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A study of the services and activities of the Talladega USO Club and the implications for program planning

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A STUDY OF THE SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE TALLADEGA
USO CLUB AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM PLANNING

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
MARGUERITE TRIMBLE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE 1946
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During World War I and World War II recreational facilities were greatly expanded in many communities. Some communities for the first time developed an appreciation of the need for planned activities and housing facilities to occupy the leisure time of adults and youth. After World War I, the facilities which had been developed largely by private agencies in social service were kept in operation by the agencies which developed them. World War II, however, inspired a coordinated approach on the part of six national agencies which formed themselves into the United Service Organization. USO, as the organization has come to be known, consists of the National Catholic Service, National Jewish Welfare Board, National Travelers' Aid Association, Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, and the Young Women's Christian Association.

In hundreds of communities USO has initiated new programs of recreational activities. The programs have been for general military use and for providing services of various kinds to industrial workers. The small towns have not been neglected by USO. Such a small town as Talladega, Alabama also received a USO development.

In October, 1942, the West Battle USO was organized. This club served the Negro population and has been the only agency in the community to provide Negroes with professional social services. For the first time in the history of the community attractive and spacious physical facilities for recreation were made available to the general Negro population. The club was operated by USO-YWCA primarily as a War Workers' Club. Because the community has a comparatively stable population and is made up of low income groups, the continuance of some type of program, such as the one
established by USO, may be desirable.

Purpose of Study

It is the purpose of this thesis (1) to survey the services of USO-YWCA in Talladega, Alabama, (2) to ascertain whether or not USO-YWCA services are desired by Talladegans (3) to discover whether or not the club can be used as a community center (4) and to ascertain whether or not it would be desirable to retain some aspects of the program if the club should not be continued.

Scope and Limitations

The scope includes a study of 163 families who have used USO for some purpose from its organization to September 15, 1945, a period of three years. The study is based on the general activities of the club provided for both the military and war workers. It is limited to the services rendered the Negro population except at those points where it has been necessary to consult certain white members of the community for data.

Method of Securing Data

Schedules were prepared and presented to 163 families who have used USO facilities. Some of the schedules were filled out in the homes. The writer presented some at USO meetings at various times such as junior hostess groups, the Operating Committee, and at a special mass meeting which was organized to stimulate interest in the community for social welfare activities. Interviews were held with the President of the Talladega Chamber of Commerce, the Regional Director of USO, the Regional Director, and Senior Supervisor of USO-YWCA, and other persons who were related in various ways to the USO in Talladega.
CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF USO IN TALLADEGA

Planning for recreation in many communities throughout the United States has generally had a slow and tedious acceptance on the part of the general public. This has been particularly true in southern communities. There has been a persistent feeling that leisure time activities were personal rather than public responsibilities. Consequently, much of the impetus for community planning in this area has developed during some national emergency, such as depression periods and war mobilization. Likewise, World War II inspired communities to develop extensive recreational activities.¹

Characterization of Talladega, Alabama

Talladega, Alabama is a town comprising 3.32 square miles. According to the United States Bureau of the Census, it is classified as an urban community.² It is situated in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and is known as the "Bride of the Mountains" because of the beauty of its setting. It is in the heart of the great Coosa River watershed, in the northeastern section of the state.

The name, Talladega, is Indian in origin and is translated "Bordertown". Historically, Talladega was the scene of the famous Battle of Talladega under the leadership of General Andrew Jackson.

It is a place of scenic beauty. Shocco Springs, two miles from Talladega and Clairmont Springs, 18 miles away, are both cool mountain resorts in restful settings and are abundant with healthful mineral springs. Cheocha

¹ George D. Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation (New York, 1940), pp. 55-56.
State Park, although it is 20 miles away attracts tourists to Talladega. The park is on top of Cheoха Mountain which is 2407 feet high, the highest point above sea level in Alabama. The park is located in the Talladega National Forest which comprises 350,346 acres.1

The industries of Talladega include several types. The city has three large textile mills including the Bemis Brothers Bag Company housed in one of the most modern mill villages in the South. One oil mill, three foundries, two ice plants, two grist and feed mills, one steam laundry, two sheet metal plants, one creamery, two electric plants, one bakery, one bottling company, and one cotton gin comprise the industries. Contiguous to the city is a rich agricultural region for general farming. Raw materials near Talladega such as timber, manganese, bauxite, iron, limestone, marble, silica, building stone, granite, kaolin, talc, and clay for brick and pottery add to the economic resources of the city.

The House of Representative has recently approved a $60,000,000 appropriation for initial development of a ninety-one channel from Rome, Georgia to Mobile, Alabama, and for construction of reservoirs and dams for power. The development of this project will bring tremendous economic benefits to Talladega in transportation of freight, electric power, and flood control.2

Since 1867, the date of the establishment of Talladega College, Talladega has been an educational center. The schools listed by the Chamber of Commerce are the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (Negro and white), the Presbyterian Home for Children (white), nine public schools one of which

1 Interview with Manager of Talladega Chamber of Commerce, September 10, 1945.
2 Interview with President of the Chamber of Commerce, September 12, 1945.
is for Negroes, Drewry High School, and Sessions Practice School operated by Talladega College maintains a library for its students, and supports a community library for the citizens of the city and county.

The Negro population of Talladega forms itself into three distinct classes. The industrial workers and common laborers compose one class. The "College Family" which consists of the faculty members and students of Talladega College are in another class. The professional workers of the town compose the third class. The "college town" is usually an extraordinary community. Its dominant interest is almost always the college or university located apart from thickly populated centers. These stratifications affect the integration of the Negro groups in various community interests. Buell G. Gallagher in American Caste and The Negro College, which he wrote while he was president of Talladega College, has this to say of class stratification in a college town:

Between the typical college and its surrounding village or city there is a peculiar sense of social distance best summarized in the classic phrase which characterizes the town of Oxford and Oxford University—"town and gown." There are subtle jealousies between college and community which cannot be attributed to difference in income or in standards of living, but which root in a kind of 'invited deference' which the town shows to the institution which it fosters. The academic alien within its gates is the source of notoriety to the city, and by that very fact the college is also a thorn in the civic and commercial pride of the towns people who might have preferred to be known instead for their solid business and professional achievement. There are special variations of the college and community relationship in each locality; but typically and generally, there is a sense of social distance between the two, varying all the way from amused tolerance to mutual hostility and recrimination.

This study of the Talladega community verified the presence of class problems as well as some progress toward group integration.

War impact was felt in Talladega in 1942. By 1943 the population had increased from 9,298 to 15,760. Three war production plants were in operation: the Brecon Loading Company, powder bag-loading plant at Talladega; Alabama Ordnance Works at Childersburg, 20 miles from Talladega; Anniston Warehouse Corporation at Bynum, 15 miles away. It was estimated that 600 Negro workers brought their families. Housing conditions which were already inadequate became critical. Some of the workers were compelled to commute from places as distant as Selma (125 miles). Both white and Negro workers faced the same problems of finding board and lodging for themselves and their families. Besides the Negro workers employed at the war plants, 300 Negro soldiers were stationed at the 4th Service Command Motor Training School in Talladega. There was no place for these soldiers to go when they were off duty. The commercial entertainment was limited and some of it undesirable. The conditions brought USO-YWCA into Talladega.

The charter upon which USO was founded clearly states its acceptance of the obligation to aid in sustaining the morale of workers in war industry. Later the War Manpower Commission listed critical areas near war plants where the sudden influx of newcomers created problems of housing, health, recreation, and family-life problems, which unsolved, would jeopardize full-speed production.

Since the war production workers are both willing and able to pay for its services, a definite policy of charges has been adopted. The USO pays the cost of general overhead and personnel. What the USO gives to war production workers in friendship, advice, and leadership cannot be computed.

Because of the religious character of the member agencies of the USO and their experience, trained personnel, and background in this field of service, the organization is uniquely equipped to meet the needs of war production workers where local conditions make its services desirable.2

1 Interview with Regional Director USO-YWCA, August 2, 1945.
2 USO and The War Production Community, 1943.
USO in Talladega

From December, 1942, through March, 1943, the USO club for whites had $75 in its monthly budget for Negro activities. This fund was spent by a committee of nine Negro citizens. The committee confined its services and entertainment to soldiers, most of whom came from the 4th Service Command Motor Training School although some came from Ft. McClellan at Anniston, Alabama (30 miles away). Soldiers from other camps were made welcome and participated occasionally. Because there was no building accessible for USO purposes, the Negro citizens committee made use of the meager facilities of Westside Junior High School, the Congregation Church, and Talladega College athletic grounds.\(^1\) These facilities were available for recreation for the military only at such times as when they were not in use for their original purposes.

In the spring of 1942 a worker was employed by USO. The committee turned over its responsibilities to her. There was no office space provided for the worker. Dr. W. H. Brothers, one of the two Negro physicians in the town, donated office space in his building. Members of the committee contributed some equipment. From the donated office space the worker directed a fairly well defined program. Groups and clubs were organized throughout the community. In addition to the clubs initiated by the USO worker, community groups of wives of war workers were affiliated with the operation of USO. This plan contributed to the development of this USO club as a Military War Production Unit.

These developments provided recreation for Negroes and were the only ones provided except the activities of the schools for the students. The USO worker and the operating committee were aware that there were gaps in

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\(^1\) Interview with Mrs. R. D. Savage, Senior Hostess, September 10, 1945.
the program. This was not only characteristic of Talladega, but also other communities have been faced with this same type of thing.

The recreation program of a community, when looked at as a whole, is likely to show wide gaps. In many communities, it has centered about the school child, and has been rather oblivious to the needs of the youngsters about to make their entrance into adulthood. In others, many more opportunities are provided for white children than for children of other races.1

An acute gap was the apparent need for a building. The committee tried to secure an old building which was formerly used for the City Hall but the white merchants in the vicinity objected to Negroes having it. Finally, an old building which was then being used as a restaurant was secured at a rental of $100 per month. USO cleaned and remodeled the building, purchased equipment and furniture, and made an attractive club for Negroes. This was the first time in the history of Talladega that Negroes had a special housing facility for community recreation.

Fortunately, the building was spacious enough to meet the general requirements of USO. Partitions were put in which gave ample rooms for most activities. Altogether the club is arranged with beauty and dignity as well as usefulness.

Beauty, and dignity should be combined with informality. There should be attractive lounges and lobbies, and a few quiet spots with easy chairs, good lamps, and writing tables so that people may smoke, read, write, or relax, undisturbed by the radio or the bustle of the lobby crowds.2

The "Quiet Room" is simple but attractively furnished. It is situated farthest from the radio, the piano, and the "juke box". Reading lamps make the lobby comfortable. There are two rest rooms, one for ladies, and one for men, with showers and shaving facilities. The kitchen is well equipped

1 Joanna C. Colcord, Your Community (New York, 1941), p. 155.
with modern furniture and fixtures.
CHAPTER III

USO-YWCA PROGRAM IN TALLADEGA

The USO-YWCA program was designed to meet the needs of the people in the Talladega community. "A community is a form of social organization which meets certain human needs."¹ Prior to the war the Negroes were engaged in industrial work to some extent, but most of them were employed as personal and domestic servants at ridiculously low wages. At the opening of the defense plants most of them in the latter class left their old jobs and went to work at one of the plants. A large percentage of the few business and professional workers contracted for defense jobs for definite periods or for the duration. Therefore, whatever program USO offered included the entire community either as war workers and their families or as volunteers. USO represented not only the initial step in organized recreation, professional social services, but also the first decent physical structure available for social gatherings for Negroes.

The WCA is the only women's organization among the six United Service Organizations. Hence it brought to Talladega USO its primary concern for meeting the needs of women and girls. In addition it brought its fundamental respect for human personality and its program of integrating individuals into groups for the welfare and social growth of the community. To this program Talladega responded with interest and eagerness.

The Program for Women and Girls

An aspect of the program, which received enthusiastic response, was the arts and crafts division. Classes in knitting, sewing, shell craft,

¹ Edward C. Lindeman, op. cit., p. 77.
crocheting, ceramic, painting, and sketching were taught by skilled volunteers. The groups that participated covered a wide range of ages from the "teen-agers" to the senior hostesses. One teen age girl taught knitting to a club of girls between twelve and fifteen years of age. This was a lively group. The girls learned to make sweaters, mittens, mufflers, and many other garments which they could use for themselves or for gifts. These girls were members of war workers' families. On special occasions the boys came in and danced with the girls after class. The junior hostesses learned to make posters and friezes, some of which they used later as effective and appropriate decorations for their formal dances. These young women are now learning to make ear-rings, brooches, bracelets, and other ornaments in their shell craft classes. They make attractive costume jewelry for themselves, for gifts, and for prizes to be used at their bridge and bingo parties. This same group joined a knitting and sewing group. Some of them made well finished work under the expert supervision of a home demonstration agent who served USO as a volunteer leader.

The senior hostesses and older women requested classes in sewing, knitting, painting, and remodeling of garment. Clothes in the stores of Talladega were priced so high that in many cases they were beyond the reach of the family budget. Women who were not active in the senior hostess group joined this club for its practical value to them. They brought in their personal clothing to re-make. They learned to help each other. One project was the assembling of a wardrobe for a second grade boy in the city school who had practically no clothes. This project lasted four weeks and included a number of men and women. The men contributed suits or parts of suits and shirts to be made over to fit the boy. The women designed, cut, and sewed the clothes for the boy. In the realm of attitudes, this project was a splendid
demonstration of cooperation in the community.¹

Another obvious result of the arts and craft classes were the attractive bulletin boards which were kept by the various groups. All of the bulletins showed originality. The posters, painting, and pictures prepared in the classes were used to call attention to coming events and as a record of past activities. According to L. P. Jacks this is recreation. "Recreation", he says, "includes all the beautiful skills, crafts, and hobbies that human beings can practice, on up to the finest of fine arts."²

Activities of The Teen-Age Group

Most of the school children stopped at USO each afternoon when school was out. The out-of-school-youth joined this group. A recent survey showed that four million boys and girls 14 to 17 years of age worked during the summer of 1943. In October 1943, 2,750,000 were still at work.³ In Talladega, children having only school attainments of fifth and sixth grades continued to work at the war production plants during the school term.⁴ These pupils were already retarded. Their need for recreation was even greater than that of those who still attended school. USO made an effort to meet the needs of both groups.

In the spring of 1943, a canteen was opened and operated by the Girl Reserve Clubs of Drewry High School and Westside Junior High School. The club activity continued until school closed, when many of the club members and their advisors from the college YWCA left the city for their vacation.

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¹ Interview with USO Director, September 11, 1945.
³ USO Manual for Work in War Production Areas, 1943.
⁴ Interview with Principal E. G. Brown of Westside School, September 10, 1943.
This particular activity was not resumed in the fall of 1943, but USO remained a meeting place for teen-agers to enjoy. The members of this group read, played ping pong, checkers, and other games, listened to "juke box" music, and danced. These activities were always well supervised by volunteers from the community.

Although "the role of USO with 'teen-agers' is to help point out to the community the need of teen-age workers for recreation and informal education," more specific things were done in Talladega because of the great need and because of the scarcity of resources. The teen-age group in attendance at Drewry High School had access to the recreational activities of Talladega College. Except for activities on the athletic field and in the college chapel other activities were restricted to the "college family" because of limited space. This is typical of conditions of Negro youth in large and small communities in the South. USO felt a responsibility to both school and working teen-agers. Those who worked needed supervision of their leisure time and their education continued informally. Those who continued in school needed supervised leisure time activities and supplements to their formal education by informal activities in which the individual has some choice.

The essence of leisure is freedom to choose. The test of personal character is likewise freedom of choice. If people tend to do and to repeat those acts that give them satisfaction and repetition of satisfying acts tends to establish habits which become trends in personal character, and then it must follow that leisure time is especially potent in establishing character trends.

Educational Activities

1. USO Manual for Work in War Production Areas, 1943.
In addition to the education which may result informally throughout all the program, USO scheduled educational activities as such. Workers are interested in labor laws, workmen's compensation, and collective bargaining. Current problems stimulated the interest of most of the people who used the club. Specialists were called in at the request of the war workers and upon the suggestion of the director to discuss such problems. The best speakers and discussion leaders in the community made their contributions. In the beginning the people preferred lectures. After a few lectures followed by questions and answers, the members chose the discussion group method. The participants enjoyed the active attack on the problem which discussion provided. This is a natural result of group interaction.\(^1\)

Educational movies were shown at regular intervals. Bulletin board exhibits stimulated interest and activity. A larger number of people who attended USO formed the habit of browsing through the reading material as they come into the lobby. Magazines, books, and newspapers were available at all times. Decorations, programs, and costumes were made in keeping with educational ideals and standards. Charm classes and courses in "boy-girl" relationships were conducted at intervals. Religious literature of all faiths was always at hand. Music, poetry, art, movies, lectures, and exhibits were media used for programs of inspiration and individual enrichment for those who attend West Battle Street USO.\(^2\)

**Musical Activities**

Music played an important role in the USO program. Group singing was an outstanding activity in the Talladega club. Music teachers and

\(^1\) S. R. Slavson, *Creative Group Education* (New York, 1940), p. 76.  
\(^2\) Interview with the USO Director, September 11, 1945.
choir leaders assumed the leadership for the musical groups. The soldiers from Ft. McClellan always participated in the musical programs. Some of them were professional musicians. USO presented concerts by the Ft. McClellan, Ft. Benning, Tuskegee Army Air Base, and Tuskegee Institute bands. All types of music were included from characteristic "juke box" music to Beethoven. Not only were outside community musical groups invited to entertain at the club but also the local church and college choirs. Volunteers from the music department of the college cooperated where help was needed. The "juke box" served not only as a means for playing popular tunes but also as a medium through which USO presented hymns, folk songs, ballads, and symphonies. The piano was a source of pleasure to those who played for their own amusement and to those who listened. Piano playing became a hobby to some people who previously had had little or no access to an instrument. Music at USO stimulated interest and cooperation among the different denominational groups, the college and the town, and in developing general appreciation for music as a medium through which the individual can live and learn and be happy.

You may think of music as a typical form of Higher Recreation, though, of course, there are a hundred others. We need playgrounds for the soul, and it is in them, I think, that the most enjoyable recreation, the most delightful and lasting of leisure occupations are found.1

Special Activities

Parties and dances constitute some of the special activities. Several clubs among the war workers sponsored dances at regular intervals. Some of the clubs were composed of women exclusively, some exclusively of men, and some were mixed. The dances featured special occasions such as holidays,

1 L. P. Jacks, op. cit., p. 106.
birthdays, and anniversaries. The junior hostesses often entertained the men from Ft. McClellan at their dances. USO introduced all of Talladega to dinner parties and formal receptions. All of the affairs had their educational as well as social values.

The educational possibilities of a party are: (1) group activities, (2) enjoyment of the social milieu, (3) overcoming of shyness and self-consciousness, (4) learning social behavior, (5) acquiring skills, (6) self-expression, (7) gaining social approbation, (8) raising the standards of aesthetic and social enjoyment.  

The junior hostesses attended the bi-monthly dances at Ft. McClellan under the sponsorship of USO. The young ladies were required to conform to standards set up by USO.

Other regular activities included a "Story Hour" for the colored blind children of the Alabama Institute for the Blind, Easter-egg hunts for service men and for children of the war workers, and special day programs for the service men from Ft. McClellan and other near-by camps. The junior hostesses made scrap books for the men who were hospitalized at Ft. McClellan. Along with the scrap books they contributed cigarettes, candy, and other comfort items to the patients.

"Family Night" parties and programs were popular at the West Battle Street USO. "Mr. and Mrs. War Worker" and their children were provided fun in the programs which they planned. Prizes were given for unique features such as the oldest mother, the oldest father, the largest family, the parents of the largest number of children in the armed forces. For entertainment the members of the families played bridge, bingo, bridge-keno, checkers, and dominoes. They participated in group singing and dancing. The family parties

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were illustrative of acceptable group work practices applicable to the entire family. The main purpose of group work is to help an individual through a group "to strengthen worthwhile personality characteristics, to eliminate faulty ones, and to broaden his horizons through new interests, better thinking, and sounder action."\(^1\)

CHAPTER IV
COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE OF USO

Some indication of the acceptance of the program of USO may be shown in the change in community relations, the participation of volunteers, and the general interest shown in programs promoted.

Change in Community Relationships

Relationships all round have improved. The heavy line of demarcation between the people of the town and the "college family" has become perceptibly lighter. Indications of this improvement were demonstrated in the collaboration of the junior hostesses and the young women of the college in the entertainment of the men in the armed services from nearby camps. Even in the first days of USO in Talladega, before the 4th Service Command Motor Training school was moved, the college students attended the dances at Westside Junior High School. Both groups continued to entertain at the club and to attend the bi-monthly dances at Fort McClellan. Moreover, a feeling of comradeship and friendly interest pervaded all gatherings where the two groups meet on the common ground of USO.

Westside school instructors, bricklayers, painters and Talladega College professors composed the Operating Committee. The success of the club was the hub around which the thinking of the committee revolved. There appeared to be a oneness and not a division between the public school teachers and college teachers, the people of the town and the "college family". Chaperons from both groups supervised the younger groups in the club and in the club and in connection with on-going activities in the town which were

Interview with USO Director, September 11, 1945.
sponsored by USO. There has always been some degree of cordiality between a few of the people of the college and the people of the town. USO induced a more general acceptance of the two groups, one for the other, than any other person or agency over a period of many years, it is reported.

Relationships among the people of the town seemed to have improved. The people who lived on the "right side of the tracks" had always had a strong tendency to isolate themselves from those who lived on the "wrong side of the tracks." This was obvious among the junior hostesses at the beginning of their organization. Charm classes, craft clubs, instruction in good taste and good manners, and parties made one group appear as gracious and attractive as the other. In fact, the two groups became one. Girls who formerly did not know how to dress becomingly learned to choose their clothes with taste and care. Some of them learned to alter ill-fitting garments to their advantage. The charm classes helped them to see that simplicity is more attractive than many gaudy ornaments. Most of the girls lost their shyness.

Participation of Volunteers

Participation by the people of a community in a satisfying program tends to weld them together. USO has been characteristically employing techniques of increasing community participation.

According to a report of the Operating Committee there has been improvement in community-college-relationships and intra-community relationships. USO initiated cooperation in areas where heretofore only lethargy and inactivity existed. Some of the oldest women in the community served as hostesses on various occasions. Particularly in the early days of USO, this group of women helped to make entertainment possible for the soldiers.

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from the 4th Service Company Motor Training School. Another indication of cooperation is the fact that every minister in this small town with all its limitations always made all announcements and explanations relative to USO activities. Some of them gave 100 per cent support to the program.¹

General Interest in USO

The cooperation of the Talladega Board of Education in permitting USO to use the city school should not be overlooked. Although this is but a slight indication of possibilities for better interracial relationships it is a definite step. The public had not been permitted to use the building before, although other requests had been made.

Negro Talladegans seem to have gained strength and confidence because they have seen the worthwhile results of their cooperation on a large scale. There seems to be a feeling of closeness, an affinity for the community, a sense of belonging. Other attempts to accomplish this very purpose have been made. Talladega College under the leadership of one of its presidents took the initiative in trying to establish unity in this small town. A worker was employed by the college to work in the community. The work actually consisted of attempts to coordinate the college and the community. Some individuals profited by the experiment but there was little lasting effect in the community.² A ministerial alliance, which included the men in the theological department of the college and the ministers of the nine Negro churches in the city, tried at various times to unite the people of Talladega for their own welfare. Civic minded individuals attempted to organize the community for one worthy cause or another. No other agency or individual

¹ Conference with the Operating Committee, September 12, 1945.
² Conference with faculty members of Talladega College, September 13, 1945.
has made the strides accomplished by USO. USO has provided an imposing demonstration of the fact that it is possible to meet with a fair degree of effectiveness the interests and needs of a heterogeneous constituency of economic, educational, geographic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

USO has touched the keynote of unity in this community. In times of crises it is the tendency of people to unite against the enemy. The state of emergency of the country gave rise to USO and its policies and practices which have been so effective in communities where it has served.\(^1\) In Talladega the development of a better type of group spirit can be attributed in part to USO.

\(^1\) USO and Social Work Practice (1945), p. 17.
CHAPTER V

THE FUTURE OF TALLADEGA USO

USO rendered definite services to the community during a period of emergency and war. With the cessation of the military and war activity, USO program continued to operate in Talladega. Because of the peculiar position of the community the program does not vary to any great extent from what it formerly included. The war plants continued to operate with a minimum number of employees. There are hundreds of soldiers stationed at Ft. McClellan, 30 miles away, who still depend upon Talladega for a part of their entertainment. Besides, there is no agency to take care of the recreational needs of Negro Talladegans who were war workers but who are now engaged in civilian industry or who have no jobs. The degree of the need for recreational facilities is just as great although the reasons may be different.

Services to Civilians and War Workers

The arts and crafts groups continue with practically the same membership and activities. Girls and women of all age groups continued to attend the classes. They were still painting, sketching, modeling in clay, and making many useful and beautiful handicraft articles. Jewelry making is the most popular activity in the younger set.

Music also plays an important role in the program for civilians. Talladegans enjoy Brahms and Beethoven, hymns and ballads, and sentimental dance tunes by record. Musical teas and group singing serve as interesting entertainment for Sunday afternoons. Soldiers and civilians stopped at the club and entertained themselves by putting nickels in the "juke box".

Instruction in making children’s clothes, in remodeling and repairing
clothes, in knitting, and general sewing is as much in demand as before the end of the war.

Teen-age needs are still acute. USO remains the only place outside the school where the Negro children can go for supervised recreation. The school is inadequate for this purpose because of overcrowded conditions and heavy pupil loads for teachers. One of the pertinent services of USO in this interim is to the teen-age group in the community. Youth formerly left to seek their own amusement are reported to be using the USO continuously.

Moreover, the recreational needs of the adults continue to be met almost entirely by USO. USO introduced organized recreation to the community. Now that the desire has been created, adults, whether formerly war workers or not, satisfy it by participating in ping pong, bridge, whist, checkers, parties, and dancing at USO. The clubs with formal organization meet regularly in the "Quiet Room". Miscellaneous temporary groups and committees meet at USO. Some emphasis is placed on the small group. This is in accord with good group work practices. The small group club represents the most fertile field for carrying out the objectives of group workers. On the other hand, mass activities reach some individuals who cannot be helped by the small group.

Mass activity, because it does not spotlight individuals, can absorb the ultra-shy person or the over-aggressive person who could not easily be drawn into a small club group until he is more fitted for small group participation.

Services to Returned Veterans

In addition to its services to the few remaining war workers, the Ft. Mc-Clellan soldiers, and the civilians who were formerly affiliated as war workers, USO is meeting some of the needs of veterans of World War II. Men

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2 Ibid., p. 98.
discharged from the armed services are finding a welcome and a haven in all USO clubs. This is particularly true in the case of the Talladega club because there is no specific agency which can facilitate a first step in the transition to the normal pattern of community life. Information with respect to jobs, schools, and G. I. rights and privileges is given by the director and by volunteers who are informed on these subjects. Personal problems are referred to Red Cross or some other agencies if they are too complicated for the staff and the volunteers.¹

The returned service men like to participate in the recreational program of USO. Because USO was designed primarily for soldiers, the veterans are still willing to accept all USO has to offer. Even the men with obvious physical disabilities resulting from the war are not too reluctant to attend the affairs of the club.

USO and Community Organization

Throughout its work in this community USO has made a continued effort to find and develop leadership. USO is seeking to transfer the responsibility for its particular work to a newly created agency under the guidance of leaders in the community.² Soon USO will withdraw its funds and Talladega will be even farther down the scale so far as facilities for recreation are concerned unless something is done toward the establishment of another program.

An interracial committee has been organized through the direct influence of YWCA. The committee is composed of directors of the West Battle Street USO and the Spring Street USO, for whites, and some of the leaders among the business and professional men of both races. The primary purpose of this

¹ Interview with USO Director, September 11, 1945.
² Interview with Regional Director of USO, August 3, 1945.
committee is to work on plans for a continued recreational program for both races in Talladega. A secondary, but important purpose, is the improvement of race relationships.\(^1\) Interracial fellowship is one of the basic policies of YWCA. In every community where the YWCA operated a USO club, it attempted to improve race relationships. Establishing an interracial committee is one of the methods used to improve race relationships and establish interracial fellowship.

From the beginning, the women who started the organization desired that all girls and young women might share in the abundant life. In seeking to make this possible they became aware of the minority racial groups in the nation's population who, either by law or custom, occupy a less favored position. As the years have passed, the women who have been responsible for the growth and development of YWCA have tried, both within and without the organization, to eradicate the shadow across our democracy cast by the inferior treatment of minority racial groups. From the time the present national movement was formed in 1906, when Grace Dodge, the first president, called a conference in Asheville, North Carolina, to consider the needs of Negro women, no year has passed without study and consideration ways to improve the condition under which racial minorities live.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Conference with USO Director, September 15, 1945.
\(^2\) "Experiments in Democracy," USO Division of the National Board YWCA, 1944.
CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS AND PROGRAM PLANNING

In 1940 Talladega was a typical small southern town. For its population of 9,298 it had not a single supervised recreational center either for its white inhabitants or its Negroes. There were just three public parks. These were and still are for whites exclusively. The schools furnished the Negro youth the only recreational facilities they had. The adults resorted to the meager available commercial entertainment. For Negroes this consisted of two segregated moving picture theaters, one dilapidated pool room, and one shabby and barren night spot. Adults unplanned for in leisure use when the full impact of accelerated war production was reached in Talladega, USO was organized with a varied and extensive program for both races. Since most of the people who were living in the town went to work at the war production plants, USO served the original residents as well as the immigrants.

USO represented Talladega's initiation to community planning for recreation. Whereas the population influx demanded the attention of USO-YWCA, the increase in population did not create the need for leisure time planning. The need was present before the establishment of USO. When USO is discontinued the need will remain. Some agency or organization should assume that part of the present program which is most useful and most desirable to the people in the community.

An Analysis of Efforts to Meet the Problems of Recreation

General Community Efforts.---Some civic minded members of the community have at various times tried to organize the young people for recreation. The

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1 U. S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit.
2 J. G. Colcord, op. cit., p. 152.
organizations consisted of groups for free play, teams for soft ball, football, baseball, and social clubs. In every case either the leaders' interest was not lasting or the response of the groups was too poor for a continued program.

Church Assistance.—In an effort to interest the young people in church activities some of the churches have tried to incorporate a recreational program in the religious program. One church organized a wide awake group of boys and girls into a club which met on Sunday evenings in the church and once each week outside the church. The weekly meetings were in the form of parties, picnics, hikes, weiner roasts, and hay rides. The Sunday meetings consisted of talent programs and discussions. The members of the club discussed problems of home and church relationships, school, church, and home relationships, current history, and Bible characters. The group invited speakers and entertainers to visit and to participate in their programs. Each member was expected to participate in both the Sunday and the week-day phases of the program. The project was not limited to the members of the church which sponsored it but was open to all young people of the community. The response was very good. Sometimes as many as fifty young people attended the Sunday evening meetings, and as many attended the week-day affairs. The project lasted over a period of about a year but it was not resumed at the beginning of the following school term. Other similar attempts have been tried in the churches but the one described was the most far-reaching and effective.

Talladega College.—The American Missionary Association through Talladega College has made several attempts to meet the needs of the Negroes in Talladega with respect to recreation and general community welfare. A Community House

Interview with Rev. J. W. Bonner, May 1, 1945.
sponsored by the Congregational Church has housed a nursery school and play
room for the younger children with support and equipment from the American
Missionary Association.

The college at one time employed a social worker as a coordinator be-
tween the college and the community. The program as executed by the worker
had recreational emphasis as well as emphasis on the general welfare of the
community. Play groups and small group clubs were organized and supervised
by the worker. For a short time the interest of the community was keen and
the response was good. By the time the first worker resigned interest and
response were lagging. A second worker was employed. The lack of coopera-
tion of the community with the second worker discouraged the sponsors of the
project and it was discontinued.¹

The Interracial Committee.—Under the direct sponsorship of YWCA an
interracial committee has been organized. The committee is actually function-
ing as a city-wide recreational committee. It is composed of the directors
of both the white and Negro USO clubs and members of the community from both
races. The committee recommended that both clubs be retained for civilian
use, that the Community Chest include $6000 in its budget for the support
of the clubs, that the city purchase the building, built by the federal
government, in which the white club is housed for $14,000, and that the pro-
gram of both clubs remain as nearly the same as possible.²

Suggestions for Program Planning

A thorough study of the USO program, its services to the Talladega

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¹ Interview with Faculty Member of Talladega College, September 10, 1945.
² Meeting with Interracial Committee, September 14, 1945.
Community, and a survey of the resources of the community have preceded the suggestions which follow:

Communities are as individual as people. They differ in history, social composition, economic and industrial institutions, and welfare agencies. Any intelligent plan for community betterment must be based upon exact knowledge of local social problems and resources.¹

USO in actuality was a community center as of September 15, 1945. Except for the soldiers from Ft. McClellan and a few other soldiers from nearby camps, the people who are being served are Talladegans. Most of them are original residents who lived in the community prior to the defense era. A few families who migrated to the community during the "boom period" have established permanent homes. A still smaller number remain in the community pending the reconversion of one or more of the war production plants to peace time production. Of the individuals interviewed, 93 per cent are original residents.

The city of Talladega is negotiating for the purchase, rental, or lease of the Brecon Bag Loading Plant, a war production plant within the city limits of Talladega. The plant will be converted into a factory for production of civilian goods. Negroes will be employed.² Other business are industrial projects are in process of being initiated. The projects include cafes, dry cleaning plants, beauty parlors, grocery stores, and markets, and at least one other cotton mill. Consequently, the 2600 Negroes who live in the city limits represent a fairly stable population.

The people need recreational facilities. USO is the only accessible place at present. The families of this study were questioned as to their participation in activities offered at USO. Table 1 shows the activities

¹ B. A. McCleeshan, Organizing the Community (New York, 1922), p. 36.
² Interview with Manager of Talladega Chamber of Commerce, September 10, 1945.
in which both adults and teen-age persons expressed interest. A comparison of the two groups indicates that the popular activities are common interests of the adults and the younger groups.

**TABLE 1**

**PRESENT ACTIVITIES OF USO AFFILIATES BY AGE GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Teen-Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridge, Whist, Other Card Games</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Literary Clubs</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Clubs</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dances</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Junior Hostesses are considered young adults.

Although the high degree of affiliation itself is evidence of the community's interest in the USO program, the author judged it wise to ascertain the interest of the participants in rendering services to USO. Generally, when individuals volunteer to do certain projects in a group work agency it is evidence that they are interested in continuing that agency.  

Table 2 shows the services which adults and teen-agers indicated they desire to render. The high number of 163 interested in contributing financial support is in itself a manifestation of interest in the project.

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When the families were asked what activities they would like to pursue, the range of interests was considerably larger than in Table 1. This was due to the fact that activities had been requested of the USO but the agency had not had the funds nor facilities with which to grant the requests, consequently, they had not been provided.

TABLE 2
SERVICES USO AFFILIATES INDICATE THEY HAVE INTEREST IN RENDERING TO NEW AGENCY BY AGE GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Teen-Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teach Handicraft</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist in Program Planning</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaperon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist Veterans</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertain Soldiers</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute Music</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute Financial Support</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to meet the growing demands for enjoyable ways of spending leisure, corporate action has become as necessary as in other fields of human activity. Increasing leisure and higher standards of living have brought within reach of the mass of people enlarged opportunities. The machinery of government, philanthropic societies, business organizations, and cooperative associations of many kinds have been called upon in the building of the modern recreation world.¹

Talladega needs corporate action in order to maintain the program

¹ J. F. Steiner, Americans at Play (New York, 1933), p. 122.
which has apparently met the needs in the area of recreation of its Negro population. Corporate action may not materialize soon enough. Talladega is conservative. USO is functioning in the interim with the hope that the community will take hold.¹ Because the needs for USO funds in the "occupied lands" is so great, the organization cannot hold on much longer in a community where the need is no longer directly related to the war. USO continues to be supported by the War Fund. The public has decided that the need for USO in war production areas is fast diminishing. One group of such clubs was ordered to close on November 1, 1945. Talladega was in the group, however, there was an extension in the possibility that a sufficiently tangible program was submitted to USO.²

Colcord concedes that private initiative is still needed, in part to carry on activities not yet undertaken by the public resources, and in part to provide stimulus and support for the public administration.³ Accordingly, certain suggestions seem pertinent to the Talladega situation.

On the basis of this study of the USO program, a survey of the community resources, and an analysis of what has been done to meet the needs of the Negroes in Talladega, the author believes the community would be benefitted by a continuance of a supervised recreational facility under private and local resources.

In Table 3 the activities desired are shown. A difference is noted between the types of activities desired by adults and teen-agers. As is to be expected, teen-agers desired active and athletic activities in excess of adults.

¹ Interview with Regional USO Director, Dr. Hugh Gloster, September 15, 1945.
² Ibid.
³ Joanna Colcord, op. cit., p. 155.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Teen-Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painting, Sketching</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicrafts</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing and Dressmaking</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatics</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dances</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luncheons</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whist</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volley Ball</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Ball</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

According to this study the West Battle Street USO Club was designed for the entertainment of the men of the 4th Service Command Motor Training School and the war workers in and near Talladega but it served the total Negro population. The study shows that the USO Club was the first planned recreational program which had been available to Negroes in the community. Since the program touched the total Negro population at one point or another, and inasmuch as it was the only housing facility for all general meetings, the USO Club served in the capacity of a community center.

This study of USO-YWCA activities in Talladega was conducted for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the services of the club were desired by Talladegans, whether or not the club could be used as a community center, and whether or not some of the aspects of the program should be discontinued. The data of this study based on interviews with 163 families and observations have, therefore, led to the following conclusions:

1. Talladegans desire a recreational agency for Negroes.

2. The agency should be housed in the present USO building, if it is possible, because the facility has proved itself reasonably adequate with its special club rooms, lounges, and general arrangements.

3. If the present building is not available after November 1, 1945, or if the rent is too exorbitant, another house should be secured for the recreational agency.

4. All the pertinent aspects of the present USO program are desirable.

5. The data show that the people in the community desire additional activities on the basis of the recreational interests expressed by the people which have not been satisfied by USO.
a. Additional activities include tennis, volleyball, swimming, and soft ball as indicated by present USO affiliates.

6. The present Operating Committee is working satisfactorily, therefore, it should continue to be the operating body for the recreational program for Talladega.

7. The Operating Committee should work in cooperation with city-wide recreational groups in order to facilitate adequate planning for Negro Talladegans.

8. The Community Chest should be asked by the Operating Committee to contribute whatever it will in part support of a recreational program for Negroes, if it will not assume full support.

9. The leaders of the various groups should be asked to continue to function regardless of the accessibility or inaccessibility of a house in order to keep a satisfactory program in progress.

10. The interest expressed by the participants in the program verify both a desire and a need for planned recreation. During the reconversion procedures of USO the Operating Committee should exert every effort to maintain a high level of community interest and participation.
Schedule for USO Affiliates

I.

1. Name_________________________ 2. Address_________________________
3. Distance from USO_________________________ 4. Age (12-14) (15-17) (18-21) (over 21)
5. Original resident - Yes ( ) No ( )

II.

1. How many times weekly do you go to USO?

2. In what activities do you participate at the present?

   a. What did you do formerly? Present Former
      Bridge, whist, or other card games ( ) ( )
      Art and literary clubs ( ) ( )
      Social clubs ( ) ( )
      Athletic clubs ( ) ( )
      Fraternal organizations ( ) ( )
      Dances ( ) ( )
      Parties ( ) ( )
      Bingo ( ) ( )
      Others ( ) ( )

3. Prior to establishment of USO where did you take part in these activities?
   Home ( )
   Church ( )
   School ( )
   Other ( )

4. What USO activities have you participated in most frequently?
   (Check in order of preference 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)
   Painting, sketching ( )
   Handicrafts ( )
   Music ( )
   Sewing and dressmaking ( )
   Family night programs ( )
   Dramatics ( )
   Educational movies ( )
   Dances ( )
   Parties ( )
   Luncheons ( )
   Dinners ( )
   Card games ( )
   Bingo ( )
   Others ( )

5. Would you like to continue to participate in these activities? Yes ( ) No ( )

6. List other activities in which you would like to take part.
7. Where would you like to participate in these activities?
   The Community House
   Westside School
   Talladega College
   USO Club
   Others

8. What services do you render at USO?
   Conduct group singing
   Teach handicrafts
   Work in the canteen
   Help in program planning
   Chaperon teen age parties
   Wrap packages for mailing
   Serve food to visiting servicemen and women
   Others

9. Would you be willing to render these same services or others to a community agency which would continue to develop the program of community recreation established by USO?
   Yes ( )  No ( )

10. What existing agency or institution do you think could take over part or all of the program of USO?
    Westside School
    Churches
    The Community House
    Talladega College
    Others

11. Give your opinion of the services of USO to Talladega.
List of Sources of Information

Personal Interviews

Miss Sara Hill, Supervisor USO YWCA
Southeastern Region
Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Hugh Gloster, Associate Regional Executive
Southeastern Region
Atlanta, Georgia

Miss Blanche Best, Senior Supervisor, USO-YWCA
Southeastern Region
Atlanta, Georgia

Mrs. Bessie Brown, Director USO
Talladega USO
Talladega, Alabama

Mr. Hugh McElderry, Manager
Chamber of Commerce
Talladega, Alabama
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