Regional Plan Association

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RPA CITES THREE STEPS TO HELP PEOPLE INTO THE ECONOMIC MAINSTREAM: INTEGRATION, REPLICATION AND FORUMS

Formation of a regional organization to replicate successful health, education and human service programs; forums to bring together the widest range of political thinking to agree on solutions; and physical planning policies to facilitate and encourage racial and income integration are the three recommendations to help the underclass into the mainstream, according to a report released today by the Committee on the Social Chasm of the Regional Plan Association.

Many problems of the very poor can be addressed cost effectively through replication of programs in parenting, teen mentoring, summer schools, prenatal care outreach and other proven successes, the report said.

Political support for extending proven government programs like the Women, Infant and Children's nutrition program (WIC) and Headstart, now serving fewer than half those eligible would be one goal of forums of political and civic leaders, academics and experts seeking to reconcile widely diverse views on issues which affect the underclass.

Physical planning to encourage racial and income integration can halt the increasing isolation of the underclass from mainstream social and economic activity, the committee said. Carefully controlled gentrification policies, cross-district school integration, and concentration of jobs in downtowns served

by mass transit are examples of strategies to facilitate and promote integration which the report cites.

The RPA report was approved by the Association's directors, headed by William T. Knowles, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, National Westminster Bancorp Inc., and was developed by a committee headed by Annmarie H. Walsh, Gulick Scholar in Residence, Institute of Public Administration, and Frank Lomax, III, Executive Vice President, National Urban League.

Other Committee members include: Nancy C. Brown, Director of Community Development, Town of Greenwich; Toni Coffee; Herbert E. Morse, Vice Chairman, New York Region, Peat Marwick Main & Co.; Nort Rosner, Vice President, RE & General Services, Xerox Corporation; James Tomchik, President, Beardsley, Brown & Bassett; and Phyllis Vineyard.

Regional Plan Association is a nonprofit research and planning organization working for the coordinated conservation and development of the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metropolitan region since the 1920s. The Association has helped Fairfield, Morris, and Westchester counties create comprehensive plans through public participation projects and is currently working with the Borough President's office and residents of The Bronx to create a plan there.

The report is part of a National Association of Regional Councils program to find solutions to the problems of the expanding, isolated underclass in the United States. The Ford Foundation financed the project.

Also released today are the recommendations of planning agencies of greater Los Angeles and New Orleans and recommendations for nationwide solutions from the National Association of Regional Councils.

The Regional Plan Association report is enclosed. For a copy of the National Association of Regional Councils report, call Mary Rivers at (212) 398-1140.

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December 21, 1989