaware of their duties, there were occasions when they overstepped their authority, and other times when they failed to carry out a responsibility. When the citizens were informed of the duties and powers of the officials, they were more willing to see these duties and powers in operation.

The question of power and authority arose in Mitchellville. Who had the authority to do what? Attention was given to the power and authority of the city officials as well as the corporate authority of cities. An attempt was made to show the office of the mayor in its proper setting, according to the Handbook for Arkansas Municipal Officials. The office of the mayor was shown in its working relation with the city council, the city recorder (clerk), the chief of police, the treasurer, the city marshal, and other appointed or elected officers.

Elections are exciting events to many people. For some reason they seem to stir the feeling of even a placid person. No attempt was made to give the reason for the dynamic nature of elections, but one was reminded that the excitement of elections elsewhere was seen in Mitchellville. In a small town like Mitchellville sometimes elections were the most exciting events of the year. Because of the importance of elections in a democracy, the class spent some time on elections procedures and presented some Arkansas Statutes on elections.

Determining the most significant part of the class on city government was difficult. The training in the conduct of the council meetings, both closed and public, proved to be very helpful. One of the most often heard complaints about the council was that it held its meetings in secret and was not willing to keep the citizens informed of what was being discussed. This contention between the council and the other residents of the town was creating an atmosphere of division and misunderstanding.

Because of the extreme importance of the procedural rules in any organization, special attention was given to this information in the training session. The rules were simple because the council was not a place for complex parliamentary procedures. The mayor was advised to make every effort to keep his rulings simple.

Several reasons were given for incorporating Mitchellville. Interviews with residents of the town and accounts of other discussions, indicated that one reason for incorporating the community was to make it possible for the community to operate as a municipality.³⁵ With this reason for incorporation in mind, Dr. Riley led the class in a discussion of the general powers of cities and towns. The discussion of city powers sought to show the privilege and the responsibility of city power. All the powers and duties could not be covered in the class, but fundamental matters were presented.

The need for public and private buildings in Mitchellville was great. Prefabricated housing was an idea that received considerable support. The advisability of public housing was an item of discussion. Because of the need for buildings, and the plans for buildings, it was necessary to discuss building regulations for municipalities.

Mitchellville had no paved streets but there was a desire and plans to lay-out and pave the streets. A master plan of the town was prepared with all the streets named. More was said about the master plan for the streets in Chapter VIII. According to the Handbook for Arkansas

³⁵Desha County, Arkansas Office of Farmers Home Administration, Brousseau Report (Desha County, Arkansas: January, 1968).

Municipal Officials, the city has control over its streets:

They (municipal corporations) shall have power to lay off, open, widen, straighten and establish, to improve and keep in order and repair; and to light streets . . . to assess and collect a charge on the owner or owners of any lot or land, or on lots or lands through or by which a street, alley or public highway shall pass, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of construction, and improving, repairing or lighting such street, alley or public highway, to be in proportion to the value of such lot or land as assessed for taxation under the general laws of the state. (Arkansas Statutes 19-2313)³⁶

Speaking of master plans required discussion of eminent domain. When this term was understood it aroused a bit of concern. The residents realized that in order to get the necessary land for the proposed public buildings, it was possible to acquire their land by eminent domain. The discussion of eminent domain involved the Puryear Wood Products Company more than any other property owner. A statement from the handbook on this very important municipal power was necessary.

The right of eminent domain is granted to municipal corporations and to counties to condemn property for the purpose of parks, boulevards and public buildings; and, in case of municipal corporations, such parks and boulevards may be situated at a distance of not exceeding five (5) miles from the corporate limits and shall not remain under the jurisdiction of the municipal corporation. The proceedings for such condemnation

³⁶Handbook for Arkansas Municipal Officials (North Little Rock: The Arkansas Municipal League, 1966), pp. 165-169.

shall be in accordance with Arkansas Statutes 35-902-35-907. (Arkansas Statutes 35-901)³⁷

The general welfare of a city depends to a great extent on its utilities. The health conditions are very much related to the effectiveness of certain utilities such as the water supply and the sewer system. The economic value and comfort of a town is enhanced by its public utilities. Fire prevention and control requires a good water system.

The utilities of Mitchellville were not well developed. The water system was satisfactory, but there was no sewer system, and no natural gas line. Because of the importance of utilities, the class in Municipal Affairs considered utilities.

Mitchellville was like New York City in that it did not have enough revenue to do what it needed to do. The financial situation was unfavorable for several reasons. The people of the town were generally poor, and therefore the revenue base was not favorable. A survey of Mitchellville by the students of Ouachita's Political Science Department revealed that 45 out of the 135 families earned less than \$1,000 a year.³⁸

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Daisy Bates, "OEO Bootstraps Project" (Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas, 1968), p. 8. (Mimeographed.)

The town leaders recognized the need for more revenue from the very beginning. This was indicated in the reasons for incorporating. They wanted to benefit from the state "turn back."³⁹ Because of the general interest in money matters, the discussions on city finance were well attended.

The fiscal affairs of counties, cities and incorporated towns shall be conducted on a sound financial basis: No City Council, Board of Aldermen, Board of Public Affairs, or Commissioners of any contract or make any allowance for any purpose whatever or authorize the issuance of any contract or warrants, scrip, or other evidences of indebtedness in excess of the revenue for such city or town for the current fiscal year.⁴⁰

³⁹Desha County, Arkansas Office of Farmers Home Administration, Brousseau Report (Desha County, Arkansas: January, 1968).

⁴⁰Handbook for Arkansas Municipal Officials (North Little Rock: The Arkansas Municipal League, 1966), p. 27.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Plans for development of the Mitchellville Community took several items into consideration. Most of the community units needed improvement. George Atteberry, John L. Auble, and Elgin F. Hunt in their book, Introduction to Social Science, state that "city planning, like planning in general, must consider all phases of urban life, physical, industrial, commercial, social, and psychological."⁴¹ Community development definitely includes those material and visible aspects which enable the community to control and develop its land area and resources, but more emphasis is being placed on intangible social values. Community development depended on certain principle divisions of an overall city plan.

(1) A plan for the regulation of traffic and transportation means, . . . (2) a street plan regulating the types, . . . and uses of streets; (3) a zoning plan which involves designation and restriction for land and building use; (4) plans for the design and construction of private and public buildings; (5) plans for recreational facilities . . . ; (6) financial plans

⁴¹George Atteberry, John L. Auble, and Elgin F. Hunt, Introduction to Social Science (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 606.

involving special assessments, bonds, issues, and anticipated revenues and expenditures; (7) plans for public services and their use including utilities, waste disposal and water supply.⁴²

The Mitchellville plan for community development followed the suggestion of Atteberry, Auble, and Hunt.

I. PUBLIC WORKS

Streets. The need for streets was recognized by the community. When it rained, a car could not operate effectively in the mud. The residents could not walk in the streets without the risks of losing a shoe. When the students first came from Ouachita, they found deep ruts in the muddy streets. In order to help preserve the streets, the city prohibited large trucks from coming through the town. Work on the streets was held up until the sewer installation was completed.

The streets of Mitchellville were not paved, named, nor laid out in any plan. A street plan called for naming the streets and laying them out in order, where possible. The opinion of the planners was that the streets should not be curbed before the installation of the sewer system, since this would damage the streets.

⁴²Ibid., p. 609.

Fire station. When Dumas withdrew its fire protection from Mitchellville, it was necessary for a fire department to be set up in Mitchellville. Plans were made to build a fire station in the community facility building. The fire station was to consist of space for one pump truck and facilities for volunteer fire fighters. The station was to be of brick veneer construction.

II. PUBLIC SAFETY

Police department. At a time when "law and order" was the slogan of the day and the charge of police brutality echoed in one's ears, inquiring about law enforcement in Mitchellville was axiomatic.

No prisoner had ever been detained in the jail since its construction in 1964, not because the citizens of Mitchellville were so law abiding, nor because the officers of the law were lax in their duties, but because the jail was not completed. The only building in town of concrete construction did not have the necessary heating, lighting, nor bathroom facilities because of a lack of funds.

In an interview the town's policeman stated that there had been no major crime committed in Mitchellville. The main problem of the officer was to curtail wreckful driving and drunkenness. When a lawbreaker was caught, the

policeman used the jail at Dumas to detain him. Another matter of great concern for the policeman was the general attitude of the residents toward him in the performance of his duties. The police officer indicated that he did not get the cooperation of witnesses when he apprehended a law violator. The negative attitude toward the officer was more frustrating to him than the long and lonely hours of his work or the poor pay that he received.

Interviews with some of the residents indicated a lack of respect for the policeman. The statements about the officer were not hostile, but gave the impression of an uncooperative spirit. They were not sympathetic with the officer's attempt to cut down on speeders, especially if the speeders were youngsters.

Fire department. An article in The Dumas Clarion, February 14, 1968, indicated something of the problems concerning neighboring communities. The Dumas City Council met on Tuesday night, February 13, 1968, to discuss and make plans for the use of its fire equipment. The council had a request from Mitchellville that the city of Dumas enter into contract with it to provide fire protection. After discussing the request the City Council passed resolution #137, as follows:

Whereas, there has been increasing demands upon the fire fighting equipment of the city of Dumas by the town of Mitchellville and

Whereas, the property of the citizens of Dumas is left unprotected when the fire fighting equipment of this city is out of the corporate limits for extended and frequent periods of time, and

Whereas, the town of Mitchellville has requested that the city of Dumas enter into a contract with the Town of Mitchellville to provide said town with fire protection, and

Whereas, it is determined that the city of Dumas does not request sufficient fire fighting equipment or personnel to provide fire protection to another incorporated town, now

Therefore, be it resolved that the city of Dumas declines the request of the Town of Mitchellville and be it further resolved that the city of Dumas will not hereafter provide routine fire protection for any other incorporated town or city.⁴³

The reaction to the denial of services by the Dumas City Council ranged from acceptance to the feeling that Dumas was not cooperative. Both attitudes were understandable. The fact that Dumas was located so close to Mitchellville led one to think that Dumas was under some obligation to enter a favorable contract to furnish fire protection to the town of Mitchellville. Alternatively the resolution of the City Council of Dumas was considered necessary because of limited resources. A statement by Mayor Free of Dumas

⁴³The Dumas Clarion, February 14, 1968.

gave some idea of the areas of cooperation between the towns.

Free said that residents of Dumas have encouraged the self-help project "because the people of Dumas are interested in the well-being of Mitchellville citizens." Free said Mitchellville residents patronize Dumas merchants and that in return for their business, the merchants have shown an interest in helping the Negroes.

"United Dollar Stores, Inc., which is located here, has definitely lended a helping hand to the people of Mitchellville," Free said. "Besides donating books and pamphlets to their new library, the company has given Negroes here a chance to work up to a position with the company . . . not just because they're qualified in what they're doing.

"This is one way the OEO project will benefit Mitchellville citizens. When others see how people here in Dumas, and all over Southeast Arkansas, are willing to give them a chance, let them earn a living, they're gonna want to learn and develop their basic skills.

"People here in Dumas are 100 per cent behind the project at Mitchellville."⁴⁴

Mitchellville used the Dumas city jail, post office, and public schools. The fact that Mitchellville was all-Negro had little effect on the problem of adjacent communities.

Dumas withdrew its fire protection from Mitchellville, making it necessary for the town to organize a fire department. The Special Contributions Fund of the NAACP made a valuable contribution when it put the plight of Mitchellville before the Vulcan Society, an organization of black

⁴⁴The Pine Bluff Commercial, March 16, 1969.

firemen of New York City. The Vulcan Society agreed to adopt the Mitchellville Fire Department and "to raise funds to purchase a fire engine and the other equipment needed to provide fire protection for the town."⁴⁵

III. UTILITIES

Sewer. A community meeting was called after the Ouachita student survey to discuss the problems, to recognize the needs, and to set goals. The surveyor's reports were very helpful because these pointed out the needs of the community. The discussion at the city hall indicated that the citizens concurred with and were aware of the needs found by the students. This meeting did much to facilitate the spirit of cooperation between the citizens and the project leaders.

From the city hall discussion the conclusion was drawn that the most pressing need was a sewer system. The citizens used outdoor toilets and spetic tanks. As a result, raw sewage flowed into some of the ditches that bracketed the town's unpaved streets.

The cost of an adequate system was estimated at between \$80,000 and \$90,000, which would have been out of

⁴⁵Letter to Mrs. Bates, Director of Housing Program of the NAACP Special Contribution Fund, from William R. Morris, September 15, 1969.

reach for the people of Mitchellville. The town installed a water system in 1963 by making a loan of \$43,500 and getting a Federal Grant for the same amount. This transaction strained the municipal resources.⁴⁶

Mrs. Bates suggested the possibility of getting a federal grant for the sewer system; this avenue was followed. Plans were made to install a sewer system with the aid of a federal grant of \$52,000, matched with a federal loan of \$52,000. Project planners agreed that the sewer system needed to be installed before any work was done on the streets. Dr. Riley summed up this view when he said,

These people need to get their sewer in first, if possible, because if they put their streets down and then when they get enough money for the sewerage system, the streets would have to be torn up, and they can't afford to waste anything.⁴⁷

Communication. Citizens of Mitchellville had to petition the Lincoln-Desha County Telephone Office (Allied) to get telephones installed in the town. After repeated applications, telephones were installed. The telephone company gave the impression of delaying installation off

⁴⁶Desha County, Arkansas Office of Farmers Home Administration, Brousseau Report (Desha County, Arkansas: January, 1968).

⁴⁷Bates, op. cit.

when it told the applicants that the telephones would be installed at a time without doing so.

Mrs. Bates was able to get a telephone for her OEO Office only after the Puryear Wood Company relinquished it to move to Dumas. Mrs. Bates did much to help the town get telephones. The petition of twenty-five citizens was very helpful in getting telephones installed in February, 1969. Before installation each person had to make a deposit for one year's service. This deposit could be used for the second year's telephone bill. The conditions surrounding the installation of telephones at Mitchellville occasioned much speculation concerning equal opportunities for all communities.

IV. JOBS

Much was said about the need for jobs, the possibility for jobs and the effort made to secure these jobs. The jobs for the citizens had to be oriented to the rural area and the unskilled, since the people of the town admittedly were deficient in many skills. The students of Ouachita organized an Economic Development Committee.

This committee was basically concerned with bringing industry into Mitchellville. An effort was made to encourage local industry to take an active part in the development.

However, the conclusion was reached that outside industry was necessary.

The residents of Mitchellville expressed in words, and actions their readiness to learn a trade in preparation for a job. The desire of the residents to prepare for jobs and their determination for community improvement was a valuable asset for any industry.

The Economic Development Committee was active in its search for ways of bringing about economic improvement. This committee, along with the project leaders and most of the residents, did not look for economic improvement to come entirely through government assistance. Industry, local and from outside, was looked upon as the key to long-range and stable economic development of Mitchellville. The residents knew that they needed some assistance from the government and other agencies, but they wanted to use their own resources as much as possible.

In February, 1968, William P. Rogers of the Office of Economic Opportunity visited the campus of Ouachita and had a conference with Dr. Riley and members of the Mitchellville Economic Development Committee. The kind of economic development needed was determined. Rogers suggested that the committee use every avenue possible in order to get local industry and resources. Local industry was thought to be in a position to be more sympathetic toward the

Mitchellville effort, and more understanding of its lack of development.⁴⁸

The people of Mitchellville were agricultural laborers, which made some type of agricultural industry more feasible for their purpose. With this idea in mind, the committee worked on the possibility of planting crops of okra and summer squash. An investigation into the agricultural venture was favorable until the question of available land came up. A land shortage made the crop venture less favorable. Land could have been rented, or leased, but this added expense was undesirable. The residents had some experience in a crop venture previously. The Bird's Eye Corporation had an agreement with the residents to grow crops, but this arrangement did not work out to the satisfaction of the citizens of Mitchellville.⁴⁹

The proposed crop venture was not completely abandoned, but other avenues of economic development were explored. The possibility of some non-agricultural industry was considered. Many such industries qualified for rural development loans from the OEO. Birdhouse building or some

⁴⁸Desha County, Arkansas Office of Farmers Home Administration, Brousseau Report (Desha County, Arkansas: January, 1968).

⁴⁹Interview with Daisy Bates, November, 1969. Permission to quote secured.

type of simple sewing was considered. The committee met with thirty-five ladies of Mitchellville who expressed a strong interest in sewing. The sewing industry seemed the most feasible immediate undertaking. Several considerations suggested the sewing venture in a favorable light. Many items such as pillowcases, laundry bags, ironing board covers, and pot holders were items considered for mass production. Before the sewing venture got underway, a period of training was conducted for the ladies interested in the sewing jobs. The training of the workers was facilitated by the installation of four sewing machines in the community center. The machines were set up for training, but this arrangement also gave opportunity for the poor to get clothing from the practice session at a very low price.

Industry in Mitchellville required the provision of additional space. In addition to the need for more space, the committee on economic development had to be concerned about a stable market for its product. Without a market the committee knew industry could not last.

Pride, motivation, and good intentions needed to be supplemented by money coming from productive work. As an all-Negro town Mitchellville had a special problem when it came to jobs. In America the Negro is the least economically secure with the lowest paying jobs and highest rate of

layoff; this created a real problem when a whole town was composed of such economically deprived persons.⁵⁰

The wood-product mill was relocated in nearby Dumas, many of the people of Mitchellville continued to work at the mill. A factory that made ironing board pads was located where the mill formerly operated. This arrangement was in line with a statement made by Billy Free, the Mayor of Dumas, in the Pine Bluff Commercial, March 16, 1969. Free said,

The people of Mitchellville are fantastic at skills that involve the use of the hands. Talents like this could possibly be developed into something useful and beneficial to that community.

He further stated, "What would really help Mitchellville would be for some industry to locate there . . . that could produce some product that involved the use of these basic skills."⁵¹

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 established two new credit programs for low income families living in rural areas; one of which could do much to alleviate the job problem of Mitchellville. Information taken from a leaflet by the Farmers Home Administration, United States Department of

⁵⁰Joseph Irvin Arnold, Challenges to American Youth (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1950), p. 521.

⁵¹Pine Bluff Commercial, March 16, 1969.

Agriculture, January, 1967, gave more information about loans to cooperatives:

<u>Maximum loan</u>	-No statutory limit, but are expected to average \$25,000.
<u>Repayment period</u>	-Up to 30 years.
<u>Interest rate</u>	-4 1/8 per cent.
<u>Security</u>	-Property lien and pledge of revenue.
<u>Purpose</u>	-To finance processing, marketing, purchasing and service type cooperatives that directly benefit low-income families living in rural areas. Some examples of cooperations that might receive a products loan grown on members' farms; marketing items constructed in home workshops of members, e.g., handicrafts, processing farm products, providing custom farm work for members, and wholesale buying of essential farm operating items, such as machinery, seed, and fertilizer.
<u>Eligibility</u>	-Established or newly formed cooperative associations made up of a membership two-thirds of whom are low-income rural families and serving predominately families in this group.

The new loan programs form an important part of the President's "War on Poverty" under general direction of the United States Office of Economic Opportunity. Application for loans may be made at local offices of the Farmers Home Administration, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. There are seventy-five of these offices and they serve all rural counties. All loans will be accompanied by direct management assistance to borrowers provided by Farmers Home Administration.

Many of the enterprises for which loans are available are of such nature that could be quickly set up in a community.⁵²

The Mitchellville Project was not considered as some isolated project; this effort was seen as a pattern for the federal government to follow in seeking to help citizens in other situations. When the cities were overcrowded with displaced farm workers seeking jobs, the federal government was helping a small town to offer jobs in order that the job-seeking migration to the large cities could be abated.

V. HOUSING

A casual glance at Mitchellville, even from the highway, revealed poor housing. This was not to say that all of the homes were substandard. A few homes in the town were relatively standard but the overall picture was that of poor housing. Many of the houses were small and appeared to be poorly constructed and maintained. The Urban Planning Assistance Report Project # Ark P-92, 1969, stated, "Of the 124 homes in Mitchellville 57 or 46 per cent are dilapidated; 26 or 21 per cent are deteriorating; and 41 or 33 per cent are in sound condition."⁵³ The surveyors asked the

⁵²Farmers Home Administration (United States Department of Agriculture: January, 1967).

⁵³The Urban Planning Assistance Report, Project No. P-92, 1969.

residents questions about the housing. They recognized the general poor standard of the homes. Parts of an interview with a resident follows:

Q. "How about your roof? Is it in good shape?"

A. "It leaks."

Q. "What do you think you need the most here?"

A. "To repair the houses. We repair, repair, repair, but it doesn't do any good because we can't afford to do it right. We could use an indoor bath too."⁵⁴

A committee on housing was formed to look into the housing situation. Some idea of the committee plans follow:

At the present we are conducting research on all of the programs now available for housing in Mitchellville. We are planning to make a detailed survey into the conditions of housing in the town and in what specific areas help is needed.

We are also analyzing the various skills of the people in order to find out who is capable of furnishing skills necessary to build the homes.

We hope to either help the people of Mitchellville to improve their homes to much higher standards or in some cases to provide assistance in building new homes.⁵⁵

The housing seemed incongruous in an era of affluence. In considering what was done in the area of housing, one had to evaluate what he saw originally to make a mental estimation of the future. Seeing a woman's face brighten with a

⁵⁴Pine Bluff Commercial, July 7, 1968.

⁵⁵Gary R. Cheatham, Bootstraps Project (Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas, 1968). (Unpublished.)

smile and call her home beautiful when there was no well-kept lawn, a wood burning heater in the living-bedroom, a wood burning stove in the kitchen, no indoor bath and a ceiling of unpainted plaster was inconceivable unless one knew what the home was like before the repair started.

One of the most successful programs for improving the housing in Mitchellville was a F.H.A. Program that was set up by Home Builders Training Association. This association took a group of local men and enrolled them in a program of training in home repair. A good carpenter was the trainer and supervisor of their work. The men were paid a small salary while they were in training. As a learning experience this class repaired homes under the supervision of the carpenter in charge. The home owner was given a loan up to \$1,500 to purchase material for the repair.

The International Self-Help Housing Association had, as its main goal, helping each family own the kind of home that everyone deserved. Mitchellville had the opportunity to profit from such a program.

Mitchellville was eligible to participate in the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Loans Program. A pamphlet on Rural Housing Loans distributed gave information in the area of housing:

The Farmers Home Administration, under provisions in Title V of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, makes and insures rural housing loans.

These loans are made to farmers and other residents of rural areas and small rural communities with populations of not more than 5,500 which are not part of or closely associated with an urban area. There are special provisions for rural senior citizens who are 62 years of age and over and for low-income families.⁵⁶

The Home Owners Association of Mitchellville was organized on February 12, 1969. One of its objectives was to seek information on housing and loans. The information acquired by the Home Owners Association was given to the residents of Mitchellville. The Home Owners Association offered the one best hope providing adequate housing for the citizens of Mitchellville.

The organization of a Home Owners Association at Mitchellville was helpful in getting the residents involved, which encouraged responsibility. The Home Owners Association gave opportunity for a wider range of discussion than city government. The leaders of the association gave direction to the setting up of a credit union. Anyone who wanted to join the credit union paid a five dollar fee which could be paid at twenty-five cents per month. The association took the lead in making plans for the improvement of the housing situation. In its attempt to improve the overall living conditions, the association had an agreement in its

⁵⁶Rural Housing Loans (United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration: October 4, 1967).

charter that no property owner would sell property without first giving the association a chance to buy.⁵⁷

This clause in the association's charter was subject to different interpretations. No provision was made for enforcing this restrictive clause. No test was made of this clause, but it was clearly a tool for discrimination. Such a provision has its justification because an antagonistic person could move into town and stir up more confusion than could be handled. The association hoped to retain persons who would be sympathetic to its ideals.

Mrs. Bates expressed the desire to make Mitchellville a home-owners' town. Instead of encouraging low-rent houses, an effort was made to encourage low interest loans for home improvement. The Home Owners Association made arrangements with Kingsberry Prefabricated Homes to build new homes.⁵⁸

VI. ANNEXATION

Mitchellville was concerned about developing the ninety acres that were incorporated in 1963, but also about development and expansion for the future. On July 18, 1969, the town of Mitchellville took a large step to assure itself of room to expand. The opportunity presented itself when

⁵⁷See Appendix G.

⁵⁸See Appendix D.

the citizens voted to annex 1,440 acres of land to its 90 acres of city limit. Interviews with interested persons in and out of the town showed that, according to the opinion of some, the town made too large a step and brought upon itself the seed of discord within and opposition from the outside.⁵⁹ The thing that caused these predictions to be significant was that they came from persons who were actively concerned about the well-being of Mitchellville.

One point of serious contention was the procedure of the non-legal aspect of the move for annexation. The legal side of the move was properly handled.⁶⁰ The announcement forms, posters, notifications and public meetings met the legal requirements.

The required public meeting was held at the St. John Baptist Church at 7:30 p.m., July 11, 1969. Sitting in this meeting one did not detect much enthusiasm for the purpose of the meeting. Mrs. Bates, Director of the OEO project at Mitchellville, talked about the progress of the OEO program of development. Near the end of the meeting the floor was opened for discussion on the proposed annexation. One White man arose and explained that he was not a resident of

⁵⁹Interview with Reverend John Mitchell, July, 1967. Permission to quote secured.

⁶⁰Ibid.

Mitchellville, nor a landowner of the area to be annexed just as Mrs. Bates was not a resident nor landowner. Later information revealed that the man was Jim Hammil, an employee of the Dumas grain drying plant. He stated that he wanted to see the town grow, and did not want his remarks to be looked upon in any other way. He was deeply concerned, according to his statement, about the wisdom of annexing so much land. Hammil contended that the landowners should be informed concerning the annexation. The cost of city services was another item mentioned by Hammil. Mrs. Bates did not attempt to answer this question; she simply responded by saying that the Arkansas State Planning Commission and the federal government were behind them and she felt that they knew where they were going.

Mayor Kelly caused a bit of surprise to some when he stated his own misgivings about annexing so much land. He gave the impression that he was not really in favor of winning the election for annexation. The point of his contention was not annexation, but the amount of land to be annexed.⁶¹ Willie Boyd spoke, not in favor of annexation, but in favor of staying together and working together in any effort for progress.

⁶¹Remarks by Mayor Kelly in the Public Hearing on Annexation, July 11, 1969.

In an interview with Reverend Mitchell the following information was obtained:⁶² When asked his opinion on the annexation, he readily predicted that the landowners would fight the move in court. Even if the fight against annexation were not won in court, Reverend Mitchell felt that the peace, harmony, and cooperation necessary for the development of the town were militated against. At first it was not clear whether Reverend Mitchell opposed annexation or some specific aspect of it. In answer to a direct question Reverend Mitchell stated that he was not opposed to annexation. As a matter of fact he felt that it was a good idea to annex the Dumas Grain Dryer. He suggested that a more conciliatory attitude prevail. He acknowledged that the legal side of the procedure was in order, but stressed that the legal side was not all to be considered. He proposed that a committee be set up to contact the landowners to arrange a compromise on annexation.

Reverend Mitchell had no admiration for the attitude and techniques of Mrs. Bates because he felt that they would hinder the development of Mitchellville. He stated that she agitated to have the wood products mill moved from Mitchellville. Mrs. Bates, in an earlier interview, stated that she

⁶²Interview with Reverend Mitchell, July 11, 1969.
Permission to quote secured.

was "glad that the mill moved out of town because the smoke polluted the air of Mitchellville to the extent that the residents had difficulty getting a clean wash."⁶³

The day of election, July 18, 1969, came and the activity of the proponents and the opponents of annexation was stepped up. One could detect a bit of tension as the late voters came in, and as the votes were being counted. The voting was held in the community center. In a floor pacing interview with Mrs. Bates, certain revelations were made. Mrs. Bates stated that there were allegedly some intimidation against annexation.⁶⁴ The landowners whose land was to be annexed were, reportedly, openly against annexation, and had been represented at the polls during the time of voting. When votes were counted, there was cause for joy in the camp of the proponents. The tabulation showed that the vote was eighty-four for and thirty-four against annexation.

As soon as the votes were counted showing that the annexation was approved, the White landowners started a movement to circumvent annexation. The landowners went to Desha County Judge Bonnie Zook to have the election

⁶³Interview with Mrs. Daisy Bates, July, 1969.
Permission to quote secured.

⁶⁴Ibid.

overthrown on the grounds that the annexation was too late since Act 65-1969 of the Arkansas Legislature was in force, requiring the people being annexed to vote for annexation. Judge Zook asked for a ruling from Attorney General Joe Purcell. The ruling from the Attorney General's office stated that the election was legal. With this ruling, Judge Zook set a hearing for the 30th of December, 1969 to hear briefs on the election.

Mrs. Bates stated that she felt that the hearing would be used as a stalling tactic until the OEO Project was discontinued; when another effort would be made to set the election aside. The OEO Project of Mitchellville comes up for refunding in March, 1970.⁶⁵ The situation is at a stalemate impending further legal maneuvers.

⁶⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL INTERRELATIONSHIP

Too often politics is thought of as an aspect of life "where the crooks get together to divide the pie and give the crumbs to the poor." The record of history reveals instances where that was the case, but for one to consider politics in such a derogatory sense is unfortunate.

One should look upon politics as the procedure in which the policies of a society are formulated and promoted. Public opinion must be considered in the formulation of policy. When one considered the role of public opinion in politics, he would acknowledge his vital role in politics, even though he was not a public official. The politics of a community or society was the concern, domain, and responsibility of all citizens.

The role of the mayor is important in a small community, because he may encourage or discourage public expression. When the students from Ouachita made the survey, there was a noticeable lack of cooperation on the part of the citizens until they discovered that the mayor was in favor of what was being done.

The meetings in the city hall were not well attended initially but the leaders of Mitchellville worked hard to

increase attendance. That effort to increase attendance at the town meetings was a good political procedure. There was a desire to have the citizens involved in the discussion of the needs, goals, and policies of the town, because it would facilitate the promotion of the town policies.

The problem of politics was a matter of concern in the creation of the classes on municipal government. Those classes served to stimulate interest in city politics, to increase appreciation of the job of the city officials, to spur the city officials to do their homework, and to bring about more efficient city government. Positive forces were at work in Mitchellville; one of which was the will of the citizens to improve their town. This will of the citizens to move forward was more than a desire. They did not simply recognize the need and desire to have them alleviated. They recognized the need and were determined to meet the needs with hard work and some assistance from others.⁶⁶

Another positive force at work was the effort the federal government made to assist in the development of Mitchellville. The effort to develop Mitchellville and other small towns and rural areas was not simply to take the pressure off the overcrowded large cities. This effort

⁶⁶Conference with the City Council, June, 1969.

indicated a recognition of the need to turn attention and assistance to the rural areas.

In a letter to Mrs. Bates, on March 8, 1968, the Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman, referred to a statement by President Lyndon Johnson:

President Johnson, in his recent message to the Congress entitled "Prosperity and Progress for the Farmer and Rural America," said, "Agriculture, our first industry, remains our greatest . . . But the American Farmer, who helped build America's prosperity, still does not fully--or fairly--share in it." He also said, "Too many rural communities have been by-passed in the climb to abundance. . . ."⁶⁷

The statement by President Johnson indicated that the highest officials in government recognized the historic contribution of rural America. The part that rural America played was seen in the prosperity of America; yet the fact that rural America had not shared this prosperity fairly was clearly set forth. This recognition, by the highest officials of government, of the need to promote the prosperity of all Americans had much to do with the funding of the Mitchellville Project.

⁶⁷Letter to Mrs. Bates from Orville Freeman, March 8, 1968.

I. PROBLEMS OF INSTITUTIONAL
LEADERSHIP VS. SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

"Leadership," according to N. L. Sims, "is a major factor in explaining the low level of village life."⁶⁸

In Mitchellville a quiet but profound conflict existed between the institutional leader, Mayor Kelly, and the situational leader, OEO Project Director Bates.⁶⁹ Mrs. Bates and Mayor Kelly were skillful enough to keep their conflict of personalities, outlooks and techniques at a respectable level.

The conflict between the institutional leader and the situational leader can become very bitter and destructive. Persons holding office in a community whether elected, appointed or otherwise selected to carry out routine functions resist others who come in as leaders of a particular movement.

"The leader's function," according to Wayland Hayes, "is such as to assist the group in maintaining its customs, its purposes and its attitudes undamaged by the chance

⁶⁸Newell L. Sims, Elements of Rural Sociology (third edition; New York: Crowell Press, 1940), p. 116.

⁶⁹Remarks by Mayor Kelly at annexation hearing, July, 1969.

ineptitudes of the less experienced or less skilled members."⁷⁰ The function of the institutional leader makes him suspect of the situational leader.

In Mitchellville, Mayor Kelly was the typical institutional leader. He was elderly, relatively well-off, active in the community, a leader of the incorporation movement, and the first and only mayor of Mitchellville. Mrs. Bates was the typical situational leader. She was not a citizen of the town, she was a newcomer, she was not an elected official, the base of her support was outside the community, and her particular project was not a permanent part of the community. This situation of leadership tended to bring about polarity in the community.⁷¹

II. PROBLEMS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Even in Mitchellville some persons considered political action as dishonest and political officials as crooks. Individuals with such ideas did not hesitate to express their views. Often no real proof was given of any misdeed, yet the assertion was forcefully stated.⁷² The city

⁷⁰Wayland J. Hayes, The Small Community Looks Ahead (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), p. 13.

⁷¹Interview with Mr. Gus Carroll, May, 1969. Permission to quote secured.

⁷²Interview with Will Pitman, November, 1968. Permission to quote secured.

officials were accused of conducting the business in a secretive and fraudulent manner.

The lack of municipal government information contributed to the manner in which the city affairs were conducted. Related to this idea was the attempt of some citizens to find villains who were responsible for the lack of development.⁷³

A negative force in Mitchellville had to do with some of the procedures of the anti-poverty program. The possibility for building unjustified expectations was always present. Mrs. Bates, in a letter to Theodore Berry, called attention to the disillusionment that resulted from a failure of the Mitchellville project to function properly.⁷⁴ The pettiness which threatened to delay or even stop the Mitchellville project was the kind that would destroy the faith of the poor.

An article in the Ouachita Signal pointed out that failure to implement the OEO program was one great negative force. The nobleness of the program was often used to excuse the poor implementation of the project. Equally unfortunate was the fact that the failure of implementation

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Letter to Theodore Berry from Daisy Bates, May 11, 1968.

was used as an excuse to cut off the program. Too often the leaders of the "Poverty" programs were too swift in their denunciation of those who pointed out shortcomings of the implementation of the program. All these forces had some detrimental effect on the Mitchellville Program. As Dr. Ralph Phelps, President of Ouachita Baptist University, said, "The administrative foulups, and bureaucratic hangups that plague the program make the waging of this war at home about as frustrating as the war in Vietnam."⁷⁵

The Mitchellville project was under the direction of OEO, which had an altruistic goal of providing economic opportunity. Yet, even in the OEO, negative forces were at work on the Mitchellville project. The negative force was the misunderstandings, pettiness, and inconsiderateness of some persons in leadership capacities in the OEO. Excerpts from letters trying to get the program started indicated something of this negative force:

Your letter of May 2 telling us that our proposal for "Bootstraps" could not be funded did not come as a particular surprise, though it was a disappointment. The thing that did disturb me was the report I received, via the always functioning OEO gossip-line, that the real reason the program was not funded was because OEO in general and Ted Berry in particular were sore at me personally. I could hope that such pettiness would not be the determinative factor in a situation in which white involvement in the South in an attempt at a mutual

⁷⁵Ouachita Signal [Arkadelphia, Arkansas], March 12, 1968.

solution of socio-economic problems could be a reality if the project were funded. If the thought there is that this works out as some sort of revenge on Ralph Phelps for having said something derogatory about the malfunctioning of OEO machinery, I hope it will be remembered that the poor are getting to be punished much more than I am--particularly since the program was not my idea, anyway.⁷⁶

One might think that the people who served in administrative positions in a program like the OEO had few personality conflicts. The letter from Dr. Phelps indicated that there were conflicts which were deep, personal, and disruptive to the Mitchellville OEO Project. A note of sadness and indignation was felt when one realized that poverty stricken people were needing and waiting for help while some officials experienced a conflict of personalities.

The federal government was the only agency in the country that could afford to make such a long range and slow paying investment. The federal government did, and should have done, as it did because it was not only concerned about a financial investment but in the general welfare of its people.

One of the greatest problems in Mitchellville was housing. The United States Department of Agriculture, through the Farmers Home Administration, made it possible for the residents of Mitchellville to make and insure home

⁷⁶Letter to Mr. Green from Ralph Phelps, May 8, 1968.

loans at a lower rate than could have been gotten at many lending agencies.

The Mitchellville Project showed that the government of the United States was able to look out for the welfare of its citizens, and was willing to expend money for their well-being. All Americans must be told of the involvement of the federal government in the improvement of Mitchellville, Arkansas, and other similar situations.

III. PROBLEMS OF MUNICIPAL AND COUNTRY

INTERRELATIONSHIP

When Mitchellville incorporated it deliberately set itself apart from the open country. Competition between the open country and the town has been standard practice.

Incorporation was the legal and formal act by which the little town declared its physical and mental severance from the open country, and registered its sense of independent group-needs and values.⁷⁷

Even when the town declared its independence from the open country, it could not turn its back on the surrounding environs. This was true because the little town was dependent on its surroundings.

Certain forces served to bring about closer relations between the town and country: (1) the farmer's wider

⁷⁷Harlon P. Douglas, The Little Town (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), pp. 50-51.

outlook, (2) good roads and their social consequences, (3) rural rapid transit, (4) town investments in the country, (5) intensive agriculture, and (6) legislation.⁷⁸

Competition was expected between adjacent communities; therefore, Mitchellville was in competition with Dumas by the very nature of its existence. But competition did not require discontinuing vital cooperation, which was vital to Mitchellville.

The problem of municipal and country interrelationship was trying to establish a proper balance between competition and cooperation. This problem exists whenever two organisms are found.

Mitchellville needed the cooperation of other towns around it, but the fact remained that it was in competition by the very nature of its existence.

The basic problem of rural community organization arises from the presence of two geographical elements.

. . .

This basic geographical division created a social situation in which differences between village and country were fostered, and in which numerous causes of conflicts arose. But with better communication conflict has decreased and the necessity for cooperation to meet needs . . . has increasingly characterized village-country relations.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Robert A. Polson and Dwight Sanderson, Rural Community Organization (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1939), p. 56.

CHAPTER VII

PROBLEM OF CITIZENSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Citizenship development is most effective when started with the youth. The Mitchellville program of citizenship placed much emphasis on its youth activities for obvious reasons.

The foundations of health and emotional stability are laid early in life. Modern knowledge of child development has served to underscore the importance of childhood as a formative period. The family and school have major responsibilities in helping the child to develop habits and skills which will serve him throughout life. . . .

Supporting the family and supplementing its contribution to the development of the child are the various community services for health, education, and welfare.⁸⁰

The citizenship development program of Mitchellville had to concern itself with compensatory education because there were areas of noticeable deficiencies.

I. EDUCATION

The educational needs were great. Plans were made for adult education. A Laubach Literacy Committee was set up to facilitate an adult education program. This committee

⁸⁰Arthur Hillman, Community Organization and Planning (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), pp. 215-16.

based its methods on Frank Laubach's approach. This approach involved a plan where "each one teaches one." The committee planned its work in two parts. The first part of the project was a workshop to orientate the prospective teachers. The teachers were informed of the literacy situation in American and other countries.

They were taught the philosophy of the literacy movement, including the influence of literacy on a person and a society. The prospective teachers were given detailed instruction on the use of the literacy kits, which included stories, writing books, streamlined English, and wall charts. The Teacher's Guide to charts was distributed. The material used by the Laubach Literacy Committee was paid for by the Laubach State Committee.

The second phase of the project of the committee was a literacy campaign beginning on March 9, 1969. The campaign was initiated with a staff of six teachers. The Laubach Literacy Program was headed by a Jordanian student at Ouachita Baptist University, Jamil M. Shami.

A preschool and "head-start" effort was started with a committee chaired by Virginia LaCook from Perry, Arkansas. The purpose of the committee was to acquaint the children of the community with some things that would help them when they started to school. The committee also served as a baby sitting group while the mothers were attending adult classes.

The committee's activities were executed in St. John Baptist Church.

Even though the committee was set up to work with preschool children, many school-age children attended the meetings. Different experiments were conducted with the school children. Additional tests were administered by the educational psychology classes of Ouachita.

Attempts were made at setting up a program of speech therapy. The program of speech therapy was designed to meet the unique need of the subject. Special recognition was given the fact that what might have been considered a speech defect could be an ethnic manner of speaking, unfamiliar to another ethnic group. The most effective part of this activity was the story time where the children heard the reading of a story. The children had the opportunity to try to read or at least to talk about the story that was read. After the reading and speech therapy sessions the children were taken to the playgrounds where they were encouraged to play games and took part in other group activity.

II. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

The people of Mitchellville were aware of the problems of young people.

The Mitchellville Project set out to formulate constructive ideas and behavior patterns. In order to accomplish

this goal, a committee for compensatory education was formed. Colene Biggs was the coordinator. The educational units were prepared to reflect the interests of the youth of Mitchellville. In such a situation, strict age limits could not be established arbitrarily. The ages of the group concerned were from fourteen to twenty-five. This wide span in the ages of the persons in the group necessitated the setting up of different classes. At the beginning of the weekly sessions young men and women participated in a discussion of one of the following subjects:

I. Privileges and Responsibilities of Citizenship

- A. Federal Constitutional Rights
- B. Voting Procedures and its Implications
- C. Operations of State and Local Governments

II. Sex Education

III. Dating Manners

IV. Basic Art⁸¹

After the discussion periods the young men participated in an athletic program. The young women participated in feminine discussions or activities that had been specified for that week. Some of the subjects covered by the young women were:

- 1. Physical Fitness
- 2. Etiquette
- 3. Child Psychology
- 4. Infant Care

⁸¹Bates, op. cit.

5. Practical Mathematics
6. Sanitation
7. Health
8. Clothing
9. Makeup and Hair Styling⁸²

This committee scheduled discussions with educators and other community leaders, particularly Negroes, to encourage the students of Mitchellville to remain in school. This was done in order to facilitate the process of identification. Representatives from the OEO were brought in to discuss the possibilities of getting the necessary funds for college with interested young people. These representatives gave assistance in the actual process of applying for funds and obtaining jobs for the summer through the work-study program.

A number of high school seniors were taken to the campus of Ouachita Baptist University. This activity was designed to acquaint them with college life and encourage them to attend college.

III. RECREATION

Benjamin Franklin has been quoted as saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." The leaders of Mitchellville and the workers in the Mitchellville Improvement Project recognized the validity of Franklin's statement.

⁸²Ibid.

One of the first things done by the students from Ouachita was to set up recreational equipment. The used recreational equipment was donated by Athletic Departments of Henderson State College and Ouachita Baptist University. The students from Ouachita set up a recreational committee to plan the recreational program.

The purpose of the Recreational Committee was to organize a community wide effort to provide recreational facilities for the children and young people of Mitchellville, Arkansas.⁸³

The Soil Conservation Service of Desha County made a survey of the facilities for recreation in Mitchellville. Recreational facilities were non-existent. The only area for recreation was an unpaved lot located behind the city hall, with one basketball goal. This area was used almost exclusively by teenage boys.

Recreational areas for the different age groups were planned. A section for a play-lot was planned for small children of preschool age. Such an area was to be off-limits to games by teenage youth.

In addition to a play-lot for preschool children, the leaders of the Mitchellville project made plans for a playground equipment area. The area, with swings, slides, seesaws and junglegyms, would be used primarily by children of ages six to eleven years.

⁸³Ibid. .

A paved area was planned for volleyball, badminton, and basketball. This same area could be used for parking and outdoor meetings at designated times. The paved area would be for teenagers and young adults, as the games indicated.

A recreational program for a community would be incomplete without the inclusion of a place for baseball. In connection with the area for field games, there would be a shelter house or a dugout.

Plans for a community building included areas for such games as checkers, dominoes, and chess. It could not have been done without knowing something of the size and location of the town; the number, type and condition of the dwellings; the size and general classification of the population; the type and size of industries and other job possibilities; the city government; public buildings; utilities; and the program of recreation. Such was included in the general background information. Information to the history of Mitchellville served to give the people a better understanding of the town and brought about a wider base of appreciation for the town on the part of the town people.

The history of the Mitchellville project recognized and expressed the fact that planning and organizing was necessary for lasting improvement. The project for

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In analyzing the problem and seeking to develop Mitchellville, the leaders of the Mitchellville Project stressed: (1) information, (2) citizenship motivation, (3) immediate and long-range plans, and (4) federal financing.

General background information put the problems into perspective. A creditable job of improvement could not have been done without knowing something of the size and location of the town; the number, type and condition of the dwellings; the size and general classification of the population; the type and size of industries and other job possibilities; the city government; public buildings; utilities; and the program of recreation. Such was included in the general background information. Information in the history of Mitchellville served to allay some implied charges against some of the leading citizens of the town and brought about a wider base of appreciation for the town on the part of the town people.

The leaders of the Mitchellville project recognized and expressed the fact that citizenship motivation was necessary for lasting improvement. The concern for

citizenship motivation was important for the residents from a psychological standpoint because they needed to be involved in the planning and conduct of such a worthy program. Citizenship motivation was important from a practical standpoint because, regardless of the interest and energy on the part of the leaders of the project, they could not drag a group of unmotivated people to success. This was important for the future of the town because the residents who were motivated by the improvement effort were the ones to carry the task on in the future.

Citizenship motivation was facilitated by the class on city government. In addition to providing knowledge, the class served as an instrument of fellowship, rapport, individual and group appreciation, an opportunity to acquire knowledge, and a tool for group identity.

The leaders of the Mitchellville Project made plans to correct most of the problems of the town.

Without trying to follow an order of priorities, attention was focused on some of the problems and the plans for their alleviation. Plans for providing recreational facilities were noted in Chapter VII. A pressing need in Mitchellville was jobs. The leaders of Mitchellville realized that it had (1) a sizeable female as well as male labor force, (2) a needy labor force, (3) a willing labor force, and (4) an unskilled labor force. Efforts at getting

jobs took these items into consideration. Attempts were made to bring in industries that could use women as well as men, many of whom were unskilled.

The people of Mitchellville realized that all of their information, motivation, and plans were of little avail unless they were able to get substantial financing. The finance for the project of improvement came from the federal government, in one form or another.

All over the country, for the past few years, the federal government has been spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in a "great society" program. This program came under great criticism from many quarters. The proponents of this program agreed that there was some justified criticism, but asserted that the appalling and explosive poverty in the cities cried out for a solution. One step to the solution of the problem in the large cities was the development of the countryside, so they would be less inclined to go to the large congested cities looking for a better life.

The involvement of the federal government in the Mitchellville effort of improvement was notable. Without the financial assistance, the success of the Mitchellville project could not have been attained. The OEO Bootstraps Project gave to Mitchellville a kind of leadership and expertise that it could not have on its own.

The residents of Mitchellville could not have gotten its sewer without the federal grant of \$52,000. Without the sewer the health of the people in and surrounding Mitchellville would have continued in jeopardy. The convenience of such a system would have been withheld from American citizens. The people of Mitchellville would have been deprived of their general well-being as well as prospects for economic development without the sewer system.

The plans for improvement of the town of Mitchellville were made. The task of the town leaders was to keep the plans before all the citizens and carry out the program as planned.

Certain continuing problems faced by Mitchellville were pointed out. The problem of leadership, finance, competition from adjacent communities, suspicion, jobs, and the persecution complex.

The problem of leadership was seen as a crucial continuing problem. Mayor Charles Kelly, at eighty-nine years of age, would soon be retiring. Even in the most tranquil situation such a change of institutional leadership would be a small crisis. Mayor Kelly was the accepted resident leader even before Mitchellville was incorporated. He was a leader of the movement for incorporation, and was the first and only mayor. The situational leader, and Mrs. Bates, will not get her program funded permanently. When Mayor

Kelly, the generally accepted institutional leader, and Mrs. Bates, the funded and skillful situational leader, are no longer active in Mitchellville, the next mayor will have a difficult time making a showing without the general acceptance of Mayor Kelly, and the funds and know-how of Mrs. Bates.

The community facility building (civic center), with its well-planned program of activities, appeared to be the key to the continuing development of the town of Mitchellville. The day care service was planned as the central program of the community facility. The OEO Educational Program, with its adult, compensatory, and vocational emphasis, was planned with care. The clinical program planned for the community was possible because doctors from Little Rock and Pine Bluff offered their services. Plans called for legal, marital, financial, health, and several other counseling services. Attorneys and other professionals agreed to serve as consultants in the community programs. Indoor and outdoor recreation was planned.

The community facility program called for an integrated staff. The program was open to all members of the community, regardless of race, creed or color. Other organizations and agencies assigned space in the building were the Social Security Office, County Parks and Recreation

Commission, Area Vocational and Rehabilitation Clinic, and OEO District Office (field coordinator).

Mitchellville agreed to provide maintenance and operating expense for the facility from its general funds. Provisions were made for a concession stand in the building to help pay some of the operating expense. No fees were set for the general community use of the building. Agencies and organizations that occupy space in the building agreed to pay a share of the maintenance cost.

The key to the continued development of Mitchellville is the careful conduct of the community facilities program. A full-time, well-qualified director is needed to lead out in the conduct of the planned program.

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Phelps, Ralph. Letter to Mr. Green, May 8, 1968.

E. INTERVIEWS

Mrs. Daisy Bates, Director of Mitchellville OEO Center.

Gus Carroll, Resident of Mitchellville.

Mrs. Ada Johnson, Resident of Mitchellville.

Charles Kelly, Mayor of Mitchellville.

Reverend John Mitchell, Moderator of Watson District Baptist Association.

Will Pitman, Owner and Operator of Pitman Grocery, Mitchellville.

Lynn O. Puryear, Vice-President of Puryear Wood Products Company, Dumas, Arkansas.

Dr. Bob Riley, Chairman of Department of Political Science at Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

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APPENDIX A

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Monday

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Staff meeting, counsel DSC trained	Classroom 1
	<u>Basic Adult Education</u>	
1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Literacy class	Classroom 1
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Sewing	Classroom 1
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Embroidering	Classroom 20
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	APPENDIX Friday 1-5	Classroom 24
4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Reading Grades 1-5	Classroom 24
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Credit Union Meeting	Classroom 16

Tuesday

8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Education class	Classroom 13
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Sewing	Classroom 1
8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Tutoring Grades 1-5	Classroom 1
8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Typing Grades 7-12	Classroom 1
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Embroidering	Classroom 20
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Leadership Training Candidates for leadership training classes will be from various fields of business, education, government, agencies, trade agencies and educational institutions.	Classroom 16

Wednesday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Sewing	Classroom 1
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Senior Citizens Luncheon Speakers, panel discussions, exhibits, etc.	Classroom 13

APPENDIX A

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Monday

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Staff meeting, counsel NYC Trainees Classroom 3

Basic Adult Education

1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Illiteracy Class Classroom 3

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sewing Classroom 1

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Cabinetmaking Classroom 20

4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Tutoring Grades 1-6 Classroom 24

4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Tutoring Grades 7-12 Classroom 24

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Credit Union Meeting Classroom 16

Tuesday

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Nutrition Class Classroom 13

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sewing Classroom 1

4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Tutoring Grades 1-6 Classroom 1

4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Typing Grades 7-12 Classroom 3

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Cabinetmaking Classroom 20

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Leadership Training Classroom 16
 Consultants for leadership training classes will be from various fields of business, politics, government agencies, state agencies and educational institutions.

Wednesday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sewing Classroom 1

12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Senior Citizens Luncheon Classroom 13

Speakers, panel discussions, hobbies, etc.

1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Cabinetmaking	Classroom 20
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Etiquette, hygiene, and good grooming	Classroom 3
1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Health Services Dentists from Pine Bluff, Little Rock	Classroom 17 and 11
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Neighborhood Council Meeting	Classroom 16
7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.	Youth Recreation (discussions, record hops, etc.)	Classroom 24

Thursday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Sewing	Classroom 1
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Cabinetmaking	Classroom 20
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Tutoring Grades 1-6	Classroom 1
4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Typing Grades 7-12	Classroom 3
3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Legal Services Attorneys from Pine Bluff, Little Rock	Classroom 10

Friday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Sewing	Classroom 1
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Cabinetmaking	Classroom 20
1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Illiteracy Class	Classroom 3
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Political Science	Classroom 3
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Mayor and City Officials Town Meeting	Classroom 16

The town meeting will be held in room 16 until room 24 is completed.

Monday - Friday

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Outdoor recreation The lifeguard will be on duty each day, 1:00 - 5:00 to teach water safety. Also included, will be games of checkers, horseshoe pitching, dominoes, croquet, etc.
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APPENDIX B

In a letter to Mayor Kelly August 29, 1969 on Desha County Judge Bonnie Zook stated, "I wish to endorse this project and offer my cooperation to you towards the success of this worthy project."

On August 20, 1969, Dr. Jerry D. Jewell, D.D.S. of Little Rock, Arkansas, wrote to Mrs. Bates saying, "I would like to be a part of helping to provide the much needed dental services for the poor in that area."

"I have talked with many of my colleagues about the dire need for dental services in that area. I am sure some will join me in giving in-kind contributions for the program, especially Dr. Robert Smith of Pine Bluff."

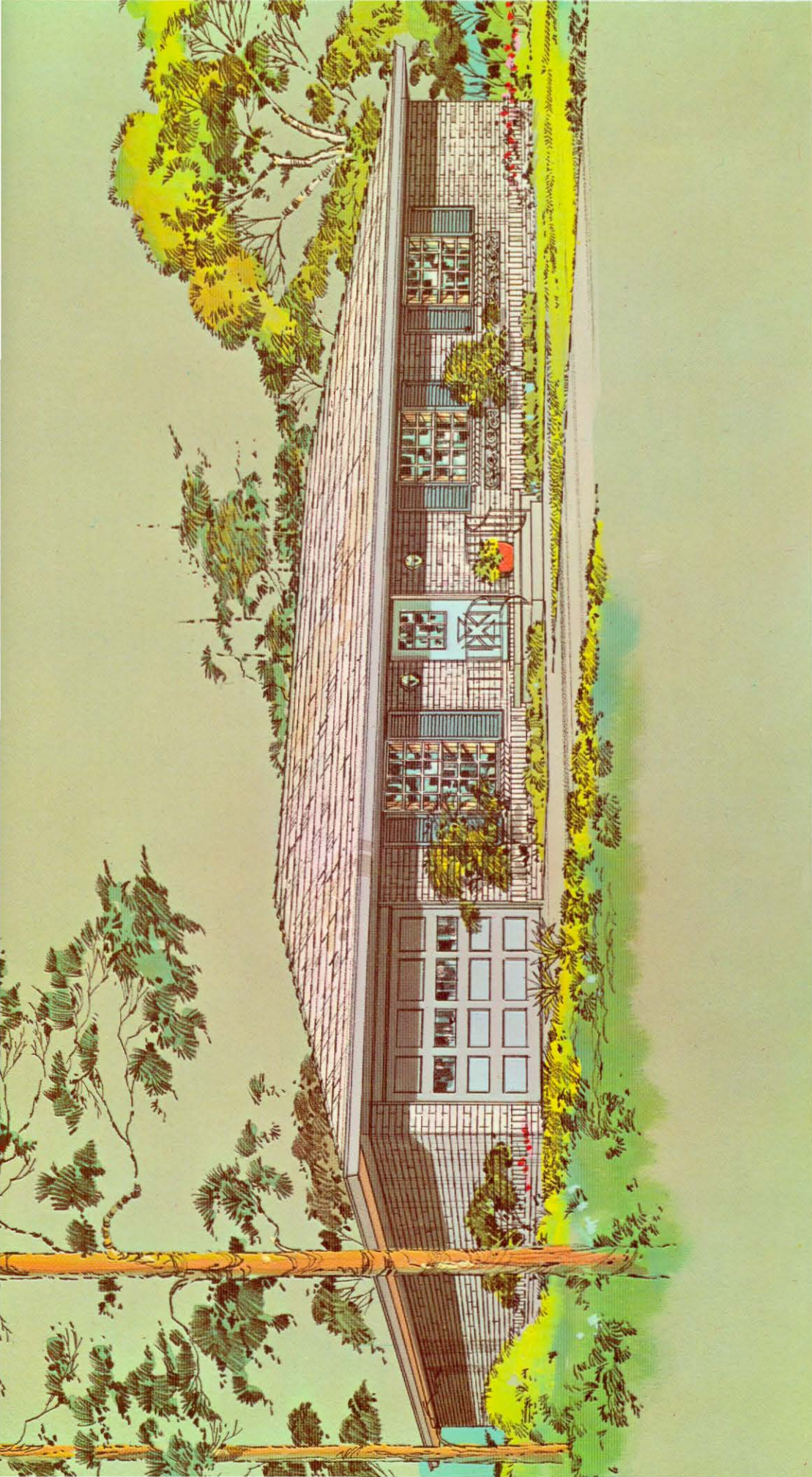
The sheriff of Desha County, Robert S. Moore, endorsed the Neighborhood Facility in a letter on August 18, 1969, to Jack Herrington, Department of Housing and Urban Development in Fort Worth, Texas: "The Mitchellville Neighborhood Facility in my opinion would be a revolution to the county and area, especially the area it serves. The Mitchellville Self-help Project has indeed since its beginning had a profound effect on the community and county."

In a letter dated August 25, 1969, Attorney George Howard, Jr. offered his services to the community program: "Please treat this letter as a confirmation or firm acceptance of the opportunity to serve as a legal consultant at Mitchellville, Arkansas."

APPENDIX C

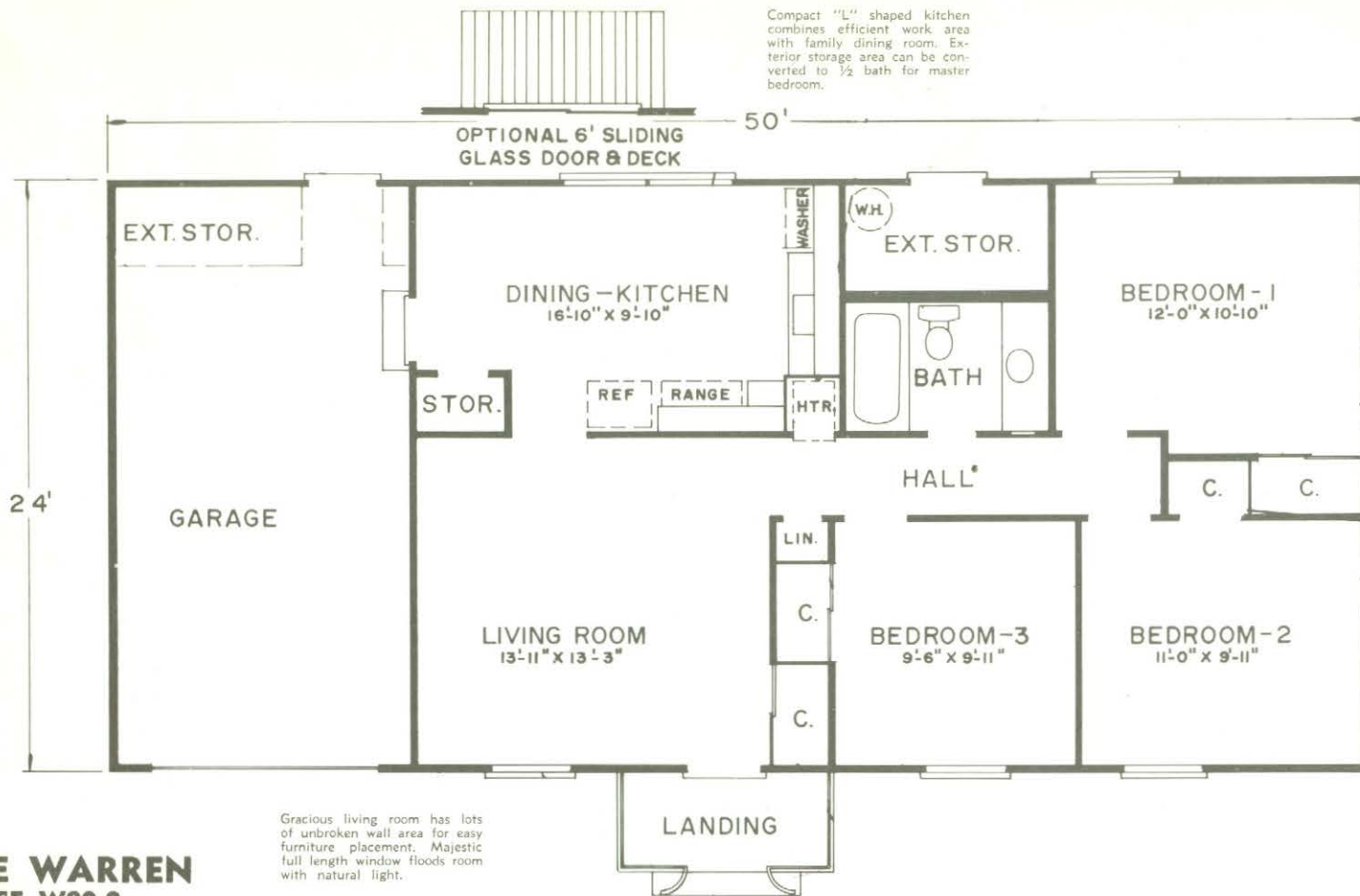
DEVELOPMENT COST OF COMMUNITY FACILITY

Area I	---- 4,500 square feet	\$12,500.00
Area II	---- 72,000 square feet	57,600.00
Area III	---- 2,400 square feet	24,000.00
Plans and landscaping		1,500.00
Parking	---- 2,000 square feet	1,400.00
Consultants' fees		5,820.00
Contingency* (10 per cent)		10,507.00
Inspection fee		1,443.00
Acquisition of site		<u>2,250.00</u>
Total		<u><u>\$117,020.00</u></u>



Kingsberry
KINGSBERRY
HOMES

The Warren
Crowning Achievement through Excellence of Design



Compact "L" shaped kitchen combines efficient work area with family dining room. Exterior storage area can be converted to 1/2 bath for master bedroom.

Gracious living room has lots of unbroken wall area for easy furniture placement. Majestic full length window floods room with natural light.

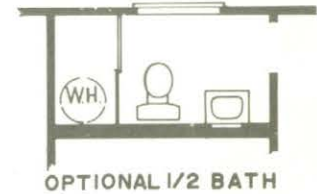
THE WARREN HOUSE W90-2

Frame, 912 sq. ft.
 1/2 Brick, 927 sq. ft.
 Brick, 967 sq. ft.

YOU CHOOSE YOUR EXTERIOR:

You have a choice of three outside finishes: Lap Siding, Redwood Plywood and Battens or Hardboard and Batten frame finish; One-half Brick with a combination of either frame finish; and Full Brick Veneer designs. Also, your choice of five different windows: Wood double-hung—Divided Light; Wood double-hung, with or without snap-in muntins; Wood double-hung—Insulated Glass (dual glazed) windows, with or without snap-in muntins; Aluminum single-hung windows; or Double track aluminum Storm windows. Also choose a white or black roof. These and other decorator features can be shown to you by your local Kingsberry Builder!

ALTERNATE 1/2 BATH LOCATION IN EXTERIOR STORAGE SPACE



OPTIONAL 1/2 BATH

Master bedroom features over-size closet. Hallway separates living from sleeping area. Centrally located bath just steps from any bedroom. Linen closet just across the hall from bathroom.



ALTERNATE BASEMENT PLAN

All lumber used in Kingsberry homes is graded and approved for quality by an independent inspection bureau—just one example of Kingsberry's efforts to insure solid, lifetime construction. And, of course, the building materials are selected from the top national manufacturers only—General Electric, Johns-Manville, Georgia Pacific, US Plywood, Dierks, Simpson, Weyerhaeuser, Universal Chef, Owens-Corning Fiberglas, Barrett, Allied Chemical, Stanley, Boise Cascade, Glidden and Kwikset, to name just a few.

NOTE: This artist's rendering and simplified floor plan is prepared only as a general guide and shall not be considered technically accurate. To order this design, first consult Kingsberry's architectural drawings to obtain technical accuracy and required dimensions.

KINGSBERRY
HOMES

5096 PEACHTREE ROAD
 ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30341

MITCHELLVILLE --- OEO SELF-HELP PROJECT

P. O. Box 567

--

Telephone 382-5976

Dumas, Arkansas 71639

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Charles Kelly, Mayor
Charlie Portis
James Boone
Abraham McCarrell
Willie I. Dean
Ellis Goodloe
A. L. Grant

Mrs. Daisy Bates
Project Director

Fifteen citizens of Mitchellville met at the home of Mr. Glass on Wednesday, February 12, 1969. This meeting was called to order by Mrs. Daisy Bates, OEO Project Director of Mitchellville. The purposes of this meeting was:

1. To organize a Home Owners Association, and work with the OEO, Training Development Program, and to develop leadership in the community.
2. To discuss problems of the city.
3. To see if the citizens of Mitchellville are willing to help their town grow.

Mitchellville will get a grant and a loan for a sewer system to be constructed in July. Therefore, we should have a clean up rally, to get our community in shape. When their new building is finished we will need city clerks, post office clerks, firemen, and trained personnel for the Day Care Center.

Introduction of speaker was done by Mrs. Bates. Mr. Priddy, of Priddy Insurance Company in Dumas, Arkansas gave the following message:

"Mitchellville is a new place. For the past few months Mitchellville has progressed.

All organizations has a voice in the city council, the council plans the growth of your city-----Dumas is an excellent example of poor planning. Business are located in the residential areas, and vice-versus. In planning your town you need professional help and hardwork. To find out if you want your town to grow asked yourself these questions: Who's qualified? Am I willing to work?"

BOARD MEMBERS OF THE HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Joe Brasfield

Mr. George Coleman

Mr. James Racy

Mr. R. A. McCarrell

Mrs. Nealie Jackson

Mr. Albert Hollinshed

Mrs. Margie Allen

Mr. Willie Dean

Mrs. Frankie Jackson

Mr. Johnnie Smith - Chairman

Mr. Will Pittman - Co-Chairman

Mrs. Dorothy M. Smith - Secretary

Mr. Shirley Glass

FROM:

TO:

Any person wishing to sell their property must give the organization (Home Owners) the first choice.

Pride in our city must come first, we show our pride by developing a pleasant attitude toward our community. Our goals and objectives are:

1. To sponsor housing, insurance and recreation.
2. To see that our city is kept clean.
3. To see that the city codes are enforced.

If any officer of the organization miss three meetings, they shall be warned by receiving a letter from the Chariman. After missing six meetings, the organization shall declare the office vacant, therefore, the body will appoint or nonate someone else for the position.

March 29, 1969

City Council
Mitchellville, Arkansas

Dear Sir:

We the Home Owners Association of Mitchellville, Arkansas, present to you the following recommendations for your consideration; at your Council meeting, which is scheduled for April 2, 1969.

I. Names for streets that have not been named:

- (a) Ringo
- (b) Pine
- (c) Kildare
- (d) Cedar
- (e) Front
- (f) Belair
- (g) McCormick

II. The withdrawal of Mitchell Street and replace it with McCarrol Street.

III. We would like your co-operation in the project to erect street signs, and numbering of streets and houses.

IV. Consider Main Street running East and West, rather than through the mill yard.

V. All street that do not run in to main street be called avenues.

Your consideration of the five above mentioned recommendation will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Johnnie Smith,
Chairman Home Owners Association

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PROBLEMS OF A SMALL
ALL-NEGRO TOWN IN THE ARKANSAS DELTA

This study gives critical analysis to a few selected problems of the town of Mitchellville, Arkansas. This small all-Negro town was incorporated in 1873 but does not give much evidence of development since that time. This critical analysis seeks to discover the reasons for this lack of development. This study will not objectively point out causes of certain problems, without giving undue attention to the motives of different personalities.

An Abstract of a Thesis
Presented to the
School of Graduate Studies
Ouachita Baptist University

by recording the events and problems it is expected that they may be seen in a clearer perspective. As the events are recorded, an attempt will be made to see the relationship between

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Such a study requires certain stated information. Attention is here given to the location of the town in the United States and also to the fact that the town is involved in that the population of the town is all-Negro.

by
Lacy Kirk Solomon
May 1970

SOLOMON, LACY KIRK, A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PROBLEMS OF A SMALL ALL-NEGRO TOWN IN THE ARKANSAS DELTA. Master of American Civilization, May, 1970, 105 pp., 4 Bibliography, 9 Appendixes.

This study gives critical analysis to a few selected problems of the town of Mitchellville, Arkansas. This small all-Negro town was incorporated in 1963, but does not give much evidence of development since that time. This critical analysis seeks to discover some reasons for this lack of development. This study will seek to objectively point out causes of certain problems, without giving undue attention to the motives of different personalities.

By recording the events and problems it is expected that they may be seen in a clearer perspective. As the events are recorded, an attempt will be made to see the relationship between them.

In order to make recommendations of improvement it will be necessary to point out certain weaknesses in past and present techniques; this will be done with the hope that the desired improvements will be made.

Such a study requires certain detailed information. Attention is here given to the location of the town in the United States and also in Arkansas. The race factor is involved in that the population of the town is all-Negro.

Special attention will be given to the Federal Programs of assistance. The efforts necessary to receive such assistance and the effect of this federal money on the social relation of the town is noted.

This study can serve as a journal of a small town or area seeking development with federal aid. The effect of the program of development or improvement will be greatly dependent on certain positive and negative forces operating in and around the town.

The problems of citizen participation, with its encouragement and discouragement, is not overlooked. Jobs in and around the town, information of city government and the basic problem of small towns will be noted. Long-range and immediate goals are natural areas of concern. Political forces in and around the town are of vital concern in such a study as this.

Cultural activities are discussed under the headings of education and recreation.

Solutions to the problems will involve an attempt to correct the problems after noting the causes.

The objective is to show that lack of development does not just happen; there are recognizable causes. We seek to show that many of these causes are selfish, and then to point out ways of overcoming hindering causes. The role of the government in developing such areas will be stressed.

This study is limited in that there are no books written on it. Another limitation is that of time; one will not have the time span to see suggested solutions actually work in Mitchellville. This study will be limited to project proposals, interviews, etc.

There is so much talk of aid to the underprivileged and so much money and talent spread around that this town would be a good place to bring ideals in touch with reality. This study seeks to do that.

This study considers only a few of the problems of the town of Mitchellville. An overall look at the many problems of this small all-Negro town in the Arkansas Delta points to deprivation. The deprivation referred to here is long-standing and in many instances it is legal, expected, and accepted. A look at some of the area of deprivation shows a marked interrelatedness. This critical analysis shows that the town suffered from a deprivation of certain educational opportunities, economic advantages, job skills, and progressive leadership.

The project of development under the OEO is seen as helping solve the problems analyzed in this study.