

NEWSLETTER FROM DR. BEN YELLEN  
Brawley, Calif.

October 1, 1967

On Sept. 22, 1967, an editorial "COUNCIL SHOUT-FEST A SORRY SIGHT", written by Jim Duke appeared in the El Centro Post-Press and Brawley News. This was an attack on me. Any good newspaper which prints an editorial criticizing a person, permits that person to have his answer printed in the newspaper. I wrote an answer immediately and Dick Fitch, the General Manager, promised to print it right away. So far nothing of my answer has appeared in the SCHURZ NEWSPAPERS.

Here is the Editorial---. The deterioration of Monday night's Brawley City Council meeting to a shouting match between the mayor and a councilman was an unfortunate display of intemperance. It was doubly unfortunate because it took place in front of an unusually large audience, whose members must be shaking their heads over their city's representative government. While council meetings are inevitably a fusion of personality and government action, it would appear that the personality of one councilman temporarily obstructed effective government action.

Brawley, faced with serious questions concerning its future in the upcoming months, not the least of which is the downtown Urban Renewal project, must rely on its elected representatives to examine all issues with as much dispassion and logic as they can summon. It is hard to refer to intemperate displays of personality and emotion without naming Dr. Ben Yellen, who has made it his policy to use the council proceedings as a platform for his many programs of "economic upheaval".

This newspaper defends the right of any councilman including Dr. Yellen to "speak his piece" in his role as a political personality and wielder of governmental power. But we cannot condone the flagrant violation of decorum exhibited by the doctor at Monday night's meeting, which nearly led to suspension of the proceedings. The Council, including the mayor, has often exhibited restraint in permitting the doctor to "speak his piece" on subjects strangely irrelevant to the immediate matters on hand.

An example of some of Dr. Yellen's logic was displayed to a chamber full of witnesses, who heard charges made by the doctor against three local organizations, all of which are undeserving of the doctor's barbs. Two of the organizations were represented at the meeting, and each offered fitting rebuttal to the doctor's charge that they were mere fronts for "controlling the Eastside" and were "regimenting youth".

The record of the Soroptomist Club is a glowing tribute to its community service, raising money for worthwhile community projects, funding scholarships, and building a school for mentally handicapped children. The Boys' Club, on the verge of getting a firm foothold in the Eastside, offers youngsters a supervised place to meet and work with one another under expert direction.

And Casa de Amistad is a well-operated center for coordinating Eastside activities, including many welfare cases and classes conducted for persons wishing to better themselves and their community. It goes without saying that the Casa has an important youth development program. Dr. Yellen's innuendos that these organizations are fronts for "controlling the Eastside by Westside do-gooders" is way off base.

Here is the answer---. Jim Duke is a young man and has been here only 1½ years so that he is not oriented into the background of many things he writes about. He has to get more experience and then he will realize that Politics is a difference of opinion. At the Council meetings in any city, people ask for things and services which cost money. Where will the money come from? When this occurs, I speak of things that Duke calls "subjects strangely irrelevant". But the people of Brawley elected me to speak about these matters which I consider relevant.



So when the matter of money comes up, I advocate the collection of the business license taxes from the big farmers and their allies who do business in the city; putting the Imperial Irrigation District on the tax rolls and to collect taxes from it; to sue the I.I.D. for \$300,000 in water overcharges from 1931-1961 plus \$900,000 (anti-trust triple damages) for a total of \$1.2 millions. Mayor Pat Williams has heard all this many times at Council meetings and gets irritated and since he is known to have a short fuse on his temper, fireworks result as my fuse matches the Mayor's. But these ideas of getting money to run the city, Jim Duke calls "economic upheaval" in his editorial.

I would suggest that Jim Duke and you readers look on the front page of the paper that had Duke's editorial and you will see where Governor Jack Williams of Arizona tells how an "aroused and angry public forced the issue" over tax advantages and lower electricity rates in the Salt River Project which is the name of the irrigation district around Phoenix. The SRP sells electricity and water just like the I.I.D. So you see that other people advocate political ideas similar to mine and which Jim Duke calls "economic upheaval". Mayor Williams who has been Councilman 12 years and the other Councilmen NEVER ADVOCATE these ideas. That is what makes Politics so interesting.

Now if Jim Duke would look at the brochure of the Casa de Amistad, he will see a picture of young boys playing pool. The long distance do-gooders consider any place where pool is played on the Eastside as a bad environment. I object to this. Mr. Orlicky is trying to run a family type fun recreation center where he has an ice cream fountain, only soft drinks, various games machines, checker games, etc., a race-way for toy car racing, pool tables which can be converted to ping pong. I do not consider that a pool table creates "a den of iniquity". It all depends on who runs the place. Mr. Orlicky should be given a chance to show how the place will be managed.

The brochure of the Casa shows 27 directors of which only 7 live on the Eastside. This substantiates my claim that outsiders control the Casa and its policies. Notice that both the Boys Club and the Casa are located on the Eastside. Why? Don't the youth of the Westside need "saving from the evils of youth" like long hair, bare feet, guitars, marijuana, the watusi, gambling, and narcotics, etc. etc. ad infinitum?

Jim Duke feels that the Soroptomists are wonderful, are a high minded group who are interested in civic affairs, etc. There is hardly a week that goes by that they are not in the newspapers which by the way happens because they send press releases to the newspapers. (This criticism also applies to other groups that create a beautiful public image for themselves by self-laudatory press releases. Doesn't anyone ever do his good deed anymore and keep his mouth shut about it?)

Have you readers ever seen where the Soroptomists take up problems like enforcement of the U.S. Reclamation Law; collection of the business license taxes; putting the I.I.D. on the tax rolls; why the people on the Eastside have such high unemployment that it was not so long ago that about 200 families had their water cut off because they did not have the \$4.50 to pay the monthly water charge.

All so-called community service projects like the Boys Club and the Casa de Amistad have "regimentation" in that certain age groups have certain hours. Then there are certain hours for this or that or whether boy or girl. Mr. Orlicky's Recreation Center has none of this. Let the children and their parents choose which place to patronize.

Finally, the Soroptomists and the Directors of the Boys Club do not live on the Eastside but seem to worry about the pool tables there. I would suggest if they want to do long distance do-gooding that they take up the problems like the effect of unemployment, the high electricity bills, and the high taxes that plague this area. If they did this first, I would not object to them having a right to put in their opinions regarding the pool tables at the Casa de Amistad and Mr. Orlicky's Youth Recreation Center.