

**CLEVELAND MAYOR RALPH J. PERK:
STRONG LEADERSHIP
DURING TROUBLED TIMES**

CHAPTER 6: EFFECTIVE REFORMS AT WORK

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CHAPTER SIX

EFFECTIVE REFORMS AT WORK

The federally-sponsored CETA program enabled the Perk Administration to develop a wide variety of highly innovative initiatives destined to improve the quality of life for many Clevelanders. The Summer Youth Employment Program represented one of the best of these new efforts. It offered important educational opportunities, worthwhile employment options, special recreational activities and community-based social events geared for disadvantaged youngsters from throughout Greater Cleveland.

CWRMC Planning Council initiated the process by hosting strategy sessions with interested agencies. Held in the spring of 1973, these meetings concentrated on job site development, educational programs, recruitment, registration, certification, supervisory training and counseling. (1) Mayor Perk, in partnership with the Superintendent of the Cleveland Public Schools Dr. Paul Briggs and the Cleveland Board of Education, created the Comprehensive Youth Services Program (CYSP). Led by U.S. Attorney Frederick M. Coleman, this task force included representatives from various youth service agencies and the Consortium's Planning Council. One of its primary functions involved developing program guidelines and objectives.

Its program guidelines detailed the procedures officials must follow concerning orientation sessions, recruitment and evaluation while its program objectives projected realistic outcomes. Expected outcomes ranged from providing

meaningful work experiences and encouraging interaction in problem solving to emphasizing social awareness and instilling a new sense of civic pride.

CYSP further recommended that all programs operate independently of each other. This would enable site counselors and supervisors to spend additional time with those youngsters with special needs. CYSP also emphasized the importance of enrollees acquiring good work habits by offering participants the opportunity of earning extra money for performing worthwhile community services.

Meanwhile, city officials focused on other important details such as scheduling the physical exams for participants, resource development, monitoring, evaluating and writing the final report. Program coordinators also held special sessions with the Cleveland Board of Education. The board agreed to handle recruitment, placement, counseling, certification, enrollment and orientation. School officials also assumed full responsibility for payrolls and performance evaluations.

A \$4.5m Title 3 grant financed the 1974 program. Its 11,842 participants ranged in age from 14 to 22 years. (2) Eighty-eight percent of these enrollees lived in Cleveland with the rest coming from outlying districts. One thousand forty-five businesses, public agencies and non-profits supported this effort. Supporters included the Chrysler Corporation, Ohio School of Broadcasting, Karamu Nursery, the Fairfax Foundation and Hillcrest Dog Grooming. Kinsman Opportunity, King Kennedy PAL, the Cleveland Board of Elections and CYSP also participated.

There were 1,252 job sites that summer. Cleveland topped the list with 995 sites while Cuyahoga County and East Cleveland provided a combined total of 124

sites. Lake County, Geauga County and Parma offered 66, 46 and 21 sites respectively. The number of participants by job classification was as follows: clerical 2,056, education 1,854, custodial 2,264, maintenance 3,248, conservation 838, food service 443, health services 296, craft mechanics 883, library assistance 197 and recreational 2,471. Participating agencies included HRED and the Cleveland Departments of Public Properties, Finance, Health and Welfare, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, Public Service, Port Control and Public Utilities. The Board of Education provided the Go-to-College Program and Environmental Renewal Program. Enrollees also participated in the school board's vocational education courses and special tutorial program.

CETA's success rate on the national level paled when compared to Cleveland's record. Some of the problems facing programs in other parts of the country included incomplete record taking, limited supervision from Washington, poor initial planning and a lack of manpower program experience. The national recession in 1974 compelled federal officials to re-examine the effectiveness of CETA programs and eliminate those deemed unsuccessful.

Redefining which communities did or did not qualify for funding under the revised guidelines of the Emergency Jobs and Unemployment Assistance Act of 1974 also impacted the program's future success. (3) Cities with the greatest chronic unemployment such as Cleveland received top priority. Between 1974 and 1976, the City of Cleveland qualified for more than \$31,000,000 in CETA grants including a \$4m emergency allocation.

Initially, HRED provided CETA job training for both entry and mid-level positions. However, working conditions within the Cleveland job market changed dramatically by the mid 1970s. Breakthroughs in manufacturing, technology and information retrieval and retention appreciably altered local employment opportunities. Plentiful entry-level jobs in factories, stores and offices literally vanished overnight. In its wake, the Cleveland business community wanted its employees to have training in computers and electronics. HRED responded to these challenges by eliminating entry level training and increasing the number of mid-level job opportunities. The department also offered courses in computer sciences and electronics and expanded the number of its on-site work experiences.

Public Service Employment Training (PSE) received \$7.5m in Title 1 funding in 1974. That allocation represented 55% of the Consortium's entire budget. Increasing demand for municipal services prompted such action. Between 1974 and 1976, the city hired more than 1,750 part-time employees. None of those opportunities would have been available without PSE funding. This versatile approach to training paid-off handsomely. Hundreds of regionally-based businesses and government agencies participated in the various programs. A federal study released in 1977 praised CWRMC for its many achievements. Its successes were wide-ranged and included such things as providing additional CETA-supported neighborhood service centers and developing new Community Development Corporations (CDCs).

The Perk Administration proudly sponsored the Comprehensive Youth Services Program again in 1975. CYSP provided over 14,000 youngsters with

summer employment at more than 1,400 sites. The City of Cleveland furnished more than 1,054 sites while Cuyahoga County provided 249. Geauga and Lake Counties offered 107 sites and the City of Parma 24. Local foundations contributed over \$300,000 to this effort. (4) Much of that funding went towards hiring program supervisors.

The Consortium announced in January 1976 the opening of a second training center on the Near West Side. (5) Cleveland City Councilperson Mary Rose Oakar played an influential role in choosing its location. A strong program supporter, Ms. Oakar had used CETA funds to help restore the historic Robert Russell Rhodes House at 2905 Franklin Boulevard. The Cuyahoga County Archives moved into this rejuvenated landmark in the late 1970s.

Much of the Consortium's \$12.7m budget for FY 1976 went towards improving successful programs. Federal allocations for the following year increased to \$15,907,718. The City of Parma secured \$315,759 while Geauga and Lake Counties received \$245,049. Washington also allocated \$3m to PSE, \$1.5m to miscellaneous programs and \$1m to jointly sponsored projects. In response to the growing demand at city hall for more part-time workers, Mayor Ralph J. Perk spent \$4m in CETA funds to hire 155 additional workers. Unexpected federal cutbacks in early 1977 forced the mayor to furlough most of them. Not to be outdone by officials in Washington, Perk secured a special \$4m grant to rehire the majority of them.

A second example of the mayor's ingenuity was when he transferred \$5.6m from the CETA budget to the Summer Youth Employment Program in 1977.

Nearly 13,000 youngsters participated. A third example of his political mastery occurred later that same year when Mayor Ralph J. Perk allocated \$272,000 in CETA funds to hire more EMS technicians.

CWRMC furnished the public with valuable information concerning many of its major programs. For example, its newsletter Labor Market Outlook, A Summary of Labor Market Developments focused on current economic trends and their impact on the labor market. Its first issue dealt with female participation in the CETA program and how their involvement improved the Cleveland job scene.

(6) CETAGRAM, A Monthly Bulletin Published by the Cleveland Area Western Reserve Manpower focused on some of the agency's most promising new initiatives. Its February 1977 issue, for example, spotlighted CETA's Job Search Group. Under the direction of Action Vista Volunteers, enrollees learned effective resume writing, good interview techniques and innovative ways to conduct follow-up leads with potential employers. The city's Welfare Department furnished trainees while city hall donated clerical assistance, bus tickets, telephones, postage, office space and materials. (7)

Another successful new offering called the Manpower Training Program prepared participants for skilled jobs in the machine tool industry. Co-sponsored by TRW and the Lakeside Area Development Corporation (LADCO) with the cooperation of the Mayor's Technical Advisory Committee on Economic Development and the Metropolitan Cleveland Jobs Council, this 12-week program boasted an 85% job placement rate. (8)

The Consortium again sponsored the Summer Jobs Program in 1977. Its planning council that year included Dr. Vladimir Rus, Dr. Paul Briggs of the Cleveland Public Schools, Dr. Thomas Campbell of Cleveland State University and Dr. Nolen Ellison President of Cuyahoga Community College. Other members included Fredrick Coleman, Campbell Elliott President of the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, Cuyahoga County Commissioner Seth Taft, Raymond Ernest Vice President of Marketing East Ohio Gas Company and Donald Mason Manpower and Development Commission Federation for Community Planning. Rounding off this prestigious list were Cleveland City Councilperson Mary Rose Oakar, Enden Schulze of the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation, Reverend James Stallings Executive Director of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and William Wolfe Executive Director of the Urban League of Greater Cleveland.

A Title 3 \$6m grant later that same year enabled over 12,000 youngsters to participate in meaningful work experiences at 1,440 sites. (9) Eighty-five percent of the program enrollees came from the City of Cleveland while Cuyahoga County, the City of Parma and Geauga County furnishing the remaining 15%. In terms of the number of available program sites, Cleveland led the field with 1,164. The breakdown of available inner-city work sites was as follows: City of Cleveland 497, City of Cleveland departments 306, Cleveland Board of Education 290 and Federal/State Agencies 71. The number of available work sites outside the central city stood at 226. Cuyahoga County provided 220 work sites with Parma and Geauga County offering 31 and 25 respectively. The number of participants by job

classification was as follows: clerical 1,511, education 1,197, custodial 1,729, maintenance 2,508, conservation 1,218, food service 765, health services 258, crafts mechanics 470, fine arts 1,042, recreational 1,609 and other 584.

For the first time, enrollees attended special job-related seminars and workshops. One of those sessions called “Decision for Tomorrow” provided valuable job skills. Three hundred youngsters also received additional training through its Vocational Exploration Project (VEP). Co-sponsored by the National Alliance of Businessmen and the Human Resources Development Institute, this very special eight-week program introduced 300 youngsters to good jobs available through the private sector. Participants included Eaton Corporation, Higbee’s Department Store, Sherwin Williams and the Union of Operating Engineers.

Neighborhood Pride represented yet another successful program. Over 600 enrollees cleaned up playgrounds, recreational lots and alleys. Local community and religious leaders working with representatives from Cleveland City Council not only determined where these improvements were to occur; but also, supervised them. Other youngsters participated in sports and recreational activities while some explored environment issues through SPARE.

A \$4m increase in the CETA budget for 1976-77 enabled CWRMC to expand its program offerings. One of these new endeavors called CETA and the Arts provided a comprehensive jobs program for local artists. It was the first of its kind in the nation. An outgrowth of a pilot project this new program employed out of work artists. Its purpose was to involve arts groups in realistic, art-related projects that would not only benefit the community; but also, introduce youngsters to

exciting new forms of art. It also promoted neighborhood preservation and betterment. Cleveland City Council President George Forbes lent his support.

Title 1 and Title 3 grants provided the bulk of its \$200,000 budget. The Cleveland Community Development Department and the National Endowment of the Arts also contributed. Under the able leadership of its Board President and President of Cleveland State University Dr. John A. Flowers and his Executive Director Ms. Nina F. Gibans, the Cleveland Area Arts Council (CAAC) furnished all the technical support. It also recruited artists, administered available funds, determined project selections and provided materials. (10)

CETA and the CAAC enabled seventy artists to teach their crafts to nearly 1,000 youngsters at 20 neighborhood locations. (11) Serving as site supervisors, participating artists offered instruction in dance, visual arts, music, mural painting, theatre and creative writing. Enrollees worked twenty hours a week at an hourly rate of \$2.30.

Two extravaganzas at the end of the summer brought this CETA program to a successful conclusion. (12) The first celebration, a one-day public art festival called the Cleveland Games of '77, drew thousands downtown, while the second, an offbeat musical adaptation of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland called "Shuffled-Up Decked-Out Alice," received rave reviews from the press. (13) This new approach to teaching the arts received acclaim from many circles. Regional Project Coordinator Helen Haynes hailed it as the best public art program since the WPA days. The Summer Arts Program Coordinator Edith Roebuck thought that its greatest single achievement was that it encouraged artists from Cleveland to leave

their studios and classrooms and embark on an entirely new adventure with inner-city youngsters. (14)

Mayor Perk used CETA funds for a wide variety of other purposes beyond the Summer Youth Program. Some of that money went towards hiring additional security guards for the city's recreational facilities. The mayor also used these funds to stimulate regional growth. In the latter case, the Cleveland Economic Coordinating Commission (CECC) received CETA allocations to launch a new national publicity campaign. This special campaign emphasized the many economic and social benefits of locating new business here.

The Perk Administration also allocated CETA funds to improve probation programs and promote native-American culture. CETA further lent its support to many non-profit charitable groups and civic organizations. They included the Greater Cleveland Boys Club, Catholic Charities and Karamu House. The Consortium in conjunction with the Federation for Community Planning used CETA money to co-sponsor "Seniors Serving Seniors" (SSS). This very popular volunteer network of senior citizens provided less fortunate elderly with companionship, home visits, transportation services and nutritious meals. It ended under the Kucinich Administration. (15)

Local arts and cultural organizations also took advantage of available CETA money. Those benefitting included the Playhouse Square Foundation, national public radio, the Cleveland Ballet and the Cleveland Opera. CWRMC's generous support was outstanding given the economic crisis facing the City of Cleveland at that time.

Without a doubt, CETA's successes energized Greater Cleveland. However, the Perk Administration knew full-well that many of the deep-seated economic and social problems affecting this region could not be readily remedied by these programs alone. It would require much more than that. Leaders at city hall also fully recognized that changing national priorities, many emanating from recent technical breakthroughs, challenged traditional American economic and social values. How best to prepare the public for these enormous changes? That question confronted the Perk Administration daily.

One thing became very evident as the decade of the 1970s unfolded. Cleveland's future would be dominated by high-tech. Mayor Perk felt duty bound to help his constituents make that adjustment. He knew that effectively run regional agencies represented the future of municipal government throughout the U.S. He also understood that the City of Cleveland had a long way to go before reaching that desired end. Perk further realized that the voting public would be resistant to any-and-all changes in municipal government without proper preparation upfront.

One way to lessen public resistance was for the mayor to spearhead reform. If he enthusiastically supported regional agencies that provided affordable, quality services for all, others would surely emulate it. He further believed that once voters realized the many advantages of regional government, as seen through successful existing agencies, then they would clamor for even greater bureaucratic reforms.

The Perk Administration decided that it must initiate this process by establishing a successful model for others to follow. The success of that agency would encourage others to follow. With that idea in mind, Mayor Perk focused his

attention on the development of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA).

ENDNOTES

1. In 1976, the U.S. Department of Labor reemphasized the importance of planning councils see U.S. Dept. of Labor, CETA Advisory Council Handbook, CETA Technical Assistance Document, Handbook No. 339 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 1976).
2. City of Cleveland, Dept. of Human Resources and Economic Development, Comprehensive Youth Services Program, Summer 1974.
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5. William Mirengoff and Lester Rindler, CETA Manpower Programs Under Local Control (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1978), 149.
6. City of Cleveland, Dept. of Human Resources and Economic Development, Cleveland Area Western Reserve Manpower Consortium, Labor Market Outlook, A Summary of Labor Market Developments 1, no. 1 (July, 1976).
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9. For further detail regarding Dept. of Human Resources and Economic Development activities and programs in 1977 see City of

- Cleveland Personnel, Cleveland Communique 2, no. 1 (May, 1977): 1-3.
10. City of Cleveland, Cetagram, A Monthly Bulletin 4, no. 2 (1977): 1-2.
 11. William Miller “Summer Arts Program to Begin Today,” The Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 20, 1977.
 12. For further details on the 1977 Summer Program finale see “Festive Downtown Weekend Being Planned,” The Cleveland Plain Dealer, August 10, 1977.
 13. City of Cleveland and the Cleveland Area Arts Council, Expressions: The Newsletter for CETA and the Arts Cleveland, Ohio 1, no. 2 (1977): 1-4.
 14. For a more in-depth account of the Summer Jobs Program of 1977 see City of Cleveland, Dept. of Human Resources and Economic Development, Cleveland Area Western Reserve Manpower Consortium, Ceta Super Summer.
 15. Joan L. McCarthy, “Senior Service Scuttled,” The Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 28, 1978.