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CONFERENCE phone

Martin Luther King, Jr., Pres



"Operation Dialogue"

Harry G. Boyte
Director

What "Dialogue" Can Do

MANY of our fellow Americans are concerned about the complex problems which contribute to economic and cultural handicaps and the breakdown of human relationships in our society.

In too many communities, these individuals have not found a way to participate in a meaningful situation, or to otherwise express themselves in the effort to find a constructive resolution. Many of them feel isolated from neighbors who might share similar views, because there has been no community forum with which they can identify without fear of some sort of reprisal.

On the other hand, numerous Americans have only a vague awareness of their dilemma, and do not, at this time, recognize the actual source of their discontent and frustration. These Americans, of latent good will, have not been encouraged to explore, by *discussion*, with their neighbors the basic forces responsible for their economic deprivation and crucified aspirations.

We are confident that an "OPERATION DIALOGUE" is needed urgently in communities throughout the nation.

We place particular emphasis on the necessity for such dialogue to be undertaken by residents of the communities and neighborhoods where the dialogue will take place. Experience has shown that unless the program is carried on by local residents, the persons contacted often are suspicious, withdrawn and reluctant to talk freely.

THOSE persons engaging in this program as initiators should already have grappled with the many facets of racial harmony and reached a position of constructive response.

They should be individuals with real concern and humility in recognizing the environmental blocks which so often have established in the minds of white Americans stereotypes of racial superiority. It is to be hoped and expected that these individuals will work at identifying those persons, particularly in disadvantaged white communities, who give promise of real growth in understanding and accepting the necessity of working for freedom and equality for all people. Through such acceptance, these individuals hopefully will be brought into a broad coalition with others of similar concerns to develop a strong and unified voice in striving for the new society where humanity's deeper needs will be acknowledged.



... Dialogue Can Be Anywhere

SUCH alliances will transcend racial and religious differences.

We advocate the technique of home visitations across all lines, and that small meetings of friends and neighborhood groups be utilized largely in carrying on the dialogue in its beginning phases.

Most often, this initial dialogue will involve simply one person making himself available to another so that an atmosphere will develop where an individual will feel encouraged to discuss his accumulated fears and tensions. Such an outlet should relieve many of these pent-up emotions, which often have only been expressed through apparent hostility.

These situations, if they show promise, will require time to bring into that condition of readiness where racial relationships and other complex problems such as automation and cybernation may be discussed affirmatively. These more complicated matters must be dealt with in unsophisticated terms.

We envision this program as involving in large measure disadvantaged white communities. We recognize, however, that the best neighborhoods for such dialogue to be undertaken must be determined by the local persons involved in planning the program for their area.

We do not believe it would be advisable to undertake such a dialogue around the question of racial relationships in the beginning stages. This, quite likely, will frighten away many whites who otherwise will engage in discussion of less emotional problems during the period when mutual confidence is being established. We would trust that as the dialogue progressed, and problems common to both Negro and whites are clearly identified, full exploration of interracial understanding would be undertaken.



Harry G. Boyte
Director

APPOINTED in July, 1963, as Special Assistant to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Harry G. Boyte is a native of the South, born in Charlotte, North Carolina. A member of the Presbyterian church for many years, he now is an active member of The Society of Friends (Quakers).

For 18 years he was an executive of the American Red Cross. During 1944-45 he was Assistant Administrator of Personnel for the Red Cross service to the Armed Forces, in charge of the assignment of male personnel overseas.

In 1946, he became manager of the American Red Cross in Greater Atlanta, from which he resigned in 1958 to devote his full energies and abilities to the Civil Rights Revolution.

He has served in numerous civic capacities, including a term as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Greater Atlanta Council on Human Relations. He also was chairman of the Housing sub-committee of the Atlanta Citizen's Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal, by the Mayor's appointment.

IN 1962, he directed a community relations project in Prince Edward County, Virginia, for the American Friends Service Committee, where he undertook a program of dialogue with citizens of the county, both Negro and white, seeking to determine attitudes which might be responsive to reopening the public schools. They had been closed since 1959 to avoid racial integration.

He received citations from both President Roosevelt and President Truman for "outstanding service to suffering humanity." During his tenure with the Greater Atlanta Chapter of the Red Cross, he received 12 consecutive yearly citations from the national office for "significant accomplishment" as a result of his organization of fund-raising efforts.

For persons interested in the Operation Dialogue Program

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

334 Auburn Avenue, N. E., Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Organizational Affiliation _____

What kinds of interracial-intercultural activities now exist in your community? _____

I believe the following persons would be interested in this program:

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____



"The Miracle of Dialogue"

As a result of continuing examination of our ongoing program, and in the search for creative response to changing moments in history, it can be said that a full measure of Southern Christian Leadership Conference involvement now rides with our Department "Operation Dialogue".

I quote from Reuel L. Howe, "The Miracle of Dialogue":

"Dialogue is to love, what blood is to the body. When the flow of blood stops, the body dies. When dialogue stops, love dies and resentment and hate are born. But dialogue can restore a dead relationship. Indeed, this is the miracle of dialogue: it can bring relationship into being, and it can bring into being once again a relationship that has died".

The concern about dialogue within the human family is as ageless and universal as these words would suggest:

"From the murmur and the subtlety of suspicion with which we vex one another,

"God give us rest.

"Make a new beginning,

"And mingle again the kindred of the nations in the alchemy of love,

"And with some finer essence of forbearance

"Temper our mind."

— From ARISTOPHANES
380 B. C. (More than 2,200 years ago!)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. L. King Jr." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom right of the page.