

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
INTERFAITH EMERGENCY CENTER

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Introduction

. . . it just so happened that on Sunday morning I had said in the pulpit that I had just finished a tour of the ghetto in Detroit and that if anyone thought that Detroit was going to escape violence we were badly mistaken. I think my complete statement was that if we were able to escape it this summer we would have it by next summer. At that point the riots were already in progress but no one knew it. That evening my wife and I were looking at the TV coverage of the Israeli-Arab conflict and they interrupted the program to say that the Grand Rapids National Guard would report to their center. We heard that announcement a couple of times and I said to my wife that it looked like there was trouble in Grand Rapids. If there was I would probably head for Grand Rapids. I called our Association Minister and asked him what was happening in Grand Rapids and he said he didn't know what was happening at Grand Rapids -- all he knew was what was happening in Detroit. And I said, "well, what do you mean?" And he said, "well, the whole intercity looks like it's about to break open." So that was Sunday night.

The above quote from a minister, who would later become involved in the Interfaith Emergency Center, summarizes several facts concerning events in

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\*This article is adapted from a M.A. thesis: Thomas R. Forrest, "Emergent Organization: A New Approach for Study" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University, 1968). The purpose of this thesis was to develop an analytical framework with which to look at organizational emergence and institutionalization. An attempt was made to test this framework using a case study which focused upon the emergence and establishment of the Interfaith Emergency Center, a group which appeared during the 1967 Detroit civil disturbance. Work on this revision was supported in part by the Center for Studies of Mental Health and Social Problems, Applied Research Branch, U.S. Public Health Service National Institute of Mental Health Grant 5-R01-MH15399-02.

Detroit, Michigan, on Sunday, July 23, 1967. First, certain persons in the Detroit community were sensitive to possible trouble that might erupt into a full-scale disturbance. Second, most of Detroit's citizens were totally unaware of events occurring in their city. City and state officials received the news media's cooperation in down-playing the event, so that local officials would obtain some control over the situation. However, national affiliates in other cities were reporting the events happening in Detroit. And third, most citizens learned of the disturbance through many indirect channels.

July 23, for most individuals, was a normal summer Sunday, with regular church attendance, swim meets, backyard barbecues, and a Tiger's home baseball game. Unknown to the 34,000 persons attending the Tiger's game, ten blocks from Briggs' stadium a disturbance was well underway. While many had taken their transistor radios to the game, no reports by local stations were given concerning any city disorder. The first clues that many received occurred when leaving the stadium were numerous road blocks, closing off the affected area. Belle Isle, a small recreational area, located in the Detroit River, was to have a swim meet Sunday afternoon. Those who were to attend found that the entire island had been closed. For many who had experienced the 1943 riot, this occurrence recalled the closing of Belle Isle -- and its use as a place of internment. Slowly, other clues of a city-wide disturbance were reaching the people.

For the greater part of Sunday, Detroit was under a news blackout. Local newspapers had already gone to press and the radio and TV stations cooperated in keeping silence on the disturbance taking place in the Twelfth Street area. It was felt by city officials that by down-playing the incident police officials could somehow contain it and minimize the spread of violence. But rumors spread

rapidly and by the late afternoon the telltale signs of black smoke, oozing forth into the sky, finally alerted everyone that something unusual was happening in Detroit. By Sunday evening, July 23, few people doubted that Detroit was in for trouble, but the extent and intensity of the disturbance was not yet comprehended. Despite the local news blackout, several clergymen and other isolated individuals had received disturbance reports from friends, relatives, and denominational headquarter officials, located in other metropolitan cities. While local Detroit radio and TV stations were down-playing the whole disturbance, national radio and TV affiliates were reporting the complete sequence of events. Individuals in other cities called friends and relatives in Detroit, only to find that they knew nothing of the disturbance. By 4:20 p.m. Detroit's Mayor requested that the National Guard be brought into the city, with the first troops arriving by 7:00 p.m. By 7:45 p.m. the Mayor issued a proclamation instituting a 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. curfew.

With the curfew and news blackout preventing both travel into the area and the dispensing of authenticated information, interested citizens relied upon gossip and what other bits and pieces of information they could gather from friends. That evening numerous Detroit church officials began calling their churches in the affected area to ascertain the extent of the disturbance, to inquire about the threat to church property and also to insure local pastors that the denomination would do all it could to aid them in their efforts to meet the situation. Reports were relayed back to these officials as to the widespread looting and arson taking place before the clergymen's eyes; however, no church reported that its property was in anyway jeopardized, burned or looted. Ministers and priests were encouraged to walk the streets in their clerical garb in order to try and persuade individuals to refrain from looting

and burning. The widespread destruction testified to the ineffectiveness of this effort.

#### Emergent Process

In most crisis situations, individuals seek to understand and interpret events by turning to friends and acquaintances for reassurance. The role that these previous relationships play should be underscored, for these relationships often provide the basis for much of the coordinated response to a crisis.

The onset of Detroit's civil disturbance was not the first time that clergymen had come together to handle existing community social needs such as low-cost housing, neighborhood integration, job discrimination and the myriad of other problems associated with poverty and racial discrimination. Besides the normal contacts through interfaith committees, councils and special study groups, church officials (primarily those church executives freed from pastoral duties) have been in frequent contact with one another concerning Detroit's racial and poverty problems. During 1963 and 1964 interested church officials formed the Metropolitan Council for Race and Human Rights, which was involved in many of the nonviolent protests that characterized the earlier era of the civil rights movement. However, since 1965 with the civil rights position dramatically changing towards a more militant orientation, many of the basic nonviolent premises which the council supported were being usurped by the more militant civil rights groups. This undermined the effectiveness of the council to speak and be heard. As one member stated:

We had an interfaith organization, The Metropolitan Council for Race and Religion and Human Rights back in the civil rights movement in 1963 and 1964 -- four faith groups and we did a pretty good job. Then with that nonviolent phase of the civil rights movement

ended we sort of lost our reason for existence it seemed. The organization spun off into kind of beating the bushes and going through motions. We still maintain it in name and we occasionally issue a statement from time to time on some public issue.

On returning from Chicago in January 1967, a United Church of Christ official brought back to Detroit an idea that he had acquired in Chicago concerning an interfaith "hotline." This "hotline" was a telephone conference among church officials involved in missions work. (Missions work is essentially the social-action field of the denominational structure.) The phone conference in Chicago was primarily intended as an opportunity to discuss the race-relation problems existing in the metropolitan area without having to spend time travelling to and from a meeting place. Financially, those involved felt that it would be cheaper to have a phone conference. It was then suggested to the Metropolitan Detroit Council of Churches that this type of conference would be an advantageous undertaking on the part of Detroit church officials interested in social action programs. At the end of January, 1967, an executive of the Detroit Council of Churches arranged a phone conference to be conducted at 8:00 a.m., Monday mornings. These Monday morning conferences were soon to be labeled the "Monday morning hotline," patterned after the Chicago one. Ten members comprised the core of this group, representing the Metropolitan Detroit Council of Churches, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian and United Church of Christ headquarters, along with the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit and the Protestant Community Services.

Every Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. the conference is held with a loose agenda allowing each member to contribute what he feels is important. Discussions run from how the churches could aid Negro families who move into an all white neighborhood, to the Kodak conflict with the Congress of Racial Equality

(CORE) in Rochester, New York.<sup>1</sup> A substantial portion of each meeting was centered around informing one another as to problems (mainly poverty and racial matters) posed in the Detroit metropolitan community. The confidence and informal understandings that participants gained through these conference calls would play a crucial role in the initial emergence of the Interfaith Council and Center.\* As one member stated:

. . . the fact that we all knew each other well enough so that when we sat together Monday afternoon we didn't have to say now who is this guy, can I trust him? I mean there had been a band of confidence built up that we immediately could move together.

While the Monday morning hotline provided one basis for interaction, the other groups (Detroit Council of Churches, Metropolitan Council on Religion and Human Rights and many other committees and conferences) all helped to establish a firm foundation of friendship and trust. With these past associations it logically followed that these individuals would attempt to contact one another when civic disorder gripped Detroit.

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\*At this point it would be appropriate to distinguish between the Interfaith Emergency Center and Council. Both the center and council emerged from this meeting. The council was designated to act as the governing body for all interfaith activities, while the center became the operating arm of the council during the emergency period (July 24 - August 4). Throughout this period the council held daily meetings to assess the events and to determine the future course of action to be taken by the collective interfaith body. With the establishment of the council, four committees were formed to carry out its activities. One committee was responsible for the center; another assessed what community needs could be fulfilled by the council; third, a finance committee was formed to handle all monetary donations to the council; and last, a long-range planning committee was formed to plan future council responses. While the council and center had the same basic roots, they both had distinct and separate histories which for the purpose of this thesis will be confined to the Interfaith Emergency Center. While the council was technically the governing body of the center, in actuality the center was an autonomous unit, developing its own separate structure, leadership and areas of involvement.

Several ministers had made a special point to be in their offices early Monday morning in hopes of receiving the hotline conference call, but no call came through. Information was still scarce, with the news media just starting to give details of the disturbance. An Episcopalian executive, in an effort to assess what had happened, heard of a meeting of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (a Negro ministers' association) and decided to attend this meeting since he was unable to contact members of the hotline. This meeting lasted three hours with no course of action decided upon. It was decided to reconvene the meeting the following day. Meanwhile, throughout the morning members of the hotline had contacted one another. It was decided by a Methodist official to convene a general meeting of the hotline members, plus other interested members of the religious community. A special effort was made to invite members of the Jewish Council and Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. Anxious to hear the report of two clergymen, who, as members of the City Coordinating Commission, met earlier that afternoon with the mayor, they decided to hold the general meeting at 3:00 p.m. Simultaneously, an executive of the Detroit Council of Churches was also calling denominational officials for a 3:00 p.m. meeting. Since many of the individuals called were asked to attend both meetings, it was decided to combine the two meetings. Thus, the meeting originally intended for the 10 hotline members, actually turned out to be attended by 20-25 individuals.

Although not all of the individuals who attended the 3:00 p.m. meeting had made previous contact with one another, a central core of "hotline" participants had. As stated by one member a certain confidence existed between members which enabled them to respond. Many of the members had common predispositions in that each had been involved in social action programs. What exactly was the motivation of each individual is difficult to assess. It may have been humanitarian

desires, idealism, guilt, religious obligation, frustration, the coincidence of a scheduled hotline conference, or a combination of these and many other factors. However, what is important in understanding the emergent process is that having had previous contact with one another these individuals sought out each other to find some meaning to the crisis and to arrive at a course of action.

The 3:00 p.m. meeting was held in the third floor office of the Director of Human Relations, Division of the Community Affairs Department of the Archdiocese of Detroit, located in the Gabriel Richard Building. Members of the City Coordinating Commission reported that the city was not doing much outside of providing primary police and fire protection. The first hour was spent exchanging information that each had gathered by either being out in the streets and/or talking with participants or agents of control (police or fire officials).

In exchanging what little information that had been gathered, the group as a whole was searching for meaning in order to understand the crisis. Meaning was found through verbal communication concerning what happened and through sifting and sorting the explanations offered. At the meeting individuals looked to others to help structure the situation. By verbalizing observations and questioning what and why events occurred, the crisis situation was structured so that individuals could understand and relate to what had happened.

Having had previous experience in the Watts disturbance, the Episcopal Society for Culture and Racial Unity (ESCRU), an unofficial organization of the Episcopal Church, drew up a set of plans which detailed suggestions as to the role the church could play in a civil disturbance. The plan called for an interfaith response which would refrain from offering gratuitous calls for law and order, while trying to see what creative things could be done. One suggestion in the ESCRU plan was the establishment of an information center which

would collect and dispense information related to the disturbance. With this plan in mind, an Episcopal official present at the meeting suggested that for the moment any immediate interpretation of the events should be postponed. Instead, this group should refrain from making statements calling for law and order and strive to establish a constructive course of action.

While the collective body did not reach consensus on interpreting the crisis, a decision was reached with respect to the immediate circumstance facing those present. It was decided to follow the ESCRU suggestion and refrain from a call for law and order. The expressed intent of this group was that they remain neutral in whatever role they were to perform. Once this had been decided the next step was to commit those present to a given course of action.

Again referring to the ESCRU plan, the Episcopal official made the motion that an information center be formed. A vote was taken and motion accepted unanimously. Immediately following the vote, the same official volunteered the use of the Episcopal Diocesan Center. It was suggested that this building would be appropriate because it was near the disturbance area but yet not in it. It also had a large parking lot, numerous phones and ample office space. Having committed themselves to a given course of action and accepted the physical facilities with which to operate, those present established the Inter-faith Emergency Center.

It is at this point that events became entangled with respect to the overall activities of IEC. For clarity, we will first present a general overview followed by a more detailed discussion focusing upon the areas of community acceptance, operating structure, volunteer assistance and general responses.

### General Overview

From those present at the 3:00 p.m. meeting, seven volunteered to man the newly formed Interfaith Information Center. Shortly after the 6:00 p.m. newscast, which announced the existence of IEC, calls started coming into the center. While it was anticipated that a majority of calls would be concerned with information requests, it was not anticipated that these calls would come from individuals asking how they could volunteer their help or how they could obtain help. It became evident that the basic need was for a brokerage which would connect individual needs with community resources and services. For the remainder of Monday evening and well into the early morning hours of Tuesday, July 25, aid was handled on an individual basis.

Early Tuesday morning it became apparent (from calls received from suburban churches volunteering to collect food and clothing, and from calls received from urban churches volunteering their services as centers for distributing food and clothing) that a network was needed to link resources located in the suburbs with needs existing in affected areas. Individuals working at the center believed that if they could respond by connecting needs with appropriate resources, the dual problematic situation of supply and demand could be solved. Fortunately at this time the Wayne County AFL-CIO Council had heard of the center's existence and volunteered to act as a transportation service. Using volunteer truck drivers and trucks donated by major companies in the greater metropolitan area, the union established a distribution department dispatching drivers to 25 collection centers and 21 distribution centers.

The remainder of the week saw a fairly adaptive structure develop which was able to adjust to incoming demands. By Saturday, July 29, a plan had

been developed to systematically phase out the food operation. A news release, given at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, explained the gradual phase out of the 25 collection centers and 21 distribution centers over a four-day period. A list was provided naming each center and its closing date. From July 30 to August 4, IEC gradually phased out its coordination of the centers.

As it turned out, by Monday July 30, the dozen individuals still working at the center realized that a whole new set of problems faced individuals who had suffered from the disturbance. These new problems became the basis for the continuance of IEC. It was to continue in operation for almost an additional four months.

#### Community Acceptance

Once the Interfaith Emergency Center (IEC) had emerged, the first problem it faced was to make the center known to the general public. It was decided around 5:00 p.m., Monday, that a news release should be prepared for the 6:00 p.m. radio and television newscast. The announcement stated that the IEC had come into existence to aid individual citizens requesting information. The mass media (radio and television), acted as a mediator, providing IEC with the necessary minimum legitimacy so that it would be recognized by individuals and other organizations within the community.

The initial IEC announcement was well received by the community. For a variety of reasons many of the welfare agencies and community emergency agencies (i.e., Red Cross and Civil Defense) were not responding in an effective manner. On Monday, July 24, the public and many private welfare agencies closed in response to the city-wide curfew. It was not until Tuesday, July 24, or Wednesday, July 25, that welfare agencies opened to respond to the growing

needs. Even though the normal welfare agencies had opened by Wednesday many individuals had heard of IEC and preferred to come to IEC instead of the city agencies. One volunteer explained this behavior by stating:

. . . the public welfare, you know, would have been inundated with requests for help. But the head of public welfare told us that day at the mayor's office that although he had announced over the radio, and I think there had been announcements in the paper, that he had put I think something like twenty extra staff members on. The first day after those announcements he had -- I've forgotten 4 or 40. Either one is ridiculous. Anyway just a tiny number of applications. And several people at the meeting pointed out that a great many of these people simply did not want to go to public welfare . . . Welfare does an enormous job in the city, but it doesn't have the best reputation in the world for efficiency or for politeness and courtesy.

The fact that IEC was able to respond quickly without the red tape and stigma normally associated with welfare agencies, may have been the reason why many individuals turned to IEC for aid. With individuals feeling that they could turn to IEC, other community groups were also seeking organization which would perform the social welfare function. While welfare agencies were closed on Monday, Red Cross and civil defense were not responding as normally anticipated. Red Cross's problem centered around the legality of its participation in a civil disturbance. Red Cross has a legal mandate which requires it to respond to natural disasters. However, its charter was ambiguous in its definition of its role in a civil disturbance.<sup>2</sup> In an official policy statement from Red Cross headquarters, Red Cross Chapters were directed during a civil disturbance to maintain close contact with civic authorities and, ". . . if there is suffering and want from any cause and fundamental human needs are not being met, Red Cross Chapters may participate in community action in extending relief."<sup>3</sup> However, any participation would not be reimbursed by

the national chapter; any expenditure of funds would have to be financed through a local campaign for funds. The lack of funds and the ambiguities in Red Cross's role led it to curtail its activities.

With the welfare agencies and two primary community emergency organizations either not operative or operating on a limited basis, the Interfaith action was viewed as a positive act by other community organizations. Individual citizens and organizations quickly acted to legitimize IEC.

One of the first public offices to recognize IEC was the mayor's office. Through this office, official contacts were made with other community organizations. The mayor's formal recognition provided the necessary legitimacy to integrate IEC into the total community emergency response. By attending many city-wide coordinating meetings, interfaith personnel were able to establish working relationships with nearly all governmental offices, law enforcement agencies, social welfare centers and the local AFL-CIO council.

Shortly after its emergency, IEC obtained an agreement with the police and National Guard which permitted IEC volunteers to travel during curfew (9:00 p.m. - 5:00 a.m.). Large signs stating "Interfaith Emergency Food Distribution Center" were attached to delivery trucks. Apparently these signs were sufficient, legitimate symbols since, as one individual stated, ". . . none of them (trucks and truck drivers) suffered any injury or scratch even going into an area where a riot was existing after dark -- both sides sort of accepted them in the spirit of humanitarians coming in to relieve the community." Volunteers who found it necessary to travel to and from their homes were also issued passes honored by both the police and National Guard.

While nearly all organizations accepted the role the IEC played during the disturbance, a severe conflict arose between IEC and the local civil defense. About a month and a half before the disturbance civil defense suffered a severe cutback in personnel and funds as a direct result of a city-budget cut. A provision had been made that, in emergencies, former civil defense personnel would return to their previous positions. (In reality only a fraction returned.) However, the occurrence of the disturbance provided the unique opportunity for civil defense to again re-assert its influence and to show the larger community that it indeed had a valuable part to play in community emergencies.

Late Sunday evening (July 23) and early Monday morning, civil defense established five temporary shelters in three large Catholic churches and two public schools. Each shelter was equipped to accommodate for sleeping 300 to 500 persons. However, on Tuesday at a coordinating meeting held in the civil defense office, IEC and civil defense confronted one another in a struggle to designate their respective task areas. Civil defense saw IEC's emergency role as illegitimate and infringing upon its own duties. On the other hand, IEC felt that since it had developed an effective collection and distribution network recognized by the mayor's office that civil defense could not force it to curtail its emergency activities. The conflict centered around the IEC operational procedures in the distribution center. Persons coming to distribution centers were not required to verify their needs, instead food was dispensed to whomever entered the center. This, civil defense felt, only prolonged the return to normal commercial activities and encouraged fraudulent behavior. Although IEC realized that many persons were taking advantage of the distribution centers, they felt that rather than allowing individuals with legitimate

needs to go hungry, they would overlook the few who took advantage. While no simple solution was arrived at, IEC did agree to phase out its distribution centers as soon as it could be assured that neighborhood stores were operating or that other community agencies would provide for the existing social needs.

#### Operating Structure

Monday evening, operations at the center were handled by seven individuals -- four of whom came directly from the 3:00 p.m. meeting, while the other three heard indirectly from their own denominational officials that an interfaith effort was being undertaken. All seven volunteers were ministers representing the Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist and United Church of Christ churches. Opening the switchboard and finding someone to man it was the first problem faced by the group. The role of operator was assigned to one minister who had previous experience operating a switchboard, while the other volunteers just sat down and started to answer the phone. As one minister stated: "There was no chance for job description, no chance for job planning." That evening, realizing that more volunteers would be needed, an announcement was made over radio and television, requesting volunteers to staff the newly-formed center.

Monday evening was primarily spent answering calls from frustrated and desperate individuals in the disturbance area, while also receiving calls from persons wishing to volunteer their help. The following volunteer's comment summarizes the first evening's activities:

. . . the kind of call we'd gotten during the night was, for example, a woman with a four-day-old baby in the riot area who had run out of formula for the child. Or a diabetic who had run out of insulin --

didn't have the proper food -- or the blind were calling in and they were just plain frightened, completely disorientated, and they needed food supplies of one kind or another. So what we needed then was volunteer drivers -- people who would go out and get the stuff for us and take it to the address. So I put out a call for volunteers and the response was overwhelming.

With this limited base of operation, the response the first evening was restricted to contacting local ministers in the disturbance area, relaying the calls from distressed individuals and requesting that the local minister try to handle the problem. In extreme emergencies, a police precinct station, located across the street from the center, was contacted to see if it could check out the call and deliver whatever aid was necessary. The police precinct station would play a significant role during the remainder of the disturbance, by supplying information concerning the extent and location of the disturbance while also handling emergency requests.

The remainder of the first night consisted of answering calls and trying to match appropriate resources with particular needs. It was anticipated that individuals would want information regarding situational reports; what actually occurred were requests for help plus donations of services and resources. The change in the anticipated demands required a reassessment of the center's purpose. Early Tuesday, July 25, it was realized that the need was not for an information center, but instead for a broker to connect needs with appropriate resources.

The first of several major structural developments occurred Tuesday morning, July 25. As persons began tuning their radios to the morning news programs, they heard an announcement which gave a telephone number to call for information and aid. Immediately following the 6:00 a.m. newscast the

switchboard received many calls and within a few hours was jammed with calls. With the requests exceeding the capability to respond, one individual took the initiative to organize the apparent chaotic situation. Following is an account of the initial organization:

. . . it was chaos on Tuesday at the center and nothing, no organization as such, had been established except the barest kind of answering phones. We were working in several offices and all of those offices were taking all kinds of calls. So at that point on Tuesday when they said that I was being placed in charge of the center, I then went to the switchboard and asked the girl to close the switchboard down for five minutes. And she did. Then I assembled all the staff together in one of those offices and superimposed a system. I had no idea that it would last. In fact, it was just an effort to bring some sort of organization to what we were trying to do and at that time I said one office, and pointed it out, would be the office where the operator will direct all calls from people who have needs, any kind of needs. Then there would be a resource office where the operator will direct all of the calls of resources -- where we can get the resources we need. And then there will be a volunteer's office of people who want to volunteer themselves and whatever. And then there will be an office to coordinate the distribution center. This latter office was to coordinate the attempts by the outlying centers to get stuff to the distribution centers and then coordinate which distribution center was closest to the person that had the need who called in.

By Wednesday afternoon a fairly stable structure was developed with key leadership positions identified and tasks allocated to particular departments.

Figure 1 illustrates this structure.

A brief description of each position and department will provide an overview of the responsibilities of each.

The center executive was the individual responsible for the overall action of the IEC. It was his duty to report back to the council in the form of verbal progress reports specifying operational problem areas. At the center his duties were to oversee all activities, confirm and make decisions involving major

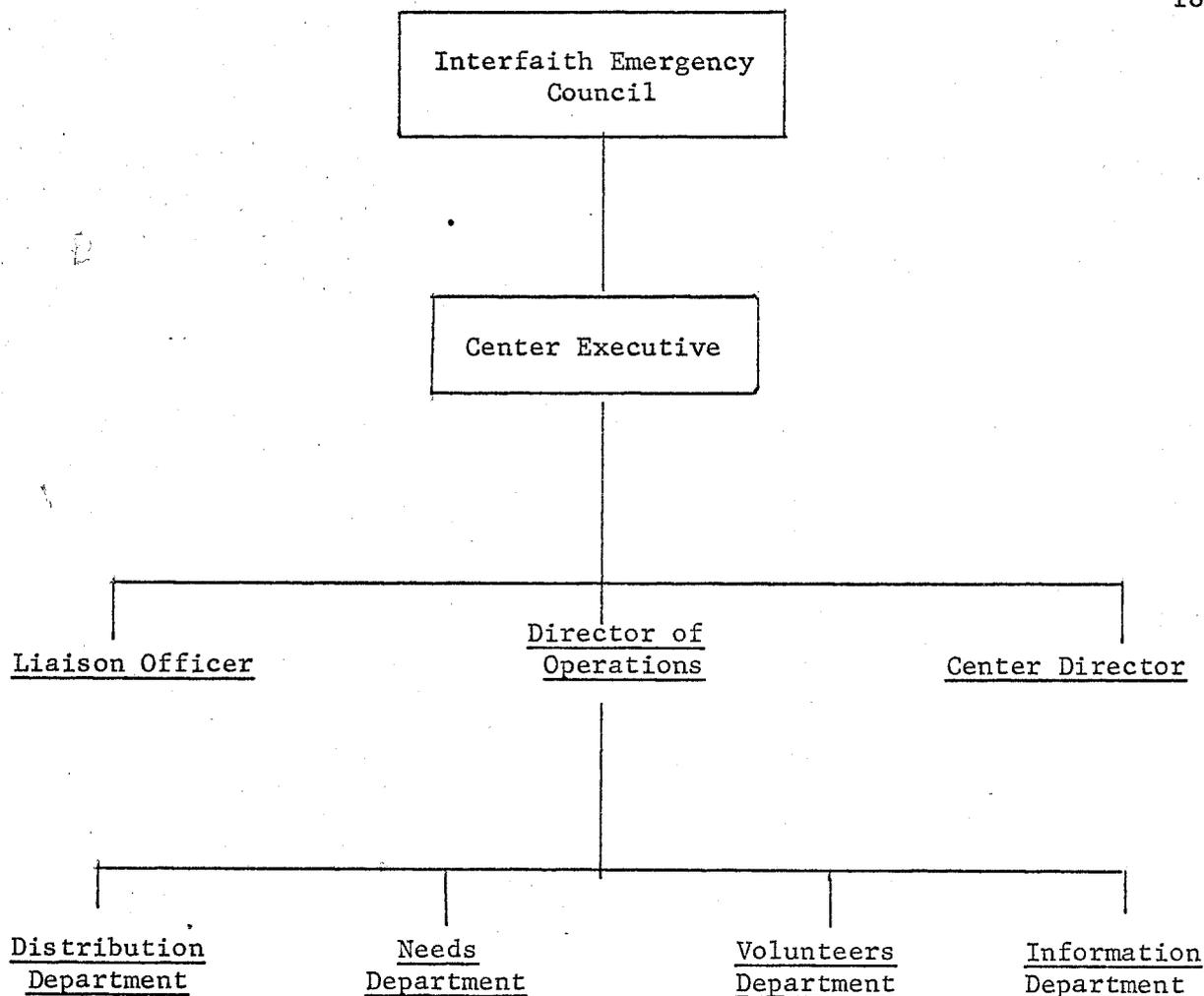


Figure 1. -- IEC Organizational Chart

operational changes, grant permission for use of financial donations, represent the center to the press and attend city-wide coordinating meetings and meetings with other community organizations.

The majority of interorganizational and community contacts were handled by a liaison officer. Much of this individual's time was spent representing IEC at coordinating sessions with the Mayor's Committee on Human Resource Development, civil defense, Red Cross, and other organizations who played a significant role in relation to the center.

Crucial to the whole operation of the center was the center director who was responsible for the initial structural breakdown and later operational refinements. It was his responsibility to see that the actual tasks were carried out, to make reassessments and adaptations, to the demands placed upon the center, to evaluate each department head, to arrange for needed materials and personnel, and to work closely with the center executive in the overall coordination of the center. Two individuals fill this position, one working a day shift and the other the night shift.

Similarly the director of operations also was a position held by two individuals working on a shift basis. Coordinating the appropriate resources with the specific need was the basic task of the director of operations. Information concerning the particular need for specific quantities of food were received through the needs and information department. These requests were then matched with the appropriate resource. This information was then passed on to the distribution department which was coordinated by the AFL-CIO.

The distribution department was operated by volunteer staff from the Wayne County AFL-CIO Council. This department dispatched trucks to pick up food and clothing at designated collection centers and delivered these items to specific distribution centers.

A staff of social workers volunteered their services in operating a needs department. Incoming calls requesting aid from residents in affected areas were recorded by the social workers who have had extensive experience in handling these types of calls. If the need could not be met by the center, individuals were directed to the nearest distribution center. Otherwise, special arrangements were made to aid the individual by sending a volunteer to the individual or by referring the individual to an agency that could help.

With the influx of volunteers a special department had to be formed to coordinate the placement of volunteers into appropriate departments, arrange shifts, inform volunteers of changes with the center, introduce volunteers to appropriate department leaders and to generally oversee that each department was adequately staffed for each shift.

The information department was formed to handle calls requesting instructions as to the location of distribution and/or collection centers, name and location

of appropriate agencies to contact for a particular problem, and location of areas affected by the disturbance.

#### Volunteer Assistance

On Monday evening, July 24, when it became apparent that more volunteers would be required to adequately staff the center, IEC announced over radio and television that it could use additional volunteers. By midmorning, Tuesday, the response was so great that they had to turn volunteers away. Instead of calling into the center -- which was extremely difficult to do -- volunteers converged at the center, filling hallways and adding to the general confusion that already existed. Since a general city-wide curfew had technically closed down the city, individuals were freed from their normal employment duties to be able to volunteer their time.

Among the volunteers that eventually participated in IEC, social workers played an important role. Persons calling to request individual aid were put in contact with the needs department. Social workers, who normally dealt with daily individual emergencies, staffed the needs department. Maintaining thorough records is an intricate part of all social work procedures. While trying not to create "red tape," social workers quickly mimeographed four differently colored information sheets with a separate color representing: needs, resources, volunteers and information inputs. These information sheets facilitated recording, matching needs with resources and later follow-up studies.

Another group of volunteers which played an instrumental role in the center's operation was the AFL-CIO. The union's community service staff representative heard of the IEC operation on Tuesday and suggested to the

president of the Wayne County AFL-CIO Council that perhaps the union could provide a transportation service for the center. Tuesday evening the union contacted IEC and arrangements were made for the union to assume dispatching and transportation services. By contacting large firms in the Detroit area, the union was able to persuade companies to donate trucks and drivers so that an IEC transportation network could be developed. In addition to providing supervisory personnel, trucks and drivers, the union brought their own walkie-talkie communication setup. This setup provided an important source for internal communication and allowed for contact with drivers en route. With continual communication, drivers could be dispatched without ever having to report to the center. This arrangement not only saved time, but decreased confusion already present at the center.

Not all volunteers were formally affiliated with community organizations. The main source of volunteers came from individual citizens who felt they could help to alleviate the community's vast suffering. While many volunteers spent only a short period at the center, a number of volunteers stayed and formed a fairly stable volunteer core.

During the first evening of IEC operations, jobs were allocated in an arbitrary manner. Individuals who came to the center were told to just pick up a phone and start answering. As one individual stated, ". . . I wandered into the Cathedral Center here on Woodward and said, 'Where can you use me?' and they said, 'sit there and answer the phone.'" Since tasks were not defined, everyone did the same thing -- answered telephones. However, as types of incoming calls began to be classified a need arose for division of labor.

Several persons who were present the first evening felt that if the other men preferred organizing the operation, they would withdraw into the

background and pick up some other aspects of the interfaith response (judicial committee, long-range planning, financial donations, etc). One individual who did withdraw into another area stated, ". . . we could see some of these guys just loved to get in there and set up an organization and make it run right and you know I would just as soon let somebody else do this who likes to do it and not have to worry about it." Job assignments by personal preference was a major factor determining the eventual IEC leadership. Those who decided to follow through with the IEC operation would eventually hold leadership positions.

The basic organizational structure was superimposed early Tuesday morning. After this initial structuring, tasks were allocated to volunteers according to their particular skills or past experience. A primary example of this was the allocation of the "needs" department to social workers. Because of previous experience in assessing individual needs over the telephone, it was felt that social workers would have the necessary qualifications to effectively organize a needs department. Departmental heads and other leadership positions were also assigned according to an individual's organizational skills as assessed by the center's director. In a number of instances volunteers would recommend friends who were particularly qualified to handle certain tasks (e.g., the switchboard operator was recommended because of her past experience as a Wayne State University operator).

Tasks were also allocated according to resources which the volunteers possessed. Such was the case when the AFL-CIO Wayne County Council volunteered trucks and truck drivers to handle the dispatching and coordinating of the overall transportation network. Their own independent resources allowed the

union officials to operate fairly autonomously, relying on the rest of the organization only for information as to pick-up and delivery locations. In sum, task assignments occurred on the basis of arbitrary decisions, personal preference, past experience, and possession of a special resource.

In addition to receiving a large supply of volunteers, the IEC inherited a complex network of collection and distribution centers. With word out on Tuesday that IEC was operating, many suburban churches in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Ingham counties volunteered to collect food and clothing. Knowing both needs and resources, IEC was in the advantageous position to coordinate supply with demand. It established 25 collection centers and 21 distribution centers.

Other community organizations quickly heard of IEC efforts to coordinate a collection-distribution network and thought IEC the logical recipient for large quantities of material goods. One well-known food chain delivered a van containing five tons of canned goods, while a leading cereal company donated 11,000 cases of boxed cereal. IEC also received live shrimp, 70 cases of milk, a truckload of bread, food collected in Windsor, as well as numerous other donations. A large parking lot adjacent to the center provided the needed space to divide and transfer food to trucks for delivery to distribution centers. While the bulk of material donated came from large companies, individual families gave food packages containing enough food for one other family.

#### General Responses

Although the major part of IEC activities involved supporting the collection and distribution network, calls from isolated and desperate indi-

viduals still kept coming into the center. Persons requesting food were referred to the distribution center closest to them, while those not able to get to a center were brought food by individual volunteers who made deliveries. Special volunteer teams made visits to persons calling in with special problems (i.e. blindness, acute illness, fear, and so on). A police precinct station, located across the street, called upon IEC to aid in counseling National Guard personnel who, under the strain of the disturbance, were suffering from severe emotional stress.

As requests and resources continually were fed into the center a number of reassessments and adjustments had to be made. The first major overall refinement occurred Tuesday morning when the center director superimposed a structure which basically would last for the entire emergency operation. Very little task distinctions existed the first evening of operations. However, on Tuesday because of a reassessment of phone calls, four distinct departments were formed, reflecting the type of requests and resources received. A needs department handled all calls from individuals requesting food or clothing, while a volunteer department was formed to process and assign volunteers to appropriate tasks. The resource department recorded all calls donating food, clothing and other materials. This information was then passed on to a distribution department which matched needs with appropriate resources and dispatched trucks to make deliveries.

Once operations were underway, each department made a number of adjustments to increase efficiency and adapt to demands. Shortly after the needs department was formed refinements occurred in recording incoming calls. Information sheets were mimeographed to facilitate accurate record keeping.

The volunteer department also underwent a number of changes. After the call for volunteer aid went out over the mass media, volunteers were literally flocking to the center filling hallways and adding to the general confusion which already existed. One volunteer took it upon herself to organize a more efficient way of processing volunteers. It was decided to set up a registration desk at the one entrance to the center. Typed cards were then filled out for each volunteer to include: name, address, special skills, family responsibilities, hours preferred. Volunteers were then selected according to their special skills and/or to the extent they could regularly report.

While departments had to adapt and refine their tasks, individual volunteers also refined tasks to increase efficiency. Small adjustments were made in record keeping, appropriate telephone responses, loading and unloading supplies, etc. These overall task adjustments provided a stabilized base from which the organization could develop.

Each volunteer answering calls continually made individual assessments and decisions which involved committing IEC resources to specific problem areas. The fact that everyone at the center was so involved in his own specific tasks deterred some volunteers from seeking consultation when making an important decision. However, in unusual or extremely difficult cases, decisions would be made by consulting co-workers or departmental heads. Callers donating perishable goods (i.e., milk, butter, vegetables, etc.) were not accepted until volunteers consulted with department heads and other officers as to whether there would be adequate storage.

Decisions involving internal problems were often made in staff meetings held late at night or early morning. Calls started to slack off between

midnight and 5:00 a.m. allowing time to plan the following day's activities as well as catch up on record keeping and sleep. It was at these late meetings that the only overt conflict arose. This conflict centered around deciding the appropriate time in which the center should phase out of its emergency activities. One faction felt that as soon as normal welfare agencies began to operate and take over the community welfare function that IEC should consider closing down its operation. From the start it was felt that the operation was only temporary. Others however felt that since so many persons had suffered either directly or indirectly that established welfare agencies would not and could not service everyone. The hardest hit by the disturbance were those individuals who were marginal -- able to get along from week to week but vulnerable to any job disruption. It was these marginal individuals who mainly concerned those favoring extended IEC operations. These persons would suffer, since they technically were not eligible for welfare. Decision on phasing out IEC operations was continually postponed until finally a tacit agreement was reached. The center would exist as long as it was funded and/or until there was no longer a demand for its services.

#### Phase Out

By Saturday, July 29, a plan had been developed to systematically phase out the food operations. A news release, given out at 11:00 a.m., explained the gradual phasing out of the distribution centers from 16, to 12, to 5, to 2 centers over a four-day period. A list was provided, naming each center and the closing date. From July 30 to August 4, the IEC went through a gradual dissolution. By Monday, July 31, the twelve individuals still working at

the center realized that a whole new set of problems were emerging, directly related to the disturbance. Families who were separated from one another by arrests now wought to reunite themselves. Homeless families that had been taken in by friends or relatives during the disturbance were now obligated to find more permanent housing. And families who normally could make ends meet suddenly were faced with bills they were unable to pay because of the loss incurred during the disturbance. By Wednesday, August 2, there were only two trucks left which would transport food from donors to city-appointed, and operated distribution centers. On Friday, August 4, the center was out of the food business and had technically phased out all emergency activity. However, the growing awareness of the continuing problems would again activate an interfaith response by reinstituting the center's activities in a different area.\*

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\*While this discussion has only dealt with the initial development of IEC, in reality it existed until November 17, 1967. Between August 8 and September 1, the center focused its activity upon following up both the welfare cases initiated during the emergency period and the new cases that developed. During the period of September 1 and November 17, an effort was made to close all cases opened by the emergency center. Those that could not be closed by the center's staff were referred to existing social welfare agencies within the community.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The Eastman Kodak conflict with CORE in the spring of 1967 centered around alleged accusations by CORE that the Eastman Kodak Company practiced racial discrimination in the hiring of employees. Members of the hotline discussed how the clergy could bring pressure to bear upon Kodak.
2. At the annual convention of the American Red Cross in Denver, Colorado, May 6, 1968, a policy statement was adopted by the National Board of Governors. This statement made the local Red Cross chapter's role one of supplementing efforts of civil authorities in event of a civil disturbance.
3. The American National Red Cross, "American Red Cross Responsibility in Situations Caused by Economic, Political and Social Emergencies, April 17, 1967" (Washington: The American National Red Cross, 1967). (Policy Statement.)