

New Detroit? Nope!

Bill Rowe

1969

Remember, if you will, the inevitable explosion that took place in our fair city during that dark week in July two years ago.

No sooner were the fires put out, the hoses rolled up and the fire trucks washed, there appeared a group of dedicated citizens whose sole purpose was, at any cost, to rebuild Detroit and put things “back to normal.”

It was the same group of people who created the conditions that caused the rebellion and it only seemed natural that the same people made sure their bland suburban lives and economic empires remained intact.

Thus resulted the New Detroit Committee, “the focal point for total community action.” As Max Fisher, a Grosse Pointe millionaire puts it, “ its potential for enabling black Americans to get a piece of the action is enormous.” Enough said for that.

The Committee’s headquarters is appropriately located in the plush tower of a new downtown office building. They have given millions to various black groups—some of the money was spent wisely, some wasn’t.

New Detroit, since it’s inception has conducted it’s affairs not with the community, but totally contained in their ivory tower, in the Economic Club of Detroit and the usual upper class hangouts. It’s become another bureaucratic organization, similar to any large establishment Corporation.

Funds provided, of course, have been encouraging but very little has been channeled to critical areas nor has there been enough of it. For example, housing in the inner city is simply unlivable. The population density in the 12th Street area is worse than before. The cost and quality of housing is far below livable standards. It should be noted that New Detroit pledged that housing would be one of its first priorities.

In the area of education and training there has been some progress, namely the presence of Wayne County Community College, which became a reality in spite of taxpayers having vetoed the funding of it. New Detroit made a large grant—this fall classes will start using existing facilities with moon-lighting instructors. Public schools however, have been untouched, and as a result, little is provided in the way of a decent education.

Other areas, such as health care, welfare and the bail system represent New Detroit’s further failures.

Although money is clearly not the entire solution, the direction and attitude taken by New Detroit to date has done little to meet the needs of the black community. That need will be met by the community itself.

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