

ERAP NEWSLETTER

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Reprinted from

JOIN COMMUNITY UNION

POLITICIANS AND THE AVERAGE MAN by Lee Murao

March 19, 1965

It's now we want the guys we voted into public office to keep the promises they made to get those votes. Where is the alderman, the ward captains? Well, most of the time trying to keep city hall, their party, the property and business owner's demands satisfied and attending dinners with the mayor or some other big shot - hoping they will get their pictures in the paper.

It's now - we, the majority of voters want these improvements that we need to raise the living conditions. The alderman made a lot of promises to improve on the North Side. We know what those are, after all we live here and know from experience we need a day care center, medical and dental care for children and adults when needed - at no cost or low cost when the person can afford to pay.

Politics is a circle with the politicians and tax dollars inside. . . . the privileged persons allowed inside - the ones the politician wants to satisfy. On the outside is the tax payer, us, who is supposed to keep supplying those dollars and be satisfied with more promises. We put them into office, so let them know we want the things we need and we want them now!

The wage earner is lucky if most of the time he can meet rent, food, and clothing necessities and occasionally finance payments much less \$3 to \$5 per day for child care for each child when the mother is sick or must go to work to help make ends meet at home. Also a mother who is the only provider for her children must work because she is not eligible for welfare or rather

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than accept welfare. Welfare is fine when no other help is available or as a holdover until a job is found but it's now the politician should give the low income guy a hand with the tax dollars he has paid in - not a hand out of a few dollars to keep him and his family from starving and in return demands his vote, his dignity, and his desire to help himself.

By standing together we can get what we need even if it means pickets, strikes, or marches. It's time to forget where we or the other guy was born, the color of his skin or his religion. He is our neighbor and we have a common bond of needs and living conditions.

If necessary we can and will stand together in the big shot's office and let them know we will boycott their reelection. Let the alderman know and find out we are not a "bunch of fly by night poor citizens" but citizens demanding what is rightfully ours. That our tax dollars be used to help help ourselves - not the party or city hall. *Span*

It has been said "you can't fight city hall", - we can but only by standing together with one voice. The alderman, ward captains and state senator like their jobs and they want our votes. Let them earn those jobs by meeting the needs of the little guy - the voter. Together we can and will be heard - all the way to the governor in Springfield if necessary. Our strength is in a united front, so let's get busy and have no thought but the common good of all. Let this be our first goal.

DUDLEY STREET

Reprinted from the Dudley Street Action Center Newsletter

WELFARE MEETING by Barbara Skillen

300 mothers attended a welfare meeting on March 22 at the Blue Hill Christian Center.

About half of us then went down to the mayor's office. The mayor was not in, but we talked to Mr. Messina, who works in the mayor's office. Then we decided to go to Mr. Lally's office at the Welfare Department.

At first Mr. Lally said that he would see only a few of us, but we said so, so he finally came out. He said that the Welfare Department is working on surplus food, like painting and putting up shelves in the distribution centers. He would not tell us where the distribution centers would be. Then he closed the door and put a sign up outside. We spoke, shouted, and said that we wanted the food but there was no answer. Some of us wanted to sit-in, but there were mothers who had children coming home from school, so we decided to leave. *Span*

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CHICAGO REPORT

RENT STRIKE: NO RENT FOR RATS!

Frank Harris, 1047 Buena, stayed up at night two weeks ago, shooting rats with an air rifle. The building is rat and roach infested, but the rats were especially wild because the landlord turned off the electricity.

Frank and his father have been out of work for a while and had fallen behind in the rent. There are four small children in the Harris family.

Two weeks ago, Frank and two JOIN staff members went down to the Urban Progress Center to complain. They were given the runaround from one office to another and finally told that Frank had to go downtown to file a complaint. Frank asked why they spent so much money on an Urban Progress Center if all they could do was tell you to go someplace else. An official promised to send an inspector the next day but the inspector never came.

When Frank asked why people have to pay rent for an apartment that isn't fit to live in, he was told that the city couldn't interfere in the treatment of a tenant by a landlord.

In the next three nights, Frank shot 11 huge rats. In order to try to get some results, Frank took 3 of the rats down to the Urban Progress Center. Five JOIN members went with Frank. The officials got mad and tried to speak to Frank alone, but the whole group stuck together. Finally, the Center agreed to send the exterminators over.

When the Dept. of Health inspected the building they said it was so bad, they could only get rid of the rats for a short time. They told the landlord to fix up the place. The owner cut off Frank's gas. Frank is back to work now, but he is determined not to pay his rent until the place is made fit to live in. He is trying to organize the other tenants to go on rent strike with him. If the government won't help, the tenants must be organized to fight the landlord.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Last week, we had an article in this Newsletter about automation and how more and more men are losing jobs to machines. One government program which is supposed to combat unemployment is the "Job Corps".

The Job Corps was set up under the War on Poverty to make jobs for young people and to teach them trades. But already three times as many people have applied as there is room for. And thousands haven't applied yet!

In one city, recruits are getting 85¢ an hour for painting police stations. In others they will have work cleaning up parks. Do these jobs train young men for an automated economy?

There is so much work to be done (like rebuilding most of our large cities) and so many people out of work, or just scraping by with low-paying jobs, that it is stupid not to put the two together. Maybe unemployed people in Uptown could work right here. We need new buildings,

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CLEVELAND REPORT

schools, and parks, Why doesn't War on Poverty do something like this, rather than set up advice centers?

WHAT'S NEW AT THE URBAN PROGRESS CENTER

Last Friday night (March 5) the Urban Progress Center had a meeting of its advisory council. This group will make suggestions to the War on Poverty about programs in Uptown. JOIN wasn't invited but Adele Davis, Dorothy Perez and two SDS staff went anyway. It was just as we had expected. There were no poor people there, and most of the "advisors" didn't even live in uptown! Yet they talked about involving poor people for most of the evening. Why don't they practice what they preach? If they really believed in what they were saying, they would have invited poor people to come and make the decisions themselves.

Joan

Then some rich businessmen got up and said that the War on Poverty had to "motivate" people and that the poor couldn't make their own decisions, because that was like "the blind leading the blind". They also said getting poor people interested in the War on Poverty was like fishing-- "sometimes you have to use worms, and sometimes you have to use a lure."

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How much longer will the politicians and businessmen make all our decisions? When will we be heard in a program of, by, and for the people?

HIGH-SCHOOL DROP OUTS

Many poor kids drop out of high school either because school is boring or because they need money. Half of the poor people who drop out are unable to find jobs because they are considered unskilled. The problem is that education just isn't made exciting or interesting in our public schools. Rich people are also bored by school, but richer schools are not as overcrowded, have more books, more teachers and more facilities than schools in poor neighborhoods.

The money for schools doesn't go to schools which need it the most; instead it stays in the richer neighborhoods. Education isn't what the people want it to be. If you're poor in the first place, you're likely to stay poor if you drop out of school to earn money. And what happens to poor people even if they stay in school? Can poor people who stay in school find interesting work and make enough money?

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JOIN PETITIONS FOR DAY CARE CENTER

JOIN continues this week to circulate petitions for a child care center in this neighborhood. We are also trying to organize small model day care centers on blocks where JOIN mothers want them. We will then demand that the city pay for them. This week, a number of rumors went around the neighborhood that the War on Poverty is setting up its own day care centers. The JOIN staff checked into these rumors and they are not true. The Urban Progress Center has no plans to run or set up a day care center. This neighborhood can get what it wants only if it organizes to demand it.

The CCP has recently made a series of "new-directions" decisions. For the past month, since the Cleveland Conference, we have spent concentrated effort in recontacting people from the summer and making new contacts all over the Near West Side. What we concluded was that no particular part of the NWS seemed more ready for organization than any other, and there are interested people in most of the areas we surveyed. The same is true for issues-- people have a variety of concerns, and there is not one particular issue which is of most pressing concern to people all over the NWS.

As a result of the past month's work, a recent meeting of SDS staff and community people formally dissolved the CCP and we (SDS staff) and community people have now become the Cleveland Community Union. A "community union" was defined, by its members and staff, as a group of people that identify with each other in the following ways: they are angry at society; they have a sense of inter-relatedness of issues and believe in the need to attack the system, not just fight on a particular issue; they are willing to work on issues other than those in their own area of vested interest; they believe that solution of the problems demands changing society in basic ways.

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However, the staff organizers still felt that in order to really begin concentrated organizing and building of a community union, we really had to pick one issue and particular area and get to work, quickly! The area we picked is the Abbey Road area, a geographically defined area of the NWS, where some preliminary work was done this summer. We've maintained contact with the people but haven't had a functioning organization of which they could be a part. We decided that the actual issue was less important for the present time than the method of organization, that is, we could organize around any issue that met the following criteria: the problem must be set in a radical context, with the enemies clearly defined; working on the issue must lead to confrontation with the power structure; the issue must get support from other poor people in other neighborhoods; the problem must demand a solution which demanded basic changes in society's structure. Our general concern is that working on a particular issue will lead to the creation and growth of a community union. The immediate issue in the Abbey area that we felt met the criteria is that of recreation. We felt that we needed a "handle" on a particular issue, and think that recreation affords us that handle.

There is a glass-filled and very dangerous lot which serves as a playground in the neighborhood; the city recreation department rents the land for \$2000/year from a wealthy man who owns a lot of land in the industrial valley. The so-called playground, and recreational facilities in general, have been a source of conflict and a reason for organization in the neighborhood before. Briefly, we hope to get people organized around the issue of the playground, organizing in such a way that people in other neighborhoods with varying concerns can identify with the fight in the Abbey area for decent recreational facilities for poor people. (For example, we will try to concern people with the fact that the city's services, of which recreation is one, discriminate against poor people and low-income neighborhoods; in that respect, recreation is just one example of how the system works to isolate and repress poor people.)

As we begin concentrated organizing on recreation in the Abbey area, the community union will try to start a small group on the union and community-wide level. We will go back to revisit the interested people whom we have met all over the NWS, during the summer and recently. We will

APPALACHIA

Reprinted from Voice for Jobs and Justice, March 12, 1965.

Four teenage boys from Coalgood went up on the mountain yesterday afternoon to look for coal in an abandoned mine shaft. A short time later three of the four were crushed when a 75-ton rock in the shaft fell on them. The fourth youth, a brother of two of the victims and cousin of the third, escaped death in the tragedy only because he had left the mine moments before to get a jacket.

BERMAN GIBSON'S REPORT ON MINE TRAGEDY

A lot has been said about tragedies, etc. This in my opinion spells out, better than anything could, the existing conditions in the coal fields of Eastern Kentucky. If these boys had been living in a home where the father was making a decent wage in order to support his family, it would not have been needful for them to have been in this terrible place where this awful thing happened. "If's" seem to have priority in this case.

If the father had been making decent wages.
If he had been able to buy coal.
If the politicians had been doing the job right.
If people would have awakened up to a few honest truths.
If we had kept our UNION in the top priority on the list.

These boys, in my opinion, died a useless death. Wake up people of Eastern Kentucky. It could have happened to our children, too. I can't say with the rescue squad worker. A human life 's always too high a price to pay for a little coal or a lot more dollars for the coal operators pocket.

It goes back in my mind as I think of the State Police. If they were on the highway protecting the lives of people there, instead of guarding non-union mines, the police should be enforcing the law to fill up auger holes, seal off old abandoned mines and other things that endanger the lives of innocent people.

Again, if they would help organize instead of breaking strikes and men's wages, then children wouldn't have to help out by digging coal to build a fire to keep the family warm.

DEATH BY NEGLIGENCE Reprinted from Voice for Jobs and Justice, March 17, 1965.

I do not presume that the death of the three Gross children, who lost their lives in one of the many death traps, prepared and set up by the Coal Operators, by the aid and assistance of the Federal and State Legislative bodies will prey upon the conscience of these legislators who are such champions of property rights over human rights that they value the lives of children at a less value than the cost of a few mine supplies or a few sticks of dynamite to seal off the thousands of auger holes and unsafe drift-mouths.

... In my opinion the death of these children lies at the door of the Federal and State legislative bodies and the Federal and State government should pay the mothers of these boys for all their trouble and hearts.

that we don't have enough CU staff to work in their area right now, but we've met other people in the NWS who have similar concerns and we'll try to get together and decide on a program or programs that will meet the criteria for a community union. Possible programs: regular discussions of issues ranging from Viet-Nam to poor housing; work on issues that affect the entire Near West Side, such as urban renewal or the war on poverty; have comm. people from other areas do organizing in the Abbey area.

There are still many unanswered questions about the approach we've decided to take: will people in other neighborhoods identify with the AB recreation situation? will we be able to organize around the rather be sounding issue of recreation in a radical way? how will our confrontations with the city recreation department this past summer, which led to red-baiting, affect our work?

CUPAW: CUPAW recently won its 5-month battle over free school lunches for junior and senior high students on ADC. After extensive visits to the County Commissioners and the School Board, after consistent passing-the-buck between those two groups, and after frequent demonstrations and rallies by CUPAW, the two agencies finally agreed to meet CUPAW's demands. ADC children in junior and senior high will no longer have to pay 15¢ a day for lunch.

This week SDS staff and CUPAW members are getting together to discuss the future direction of CUPAW, and the relationship of the SDS staff to the organization. Complete report to follow in the next Cleveland report.

Other Ohio and Cleveland notes:

--SDS staffer Ken McEldowney recently took a campus organizing trip through southern Ohio. He visited potential SDS chapters in Cincinnati, Columbus, Yellow Springs, and a new chapter in Kenyon. People in those areas are extremely interested in the entire SDS program, campus and community. They already planning to send busloads of people to Washington for the April 17 March. Ken also visited CORE community organizing projects in Cincinnati, Columbus; we plan to keep in touch with them and have a cooperative relationship. SDS and CORE are tentatively exploring the possibility of a joint conference for community people and organizers, to be held later this spring.

--An SDS chapter has been formed and recognized on the Western Reserve University campus. They are presently organizing around the Viet Nam issue: Dr. Benjamin Spock has agreed to speak, sponsored by SDS, at a mass meeting that will be a kick-off point for the March. There is also a good possibility that a separate chapter will be formed at Case Institute of Technology, where there is a core of interested people.

--New staff: Welcome to Chris Overs, from Antioch, who is coming to spend his 6-month work period with the Cleveland project.

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they did encounter in raising these kids and to see their lives snuffed out by negligence of our public officials who are charged with the responsibility of seeing that our laws are enforced.

...The corruption emanating from the South is polluting the atmosphere around the World and causing our foreign friends to holler, "YANKS GO HOME", and if the Federal government is interested in protecting the rights of United States citizens, then it should bring the Yanks home and station them throughout the South, before this country turns into a Congo or Vietnam, and quash the rebellion which is on the verge of exploding.

What is Communism except acts performed against this Nation by so called elected public officials who deny the right of the majority to have an equal vote in the affairs of this country? If these acts of our public officials are not giving aid and comfort to our enemies, which constitutes Treason, then I don't know what Treason is. It's time for bold action, not hesitation.

THE GREAT SOCIETY by Ray Stidham Reprinted from Voice for Jobs and Justice,
March 12, 1965

My friend:

In the recent Presidential election, Mr. Johnson spoke at length of the Great Society. That he has great visions of. If what we see happening before our eyes is a sample "GOD HELP OUR COUNTRY". We live in a country believed to be the most powerful, the richest, and with the highest standard of living in the world. Yet the region in which we live-it's people are among the most poverty stricken in the world. Now many of the causes of this is our own. We have the right to organize ourselves into a labor union, to bargain for better wages, and working conditions, which we have not done. We have the right to speak out against crooked public officials and corrupt government which we have not done.

Now my friend, we see and hear a lot now days about the plight of the Negro in our Southern state. Now I ask you is his condition so much worse than ours? It is possible, but it won't be for long. These people have the guts to fight and stand up against corrupt public officials. They have brought their conditions to the attention of the federal government, and the public. We have the same right to be heard as they do.

...Now my friends, we have in our power a weapon so great that coal operators, big shots and crooked politicians dread the very thought of it. What is it? It is our vote and our voice. What kind of country do we live in? A place where men can be indicted on trumped up charges one week forced into trial the next week. This gives them scarcely any time at all to employ counsel, or contact witnesses. If this isn't a plain case of railroading men to try to break the back of an organizing drive, I have never heard of one. Is this the Great Society? I would love to have our friends read this letter. I would love to have the Justice Department investigate some of the things I have mentioned here. The only way this will be is for enough of the people to cry loud enough and long enough.

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