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ERAP NEWSLETTER

August 27, 1965

46 Arch Street, New Haven, Conn

Chicago's Welfare Work taken from a letter by Casey Hayden

"Welfare work here has consisted largely in taking people to the welfare office to try to get problems straightened out, making calls to try to straighten out various bureaucratic hang-ups, etc. We did have one meeting of welfare people which drew up the 'welfare bill of rights.'

We've worked some with a newly forming caseworkers union and have gotten some help and information from them, although there are varying views on the staff as to whether caseworkers are enemies or potential friends.

Not a lot of long-range strategizing has gone on on the welfare issue. We've been thinking more about things like getting a couple of the women we're now working with going around full time and beginning to do organizing, setting up an office in a new neighborhood which

we initially opened up with the welfare thing, really building a group of women whose allegiance is to us and each other against the system and who can form the core of a larger group as we recruit. This is happening, I think.

A problem we face now is that of locating welfare people. Thus far introductions have come through other welfare people we know. Cleveland was able to build largely because they have the food stamp program distributed through two centers twice a month, which means that all the recipients are there on the line and CUPAW can recruit there. Lacking this, building is slower.

One idea we had been talking about was the possibility of legal action challenging the basis of welfarism. That is: the welfare system works on the assumption that welfare people

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Oakland Notes

Some recent developments, briefly noted:

1. At the Housing Commissioner's meeting last Monday, after putting down the tenants, they voted 3-2 to take a poll of all tenants on the fence question. This would presumably be taken into account next month when they decide whether to put them back up.

2. The tenants league had a rummage sale that earned \$70.00.

3. Two members went in yesterday to find out the details of the poll, and to ask that it be a secret ballot. They didn't get any satisfaction from the Housing people. They also asked permission for having a rummage sale in the backyards, and were told it would take a couple of days to approve.

4. We showed the movies of Newark and the Cleveland Conference last night; mostly kids showed up. There's discussion of trying to send one of us to the Newark conference but it looks questionable right now.

Bob Mandel has been working with a group of rank-and-file members of construction laborers locals. There's a large tunnel being built for the rapid transit, and it seems the district council of the union agreed with the contractor that the contractor could hire non-union labor as long as they joined up within 8 days. This led to hundreds of out-of-town whites being hired for the mining, and no Negroes from the local union. The Unemployed Rights Committee leafletted at the employment office for a demonstration which seems to have scared the contractor but not enough to get him to change his practices. The fight is now being conducted within the union to get the bigwigs to heed the needs of the members.

VIETNAM

We've also been involved in Vietnam activity. A lot of the kids around here are worried about the draft--as well they might be--and

we (with the Vietnam Day Committee) have been working on weekly rallies in the local playground about the war. Now we're going to start explaining to draft-age kids how they can keep the draft away through filing for conscientious objection to the war, and we hope to organize large numbers of kids in this program.

Oakland is also where all the troops go through on their way to Vietnam, and all the supplies are loaded. The students at the University of Calif. have been having demonstrations as trains carrying troops to the Army Terminal.

CHICAGO continued

are property or children of the state. Caseworkers act as agents of the middle class values of the state in a parental or policing function. Recipients are supposed to be reshaped to meet society's demands and norms and then pushed back into the system. The result of this assumption is that recipients aren't guaranteed certain constitutional rights, the most notable being search and seizure without warrant and right to confront an accuser. As the legal suits for the FDP challenged en masse Southern assumptions about voting and qualification I think we can raise en masse questions about welfare. This still has to be thought and talked about, someone found who'd be willing to stand up to the system to this extent, etc.

This certainly doesn't present a very deep analysis, but will give some idea of the kind of welfare stuff we're getting into. Probably have about 25-30 welfare people closely involved with us now, maybe more.



CLEVELAND WEST plans a play

People of this area are being invited to join with others wishing to put on plays and skits this Summer. Why, you may ask, a Theater for the West Side? Well, for one thing, we think it could be lots of fun to get out and play together, instead of work and worry all the time. We want to write our own plays and skits about things which concern all of us right here in the community. For example, we might write some skits showing how the landlords take advantage of us as individuals and then show how we could get together to give the landlords a hard time and make them fix up the houses.

We don't want to leave the impression that the Theatre is just going to be a lot of hard work. We think it will be fun to poke fun at people like the bad landlords and bad politicians. We think it will be fun to expose some of the bad policies of the Welfare or show how poorly informed some welfare workers are about the conditions under which we live. We would like to show the world that we are not a lot of ignorant poor people who don't know the score. We believe that Theatre is one way we can show everybody that we understand WHY we are getting a raw deal and that we intend to do something about it!

We are really in need of people to help build a Theatre here. We need people who might want to work in any capacity. Such as musicians, those who might like to do some acting, those who would like to write skits and plays, those who can sew and help make costumes, or those who just want to have a voice in what we should say in the Theatre are invited to contact the Cleveland Community at 2908 Jay, or call 781-3739. Don't be timid-- Please call.

--Bob Smiddie

ONE heckler takes a review

Last night I attended a one act play on Label Court, which is located on the West Side. It was about a social worker and a 16-year-old poverty boy. It was so real to life it brought tears to the eyes of us that have experienced such a thing. One heckler on the sidelines really gave us all the chance to know that what was being said on the stage was true, for he is a poverty boy that is hostile in every way. The actress he was heckling in real life was one of the most concerned persons when he was in an auto accident. She played her part so well, he seemed to have forgotten her Good Samaritan role in his life. To Bill and Mallian a job very well done. I think we all learned something last night.

P.S. To the author--Bob Smiddie-- just great, let's have more!!

--by Dorothy Hammer

***** ATTENTION ATTENTION ATTENTION *****

The Birth Control Mobile Unit is at St. Paul's Church (W. 45th and Franklin) every Tuesday morning from 10:00 to 12:00. If you are interested please go or contact Geraldine Broccles at 831-1570



reports on Cleveland's Rat March

NOTE: The Cleveland CRAP projects did not sponsor the Rat March, although many staff members participated. We have had an interest in the activities of the Citizen's Committee over the last 11 months, and many community people close to us have become involved in the activities of Citizen's Committee--Glove Proj

Working on the idea that the C.O. Board in the city of Cleveland is intentionally setting aside Federal Anti-Poverty Law which states that antipoverty programs shall be developed, administered and conducted with the maximum feasible involvement of poor and poverty residents we decided to do something about it. Something that would show them what poverty really is. Something that would show them what we have to live with every day--the magnificent legless chairs, the gorgeous air conditioned clothes and let us not forget the Roaches and Rats we pay to share our 75 to 90 dollars a month apartments(?). To show them

this, we decided, would show them what we can't just ride down a street and not see again.

I believe the reaction of most people, at first, was one of disbelief and disgust but after they thought about the actual reason we put these things on the steps of City Hall they seem to agree it is true that our C.O. Board doesn't know what poverty is or what to do about it.

We know what it is and we'll keep picketing and giving samples of our everyday life until we get what we want. Yes, C.O. Board, we'll be back again and again.

--Alice Aaronson

Background of March

In October of 1964 several different groups of people became very concerned with Cleveland's Council for Economic Opportunities board which is made up of 17 suburbanites and only 3 people who live in the city. This group of people only consisted of 1 poor person who was selected by councilmen who in return was a

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Don't hold
Swayed by
State

Don't hold Swayed by State

Mayor's man. This disturbed people very much. Three ministers--Re. Milan Breenkus, Rev. Paul Younger and Rev. Jacobs--people from CORE and CUPA plus other interested people combined to try and make decisions on what should be an adequate board and adequate plans for communities in Poverty. After the Citizens Committee for an Adequate Cleveland Community Action Program had tried for 10 months even through Washington just to get Mr. Fudley, director of the anti-poverty board, and other of the anti-poverty board to converse and take ideas from us, we decided to demonstrate with symbols of Poverty. These symbols were as follows: torn winter coats, rats, shoes with holes, broken down chairs, piece of sofa and people who suffer because of America's inadequacy to take care of home first. We started marching at Public Square and went straight down Euclid Avenue (which is loaded with rich businesses) to 6th Street.

STORM TROOPERS

When we arrived the storm troopers were in front of City Hall waiting for us. The Citizens Committee had written a proposal the month before and presented it to the C.O. board. After going in the chambers where their monthly meeting was being held, where they turned down our proposal, we decided to continue our picketing and demonstration. We then retrieved our Rats, Furniture, Clothes and Shoes and started picketing again. Because several had volunteered to place these articles on City Hall steps Louise Gaston, Margaret George, and Hattie Mae Dugan were arrested. Grady Robinson had previously been arrested on what we felt were trumped up charges. He is the President of Cleveland CORE. I feel we have made a great impression on the decision-makers on what poverty is like, because we took it down to City Hall to them and more important left it!

--by Carole King

To my own belief I think a person who is of low income and on welfare is more capable of knowing their circumstances than one living on a substantial income and above average basis. A poor man earning about \$450 a month can't live to the standards of one making \$2000 a month. Isn't this a



Crash on the city hall steps fact? They have added 5 more members to the Board and the public doesn't even know who they are. This is supposed to be the land of Democracy but I haven't seen it in 29 years of my life. Every City official is put in office by people whom they call ignorant, illiterate, uneducated, and immoral women which is what they call those who are on welfare. The people should know some of their candidates before they are endorsed and before they go to the polls to vote for them. I think Cleveland is very far behind in everything to be living in the 20th century, it has a very long way to catch up. Until everyone thinks of each other as a person instead of looking at the color of skin, the world will never be like it was intended to be. God created all of us equal but man is going to destroy himself and all people. I know what I stand for but does the CEO know what they stand for and what are their plans and goals for the coming year and the years after this to follow? I am glad I don't have to sleep on your conscience because you people don't have any.

We poor people understand and know what poverty is and accept it to a certain stand point and are willing to fight for it in every way including going to jail. Love, Understanding, Respect is more important than all the money in the world.

--by Margaret George
P.S. I love my children, do you love yours?



kids bring trash to City Hall... while mothers picket

The newsletter:

In a discussion last night about whether the New Haven Project should continue to put out the Newsletter through the winter, one staff member said, "It's silly for college-type organizers to keep putting out the newsletter. If we're really trying to organize a movement of the poor, we ought to go to the Newark Conference with the idea of handing over the newsletter to poor people so they can put out their own newspaper. The way it is now the newsletter is largely a publication for organizers which community people aren't interested in."

But a letter we got from another project this morning said they decided not to submit a piece (explaining their relationship to a local group) "Because it was felt that this was something intended primarily for staff people across the country, and we feel that the Newsletter has become a community oriented publication. There are things which we felt were true that we do not feel we can discuss in the community at this time."

MARXIST SLANT?

To add to the confusion, a letter came in the mail this morning stating "The newsletter should have more of a Marxist slant, more meat to it, and a definite political direction." Finally, we got a letter from Knoxville saying that a new newspaper was being started because "Our assumption is that a poor person, Negro or white, is better able to get an idea across to another poor person than an organizer is."

It's certainly obvious--in case one can't gather it from these comments--that the newsletter has been a hodgepog. Material has been written by different people for quite different audiences. Generally, the material (usually in the front of each issue) taken from local newsletters has been largely written by community people, and from what we can gather here is fairly boring after a while to organizers. The material in the back--reports, correspondence, and some analysis--has been written for the most part by organizers, and from what we can gather is not read

by community people.

The question in my mind is whether this juxtaposition has been a healthy thing, or whether it has meant that both community people and organizers have been inhibited from writing things because they feel that the main function of the newsletter is communication among the other group of people. If, as the New Haven staff member said, community people are being blocked from the experience of having their own national newspaper, and if organizers are withholding reports because they are afraid of offending community people, then one might think--as has been suggested many times--that there should be 2 publications, one for organizers, one for community people.

HARMFUL?

But I think this could be harmful, because it would separate these two groups of people even more than they already are. In our work--when a community person joins a project staff, for instance--we should be working to close this separation as much as possible. As it is now, at least, the two groups probably skim the material which is said to be written for the other group.

In any case, more thought must be given to the question of whom the newsletter is going to, and what function it should serve (I've ignored here the fact that 450 newsletters go to people who are neither organizers or poor people, because our feeling has been that most of these people just want to read what we're doing, and that the content of the newsletter shouldn't be affected by them). Certainly, if the newsletter is to be part of our organizing, the people putting out the newsletter will have to think about these things as each issue is put together.



NOTES on organizing poor Southern whites

by Casey Hayden, Chicago

A summer's work with white migrants in Chicago left me with numerous questions and some tentative conclusions about the extent to which the SNCC pattern of organizing and analysis can be used to organize this group of people. It's important to ask this, I think, since SNCC has been my experience in the movement and has certainly had a big influence on others.

ASSUMPTION OF WORK WITH SNCC

Patterns of work and ideology grew out of working in the Deep South in rural areas with Negroes. SNCC staff assumes:

--The power structure cannot and will not yield to even the most elemental political demands.

--The enemy is clearly perceptible: He is the white man, the man downtown, the boss man--almost always identified in terms of race and thus always felt and seen.

--Given the oppressor is clearly felt and even the simplest demand are radical ones, the task of the organizer is simply to get people together to voice their feelings and demands and to support whatever action people want to take.

--Deepening and broadening political awareness is not difficult as people learn from the actions in which they become involved and can begin to see and understand "the power structure" rapidly.

--The power structure's reaction is nearly always one of oppression: programs can be developed indefinitely simply in response to this clear oppression. Increased political awareness will happen more rapidly than concessions will come, so that people will reject tokenism.

--There are no allies to be trusted finally. Often organizing will involve overturning established leadership in the community so that masses can be mobilized. Allies in any national sense are political who will support organizing SNCC does. There is enough support in the North to provide adequate funds and political pressure around given programs if the support can be mobilized. SNCC's task is to organize, not to build coalitions.

Some of these assumptions have proved wrong in specific situation, but they are the working basis of day to day activity in community organizing.

I. In applying these assumptions to work in Chicago the major problem, I think, is that of identifying an enemy and finding a basis for solidarity. For instance, instead of identifying an oppressor, people identify problems: "Teenagers drink. The neighborhood is dirty. Cops don't give protection." Then people blame each other: "Anyone can make it who really tries. Hillbillies (or spicks or Indians or niggers) are to blame."



What is a basis for identifying with each other, around which people can be organized: class, ethnic group, neighborhood, people with similar problems?

Because this seems to me to be the crucial question in community organizing and because no one seems to have any answers, I confined my work to one group I felt I could understand best: women, mostly on welfare, mostly southern. In this particular group I think there is real potential although we need to meet particular problems they have by searching for ways to pull them out of their homes and away from the kids, setting up centers of operation in their immediate neighborhoods which they seldom leave, building a group based initially on their immediate felt need for help. Nearly all of them have some other women to whom they can turn (Continued next page)

Organization and mobilization around...

for help when some guy beats them up, the kids are sick, the check is late. They can understand the need to enlarge that group, pool resources, stand together. And because they really are on the bottom in this community and know they are perceived that way, they are not so ready to blame others for the condition of people who are them. They are tied to the state through the welfare system, and thus their gripes are easily politicized.

GROUPS AND THEIR NEEDS

I don't have any real knowledge of any other group, but my general impression from scattered conversations with adult men and teenagers is that their needs, activities, and perceptions of causes for their condition differ enough from each other and from the people that work with different groups will have to be somewhat specialized. A community union framework may be adequate, if the basis for the building of the union is clearly problems that adhere to different groups rather than problems of the neighborhood as a community area. I found, I think, that it was only as I organized around the problems of women and welfare people and really got involved in people's lives through these problems that I could begin to even think of talking with people on any other broader basis in any way that made sense to them.



NO MOVEMENT

Another problem in the general area of identity and organizing basis is that the people we're been working with don't have any reference point for organizing: no movement that can be pointed to, no group experience of working together on problems. Thus people initially consider JOIN a charity group--their only reference point for dealing with problems. My feeling is that starting with people where they are will allow us to build

on their initial perception. That is, service actions can create strong ties: getting food for someone whose husband just left her, getting someone on welfare, will bring someone to a meeting perhaps and will certainly open her up to continued conversation and introduction to friends with similar problems. Key to one who area was servicing one person in this way this summer. Given this, however, the problem of building an organization rather than a staff who service people remains. The need is to find reference points for helping people understand organizing themselves. The existing ties in the community can be used. Another is to talk in terms of backing each other up, a term used to refer to fist fights when one guy will step in if his buddy starts getting beaten. The Dorothy Perez arrests can be explained that way: People went to jail with her and went down and picketed with her and backing her up in this way got her demands. (This is a very different use of arrests than is often made of them in the South, where a community can sometimes be mobilized around unjust arrests. That can happen, I think, only when there is already a sense of identity with each other.)

ORGANIZING TACTICS

Given that people have no sense of identity or oppression clearly focused and that they don't have experience with organized effort of any kind, there is a real need to find patterns in the community through which people already relate to each other and to build on those. For instance, one woman's husband works at a charity store. There are lots of these little second hand stores around which give things away and sell enough on the side to make an income for several people. This woman is interested in having JOIN start such a store, as they are widely used by really down and out people in the neighborhood. This action grows from her viewing us as trying to help people on a very elementary level, but the store could well be used to introduce us to people, provide some income for the project, involve community people in working with it.

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Organizing poor people...



It is at least seriously considering whether we can utilize this way people try to solve immediate problems for what we want to do. Another instance is that people continually ask for membership cards. The idea that people who do work are members certainly fits our values, but it doesn't answer people's needs. People in this area don't belong to anything and nothing belongs to them, but one way they can understand being a part of something is a card or something that says they're "in." If this helps them see the organization as their rather than ours, then it should be seriously considered. Another instance: the leadership question. The SECC position on leadership grew from pragmatic considerations about how to build a movement. One of the things that had to be done to build a movement was to free people from uncle tom leaders. Another was to create a sense among people that they could do and act, to battle inferiority feelings. Pragmatically, poor Southern whites need one of themselves who can be seen as heading up the organization, as a leader. That is, there are plenty of white leaders, but none who express their class and ethnic group in any positive way. It may be that instead of titular heads and spokesmen, potential leaders in the community can become organizers. At any rate, the "we have no leaders" position does not seem to me helpful in organizing with Southern whites. I am less sure what to do about that.

DIFFERENT FORMS

The above is to say that forms of work among this group may be different than those forms that were useful in the Negro community and people who are organizing have to spend a great deal of time figuring out what will work to build the kind of movement we want, that will take the lid off....imposing ideas from somewhere.

II. the second major problem in applying Southern assumption to North ern work with whites is probably the reaction of the power structure. I don't really doubt that the intent here is to stifle radical politics anymore

than in the South, but we are handled differently:

ACCOMODATION--There are numerous organizations providing "help": Hull House, the War on Poverty, officials who will give audiences, precinct captains, etc. This differs from the South largely in that in areas where SECC has the most experience there are literally no institutions to provide relief to Negroes. That means that numerous institutions in the North must be learned about and coped with. We should at least understand the politics of the area--who are the potential allies (if any) who are the real enemies to be avoided, who has real power (ie, who do people go to for help), what institutions are operative. While the system is attempting to accommodate poor people more in the North than in the South, I don't think the power structure can yield any more readily to radical demands here than in the South. As in the South, radical demands are those which ask power for a dispossessed group--real power over their lives. It seems fairly clear to me that the welfare bureaucracy is too screwed up and anti-democratic to meet demands for fair treatment to recipients, the hospitals are too overcrowded to provide decent emergency care to the poor, the police are corrupt to provide protection without or decent treatment to people arrested. I don't think the issue is which demands are radical, but how we organize people to make demands. SUPPRESSION--High fines, false arrests can suppress activity rather than providing a mobilizing issue as they do in the South where there is already a group organized. Besides the fact that the community doubts us more than in the South in a Negro

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Organizing poor whites arrives

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community, here is the fact that we have no source of funds and moral support "up North." Besides oppressive fines in the Perez case and the false arrests, organizers in Chicago are already having to deal with red baiting in the community. The need for any help that could be obtained in Southern communities and the clarity of the issues SNCC was raising delayed red baiting for SNCC, and now that it is coming it is coming from outside communities being worked. In Chicago, questions are already being raised in the community, probably indicating among other things that people can't understand who we are and what we're doing and have no other way to identify us. In addition, there is the question of harassment of community people who identify with JOIN (evictions, questioning by welfare offices), without the initial support in the community for the newly recruited community people any more than for the organizers. I don't know what the implications of all this are, but probably the most positive attitude to take is simply that we have to organize faster than they can get us.

ALLIES AND COALITIONS

III. The question of allies and coalition building is more complicated in the North largely, I think, because the liberals who give money to the renewed Southern movement are right there in Chicago, judging

and periodically threatened by our work. Aside from this, however, the SNCC position on coalitions is probably fairly true for us. This is not because there are no liberal groups around, but because we probably have as much real power against the Daly machine and the prevailing politics as any of them, (or so it seemed in view of the lack of help any of them were able to give in the Perez and other arrests.) It is probably more important to think of help from them. A political movement in Chicago will eventually involve working relationships with other groups, especially the civil rights movement, but for the time being organizing where we are seems much higher priority.

ORGANIZER'S ROLE

IV. The role of the organizer requires more real writing than has been done on it. Somebody should try to do a long essay on community organizing that goes beyond slogans about letting people decide for themselves. I feel fairly certain that the organizer working with poor whites must be much more active and directing, at least initially, and probably more persuasive than the organizer in rural Southern Negro areas. This is the result of the problems of identity outlined above. Another difference in the poor white neighborhood is that students there are not viewed, as in

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Organizing poor whites

concluded



the Negro community, as an elite educated group which should be expected to provide leadership and are thus accepted. Traditionally, mountain people are suspicious of outsiders, although this breaks down somewhat when they enter the urban environment, I think. But that factor, combined with the fact that it's very hard for the people to understand what we're doing there causes me to question whether students can organize on a large scale in poor white areas on the pattern of Southern movement work.

Certainly I don't think anything like a summer project should be considered for Chicago again unless full time staff is willing to spend a great deal of time planning for how to use students and training them when they arrive. Middle class college educated non-Southern people have a hard enough time understanding and relating to Southern poor without the added complication of youth, I think. However,



or, even if students are to be used, it is crucial to find and train community people to come on staff. That seems to me to be a very high priority activity in the initial stages of organizing, certainly higher priority than training additional non-community organizers. This means serious thoughts about fund-raising, as community people have to be subsidized in some way if they're going to work full time.

NON-VIOLENCE

One other problem occurs in organizing with Southern poor whites that is not thus far a question in the Negro areas of the South. Violence is such a part of life for these people, and the organizer has to be ready to receive it and deal with it. Nonviolence as a tactic is even further from these people than from the Negro and the violence in the community is directed against organizers as well as anyone else around.

Based on my experience with women, I think Southern poor whites can be organized, but it will require much more openness to organizing forms and much more work to build leadership from within that group than I had expected. Sure ain't easy.

What's Happening

(The following is an excerpt from What's Happening, a new Newspaper in which teenagers of New York express their views. The address is c/o Mr. F. B. Campbell, 32 West 131 Street, New York, New York)

"Our paper, What's Happening, is written mainly for the teenager of today and for those adults who are interested in the welfare of the youth of today. The paper was founded by a group of Harlem's teenagers who were interested in the welfare of their fellow teenagers and feel that they know what's happening.

One of the major reasons for this paper is to express the opinions and beliefs of young people. Too often the teenager is written off as bad; as a person whose ideals are not worth listening to. The newspapers of this

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What's Happening, cont'd ¹²

city always print the trouble which the teenager gets into. They rarely tell of the important and valuable acts of young people in the greater New York community. School newspapers do not fill the gap. They only print what they feel will make them look good. Dissenting opinions are, as a result, left out and all criticism of the schools is avoided.

We feel that this is wrong. Newspapers give an unfair impression of us. It is our belief that if we print the truth, which will include the good things which the youth of today do, as well as the thoughts and ideas of the city's teenagers, there will be greater understanding between teenagers here and in other parts of this city, as well as between teenagers and adults. So our paper will be about the teenagers and adults who live in New York City. We will work with our fellow teenagers to make us known and respected.

Our paper will be published every month for your enjoyment. I hope you will read it and benefit from it.

--by Frank Campbell

THIS GENERATION

(the following poem was sent to the Newsletter unsigned from a project)

We keep working in spite of the odds.
 We know what would happen if we quit.
 Students in 5 years would come along and try to organize.
 They would see us as the older generation who broke the faith.
 They would start from scratch.
 But we don't quit.
 We are the first generation that will never sell out.
 When we are 50 we will still be working.
 And we will share power equally with those who are 20.
 (unlike Walter Reuther. Un like university administrations)
 Society asks us, will we succeed?
 "Success" is a standard we learn from society.
 Do we trust it?
 We ask ourselves, will we be human with each other for all our lives?
 When we stop trying we stop being human.
 If we stop trying--when we chase personal success--society has won.
 I don't know if we will ever "win."
 I don't have the power to determine that.
 But we have the power to quit if we want.
 Quitting is defeat.
 If we keep working, society can never defeat us.

It hurts to keep trying.
 The world is blood and brutal to itself.
 Brutality causes us pain.
 To quit is "peaceful."
 To endure is painful.
 We accept the pain.
 In 30 years, we will still be facing the pain.
 That will be the measure of our humanness.



Negroes & the War: a Sequel

The body of a young man, who had participated in the early stages of the McComb movement, was shipped home last month from Vietnam. Two persons working on the project there (one of them an out-of-stater) composed a circular which they thought reflected local Negro sentiment about the war. The text of the circular was printed in the last newsletter, and its appearance in the MFDP's newsletter caused a national stir, enemies of the MFDP using it to support their charges of subversion.

A MISSISSIPPI REACTION

Regarding the circular, a share-cropper from Amite County, Miss. has something to add to the discussion: only a few days after the flood of newsmen crowded into the Jackson office to demand a statement from MFDP leaders, I accompanied a CORE worker out into the countryside. Leaving Clinton, Louisiana, we drove out the main road north, turning onto a side road, and after ten miles onto a dirt road through pine forests and little openings of farmland.

After twenty more minutes on isolated dead road, we turned sharply, entering Mississippi, and within another hundred yards there appeared a farm. We drove up the house, which turned out to be a headquarters of the Amite County movement, and the home of the Steptoe family.

SMALL TALK

We sat down with W.S. Steptoe, the head of the household. Amidst preparations for the daily Freedom School, we engaged in polite conversation--the latest happenings in the movement. He enthusiastically showed me the new voter registration form, with no interpretive questions, and told of the scores of new registrants. We compared notes on the ward-level agricultural committee elections, in which Negroes are running for the first time, throughout both Louisiana and

Mississippi. Among the piles of the latest copies of "movement" and leftist publications there, I noticed the MFDP newsletter which had printed the McComb circular.

AN EXCHANGE

Having gotten over marvelling over the communications system the movement had brought to rural Southwestern Mississippi, I assumed Steptoe might know about the McComb circular and the controversy it set off.

"What do you think about this thing in McComb?" I asked.

"Well," Steptoe said slowly, "I agree with the people over there about the war, but I'm not sure that I like the petition they wrote up."

He paused, and I quickly ran through my head the reservations he might have. The damage it has done to the hard-worked-for congressional challenge? The lever it gives to anti-movement propaganda? The complications of adding new issues to a fight with so many fronts already?

I responded: "How would you have written it, if you'd been there?"

"Well, it seems to me that Negroes aren't the only people against the war, and when it talks about Negroes boycotting the draft and having hunger strikes, it cuts off working with other people. We should try to get everyone to stop the war."



Response to Countryman On Race

-- by Samuel Leiken of NSM.

(The following article, from Samuel Leiken of Northern Student Movement, was written in response to Peter Countryman's article on "Race and the Movement" which appeared in last week's ERAP Newsletter. Leiken says, "This represents a personal reply to what Countryman has written, and should not be taken as an organizational statement.")

Peter Countryman raises some important questions for the movement in his recent article "Race and the Movement." I would like to add to that discussion a few observations of my own.

The question of race and racism is first one of analysis. Does one believe that all people, poor, working class, students, middle class, and wealthy are victims of the same powerlessness? Although we all live under the same system, it behaves differently towards us, depending on our position. To assume that everyone has the same problems, it seems to me, ignores the 400 year history of the Negro in America. Although alienation may be a common denominator, and that is questionable, the fact remains that whites have exploited Negroes in every phase of their lives and that no other group has ever been held in slavery in this country. The entire psychological relationship between whites and blacks in America is unique. The effects are a two way street. Negroes are victims of the oppressor's outlook as much as whites are victims of the oppressor's.

MOVEMENT & REALITY

To the Negro in this country life is a matter of survival and the movement is not a way to change the society to participatory democracy but a means to end oppression. Thus white students and Negroes come to the movement with a different outlook and motivation. Students can always leave the ghetto or the field, but Negroes still must survive where they are. Thus Countryman can say,

"Besides, it is a question of human beings, and it is irrelevant, except in terms of tactics, whether people are black or white."

Certain the ERAP projects make it clear that whites can organize Negroes. The question is the nature of that organization and its permanence. If we recognize the self-hate and ambivalence of Negroes as a result of racist oppression, we must then realize that black people can never be free until that problem is dealt with. Organizing Negroes simply on economic issues is a process that can go on forever--for issues are merely manifestations of larger contradictions in the society. What needs to be done is to eradicate racism from America. That is a political not personal problem.

COALITION

The history of the Negro struggle is marked by attempts at coalition, be they called a popular front or an inter-racial movement of the poor. Alliances from the radical Republicans to the Populists, to the Communists-Party have ultimately sold out Negro interests. Negroes were told that their interests were the same as a group and therefore Negroes must sacrifice their own struggle (continued next page)



Response, E.C.T.

for the greater good. All of the coalitions were marked by lack of real Negro organization with real independence. Black people stand in a different way in this society--a way in which whites do not stand. To organize them together denies that. That is needed, if we are speaking of a Negro movement, is an independent movement of black unity free to make its own alliances from a base of power which represents its own interests.

TO ORGANIZE

To organize around black unity requires not the collection of people who perceive common economic plight, but must be based upon the common life experience of all black people in this country--the fact that they are black and what that means to the rest of society. White students have no place organizing such a movement. For black people to be free, they must free themselves, not continue to rely on a good white person to make them free. Unless black people can be confronted honestly with all the myths they use to avoid the reality of their situation, they will not be free. For freedom is as much a psychological fact

as an economic fact. Thus we can see African nations, which have fought for political freedom, still remaining economically dependent. Malcolm X represented that force of reality which forced Negroes to face up to themselves. He took a position of absolute black unity, because whites, no matter how friendly or benign, still represent to black people, the oppressor. No matter what kind of personal relationships are built, the effects of racism are such that every Negro in some form or another hates the white system.

WHITE RADICAL VIEWPOINT

The difficulty with Peter's article is that he is looking at race and the movement from the viewpoint of a white radical. He is concerned with personal, no political, problems. If we recognize that the situation we find ourselves in requires political power and necessitates a political solution, then personal problems must remain just that--and they are not vital to the task at hand. Being hung up with race comes only from being in an unreal situation. It is the problem of that particular organizer, who must make his own decision about reality. Being hung up with race is a state of life for whites organizing in black ghettos.



CORRESPONDENCE

Newark's Welfare Work

FROM: Phil Hutchings, 194 Ridgewood, Newark, New Jersey
TO: Casey Hayden, JCH, 1100 West Ainslie, Chicago, Ill.

"Here in Newark, 3 full time organizers are talking to mothers on ADC to find out what they think can be done and the types of action they would want to take. Welfare in Newark is different here because there are 2 separate administrations: the city and the county. City welfare is for emergencies and has few requirements. Standards for case-workers are not very high. The entire program is very bad and out-dated. Most of the people in our area of Clinton Hill are on county welfare (actually it is the state but administered at the county level) and standards here both for case-workers and contents are more rigid.

CONFUSION

The state administers 5 welfare programs, the largest one being ADC. Payments are higher than city relief and many people shift from city to county welfare after their poverty status is clear. So far we have talked with a few welfare officials and haven't gotten too much help. No one has an overview of the entire welfare situation in Newark because it is divided among too many different agencies. If the administrators are confused you can imagine the client reactions. In the last week I have gone down to the welfare department with a couple of women and have talked at length with several case-workers. (they admit that they don't like the jobs and that the budgets are enough to exist but no live on).

So far we haven't had a strategy. Two summer staff and Bob Heifitz from the National Committee for Full Employment are doing research and we have the cooperation from 2 high officials of Core who work in the welfare department. The 3 organizers work pretty much on their own. I am trying to talk a lot to the women on an individual basis in order for them to get to know us well. I think welfare is very personal to them and much harder to talk about than housing and recreation. Later I hope to have 2 or 3 come together and share experiences and have the group get steadily larger. Once a group is formed, they can enter into the structure of NCUP or be close but independent of it. I haven't thought too much about what kind of action we can take yet because there are lots of things I want to talk with them about. I just have a couple of ideas and I'll share those:

- Have the mothers get together and draw up a budget of how much they think they need to live on and make a political issue out of it by getting NCUP and other civil rights groups to support it.
- Use official committees of our area-board of the War-on-poverty (which we control) to investigate the welfare dept. and other city agencies that deal with welfare. The mothers would be on the committees and could formulate proposals for anti-poverty in Washington.
- Publish a brochure on welfare in Newark from statements tape-recorded from talks with mothers on ADC and send them across the nation to other ERAP projects and groups doing similar work. (Do you know of anything outside of CUPAN and the APDC mothers in Detroit?)
- The mothers could put pressure on the welfare dept. (pickets, sit-ins) for more money, surplus food, etc.
- Mount a campaign to have welfare mothers or mothers once on welfare to go around as/with caseworkers.



CORRESPONDENCE continued

PITTSBURGH

FROM: J. Matthew Sloan, 4181 Centre Ave, Pittsburgh 13, Pa.

"We have a permanent Progressive Neighbor's Union (PNU) meeting now in a small store front church every Wednesday at 7:30. The PNU is presently trying to get the city to demolish vacant houses which have been or should be condemned. We planned to have the people take a city safety inspector on a tour of the district to show him exactly what they think should be done. Unfortunately, the City Safety Director now informs us that due to the vacation schedule it is impossible to send an inspector out.

We are having a student meeting tonight to decide what should be done about this change of events.

I will also mention your letter tonight. As soon as possible, I'll send you a more detailed account of what's going on out here."

VISTA VOLUNTEER

From Sandra Barnett, c/o ERAP Newsletter (address withheld on request)

"I'm working as a Vista Volunteer. It sounds terrible and could be even worse if it weren't for the man who is my co-worker/immediate superior/sponsor. The bureaucracy doesn't really give a damn what we do and I suspect they would be very happy if we did nothing. So I feel some what elevated about the prospects of using the bureaucracy's money to supply the people with information and strengths and encouragement and strategy to fight the monster I'm supposedly working for.

I have general obligations to 4 H Clubs...which heretofore have done little other than offering children a nibble of phoney middle class experience one or two hours a week. They deserve a lot more than that. This whole community would have a chance if an ERAP project were started here. It isn't a ghetto yet. The leadership is so weak. All the so called leaders are making wild bids for respectability, accept money from the Poverty Program and shut up. There are 3 of us here who could use a lot of advice and would be very grateful if you would write to us."

BUFFALO

FROM Gerald Gross, 226 N. Girard Blvd, Kenmore, New York

"I am working at the ERAP project here in Buffalo, New York. We have just finished putting a nice new coat of paint on the walls of our headquarters, at 239 High Street. Now we have to figure out just what we are going to do here.

The ERAP Newsletter helps us a bit but actually there can be no substitute for trial and error and getting the experience right down here in the Ghetto. I do think, however, that the Newsletter should have more of a Marxist slant, more meat to it, and a definite political direction.

It is important to go careful with the slogans. We must not alienate the people here with leftist slogans, and, on the other hand, we dare not put up slogans that will send the people in a non-Marxist direction. What has been your experience in this matter. Perhaps you could write up on it in the Newsletter.

Mississippi Young Dems

FROM: Hunter Morey, P.O. Box 2251, Jackson, Mississippi

"We just had a Young Democrats convention here in Jackson, Mississippi and what a fight it was. Young people from all over the state had gotten together last year after the Freedom School convention to start the Young Democrats but so far we haven't been able to get the national group to recognize us. It is like the fight the Freedom Democratic Party is having on the adult level. This Young Democrats is where we young people can get together and find out about government, do vote registration, and participate with people from other states.

Well, last Saturday the NAACP came with many people who had not participated before to try to take us over. About mid day when we had the majority votes, the NAACP kids walked out because they could not have all the say so. We did not act like they did. When we elected officers we put some of them on too. We are hoping that they will come back with us so that we can be together when the national Young Democrat convention comes up in New York this October 12-16. They (NAACP) tried to frighten us off by having the convention in a white hotel here in Jackson. We weren't frightened though. So don't you be frightened off by the Hotel New Yorker where we need you to come and help fight for us. P.S. I work for SNCC"



The ERAP NEWSLETTER helps to maintain contact among community organizations associated in some way with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and its Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP). It also contains news of any other community projects it can contact. For the moment it is compiled by the New Haven Project, 46 Arch Street, New Haven. Community projects receive it free. Others can subscribe for \$4. a year.

FROM: ERAP NEWSLETTER
New Haven Project
46 Arch Street
New Haven, Conn

THIRD CLASS MAIL

THIRD CLASS MAIL

State Hist. Society of Wis.
816 State St.
Madison 6, Wisc. X/