

2B155

# CHESTER REPORT

SEPT-64-13

SEPTEMBER 23, 1964

Urban renewal

In the past week the blocks and the organizers have been increasingly focusing their attention on the city's proposed urban renewal program. Plans are being made to defeat the city's urban renewal or "people removal program" in favor of an area redevelopment program which would be written by block members, college students and other persons who will be fighting with us against urban renewal. First efforts will be directed toward the defeat of a proposed increase in the debt ceiling of the city budget which must be approved on the November ballot. This increase would make it possible for the city to float a bond issue to fund the city's share of the proposed program. Extensive state and federal aid is available.

Block meetings have been talking about the proposed urban renewal and how it meets or fails to deal with the needs of their respective areas. Mass leaf-letting, street corner rallies, and the organization of a mass movement to protest the plan have been suggested. This week the blocks will be getting together at the regular meeting of the United Committees to consider forming an anti-urban renewal subcommittee to direct the fight. The mass movement would carry most of the work in the fight against urban renewal.

During this period blocks will continue to direct their attention toward block related issues. Their main concern in regards to the anti-urban renewal fight will be in writing part of an alternative program for area redevelopment which will meet the needs of their area. Leadership from the blocks will participate in the new subcommittee.

Progress reports on different block groups:

People in William Penn project have expressed quite a bit of interest in an area redevelopment program which will provide for improvements in schools and other benefits that would directly affect the project. At present, people in the project are neither helped nor hurt by the proposed program. They want to see what others who are affected by it are proposing to do. Then they will join with them in creating a program which deals with the needs of all.

Our current set of tactics for fighting the city's program was worked out by a resident of the Penn project, Fred Chambers, the former vice chairman of EFTN and one of the organizers, Don Jackson. Until recently, Fred Chambers had been suspicious of us because he could not see what plan block organization was related to. But he is very interested in the urban renewal deal and thinks that it will be an issue around which many people can be organized. We hope Fred is indicative of the demonstrators from the fall and spring about urban renewal.



Involvement with the new recreation program for the Penn project remains high. Project members are running and developing their own programs. Outside help is being used only for consultation and financing. The city and GCM have helped in financing.

Members of the Mary Street block organization are very interested in an area redevelopment program which would include provisions for the unemployed. Unemployed men in this area are considering the formation of a JOIN type organization. (All these groups--blocks, JOIN, and the anti-urban renewal subcommittee will be, we suppose, committees of United Committees) The existence of this type of organization would be an important prerequisite to the inclusion of a job retraining program and preferential hiring of Chester's unemployed in the area development program. More work will be done with the unemployed men in this and other areas as we get more help from the area colleges.

Complications with a rent strike in the Kerlin Street area gave us our first major contact with the Department of Public Assistance this past week. The landlord of several of the families that were on rent strike went to the DPA and told them that they were not paying their rent. The DPA worker for the families of the tenants on rent strike threatened to cut off their DPA checks if they didn't pay their rents. The tenants involved in the rent strike and some representatives from the United Committees for Self-help went down to the DPA office and called them to task for not supporting efforts to obtain home improvement. We informed the DPA people of Scranton's new pronouncement to the effect that people who were withholding rent for legitimate reasons were to be aided by the D.A. The DPA was to help them by holding the rent for them. Some of the people on rent strike said that they would not let the DPA hold their checks for the next month for rent. This was because they had to use part of their rent money to pay other bills due to the inadequacy of their DPA allowance. The result of our conversation with the DPA was that the people agreed to pay part of their rent and to hold the rest until the landlords had completed the repairs. The next day in the mail, the people who had gone to the DPA received an increase in their DPA allowance.

Interest in fighting the urban renewal program on the East side which is not directly affected in either way by the proposal has only been moderate... Housing in part of this area is not so bad that all the tenants think that it should be torn down. Even those tenants who do feel that the area should be cleared do not seem to be excited about writing an alternative program. They are very much aware of the drawbacks of the present publically financed housing in Chester and don't seem to conceive of favorable alternatives. Inclusion of school and recreation programs may increase their support. A program written for this area will have to make provision for the diverse nature of the area's inhabitants: tenants in dwellings which should be torn down, tenants in dwellings which can still be repaired, home owners on low incomes who need money to improve their houses and a few scattered home owners with adequate housing.

Tenants in the Norris St.-Church St. group are fairly cognizant of how the proposed urban renewal program will and is hurting them. In terms of its immediate effect, they have been told by the Dept. of Public Safety that the the housing code will not be enforced in their area. It would cost the landlords too much to make the required repairs in view of the short period before



all the housing in the area will be cleared. In this and other areas urban renewal has been used as an excuse in postponing needed programs such as an increase in recreational facilities. People are told that they will have to wait until complete plans are made for the area before these facilities can be brought in. Awareness of the long term effects of the program is not as complete. The city's vagueness about whether all the housing in the area will be torn down and its vague hints that relocation will be provided has prevented some people from realizing the complete ramifications of the program. Block meetings are helping to correct this picture and to show the effects of this poor man-negro removal program, the utter failure of the city to deal with the relocation problem and the need to fight Chester's chronic unemployment, and the need for better schools. Complicating the block organization's activities has been over-developed street identification. This has resulted in problems in getting all the people in the organization working together on different issues which may just benefit part of the area.

like Newark

block org

Forays are being made into a potential new block organization of home owners. Don Jackson's mother lives in the block and thinks that people there might be organized around recreation needs. Still to be explored is the potential of using urban renewal in this area. Don's mother is also interested in joining a Chester branch of SDS. Note: she's interested in joining in the creation of a new left, but not in a lot of rhetoric.

Larry is interested in doing something with tax structure as a possible organizing issue in the white community. The tax structure in Chester is very bad with a very high property tax, a \$10 head tax on everyone who works in Chester every year and a very favorable deal for industry. Interestingly enough just a couple of days after Larry arrived and started talking about tax structure revision, GCM came out with some rather meaningless proposals for tax structure revision. One exception to this is a proposal for a tax on properties owned by absentee landlords.

For the entire summer, and especially the past few weeks, we have been engaged in a debate on the problems of building a grass-roots democratic movement in Chester. Involved in the debate are three considerations: our knowledge of the current objective realities of commitment, awareness and consciousness of the blocks, the nature of the democratic movement which we would like to have and the knowledge of what we must do in order to meet the demands of the current time situation.

org issues + probs

The majority of the people in the block organizations lack experience in a successful democratic group situation. They lack faith in, and commitment to, operating in this fashion. They cry again and again that they want "a leader, a leader," someone to do things for them. They lack the faith in their ability to accomplish things without a charismatic leader who can do this.

Political consciousness and awareness are in many cases at a very low level. Up to this time, block organization has had limited success in enlightening the people on the blocks and bringing them to an organizational level where they can voice and formulate their own program under their own leadership.

The current political situation in terms of the election only two weeks away would seem to demand a mass movement of committed, militant people in order

to dramatize and present the idea that people vote NO in November and that they listen to our alternative program. Democracy is slow moving in terms of program and action formulation. People are not coming out of the block in terms of the numbers that the objective political situation would demand. Yet alternatives to a grass-roots democratic movement, which could meet the needs of this political situation, might mean the departure of our program from its central ideal of grass-roots democracy. One of the possible alternatives, strong leadership and centralized control, could result in the leadership losing contact with the basic needs and desires of the people in the movement.

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Probs

Our present solution to the debate is to use a mixture of grass-roots democracy and centralized control. Efforts are being made to give the people as many satisfactory democratic experiences as are possible. They will write as many of their needs into the area development program as is possible. Blockleaders, Swarthmore and Cheney State College students, and other persons will draw up a total program which meets these needs of the blocks and the broader Chester community.

Solution

*[Faint, mostly illegible text follows, appearing to be a continuation of the document or a separate page with very light ink.]*



2B155

# CHICAGO PROJECT RECEIVED

SEP 27 1964

September 25, 1964

Apologies for the failure to report for three weeks - it was due partly to negligence (unexcusable) and partly to a fact that no accurate report could be given until the new staff had accomplished the transition and had some grasp of the project and its problems.

The fact that Chicago JOIN still has only two staff members makes the project's state not simply one of crisis but of tragedy. We feel very strongly that ERAP was very irresponsible, not only to itself but to the people whose lives we have affected by their involvement, in committing itself to more summer projects than it could be certain of continuing in the fall with adequate staff.

The first two weeks I spent here at Chicago JOIN were admittedly weeks of pessimism and doubt about the strategy and goals of the project. This was in part the result of the fact that the greatest failure of the summer was the lack of a consensus among the staff members about the project's strategy. This is not to say that there was no strategy, but simply that understanding and agreement on it was not dispersed. A number of the summer staffers felt that the current structure of the project was untenable because there was no clear cut notion of exactly how our local committees could programmatically relate to our goal, full employment. That is, our "change" was full employment, our "agencies of change" were the local JOIN committees, but the nature of the agency was not sufficiently defined. Since our local committees were ~~still~~ predominantly talking groups, since there was only one project (the Mayor's petitions) which continued from one meeting to the next (and this project only halfheartedly pursued), these staffers had somewhat an ad hoc conception of the local committees to do in two weeks was seen as a critical failure of the project.

Another staffer, however, took the view that it was important to build a largely content-empty structure of local committees, so that when the detailed program of Full Employment for Chicago (including specific public works programs, job retraining programs, etc.) was completed by our research wing, the local committees would already be there to move in support of this program with demonstrations, pickets, delegations, letters, etc. Those who argued this point of view agreed that the present program for the local committees seemed insufficient but felt that before determining our minds on the matter we should wait for the publication of the Full Employment Plan. (This plan is not yet anywhere near completion.)

The negative attitudes toward the committee structure were confirmed by the state of all the local committees save Broadway Wilson. The Graceland Committee had one meeting since Philadelphia: two people showed. The one meeting of the Graceland Committee were referred to Broadway-Wilson where they now attend. The one meeting of the Logan Square Committee saw an attendance of three; Albany Park has not yet had a meeting (in part because of the Jewish holidays).

The failure of these committees is in large part due to the impossibility of putting staff time into field work in these committees. One cannot expect people to come to meetings unless they

critique of project

summer program

who?

2



are visited, called (if they have phones), and talked to and educated about the goals we are pursuing. And we have no staff to carry on the work begun during the summer with these committees.

The failure of the committees was also due, however, to the member's own doubts about its use, and this is tied to the "agency" problem discussed above. "Talk is cheap," one member said to me, and this has been repeated by many others. Without a really definite continuing program, it is difficult to keep members, especially without staff work.

The Albany Park-Logan Square area (i.e., the Western half of the North Side is predominantly lower middle class. Living in a fairly attractive well kept neighborhood it is more difficult for the unemployed of this area to view their problems as structural. And their unemployment is also more short-term than that of the eastern half of our district. The leadership in both the Albany Park and Logan Square committees are well-employed men, elderly and quite comfortable.

The Broadway Wilson Committee is another story. Its members tend to be younger; more chronically unemployed, or if employed, less comfortably so; more active, more radical, and with a very great self-identification with JOIN. The Broadway Wilson committee is, at this writing, an unqualified success. The issue of unemployment is real enough to these men to become a continuing program. And day to day programs come out of the committee. The committee (not the JOIN staff) has written a letter to all candidates for the state legislature listing the JOIN demands and promising support to those who agree. They are dividing themselves into campaign teams to canvass for the good legislature candidates and against Goldwater. They are planning another apple selling demonstration outside of the Pete Seeger concert on Oct 2 and 4. Some make visits to city officials; one woman researched an employment fair on the Near North Side and then insisted that we go leaflet it (we did). The Southerners on this committee are about 1/3 of the membership and are good on the race issue. Earlier this summer when a local fascist came in and denounced Jews, Niggers, etc., she was put in her place by a Tennessean who knew that working men have to stand together. We have broken into the sizable Puerto Rican and Mexican community on Clifton Street. They come to meetings, bring their friends, and will continue to be active if we can break the language barrier.

The last two meetings of the Broadway Wilson committee have seen excellent discussions and were attended by 10-15 people despite a violent thunderstorm and cloudburst 15 minutes before the last meeting began. (Remember that people come from a 4 square mile area for this meeting.) If there were an adequate, even minimumly necessary staff, to visit these people, I am confident that there would be at least 30 and probably more at each meeting.

Our thinking in the last few weeks has alternated between keeping the present structure of JOIN (leafletting comp office, local committees for full employment, political issues and activity), moving into the Broadway Wilson area to try to do community organizing with our full employment committee, and closing down the project altogether because of the failure to obtain adequate numbers of staff. The last of these alternatives remains a real possibility: we have so far been running to stay almost in the same

Program  
Probs

Construencies

Uptown  
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Options



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place by working 18 hours a day and by intensively exploiting the previous capital of the project (i.e., e.g., we have not been able to leaflet the comp office for new recruits but are attempting, without success, simply to visit the best of the people we inherited). But the 18 hour days are going to have to stop. We will hold on until we see what kind of part time workers can be recruited from universities, what kind of staff materializes. Some members of the Broadway Wilson committee are, of course, real possibilities.

We now have an apartment (4402 N. Racine --- but please continue to write us at the office, 4849 N. Kedzie) which is right in the best (for organizing) of the areas in the Broadway Wilson committee. We are in the Southerner's area, one block from Clifton Street. We are two blocks from the rooming house area where a number of our best unemployed single men come from. As a matter of fact, the area is in such bad shape that it will probably be almost impossible to do community organizing here. There is little stability, the area has the highest rate of transiency in Chicago, there is little family formation (how's that for a term?) in the area. Much of the area's housing is converted apartments now one or two room units for single men or elderly people. There are, however, some families, especially on the block and adjoining blocks, where we now live. The street on which we now live and the others adjoining it on the opposite side from Clifton Street, have been chosen by the Uptown Planning Commission as a "demonstration project" in deconversion, attraction of families, etc. This will probably never happen, but it is indicative of the complexion of the area in contrast to the rest of what we have come to call "Broadway-Wilson."

Uptown

Our thinking on the relative merits of committees of the unemployed vs community organizing continues, and may be intellectually fruitful. Among the points made in addition to these in the first page of this report are the following: community organizing may not solve the theoretical objections to week to week rather than long term programmatic planning for a committee. Just as we will have to find another activity in two weeks when our full employment committee has finished its apple selling, so would we have to find an activity to replace a community committee's completed rent-strike.

--the lack of a revised and detailed conception of "agency"K does not seem to dim the enthusiasm of the members of at least the Broadway Wilson committee;

--the comp office should be leafletted for this is still an excellent way of making contacts. Thus, even if we do concentrate in Broadway Wilson area, we should still keep the Kedzie street office in order to make contacts. However, now that we have moved into our apartment, the Ked zie St. office will probably not be the focus of the project; indeed, it will probably be often closed until our staff situation becomes such that contacting people in the comp line is not mutually exclusive with doing work in the community and visiting active JOINers.

In short, the experimental nature of the project continues. We will continue to concentrate on the present enthusiastic Broadway Wilson Committee for full employment, do some scouting for issues in the Broadway Wilson area, establish contact with trade unions

and other community organizations, and make contacts in the comp office. All these in this prioritized order.

And yes, Clark, we will do the impossible. We will organize chapters. The interest of a local high school girl who passes by the office every day has grown into a discussion group and potential chapter. And this weekend Paul Millman and myself are accompanying Bob and Lee to the U. of Ill. at Urbana, for a short rest-talk.



# CHESTER REPORT

September 28, 1964

The past week in Chester has been a time of outward stability and internal trial. Block organizations, although weak, have continued at a fairly even keel. There are not signs of growth, however, and within the project there has been a considerable amount of debate around the question of whether block organization is, after all, a viable vehicle of social change in Chester. The problems are basic, but perhaps only relevant to Chester. These are: a lack of homogeneity of housing that makes the landlord-tenant fight untenable in many areas, the presence of a terrifically efficient buy-off machine that seems to steal issues and programs from the civil rights-social change movement faster than we can find them, the ever-present shadow of a dying civil rights movement that threatens to rejuvenate itself and capture our constituency (or recapture its own old constituency), a racist-oriented municipal establishment that may force us to be blacker in our approach than some project members would like, our inability to draw mass attention at a time when it is direly needed to combat an urban renewal plan that aims at forcing a fantastically large percentage of poor Negroes out of Chester (the Negro population is approaching the half-of-the-city mark, the school system is predominately Negro), and basic, relevant ideological diversity within our tiny staff.

Our solutions to date are promising but currently inadequate--this is more or less true depending upon who in the staff is assessing the project. We are leveling our attack more at the city and less at landlords; we have an ad hoc committee to fight urban renewal and to campaign against the bond issue that the city wants to finance its Negro removal plan. We hope to get help from whites who are being overlooked in the plan. A problem is that the plan does actually help many whites.

We have not really spoken to the problem of the buy-off greater Chester movement. Within the staff, the sentiment ranges from "Well, if they can really help people--good," to "Oh, goddamn, those s o b's have beaten us to the punch again." How can we organize around that issue now?" Whatever the case, we are all sure that GCM will not espouse our anti-urban renewal program.

Stanley Branche, who is showing signs of life again, may be a different story. He plans to attack urban renewal, to present another plan that will meet real needs, and he is out to get the Greater Chester Movement. We will certainly have to cooperate if he moves. And we may be lost in the shuffle, for he still has popular appeal and we, with the possible exception of Don Jackson, can become easy targets of suspicion. This problem is compounded since the issue of our splitting with Stanley Branche and company was democratic participation--a real issue but not an easy one to maintain an identity on.

split

The questions of drawing mass support and appealing to Negroes as such are obviously intertwined. We have yet to answer them completely.

On Wednesday, we will have a mass meeting and begin getting specific proposals for an alternative urban renewal plan. Or we will attend and participate in a CFFN rally against urban renewal. We are going to leaflet and continue talking about urban renewal. And we hope to move closer to a consensus concerning the "blocks or not blocks" and "CFFN or independent organization" questions. That means a lot of talk, a lot of work and a lot of reciprocal best wishes to the rest of the "new left."



# CLEVELAND REPORT

RECEIVED

OCT 9 1964

Report of the Cleveland Community Project Sept. 20-27

STUDENTS FOR A  
DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

This week the CCP spent most of the time making contacts in the Cleveland area and fundraising. Almost no time was spent in the areas of unemployment and public housing while the welfare group received minimal attention. The reasons for this lack of community activity are 1. the inability of the project to find additional housing at reasonable rent, thus necessitating expenditure of time searching for housing and discussing various possibilities; 2. the difficulty in adjusting to only three full time staff members as opposed to ten during the summer; 3. the expansion of the program requiring more work for the staff; 4. the desperate need of the project for funds to keep solvent for the next few months; 5. the constant stream of guests who ate meals at the project house and spent hours talking with staff about the project. This last was mainly a result of the staff's high school and campus organizing program. One of the staff spent a day organizing on the Ohio State campus in Columbus. All these things combined to make up a hectic week in which the staff found difficulty in getting out of the house and into the community.

The last meeting of the welfare group (CUFAW) pointed up the need for increased community work. Staff was unable to spend the time organizing the "old" mothers to recontact the newer mothers and go on to additional recruitment. Leadership development was also neglected. As a result there was a turnout of eleven mothers (smallest since early summer); discussion on nearly all levels was generally poor. Severe personality clashes aggravated the situation and there was a major dispute over a racial matter.

On the positive side an agenda committee was appointed consisting of one old and one new mother plus the heads of the political education and recruitment programs. At the agenda committee meeting the next day two of the mothers said that the CUFAW meeting had been the first meeting they had attended in their lives. Thus, they hadn't really understood the meeting. The group then discussed such things as: agenda, the role of the chairman and secretary, committees, and the general operation of a meeting.

The U-JOIN group had a good meeting at which the members suggested drawing up and circulating a petition calling for an end to spot labor companies. They have begun getting signatures and will continue this for the next few weeks. The problem is that the group did almost no active recruitment in the past two weeks. New members have come as a result of old ones talking to friends. Unfortunately, the most vocal member is still in the hospital recovering from a series of heart attacks. The CCP plans to begin more extensive recruitment program soon.

Summer

6 staffers  
transition

Welfare

CUFAW  
indig  
+  
fund

Internal org

petition  
Manpower

Manpower

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not 1 here

The housing project has perhaps been the most neglected area. The staff spent only a few hours there during the last week. This week there will be a revitalization of activity there headed by a meeting of the caucus group of the tenants' council that the CCP has been working with.

Depletion of funds caused the reorganization of the CCP's fundraising program. Cards were made on every contact the project has in Cleveland's liberal-radical community. People will be assigned one or more of these contacts each week and will approach them with the purpose of getting a contribution and a monthly pledge. Sunday, September 27, another fundraising barbecue was held for the CCP. About \$35.00 in cash was raised, and more importantly, people pledged a total of \$40.00 per month. They also set up a committee to undertake additional fundraising efforts. All this came from a group of about ten couples. Three of the staff members now have part time jobs but hopefully the fundraising efforts will produce enough pledges so that more time can be spent on community work.

"Part of the way with LBJ" buttons are selling like  
Beatle pictures.

fund-raising

Jobs

election