

# ERAP NEWSLETTER

October 19 - 26

1100 E. Washington, Ann A

## CHICAGO REPORT

Last week was marked by an attempt to get onto a steady organizing schedule, after having been bogged down in administrative matters and problems of staff transition for so long. We set up a rotation system at the office, so that the office was staffed and the compensation lines leafletted all week. At first, we used a leaflet which was headed "Help JOIN Defeat Goldwater." But too many people saw only "JOIN" and "Goldwater" and thought we were on the wrong side. So after three days we changed the leaflet to read "In Your Heart You Know He's Nuts"; "Defeat Goldwater Before He Defeats You;"; "Come to the JOIN office to See How Your Can Help." The problem with this leaflet is one which we have been having with all campaign work. If people are going to vote for Johnson, they assume that is all we are asking them to do and find no need to come to the JOIN office. Men would take a leaflet and say "Don't worry, I'll vote for him" and walk off as we would try to shout after him that more than a Johnson vote was wanted. On the other side, a leaflet calling Goldwater "nuts" alienated all the backlashes from us. We picked up about three new people a day from this leafletting operation.

We also divided up the Broadway-Wilson area (actually, the whole 48th Ward) into three sections. The western section was assigned to Richard, the middle section to Glenn, the eastern section to Bob Pardun. Unfortunately I (Rothstein) was still too bogged down in fund raising-administration to do much canvassing or visiting, and we soon decided that it was foolish to send Bob to contact people if they would have to be recontacted after he left in a week. Even Glenn was not able to get out into the field as much as he would have liked. Our aim in this field-work is to follow up the contacts from the JOIN office and, in addition, to begin canvassing the area in an attempt to set up a more broad-based working class organization. A hunt for local immediate issues is also part of this. But for any success whatsoever to be had in these attempts, we will have to be spending a lot more time in the field than we have been. Even last week, for an organizing project, the amount of time spent organizing was really farcical.

On Friday the project staff (but none of our people) went downtown to the loop to picket Goldwater. SDS got a good deal of publicity from the picket. "A little known militant student organization" -- Chicago Daily News.

*funds*

Our fund raising efforts have been notoriously unsuccessful to date. A contact has been made with one angel, but there's no knowing what will come of it. Contacts are still being made with unions, but these may or may not develop into fund sources -- we are beginning to fear they may not. We are now thinking of trying to depend more on a system of monthly pledges

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from individuals. But even here we are having great difficulty establishing the necessary contacts in the suburbs. To date we have managed to survive on a loan from ERAP and on the personal savings of the Thureson's -- now depleted. We have only yesterday got a \$175 check from the south side JOIN office (run by the Packinghouse Workers) but it's not at all certain that more will be forthcoming. Our estimated budget is \$700/month.

Bob Pardun left yesterday for Texas as an SDS traveler. He was superb on the project and will also be superb on the road for SDS. But we will miss him.

So again we are understaffed and are particularly lacking a staff member with considerable organizational and ideological experience -- the latter being more important.

We still have not found the organizing ticket. Unemployment is not high enough in Chicago white areas for this to be our sole constituency. In addition, talking about full employment and medicare and social security have not turned out to be sufficiently radicalizing. That is, these issues do not confront our people with the power structure, with society, with a them as opposed to us, in a way that will shake them up. In our strategy meeting (staff) last night, Dick Flacks urged that we consider support for the new Clark planned economy Bill as a focal organizing tactic. But again, we must consider whether support for a piece of legislation can (inherently or emotionally) be a radical lever. It is true that the contemptuous answers which the Broadway Wilson committee got last month to its letter to candidates for the legislature were somewhat enlightening. But not enough.

It is this search for a radical lever which enforces our desire to de-emphasize the comp lines and emphasize community survey and recruitment (possibly by means of COPE precinct lists). But exactly what local issues we will find, and how these issues relate to our ultimate goal of building, stimulating a genuinely insurgent radical white movement, are unolved questions.

I (Rothstein), by the way, was in Ann Arbor this weekend and was disturbed by a perception (possibly incorrect) that other projects were not giving enough thought to the latter question. We are not in business to organize rent strikes but to turn these rent strikes into broader insurgency. I hope we have an idea of how this might happen.

Rennie is coming to Chicago this weekend to discuss both the strategic and staffing problems.

We are not sure exactly what our participation in the Cleveland December Community conference will be. For one, we don't know which of our people will be willing to go, and beyond that, which of those willing to go will be valuable participants from the point of view of feedback to the movement. I quote a letter we wrote to Sharon:

"We are unclear about exactly what we want out of the conference. Do we want it to train leaders, or simply to increase the identification of a few individuals with JOIN by providing them with an exciting weekend?"

Is it, therefore, worth our while to invite anyone who wants to go, or only those who will give the project positive feedback? If we want it to train leaders, will it in fact do so? How do we judge this in advance? Will the sense of participating in something national really compensate for a knowledge of the insubstantiality of the local movement -- and the leaders we would want to bring to such a conference would certainly understand that the facade of a national movement does not make up for our own inadequacies.

Our tentative conclusion is that we will think about bringing some people to the conference on an ad hoc basis if in any case we think it would be useful -- but we won't commit ourselves now to participation."

## CHESTER REPORT

This report will be short, due to pressures on time. We hope to develop the ideas touched on here in later reports (perhaps after the Election).

(1) We definitely will be mobilizing support against the city's urban renewal program. At the moment, we can expect few allies in this fight. Business groups and the liberal elements of Chester are locked together for urban renewal. Not only is it their answer to the problems of poverty, housing shortages, Negroes and the general decay of Chester, it provides important gains. The one group that opposes the Establishment's poverty plan is the right-wing Chester Parents' Association -- their reasons for opposition not exactly following our own. We are the only opposition based on the position of the poor and disenfranchised Negro.

We are still in the process of working out our analysis and alternative program. We are hoping that out of it will come insights relevant to radical social change in other areas across the country.

(2) October 24 marks the opening of the William Penn Project -- a recreation center which was demanded and gotten by people organized in the Housing project. The project people are fully aware that their actions got the Center and they remain a strong, active and independent force in the city. While the recreation center, which is a gift of the Chester Housing Authority, is meant to stifle organization, it's currently being staffed by the United Citizens for Self-Help (our people).

(3) At the October 13th meeting of the Mary Street block group, plans were laid for an area school. A committee is forming to present the plan to the Greater Chester Movement (the City's Clean-Up Organization). Eighteen people are now committed to fixing up and staffing a building if GCM will furnish the materials.

(4) Our staff internal dispute continues. And we gird ourselves for the December community leadership conference.

Rushed but loving ---

the Chester project.

THE EVENTS OF THE WEEK IN CLEVELAND: the eviction of a woman's family due to her participation in the group; a CUPAW meeting; a large public housing meeting; discussions with CORE on how to organize public housing projects; the circulation of two petitions by CUPAW at the food stamp line; drawing up plans for a vigil against Governor Rhodes when he arrives next week; three tutoring sessions; fundraising; guests for dinner; a work-study weekend for SPU high school students who live in the suburbs; and the rental and occupation of two more apartments.

## ORGANIZING IN POOR WHITE COMMUNITIES. TWO PROBLEMS.

The above events deserve to be described in detail. But, due to more immediate questions which we have concerning our work, questions which may apply to problems in other cities, we shall instead delineate some of our thoughts on organizing in poor white communities.

It is our feeling that we face two major problems: (1) limited staff (2) limited organizational experience among the people with whom we work. We will deal primarily with the latter problem in this report with the hope that other staffs will view this discussion as a point of departure for further discussion and study. (For example, we have been encouraged by the frank and open reports from Chicago.)

## LIMITED ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AMONG THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM WE WORK

Most of the people in the group are not familiar with traditional--formal, if you will--methods of holding meetings, staging demonstrations and rallies, forming committees, telephoning, discussing, etc. Indeed, most of the men and women in the unemployment and welfare groups have never attended a meeting, aside from never having been a member of an organization. On the other hand, they are discontent and interested in doing something constructive. Therefore we have given serious thought to finding ways to restructure the activities and methods of organization so as to provide a more familiar and natural setting for the people and, at the same time, to decrease the amount of work which is required to organize a formal meeting.

During our investigations, and in the course of several months, we discovered the ordinary patterns of interaction and communication among members of the community. We have noted the following: (1) several people frequently associate with people outside their immediate neighborhoods; they are, however, within walking distance (2) groups of people gather informally at one another's homes for coffee (3) the one person we know generally has friends within the immediate neighborhood who she visits or who visit her daily.

The above information is particularly important in evaluating the value of formal meetings. For all three groups, guaranteeing a large turn-out for a meeting requires a week's work in the field. In CUPAW, for example, many women identify with the group as a result of our work at the food stamp office and due to the initial contact made with them in their home. But most of these women do not come to meetings.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION is to form clusters of people within a given area rather than depending upon weekly meetings. Specifically, a cluster would consist of groups of people, most of them friends, who live within the same immediate area. The same group which regularly meets for informal talks would meet to discuss substantive matters concerning the organization. This procedure would allow for more comprehensive discussions in which everyone might participate in a meaningful way, at the same time eliminating the negative aspects of the formal meetings. Formal meetings would continue, but would be held less frequently.

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This is one of several thoughts we have had regarding the serious problems involved in organizing people who lack ~~previous organizational experience.~~

**PROBLEMS OF A LIMITED STAFF.** We are also considering either discontinuing one of the groups or restructuring the relationship of the present three groups since it is exceedingly difficult for one person to assume sole responsibility for the organization of one issue group--particularly when he has other responsibilities as well! There is no question that the three groups have suffered due to a decrease in staff and in time spent in the field.

**SOME QUESTIONS.** We are very interested in the response of others. Also, what are your thoughts about the community peoples' conference? So far we have heard only from Chicago. At this point they do not wish to commit themselves to bringing people to the conference. Another question: What sort of person ought to attend the conference? Is there any value, for example, in bringing five or ten people who will not belong to the organization within the following months?

**A CLOSING COMMENT:** Last Saturday was very exciting. In the morning the housing committee of CORE came over to discuss with us and with people from Lakeview (the public housing project we organized) how to organize within public housing projects. Attending these sessions were high school students from the Heights who were here for the weekend in a work-study program. (Another group is coming next weekend.) In the midst of these sessions George and Leslie arrived; they are responsible to us for the tutorial. And, of course, Lillian--the most vocal of all the mothers on welfare--dropped in. It was a grand, very stimulating session! Early in the afternoon the high school students helped the mothers on welfare distribute leaflets announcing a public meeting CUPAW is housing concerning the election. When the mothers and youngsters returned they walked into a houseful of tutors (who had just returned from their tutoring session). So--they all talked together. It was great! Our house is really turning into a community center which is frequented, not only by people from this area, but by people from the suburbs as well. It's very relaxing...and very thrilling!

# HAZARD REPORT

Six rifle shots were fired into the home of the Rev. Jason Combs, retired miner who is Vice President of the Appalachian Committee for Full Employment, at about 2 a.m. October 6. Five shots were fired shortly thereafter into the office of the Committee on 501 High Street.

No one was hurt in the shooting, but Combs and his wife were sleeping in the path of one of the bullets fired into their home, and it was stopped only by a piece of furniture. They were alone in the house at the time. No one was in the Hazard office when the shots were fired.

The Appalachian Committee for Full Employment has been working to organize the unemployed in Hazard and Perry County; its main objective is to seek improved government programs to help the unemployed and to create new jobs for the men who have lost their jobs because of mechanization of the mines.

Everette Tharp, a secretary of the Committee, said the October 6 shooting followed a campaign of intimidation against the Committee that has been going on for the past several months. Tharp charged that coal operators and county officials in the area are attempting to destroy the Committee.

Neighbors of the Combs' said they saw two cars leaving the scene just after the shots were fired. They could not describe the cars because of the darkness. The range of the fire progressed from one side of the house to the other indicating that the cars were moving when the shots were fired. The cars were headed toward Hazard, the neighbors said, leading witnesses to conclude that the shooting at the office of the Appalachian Committee was later than that at the Combs' home.

Officials of the Appalachian Committee immediately wired Governor Edward T. Breathitt informing him of what had happened and asking for police protection. They also called on the city and county officials for protection and asked Wm. Engle, state senator from Perry County, to take some action.

The telegram to the Governor stated that when the Appalachian Committee for Full Employment has asked for state protection in the past it has not been forthcoming. Appalachian Committee officials contend that "the Committee does not get the protection of any of the police powers of this State-- local or state."

Combs said he telephoned the state police office in Hazard immediately after the shooting, but was informed that they had no one to investigate and could not do anything until morning. He said a state police officer finally arrived at the scene at 12:30 the following day.

Just last week, Philip Sipser, New York City attorney for the Appalachian Committee, wrote a four-page letter to Governor Breathitt outlining a pattern of harassment in Hazard during the summer and asking that the Governor order an impartial inquiry into the situation by a committee of reputable citizens of the State. He urged in the letter that the Governor intervene immediately "before serious damage is done."

Appalachian Committee officials say the harassment was directed especially against students who were working with them in Hazard during the summer. The young people were victims of repeated arrests on minor traffic charges, ect. This finally culminated in a two hour interrogation of two of the students by county officials. The students said that during that session they were ordered to leave the County, told that "The hunting season was on," and they were "fair game."

There have been constant telephone threats against the Committee leaders. Recently there was a grand jury investigation of the Committee.

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The Committee leaders believe the recent events are related to the approaching trial in Lexington of Berman Gibson, a leader of the unemployed miners from Eastern Kentucky. He is scheduled for re-trial October 14 on a federal charge of conspiring with seven others to dynamite a railroad bridge in June, 1963. The charges arose during the campaign of the roving pickets against non-union mines in this part of the state. Gibson's first trial on the charge ended with a hung jury, with 10 of the 12 jurors for acquittal.

Appalachian Committee for Full Employment

# NEWARK REPORT

Tom Hayden was arrested and faces charges of assault and battery and threatening to kill. The story appeared in the Newark Evening News on Oct. 17:

## SLUM FIGHTER HELD FOR JURY Accused of Assault on Woman Operator of Rooming House

Thomas Hayden, 25, of 194 Ridgewood Ave., organizer of an anti-slum campaign in the lower Clinton Hill section, yesterday was ordered held for Grand Jury action on charges of assaulting and threatening to kill a woman rooming-house operator.

Appearing in Municipal Court before Chief Magistrate Nicholas Castellano, Hayden pleaded not guilty to charges of punching and kicking and threatening to kill Mrs. Mamie Hayes of 105 Shanley Ave. He was released in the custody of his lawyer, Felix Neals of Jersey City.

Hayden, former president and now a full-time staff member of the Students for a Democratic Society, a national organization, was arrested Wednesday night after he allegedly assaulted Mrs. Hayes near her rooming house at 123 Ridgewood Ave.

Mrs. Hayes was treated at Beth Israel Hospital for body and arm injuries.

Mrs. Hayes testified that Hayden assaulted her and threatened her life in protest of her planned eviction of a tenant. The tenant had gone to Hayden for help in the matter.

The landlady said she had been ordered by city authorities to make certain repairs to the rooming house and that the work required use of the tenant's room.

On October 14th Carl and Tom put out the following fact sheet: "Facts on Slumlord Mrs. Hayes' Charges Against Tom Hayden"

On Wednesday afternoon, staff member Tom Hayden went to look for Mrs. Mamie Hayes, because she had broken the agreement to fix up her slum and unlicensed rooming house on 123 Ridgewood Ave. She tried to grab the statement out of his hand, and hurt her thumb while digging her thumbnail into Tom's wrist. She screamed that he had broken her thumb. He reported the incident to the 5th Precinct, and soon after, two policemen arrested him, charging him with assault and battery. They ignored his complaint against Mrs. Hayes.

### HERE IS THE WHOLE STORY:

Five weeks ago 70-year old Mrs. Watkins rented a room at 123 Ridgewood Ave. for \$12/wk, including kitchen rights. She soon found out that the kitchen was filthy and filled with cockroaches. The windows were broken, her food kept disappearing, people living on all three floors shared one tiny bathroom, and many other violations existed. Mrs. Watkins complained and offered to move, but Mrs. Hayes said no, and promised to fix up.

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After a few more weeks, she came to the office on 155 Ridgewood and asked us for help. We complained, and found out the rooming house didn't even have a license. Inspectors came out, and found lots of violations. We talked with Mrs. Hayes that night, and she agreed to fix the place up, and that she would not evict the elderly lady who had complained.

That night, past midnight, she and her man friend came and threatened the old lady, and told her she had to be out by 8am the next morning. They cursed her, and she was even afraid to open the door. The next morning, we met with the tenant and Mrs. Hayes, and told her we would pamphlet the whole area telling about how badly she treated the old lady, and that neighbors would protest in front of her house.

She agreed, under her own free will, that she would not collect rent until the repairs were made, and that she would use no abusive language, and that any plans to evict Mrs. Watkins would come before those who signed the agreement. The agreement was signed by Tom, Mrs. Hayes, the tenant Mrs. Watkins, and staff member Carl Wittman in front of a notary public.

On Wednesday morning, Mrs. Hayes broke the agreement, by telling Mrs. Watkins to get out of her room. Tom went to see Mrs. Hayes. She tried to grab the agreement from his hand, and supposedly hurt her hand while she gashed his hand with her fingernail. She said that he broke her finger, and charged him with assault and battery. The police picked him up about 5pm.

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[ This report came prefaced by a note including these lines: "...My immediate activities will be fund raising and making contacts with people who might fit into an Arsenal Working Group. Had a lengthy and encouraging telephone conversation with Gov. Gardner of the Mass. Bay Council and plan a personal visit, with some descriptive materials, next week. Most other contacts are ready for launching as fast as I can get to them....Finally, please react (1) to the tentative thinking presented in the Boston PREP Report. Does it sound good, bad, or indifferent and what additional things should I be considering and working on? Remember, I'm a whale of a neophyte in this business and much in need of accelerated education...." PREP—this means YOU!—T. G.]

The past week has been spent largely in formulating next steps regarding the Watertown Arsenal and in making contacts among local faculty members who are interested in conversion. A tentative scheme has germinated which is guiding current efforts. The plan is to organize an informal working group of a dozen or less persons, who collectively possess sufficient knowledge and skills to generate "specific, viable proposals" for converting the Arsenal. Formulating the desired composition of this group and then trying to get the right set of people thoroughly interested and active and with a proper orientation to the problem are the immediate steps ahead. Faculty members are apt to be the most numerous group members. Hopefully, representation can be gotten in the areas of regional economics, marketing (especially new products), the federal bureaucracy (poli. sci.), electronic engineering, metallurgy, mechanical engineering, and maybe sociology. In addition, it seems to me one would like to have at least one influential and creative representative from labor,\* business (an executive), one or more of the affected communities, and the Arsenal engineering staff and production staff. If a group of this kind can be organized and interested in meeting periodically (maybe one evening every two weeks), it may be possible to formulate several alternative possibilities that are agreed to be worth some serious research and development into a specific written proposal—the latter work to be done, hopefully, by individuals or small subgroups from the Working Group. If we should get to this step, the Working Group meetings could then serve as a sounding board for discussion and criticisms and suggestions regarding the separate proposals as they are being developed. The role of PREP would be (1) to coordinate the activities of the Working Group—arranging meetings, etc., (2) assisting those working up proposals in terms of leg work to get required information, background research, etc., (3) providing typing assistance for drafts, etc. as required, and (4) possibly to take responsibility for the development of one of the proposals, plus some survey work described below.

Initial contacts with Sumner Rosen of Simons and Mike Brower (economics/ industrial management) and Murray Eden (mechanical engineering), both of MIT, have been favorable. Further contacts will be made soon at Harvard Business School, B. U., Tufts, Harvard Econ. Dept., and Social Relations. Herb Weiss (Vice President of Kennedy's Dept. Store) seems very favorable toward PREP and conversion and has offered to arrange a meeting with 3 or 4 executives (Presidents, he said) of top Boston banks with regard to funding support to the Conversion Report, to the Conversion Conference (discussed below), or directly to PREP, if the SDS label is not too disquieting. Time permitting, the meeting with Weiss and the bankers will be next week or the following one.

\* an officer in Local R 1-5 of the National Association of Government Employees preferably, and perhaps a regional leader in AFL-CIO or some such.

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I should pause at this point and mention that through Sumner Rosen we have gotten a copy of two reports (60 and 86 pages long) that were prepared (it says) by the local Government Employees Union as briefs to the Mass. Congressional Delegation. One report lists the number of Arsenal employees (and their salaries) in each town; describes the different defense jobs recently done by the Arsenal; and emphasizes the modernity, diversity, and flexibility of their equipments. The other report describes in some detail the equipments and facilities and skills at the Arsenal and the capability to do many different types of work; many photographs of the plant facilities are shown, along with reprints of various technical-journal articles describing technological advances generated at the Arsenal.

The second report also makes two conversion proposals. The first is that the Arsenal become a Department of Defense (across-service) Manufacturing Technology Center, which would eliminate duplication, reduce costs, increase quality, etc. of defense products.

The second proposal is that the Arsenal become an "Industry-Defense Conversion Technology Center," to conduct marketing and civilian-economy studies and apply those of other agencies; conduct manufacturing technology studies, working out production processes; give advice to specific plants on conversion problems; technically monitor a program of government support to selected plants, enabling them to work out their specific conversion problems; and, finally, "to play a prime role in the 'war on poverty' through its program of personal retraining and conversion leadership." It is proposed that either the Dept. of Defense or the Dept. of Labor might be responsible for the Conversion Center.

There is no indication that the briefs were (or should have been) considered confidential or proprietary—though I plan to check this with Lamphior of the Governor's office when I see him. Yet, to our knowledge, neither of the conversion proposals was ever mentioned in the newspapers—a darn interesting fact, if true. Through Lamphior, we will try to find out what has happened to the proposal, in terms of the reaction to it from DOD, the Congressional delegation, community leaders, etc. We plan to write Bradford Morse (Republican Representative from 5th Middlesex District) soon and tell him something about B-PREP plans and indicate that we would like to talk with him personally about conversion in general and the Arsenal in particular after the election is over.

George Benello of IUP has been thinking about organizing a regional conference on conversion, in which participation would come from labor, community leaders, academic leaders in conversion, and interested local businessmen—with federal government being observers, if anything, rather than active participants. Of course, if Brad Morse would be induced to serve as Keynote Speaker, it would probably be a boon to the whole affair.

George has said he was thinking of January or December as a possible time. It seems to me that one factor to consider in the timing is the very negative reaction to the Sept. 20-21st conference on conversion sponsored by the New England Council and B. U. The new conference should take pains to clarify the fact that it will have a noticeably different orientation—directed much more toward specific proposals or discussions of direct relevance to local conversion problems (such as the Arsenal and the Shipyard/fishing industry).

Probably the most important factor in the timing of the Conversion Conference should be the time it takes to get a really solid set of working papers, panels,

and a balanced program completed. The proposals from the Arsenal Working Group, for example, should be ready. A specific B-PREP project that could lead to a presentation and lively discussion at the Conference would be a survey of the Arsenal employees (and possibly leaders and others in the communities having high concentration of Arsenal employees). The current attitudes of the employees (and their families) toward discontinuance of ordnance work, toward moving or changing type of work, and toward civilian vs. defense products could be probed. Also, one could get information on how many own homes, have some savings, etc. To allow such a survey to be planned, prepared, administered, analyzed, and written up in time for the Conversion Conference, it would be necessary to keep the questions focused more sharply on the specific issues than was true in the Bedford questionnaire.\* Conducting the survey could be an attractive and absorbing project for a set of SDS members with appropriate interests and backgrounds. Hopefully, one or more grad students (in Social Relations at Harvard, for example) could be interested in actively participating, or leading, the survey—maybe as a term research project. Since the term has started, fast action is in order on this one. The possible Arsenal Employees Survey Project will be discussed at the SDS Regional Executive Committee meeting on Monday, October 12th.

Surveying the Arsenal employees can be an excellent way of identifying individuals who, later on, could play a key role in organizing the employees. The survey, in fact, can be quite useful in helping define just which issues and approaches are apt to be most effective in the organizing effort.

A handout of selected survey results and a presentation of them to the Conversion Conference should arouse an active interest and discussion from community leaders and others. Survey results are almost always provocative, in spite of seldom being definitive.

—Jim Moray  
Boston PREP Director

\* The number of respondents should be larger also.

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Dear Ren:

I think most of us are agreed that the central problem in organizing the unemployed is the development of a continuing program of activity for JOIN groups--a program whose relevance is obvious to the participants, which can potentially recruit new members and which can have some political significance. Some people are already despairing that such a program can be developed given the nature of the unemployment problem and the kinds of people who are recruited to JOIN. The time for such despair has not yet arrived, in my view. I think we may be confronted by a chance for a breakthrough. I refer, specifically, to a new bill introduced by Senator Clark on October 1 and supported by Senators Nelson and Morse. This bill, summarized by IF Stone's Weekly of 10-17-64, represents an attempt to revive the spirit of the Full Employment Bill of 1946. The heart of it appears to be the writing into law of the responsibility of the Federal Government to maintain unemployment levels below 4 per cent until 1968 and below 3 per cent thereafter. The bill would require the Administration to submit Full Employment Budgets to Congress with fiscal and monetary provisions aimed at maintaining unemployment at the stated levels. It should be evident that: (a) this goes beyond merely ad hoc public works and tax cut measures; (b) this institutionalizes the notion of national planning to ensure full employment, with the responsibility for approving such plans resting with Congress rather than Federal bureaucracies. The bill, according to Stone, goes beyond the measures proposed by Clark's subcommittee, and as far as I can tell is one of the more radical economic measures to be recently proposed by left-liberals. According to Stone, this bill could become the focus for left opposition to the Administration within the Congress. It definitely does deviate from the Administration emphasis on private enterprise, education and token appropriations as the means to fight unemployment. And it clearly asserts that existing national policies are a cause of unemployment.

For these reasons, I think this legislation may be worthy of support. But more than this, it offers the opportunity for continuous, relevant programs for JOIN groups. Such a program could be built around delegations to Congressmen and Senators, community education focused on support for this Clark bill, visits to newspapers and to other "opinion leaders" urging the support for this legislation, etc. More than this, it may provide the occasion for a genuine alliance between unemployed organizations and labor unions--with unemployed groups urging labor unions to help back the legislation and labor unions at last seeing the need for grass-roots organization of the unemployed in order to build support for the legislation. Finally, along this line, it seems to me that this would be a good basis for national ERAP fund-raising and joint programming with the labor movement.

The ideas embodied in the Clark proposal are fairly complex, but if they can be gotten across to people, it seems to me that the possibility for national debate and grass roots organization of the issue of jobs, automation and national planning will be there.

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I would like to see some discussion of this proposal in the Newsletter and in the next ERAP meeting. In the meantime, I will try to obtain copies of the Clark Bill and supporting materials; I would urge others interested in the issue to do the same.

Love to all,  
Dick

October 21, 1964

Dear Dick,

Your proposal that JOIN projects develop a campaign for the Clark legislation doesn't, it seems to me, resolve the more fundamental organizing problems faced by the Chicago, Cleveland and Baltimore staffs. We built the JOIN projects on two critical notions: (1) that the economy increasingly would fail to provide jobs -- due to job-eliminating technological advances in production; upward population trends; foreign competition; and a steady weakening of post-war consumer demands; and (2) that a program for full employment was a "radical" program -- because it tied the issues together and required fundamental political and economic change for its implementation. (To demand full employment was also to demand major narrowing of income gaps, redistribution of power in the society, and public programs which could meet the enormous social needs in schools, housing, etc.)

There is no question that unemployment, particularly among the structurally unemployed with whom we work in Cleveland, Chicago and to a lesser extent in Baltimore, is acute. The boom period we are in, however, does raise new questions for our earlier analysis. The resiliency of the American economy seems greater than we expected. Unemployment is lessening. And there is little indication that we can build a movement of unemployed, at least among whites, in our JOIN projects during the current period.

However, the even more critical and immediate problem faced by JOIN in my opinion is inadequate program rather than shortages of constituents. While the lines around the unemployment compensation offices have been substantially reduced, we continue to find many people who have little hope for a steady job in their lifetime. These people are potentially radical and could become involved in a social movement. Our failure has been to provide them with the kinds of experiences which would commit them to a program for basic economic change and full participation in a movement for that program.

Thus far, our activity has centered around petition campaigns, rallies, apple selling, leafleting, signing unemployed up for membership in JOIN (mostly in Baltimore), and small group discussions. All of these activities are important to building an organization, but are not conducive to serious

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political education. There are few lessons that can be drawn from them and there is no sense of victory (or loss) following the activity which is likely to directly challenge the unemployed to accept new responsibility for developing a program and an organization.

Your proposal comes close to the kinds of programs needed in JOIN, except in one respect -- it has no tactic which would demand a response from established powers. There is nothing in it that cannot be ignored. The project, it seems to me, does not readily lend itself to such tactics, because the principal target is distant Washington.

What are the essentials for a short-term program for JOIN? I think a program is needed which will have the possibility of a significant limited victory; which will involve people in tasks which can readily be seen as critical to victory; which will force some group or individual to grant or deny victory; which will involve people in experiences which develop a new understanding of the society which denies them opportunities and rights; and which will open possibilities for more insurgent activity in the future. Among organized tenants, a rent strike can be an example of a program which meets these criteria.

There is only one example of such a program which has grown out of JOIN, and that one had major problems. The Chicago effort to combat hiring practices and other corruption in day-labor agencies potentially combined the experiences needed for a good short-term political program for the unemployed. Reform in the spot labor groups was feasible and the people involved faced real power which they could learn about and combat through organization and action.

The difficulties which were encountered, however, suggested the need for several experienced organizers who could work from the "inside." We also realized that any strike of the men would be extremely vulnerable to strike-breakers, particularly from the winos who are pleased with an occasional \$7 a day. Finally, we saw that it would be enormously difficult to pressure the city to take over the hiring agency (the critical demand) while, at the same time, conduct an effective strike at the hiring site. Our one experience in Chicago, remember, in calling a meeting of people to oppose a spot labor group produced two JOIN members, two private detectives, and an official of the hiring agency.

The Cleveland U-JOIN has recently undertaken a less ambitious project related to reform of day hiring agencies. It involves its membership in letter writing to state representatives, publicity work and pressure on the AFL-CIO to organize the men who are exploited by the agency. It doesn't, however, lend itself to the kinds of experiences I have suggested as critical to building a radical movement.

I don't have any easy answers to the problems which I think JOIN faces in each of the three cities (Philadelphia, by the way, has pretty nearly dropped its U-JOIN for block work on GROIN-type community problems and organizing in a housing project.) We need to find programs comparable to a rent strike for unemployed. JOIN needs to decide how to organize for limited goals which actually matter in a man's life, but which are more

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political and educational than the goal of self-help. ★

I can offer a few examples of the type of programming I would like to see tried in JOIN, though I think (hope) better ones can be created.

One notion that I have is to implement our idea (in a modest way) of building pressure for programs which would fill unmet social needs in a community and thereby put people to useful work. Pressures could be created by a number of tactics: (1) a street could be blocked off and repaired by JOIN members. After the repairs were made, JOIN would hold a demonstration at city hall to present the bill to the mayor; (2) JOIN could fix up an apartment where it had previously been active in developing organization. Tenants would then hold rent to pay for materials and labor; (3) an abandoned house (always a good issue) which had been condemned by the city could be torn down by JOIN for a recreational area. JOIN would protest with whatever methods possible if the city tried to interfere with the "community decision."

Activity such as this is highly visible, but difficult to organize. Such a program, I think, would raise important questions about private property, the responsibility of the city to provide jobs, and the right of people to shape conditions in their immediate lives.

Another type of programming might center on the Administration's War on Poverty. JOIN could build community support for a program developed and run by community people and oppose any city effort which failed to include the interests of the community or was based on private gain. Parts of the adopted legislation commit the government rhetorically to worthwhile programs. For example, the bill provides loans to build cooperative enterprises and to construct low-rent housing units (Title IV). It also has money for labor and materials to beautify neighborhoods (Title I) and funds for anti-poverty agencies (i.e., JOIN) who hire indigenous leaders onto their staffs (Title III). I could see the possibility of utilizing the rhetoric of the poverty program to write our own program and then put pressure on the local poverty corporation to accept it. Were we working in an area where the government was planning an anti-poverty drive, such pressures could prove extremely embarrassing and effective against the local administrators and could provide important radicalizing experiences for the JOIN and active community people.

A third type of programming for JOIN could be developed around the welfare and social service system. I think the Cleveland welfare mothers have shown that recipients of these programs can be mobilized against inhuman and inefficient administrative practices and will press for more comprehensive coverage. There is no question but that a meaningful confrontation between the individual who has been made wholly dependent on a service system and the system itself can be created through organization. During the summer, Chicago JOIN had a grievance committee established to get better service out of the unemployment comp. office. The shortcoming of this committee, it seemed to me, was that it was run by the staff members and didn't train JOIN members to take responsibility for anyone who had a

complaint about the UC office. The JOIN grievance committee should be re-established and the notion of JOIN groups which are active in the community for an improved and more humane welfare system should be experimented with concretely.

These suggestions represent a new conception for JOIN projects. I think that our experience increasingly shows that JOIN must recruit beyond the ranks of the unemployed and there is experience to suggest that initially the organization is likely to be more viable in a community than a city-wide context. Certainly, the types of programs I'm thinking of would require an expanded constituency and a community organization.

However, I do not see JOIN abandoning its basic concern for full employment. JOIN committees should take up legislation which seeks to re-establish the notion of government responsibility for job creation -- the basis of the 1946 Employment Act. (Though the Clark bill should not give support to a 4% unemployment rate. Even English Parliament gets aroused if unemployment creeps up to 3 percent). Also, JOIN recruitment should concentrate on the unemployed. And its major educational programs and activity should be geared to the problems of joblessness. JOIN must not, however, limit itself to the narrow conception of program thus far developed.

As ever,

Rennie