

Presentation by Bert Berkley
First LINC Commission Meeting
Princess Garden Restaurant
November 16, 1992

I very much appreciate the fact that you've made the commitment you did when you raised your right hand tonight. I agree with you that we are in the position to do something really constructive for children and families in this community; and together we can bring about some results that have never been experienced before, anywhere.



Incidentally, the reason we're here tonight at the Princess Garden, for a very different kind of a meal, is because I want you to remember: the OLD WAY is OUT, CHANGE is IN. What we have to do is change the system. We have to NOT think in terms of "demonstration projects," and "isn't that wonderful — I'll get a pat on the back ... " and then it slowly but surely fades away. What we want to do is CHANGE THE SYSTEM.

I've been asked, "What's your vision for LINC?" There have been lots of words written pertaining to vision. My vision comes from an old African proverb:

"IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD."

We have to tap into the COMPASSION of this Community. We have to listen; we have to respond, we have to empower. We have to let those that are involved develop solutions for the people they are dealing with -- for the welfare mom, for the abused child, for the jobless who want to work. And you might say, "Well, how really serious are the problems?" The problems are EXTREMELY SERIOUS. This is not the "11th Hour;" it's ONE MINUTE BEFORE MIDNIGHT!! There is despair in this country about saving ourselves that is beyond anything you can imagine. It goes from the inner city of Kansas City to the highest ranks of those in Washington, D.C. And the reason that's true is because it's recognized that we're destroying ourselves from within. We have to work it out; so that what Marian Wright Edelman said is changed. She said that 1 in 5 children in this country live in poverty.

One in five! That's enough to make you cringe. We have to REFORM the social services.

I've made several trips back to Washington, and talked to people at the Department of Health and Human Services; and when I first meet them, I sit down and say a little bit about LINC; and then I say, "There's an old saying: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' -- but this one's broke!" Everyone agrees, immediately. They understand that. And while I might have thought that the bigger problem we might have here is the Department of Social Services because there's a tendency to think in terms of "they're going to gore our ox;" they are DELIGHTED that the LINC Commission is being formed, and that we're now in existence. They want to change what they're doing. They want to be flexible, they want to be responsive. We want to put them in a position that they feel good about what they're doing. And where should we concentrate? Our concentrations must be on OUTCOMES – on worker discretion, LISTENING to customers; and working with other reform efforts in this community. We have many fine partnerships, as have been discussed here this evening. We have many fine programs. We want to strengthen those partnerships and programs, and see that they are even more successful.

Tonight we talked about Lee Shore's book for just a moment. That book was published in 1989. Most of those demonstration projects – not all, but many of those demonstration projects – are no longer in existence. And why? Because the money dried up. And that's why we can't think in terms of a demonstration project. We must think in terms of changing the system. We must think in terms, as she says, of OUTCOMES, and that's where we are going to be concentrating. One of the things that agencies often report

at the end of the year, is that last year we serviced 900 clients. Seldom, if EVER, did they look to see what HAPPENED to those 900 individuals. What we want to do is service 200 clients; and change their lives!

Allow me to tell you a problem that this commission must come to grips with. Every individual who comes to the door must be served. We cannot turn people away; so we have to find a way to change lives for the better, for EVERYONE who asks for help. Do you realize that a social worker – not just in Kansas City, but it's true in Kansas City – can't write a check for \$200 to give somebody help that is desperately needed at that particular moment? And yet, we allow that social worker to make a decision that CHANGES that person's LIFE. It isn't right. We have to TRUST the social worker, we have to believe in that individual. We have to believe in the nurses, the counselors, the eligibility workers – those who are on the firing line making things happen.

In my business, and I know in whatever you do, you listen to your customers. We send our people out to see somebody, and we say, “Are we doing alright?” If they say, “Yes you are” then we say “Well, isn't there something we could do to do better?” And if something's WRONG, we SCRAMBLE. We do everything in our power to make it right as quickly as possible! The social worker is in that position – to listen. Therefore, that individual must be empowered, so something can be done very quickly at the time they are with the people who need help.

There's a wonderful story in the social work field about the social worker who received a call from a welfare mom; and the social worker was invited over for coffee. What a breakthrough! She had been living for the day when she didn't have a formal relationship, and here she was invited over to talk. When she got there, there were six other social workers. The welfare mom said, “I thought it would be a good idea if you met. Each of you has something to do with my family.”

That's terrible. That's NOT the way it should be done. We don't want THIS social worker for one child, another social worker for another child and somebody else for grandmother. We don't even want to have a situation where we have one person for health, one person for mental health, and another person for Head Start. We have to have what is commonly referred to as “one-stop shopping;” meaning we have to trust the social worker. And, incidentally, on this issue of different social workers serving different children in the same family – Gary Stangler can give you horror stories about how a social worker walked in and was responsible for “Child A,” and “Child B” was near death; and nothing was done. Absolutely UNBELIEVABLE that this kind of thing could happen. We have to change things; and we are CAPABLE of doing so.

I want to reemphasize the importance of the many programs that are going on in this community – the partnerships. I want you to remember that our objective is to STRENGTHEN those partnerships and those programs. On October 30th, a gentleman named Ira Barbell was in Kansas City. He's a senior associate of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. He said that change in the social work field is 4 or 5 times more difficult than in business, and 4 or 5 times more difficult than if they continue doing exactly what they're doing today. Well, is it just because these people object to change more than the rest of us? No. It's because they have two serious problems to contend with: one is political – they're under the gun from the politicians, if anything goes wrong with the politician's constituency; and the other thing is they're subject to the press, the public, whatever you want to call the media which is looking down their throat all the time.

There has to be change. LINC can be the bridge. We can be the vehicle that educates this community to the importance of change. We can create that climate. And that climate is essential, if we are going to get our job done. Interestingly enough, at state there is little or no vehicle for change. But we have to

institute change, and we must recognize that if we do it wrong, if this commission does it **WRONG**, it can be **HIGHLY** demoralizing. We have to handle change in a constructive, mature, progressive manner. And I'm confident from what I've learned up to this point, that we'll have the kind of cooperation we want.

Ira Barbell said something else. He said, "Focus on systems change -- focus, *focus*, **FOCUS!!**" Please bear that in mind. He went on to say that you can't have six-inch manuals, and expect people to change. Ladies and gentlemen, we have departments of the Department of Social Services, State of Missouri, that have manuals that are over six inches thick, and a mindset to go with it. "If it ain't in the book -- don't do it." Why is that the case? The reason is because the system is driven by **ERROR RATES**. You must avoid mistakes, you may not waste even a few dollars. The result, very simply, is that there is **NO WORRY ABOUT OUTCOMES**. WE have to concentrate on outcomes.

But why has it been like this? Because these people are afraid. They've been **BURNED** by supervisors who are not adequate in their responsibility of supervision, they've been **BURNED** by the media – Gary Stangler can tell you stories you wouldn't believe, and the individual has been burned by the system: step out of line, or try something creative, and you don't get the promotion. It's as simple as that. We have to be responsible for changing the rules; and in doing so we have to work with the Department of Social Services, we have to work with Health and Human Services in Washington, we have to work with state and federal legislators. And we're going to be **SUCCESSFUL** doing it.

The reason we're going to be successful is because of this blue-ribbon commission. Nobody in public life likes to see a blue-ribbon commission – people of this caliber – who are thwarted in honest efforts to improve things. We must see to it that we encourage innovation, collaboration, risk-taking and opportunity seeking.

Let's talk for a moment about the commission. Gary has already explained that we are agents, and we have no legal liability. You should also know that Gary has said that he will not veto what this commission does – as long as it's legal, as long as it's reasonable; and therefore, anything we do that's reasonable we will be able to continue with. Hopefully, Gary will be at our side to give us advice and counsel as we go along; but I do want to make it very clear: this commission is acting as a board of directors, and we are an independent body. Our decisions **COUNT**.

There will be seven committees that are involved with LINC. Originally, in the write-up you received, there were five: children and families, aging, health care, school-linked social services, and welfare reform, or teaching people how to get a job and to hold it. We are adding two to that, on the economic side, based on our conversations last week about 21st Century Communities: one is housing; the other is business development – -meaning someone will have to go around to every medium-size and large business in this community, and hopefully convince them to put a business in the inner city.

(At the Commission Meeting Tuesday morning, November 17, it was agreed to add a safety committee, our eighth.)

One of our objectives is to get people off of welfare – **OFF** of welfare. And with 21st Century Communities and the "living wage" that we have talked about, that is a very practical possibility.

Gayle Hobbs is our executive director. I've been working with Gayle for a number of months now. Gayle, as she indicated to you, had the responsibility for youth services in the 28 counties of northwestern Missouri. She has been with the Department of Social Services for 17 years, and she knows the De-

partment from the inside. Gayle is energetic, she's frank, and her opinion counts. I can tell you that I could not be more delighted with an executive director than I am with Gayle. We are very fortunate to have Paula Cardello as her assistant. She is our deputy coordinator. The one person that Gayle wanted was Paula, and I'm very pleased that Gary saw fit to do that. For the five committees that we have on the social services side, there'll be one staff person for children and family services, and the other four committees will be divided between two staff persons. We will have two staff persons for housing and business development. We hope that the business community and the foundations will give consideration to funding those two positions.

As far as the committees are concerned, we need names from you as to who you would like to have on the committees. When we announced LINC originally, we asked for names, and Gary has a number of names for committees in-hand; but we didn't want to name those committees until there was an opportunity for this commission to give their recommendations to Gary. I hope you do understand that the decisions are made by Gary. You can send your recommendations for committee people, and professional cabinet people for each committee, directly to him; or you can call Gayle, or you can call me and we will certainly pass them along. Gayle's number is 889-2428, mine is 471-3800, and Gary's is 314-751-4815. I'd like to have your nominations by the end of next week.

One of the things I've learned is that training for Department of Social Services people has been neglected. They have been receiving some technical training, but most have not even been trained in the human needs of children and families. They have been trained to work for the benefit of the system, rather than for the benefit of those they are serving. Frankly, they have never worked with the lay community. They have never worked with a commission like this. They've not worked with lay committees, and they're somewhat fearful. They're fearful that they might be criticized. And one of the things you're going to be seeing tomorrow is a very complete, thorough training draft that is being discussed with the Kauffman Foundation with the thought that they may be helpful in funding, thereby creating first-class training. When you're in touch with people from the Department of Social Services, please make them feel at ease; that goes for agencies, as well.

I want to remind you that there are quite a few people in the system who are looking forward to what LINC is going to be able to do, because they WANT to change things; and when the time comes that you are in contact with those people, let's be sure we give them full credit for what they're doing.

I want to make it clear that on this commission and on the committees there are no professionals. We are all lay people that are on the commission and committees. The reason for that is very simple: if we had an agency head, for example, on this commission and money went to that individual's agency, every agency in town could be upset. So there are no professionals on the commission or the committees; BUT, and this is a very important but, the professional cabinet will be with us all the time, to advise us, to work with us – and frankly, our success, to a large degree, is going to be based on the advice and counsel of the professional cabinet members who are going to be working with us. I think it's clear that the only thing that the professional cabinet does NOT have is the VOTE. They are expected to be at every meeting. We want their input. But all of us who have worked in the community know: it's not the vote that's important; it's the voice that's important. And each one of them will have a voice.

Our meetings are going to be open. There are not going to be any secrets. If anybody wants to know what we're doing, information will be available to them. I should say also that the professional cabinet will not be chosen by throwing darts at a bunch of names. They will be very carefully selected; and the reasons they will be selected are 1) because of the advice and counsel they can give us, and 2) because they are the kind of people that EXPECT to be CHALLENGED on what they're doing. They WANT to know that there are some other avenues that can be suggested to them so they can do a better job. So it's

not just advice to us – it's input to them. That's the kind of people we like to work with.

Liaison. We MUST have liaison with the seven committees; so I would like to ask you to let me know with which committee you would like to be liaison. There will be three liaison members for each committee from this commission – so it's not a matter of you doing a great deal of extra work; but those committees want to know what the thought processes of this commission are, and you're going to interpret that for them. Obviously, when we have meetings and have input from the various committees, your evaluation will be extremely important.

I do want to make it clear that the most time-consuming work that's going to be done, is going to be done in the committees – -that's for sure. But I think you should understand how IMPORTANT the work of this commission is. We have to make a determination of how well what the committees are doing is fitting together. We also have to make a determination of whether or not the change that we want to bring about is actually taking place.

What about dollars and cents? The dollars and cents that will be under the auspices of this commission is \$255 million. That will be for Kansas City, Missouri south of the river. That's our TEST AREA. As soon as we make that work, we will obviously expand it to the entire community. \$45 million of that \$255 million is discretionary. What's NOT discretionary? What's mandated is AFDC, Food Stamps and MEDICAID. We have to see to it that we're getting the dollars we should get, and we have to see to it that the dollars are being used effectively. What's discretionary? Child abuse and neglect; residential treatment; Futures, which is welfare reform; community-based services and child care. The key is seeing to it that we are getting the maximum dollars; and with both discretionary and non-discretionary funds, our responsibility is to see to it that the dollars are spent WISELY.

Ladies and gentlemen, the responsibilities of this commission are awesome. For that reason, there will be no executive committee. We are NOT going to have a few-of us making decisions for this entire group. We will have no executive committee, and for that reason I hope that you will plan to be with us when meetings take place. They are very important meetings.

The way we propose to work is to use the Demming Principle. Demming is the genius whom no one would listen to in the United States. He went to Japan and taught them how to make quality and become the commercial leaders of the world. We're going to use his principles in the hope that we can become the social work leaders of the world. We're going to use the program of Plan, Do, Study, Act. That means we are going to PLAN CAREFULLY for what we want to do. We are then going to DO it. We are going to then STUDY it, to determine that the test we just did is OK – and if not, we're going to take corrective action. Then we're going to ACT. But, after we've acted, let's understand that NOTHING is in concrete. If we have to CHANGE so we can do a more effective job, we're going to change, right then. NOTHING is in concrete. We're going to concentrate on changing the PROCESS. We're going to concentrate on OUTCOMES.

We're going to shorten time frames. One of the things I've learned is that those in government have a way of thinking in terms of YEARS, where some of the rest of us might think in terms of months, even weeks. We have to create a sense of URGENCY. That urgency will make a big difference as to whether or not we're going to be successful, and others that are involved must have the same attitude we do.

How about EVALUATION? Evaluation is absolutely critical. I've already talked to Bill Eddy at UMKC. He will see to it that some of his top people are made available to evaluate what we do. We're going to evaluate the process, and we're going to evaluate outcomes. And we're NOT going to be an "Inspector

General.” The way we do it is that we will have people establish a process, and then we will see to it that they are carrying out that process; and if they are not, they will understand that they are not and they will be able to correct it. Therefore, evaluation becomes an educational process, which is very important, as we deal with so many people in this movement.

I've said to Gayle, “Gayle, if I tell you something **MUST** be done **THIS WAY**, and she doesn't think that's the way it should be done; she's supposed to tell me. And I have told Paula exactly the same thing. I'm sure we all realize that we **NEED** the advice of our executives. We need the advice of our professional cabinet. We need the advice of our customers. We must learn from each other, and we are going to be well educated. Gary, Marty and Gayle have been working on that. We **HAVE** to get educated, so that we are in a frame of mind – have an understanding – that allows us to render the right decisions. At our 8:30 meeting tomorrow morning we are going to start a very interesting educational process.

We all recognize that this commission would not be possible, nor would our dreams mean anything, if it weren't for Gary Stangler. When he appointed the Business Roundtable, over two years ago, you have to ask yourself, what other person in his position in the 50 states would ask a committee to take a look at **WHAT HE WAS DOING**, and say how it might be done better –allowing the **LIGHT OF DAY** to shine in? Well, Gary's got a great reputation in Kansas City and St. Louis, Springfield, Joplin, etc. all through the state of Missouri – but what you should know, and possibly you do, is that he is held in the highest esteem by people in Washington, and across this country. What I'm concerned about is that somebody's going to take him away from us; and I'm going to put shackles on him so that he stays in Missouri. We surely need him. He has a reputation of being a highly progressive individual.

One of the things that Gary taught me is that if we're going to make this thing work, we really have to have **TEAMWORK**. We have to have a close, working relationship among those of us in this room; a close, working relationship with the committees; a close, working relationship with the professional cabinet. We have to develop a close, working relationship with the Department of Social Services and the agencies in town. And under that kind of a scenario, we also have to have a close, working relationship with recipients.

It's up to us to **STRUCTURE AN ENVIRONMENT** that allows that close cooperation; and in that structuring, I hope we will recognize that we are not so smart. We have to **ASK** people how we are doing. We have to ask the participants, we have to ask the community. We have to see to it that there are ongoing **REALITY CHECKS**. As I indicated to you before, there will be evaluations; and those evaluations can be very helpful, because they'll tell us how well **WE** are doing.

Allow me to put a new word into your vocabulary. We always think of those who are on welfare as “clients” or “recipients.” The new word is **PARTICIPANTS**. So from now on, when we talk about those who are involved, we talk about participants.

In the scheme of things, we need some initial successes. They don't have to be **BIG** successes; they can be very **SMALL** successes, but they **HAVE** to be successes. We will spend most of our first two meetings getting educated. After that we will continue the educational process, but there will also be more concrete **ACTION**.

We will see to it that we are in a position to make the kind of decisions that **START** to change the system. And now, a fact of life. A fact of life is that when **LINC** becomes better known, there are going to be the doubters. There will be those who will condemn us, as though we couldn't **POSSIBLY** get this done. And we must recognize that we, as a commission, don't have all the answers; but we must take the

position that we WILL move forward, will learn from our problems and mistakes, we will make corrections, and we will move forward again.

Gary has indicated to you that no one else is doing this, and that's correct. No other local initiative – and there are a number of them around the country – has control of the money to the extent that we do; and no other initiative has the close, close working relationship with the professionals that we have in this setup.

Charlie Bruner, from Iowa, said that “collaboration” is an unnatural act between non-consenting adults. That's about right in the social services field; but we must make collaboration a living, breathing, practical thing. And we can do it.

In my judgment, at NO TIME has there been a NEED for each other to the extent there is today. I look forward to working with you. I look forward to the teamwork, to the good will that's going to allow all of us to be successful.

And in closing, allow me to tell you a brief story. A well known poet and author was on vacation on the southern coast of Spain. He went out very early one morning. The sun was just coming up, the rain had stopped, the rainbow was beautiful. As he looked down the beach, he saw a figure dancing on the sand. When he got a little closer, he saw that it was a young man who was picking up something and throwing it into the water. As he got very close, he said, “Young man, what are you doing?” The young man replied, “Well, I'm picking up star fish and throwing them into the sea.” “Why are you doing THAT,” the poet persisted. And the young man answered, “You see, if the star fish is on the beach and the sun gets high, the heat will kill the star fish.” “That's ridiculous,” scoffed the poet, “there are thousands of miles of beach, and there are millions of starfish -- you don't think that what you're doing can really MAKE A DIFFERENCE.” Picking up yet another star fish and while throwing it into the sea the young man replied: “It makes a difference to THIS ONE!”

Thank you.