

CLEVELAND REPORT

2908 JAY AVE.

JULY 23 1964

ERAP-64-16

The bulk of this report is a summary of two evenings of meetings on July 14 and 15 (about 9-10 full hours of discussion) in which we shared the experiences of the past week, and went on to outline our activity for the rest of the summer. On the weekend before the ERAP meeting here in Cleveland (July 4-5) the CCP had lowered the priority of our "turf" random canvassing, and had redivided ourselves into a number of research groups to test the possibility for organization around a number of key issues. Two people worked on unemployment, two on welfare, two on the formation of a neighborhood organization around the issue of an inadequate and dangerous playground in the Abbey Rd. Area, two on tenants' councils in Lakeview Terrace public housing project, and one each on recreation (partly coordinated with the Abbey Rd. team) education and credit structure. The strategy meetings were held to hear reports and suggestions on these issues, to set up criteria and decide which of them should be continued, and to reallocate personnel for the rest of the summer.

Strategy

Issues

UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment team had spent the week trying to make contact with known unemployed (found through the "turf" activity) as well as finding new ones, and trying to discover more information about the unemployment picture in Cleveland, including opportunities for retraining, the nature of spot labor operations, and the city work relief program. Having made several good contacts, they made the following suggestions for an organization of the unemployed; the first meeting of which will be held on Thursday, July 23.

A service function of the organization is necessary both to give people immediate tasks, and to provide the potential for small short-run successes which might serve to bind the group tighter. Unlike Chicago JOIN, we do not see service as something we will provide as a means of recruitment as much as a means of immediately involving at least a core group of men who might develop as leaders of a larger group. The team also made some tentative suggestions for action programs once the group was underway. Some kind of protest against Manpower, Inc., a national spot labor corporation, was proposed since a number of unemployed had expressed dissatisfaction with the way they had been treated. It also may provide an opportunity for fruitful alliance with some labor unions since Manpower seems to have been a source of scab labor on occasion. A protest against the county about the exploitative wages paid those who were forced to work for their general relief checks was suggested. Along with this was suggested a look-see into the possibilities of demanding that the city provide more jobs by expanding employment in areas where the city's services are less than adequate.

The question of recruitment was a particularly interesting one since, unlike Chicago or Baltimore, our group was not started from a central office, but arose out of community contacts. No trappings of existing organizations were used; people were simply asked if they would like to take part in an organization (though leaflets from the other cities were found very useful in giving people something to identify with). Though there are avenues of recruitment open to the group, any real decision about recruitment will be left to our group of unemployed, and their participation in a recruitment program will be another avenue of immediate involvement; eg., a

Labor

diffusion

couple of girls have expressed willingness to go door-to-door looking for unemployed, and to help write a leaflet for use here in Cleveland.

Numbers
About eight people had been found who seemed ready and willing to attend a meeting with other unemployed. A number of characteristics were seen as significant to the functioning of the individuals organizationally. For instance, all were married; this seems good for personal stability, and insures a personal stake in the jobs issue. On the other hand, a family man has to be more immediately concerned with the need for a job, which may force him out of active participation in the organization. Further, the short-term unemployed were seen as more bitter, and more immediately ready to do something, but also more impatient, more anxious about getting a job for themselves now. The long-term were more adjusted to their position, and therefore might well be willing to take the time that organization would require, but often were resigned to their position, and too "depressed" for action. The older men seemed more stable, but the younger more energetic. Detailed discussion of the relative organizability of these people was put off but it was felt that these distinctions were important and should be considered in any attempts at organizing the unemployed.

Finally the team raised some very basic questions in terms of looking beyond short-term objectives to some conception of middle-range program: should we be demanding public works, is this an efficacious way of creating jobs, or, as suggested by some sympathetic people talked to by the unemployment team, should the main thrust be for more and better retraining programs to prepare people for the jobs which are available. This uncertainty later led to a discussion of our general lack of an adequate conception of what a full employment economy would look like structurally and whether it was in fact a realistic or meaningful demand in a rapidly advancing technological society. Such an economy was counterposed to the "Triple Revolution" notion of an abundance system (implied by the words JOIN stands for) which might violate our value commitment to a system in which each individual would be able to contribute constructive work to the society. /c.v

WELFARE

c.3
The welfare team began by listing various reasons why organization among welfare people might be fruitful. It might be fruitful to attack the present system of welfare which tends to reduce people to a position of total dependency and isolation, even stifling opportunities for initiative (like the repressive strictures against welfare mothers workers to supplement their payments). Further the constituency of such an organization may well share other concerns as poor schools or even unemployment. Such an organization could be easily begun due to the prior existence in Cleveland of the Citizens United for Adequate Welfare (CUAW), an interracial group started by some ministers of the Inner-City Protestant Parish, including Don Anstrom, a local minister who is with us all the way, and including some local ADC mothers whom we know quite well. Because of Don, the group would even be able to continue even if the CCP did not in the fall. CUAW was an action group which went to Columbus to picket the governor over the slashed in welfare budgets.

The team also saw certain very immediate and exciting programmatic goals. In terms of service, the need for help with technical problems with the welfare department was pointed out. Also various programs to aid in economic planning, and to break down the welfare routine were seen as desirable, eg., menu planning, day care for kids.

Action programs were suggested which would relate to some of the fundamental problems of people on welfare. Demonstrations demanding more money, or, more accurately more effective income, would ask for greater opportunities for supplemental work, modifications in the food stamp program regulations so people could buy as little as they could afford, rather than be squeezed out of the program which now requires a specific and costly amount to be bought or none at all. Reverend Don suggested some very militant steps to assert the right of welfare people to such things as amusements, transportation at reasonable or no cost (public transportation is very expensive in Cleveland) school supplies and clothes for children, often embarrassed by their lack of them. He suggested, for example, 'a mass steal-in of ADC mothers in a clothing store to get such school clothing.

distinction

The team did however express some hesitancy about the long-range goals of a group of welfare people. This is true in two senses: 1) how to translate the above bread-and-butter demands of a welfare constituency into demands with political content, consistent with the vision of a full-employment participatory society, and 2) can a welfare constituency ever attain a significant membership to be a politically significant minority, as the Negroes are. Other questions were raised later.

ABBNEY RD. AREA (RECREATION)

As a general issue, the researcher on recreation did not feel there was too much potential, despite the appalling inadequacy of such facilities, especially on the Near West Side. The reasons for this involved both doubt about what kind of constituency could be reached through the recreation issue (doubts of whether lower class people would see it as significant) and a feeling that the issue had a much lower priority than either of the two above.

The team which had continued working in the Abbey Area "turf" had, despite reservations, nonetheless continued to feel the great potential in the organization of a neighborhood group around the issue of a local playground. This team had found 16 people who were interested in working together on the issue, many who were Appalachians, a group significantly absent from the other groups, and including a Negro couple. All the people were working and in general were seen as less vulnerable to public pressure than those who might fear cuts in welfare checks, or unemployment comp, or relief, or those who feared eviction from public housing. Some of these people had also expressed interest in other issues beyond the playground, such as schools, and the problem of condemned buildings which were not torn down, thus providing a safety hazard in the neighborhood. It was suggested that a neighborhood group in this area might form the nucleus of a group to support a good candidate for city council from our ward, to run against the present do-nothing Republican incumbent of 35 years. More on discussion of the Abbey Rd. area later.

numbers

LAKEVIEW TERRACE

The workers in the housing project felt that the tenants were a fairly uniform constituency, with many problems by virtue of being tenants of public housing. Interest had been tested on a number of issues, and there had been some response to the possibility of forming tenants' councils in the project. Some difficulties in organizing were seen revolving around a syndrome of mistrust among the tenants, feelings of lack of privacy, and the frequency of snitching to the management for some infraction. Difficulties are also

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around the unemployment issue would seem to be the best way of developing a radical constituency. On the other hand, a general insecurity was felt as to our real lack of knowledge of the unemployment situation, even in quantitative terms but especially in terms of just who is unemployed, and just what kinds of jobs need be created.

The question of leadership among the unemployed was not dealt with in much detail. The consensus seemed to be that there was little data on which to base a judgment on this. In fact this was one of the questions we felt was important to have answered by our summer's work. (Given the importance of the unemployment issue, continued work was essential, if only from an "heuristic" point of view, and especially since the CCP approach is somewhat different from the JOIN groups of the other projects. Some of the questions we hope to better understand from the summer's work are what is the nature of the unemployment problem in Cleveland, what is the trend? Is there a large group of unemployed in Cleveland that can be brought together into an organization? What is the self-perception of the unemployed; do they perceive themselves as a growing group? To what extent do they perceive themselves as a unified group, eg., ethnic differences notwithstanding? The race question has become a very much unknown quantity. It has not come up yet in our dealings with unemployed, and the failure of CORE to effectively begin its expected work among Negro unemployed is a great hindrance. Finally, because of the fact that the summer's work will probably involve fairly intensive work with a relatively small group of unemployed (though this is subject to change) the problems of continuation were not stressed too much. For one thing, there is the possibility that Don Armstrong would be able to help out here, and in any case, there is little likelihood of leaving any kind of mass organization in the lurch.

Four people are working on unemployment (to be three, with the passing of Kathy Boudin from the CCP in a few days) and will be seeking answers to the above questions. Whether there is much chance for an action program this summer is unclear. We do hope that other projects working with unemployment will take note of the difference in approach of the CCP on this issue (as outlined above) and will seriously consider some of the basic questions we have raised about the issue as a whole, and will comment on them.

The question of organizing around the welfare issue was very hotly discussed. In terms of "axes" 3) and 4) above, the more pragmatic ones, it was clearly the number one issue. As mentioned above, Don Armstrong's interest in and experience with such a group pretty much assures the continuation of a welfare group whatever the fate of the CCP may be. Also, the continued interest of the welfare mothers who had been active in CUFAW's earlier activities meant that at least a core of people exists who could be mobilized into action. Thus, a good deal of activity might be expected even in the six weeks left to the summer project, especially given the extremely bad position of the state government on welfare, and the existence of some fairly clear cut demands that could be immediately made, as mentioned above.

These factors were pretty overwhelming in terms of continuing work with this group, but there are still numerous questions. The readiness of welfare mothers for the kind of militant action proposed above is undetermined. Also, the problem of leadership development within the welfare group is an important stumbling block. The overwhelming preponderance of females, mainly with children creates difficulties for the kind of ongoing commitment to the organization required from a leadership person.

But most important was the discussion of the welfare issue in terms of its

potential for being a radical confrontation with society's problems. Some people in the group felt that organizing around the welfare issue provided an opportunity to confront directly the assumptions underlying the welfare state conception. The questions of the social and psychological effects of being on welfare, given this country's refusal to recognize the receipt of public aid as a right, will raise all the questions about a society which makes it clear to welfare recipients that they are on dole, puts them on the defensive, and makes them very insecure about their position within the society. Others countered this with the point that even given the militance of some of the proposed activities mentioned in the welfare team's report, they are geared to demands for more adequate welfare, but do not begin to confront the need for broader social change. And in fact the welfare mother constituency is primarily interested in more adequate payments, not, let's say, in getting jobs. To those people who questioned the potential for radical demands coming from a welfare group, it seemed that making this issue the keystone of organizing was at least a partial rejection of a full employment society as a goal. And in just the same way that we felt the lack of an adequate model of what a full employment society would look like, we also did not find it easy to imagine what a welfare system which recognized the worth and dignity of the recipient would look like. How does a dole become other than a dole? Certainly not by simply calling it something else. With these questions in mind, three people are working on the welfare issue and hope to build an organization with the veterans of the CUFAW experience, but greatly expanded beyond that original group.

limitations

welfare state
M.A.

The last two potential activities were organizing in the Abbey Rd. Area, and the formation of tenants' councils in the Lakeview Terrace public housing project. Although it was finally decided not to continue the Abbey activity, the overall discussion of these was most interesting. The primary characteristic of these two programs as opposed to the first two is of course that they represent attempts at community organizing per se, that is, geographically oriented organizing.

Issue
v.
Community

In the discussion of the Abbey area, there were three basic points at issue. First was the question of constituency. The people that the Abbey team had made contact with who expressed concern over the playground issue were not at all of the lowest stratum. Doubt was expressed whether these people would be able to or willing to translate their interest in an issue like recreation or neighborhood safety into more fundamental concerns. More generally, there was the fear that, as with all GROIN issues in general, the degeneration into a neighborhood improvement association might be inevitable. Another problem was the possibility that these relatively 'middle-class' people who had been contacted might not be flexible enough to accept into the group people from lower strata. This would hinder one of the most important aims of the Abbey project, that of bringing together these two groups. On the other hand, it was pointed out that this group of people, many of whom may be on the brink of personal decline (from job loss or something) are just the people that the movement cannot ignore. As mentioned above these people are less vulnerable to pressure than some of the other constituents, and because of this may have a greater potential for developing into leadership roles.

Another important objection raised against Abbey organizing, and one which all of ERAP should take heed of, is that no one in our organization, in writing or at the Institute, has ever concretely developed even the bones of what a program for a community would look like. It was mentioned in line with this that most people do not generally look to the "neighborhood" for their associations, but rather to some other interest group or organization.

C. 3
Thus guidelines for a neighborhood group are almost totally absent. In a sense, this is an argument in favor of such an attempt here in Cleveland since many of us are wed, at least by faith, to the conception of people organizing in their own communities, and growing more radical as basic needs continue to go unmet. Since this has not been tried at all in white communities (though of course it has in the Negro community, viz., the rent strikes) a desire to test this notion was expressed despite all the difficulties. It should also be mentioned that the Abbey team did have some ideas for their community group to develop a counter-plan to the current urban renewal plans, particularly concerning recreation in the area, and this may have been the start of a community program.

But the final argument called into question the organizability of the Abbey area itself. It is an area of high mobility and transiency, which would make continuity of organization a real problem. This is especially true since with the short amount of time remaining to the summer, the exploration of radical community organizing would not have time to be tested meaningfully, i.e. there is not adequate time for the translation of the community activity from GROIN to JOIN. In light of the difficulty of continuing such a neighborhood organization when both members of the team would not be around full time in the fall, it was decided that there would be more utility in placing the two people on the Abbey team on two of the other projects.

The organization of tenants' councils in Lakeview Terrace, though ostensibly also an attempt to organize a community, is in many ways significantly different. Where the Abbey question was one of simply neighborhood organizing, the housing project contains a clearer and more immediate community of interests among all the tenants, which is inherent in the very structure of their environment. The issues surrounding public housing bear certain similarities to the welfare issue, viz. the issue of tenants' rights vis-a-vis management, and the insecurity built into the project situation.

Further, despite a fairly high turnover in the project, unlike a neighborhood like Abbey, a continuity of constituency is assured since any new tenant who entered the project would immediately face the same structural insecurity, and the same debilitating paternalism faced by the older residents. One problem for the rest of the summer is the relationship of a tenants' organization to either of the issue groups that might be set up. There is an overlap of constituency since there are welfare people and unemployed people living in the project. This concern was put off for the individual groups to work out together.

The CCP now has four people working in the housing project, and hopes to set up several councils in different units of the project, to begin to work with tenants' problems. The movement to more fundamental issues faces the same critique as the welfare issue does, but the organizability of a public housing project, assuring a high concentration of poverty, is most intriguing. The progress of activity there also indicates the possibility for learning a lot before the summer ends.

The three groups that will function for the rest of the summer, will work relatively independently, though frequent "octopus" (or anti-octopus) discussions of the whole will attempt to integrate all activities. Especially important is the need to seek out ways to combine the three independent groups into one constituency which will be able to work together in raising fundamental social issues. This takes great priority especially in light of the prospects of a much smaller staff if the CCP continues in the fall, which might be unable to maintain three separate activities.

RESEARCH

The original research projects outlined in an earlier report have been pretty much dropped. The focus of research for the rest of the summer will be on gathering information needed by each sub-group of the CCP for its own work.

INTERNAL EDUCATION

The program continues this week with a discussion very relevant to our immediate organizing concerns. We will discuss alternative visions of a future society, with especial reference to the prospects of a full employment society as opposed to a welfare state future. Reading is varied from Marx and the Program of the CPSU to Gunnar Myrdal and Robert Theobald. At the end of the week, Mr. Ben Gray, a friendly lefty, who along with his wife has been unbelievably kind to us, is coming over to talk with us about his experiences with the unemployed in the 1930's,

FUND RAISING

We are about to start a systematic fund-raising effort each of us to be responsible for a certain number of contacts. In addition, this coming Sunday a lady is having a lawn barbeque for us to which are coming many of her friends, whom we will pitch to. Many of the people are the same ladies who continue to ply us with free meals.

ADDENDA

Finally, as of this writing (7/21) the CCP is just returned from a weekend of camping in Mohican State Memorial Forest, where, along with general fun, sun, swim and sing, the exciting experience of skinny-dipping was sampled in ye olde swimming hole, under a brilliant gibbous moon. All in all, an exciting week for the CCP.