

ERAP NEWSLETTER

451 Dudley Street, Boston, Mass. 02119

October 20, 1965

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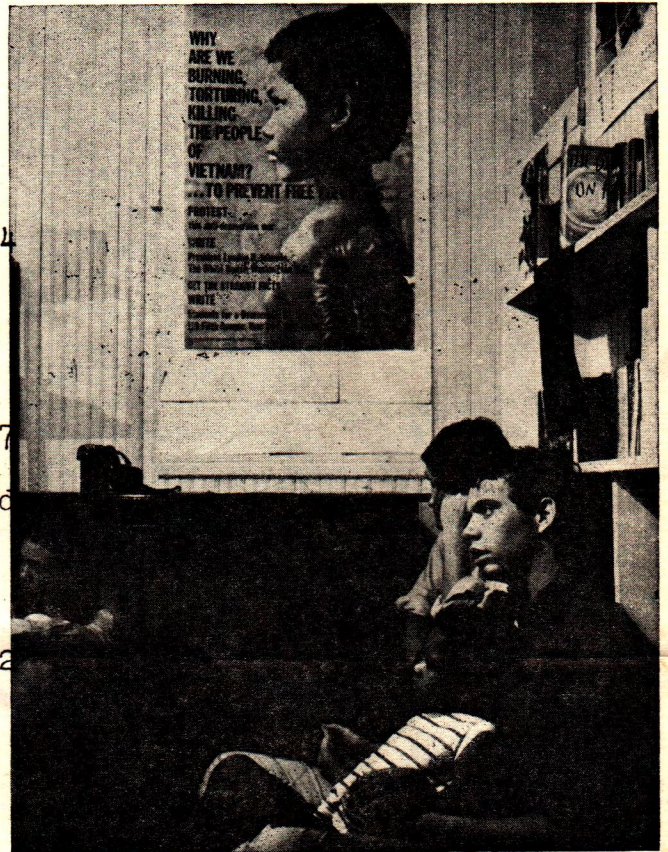
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LETTER FROM LOUISIANA

(West Feliciana Parish is a farming area on the Mississippi River. It is overwhelmingly rural--- St. Francesville is the only town. There is no "project" there-- no outsiders, northern students, no CORE "staff" living in the County. The CORE project members from its sister parish, East Feliciana, drive over occasionally to give technical advice and keep them in touch with outside events.)

We're going over to West Feliciana weekly meeting tonight, I was told. We arrived at a largish building out in the country, just off a main road, at about sunset. There were only a half- dozen people standing around outside, but clearly more were expected: inside a crew of women were setting out chicken dinners for dozens. Someone explained to me that this was both a fund-raising affair and to make it easier for people to get to the meeting on time. Cars begin to drive up, and soon the room was filled. In contrast to most other movement meetings, no one group predominated in the crowd. Young and older men, who turned out later to be sharecroppers, their wives and children, the
continued- page 2.

P. 2
Louisiana, cont.

the grandparents, teenagers. As was clear later on in the meeting they were from almost every corner in the parish, not just one area or church congregation.

People smiled and welcomed me when I was introduced to them, and there was a lot of socializing--- it looked like the weekly meetings fulfilled a number of social as well as political functions, apparently very necessary in this rural and formally unorganized parish. I sat and talked with a 19-year old from Clinton who had come over with us. He was emphasizing how important it was that the white CORE people be present at things like this, for it is easy to begin talking about black- and- white, when really we're fighting the system. I agreed but expressed some feelings I had heard among white staff members that by virtue of their color they were accorded positions of authority and thereby were relatively ineffective in helping to build a democratic and self-sufficient movement. He readily agreed that this was a problem, but that the other issue was far more important. He spoke persuasively, but softly, and lacking either arrogance or subservience-- these traits characterized a lot of the movement people there.

The young people, perhaps fifty in number, left the meeting to get together upstairs. I was told that they meet separately regularly, and work on things which either affect them directly or which they can do better. They consult the adults, but meeting without adult supervision.

Two of the leaders of the group didn't arrive, but this seemed no matter little-- another stepped to the fore, and began the meeting, which without the young people was well over 100. He was a minister, young, very militant and strong. After a prayer the meeting began-- kind of cross between the minister-led mass meeting and an SDS get-together. People sat in a large semi-circle, and a dozen or

so people gathered in the front, to lead various parts of the meeting. There were numerous interruptions from the floor, and plenty of opportunity and encouragement for announcements and comments. Generally people's comments were short and meaty, for although the issues people were dealing with were complicated and controversial, everyone knew that the agenda was long and farmers have to get up early.

The first topic on the agenda came up. It came out that for the first time there were Negroes on the ballot in the ASCS elections in the parish. Five farmers are elected from each of the 10 wards in the committee. The parish ASCS committee makes major decisions about the allotment of crops, loans and the like, and has long been run by whites to the detriment of Negro farmers. Unfortunately, the Negroes on the ballot were "uncle toms, and appointed without their knowledge by the incumbents to run. A man got up and said that he hadn't received a ballot even, and a straw count showed that many had not gotten ballots. Someone else pointed out that they could go into the parish seat and get theirs, and that anyone -- landowner, tenant, farmer's wife-- connected with the farm could vote.

A farmer from ward 8 explained that farmers in his ward and two adjoining wards had already gotten together and nominated some movement members to the ASCS board, and that there was provision for write-ins. Members of other wards, began to set meeting times to organize themselves in the same way.

The women in the kitchen interrupted the meeting to have dinner, and almost immediately the meeting resumed with a minimum of confusion.

The other major item on the agenda was the 'headstart'. Since the racists and the uncle toms have avoided participating, this left the movement to organize itself as a recipient of federal moneys and make application for a headstart program. At previous meetings, they had decided that it would be year-long, held in people's houses.

West Feliciana- continued
 and run by the people of the county
 There was a short discussion in
 which people decided that no one
 should have more than one job (asst
 teacher and bus driver, for example
 or cook, and leasing their home)
 for the idea was to spread the money
 around to all the people. Also
 it was clarified that anyone who
 felt qualified to teach should
 sign up, for all the local school
 teachers would both be busy during
 the year, and would probably boycott
 the program anyway. Many felt
 that teachers were already rich,
 and the other people had enough
 sense to run a nursery school. The
 minister then exhorted the people
 to come up front and sign up for
 a job with the program. At first
 there was a tense moment, and very
 literally it was difficult for people
 to step forward into a new and
 independent role in society. But
 within a half hour more than 50 people
 had signed up to teach, assist
 cook, drive, or rent their house
 out. This was enough to write to
 Washington to ask for funds, and
 the headstart project looked like
 it was moving. You could see broad
 smiles break out as people understood
 the idea that these were new
 jobs, not working for some slave-
 driver for low wages, but decently
 paid jobs for a program they themselves
 were setting up.

There were announcements: the
 voting rights bill was just passed
 and registration could be begun. A
 long-awaited breakthrough. A doctor
 from New York working with the Medical
 Committee spoke, struggling
 to convey his deeply felt ideas in
 a language strange to the ears
 of the sharecroppers. And a
 farewell applause and exchange of
 words to a civil rights worker who
 was returning north to college.

On the way out, a CORE worker
 touched my shoulder and said that
 she wanted me to meet someone I
 already knew. I followed her across
 the room, puzzled: This is Mrs.
 Davis- you have her picture on that
 CORE poster in Newark! We embraced
 as if she had as much knowledge to
 believe in me as I had to believe
 in her. The minister's wife and I

talked about religion and the draft
 with little disagreement, but with
 honesty and conviction on both
 sides, and some advances in understanding
 for both of us, I think.

As we drove home, people
 talked seriously of the issues
 raised and the problems they saw
 which needed attention.

Carl

PLEA FROM

CAIRO

ERAP
 Freedom House
 214 Poplar
 Cairo, Ill.
 10/4/65

Dear Friends,

As is usual from Cairo, we
 send you an urgent plea of assistance.
 Please do not think that
 since it is the usual that we are
 in jest. We are not. We are in
 deepest sincerity. The very continuation
 of the project lies in
 how successful our plea is. Our
 ranks have been diminished to two.
 The project has slowed down to a
 pace that it is hard to reconcile
 oneself to. I am here on the Antioch
 work-study program and am
 to leave after two months. That
 will mean there will be only one
 staff member left to carry on the
 work. For a project to be successful
 one person cannot carry on the
 struggle by himself. It is impossible.
 We, therefore, make a plea,
 which we hope you will print in the
 ERAP Newsletter, for staff members
 who desire some hard and fresh
 work in an area of blight and corruption.
 If this project is to continue
 with any possibility of success
 to give the people a feeling
 that they can buck the establishment,
 that they can fight back,
 if we are to give the people any
 hope we will need staff. Let me
 reiterate that this is urgent!
 If you could add to that plea
 something about money, the problem
 all ERAP projects share, it would be
 continued on page (4)

P.4 BIRTH OF A
REVOLUTIONARY

Footnote to
JOIN

In this day of
push-button canopeners
he stood waiting
before a door
waiting
it wouldn't open
waiting!
Three years later
he died, waiting still
and on his tomb it said:
he stood waiting
before an old-fashioned door
waiting! for it
to open modernly
and died
waiting
get the point:
push a little
while you can....

Betsy Davis
East Cleveland

The following information will be of interest to those who read Richard Rothstein's article on JOIN organization in the last issue of this newsletter. Even prior to publication of the article the Chicago group voted to adopt Rich's proposal for an organizing committee on which both community people and student staff would have an effective voice. At the meeting which voted on the proposal were ten community people and six former students. This group became the original JOIN organizing committee; more community people will probably be added in the future.

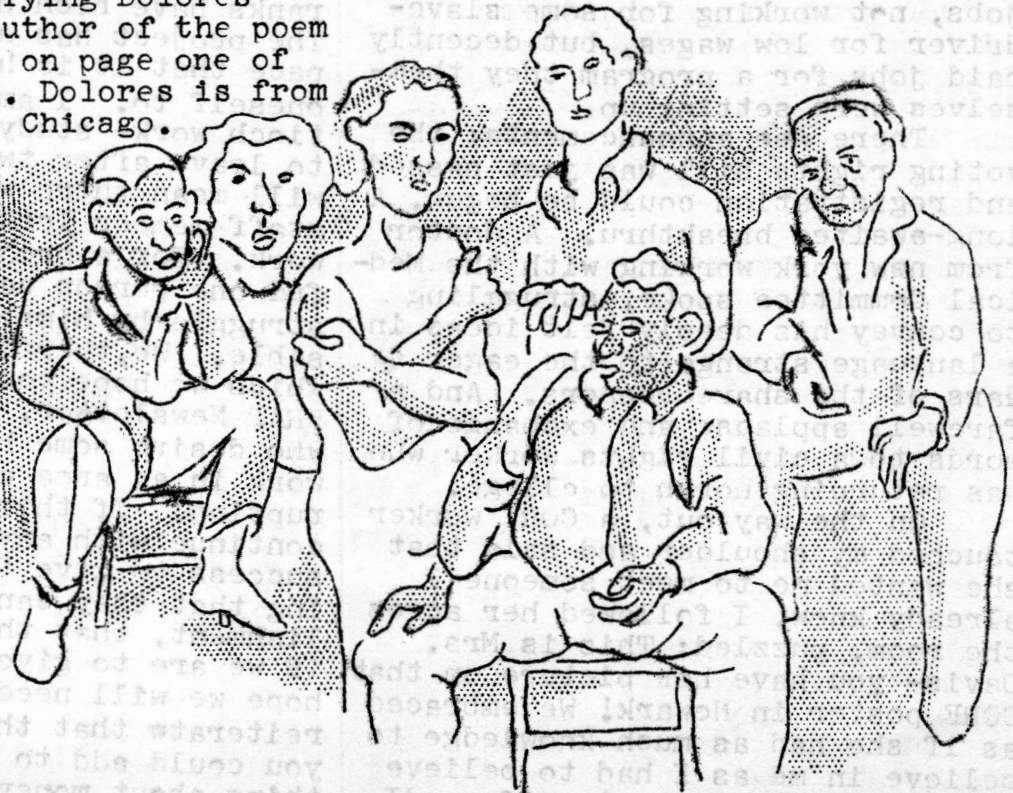
Cairo, cont.

appreciated. We are about to be evicted. But the money is only secondary. Thank you.

Yours,
Jim Huntington

Correction

We regret that an error was made in identifying Dolores Maxwell, the author of the poem which appeared on page one of our last issue. Dolores is from Cleveland, not Chicago.



PROJECTS...

Cleveland

STORY BEHIND

WELFARE MARCH

Alice Aarons

I have been on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) for three years and I have found out that things are not at all as they seem on the other side of the fence.

As one of the general public, my estimation of the "welfare mother" agreed with the conception that "they" were all sloppy, lazy drunkards, irresponsible and shiftless. Let me tell you, my friends, this is very wrong.

During my three years as a welfare mother - that sounds like a prison term, doesn't it - my education in common sense really began. Let's take, for instance, your budget - how much do you have for food each month? With my family of four I am allowed \$82 per month, or \$20.50 per week for food. Three dollars of this goes for milk per week since my children are big milk drinkers and I buy at least one half gallon per day; occasionally I buy two, but I didn't figure that in. So let's say you have \$18 per week for food, or \$4.50 per person for food. This allows only for the bare necessities of eating, beans and the like.

Don't forget the rent - I pay \$65 per month, heat included. This isn't too bad, but I have a friend who pays \$75 per month, with nothing included. Welfare mothers do not get anything for utilities. So what do you do? You take the 10% of the check that they allow for clothes and use it to keep the lights on so you can see and the gas on so

10.5
you can cook beans for your family.

I feel fortunate that I'm not really as bad off as some of my friends. I know several people who have 8 to 10 children. Think of what they must have to do. My friend with 8 children receives \$255 per month and \$80 goes for rent, \$94 for food stamps. She pays gas for heat and cooking and electricity. Out of what she has left, which is about \$50, how many pairs of shoes can you buy? How many dresses and pairs of trousers? Giant Tiger Specials don't last forever, so shoes cost about 5 or 6 dollars a pair, times 8 is \$40. Then there are dresses at three dollars each, and trousers at four dollars per pair. Lucky, you say, to be sitting on your rear and getting money for nothing? Don't believe it, buster. I used to feel that way, but after you worry about how to get clothes for your children, how to skimp and pay for the gas and lights a and then in the middle of the month you wonder what you're gonna eat for the next two weeks - yeah, friend, we "welfare mothers" are damned lucky!!

One other thing that I feel should be brought out is that the Welfare does not consider stoves, refrigerators, or washing machines necessities. How do you prepare a nutritious meal of beans and salt pork without a stove? How do you keep milk in the summer without a refrigerator? People will not have many clean clothes without a washing machine.

There's a lot more than meets the eye in being a welfare mother. We'd enjoy your presence at any of our meetings. CUFAW (Citizens United for Adequate Welfare) is the name of our organization. We meet every Tuesday at 7:30 pm. Call 761-3197 for more information.

9.6 NE W BRUNSWICK :

Petition on Poverty Program Circulated

At a community meeting it was decided to circulate a petition protesting the politicians' attempt to control money which is intended for the poor people. The poverty program is supposed to enable poor people to get funds to help better their conditions. But in New Brunswick the politicians are trying to get the money for themselves and their projects. They won't let the people decide what they want. The politicians won't listen to the people, so the people must make them listen.

Southern "Justice" Comes to New Brunswick

The attempt by the city police department last summer to frighten people of the downtown area who had begun to join together to demand decent recreation areas came to its conclusion last week in New Brunswick Municipal Court. The cops said that they had been pushed and shoved by a CAP worker. CAP people testified that all day the police had been questioning them and that night tried to break up their dance. They seemed to be trying to make trouble and the arrest was made only to try and scare us just like they so in the South. There was no shoving by anybody, but the cops just kept bullying us and stirring things up.

The judge said there was no definite proof one way or the other but since the cops made an arrest, they must be right and we must be wrong. That's certainly not justice but it's no surprise to the people of the downtown area that the cops and the courts don't treat everybody equally. We can't stand for that any longer. Poor people have got to organize together and make

city officials start treating us like human beings. Like Marshall Rosser said at the trial, "People ain't gonna be treated like dogs no more." Come to CAP office and help us work for justice in the courts for everybody.

NEWARK :

Community Corporation

Emma Gaskin, Sadie Williams, Gloria Arbuckle, Danny Williams, Wyla McLean, Melvin Higgins, Jesse Allen, and Bessie Smith went to see Mr. Carl Kaditus, a lawyer, to see about forming the People's Community Center Corporation. The Corporation is open to people in Area Board Three.

Those people and others who did not go to the lawyer have put a proposal into the UCC for a community center where there will be arts and crafts, sewing, typing, woodworking, meeting rooms a teen canteen, boxing, an adult lounge, pool tables, ping pong, and a grievance clinic for problems in health, housing, education, welfare, and employment.

The same committee and more people from the community who are also involved in this are going to meet with Mr. Blair of the UCC office on Wednesday at 8:00 to go through the proposal with him. This is our third time we are seeing him and we have done everything we could to put this proposal together and if any more work has to be done, it will be done by the staff of the UCC.

At the program committee meeting last Tuesday NCUP voted to write a letter to support the proposal for the center.

Fifty business people have signed petitions to support the proposal for the center. The number are looking to go up higher in the next few days.

NEWARK, cont.

WELFARE MOTHERS

MEETING

Women on Welfare are now meeting every week to help each other out with problems. We have been meeting for two weeks now, and we have helped two women straighten out their troubles -- one had her checks held for three months, and one was getting only thirteen dollars to live on after she paid her rent. They went down to the Welfare office with other women from the group. The people there had to pay attention and do what was right because they could see that the women were not alone.

WE DEMONSTRATE

FOR A TRAFFIC LIGHT

by Ceola Session

On Monday, Sept 20, 1965, there were people demonstrating on four blocks, on Avon and Badger and on 18th Ave. and Lillie. Before the people could get to the demonstration the policemen was already there on the street and one of the policemen told Bill to tell the people to get off the street and get on the sidewalk and out of the street. There were men there from downtown. One of the men was Irvine Turner. There were other men there but I didn't get their name. One man was talking about the traffic light and he said that there is no need for a traffic light on Avon and Badger.

The people left Avon and Badger and went over to 18th and Lillie and began to block off it and about 15 or 20 minutes later there were policemen there and they took over to let the traffic back through 18th and Lillie.

People started to go back and forth across the street and it made the policemen kind of mad.

IN THE OFFICE

by Terry Jefferson

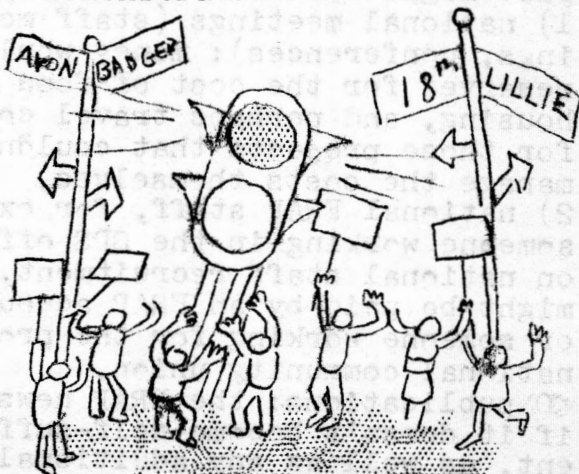
Hear! Hear! The Office at 471 Clinton Ave. is asking community people to come and work part time in the office with two members of NCUP.

We would like to see the Office run by community people.

Terry Jefferson and Anita Warren are the office managers, And would love for as many people to become interested in the office and do what they can to better it and make it interesting for the people of the community.

* * * * *

because people started to walk in front of cars. After the people demonstrated at 18th and Lillie, they went back to Avon and Badger and started to demonstrate again. At first they didn't do anything. They just gave out letters to people in cars. When the policemen came again, they just rode around in their police cars and watched the people demonstrate, until other policemen came. There were 75 or 80 people on Avon and Badger to help us demonstrate, and pictures were taken at both places we demonstrated at. About 7:00 or 8:00 the demonstration was over.



P. 8

ERAP FINANCES

Dear ERAP community,

This is a long overdue letter regarding central ERAP financing and distribution of any money raised in behalf of national ERAP. The eminent possibility of money being sent to Cleveland for dispersal has inspired us to spend time thinking about the many problems involved in the seemingly simple process of writing checks.

Essentially our feeling is that we should handle the administrative aspect of money-dispersal. As we agreed in the ERAP institute discussion about money, basic policies should be determined by the ERAP community (regardless of how that eventually gets defined). What this letter will do is suggest some of the schemes we've thought of for distributing money, and try to make explicit some of the basic underlying questions we feel are raised by the mere existence of an ERAP bank account (which has recently been opened in Cleveland. Voila!)

Scheme I: ERAP writ large should establish a set of priorities about national programs and/or functions, that require funds, and money should be earmarked for those expenses before being applied to the needs of individual projects. Possible programs and functions that have been discussed in the past might include

- 1) national meetings (staff meetings, conferences): money would be reserved for the cost of food and housing, and perhaps travel costs for those projects that couldn't manage the costs themselves.
- 2) national ERAP staff, for example someone working in the SDS office on national staff recruitment, who might be paid by an ERAP account. or someone working for the proposed national community union.
- 3) publications: the ERAP newsletter if it doesn't become self-sufficient, as well as any additional written or visual material we might de-

velop, such as pamphlets, films.

- 4) interproject travel, perhaps for a rotating group of people.
- 5) emergency defense fund: perhaps setting aside a certain percent of whatever money comes into ERAP, to be used only for legal expenses.
- 6) experimental forms of organizing which ERAP as a whole decides to assume, for strategic or whatever reasons, that require initial funds to get off the ground. For example, a union organizing project.

There undoubtedly are numerous other possible needs for national ERAP. In any case, we might decide that programs such as the above get first preference in the distribution of funds, over the needs of particular projects (such as rent or phone bills). This scheme assumes some degree of self-sufficiency for existing projects, and suggests that projects in immediate need of funds might not be able to go to a central ERAP account to fulfill those needs. What they would do is another question: they might go to other projects for help, they might fold they might force the larger community to re-evaluate this scheme.

Scheme II: Money would be dispersed according to the needs of individual projects. This is essentially what happened last year when projects turned to the Ann Arbor office with their needs, and would receive whatever money was available, relative to the immediate needs of others. Cleveland would attempt to determine as accurately as possible needs and incomes of all projects in the following manner: each project would submit a list of needs, we would compile a list and send it out to projects, whereupon each project would submit a revised list of needs. Cleveland would still have to make ultimate decisions, assuming that the total needs are greater than the total resources (a fair assumption based on past reality!), but other projects would be closely involved in that de-

cision. This scheme assumes the immediate dispersal of money. Essentially,

we would send out a letter announcing that ERAP money had been received and requesting directives for disposing of it. That would probably mean that no money would be on hand for emergencies. What we might decide to do in case of emergency is have Cleveland serve a clearing-house function by assessing other projects certain amounts to meet those emergencies of a particular project.

Scheme III: Them's what calls gets. Cleveland will notify you all as soon as money come in (taking care to mail letters to faraway places a day before mailing those to nearby places) and whoever gets to the phone first wins. This is the scheme that gets adopted by default if we can't reach a decision about an alternative method.

Needless to say, these schemes are only suggestive and we hope that they will provoke some discussion and further suggestions. It might be helpful if we list some of the basic questions we feel require answers before deciding to implement any particular scheme:

- 1) What long-range view should we have of a central ERAP account? Something that should be strengthened and built up as a basic and continuous source of funds? Something transitional that meets needs until existing projects become self-sufficient?

- 2) Do we want to adopt the principle of financial self-sufficiency for some, all, or none of the ERAP projects? Do we want to say that some projects perhaps should fold if they cannot manage financially over a long period of time? And, on the other hand, do we want to say that staffs should legitimately expect money from outside sources over a long period? Do we want to distinguish between old and new projects; for example, say that projects should draw upon central funds for the first year of existence but not beyond?

How do we define the ERAP community? Who should be part of the decision-making process that determines how much money is spent, and for what? What criteria do we want

to establish for "admitting" someone to the ERAP money community?

- 4) What should be the source of money that goes into whatever ERAP account exists? Do we want a system by which projects make pledges to a central account on the basis on relative needs and ability to pay?

The fact that we now have an ERAP bank account, with a very low balance, underlines the importance to us of establishing some policies. We hope that serious discussion of these problems occurs in the next two months, and that you share with us and others the content of those discussions, so that a decision can be made at whatever ERAP meeting takes place over Thanksgiving.

If we don't hear from you, we have an alternate scheme for disposing of the money: we plan to invest in South African gold.

Faithfully and fiscally,
Cleveland ERAP

TO OUR READERS

Because of the cost of printing and mailing, we have to stop sending copies to people who aren't connected with projects (SNCC, SUPA, ETC.--not just ERAP) unless they send us \$4. If you're already paid, write and tell us that, so we don't cancel your subscription by mistake. Some records were lost in transit from New Haven.

Boston ERAP
#51 Dudley St.
Roxbury, Mass.



NATIONAL ACTION Program ?

Dear Project People,

During the Newark Conference there was discussion of bringing staff and community people together at Thanksgiving for a discussion of:

- 1) The proposed "State of the Union" conference in D.C. in January.
- 2) Whether ERAF should organize a new national structure or certain national programs.
- 3) The "problems of direction" we face as staffs: politics, decision-making, unions, counter-communities, talking to new people, local-level coalitions, staff living arrangements, fund-raising schemes, etc.

Rennie, Jake, and I took responsibility for getting an agenda prepared, and getting some thoughts written down on paper. Midwest people were going to choose a place out there for the meeting. Several people from different projects were going to write letters just about what is on their mind: Helen Hoboken, George Cairo, Johnny Boston, Rennie Chicago, Carol Cleveland. Since that meeting in Newark, no writing has been done, but we still plan to get it done and have the meeting. It may be important, however, to re-think some of our plans, especially about the January meeting.

The main reason I suggest this is practical. There simply may not be enough time between Thanksgiving and the first week of January to set up a conference in Washington. There is the problem of housing, getting a place for the conference, opening up a local office in Washington, sending people there in advance, and so on. I'm not saying it's impossible to pull this off, but the difficulties may require an earlier meeting than at Thanksgiving. Now, too, there's going to be a long SDS meeting around Xmas, and we have to decide how to deal with it as well as our own plans.

Therefore, I'm proposing an earlier date, October 29-31, for a special meeting of "project representatives" at a farm site in Pennsylvania. This meeting would involve one or two people from each project, and would settle the question of whether and how to have the January conference.

Now there is more to this proposal than meets the eye... In order to send "representatives" to a meeting, each project will have to sit down and thrash out some issues. I was in a discussion with the Cleveland staff last week, and some of the questions we talked over were ---

1) the responsibility of projects to each other. Everyone agrees that the projects are in different "states" - the number of people organized, the programs being emphasized, the kind of alliances with other organizations, the progress being made in achieving concrete goals. This seems to mean that the Washington conference, or other "national projects", might suit the needs of some local projects, but not the needs of other projects. When this is the case, are all the projects somehow required to participate? Some active project people may not see any use in the Washington conference, but they haven't had much time at all to sit down and discuss their questions with other people.

2) can all the projects agree on a common national action program? Perhaps it is not just different local situations which cause people to estimate the Washington conference differently. Perhaps also it is the way different people think about the shape and direction of a "national movement". Some of us think that national projects are important because, for instance, they make people feel like national actors, they lay the blame on the national power structure instead of just the local one. Others of us might agree in theory, but think that we have only the beginnings of a movement, and therefore we should not get into national programs at this point. They agree that, between ERAF and SNCC for example, we could bring several hundred people to Washington, but we might be kidding ourselves. One concrete way to discuss this would be to look at the "National Community Union" and ask what it is supposed to become. Since very few people have done this, it means that the thing might not become real, if only too few people understand it.

These are just some of the questions we talked about, and we felt that they are as important as the "practical" questions of whether we can pull off the

Washington meeting. I'm proposing, with the Cleveland people, that we hold local discussions this month, then send representatives to this weekend meeting to make a final decision about the conference, based on how the various projects feel. I'm really sorry just to send this out to you, but we couldn't figure any other way to make sure that if there is a Washington conference, everybody who's important to it will think it over and understand what we're getting into. PLEASE LET US KNOW RIGHT AWAY IF YOU WANT TO COME TO THE OCTOBER 29-31 MEETING. We will then reply to everyone.

Meanwhile, you can expect something on the Thanksgiving meeting soon.

Vote the United Freedom Ticket,

Tom Hayden

ANOTHER VIEW — — FROM BOSTON

Dear project people,

As far as I can tell no clear consensus was reached at the Newark meeting about what the nature of purpose of the January Washington conference would be. There was vague agreement that it would be a broad get together focusing chiefly on the War on Poverty. We have a more specific proposal.

There seems to be a crisis within the War on Poverty Administration in Washington. Many of the more liberal voices have left the OEO: Jack Conway, Richard Boone, the chief exponents of community involvement have all left in recent weeks. Due to tremendous pressure from big city mayors and to the tremendous fights which have developed in local areas around the WOP programs, there seems to be an imminent danger that the OEO will give up entirely on the involve-the-poor provisions of the Act.

We are also in the midst of a crisis with the local poverty program here in Boston. The city-wide mayor-appointed poverty agency is engaged in an all-out attempt to dominate, subvert, or render impotent the democratically elected local boards. Their latest move is an application for a \$2.8 million federal grant to unite all the job programs in the city -- programs now being administered by various neighborhood and civil rights groups -- under their own central administration. In submitting this proposal they completely ignored the elected boards. If approved it would extend their influence into almost every organization in the city and further undermine the local board structure.

I am sure that many other cities or local areas face similar problems although they may not be coming to a head at this point as they are here.

There has never been any national pressure from the bottom by poor people themselves on the OEO. Washington is extremely sensitive at this point to any pressure from the ghettos. Thus there is a good chance that a well-pulled-off Washington protest could have a visible effect on OEO actions.

So, we'd like to propose a national protest in Washington for the specific purpose of supporting the pro-community involvement voices in the OEO and protesting the acquiescence of the OEO to city takeovers of the elected board structures as in Boston, and of their failure to enforce the involvement of the poor provisions from the very beginning in other places such as Chicago. Hopefully, such a Washington protest might be able to come up with some specific structural proposals which would make the enforcement of the community involvement provisions easier and simplify the bureaucratic structure of the OEO.

Furthermore, we think January is too late. We would prefer a date around Dec. 18. Many organizations will be out for a week at the end of Dec. because of Christmas and various meetings, so an early January date really only adds about a week and a half more organizing time. Also January is colder. (most places) This can be settled at an October meeting.

The Washington action should not be seen as the first step towards or the initiation of a National Community Union. (even though some of the contacts made and the experience gained in organizing such an action might prove invaluable

when at some later date some kind of national organization is initiated). This for two reasons: 1) Talk of a national Community Union seems very premature to us. By far the majority of the projects haven't even defined the nature of their own local organizations. The new organizational revision in Chicago, probably farther along the road to a community union than most other places, attests to this fact. Many projects don't even have a community union or anything approaching it. I'm not saying that we should wait until every project has developed its own finished conception of what a local community union looks like before we consider any kind of national organization. But at this point I don't think there is any community group that has sufficiently defined its own identity and sufficiently worked out problems of organizational structure and so talk of forming a national organization on this shaky basis seems crazy to me. 2) The Washington protest will be a very broad affair extending way beyond just ERAP and SNCC circles. In Boston, for instance, besides the Action Center, NSI, BAG, many NAACP people, and many unaffiliated community groups could be involved in the action. Thus the constituency for the specific War on Poverty protest is not at all necessarily the same as the constituency for a nascent NCU.

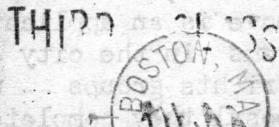
We still think the Thanksgiving discussion-of-issues meeting is valuable. However, if it is relieved of the responsibility of planning the D.C. affair, it becomes less urgent. A November meeting might create just too many meetings in too little time. Also, if we can agree on the War on Poverty thing, a fair number of people will probably be traveling around and this will tend to stimulate some discussion of the issue which the Thanksgiving meeting was going to deal with. Thus I would suggest we hold off on the Thanksgiving meeting until the middle of January.

To summarize. We do want the October 29-31 meeting. We want it to initiate the planning for a December Washington War on Poverty protest. Hold off on NCU for a while. Have ERAP staff-community retreat in mid-January.

We would like to know soon if any people have any basic disagreement with our proposal for the D.C. affair.

Larry Gordon, Boston

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