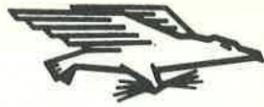


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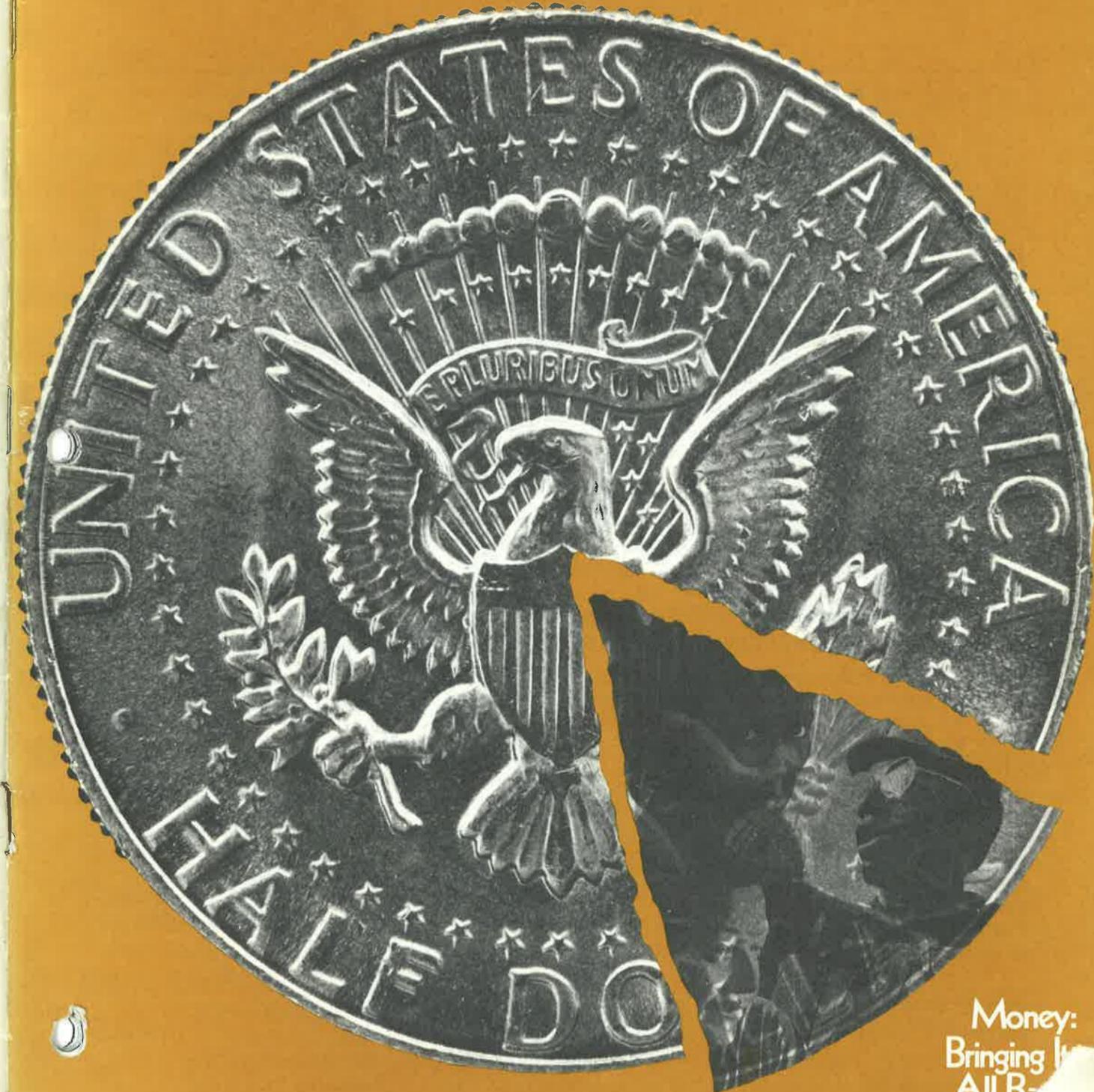


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**Vista**

VOLUNTEER

October,  
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Number Ten



Money:  
Bringing It  
All Back  
Home

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One of the most significant directions VISTA has taken in recent months has been to recruit large numbers of men and women with professional training to help solve some of the basic economic and social problems of poverty communities. These VISTA Volunteers, who come from graduate schools of law, architecture, nursing, business administration, and urban planning, bring more than good intentions with them. They bring the kind of specific knowledge and skills that are being requested by local communities and organizations of the poor.

This fall, for example, some 500 lawyers joined VISTA and are now working as VISTA Volunteers in neighborhood legal service programs across the country. Not only are the numbers of skilled VISTA Volunteers increasing, but graduate schools are increasingly focusing both curriculum and faculty resources on the problems of the poor. VISTA, already working with law schools in developing new programs and curricula, is joining forces with an increasing number of schools of business administration to attack the problems of economic development and minority entrepreneurship in the ghetto.

The Denver School of Business Administration is sponsoring a VISTA program to assist both the black and Mexican-American community in business development efforts. The UCLA School of Business has mounted a similar program in Los Angeles while Stanford University is sponsoring VISTA Volunteers to stimulate economic development in the Bay Area. The involvement is direct, constant, and productive. VISTA Volunteers with graduate degrees in business administration or law are working to establish cooperative businesses, community-owned corporations and to help new entrepreneurs solve the practical problems of starting, financing, maintaining and expanding individual businesses.

VISTA recently sponsored a two-day conference on economic development in New York City. Experts

from business schools such as the University of California at Berkeley, Rutgers, and Boston University, members of local development corporations such as the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Project, and VISTA Volunteers met to discuss how VISTA could recruit Volunteers with business training and develop programs designed specifically to stimulate economic development in poverty communities.

This issue of the VISTA Magazine is devoted to the rapidly growing involvement of business schools and business school graduates in VISTA's work. The interview with Ed Stadum, Director of the San Francisco Local Development Corporation, describes some of the things his program has done to help community corporations and individual entrepreneurs. Articles about the Hough Area Development Corporation in Cleveland and a cooperative in Albuquerque, New Mexico, describe how VISTA lawyers have provided technical assistance in the development of community-owned businesses. In all of these articles, the prime movers are the people themselves who are seeking new opportunities. VISTA Volunteers, working directly and daily among the poor, are providing the kind of technical assistance that is often needed to start new economic life in poverty communities.

This year VISTA will be working to forge alliances with business schools and local development corporations throughout the country. The purpose will be to mobilize and channel the wealth of available talent and skill into economic development efforts. Many schools of business administration are already eager to get involved in the social and economic problems of their own communities. And in the long run these institutions could be invaluable not only in providing the needed technical assistance but also in training a generation of potential business leaders to their social responsibilities and opportunities. This is a major VISTA thrust and the story behind this issue of the VISTA Magazine.

Padraic Kennedy  
Acting Director, VISTA

BUSINESS PROFITS SHOULD  
BE KEPT IN THE  
COMMUNITY TO UP-  
GRADE THE AREA.

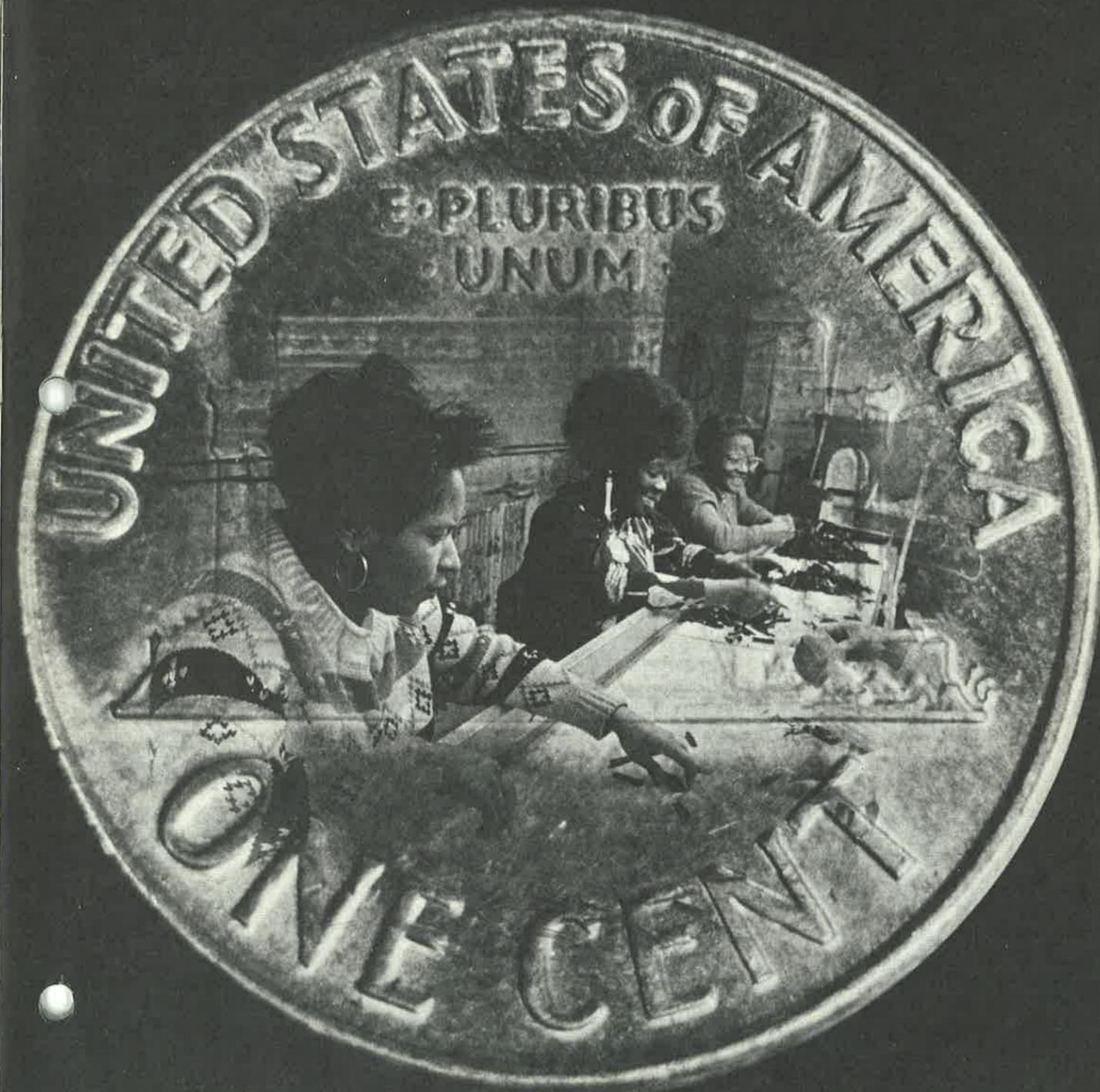
# Cleveland: The Hough Area Development Corporation

"To begin with, I'm a hoodlum, no education, ex-convict—you name it, I'm it. So you know, this social thing, this ain't my thing. I got one thing I'm going to do—I'm going to make it for me, Soup Overton. I got eight kids, I'm going to make it for them. I ain't got time for no social thing, going to meetings and all. I don't know nothing about all this jazz. But this Rev. DeForest Brown, Jr., he kept messing with me to join this group called the Machine, so I said, 'OK, man, count on me—just get out of my hair.' So I went to this meeting and met a lot of concerned people. And DeForest is smart—he says, 'We've got to have a membership committee; you're the chairman. Thanks for volunteering.'"

In the late summer of 1966, 50-year-old Winfred "Soup" Overton, a guy who owned a liquor store at

78th and Hough in Cleveland, Ohio, went to a meeting because another guy named DeForest Brown had been bugging him. Now he is Brown's right hand man in the Hough Area Development Corporation, the black economic development program which began with the Machine.

Approaches to the problems of urban blacks often seem caught in the laundry detergent syndrome—last year's approach is as obsolete as Brand X. Integration was considered a solution in the mid-50's and early 60's, but integrationists are now sometimes shunned as Toms or White Liberals. Pouring services into ghetto areas was replaced by a trend toward community organization. As increasing numbers of community people became involved, they began to press for community control, independence, separatism.



In the meantime national emphasis had shifted from community organization to the development of black businesses and job training programs. Different theories—even different emphases within a theory—are being tried in all of the problem areas of poor communities. What doesn't work is discarded. What is best is retained.

Since Soup Overton joined the Machine, he has been a part of an evolving idea. In its three years, the Hough Area Development Corporation has gone through a process of discarding and retaining and has arrived at a theory of economic development which combines outside expertise and strong community involvement.

The Hough Area Development Corporation makes a sharp distinction between black capitalism and black economic development. HDC feels that simple black capitalism, the replacement of a white-owned ghetto business by a black-owned business, fragments the black community. The economic needs of a few individuals are met while the needs of the large mass of people are not.

Black economic development, however, is community based and is geared toward an overall improvement of the total black population. Business profits should be kept in the community, to upgrade the area. Outsiders can help, but only at the request of the community. Decisions as to what is best for that community must be made by the people who live there.

HDC feels that their concept of economic development does not exclude the possibility of individually-owned businesses. They will encourage a black entrepreneur, but only if his business will satisfy some need of community residents. HDC insists that a black businessman in the Hough area find a balance between making a decent living for himself and providing goods to community people at prices which they can afford. Soup Overton says, "Our job isn't making black millionaires. We have a responsibility to Hough. And besides, even if we did produce black millionaires, they wouldn't have any place to spend all that money. Who would let them into the polo club?"

There is no polo club in Hough, the 2.3 square-mile community which was the scene of riots in the summer of 1966. Hough is two miles east of downtown Cleveland, and east of Hough is University Circle, the cultural center of the city. The boundary is a lush park which was donated to the city by a gentleman who used to live there, John D. Rockefeller. Today there are 1000 millionaires living in the greater Cleveland area.

DeForest Brown's main concern is not with these 1000. He is concerned with the 70,000 people who live in the Hough ghetto. By the time he started or-

ganizing the Machine, Brown had left his job as youth minister in Fellowship Baptist Church to work full time in community organization. He had seen a steady decline in the area since the early 1960's, when the black families who could afford it took advantage of open housing opportunities outside the Hough area (from 25,000 to 30,000 blacks left Hough between 1960 and 1968). The people who remained were the ones who couldn't afford to go. As more poor families moved in, total income decreased, the number of occupied apartments decreased, property improvements decreased, and as Hough became known as a high crime area, supermarkets, drug stores, variety stores, specialty stores and banks disappeared.

By 1965, 31 to 40 percent of the total population were in poverty, and in a section of Hough called the Strip, the number rose to 50 percent. The number of abandoned buildings increased. What life there was came from the influx of quick credit merchants, bars, second-hand stores and storefront churches. Brown saw that even with experimental programs by HEW, additional welfare caseworkers, OEO programs, private social action groups, and countless other service organizations available to the community, the situation was not improving. So he set out to find the people who were as bored as he was with talking about problems.

He rounded up 44 community people—representatives from social agencies, clergy, conservatives, militants, working people, and businessmen—and asked each to contribute \$100 to a working fund. Soup Overton came because Brown was so persistent. "DeForest felt like he needed a guy like me in the Machine, so he kept at me. I had been running my own little social program before this—I guess you'd call me one of those guys who feels responsible. I'm a sucker for any sob story. In the store I used to carry milk and candy, and I had to get rid of them. I'd give it all away. And there were about 35 kids I saved from going to the penitentiary. But I lost a whole lot of them, a whole lot. I just wasn't big enough. When I got into the Machine, I saw that here were 44 people who had the same concerns as I did, so that made me multiply 44 times. We set ourselves up as a watchdog. Any kind of business that came into the community, we were going to check them out. The landlords, the welfare, the churches, the schools—we just wanted to be sure that they all did their thing."

Besides being a watchdog, the members of the Machine hoped that one day they could make use of the many vacant lots in Hough by initiating a scattered-site housing project. This was a dream, something to work toward. In the meantime, they received a foundation grant for \$25,000 to do an inventory of services in the Hough area. They studied their own community

for almost a year, as Brown says, "not just talking about the problems, but doing real planning on the best ways to implement our ideas for change, and on how to involve our own people in the implementation."

As they studied, they discovered that all of the programs in their community were geared toward fitting Hough residents into a structure which didn't want them. They could train men for jobs, but they couldn't get employers to hire them. They could get money to build houses, but no one in Hough could afford them. So they gave up their "watchdog" position and delayed their scattered-site housing plans. They decided to use their strong community organization base and develop a new corporation which would concentrate on economic development in Hough. The Machine became the Hough Area Development Corporation, and in 1967 set out to try for the OEO 1-D Impact Grant for economic development. Because they were a community-based organization, they ran into some immediate problems. "We said, 'Good, let's go after that money,'" Overton recalls. "But who can write a proposal? Some of us didn't even know what the hell a proposal was! Finally we got it in—two days late—we were competing with 15 other cities. Then we sat back and crossed our fingers and thought, 'Forget it. We ain't got a chance. We'll go on back and do our housing thing.' But sure enough, it came through. We were elected to get the money—\$1,644,000. We had to match it, and that took a lot of hustling, but we did it. We actually got the check on August 1, 1968."

It took hustling for more than money; a community group with little experience also had to hustle some expertise before they could set up a program involving three million dollars. They started building back-up forces in Cleveland. Businessmen pledged support and technical advice. An economic development specialist from the mayor's office offered his resources and information. Lawyers from downtown law firms volunteered spare time to help with legal problems. The Cleveland Legal Aid Society agreed to help them, and assigned some of their VISTA Volunteers to work full-time with HDC.

While some HDC members were enlisting help at home, others were traveling across the country, talking to businessmen and market analysts, visiting other economic development and black capitalism projects, and trying to determine the practicality of the programs which they had thought they would like to start. Overton says that the whole period was a real educational process. "We found problems we didn't even know existed. For instance, in the proposal we said we wanted to start a laundry and supply company. But that belongs to the Mafia, and they gonna kill us all before they let us have it. This is a dirty game out here, this game called money."

When everyone got back to Cleveland, they pooled their information and started working on a few projects. They first focused their energies on the small manufacturing company. When they wrote the proposal for the OEO grant, they knew only that they wanted to start a black-owned business which would produce goods for sale outside the community. When all of the research was in, they discovered that small rubber parts produced through the injection molding process would be the most likely project for success. They estimated that by 1972 the number of applications for rubber parts in the construction of American automobiles would double, and that their business would have a growth potential of 500 employees within the next few years.

Before production started, HDC rented a building, bought \$150,000 worth of equipment, hired managers who had experience in producing rubber parts, developed contracts with customers, hired workers, and set up the machinery for owning the corporation and handling the money. Thirty-two ADC mothers are now employed making rubber parts for General Motors, Chrysler, Ford, and General Electric. The plant is set up as a separate corporation, and HDC is the sole stockholder, acting as a holding company for the Hough community. After the risk period is over, HDC will sell stock in the company to people in the community. A portion of the company's dividends will go into a revolving fund to help start other businesses.

Two months ago, the plant began production. The enormous sign painted on the outside wall of the building at 5806 Hough Avenue reads, "Community Products, Inc. This company is owned and operated by the People of Hough."

Hough Development has made good use of the year they have had the money. Besides Community Products, they have set up a maintenance, landscaping and gardening business and are negotiating for a black-owned bank in Hough. This fall they hope to begin construction on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Shopping Plaza. They provide venture capital to new black businesses, guarantee contractors' loans and give loans and technical assistance to small businessmen who might have to abandon their stores if they can't get help. With all this activity they have not given up their original dream; they have just broken ground in a vacant lot for a duplex—the first of their scattered-site housing projects.

The VISTA Volunteers who have been working with Hough Development are not community organizers. They are specialist volunteers, and see themselves as technical assistants to a strongly organized community group. Ed Pelavin, a 25-year-old graduate of Wayne State University Law School working with the scattered-

site housing project, evaluates the VISTA's role in Hough: "This is a very community-minded area. It was already organized before we came in and we would be useless if we thought of ourselves as organizers. I don't think it would have been possible for us to come in and start bringing businesses into Hough. Sure, the expertise isn't all here in Hough. When Community Products started up, the community people on the board of HDC were able to realize their limitations in a highly technical field. So they went out and hired someone as a consultant, and they still retain advisers. At the same time they hope to train community people to take over those skilled positions."

When Barry Vasios, a 24-year-old VISTA with a year of law school at Yale, came to Cleveland he started work immediately with the planning of Handyman's Maintenance Service. It is a profit-making corporation, designed to be employee-owned. It trains hard-core unemployed men from the Hough area to do apartment repair, office cleaning, and landscaping—both in Hough and in the Cleveland suburbs. Barry worked on the articles of incorporation (it was incorporated in December, 1968), getting leases and developing work contracts.

His job also involved getting insurance and bonding for the men. "Getting insurance was a hassle. We would apply to one company, and after they looked over our drivers' records, we would be rejected because they found out that they have accident records and criminal records. For the same reasons, getting them bonded was another problem; we finally got that through the state employment service."

In December, 27 men entered training sponsored by the National Alliance of Businessmen. At the end of the 13-week program, 20 were left. Now 11 or 12 are still working. Some left because the training qualified them for better jobs. Handyman's two divisions, maintenance, and landscaping and gardening, are both headed by black men experienced in their areas. Right now HDC owns all of the stock. After the risk period, and after the company is on a firmer financial footing, the steady employees will be able to buy stock.

As he worked with Handyman, Barry learned some of the problems of a program which responds to community feeling. "The program is a little shaky right now. It was hatched prematurely. There was great pressure to get guys jobs before Christmas, and we didn't wait long enough to structure a better training program. So the men just weren't proficient enough to satisfy customers. In this case good community feeling meant some real monetary losses which may, in the end, prove to be overwhelming.

In June, Barry stopped working with Handyman's Maintenance and began setting up a black bank in

Hough. For the first month, he gathered information on the requirements for the formation of a bank. HDC considered setting up a one-bank holding company, setting up an entirely new bank, or soliciting an established bank to set up a branch in the area, then selling it to the community. They chose the last possibility and are now in the process of soliciting banks to come into the area. The bank will be located in the new shopping plaza.

The bank which comes in must set up training programs and hire blacks from Hough and must cooperate with a community advisory board in the opening and operation of its branch. In conjunction with setting up the bank, HDC will form a non-profit service corporation. The corporation will guarantee loans for business and personal use and will give technical assistance with budgeting (optional in cases of personal loans) and management, accounting, and business operations (mandatory for business loans).

VISTA Dick Dunham, a 1968 graduate of Harvard Law, has coordinated a major project of HDC—the Martin Luther King, Jr. Shopping Plaza. "Many Hough residents have to travel to the suburbs to get good merchandise, and there is a need for low-cost housing in the area, so we have included both in the plan," says Dunham. "The shopping plaza will house 19 black-owned stores, a bank and a supermarket, surrounding a heated and air-conditioned enclosed mall. Above will be a roof terrace with play areas and grass, and surrounding the court will be 30 townhouses—three bedroom units. Ed Pelavin is handling the housing.

"The minority entrepreneurs in Hough have been running their stores in old buildings with no parking, and they have had no technical assistance. We are already soliciting black businessmen to come into the shopping center. They will have long-term leases (20 years) and rent which is just high enough to cover the costs of operation. We will also provide technical assistance to the businessmen.

"OEO has given HDC \$700,000 for the commercial portion of the shopping center and \$275,000 for the residential portion. This grant will make it possible for the rents to be low enough for the merchants to afford. The total cost of the project will be under two million, and we think we can get the remainder of the money for the commercial portion from SBA. The whole thing will belong to a non-profit corporation which will receive the OEO grant from HDC."

Dick's legal role has included setting up the Martin Luther King Plaza Corporation, drafting the lease forms to be used in negotiations with the merchants, drawing up the forms necessary to qualify the corporation as a

local development company under SBA loan programs, negotiating the financing of the plaza and townhouses with banks, companies, and with the SBA. As coordinator, he has worked with shopping center development consultants on leasing, cash flow projections and best locations for stores within the plaza, has maintained the timetables for the shopping center development, discussed plans with the architects, negotiated with the city on the purchase of urban renewal land, and handled questions of zoning and lease negotiation with prospective townhouse residents and plaza merchants.

DeForest Brown has been pleased with his VISTAs so far. "We haven't had any trouble with them. They understand that we will treat them like any other employee, and that they work for us. We don't tell them each day what to do. We give them a general outline of what we're trying to accomplish, and each of them is free to use his imagination, bring in suggestions, and research things. Then we use that information to help us make decisions. Of course we want them to relate to the community. We don't feel that they can adequately apply their trade or utilize their skills on our behalf unless they understand the community."

According to the people in HDC, the success and acceptance of their program is due to Brown. "He

sticks by his word. The people downtown gave us grants and the banks deal with us because they believe in him." "He is talking about community control just as much as some of the people who make the papers every day. But our society gives attention to the guy who is loud, and they hang him up, while the quiet guy is doing what the loud guy was talking about." "After you've worked 18 hours, you turn around and look at him and could work 18 more because he has been out there 38 hours. He is the force behind the whole thing."

Brown is more modest about himself: "I'm not sure that it's me . . . I attribute our success more to the makeup of our organization. We have involved people in the community and some expertise outside of the community, and maybe they look at our organization and realize that we have finally put together a group that can really do something. The real problem that we're attacking is not the problem of black people per se. The real problem is how to make the urban centers economically viable. I don't care who lives in these doggone centers now, the economics of it is dead. We don't know who is going to solve the problems of the future. We don't even know who can bring effective solutions to present day problems. Maybe we have an effective approach. I'll tell you five years from now how it worked, or how it didn't work." ■

TAKE ONE

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VISTA

"HELP THE BROTHER."

# Camden: The Action

*Unto everyone that hath shall be  
given, and he shall have abundance;  
but from him that hath not shall be  
taken away even that which he hath.  
Matthew: XXV, 21*

When you go by Broadway in Camden on your way to somewhere else you see the people sitting on the stoops, lounging in doorways. They are the people left behind—some white, some Puerto Rican, but mostly black.

Fifty percent of the businesses in once-busy south Camden have failed or moved to the suburbs. Block after block has vacant, decaying, boarded-up buildings. The customers who remain are the people who can't get a ride to the east Camden suburbs or to Cherry Hill Mall—"The world's largest indoor shopping center," or across the river to Philadelphia.

The remaining businesses often offer poor quality, less variety, and little enticement to shop. It is no wonder that inner city people when they have money to spend spend it outside of their community, which grows poorer.

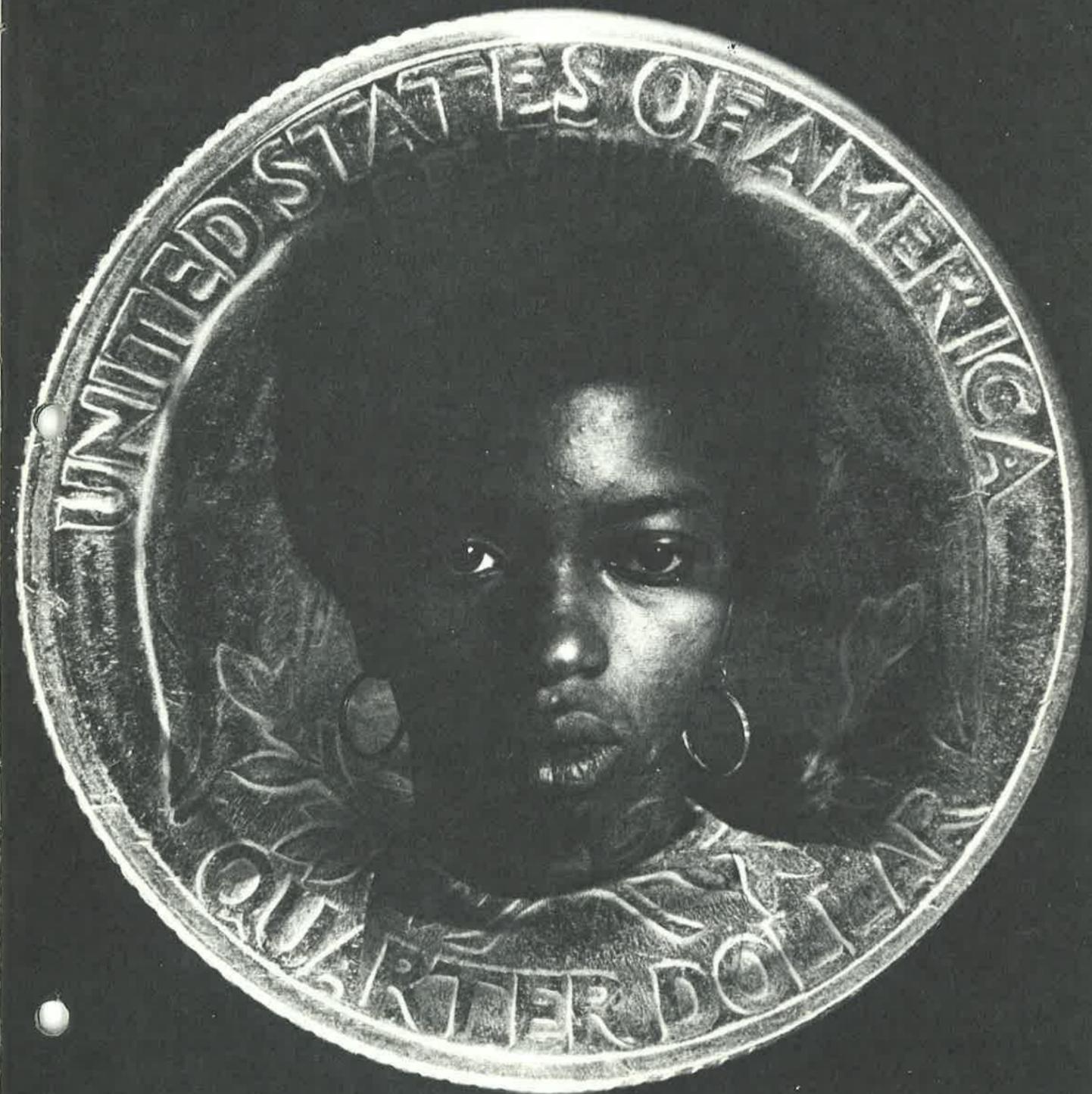
"Camden follows the pattern of other cities on the East Coast," VISTA Ken Meiser said. "Its property taxes are exceedingly high; there has been little attempt to

attract new industry or to help existing industry expand. The only businesses staying are those which are willing to take risks; they are run by residents of the community who figure they will be there a long time."

A significant, controversial movement has started among the black people in Camden—many of whom have little choice but to stay. Black people with a variety of backgrounds and skills are joining together to reach specific goals: the building of quality institutions, better community services and more and better jobs for black people.

Formalized as the Black People's Unity Movement (BPUM), the movement first concentrated on education and housing problems. Hundreds of people took part in peaceful demonstrations which brought about the addition of black studies in some schools and the hiring of a black principal.

The organized blacks sought city recognition of the housing problems of Camden's poor. Community groups made frequent treks to City Hall to make known their concern. VISTAs, who had personally seen numerous family tragedies while working with people in the inner city, helped by gathering case-history material on the devastating effects of freeway construction on the people whose houses were in the way. VISTA lawyer Steve Leleiko used the research in a comprehensive documentation of the financial and emotional



hardship endured by numerous dislocated poor families. Freeway construction was halted by federal order. By the same methods—detailed, systematic documentation of injustices perpetuated by outmoded housing laws—the city of Camden was moved to revise its housing code.

Things that before were looked upon as hopeless situations are now being considered as problems to be solved by members of the BPUM. While still involved in all social problems of minorities in Camden, the BPUM has set some of its brightest hopes in the area of economic development. Key people are skilled black men who have "made it" in the white society but to whom the challenge of developing black businesses is more appealing than job security. BPUM's first venture into the jobs field was the development of BPUM Industries, the name for a garment factory which employs about 30 formerly unemployed or underemployed women as seamstresses, pressers and in related jobs. The factory makes *dashikes*, other articles for the Afro-American market and some industrial uniforms.

Heywood Smith, a black businessman-tailor undertook the management responsibilities as well as the training of the women in garment-making skills. Appealed to by certain influential churchmen and the VISTAs, a local industry helped with money for machines and space and the New Jersey Alliance of Businessmen made a \$75,000 training grant under which Smith is training 15 workers.

The garment factory now has its own outlet—the Personality Shop operated by black community residents.

Black awareness has become a marketable commodity, and now, at least in Camden, it is blacks who are cashing in.

Another business venture—the Black Developers Corporation—was started with the help of VISTA Richard Rhodes, a business administration major in college. Rhodes, who is black, had worked in the black community for a year.

The Black Developers Corporation combines the resources of about 30 black contractors in the building trade—providing them with more work, more money for their work, and skill development.

As individual contractors, black carpenters, cement men, plumbers, and electricians had depended on small, odd jobs to make a living—jobs which did little to increase skills or earn reserve capital for investment in tools and materials.

Rhodes said, "Mrs. Jones wants her plumbing fixed, so she calls a local black contractor—maybe it's a \$50 or

\$75 job. Or maybe someone wants a carpenter to hang a door, or to build a porch—maybe the black carpenter got a \$1000 job. But it is white contractors who are called by large building firms, who contract to do the plumbing for several new houses at something like \$5,000 a house.

"The black contractor is usually working for poor people who don't have much money either. His materials are likely to be inferior because he doesn't have money to buy better. The guy who can buy the best materials is in a better position to do a better job."

Rhodes and other BPUM people combed the city for black contractors—reaching them by letter, phone or personal visits. They had several meetings with the contractors to discuss the advantage of the men pooling their resources and abilities. As a result, Black Developers Corporation was founded with monies provided by the black contractors. Profit-sharing is written into the bylaws.

To contract for jobs, they needed three important things: a history of jobs performed; contract fulfillment; and reserve capital for labor, materials and license fees due before the first payment on the contracts, and bonding by a recognized bonding company. To start to meet these needs, they solicited funds from local industries and an interest-free loan from the state of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (an agency comparable to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare).

A skilled black businessman builder, Ed Evans, who had been working for a large firm in Philadelphia, was induced to take over the operations of the new corporation, his first-year salary made possible by the state grant. An agreement was worked out with two non-profit corporations that buy and rehabilitate old houses in Camden and sell them to low-income families. "We were told by both of these corporations that there weren't any black contractors in Camden to hire," Rhodes said. When they found out otherwise, the two firms allowed unit by unit contracts with the Black Developers Corporation, thus making contract history for the black craftsmen. Both rehab firms agreed to make requisitional payments week by week to craftsmen who have no reserve capital. Both firms eliminate bonding requirements because of the unit by unit contracting and require only insurance.

Several rehab jobs have been completed, and the Black Developers are working on a park area and on a community center.

"The Black Developers Corporation makes the individual contractors more viable in their own professions," Rhodes said. A primary goal of the Corporation is to establish a reputation for both the Corporation

and the individual contractors as top-notch craftsmen. Evans personally inspects each craftsman's work. The work has to be done well or it is re-done. Because he is certified by the Corporation, a black contractor-member can get credit at stores where he buys his materials.

Like the garment factory, the Black Developers Corporation has started more money circulating in the black community. The contractors have steadier employment, more money to spend. Unskilled men are employed as helpers. An apprenticeship system of training more craftsmen is being planned. "Nobody is making a whole lot more money," Rhodes said. "No contractor would be in this if the sole aim were quick gain for himself. Everybody has to realize that by supporting each other everybody will ultimately benefit. There is an awful lot of faith holding this together."

Black leaders could see that the jobs for people in the garment factory and the building trade were only a promise to the black community. Much more would have to be done in business development if any real change for south Camden were to be effected.

With proof that the black community had the necessary talent and will, the next step was to persuade government and industry to invest in black business.

Black leaders went to the state for financial aid. In Trenton they were told that the state had no legal means of making loans or grants directly to a business. However, it could provide funds to a non-profit corporation which was assisting in economic development. The Economic Development Corporation of the BPUM was created to fulfill this function. VISTA Ken Meiser worked closely with black leaders and Department of Community Affairs' officials in helping work out the details using as a model a similar corporation in San Francisco.

On the 29-member board of the corporation are both grass roots leaders and influential businessmen and churchmen. The administrative head of the corporation is a black lawyer, Harvey Johnson, whose salary is made possible by a grant from the Department of Community Affairs. The corporation's elected president is a black businessman, Amos Johnson. Membership is open to the community. Resources of the EDC include the volunteered skills of accountants, businessmen and lawyers. They help set up bookkeeping systems, train workers in business methods and advise new businesses on legal problems.

Thus the EDC provides struggling new businesses with the funds, skill resources and quality control they must have before they can be considered for Small Business Administration loans or other types of conventional loans. EDC backing means SBA loans can be secured that are more liberal, have lower interest

rates and require less capital than would be otherwise required.

Harvey Johnson, Director of the EDC, said, "What we are talking about with the EDC is building institutions within our community. We are training people to administer programs. Each enterprise always has some way workers and the community can benefit from the project."

EDC is starting "superettes"—small, community controlled grocery stores. The stores will be operated by a group of community residents with financial and technical assistance from the EDC. "The EDC will assure that the prices are what they should be, the quality is good and the variety of things sold meets the needs of the community," Johnson said.

The EDC is also helping to establish a five-man janitorial service to do industrial office cleaning. In another project inner-city blacks are being signed up now for an eight-week course in real estate management, accounting, merchandising and related subjects. VISTA Ken Meiser, working with Legal Services lawyer Pete O'Conner, helped with this by convincing state officials that such a program, if structured right, could qualify for state aid. Teachers from three area colleges will conduct the courses. VISTA Associates—students from Glassboro State College—helped co-ordinate the program with the colleges. "We try to make the VISTA Associates working with us an integral part of our staff," said Amos Johnson, president of EDC. "Some VISTAs now are working on a documentation of the BPUM and the EDC so we will have on record that what we are doing is constructive. We don't have a very good press."

The development of large black-controlled industries is an ultimate goal of the EDC. The corporation is counting on spin-off operations from large industry. The industry, with the aid of government or foundation training grants—would help train local people to operate a plant and would eventually release ownership to a community group.

The success of the EDC could transform the character of the inner city—provide employment opportunities and a flow of money that would result in the rebuilding of all the run-down areas of Camden, and as a result, benefit not just blacks but the entire city.

According to Richard Rhodes, now a resident in Camden, the strength of the BPUM is the "strength of black people working together."

"It's not just black capitalism we want," he said. "Exploitation by blacks is just as bad as exploitation by whites. We want to do as the Jews do—help the brother." ■

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## Camden: The Reaction

The blacks are coming together in Camden out of economic necessity. In many cases they are not wanted by white employers, white businesses. They are not wanted because they are black or because they lack skills and financial stability.

Blacks are coming together because they care about themselves more than any other people care about them. If their situation is to improve, it will have to be through their own efforts.

This is the self help idea that is the gospel of the American system, yet its implication in the form of many black faces coming together in one place—at a demonstration over schools, in a garment factory—causes fear among many whites. They fear that blacks want a better life at the expense of white peace and white security.

It is hard for many non-blacks to understand that the BPUM is not a destructive racist organization.

Local papers frequently refer to the BPUM as Camden's black militant organization. "Any time black people get up and ask for what they need and want they are labeled militants," Rhodes said. "Militant means to believe strongly in something. We believe strongly in black power. But the press uses the term without explanation. The way they use it, it brings up the image of people going around burning down houses."

The BPUM has built, not destroyed.

The development of a black power movement in Camden has effected the role of VISTA Volunteers, especially white Volunteers. In some black communities, the mood is such that a VISTA would meet hos-



tility if he tried to call meetings, raise issues for discussion, plan strategy for community improvement.

Expressing this mood is Charles Sharpe, long-time resident of Camden's inner city, one of the BPUM's organizers, and now its chairman.

"The danger of the white volunteer in the black community is not a physical danger, it is more a mental danger," he said. "Too many whites who try to work with blacks do not understand the position they themselves are in. Some type of mythical paint gives them the impression they are free. But they are not really free. When they come into the black community, they find out there are two different types of freedom people are seeking. They are confused. They don't understand the language, the philosophy, the terminology of the black community. It is not taught in any classroom. Whites don't understand black hunger. It is not like any other hunger. There is a radical difference in the mood of a hungry black man and a hungry white man. Black people are no longer fighting for civil rights. We are not asking to sit in a restaurant, or ride in the front of the bus—legislative rights. Now the issue is human rights. Most whites cannot understand this. They think the issue is a job, education. That's not it. It is the right to be a man.

"The most effective thing the skilled white volunteers can do is research. They can come up with what it takes to solve a problem and funnel the information to the black community. They should allow the black community to use it as they want. If the community people stumble, then they can reach back for this expertise the white people have."

In part of a Buy Black campaign, VISTA Associates from Glassboro State College helped prepare and distribute a directory of black businesses in Camden. It reads from architects to taverns and includes the names of 75 businesses. An accompanying statement with the directory, written by a member of the BPUM, states, "We still have white businessmen who export our hard-earned money to suburbia every night. What does this mean? It's simple. The money that we could normally use to develop our communities, build more schools, renovate our houses and send our children to college, goes to the suburbs and thus improves suburban standards of living. Black people have always been consumers and the only product to be consumed was the white man's product. And as long as we are consumers and not producers, we will constantly be manipulated and have our money taken from us . . . it's about time we channeled our money into the pockets of those who offer good services, sell good products and do not take the money out of our communities every night."

"White volunteers can also help by speaking out, really becoming a part of the struggle," said Sharpe. "There is a great clamor for 'education.' But struggle is education. If you can understand struggle, you're an educated person. Some who say they want to help simply refuse to embrace the struggle and risk losing what they have."

Ideally, black Volunteers would be placed in black communities where this mood exists. But there are not enough black VISTA Volunteers to assign only black people to black communities. There are even fewer black Volunteers with professional skills who can provide technical assistance.

Ron Tolbert, a black VISTA from a low-income community, was an outstanding community organizer in the early days of the black unity movement in Camden. His skill was in making people believe that change was possible and in identifying local black grassroots leaders and linking them with the variety of resources for community improvement available in black Camden and white Camden.

But being black and poor and urban-oriented is no guarantee of being able to work successfully in black inner-city community development. It is harder for some blacks to work in the black ghetto than it is for some whites. Black or white, the person's abilities and skill in human relations are the factors that determine his effectiveness.

In Camden, at this time, the most effective use of white Volunteers with professional skills seems to be providing technical assistance to already formed black groups.

VISTAs Ken Meiser, a law student, and Ed Cull, an attorney, work in conjunction with the Legal Services Office in Camden, responding to the needs of the BPUM and other groups in Camden working on housing, education, welfare and other problems. When necessary, they serve as liaison for the grass roots groups and members of the power structure. They keep red tape from strangling programs, and they explore numerous ways of channeling government and private resources into community self-help projects.

This doesn't mean such Volunteers can disassociate themselves from the community. Volunteers with professional skills still need to work closely with community people in order to understand how people feel and what they want. Otherwise, a Volunteer might knock himself out developing a terrific idea to help poor people that will fall through as soon as he leaves. It has to be the people's thing from the beginning.

"White people," said Rhodes, "have to learn that they can be followers." ■

