

Elderly

(Continued from Front)

could avoid this kind of thing in all cases," said Dan Hudgins, director of the Durham County Department of Social Services, "unless you have a third party contact with all your clients almost daily."

Dr. John Fletcher, director of the Durham County Health Department, adds: "We don't have a policy of checking up on our employees, per se, and we don't have investigative teams."

Both Hudgins and Dr. Fletcher said that the only way they could know that a worker for their agency might have operated illegally by taking advantage of a client would be if an allegation was reported.

"...the only way we could detect something like this is if someone calls us and tells us," Dr. Fletcher explained. "Then the county legal office would have to investigate it. And if we found the allegations to be true, we'd immediately dismiss the person."

Interestingly enough, however, in the case of

an employee of Operation Breakthrough, who is charged in the suit with fraudulently taking a woman's home who was a client of the agency, the employee has not been dismissed.

Recently, the agency's board of directors decided, following a hearing on the matter, that the woman did not act in her capacity as a Breakthrough employee. She has been subsequently reinstated from a suspension that went into effect soon after the suit was filed.

The whole issue of how elderly clients can protect themselves from unscrupulous social services workers arises out of the allegations in this suit.

The suit alleges that Ms. Reathie Mae Rogers, an Operation Breakthrough employee, used her agency position to gain the widow's trust, and then tricked the woman into signing her home over to the worker and subsequently evicted the woman this past winter.

Blacks Turn

(Continued from Front)

Mrs. Brooks refused interviews.

All officials of social services agencies interviewed said that such an incident as described in the suit should not happen, but they conceded that there is no way the agencies can prevent it.

Only Breakthrough, in the wake of the suit, has developed a procedure designed to at least partially address the problem.

According to McNeil, the agency now requires workers to complete a form that details the name and other vital information regarding every contact that workers make outside the agency.

But McNeill pointed out that even this procedure won't solve the problem.

"I don't believe that it's humanly possible," he said, "to prevent collusion between two or more people if they want it to happen. Unless employees abide by the rules, there can always be situations where the employee and the agency are placed in an embarrassing position. But this is the first time in the history of this agency that someone has been accused of something like this, and I believe that it shows that our employees are exemplary people who generally follow the rules."

Thus that leaves elderly people and other services recipients mostly to fend for themselves in

in the past," said Mrs. Mary A. Broughton, a county elections board official, "and in some polling places, we just had a lot of problems."

Vote procedure also robbed the write-in and the Committee of some of its force, though it is unclear just how much.

Durham Committee chairman, Willie Lovett explains: "In many precincts, the voters got confused because there are two ways to do a write-in, and we recommended one way, while election officials recommended another. The effect was that Valentine (I.T. 'Tim') got some votes that it would have gotten."

According to Lovett, the Committee suggested that people supporting the write-in would vote for the write-in first, and then vote the Committee's endorsed slate individually.

But precinct officials, according to Lovett suggested that some voters pull the straight Democratic Party lever first, and then go back

not being billed by an unscrupulous agency employee.

Unfortunately, according to Ms. Johnson, allegations such as the Brooks suit, whether true or not, lead to a decrease in trust between recipients and service delivery agents.

"But if a person has some suspicions about an agency worker, then the person can either check with someone else in the agency, or call us," she said. "We will try to find out what the problem is and do ing to alleviate it."

According to the suit, here's what happened:

Mrs. Thelma Brooks, 67, applied to Operation Breakthrough several years ago for help on her energy bills, and through that application met Ms. Rogers who worked to get the older woman help through the agency's emergency energy program.

Some time during late March 1978, Mrs. Brooks got behind in her mortgage payments and Ms. Rogers assumed the two mortgages, the total of which was less than the market value of the home at 802 Lee Street.

Mrs. Brooks then made monthly payments to Ms. Rogers.

It is not clear from the suit if the two women had any type of written agreement, or if the payments made by Mrs. Brooks were rent or mortgage payments. It is also not clear if Ms. Rogers paid off the two mortgages or merely assumed them.

Around March of this year, after Mrs. Brooks fell behind in her payments to Ms. Rogers, the older woman was forcibly evicted, and her furniture set on the street.

In the suit, Mrs. Brooks seeks to regain ownership of her house and to have \$150,000 in damages assessed against Ms. Rogers. Both Operation Breakthrough and its director Fred McNeill are named as defendants in the suit.

Both Ms. Rogers and

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9:30 A.M. Sunday Church School
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and reject the votes that the individual didn't want recorded. "This might have been a more efficient way to do it," Lovett said, "but our way would have been better for the write-in." And so now, there's a new political day dawning in Durham on two levels, and only time will tell how effectively the black community can take advantage of the new day, and turn a bold stroke into payoff."

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