

Citizens League
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APPROVED:
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
May 30, 1979

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Members, Board of Directors

FROM: Program Committee, Medora Perlman, Chairman

SUBJECT: Recommendation for the new studies component of the 1979-80 Citizens League work program

The Program Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Directors on that portion of the annual Citizens League work program concerning new study projects. This past year the Program Committee has followed essentially the same procedures as previous Program Committees. During the first several months of its work, the committee invited several resource persons to discuss possible areas for Citizens League study. Then, in February, the committee assembled a list of more than 200 possible study projects. In the intervening months the committee trimmed the list until it came up with the recommendations in this memorandum.

Members of the Program Committee this year were: Medora Perlman, Chairman; Tom Beech, Francis M. Boddy, Fred C. Cady, Charles H. Clay, Robert Courser, Scotty Gillette, David Graven, Peter A. Heegaard, Paul Hilstad, Peter Hutchinson, Dean Lund, Rosemary Rockenbach, John Rollwagen, Glen Skovholt, James Toscano, Tom Triplett and T. Williams.

The Program Committee recommends four new study projects for 1979-80:

- Job training and placement for the disadvantaged in the Twin Cities area, with emphasis on the role of public programs, such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).
- The dilemma of using the pricing system in allocation of basic household services without placing an undue burden on lower-income households.
- Finding ways to site environmentally-sensitive projects in the Twin Cities area.
- Whether the Twin Cities area is in a position to utilize new technology to the fullest in improving communications within the area, including rapid transmittal of written, audio and video information.

If the Board of Directors authorizes additional new study projects for 1979-80 beyond the four listed above, the Program Committee recommends either or both of the following two projects be selected:

- An attempt to determine what lies behind apparent widespread concern over the quality of public elementary and secondary education.
- Determining the potential of, and obstacles to, flexible work hours and job-sharing.

At the meeting at which the Program Committee made its final selection, twelve projects were still under consideration. They include the six listed above, plus the following:

- The provision of responsible guardians to look after the assets of people who cannot otherwise care for themselves.
- How to provide an administrative mechanism in public agencies in Minnesota to handle citizen grievances.
- The question of expanding the uses of tax-exempt municipal bonds.
- The growth, scope of activity and relationship to government of non-profit organizations.
- Whether supervisory employees in government should be treated differently from the rank-and-file in collective bargaining.
- The controversy over whether certain housing policies are restricting the availability of adequate dwelling units for low- and moderate-income households.

The Program Committee assumes that the Board of Directors will continue the practice begun last summer of naming a special ad hoc committee of the Board to recommend a specific charge for each new study project. Therefore, the brief descriptions which follow should be regarded only as preliminary, and not a final assignment, to the research committee. In fact, some of the questions which are listed in these brief descriptions will have to be addressed by the ad hoc committees in developing the recommended charges.

1. Job training and placement for the disadvantaged in the Twin Cities area, with emphasis on the role of public programs such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

There is considerable controversy over the adequacy of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs for the Twin Cities area jobless persons. There are serious questions concerning the effectiveness of the program in assisting unemployed persons in getting and keeping their jobs.

The study committee could examine how the needs of the unemployed are determined. Are there reliable sources of labor market information data? How are the unemployed identified? Is CETA reaching the Cities' hard-core unemployed? In what way are services for the unemployed developed or even linked together? Simply, who benefits from CETA and how much of an unemployment problem is there?

Furthermore, what about CETA's overall problem in the area of mismanagement, especially concerning the allocation of federal funds? What is CETA's impact on public institutions and services? And what is the relationship between CETA and the economic development of our area?

2. The dilemma of using the pricing system in allocation of basic household services without placing an undue burden on lower-income households.

A serious dilemma is appearing, as the cost of a number of basic household services now continues to rise sharply. On the one hand, the use of a price-rate

system is seen as important and perhaps even essential, as a device to conserve heat, automobile fuel, electric power and other scarce resources, to minimize environmentally-disruptive activities, and to control spending by local governments for such household services and police, fire and street maintenance. On the other hand, since family incomes vary widely, these rising prices and rates create much greater burdens on some people than on others -- and a real problem for those at lower income levels. This dilemma needs to be resolved.

The committee should look at the proposals being discussed, for dealing with the 'equity' problem by keeping the prices of essential goods and services low, through the regulatory process. It should look also at other approaches to dealing with income inequities, that could maintain the conservation-effects of the pricing system. The study should be broad enough to look at the way public policy in Minnesota deals also with the problem of income-inequities in the tax costs for public services, both through rate-reductions and through credits.

3. Finding ways to site environmentally-sensitive projects in the Twin Cities area.

Finding acceptable locations in the Twin Cities area for landfills, coal storage facilities, roads and other uses with substantial environmental impact is becoming more difficult. Sometimes the problem may be an apparent refusal to face up to a decision at all because of an expectation that no location can be found. Other times, a decision may not be possible because all of the controversy is focused on someone's preferred solution, instead of trying to analyze the problem and possible ways to solve the problem.

In developing a specific charge for this project, the ad hoc committee of the Board should become familiar with a new project of the Upper Midwest Council which is designed to mediate environmental disputes. The ad hoc committee should determine whether the assignment should focus on *process* or on finding a solution to an immediate, specific environmental controversy in the Twin Cities area, such as the location of solid waste disposal sites or a proposed freeway.

4. Whether the Twin Cities area is in a position to utilize new technology to the fullest in improving communications within the area, including rapid transmittal of written, audio and video information.

Means of communication within the Twin Cities area are changing at a very rapid rate. Several new forms of technology are now, or will shortly be, available in our area. These new forms of technology include such things as: fiber optics, high speed facsimile, and two-way cable TV. Local awareness of communication developments and their potential impact on the region's quality of life and economy is low.

The study committee should consider communications needs in this region, including the need for rapid transmittal of written material, data, and audio and video material. What are the immediate one-to-one and many-to-many needs? Are the technology changes developing in a way to provide this community with rapid, effective, and responsible communications?

What will be the impact on an organization like the Citizens League?

5. An attempt to determine what lies behind apparent widespread concern over the quality of public elementary and secondary education.

There is widespread concern over the issue of public education in our area. Concerns are varied, including: the quality of public education, teacher seniority,

student and teacher evaluation systems, class size, expectations of public education, and parent perception of education. In addition to looking directly at the system of public education, we will examine private education and what attracts people to it, to shed some light on the problems within public education.

Why is there a growing interest by parents to send their children to private rather than public schools? What does this movement in educational institutions say about the quality of education, educational values, and the public school system? Are educational values changing?

6. Determine the potential of, and obstacles to, flexible work hours and job-sharing.

With the continuing growth in the number of two-wage earner and single-parent households, interest in flexible work hours and job-sharing also grows. Flexible work arrangements can provide benefits for the employer and employee alike. Some firms have found that employees working part-time get more accomplished per hour than do fulltime employees. Flexible hours can reduce congestion at the work place, and increase employee productivity, as employees tend to select the work period where they personally function best.

The committee could explore the obstacles and benefits to flexible work hours within three groups: management, labor, and employees, and how these three groups perceive and benefit from flexible work hours.

7. The controversy over whether certain housing policies are restricting the availability of adequate dwelling units for low- and moderate-income households.

In parts of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, some dwelling units which formerly were occupied by low- and moderate-income households have been remodeled into or replaced by dwelling units which are too expensive for these households. There is some controversy over the extent to which such displacement is occurring, whether adequate, affordable housing options are available for the lower income households, and whether certain households, such as large single-parent families, are more affected than others.

The study committee could examine this issue by concentrating on a small geographic area and study the number of problems impacting on that single area. This would allow a committee to see all of the given factors affecting a neighborhood.

8. The provision of responsible guardians to look after the assets of people who cannot otherwise care for themselves.

Guardianships exist in a situation where persons cannot be responsible for themselves and do not have responsible relatives. Therefore, other individuals are appointed as the responsible guardian. The problem in question is one of the guardian's management of the assets of people in a system with little oversight by a responsible governing body. Evidence shows that the courts pay little attention to the activities of the guardian nor take on much responsibility. The question, then, is the present system of guardianships properly caring for these people? And who should have the overall responsibility for the guardians?

9. How to provide an administrative mechanism in public agencies in Minnesota to handle citizen grievances.

Several programs in Minnesota now are designed to provide an administrative mechanism for the resolution of citizen grievances. However, the philosophy of these concepts needs to be examined, along with the success of various projects now in effect to determine the best way or ways to handle citizen complaints with government agencies and organizations. What kind of access do citizens presently have to governmental organizations? What additional barriers exist to citizen complaint procedures for minorities? What would be the effects of an external grievance course of action for all citizens (such as an ombudsman)? Where are the present citizen complaint organizations located, and do they have overlapping functions?

10. The question of expanding the uses of tax-exempt municipal bonds.

The tax-exempt municipal bond market has been enlarged considerably in recent years as government credit has been used increasingly for such traditionally private investment as industrial buildings and housing. Serious questions remain concerning the use of tax-exempt bonds for purposes that are not clearly for a public purpose.

Should Minnesota follow other states and prohibit bonds? Should the state be subsidizing the interest paid on private projects? Would the reduced interest equal the cost to the state in lost state income taxes? How much effect do industrial revenue bonds have on the cost of general obligation bonds of the state and its political subdivisions?

11. The growth, scope of activity and relationship to government of non-profit organizations.

How is the government dealing with the rapid growth of non-profit organizations? The size, number, scope of activity, and the question of legality of non-profit organizations is growing. But how are these groups being critiqued and controlled by the government?

How effective and responsive are these groups? What is their level of performance and/or waste? On what basis do these groups receive their non-profit, tax-exempt status? If several of these organizations are providing compatible services, should they be required to provide shared services (that would otherwise be provided through the for-profit sector)?

12. Whether supervisory employees in government should be treated differently from the rank-and-file in collective bargaining.

Should any changes be made in the rights given to supervisory employees to organize for collective bargaining? In apparent contrast with private sector labor relations, an increasing number of supervisory and managerial personnel in the public sector are becoming organized themselves for collective bargaining. Consequently, the lines between "management" and "labor" seem to be becoming more blurred in a public body than in a private business. In some cases, the supervisory employees are members of the same union as the rank-and-file.

Do management personnel negotiate the same as other personnel? Are these two groups treated equally or have they developed different rights? Should it be management personnel that have the bargaining rights with the employer, or should it be representatives from the labor force?