

# ERAP REPORT RECEIVED AUG. 8-16

## TRENTON....

STUDENTS FOR A

DEMANDS

Our activities in the last two weeks have centered around various meetings. After taking 14 people to visit the relocation office, director Haley made an effort to get us evicted (unsuccessful). This was followed by a round of block meetings in the South Ward, leading the following Thursday (August 6) to the presentation of a Mercer-Jackson block petition on cleaning up the Assunpink Creek to the city clerk after the city council meeting. Around 25 people from the South Ward blocks also went to city council with a petition for systematic cleaning up and extermination in the area, but showed up late because the Council meeting lasted only 45 minutes. This group returned to our office, decided to call their councilman, Mr. Pegg, who came down at 10 o'clock to a Union St. storefront church to be presented with the petition.

Mr. Pegg was angered at "being gotten out of bed" but the petition led to two meetings with city department heads, who went along with most of the demands: grass lots were cut, street-cleaners appeared for the first time, etc. On August 12 we had a larger meeting with around 30 people, at night in the South Ward, with the heads of health, inspections, and relocation. By this time most of the people in the city government were not talking with us. The "human renewal coordinator" for our area was particularly angry that we had quoted her statement that she thought it was city policy not to build low-income homes so that the poor would be pushed out of the city; this meeting led to a three-hour meeting with her boss. We hope she will be fired.

On August 20 a group of people from the Mercer-Jackson area went to a Planning Board meeting, the first time anyone had done so in a long time. The mayor saw the indigenes and waddled over to where they were sitting, saying "I guess I ought to sit with the rest of my neighbors." We hope to get a document written by us passed soon, called "Planning Department Objectives in the Mercer-Jackson Area."

Tuesday night a racist storeowner from the South Ward area had gotten hold of one of our leaflets, told the cops we were inciting to riot, and the cops sent out an alarm for our car. Walter Popper was stopped ("Is that all they teach you in college, civil rights? New Republic? Sounds like it comes from Cuba; this is the kind of group the Communists set up.) Thursday night a group of cops came by and asked a lot of questions. A detective got hold of a block meeting leaflet for the previous Thursday, thought it was for that night, and read into it a march on city hall that wasn't there. We told him that the leaflet was about an old meeting, but he didn't believe us, told reporters, and went down to the

"meeting." The following day there was a story headed "March on City Hall Fizzles," reporting that "only two detectives and this reporter showed up." The cops also told one of our staff members to get out of the neighborhood.

It is possible our project will receive a federal grant through the Federal Urban Renewal Agency. A planning department official for our area feels we are providing an essential service, and will, apparently, request money for us next Tuesday.

Since Trenton is a liberal city, we have had difficulty creating confrontations. The mayor's policy is to take care of all specific complaints, have committees working on all the larger problems but not doing much of anything, and to try to seem to agree with everyone. Also, Trenton has had almost no pickets or demonstrations and local people are reluctant to use this tactic. The machine also buys people off: they have already offered our best person a project home, which he has been waiting for for three years. While housing shortage and high rents are the greatest problem, about 70 percent of the units are owner-occupied and many of the 30 percent that are rentals are middle-class. Unemployment is not a big problem as far as we can see. There is already a liberal coalition in the city, supporting Holland because of (1) his image of honesty, and (2) his urban renewal policies. To build a radical coalition we need a broader issue than housing, and the ability to challenge many of the technical, planning, and financial decisions the mayor makes. We don't have either.

HAZARD...

Rennie:

Enclosed are reports by Sally and Chuck Koehler on their intimidation and cross-examination by the "powers-that-be" in Hazard, Thursday night, August 13.

In a nut shell here's what happened:

The field workers were picked up by the head of the State Police in Hazard-Sgt. Mitchell. They were taken to the office of County Judge Noplis. In the judge's office were High Sheriff Charlie Combs, Noplis, the County Attorney, Mitchell, and several others who were not known. The meeting had obviously been set up in advance, with orders tut to bring in some ACFE Field workers. The good judge is never in his office at night.

The workers were questioned for over two hours. They asked if they were under arrest and were told that they were not. They were asked about their political connections, why they were in the area, if they were communists, and about the activities of the ACFE and CFM.

They were told several times that "if you don't get out of town in 24 hours the hunting season will be on for you." They were intimidated and threatened throughout the meeting.

We have protested to the Justice Dept. and demanded protection for our staff. I have been in touch with Frank Dumbrough of the Civil Rights division. He said that an investigation would be undertaken. We asked that the FBI not be used for the investigation of this case. The Justice Dept. not only sent in the FBI to investigate but sent the same agents that had tried to frame Berman in his trial. We have demanded that one of their lawyers handle the investigation.

Art Gorson

TEXT OF STATEMENT WRITTEN BY SALLY SUSKIND, IMMEDIATELY AFTER HER EXAMINATION AND INTIMIDATION BY PERRY COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS ON THURSDAY NIGHT, AUGUST 13, 1964.

At about 7:30 P|M| on August 13, 1964, Chuck Koehler and I were on our way home from Hazard. We had taken a taxi because we had missed our ride home. We had been in the taxi no longer than five minutes when our driver pulled into a service station to get gas. An unmarked State Police car pulled into the service station behind us. It had, evidently, been following us from town. Sergeant Mitchell of the State Police came over to our car. He asked our driver to show his operator's license, and then asked Chuck and me our names and ages. Mitchell then informed us that Babe Noplis, the County Judge, wished to see us, and that we were to go to his office immediately. I asked if we were under arrest, and was told that we were not, but that we had better go see the County Judge anyway.

When we arrived at Babe Noplis' office, Chuck was told by Sergeant Mitchell that Noplis wanted to see him because he was a minor. I was told to remain in the cab, which I did. Within half an hour, Mitchell came out to the cab and told me that I was to join Chuck inside. When I entered the office, there were about eight men inside, including the County Judge, the County Attorney, High Sheriff Charlie Combs, as well as others whom I was unable to identify. When I entered, I was asked whether or not I was a minor, and informed that if I were a minor, I could be put away in a reformatory school. I showed evidence that I was not a minor, and someone then brought up the point that since I couldn't be held as a minor, I could be booked for contributing to the delinquency of a minor (Chuck). It should be mentioned here that Noplis and his friends has probably sent out a call to have some of the field workers for the Appalachian Committee for Full Employment picked up that night, for all the other offices in the building were closed for the night, and people later informed me that Noplis is never in his office at night.

It is difficult to recount the conversation that went on in the office, for most of it was generally desultory and moronic. The men there spouted questions at me which I then attempted to answer in a way which would refute a good deal of the nonsense and red-baiting which was going on. Babe Noplis, the County Attorney, and a local businessman directed most of their questions at me, while the other men in the office interjected insults and wisecracks. What can be said of the earlier part of the discussion, and this tactic was carried on throughout the entire evening, was that a great deal of red-baiting was being done. Whatever I said, the men there attempted to tear apart and find something evil and subversive in. Noplis spent a considerable amount of time telling me that he and the other local officials were quite capable of dealing with the problems of Perry County, and that outsiders were not welcome. He said that the people of Perry County did not want us there, harassing them and attempting to "poison their minds." It is difficult for me to remember what problems Chuck was having at the time, for I was preoccupied with holding up my end of the fort, but I do remember that Mitchell and Noplis questioned Chuck about carrying a concealed weapon. The taxi in which we had been riding was searched, and Chuck and I were afraid that a pistol would be planted there, and then used to frame Chuck.

*ending on leaf CCP*

# CHESTER...

There have been no great crises this week, but rather a few permanent decisions, continuation and results of recent block action, and a delicious steak dinner. A good reverend from Baltimore brought us supper, announcing with a smile that he, "a representative of the corrupt, decadent Church, had come to buy us off." Don Jackson has decided to drop out of the ivory tower for a year and has requested that he be assigned to Chester which would bring the permanent staff to a much needed three. As plans now stand, his work would mainly be with the Democratic party as he is both a resident of Chester and the most knowledgeable on that subject. In order to regain some sanity and sleep those three are now taking vacations, so they can stay in Chester during the Sept. break.

The first part of the city voter-registration drive organized by YAC and the Dem. party resulted in 865 Dem. and 555 Rep. registered. This is more impressive considering that only once before in 70 years have the Dem. outregistered the Rep. On Wed. three of us led a group of 45 kids to City Hall to speak with the head of the recreation department about a much needed swimming pool. When the officials delayed and finally called the police with night-sticks to kick us out, all the kids become very irate and wanted to invade the building. Cries of "are we going to let 'em scare us? NO!" were heard while an official inside was telling Scott "Yes, I know, I can hear them." Finally, they decided to come to the city council meeting next Tues. when their demand is supposed to be considered. This will be the first time the Council will have to face a band of angry twelve year olds.

Although no permanent plans or commitments have been made, we have started to investigate two white areas. The first of these, Ukrainian and Polish, is a self-contained section with its own business center, schools, and clubs. The housing is much better than that of the Negroes: owner-occupied, duplex apartments and some middle class type row houses with awnings, porches, lawns, etc. A few conversations conducted under the guise of "a Harvard student doing research on political attitudes" indicated that the community was generally apolitical and that the expected white backlash was absent; instead, there was a general, but rather latent, fear that Negroes might invade the neighborhood. All we know about the other white area is that the housing is poor. Hopefully, an anti-Goldwater campaign, which would avoid any overt connection with the Negro community, would serve as an initial organizing issue; then through issues that appeal to them like medicare and community colleges we could shift to the more basic issues.

The city has finally come out with its concrete proposal for Urban Renewal. As might be expected, the plan completely disregards the interests of all the people with whom we are working in block organizations. Although the UR director has stated that relocation is the most important aspect of the plan, it contains no provisions for low-cost public housing, and the Mayor has said that no more

projects will be built. Large areas of the worst housing have been ignored in the present plan, but may be included in a more complete version. The procurement of land will not begin for 9 months and new housing will not be available for at least two years. Top priority has been given to a largely white area with poor, but not delapidated housing. Finally, the plan was conceived at a closed session of the City Council. CFFN is releasing a statement to the papers tomorrow, stating these complaints and demanding: 1) that more areas of the city be included in the urban renewal plans, especially the area between Second and Fifth Streets west of Chester Creek and the area between Madison and Chestnut Streets and Ninth and Twelfth Streets. 2) that low-cost public housing be constructed for families whose homes are in the urban renewal areas. 3) that a series of public hearings be held in order to give the citizens of Chester an opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions on these plans. The whole question of employment for this work has not yet been touched upon; demands may be made that Chester labor receive priority.

Minor Goals

Some of the blocks have achieved limited successes in the actions begun last week. About eight people are out on rent strike, and one lady made the constable agree that he would not collect rent as long as he knew of specific grievances and breaches of the housing code. So in one ward, at least, there will be no problem about people on rent strike being levied. As usual, several groups have been to City Hall, winning the blocking of a street for kids to play in and several stop signs. The same old problem remains of finding middle range issues, issues which will direct energy against the city but not be so far in the future as public housing.

ISSUES

In one area landlords have begun to fix up their houses due to tenant pressure, and in another the city has delivered an ultimatum: the landlord must fix the houses to the tenants' satisfaction, and to comply with the Housing Code. The landlord has appealed this decision and received a partial dispensation: she did not have to install furnaces. The block, in turn, has now petitioned to have this decision reversed. The main problem is that the petition is heard before "an impartial board of realtors"; this, Jimmy Sharp, Chief Housing Inspector, hastened to say meant that no landlord actually involved in the dispute would sit on the board for that particular case. If this fails it is still possible to appeal through the courts.

One last note: we're being evicted from our house on the 19th.

# NEWARK...

Attempts to organize tenants resulted in three rent-strikes during the last two weeks, with a fourth beginning in September. Of the first three, two are over and one is continuing. In the case of one, we found that there was not enough time for the tenants to develop confidence in their legal-political position; they relented after red-baiting pressure from private detectives. In the case of another, a welfare caseworker intimidated ADC mothers. In the latter building, however, one woman remained on strike even after she was singled out and received a dispossessed notice. The other continuing strike, in a building around the corner from the first, was staged effectively because more time was taken in readying the tenants.

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Considerable block activity was given to generating a support demonstration for the rent-strikers. A block leaders' meeting was called to plan the demonstration and a later rally and was attended by an excellent group of 40 persons. However, we made the mistake of depending too much on the block leaders to function as organizers of greater numbers from their blocks. Therefore, we overestimated the numbers planning to demonstrate, although the 50 who came were a good number and included a few new persons.

The rent-strike and supporting demonstration took place in an in-<sup>tonso</sup> political context. Throughout the summer various city leaders developed an interest in the political implications of our project. Included among them was South Ward Councilman Lee Bernstein who at first appeared to some as a semi-friendly, partial ally. However, as the militance and grass-roots characteristics of the project become visible, Bernstein and others become hostile. This attitude was expressed decisively when Bernstein attended the demonstration in the company of police and detectives, red-baited the staff to any number of passers-by, and issued a statement to the press that outside agitators were trying to inflame a problem that he already had in hand. This statement, when it appeared on the Sunday front page, undoubtedly drew some political battle lines and crystallized certain community attitudes. We are not certain yet of the effects in general, though the statement converted the block leaders to an angry anti-Bernstein position. We expect follow up with an attack on Bernstein as a slumlord, as soon as we are certain of the facts. However, other political events were complicating the situation as well.

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The first of these occurred at a special conference called by the Mayor to unveil his strategy in the war-on-poverty. At that meeting, the president of the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council was embroiled in debate on housing, and city officials generally stated opposition to the next morning's proposed demonstration. At least one Negro in the neighborhood became vociferously alarmed, too, over the possibility of a race riot. That same evening we convened a large block leaders meeting which planned demonstration strategy, and which was attended for an hour by the Deputy Mayor. He assured us the city was willing to condemn two buildings, would relocate the tenants, and invited us to meet with the Mayor "first thing" Monday morning. While not opposing the demonstration, he clearly indicated worry about riots, partially because of the wave of them going on elsewhere in the state, but fundamentally because of Newark's need for order as a basis for its massive housing programs and its political image. The neighborhood people were somewhat

awkward in confronting the deputy mayor; however, several very sharp questions were asked, probably the best being "why are mass movements needed to make the city do its simple promised duties?". The group decided to go ahead with the demonstration unanimously, despite some real worry about the risks. As it turned out, the demonstration was quite smooth in operation and, as mentioned, received high front-page coverage. demo3

At further meetings over the weekends, block leaders and research staff came up with a refined set of demands to present to the mayor this morning. A large delegation of neighborhood people (30-40) are expected to attend the meeting with the mayor.

This series of events is relevant to the ERAP debate about community organization and politics, and about the nature of the housing issue. Contrary to the views of some, we find ourselves in a situation that is intrinsically political because we have demonstrated neighborhood support for individual rent-strikes. The act itself provoked an attack from the councilman; and the activity generally, according to one reporter, is creating "talk" all over the city. Some of this may be due to Newark's unique conditions; in this city the Housing Authority is perhaps the key institution in terms of all future economic development. Such an institution, by the very nature of its present and projected deals with the government and the big contractors, is extremely hostile to disruption by local interest groups. Staff

The next step here is a Friday rally against "rats, roaches and ridiculous rents", featuring the rent-strikers, other block leaders, legal aides, and Granville Cherry from Harlem. We are counting on this to push rent-strike sympathies way ahead of their present state, and this week's energies are being focussed on organizing people to come to the rally. We expect that rumors and attacks will increase because of this, perhaps especially because of Cherry. One rumor already has us inspiring the Harlem and Patterson riots, and now we're bringing in an associate of Jesse Gray. Oh well. rallies

While this critical situation is shaping up, we are not free of "internal" organizational problems. One is fairly simple, the transition to new staff. The permanent people now will be Barry, Carl, Harriet and Tom, each of them responsible for certain blocks in addition to other organizational tasks. The more difficult problem is program emphasis. The staff spent considerable time this week in consideration of organizing whites, and smaller discussions took place about the unemployment issue. One view in this discussion was that any displacement of resources from the blocks at this time would prevent the strengthening of our only real base of power. The other view was that broad coalitions must be formed simultaneous with, not after, the forming of the base. The decision was that Jill Hamberg, Bob Davis and Tom Hayden spend part-time for the next month exploring the East Ward situation in preparation for a fall program decision. As for employment issues, several possibilities exist and are being debated. They include the organization of hospital workers in this area; creation of a lobby of unemployed union members to appeal to labor officials and org  
issues

rank-and-file in this area; leafletting by Clinton Hill unemployed at the comp. offices uptown. In addition to these organizing possibilities, the Newark Committee is now ready to issue a long report on employment and community needs.

In the meantime there are very sensitive problems with the other elements in the project: the Neighborhood Council, the Newark Committee, etc. Most of these can be reduced to power plays, status scrambling, and crumpling about our militance on the part of Council leaders with whom we have not created rapport. We spent a good part of last week building up support against any anti-Kalish or anti-staff moves at the coming trustees meeting. We also are fighting for a new decision-making structure which will require those with voting power to be consistently present at twice-a-week program meetings. For a while we feared a showdown at the coming meeting, but the demonstration, the fight with our Councilman, and our soliciting of support from some trustees, seems to have prevented any such crisis for the time being. The development of productive relations with all the groups "supporting" our work will require much more thought on our part.

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We also talked a good deal about bringing one or more neighborhood people directly onto the ERAP staff, but postponed a decision indefinitely.