

NEIGHBORHOOD FOUNDATIONS
MEMORANDUM #16

FROM: MRS. LAVERNE LOVE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
EAST CENTRAL CITIZENS ORGANIZATION,
COLUMBUS, OHIO

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY BEFORE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON EXECUTIVE REORGANIZATION

DATE: DECEMBER 6, 1966

STATEMENT BY MRS. LAVERNE LOVE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ECCO, COLUMBUS, OHIO
PRESENTED TO THE RIBICOFF SUBCOMMITTEE
ON URBAN PROBLEMS, U.S. SENATE

In remembering President John F. Kennedy's famous words and I quote, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." I have truly begun to realize what these famous words mean to me. To have this opportunity to tell you of an organization that is fast becoming a household word in Columbus, ECCO, is a great honor for ECCO as well as myself.

The letters E-C-C-O, stand for "East Central Citizens Organization."

ECCO became an entity August 16, 1965, when the neighborhood leaders had a general meeting to prepare people for the signing of the Charter. ECCO received its charter from the State of Ohio, August 30, 1965.

ECCO is a non-profit, tax-exempt neighborhood foundation. It is a pilot project and the first of its kind in the nation.

ECCO is composed of four Neighborhood Block Clubs which serve the geographical area which includes the 6,500 people in ECCO. Under ECCO's constitution and by-laws, anyone 16 or over, living or working within the boundaries who has signed a roster, is a voting member of the General Assembly.

The Executive Council which is elected by the Assembly is composed of 21 persons. Each Neighborhood Club elects two delegates, who fill eight seats on the Executive Council; the remaining thirteen will run as members at large.

The day-to-day functioning of the government of ECCO is carried on by a staff the Executive Council hires, for the purpose of charitable, educational, social and economic development.

Each member of the Executive Council receives a stipend of approximately \$80 per month for their participation.

To date, ECCO has received \$185,000 for the project from the Office of Economic Opportunity and \$126,000 from the Office of Juvenile Delinquency, HEW.

Milton Kotler, of the Institute for Policy Studies, and Pastor Leopold W. Bernhard, of the First English Lutheran Church, are among ECCO's hardest workers, and in a sense are the fathers of ECCO. Pastor Bernhard asked for aid from his congregation in working with the community which is 70% Negro, 30% white, and where unemployment and juvenile delinquency run high. From this aid, the community took hold and began setting up a government that they designed themselves. Four years prior to this action, Pastor Bernhard asked for and received support from the First English Lutheran Church to the tune of \$175,000 toward developing a Neighborhood Center at the church. The General Lutheran Church gave an additional \$30,000.

The congregation of First English Lutheran Church has since transferred the Neighborhood Center and all its services to the management and direction of ECCO. ECCO, through its Council and Assembly, will continue, change, or terminate existing programs and invent new ones according to needs and wishes of the people, as expressed by the people.

With the facts I have given so far, I feel the East Central Citizens Organization is an opportunity not only for the community people of ECCO, but for all of Columbus, and indeed for the whole country.

Poverty effects all of us. If one human being is poor or lacks formal education through lack of money, knowledge and skills, that person can be of help to no one, not even himself.

Through deprivation and degradation, he will leave a grotesque and disgusting picture on society. He will bear children to carry this picture on. He will take and take until society has nothing more to give. Here you have a man that is a total liability to himself and the community. Now, let us take another look at ECCO, through the eyes of this person, this alive human being.

ECCO will act as an interceder between him and society, between him and the community. ECCO will counsel, guide and build a bridge so that the gap between the two will be closed. He will then feel new freedoms, formulate new goals. Apathy will no longer exist. He will begin to know the joy of making a decision for himself, and for the benefit of others; he will know the

joy of accomplishment. He will see himself, his family, and his community rise to heights, before thought unattainable. He has now become an asset to himself as well as his community.

This is the heart and goal of ECCO. To give people freedom to act for themselves in a community so that apathy and the divisions that exist between people can be abolished, giving people the joy of working and acting together.

In the past, people were not given the opportunity to solve their own problems. This is what makes ECCO so unique. It does not have to wait for decisions and actions on the part of a structure that is far removed from the grass-roots problems of the people in the community. To this extent, the people come together sharing their common problems, and seeking a means towards a solution. Such a foundation eliminates any fear of reprisal from a power structure or a super-social agency. It is the thinking of the people within the foundation, that this program will help them elevate their standards of living.

The OEO grant to ECCO was to consist of three phases. Phase One of the grant, covered by the initial proposal, was for a period of three months, during which the necessary preparation was made for the first General Assembly of ECCO, the election of its officers, and the complete transfer of responsibility for the areas' social and welfare services at the Center from the First English Lutheran Church to the area citizens' organization.

A Research and Development program budget for this purpose had been submitted to the Lutheran Church of America and was funded. Also, the Stern Family Fund contributed, as did the Columbus Council of Churches. Attorneys and consultants had drafted a foundation charter as well as a set of by-laws and had secured tax-exemption, etc. Each step was reviewed by the operating committee of the Center--a committee composed of First English Lutheran Church personnel--and they made final decisions concerning the transition. When the Articles of Incorporation were finally signed, the signatories were the operating committee of the Center as well as five area citizens representing the four neighborhood clubs. This group became the interim council for the foundation membership and served until March 6, 1966, the time of the first General Assembly meeting.

During this preliminary period, an application had been prepared and submitted to OEO for a demonstration grant to fund the operation of the newly emerging Neighborhood Foundation governing structure.

Many contacts had also been initiated to assure a close working relationship between the new citizens' group and the Columbus Metropolitan Area Community Action Organization (CMAAO). Although the demonstration

nature of the grant that was being sought made it possible for ECCO to function outside the jurisdiction of CMAAO, it was immediately recognized that close cooperation between the two organizations was absolutely essential. Numerous communications, meetings and conversations were held. Several public and private area leaders, not members of either organization, were also enlisted to secure the interest of a broad-based community leadership support for the project. A strongly sympathetic and supportive role was played by many individuals from all area groupings during this period as the purpose and concept of ECCO was widely explained. Almost everyone seemed to look favorably upon this unique experiment in community organization and self-determination--including OEO, which approved the application and made the demonstration grant.

ECCO held out a new hope and imagination for the settlement house tradition, neighborhood center structure and possible community organization. It also offered a new setting for the whole social work profession. Self-governing development afforded a whole new cadre of leadership in real service by the neighborhood citizens. From almost every quarter there seemed to be recognition of the promising new possibilities for updating the concept and dimensions of social service education and citizens' participation.

ECCO was also the tangible example of the kind of cooperation that was possible from an established private institution--the First English Lutheran Church in this instance--and a broadly-based community action program and structure. It was equally an example of how a church organization could cooperate with a Federally-supported program to the advantage of its area citizens. These and many other characteristics and considerations evoked wide interest in this unique experiment and prompted the area citizens to respond enthusiastically until over 1400 of a possible 2000 eligible citizens in the target area had become members of ECCO. Over 450 of these attended the March 6, 1966 General Assembly and elected twenty-one representatives to their Executive Council and chose their Council officers.

The interim council designated a project staff for the Phase One period to increase the membership and active involvement of the residents in the area in order to gain more complete citizen-participation in both the organizing efforts and the ultimate decision-making. They also secured the election of two representatives from each of the four neighborhood clubs to the Executive Council. Each club was strengthened and encouraged to initiate local services. A large scale information program was launched to acquaint all the target area residents of the purpose and concept of ECCO--self governing development of both themselves and their community.

The by-laws, etc., legal documents, were revised and further developed and the entire structure was finalized during this period in preparation for the Assembly meeting.

Expert counsel, competent consultation, dedicated staff leadership, enthusiastic citizen participation and popular support--a broadening understanding of ECCO's purpose--characterized this Phase One period.

Phase Two of the grant period, following the March 6, 1966 General Assembly, was the actual beginning of the concentrated and comprehensive efforts of ECCO as a broad-based citizens' organization and service agency. At this stage of development, there was a popularity and interest in ECCO that seemed to suggest the availability of massive cooperation, assistance and support from all directions. Almost everyone was confident that herculean strides would be made by this new grass-roots organization over night. But, unfortunately, a number of events transpired that were to delimit ECCO's "speedy" progress. OEO nationally fell on hard days in the mass media. CMACAO had a staff leadership change and found itself projected in the local press through several unfavorable releases. A situation which has since improved. Many private, local and national agencies took a somewhat less enthusiastic posture with regard to OEO programs in general and ECCO in particular. Community Chest money directly or through agencies was not forthcoming. Several agencies and individuals in the community began to realize the potential "threat" that ECCO's concept posed to the traditional "service" and "helping" organizations in terms of citizen involvement. OEO or other Federal funds were not made available to ECCO so that they could establish their first component neighborhood center--in fact--adequate funds were not received in order that ECCO could even continue the center activities at the level which they had been previously in the former church-related center. Some internal misunderstanding also contributed to a slow-down in progress, and several adverse news releases put ECCO on the defensive.

In less than three months, ECCO began to experience a great many developments that all other CAP agencies were experiencing; however, they were more critical for ECCO. The preliminary phase and Phase One in ECCO's development and history had been primarily periods of enlistment and neighborhood organization which were not ends in themselves, but had lasting value only in the program development and action-oriented services that were to follow. Central to the whole concept of ECCO had been the idea that it was a self-organized, self-selecting, self-help and self-directed structure and "package" of programs. The self-organized structure was well on the way in March, but the remaining ingredients--essential to the whole concept--were not possible. This had a very negative effect upon both the "grass-roots" leadership who desperately needed some personal and corporate success experiences with "the establishment"--and also the citizens in the neighborhoods who had seen and accepted ECCO as a direct solution to the red tape, detached delivery of services and irrelevant services and criteria for being a recipient which had characterized on many of the helping agencies which they had known. Both groups and most individuals had been drawn to

ECCO for these reasons and because of their numerous unpleasant experiences (disappointed promises) of the past, had a slower motivation point and an earlier frustration point than their more affluent neighbors. These factors contributed to their suspicion of the organization, its leadership, Federal OEO support, etc. This suspicion on a number of occasions burst into open hostility.

A whole series of failures plagued ECCO. Conversation that had promised cooperation between ECCO and CMACAO produced no tangible results. Strong support from Columbus' civic leadership did not materialize. The Advisory Board of such business and professional leaders was six months in forming and even then had been a weak and ineffective tool. With the changing role of the First English Lutheran Church's relationship to ECCO, there has been a reduction in church and church agency involvement at all levels. Competition began to develop between all OEO supported programs and U.C.C. agencies so that anticipated cooperation and support never was realized. Because of these local developments, State and national agency and institutional support and cooperation were also limited.

Perhaps the most discouraging experience that ECCO has faced is the lack of financial support it received to carry on the programs it had developed. In line with its purpose and unique genius, service priorities were set by the area residents, proposals were written and reviewed, edited and changed at every stage by the area citizens and then processed through Chicago--at least in one instance, ECCO had been told over six months ago, that its center proposal would receive preferential funding--yet no OEO funds have been received. Many demonstration projects have been "assigned" to other communities, but no strong supportive, careful attention, preferential or compensatory efforts have been made by OEO--on any level--in behalf of ECCO. This, in spite of the approval of ECCO's purpose initially, its realization that there was considerable opposition and many road blocks in the path of ECCO's accomplishments as well as ECCO's lack of experience in dealing with such matters. This, in spite of the need for a successful, local demonstration of the community action philosophy regarding the "maximum feasible participation of the poor." This, in spite of frequent requests from ECCO for assistance.

These many factors--plus a number of others--have conditioned the direction that ECCO has taken and determined to a considerable degree the success that ECCO has attained--both in terms of those criteria based upon its original concept and purpose, and also those internal criteria which have emerged during this developmental period. It can be substantiated conclusively that the community organization portion, in line with ECCO's concept, has progressed faster, more thoroughly and more comprehensively than was expected by most observers. The hindrances and set-backs listed above, while discouraging and deplorable in the light of their implications, did not

destroy either the grass-roots organization or demobilize it. In fact, it has been the judgment of many observers that the resilience and stamina of ECCO's staff leadership, Executive Council membership and neighborhood clubs have been far greater than would have been manifest by a more affluent, voluntary membership, service organization during this stage of its initial formation.

Yet, these factors have made the unique program development and selection part of ECCO impossible as well as program administration, and this impossibility has been heightened not only by the absence of program funds for ECCO to mount its first neighborhood service center, but also the fact that CMACAO's first neighborhood center was not funded and opened until ECCO was already over eight months old and no traditional "Settlement House" center was found which was willing to participate fully in the comparison of selection, administration and budgets of service programs.

Although ECCO has tried to do its part in all of these areas, and stands ready and eager to go on with the complete and comprehensive task which was implicit in its origin, it now becomes obvious that much of this broader activity will not become possible until Phase Three--the Conduct and Administration phase--has been funded and implemented.

Some consideration must also be given to the evaluation machinery which was a part of ECCO's project. Since this evaluation was to be based primarily upon the comparison of programs--selection, administration and costs, as they were a part of the three Neighborhood Centers, and since this was not possible, as described above, only minimal preliminary steps were taken by the evaluation team. An evaluation instrument was prepared, some initial criteria established and several members of the evaluation team either visited ECCO or had conversations with ECCO's staff, council members and/or residents; however, a report of their findings and recommendations concerning project modification are not available at this writing. (A complete report will be made by this team by the end of February, 1967, at the conclusion of Phase Two of ECCO's present grant.)

Here follows a delineation of the service programs that ECCO inherited from the church-related center and a brief statement concerning their status at this time.

The East Central Citizens Organization Neighborhood Center was originally the community services facility of the First English Lutheran Church. For several years that congregation provided a number of social services to the residents of the east central area. When the center was formally transferred to the East Central Citizens Organization, it was done so with the clear understanding that ECCO would continue to provide the needed services so far as its resources would allow. This has been done; and where it has

not been done, it is because ECCO lacked the necessary funds.

1. ECCO is conducting a pre-school activity for two classes of pre-schoolers, children afflicted with mental retardation and 4-5 year olds. This service doubles as a day-care operation for the large number of working mothers in the area; it provides a social development laboratory for children just prior to their entering elementary school; and it helps provide an experience for the mentally retarded which they would ordinarily not receive. (This service has been maintained exclusively by volunteer staff and re-usable materials.)
2. ECCO can point to an excess of 150 persons who have received employment through a unique Job Development and Referral program conducted in cooperation with the Ohio State Employment Service. An O.E.S. representative is headquartered in ECCO's offices five days a week. Job applicants in the community place job applications with this representative, who in turn avails them of the many O.E.S. services. Also, many Columbus employers contact ECCO in search of employees; and ECCO and O.E.S. refer their applicants to the employers. In the summer of 1966, this service was broadened to include a special summer jobs search for high school students. (This service has been staffed by ECCO's corporate aides and the placement of the O.E.S. staff person in the ECCO office at no cost to ECCO.)
3. The east central area, like all central city slum areas, suffers from educational deficiencies. ECCO is attempting to deal with this problem by providing tutoring services for school students and adults. Current programs give priority to 4th, 5th, and 6th graders and to adults who request it. (This service has been provided through the volunteer staff time of Ohio State University and Capital University students, again at no cost to ECCO.)
4. A constant and recurring problem in areas of high poverty is the matter of families with insufficient income to purchase the necessary food for their daily needs. ECCO has sought to deal with this problem through its Emergency Food Shelf program, a "community pantry" which has food for needy families. The Shelf has filled the void created by public relief and welfare regulations which sometimes operate to create a time period between needy person's application and the application's approval-- a time period which does not diminish the need and often the need going unmet. (This service has been financed by resident bake sales, paper and rag collection and sales, etc., citizen support.) However, the demand has far exceeded the resources; and unless substantial additional funds are found immediately, this service will have to be curtailed.

5. A Mother Club provides leisure time services to mothers in the area. Arts and crafts, bowling and general leisure time activities are a part of this program. (This service is also provided at no additional cost to ECCO.)
6. Home management, cooking, serving, food budgeting, etc., are provided through Consumer Education and Home Maker Services. (These services have also been staffed by volunteers or as an additional responsibility of members of the ECCO staff.)
7. The ECCO area has four block clubs which were in existence before ECCO was legally established. They are the South Side Clover Leaf Club, Blackburn Club, Middle East Club, and First Neighbor Club. Through ECCO, and with its help, these clubs were encouraged to expand their activities; and each club was given two seats on ECCO's Executive Council. They have a major voice in running ECCO programs. Their major activities are as follows:
 - a. Community Clean-up Campaign: Garbage and trash collections, removal of all abandoned automobiles, and de-weeding of the lots and yards in the area.
 - b. Distribution of free grass and flower seeds to those desirous of improving the appearances of their yards.
 - c. Community picnic for all children in the area.
 - d. Community paint-up campaign: Helping area residents to secure paint for houses in need of new coats of paint.
 - e. Housing code enforcement: Working to persuade the proper authorities to tear down condemned units and to force owners to upgrade those units that do not meet code requirements.
 - f. Red Cross Home Nursing Course for area mothers: Teaching of the basic skills needed by one who provides nursing care to people confined to their homes.
 - g. Blood Donors Program: Encouraging area residents to contribute to the Red Cross blood supply.
 - h. Fund Raising Activities: Sponsored bake sales and rag sales to raise money to help finance community improvement projects. (All of these services have been provided at no cost to the ECCO budget.)

8. Despite its very limited resources, ECCO is making an effort to provide some additional needed programs such as:
 - a. Senior Citizens - The Columbus Golden Age Organization conducts a senior citizens program in ECCO's facility. ECCO assists by recruiting new members and by providing an ECCO corporate aid for on-the-spot program assistance.
 - b. Planned Parenthood - The Columbus Planned Parenthood Organization conducts a clinic in ECCO's facility. ECCO assists by interesting its residents in the program and by providing a corporate aid for on-the-spot program assistance.
9. Formerly the church-related Neighborhood Center conducted a legal services program for area residents. ECCO continued this function when the Center was transferred to it and until the funds were depleted. Presently ECCO's legal counsel has continued some of these services; but he is limited because no funds are available to conduct the program on the scope necessary to meet the need.
10. A basic function of ECCO is the mobilization of community sentiment with regard to the existence of specific problems which are prevalent in ghetto areas. ECCO's philosophy requires it to speak out on certain public matters so that the total Columbus community can be made aware of the needs and aspirations of the people in the ECCO community:
 - a. Recently local police were called to investigate an incident--a burglary--which occurred at an east central business establishment. After arrival at the scene, the police officers discharged their firearms, one bullet passing through a residence in the immediate vicinity. Many residents in the area felt that the police had engaged in indiscriminate shooting, which endangered the safety of innocent people. Recognizing that the nation--Columbus included--is witnessing some adverse relations between police personnel and minority groups, ECCO took the lead in bringing together police officials and area residents, to prevent this incident from poisoning the community atmosphere. A thorough discussion was held; and the incident closed without any significant harm being done to police-community relations.
 - b. Residents of the ECCO area are quite concerned over what many believe to be a lower quality of education in the area's public schools. Alone and in conjunction with other civic groups, ECCO is working to keep city officials and public educators aware of these feelings. ECCO believes that race relations in

many cities have been strained because of the problems inherent in ghetto education. It believes that Columbus race relations can be improved more rapidly if Columbus people are made and kept aware of the need to solve this problem now. Also, ECCO believes that residents of the east central area cannot really improve their employment opportunities if their education is not significantly upgraded.

- c. ECCO works to improve the quality of public services in its community. For example, it successfully fought for, and secured, a traffic light at a busy intersection through which children must pass going to and from school. This service, although tremendously important to the life of the community and its residents, has been provided as an integral part of ECCO's structure and at no additional cost to ECCO's budget.

The only component program that ECCO has had funded up until this time was a Youth Civic Center, which was funded by the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

As an organization dedicated to the proposition that the war against poverty is a total effort, ECCO is vitally concerned with the effects of poverty on the young people of the east central area. For several years the First English Lutheran Church operated programs designed partially to meet the needs of the area's youth. With the transfer of the Neighborhood Center from the church to ECCO, the latter's leaders continued those programs and began to seek out more effective ways to meet the needs of youth. After numerous community meetings called to discuss ways of improving opportunities for youth, ECCO submitted a proposal to the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The proposal embodied a demonstration project in a self-governing and comprehensive youth services center. In June 1966, the proposal was funded by a \$126,619 Federal grant. The Youth Civic Center is providing a number of programs and services for the ECCO community--programs and services which are benefiting the total Columbus community.

1. The Youth Civic Center conducts community dances, and it sponsors teen-age club groups. These activities have been very helpful in providing supervised recreation. A major result is a decrease in the number of young people found loitering on the streets and in unwholesome business establishments. A teen snack bar is in the final stages of preparation. Also, the center pool room provides good co-ed recreation.
2. The Center sponsors sports programs in basketball, football, volleyball, skating, and baseball. Also, checkers and card-playing activities are provided throughout the year.

3. The Center conducts this program for the specific purpose of helping the young people develop a greater sense of awareness of the American and Afro-American cultural and historical heritages. A library of books dealing with all cultural and ethnic groups is being established. The Center sponsored a prize-winning American history float in the ECCO parade; and recently some of its members visited the campus of Winston Salem Teachers College in Winston Salem, North Carolina.
4. The Y. C. C. is developing an agreement with the United Auto Workers which will provide training in service station management and auto mechanics for interested young men. Efforts are underway to lease from the city a soon-to-be abandoned fire house. The fire house will serve as the training center.
5. Columbus, like many other large cities, has experienced some manifestations of racial tensions. The Center is constantly involving its members in joint activity athletic and social--with the members of predominant white teen-age groups. The purpose here is to build bridges of understanding at a time when racial misunderstanding threatens Columbus and other cities.
6. The Center provides an organized instrument through which the youth can support all of ECCO's programs. The Center members publicize ECCO meetings by distributing leaflets on a door-to-door basis; by visiting homes to inform families about ECCO; and they publicize through loud-speaker vehicles operating in the ECCO area.
7. The Center has a working agreement with the Franklin County Court of Domestic Relations, Juvenile Division, which refers to ECCO all neighborhood youngsters who have been referred to the court. From twenty to thirty such referrals are made each month. The referrals are then involved in the Center programs for the purpose of helping them acquire more acceptable patterns of social conduct. The court maintains follow-up contacts to determine the effectiveness of the Center's programs in juvenile rehabilitation. Teams of Center members sit in on all court hearings for ECCO community youth who are in trouble with the law. They attempt to get to know the young person in trouble and they encourage him to visit the Center and take part in its activities.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Youth Civic Center has been its contribution to helping the young people develop a sense of their own worth. The bulk of the work required to put the Center building into good operational shape has been done by the young people. The Center is staffed by young people; and it is governed by a youth board. Thus, these young people are

experiencing the growth which accompanies the assumption of leadership responsibilities. In a sense, the Center is helping to prepare the area's future leaders; Youth Civic Center members are on ECCO's governing body. The Youth Civic Center screens, interviews, and hires its own youth employees some of whom are full-time and others of whom are part-time. The Youth Civic Center and ECCO finance committees hold joint meetings to map their fund-securing programs. The Center idea was partially conceived because of the numerous gang fights occurring in the southeast central area. Youth leaders, ECCO members, and First English Lutheran Church members believe that Youth Civic Center has stifled the development of juvenile gangs and fights.

Membership in the Youth Civic Center is open to all Columbus youth.

Some allusion should be made to several additional steps that ECCO has taken. In addition to the application which it has made through CMACAO for the establishment of a comprehensive neighborhood service center (mentioned previously) applications have also been developed for a credit union, a housing development project, a health program, etc. Also, ECCO has cooperated with CMACAO and other community agencies as they have sought Federal, State and local funds for programs that would benefit the residents of the ECCO target area.

The refunding of ECCO by OEO will make possible the continued successful example of OEO's most unique and significant structural concept--"the maximum feasible participation of the poor." Along with the funding of several component projects for ECCO's administration, an extremely valuable demonstration will be created for the comparison of what is possible under the OEO legislation, and other methods of decision making, selection and administration, and should do much to reinforce this whole concept--during a year when it is going to be hotly debated in many "courts" -- legislative as well as public opinion.

CS:kk
5/67