



THE FLATLANDS

"TELL IT LIKE IT IS AND DO WHAT IS NEEDED"

Volume 1, Number 2

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Bulldozing the Poor

BY RUTH GOODMAN

EDITOR'S NOTE: Housing is one of the most pressing problems of Oakland's poor. It is a problem which has many causes. THE FLATLANDS, in this issue and in future issues, will focus much attention on these causes and on what should be done to remove them.

BULLDOZING THE POOR shows why Oakland has a steadily decreasing number of low-cost housing units despite the steadily increasing demand. The author, Ruth Goodman, is a graduate student in Community Organization at the University of California.

Many homes in the Oakland flatlands are now threatened by government action.

The Acorn Redevelopment project has already taken homes away from many poor people. Funds are being held up for the Oak Center project, which will move more people out, until a decision is reached to exclude redevelopment projects from Proposition 14.

Federal funds will not be given for redevelopment projects, such as Oak center, unless a non-discriminatory clause is included in the Redevelopment Agency's contract with housing owners. Proposition 14 prevents such a clause in California. Code enforcement, BARTD and the Grove-Shafter freeway will soon displace still more residents.

In 1960 there were 141,537 houses and apartments in Oakland; in 1965 there were 146,700. This gradual increase of 5,000 hides an important fact: 6,000 of the 8,000 units torn down in the last five years were occupied by low-income people; most of the 13,000 new housing units were built for moderate and high income people. 90% of Oakland's new housing is in the \$110 - 375

a month rental range. As the city officials and the real estate men say, low-cost housing is simply not profitable for the private housing market.

Let's take a closer look. Here is only part of what poor people lost in the last five years:

- 1,400 public housing units were destroyed
- 1,713 homes removed in Acorn
- 2,250 homes vacated or demolished through code enforcement
- 350 units torn down for BARTD
- 650 units removed for the Grove-Shafter Freeway

That's just the beginning! In the next five years, at least 1,900 of Oak Center's 2,900 housing units will be demolished. If Redevelopment plans go through, more than 1,100 of Oak Center's 1,700 families will have to move and 800 of the 1,100 individuals living alone in the area will have to get out.

By the time Oakland's Building and Housing department gets through, 13,560 more housing units will be inspected — most of them in the flatlands. Where landlords refuse to bring their property "up to code," tenants will have to move. If the landlord fixes up the place, you can count on a raise in rent.

Already, residents of 3,150 Oakland homes have been forced to move because of the city's code enforcement.

600 more housing units will soon be demolished to make way for BARTD.

Other Redevelopment plans include:

- 1,800 units to be demolished in the Corridor project
- 300 units to be demolished in the Peralta project



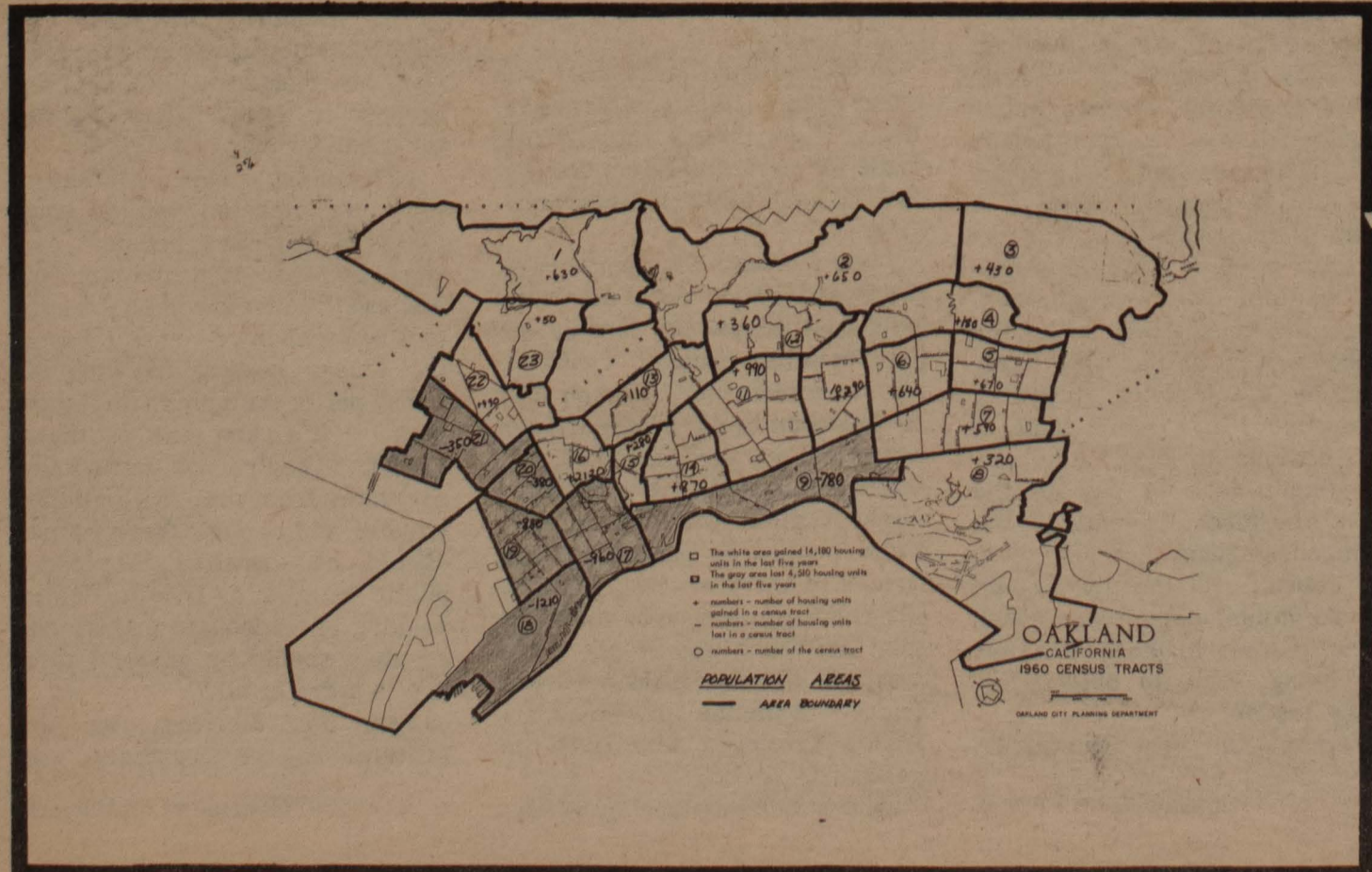
Acorn Project - West Oakland

- 900 units to be demolished in the Chinatown project

All these "projects" — past and future — put the greatest hardship on low-income people because there is not enough decent, safe and sanitary housing in Oakland for families which earn less than \$4,000 a year. True, most of these units should be fixed up or torn down. No one should be expected to live in rat-infested, broken-down housing. But poor people who are forced to move from their houses are not given any choice: the new units which are built are not meant for them. They have to find another place, which is also usually in poor condition, and pay a higher rent than before. The more houses that are torn down,

Current Code Enforcement Areas Include:

	started in	# of units eventually affected
1. Clinton Park	1958	4,750
2. Durant	1964	1,285
3. Mosswood	1964	1,350
3. Mosswood	1964	1,350
4. Hoover	1965	1,396
5. Longfellow	1965	1,092
6. Bella Vista	1964	1,167
7. Boulevard Plaza	1964	1,216
8. San Antonio	1964	1,213
9. Garfield	1965	1,402
10. Prescott (in planning stage)		1,839
Total		16,710



the greater the demand for "inexpensive" housing, and the higher the price. Low-income people who live in sub-standard housing pay just as much, if not more, than people living in standard housing. If you have a large family, if you're Negro, or Mexican-American, or Indian, or Chinese, or Japanese, or Filipino you will be prevented from living in certain parts of the "All-American City."

On the private market, the only housing poor people can afford in Oakland is overcrowded, unsafe, unsanitary, overpriced, and situated in the ghetto. The only "decent, safe and sanitary" housing available to low-income families is public housing — yet there are only 1317 of such units in Oakland today. The city plans a big 105 more units to be completed by August, 1966. Public housing amounts to less than 1% of the city's 146,000 housing units. And this in a city in which

over 1/4 of the population earns less than \$4,000 a year; in which about 10% of the whites and 20% of the Negroes are out of work, and in which 24,250 families are eligible for public housing and federal rent subsidies. The Redevelopment agency has estimated that 90% — about 22,000 — of Oakland families eligible for public housing will be affected by public action (freeways, BARTD, code enforcement, urban renewal).

It is clear that if something drastic isn't done NOW, flatlands housing will get more crowded than ever, in the months and years to come, more families will have to "double up" with friends and relatives, and prices will go still higher.

Just what IS Oakland doing, anyway, about the problems of relocation and decent, low-cost housing? Read part II of this article in the next issue of THE FLATLANDS.

BIG DADDY O.H.A.

• BY RICHARD YORK

EDITOR'S NOTE:

What is life in an Oakland public housing project like? asks Mr. Richard York, member of the Peralta Improvement League. It's not as good as it looks, but it's better than the slums.

In fact, fear of losing their place in the housing project keeps many tenants from demanding the rights from Oakland Housing Authority which should be theirs. Only by banding together in tenant groups have they been able to win the few concessions they have. Even these minor victories have been encouraging. As people begin to see the strength of numbers, more tenant groups are springing up. Watch out, OHA — here come the tenants!

Public housing in Oakland is the only present source of fairly good low-cost housing. But there are only 1,317 public housing units in the city (plus another 105 to be completed this year).

The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) is the city agency in charge of public housing. It is made up of a board of five commissioners appointed by the mayor. They are businessmen from the hills and are not paid for the job, except in political prestige. Once a month they swoop down from the hills to make policy and decide the fate of tenants. Most of them don't even know the physical lay-out of the projects, let alone the people who live in them! The commissioners hire the executive director, R. J. Guichard, and the project managers.

What is it like to be part of that "lucky" 1% who live in Oakland's housing projects? IT'S NOT AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS! Since the only alternative to public housing is slum housing, once you're in you behave yourself. You tend to be quiet, mind your own business. You don't make waves, don't organize, don't demonstrate. As a result, fear runs wild in the projects. Tenants are afraid they might lose what little "advance" they have made. What is worse, the Housing Authority realizes this and does its very best to USE that fear to keep tenants in line. Official threats are very common. Let me give some examples of how OHA operates.

"BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM"

In July of last year OHA began what it called a "Beautification program." The first we tenants knew about it was when the Neighborhood Youth Corps (War on Poverty), under the direction of the Labor Council and OHA, arrived in our backyards and started demolishing our backyard fences and flower gardens. They had gone to Lockwood Gardens housing project in East Oakland first, but they were met by a

"human fence" made up of members of the Lockwood Improvement League. They didn't touch a thing there, but were sent to our project, Peralta Villa in West Oakland, to start tearing down our fences. The people here were very made because they had paid the Housing Authority for the fences, and had planted their own gardens. No advance notice was given — the workers just arrived and started tearing everything up. Here is a good example of how a War on Poverty, when it is run by the rich, can become a "War on the Poor."

In a few days 85 tenants from Peralta Villa held a meeting at Cole school, formed the Peralta Improvement League and a "human fence," wrote up a petition of demands, and began our fight to save our yards. Three projects in Oakland have these individual backyard fences, and in all three the fences were going to be destroyed. The fences are very important to us for a little privacy and for the protection of our small children. The enclosed yards and gardens are a last fort of individuality and pride in a housing project.

The entire summer was spent protesting this so-called "beautification" program. Meetings, marches, petitions, phone-ins, picket lines, sit-ins — this is what it took! Once the protest began, the Labor Council instructed the work crew to stop tearing down the fences, but to continue with other work in the project.

Finally when OHA refused to give us the "beautification" plans, so we would know what was coming next (they still have never made these plans public), we decided to sit-in on all the work being done in the project. On July 12 we did this — we stopped all work in the project. The Labor Council pulled the workers out completely, and left OHA with no "beautification" and no free labor. If OHA would meet our demands, give us the plans, rebuild our fences, reimburse us for our losses, and let us have a say in making decisions, then we would let the workers come back. But not until then! They have never come back and the "beautification" was never finished.

We continued to press our demands. We met with Guichard, the executive director, who told us: "I talk about units, not about people!" We marched on the commissioners' meeting in July, filled the room to overflowing with tenants, and tried to present our grievances. The police were called and forced most of the tenants out of this "public" meeting. They formed a picket line in front of the office. Inside, the tenant spokesmen were harassed, ridiculed, interrupted and insulted by the commissioners. We were

not given enough time to present our case. But at least they met the tenants for the first time!

PICKET FOR ACTION

Eventually we had to start picketing the businesses of the commissioners. This got action! The commissioners decided to take a poll of the tenants to see if we wanted fences or not (as if we hadn't made that obvious enough). But the tenants were not allowed to participate in writing up the ballot, or in any other way. One day the ballot arrived by mail. It was, of course, worded in a way which would confuse the tenants and make them vote the way the Housing Authority wanted. We had to distribute leaflets explaining what it meant. It spoke of "modification affecting backyard fences in order to accomplish integrated landscaping," rather than of tearing down fences. You had to sign your name, so it wasn't a secret ballot. But in spite of this, the vote was more than 2 to 1 in favor of fences. The Housing Authority said they would begin looking for money to rebuild the destroyed fences.

At the next commissioners' meeting however, they passed a policy which said that tenants who wanted their fences back would have to pay for them a second time. Also, you had to sign an agreement which said you could not keep your new fence if the OHA evicted you or moved you to a new unit. Of course nobody fell for this trick.

One third of the fences here at Peralta are still standing. Most all the fences at Lockwood and Campbell Village are still there. This was our victory; we saved the fences in 2 1/3 projects from being torn down. But the fight to get the destroyed fences rebuilt by OHA still lies ahead of us.

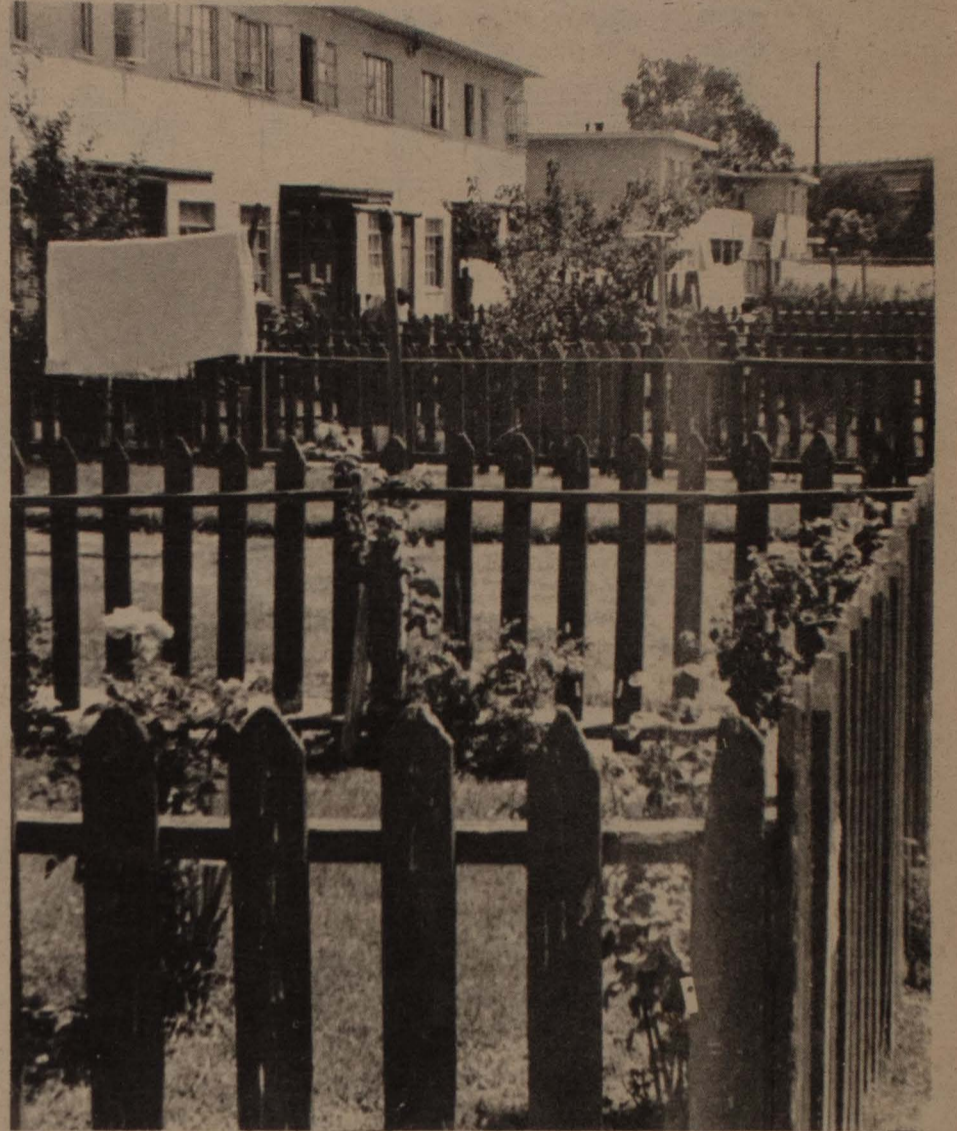
The fence story is just one example of just how unconcerned about people the OHA really is. There are many other things I could list. For example, the lease which all tenants must sign is terrible. When you sign it, you sign away your rights and dignity. The lease says that the management can inspect your apartment at any time, even when nobody is home. It says you can be evicted with no reasons given. When you sign it, you give up all kinds of legal rights, and it leaves you nothing. That lease has got to go!

OHA often stretches policies way out of proportion, especially when it helps them politically to do so. There is one policy which says every tenant is responsible for his own broken windows, no matter who broke them. One day a tenant at Peralta smashed all the windows in her neighbor's unit. Lots of people saw it happen, and the person who did it bragged about it in front of the manager. And yet the OHA tried to make the neighbor pay for her own windows. Since the tenant who broke the windows was at the time being used by the Housing Authority to oppose PIL's fence fight, it was obvious to everybody why she didn't have to pay for the mess she made. Eventually the wronged neighbor got justice in the courts. But the next month the commissioners commended the woman who broke the windows for being such an outstanding tenant leader!

Perhaps the best illustration

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(Photos by Terry Link)



Oakland Housing Project with fences (Lockwood)



Oakland Housing Project without fences (Peralta)

Grateful for What?

Open letter to Mr. Guichard and members of the board of the Oakland Public Housing Authority from Bill Goetz, community organizer at East Oakland Area Service center, member Lockwood Improvement League.

Dear Mr. Guichard and members of the board:

In compliance with your request at the meeting of March 14, 1966, I am putting into writing some of my complaints against the Oakland Public Housing Authority.

Once a month, the members of the board swoop down out of the hills and decide the fate of the poor in public housing. I ask you, Mr. Commissioner, what do they or you know of our problems, our needs and our desires? You, Mr. Guichard, earn \$1,100 a month. I might remind you this is what some people in public housing live on in one year. Mr. Godkin, chairman of the board, you must earn as much as, if not more than, Mr. Guichard. How can you relate to a woman with three, six or nine children who lives on welfare?

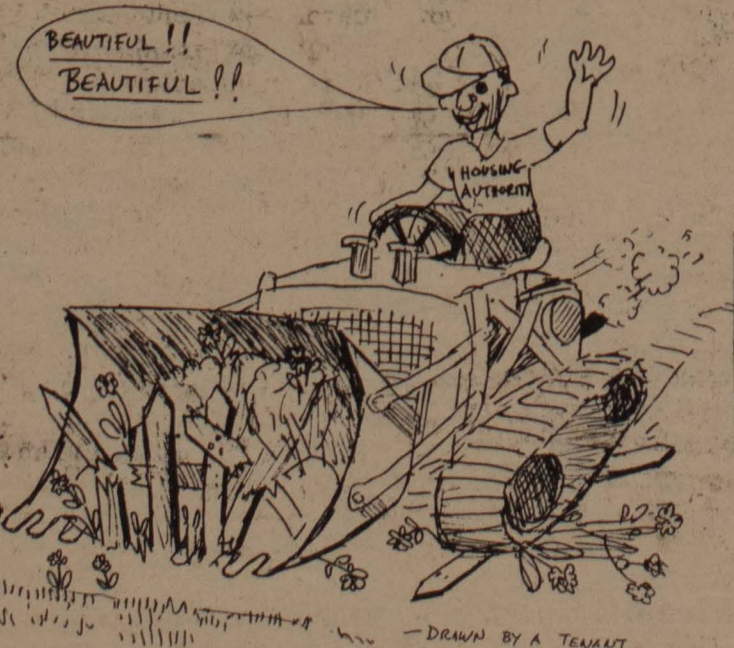
During a discussion on wheth-

er unwed mothers should be allowed in public housing, Board Member Leon Riese asked: "Do we have to have this type of person in a development where there are children?" I ask you, Mr. Riese, since you seemed to be so concerned about children, how do you propose to care for these unwed mothers' children? I'm sure it's not your intention to play, God, Mr. Riese, but have you ever stopped to think, "There but for the grace of God go I?"

Remember, Mr. McHenry, when we picketed you at your place of business because you were in favor of destroying our fences? Remember when you said to a newspaper reporter, "As for the fences keeping the kids in, we're not in the baby sitting business. It's just one of those things. They're not getting any sympathy from me. With all this trouble and ruckus, these people should be gratified they have public housing to live in. Public housing is inadequate in Oakland, so they should be grateful they are in there at all."

Yes, Mr. McHenry, we are grateful that we live there, and

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—DRAWN BY A TENANT



Children in San Antonio Villa

Shifting Slums

By Earl Hamlin

EDITOR'S NOTE: Relocation is a dirty word in Oakland. The people in urban renewal, the people in BART - they squirm when they hear it. They know what they owe to the people they shove around, but they don't like to be reminded of it.

Mr. Hamlin writes about what happens when the problem of relocation is ignored; he works for Central Realty, and is a candidate for the Alameda Board of Supervisors.

The public officials and the press talk much about all the benefits that urban renewal and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) will bring. But very little is said about the effect these projects will have on the lives of many of the poor.

When people do complain about the injustices caused by relocation, it is too little and too late. The general public must gain something from the project being built. But the individual guy that's got to move (sometimes aged, often of a minority race, and usually poor) is damned to work out his problems.

This is not only wrong from a humanitarian standpoint, but also from a practical standpoint. Here are some important factors:

1. We all pay when people are not paid enough to buy a comparable or better home than the one they had.
2. Overcrowded schools and depressed property values are the result of families being relocated to one neighborhood. Children are uprooted from familiar schools and communities. They lose their identity and incentive which is hard to come by

in a hostile world dominated by economic and social inequities.

3. People are justified in their belief that poor people have no rights, old people have no security, good schools are for rich children, home ownership is for suckers, and urban renewal is Negro removal and the city is a human junkyard.

The Acorn Project and the City of Alameda Public Housing are responsible for these relocation problems. BART makes no relocation efforts at all.

Acorn Project planners point with pride to their efforts at relocating people in homes better than those they occupied in West Oakland. But what they do not talk about is what happened to relocatees after they had been resettled for a year. Greedy landlords subdivided old Victorian homes to create conditions as bad as those the Acorn planners were supposed to replace. Two-thirds of the Acorn Project relocatees settled in census tract 66-A (around Lockwood and Havenscourt schools). The effect on the schools was overcrowding and student turnover. (It is not surprising that some of the worst complaints about schools and housing come from Lockwood and Havenscourt parents.)

Many lots in these two areas now have additional units added on. Duplexes and fourplexes have been hastily built to meet an artificially induced demand. What were once neat, lower middle-class single family dwellings have been turned into overcrowded slums.

The City of Alameda's policy on relocation is very simple - it does not have one. In its haste

to get rid of its public housing units it turns people out onto the streets and disclaims any legal or moral obligation to help relocate them.

Unless action is taken quickly BART threatens to provide additional examples of relocation injustices.

The things that can and must be done to end these are:

1. Pay people based on what it costs them to relocate in comparable housing, with subsidies if needed to help them maintain their new dwellings.

The term "fair market value" can only be meaningless and cruel to a poor retired couple living in a mortgage-free \$10,000 house which cannot be replaced for \$10,000.

2. Make extensive use of rent subsidies so that renting relocatees need not give in to landlords who hold out the promise of lower rents for permission to further subdivide buildings.

3. Hold planners, experts and public officials responsible for the foreseeable consequences of their projects on all parts of the city. What census tract 66-A looks like 10 years from now is just as much the responsibility of the Acorn planners as is the Acorn project itself. Departments squirm out of such responsibilities all too easily.

4. Adopt a Fair Housing ordinance so that relocatees can move to other than ghetto areas. A city without a Fair Housing ordinance not only does not deserve the benefits of urban renewal and rapid transit, etc., but cannot afford the consequences of not having such an ordinance.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following statements were made by tenants in Oakland's public housing projects. Some of these statements were made during meetings of tenant groups like the Peralta Improvement League and the Lockwood Improvement League. They point up the criticisms of the Oakland Housing Authority as outlined in Mr. York's article and in Mr. Goetz's open letter.

Most people in public housing are afraid to speak out individually. The tenant group meetings give many of them the confidence to discuss their needs openly and to take action to see that these needs are met).

Disabled nurse, Negro, living with mother in housing project for twenty-five years:

"Public housing is lousy. You have no say. No privacy. No beautification. You have no say what you like and don't like. They (the housing commissioners) do as they please. When you go to see the manager you can never see him or even get him on the phone. He's afraid to face us. He plays favorites."

"We're not getting charity. We're paying for it. The manager should listen to the tenants. That's the facts of what's going on in the housing project.

"We're trying to fight for our rights. It's really not sunny California like you've heard. But we're winning slowly but surely. We do have hopes that we shall overcome."

Negro mother of six children, living in public housing since 1942:

"When my children first started to school I worked on the P.T.A. and then was a leader of the boy scouts, girl scouts, church groups and all that stuff. After I had been here a year, I asked the manager about having a fence to keep children from running all over and he gave me permission. Then everyone had fences, up until last year. Then

there was just not enough money to go around.

Havenscourt Jr. high, whose children went on strike against the food situation in the fall of last year, doesn't even ask for funds from the PTA nutrition fund. The faculty occasionally loans lunch money to children who ask for it. But most of the children choose to beg handouts from their schoolmates rather than from their teacher. Lunch at Havenscourt begins at 10:40 a.m. - that is if you're fortunate enough to get one. The school administration has finally decided to build Havenscourt a separate cafeteria so it won't have to share its lunch hours with Lockwood. That should ease up the schedule a bit. It's a long stretch to go without eating from 10:40 a.m. to 3:30 or 4 p.m.

On the first and the 16th of the month at schools near the housing projects in the flatlands, the lunches the children carry are large and well balanced. Toward the end of the pay period, the lunches grow lean or disappear. Most children refuse to go to the office to ask for a loan for lunch. One little girl who was seen going without lunch for several days was finally persuaded to go to the office. She was given a nickel and a pickle. It seems the PTA nutrition fund had run out.

One teacher in the target area, when told that one of her pupils was often kept home from school because her mother had nothing for her to eat, replied: "I don't have anything to do with it; that is a matter for the school nurse."

When this sort of thing goes

they had this thing they called beautification project. And they tore down our fences. Everyone seemed to be happy in the community before they tore down our fences. Now it's lousy. Really lousy."

"The housing authority plays favorites. I know people who were only up for two months and they got a place. My daughter has been waiting for years. Public housing should be where the people can have more comfort. But the manager says he's interested in units and not the people. Tell the people that. They can't push me around. I pay for public housing. I think they figure we have less rights."

Negro widow, four children, ten years in public housing:

"You never get a fair discussion with the housing commissioners. You are always turned aside. There is just no consideration. We have to get people in office who are concerned about the people. Their ways and action prove what they are. I don't believe in the beating and scheming type of people. The fences are the main issue."

Unemployed Negro man, wife works as teacher's aide, has four children:

"All of us in the units have at least one gripe, but it might not be the same gripe. Even though we don't all voice our opinions we are all somewhat dissatisfied. Lots of people don't complain because they are afraid to speak out because they are not eligible to live here. If they gripe they are afraid they would be put out.

"The housing commissioners don't care about the poor man's problem. They are only interested in saving the taxpayer's money and only concerned about themselves. It's alright to save money when it is going to waste. But when they are spending money for our well being and safety it should be spent. After all, it is the people's money."

on, the school board simply can't afford to leave the question of feeding hungry children up to the individual schools. In fact at a March 10 State board of education meeting, resolutions were passed which urged not only that federal support for school lunch programs be increased but that school districts develop written policies and procedures for providing free or reduced price meals to needy children.

Still the battle for the hungry child in Oakland goes on. The policy in most California schools has been to refuse free hot lunches to children if it was known that their families were on welfare. "This policy seems to me to be self-evidently ridiculous," said state board president Thomas W. Braden. He suggested a resolution asking school boards throughout the state to reconsider any such policy.

This was done in part as a direct result of the stir of unrest displayed at the school board meetings in Oakland. On January 25, 1966, after all attempts had failed to get any action or consideration, several organizations and parent groups stormed down to the school board meeting. They paraded in front of the administration building with picket signs protesting the fact that the school board was still refusing to act.

In reviewing the situation, the state board uncovered these facts. Oakland receives a subsidy from the government of 4½ cents a lunch. The children pay an average of 35 cents at schools in upper middle class areas as

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What's Cooking in School?



A NICKLE—A PICKLE

EDITOR'S NOTE: One of the hottest issues in Oakland is the free hot lunch proposal. Should the school district provide free hot lunches to needy children on a permanent basis? The answer of the Flatlands people is yes!

The following articles tell what the school administration in Oakland has done so far to meet this urgent request.

Agnes Woods lives in East Oakland; her children go to Oakland public schools. She works at the East Oakland Area Service center as a community organizer.

Rod Duncan is Assemblyman Petris' legal assistant. He is a candidate for Assemblyman in

the 15th district.

Parents and community groups have been storming the Oakland school board to demand a free hot lunch for all the children that need it. So far, the board has only agreed that children should be fed on an emergency (not a permanent) basis, regardless of whether their parents are welfare recipients.

Why isn't the school board pressuring for Federal funds to pay for free hot lunches in target area schools?

According to school board member Lorenzo Hoopes, the school district's business is "meeting the children's educational needs." Going hungry just doesn't come under that category. Superintendent Phillips dis-

agrees, however. A report he issued recently pointed out that a child could not concentrate and learn when he was hungry. There are many ways, Supt. Phillips said, that the school board could finance hot lunches for children who need them. Berkeley does it; why shouldn't Oakland?

To date, the Oakland schools use only one source to pay for feeding hungry children: The PTA nutrition fund. This provides lunch on an emergency basis only. Until recently, even this assistance was not always given to children whose families were on welfare. Such children were asked to pay this money back as soon as possible. But they seldom could repay the loan because

of the OHA's attitude toward tenants can be seen by attending the commissioners' meetings. Since we started presenting tenant grievances there each month, the commissioners have called us such things as "communists," "pip-squeaks," "cockroaches," "emulators of Hitler, Stalin, and Khrushchev," etc. The insults they throw at the tenant spokesmen are sickening, and show what they really think about the people they were appointed to serve. They have tried their best to prevent us from bringing our grievances to the meetings. They have refused again and again to answer for their behavior in public. In November, Guichard was scheduled to appear in a panel-discussion on public housing problems, along with several tenants. This was one of the regular Town Meeting discussions at the city library. Close to 200 Oakland citizens, including many tenants, were there to see the rare sight of OHA defending itself in public. But Guichard failed to show up. In his place came a letter from the commissioners saying they couldn't let him speak because he was overworked. The audience roared with laughter at this weak excuse, and the tenants then presented their problems, unchallenged, for the rest of the evening.

In October, the commissioners decided they would try to pass a policy banning illegitimate children from public housing. We put up a good protest on this last indignity too, and on this we had the help of CORE and many other groups. Another housing project organized themselves into a Tenants' Union as a result of this. Finally the commissioners found out that a policy banning illegitimate children was illegal discrimination. And that was the end of that!

OHA's View

The primitive philosophy which OHA follows is that public housing is a charity, a hand-out to the temporarily down-and-outers.

Their idea is that people should live in public housing for as short a period as possible. So they give preference to whole families, with husbands who can work and are therefore able to get on their feet financially and move out sooner. But what about the family which has no working male member? What about the unwed mothers? What about the widow? It seems to us that they need public housing more than anybody!

Because of this old idea of public housing, OHA is always passing policies which enforce poverty rather than help free people from it. For example, until recently the Housing Authority has not allowed tenants to have extension telephones, freezers or clothes dryers. If you had a freezer or dryer when you came into the project, you had to sell it. Recently Chestnut Court Tenants' Union got OHA to O.K. having freezers. The reason OHA give for not allowing freezers in the past was that "they seemed a luxury item not in keeping with the principles of public housing." In other words, poor people should be kept poor! We still can't have dryers or two telephones. When we asked why we couldn't have two telephones (since we pay the bills), they said the same thing: poor people shouldn't have two phones! Big Daddy OHA speaks again — and we're getting damn tired of it! When we asked for interest on the \$25 deposits all tenants have to pay (OHA holds about \$32,500 in tenant deposits), Commissioner Riese said: "It's just not done—it's not a common practice at all!"

When school integration started in the south, some other people said the same thing: "It's

not a common practice at all." Well, it took a good Freedom Movement to make it common; and that's just what it may take here too!

The time is way overdue for cleaning up the Oakland Housing Authority! It's time the commissioners learn that we don't want any "Big Daddies with hand-outs." We don't owe them anything — we're paying for what we get, according to our incomes. Their job is to be public servants for us, the tenants. They were appointed to serve OUR best interests, not theirs. And we don't have to check in our rights at the office when we move into the projects. There are four housing projects in Oakland that are organized in tenant groups already. A lot of other groups in town are waking up to our problems too. A big change is coming soon! Look out Oakland Housing Authority — Here come the tenants!



Chester St., West Oakland—to be torn down by BART



The rat problem in Oakland has always been a difficult one to fight. The Sanitation Department will do its best when called but the landlords often kick the tenants out for the trouble caused. See the next issue for a story on the REAL rats of Oakland—the Slumlords.

Grateful for What?

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we are grateful that we have fences in our backyards. But should we also be grateful that you can enter our homes without notice on the whim of any of your housing employees? Should we be grateful that you can evict us without giving a reason? Should we be grateful that you charge welfare recipients more rent than you charge non-recipients for the same size apartment? Should we be grateful that you and the board members intimidate us and call some of names and try to degrade us at your public meetings? Should we be grateful that as soon as one of us tenants starts to make a decent living he has to move out?

Should we be grateful that with every raise, no matter how small, our rent goes up so it makes it difficult to "get on one's feet"? I must assume that you fail to take into consideration that when a family has been "down" for any long period, it takes time for them to get back on their feet.

Five men sit on the board of the Oakland Housing Authority, with a consultant, a lawyer, and a man to whom they pay \$1,100 a month to be their executive director.

Board Member Mr. Anderson, who is a union leader, told me on the phone that it was his idea to tear the housing project fences

down. He told me that our children can go play in a park, but he doesn't know that there isn't a park within a mile of the 1500 children in Lockwood and San Antonio projects.

How can you gentlemen of OHA possibly go blundering along making decisions without knowing all the facts? Only recently, for instance, when I mentioned to you that you have 800 children in San Antonio villa within a two-block area, one board member said, "Is that so?" Gentlemen, if you were to display the same ignorance in your own business affairs, or if you handled your clients the way you do housing tenants, I wouldn't give any of you two years before you were applying for entrance into public housing yourselves.

Could you gentlemen arrange for a specified time on the agenda when tenants could speak out about any urgent problems even though these problems may not be included as separate items on the agenda?

Could you gentlemen develop or at least affect the feeling of equality for those appearing before you who are less articulate and less informed than yourselves?

Any one of these small requests would go some way to assure those who depend on you for their homes that you have, in fact, some concern for their welfare.

JOBART: WHERE THE ACTION IS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Over the past three months, JOBART (Justice on Bay Area Rapid Transit) has held rallies, demonstrations, and press conferences in an unsuccessful attempt to force BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) to negotiate on three specific issues: jobs, evictions, and discrimination in hiring.

On March 17, JOBART organized a picket in front of the BART head office in San Francisco. Several days later, they sent a letter to BART asking BART not to award contracts concerning employment and to cease all real estate activities which affect home owners and tenants until a meeting could be held with JOBART to discuss JOBART's demands.

BART agreed to hold a meeting with JOBART on Friday, March 25, and to cease its real estate activities for the week of March 21-28. Except for a minor demolition contract, BART also agreed not to award contracts involving employment during this same period.

The article below lists the by now well-known demands JOBART plans to present to BART at the March 25 meeting. Should nothing come of this meeting, JOBART intends to continue putting pressure on BART — including direct action — until an agreement on each demand is reached.

Justice on Bay Area Rapid Transit (JOBART) intends to force the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) to use its funds and power to HELP, not hurt, the people of the bay area.

JOBART's concern is jobs, evictions, and discrimination. JOBART has made the following

demands on BART:

1. Residents of the bay area must be given first chance at the 8,000 jobs that BART has to offer. BART's money comes from bay area taxes. It is unfair for BART to bring in people from all over the country to fill these jobs when unemployment is so high in the bay area. There are thousands of people living here who are already trained to do these jobs or who can be retrained in plenty of time to do the jobs and do them well.
2. BART must hire a substantial number of Negroes, Mexican-Americans, and other minority people. As a large employer in the bay area, BART has a duty to help solve the problems of discrimination which keep so many of our people poor and unemployed.
3. BART must give fair eviction notice to people who live in the path of the rail line. Three months' notice is the least that should be given. Now some people are only getting three day's notice.
4. BART must use its money and efforts to find good housing for people who are being evicted from their homes. And BART must use its money to be sure evicted people get a fair price for their houses.
5. BART must not build the Richmond "Wall." BART is planning to put its tracks down a street in Richmond which separates the black and white areas of the city. BART plans to build the tracks at street level, with cross-roads only every five blocks. This will make the Negro section of Richmond into a ghetto. This must not happen. The tracks should be put underground or along another street, or more

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Jobart Picket March 17

WHY THE WALK OUT?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter was written and signed by the three chairmen of the Target Area Advisory Committees of North Oakland, West Oakland and Fruitvale, as well as by the Target Area Advisory Committee delegates to the Oakland Economic Development Council who walked out of the OEDC meeting of Saturday, March 12. Copies of this letter were sent to President Johnson and to Sargent Shriver, head of the Poverty Program. The letter explains the reasons for the walk-out and outlines the conditions under which the support of the delegates and the Advisory Committees who withdrew from the OEDC will be returned.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The following statement was presented today to the Oakland Economic Development Council after repeated attempts to make the "War on Poverty" an effective and truly representative program:

We have tried in every way possible to represent the concerns of the poor people in our communities to the Oakland Economic Development Council. In spite of this the Council has followed its own course, funded agencies that are not trusted by the poor, supported programs that are not wanted by the poor, and in general refused our advice and counsel. If we are to responsibly represent the poor, we feel that we can no longer support the Department of Human Resources and the Oakland Economic Development Council as it is presently constituted.

Whereas the Target Area Advisory Committees have labored long and hard to develop and evaluate programs, the O.E.D.C. has often passed over serious matters in a cavalier manner with little regard for the preparation which went into them.

Many well meaning individuals can be appointed to the O.E.D.C., but if they are not elected by representatives of the poor—to which they are directly responsible—then we have no assurance that they will reflect the concerns of the poor.

Therefore we are withdrawing our representatives from the O.E.D.C. and announce our intention to formally request of the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, that the Target Area Coordinating Committee and the joint Target Area Action Committees be recognized as the official Oakland Community Action Program agency.

We shall request our own staff, submit proposals directly to Washington, and offer our assistance to any indigenous group seeking funding for its program.

We appreciate the support which we have received from individual O.E.D.C. members, and we invite and encourage any who support the idea of greater in-

JOBART . . .

Continued from Page 4

cross-roads should be planned. JOBART is made up of representatives of bay area religious, civil rights, political, and community groups. Any group can be represented on JOBART's steering committee. Any group interested in joining JOBART should call the JOBART office at 929-12th street, Oakland; phone 832-2269 or 832-2270.

JOBART needs people. Anyone who is willing to do telephoning, manning the office, picketing, or any other kind of work should call the office. The office will be open most days from 10:30 to 4:30.



WATTS by W. Chastain

"homework"

When the Development Council was created, there was NO representation from the target area committees. Only after loud protesting were we granted two representatives from each target area, bringing to a total of twelve out of forty, the elected representation from the four target areas.

It should be noted that of the twelve elected representatives, some are eligible recipients of services under the program and some are not. Each advisory committee represents a coalition of the various segments, both poor and non-poor, to be found in their area. The committees are constantly trying to improve their own representativeness and actively solicit cooperation and membership from all groups and individuals in their neighbor-

hoods. Unfortunately, under the present administration of the Human Resources Department and the leadership of the O.E.D.C., the program has been decreasing participation and representation, rather than increasing them. The fundamental problem lies in the present structure of the Oakland Economic Development Council. Much of Oakland's initial poverty program and structure were determined long before there was any representation of elected target area com-

involvement of the poor, to come with us as we seek to establish a truly representative agency. This decision has been reached after much soul-searching and only as a "last resort"; after working within the program for close to a year. As Advisory Committee members we were led to believe that we would have a real opportunity to plan and review programs in our neighborhoods and now find that we are only "window dressing" for the Council. After our Advisory Committees were formed we were told that our only function was to "advise" and "recommend". Even when we tried to do just that, spending long hours in review of proposals, our recommendations were ignored by Council members who hadn't done their own

When the Development Council was created, there was NO representation from the target area committees. Only after loud protesting were we granted two representatives from each target area, bringing to a total of twelve out of forty, the elected representation from the four target areas. It should be noted that of the twelve elected representatives, some are eligible recipients of services under the program and some are not. Each advisory committee represents a coalition of the various segments, both poor and non-poor, to be found in their area. The committees are constantly trying to improve their own representativeness and actively solicit cooperation and membership from all groups and individuals in their neighbor-

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mittee members. Although the Council has pacified the people by allowing a few representatives to sit on that body, they have steadfastly refused to make substantial changes in their procedures and approach. For example:

1. The Council has no master plan for development of new and creative programs.

2. The Council members prefer to do all of their work at one early morning meeting once a month (7:45 a.m. on Wednesday, when the chairman has to be in court shortly after 9 a.m.), and reluctantly agreed to meet only quarterly in the evening in the target areas - in lieu of one morning meeting. The chairman contends that evening meetings before the public are "inconvenient" to the non-poor, claiming that such important persons "would find it difficult to commit themselves to a steady diet of evening meetings." If such commitment is lacking among the non-poor segments of our community, it certainly indicates why the program is suffering so greatly both here and elsewhere.

3. The council operates on a crisis basis, due to the infrequency of their meetings and are always being told that unless they act today, the funds will run out tomorrow or next week, thereby limiting adequate discussion or information.

4. Institutions and indigenous groups are required to meet the same hurry-up deadlines, which always operate against self-help programs. For example, the public schools can work their staff overtime over the weekend and come in with a detailed proposal to eat up available funds, while a group of volunteers, doing their planning evenings and on their own time with little or no technical assistance, get lost in the shuffle.

5. The Council members too easily accept at face value the recommendations of Dr. Smith, who is more concerned about pleasing everyone by giving him

Continued on Page 6.

THE CHURCH AND BART

EDITOR'S NOTE: BART's construction projects will open up at least 8,000 jobs over the next five years. The immediate concern of the newly-formed Ministers of the East Bay is to force BART and the labor union to hire and train local people, especially minority people, to fill these jobs. For the first time these ministers, representing some 80,000 Negroes in the east bay, have agreed to pit their forces together to fight for a common cause.

In the following article, Rev. J. Russel Brown, pastor of the First African-Methodist-Episcopal church and chairman of the Ministers of the East Bay, tells how and why this group was formed.

Neither Bart nor the labor unions have accepted responsibility for or taken any interest in training and hiring minority people for the jobs made available by a billion dollar tax-supported public construction program in the bay area.

Sensing that in Oakland and the entire east bay a potential Watts situation was developing a committee from the Interdenominational Alliance (of which Rev. A. S. Jackson is president) was appointed to confer with repre-

sentatives of the Baptist ministers union (of which Rev. Guice is president), the United Baptist Union (of which Rev. Jacobs is president), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Ministers Alliance (of which Rev. L.S. White is president), the African Methodist Episcopal Ministerial Alliance (of which Rev. E. P. Williams is president), and pastors of many independent churches.

The group agreed that unemployment was the area's most pressing problem, and that ministers and churches were obligated to God to seek its solution. With tensions and distances increasing between the privileged, and the underprivileged, the ministers agreed that there was no way they can deliver themselves, help the people and be true to their calling unless they make whatever ultimate and complete leadership sacrifices necessary to bring employment and financial decency to the poor. No matter what is involved in the way of concessions, training, patience and finance to achieve this goal, the ministers accept their obligation as of now. Nothing they can do (regardless of how extreme) for the improvement of the present insane conditions and poverty and discrimination in the east bay could be more grievous than



Photo by Howard Harowitz

those same conditions.

Presently the ministers of independent churches and ministerial alliances and unions are meeting at First A.M.E. church, 530 37th street, Oakland. The Rev. J. L. Richard has been assigned the duty of co-chairman, Rev. J. L. Strawther of secretary, Rev. R.T. George of assistant secretary, Rev. A.C. Dones of treasurer, and Rev. J. Russell Brown of chairman.

The Ministers of the East Bay seek the help of God and all men.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE OUR SCHOOLS:

If you have ideas or want more information phone 533-4158, or 652-7276

WHY THE WALK OUT?

Continued from Page 5

a little piece of the pie, than with really helping people to get help from other sources or with forcing institutions to drastically re-evaluate their programs "for the poor."

6. The Council does not think that the poor, after close personal experience with poverty, know what they want; and it continues to fund programs which have demonstrated an historical inability to cope creatively with the problems of poverty.

7. Further, the Council and the Human Resources Department systematically attempt to destroy and discredit leaders of the poor. The chair has permitted name calling, innuendo and charges against those who have been representing the interests of the poor in Oakland.

8. When the Council meets under the watchful eye of the public at night in the target areas a very liberal image is presented, such as: "The Council agreed to move as soon as possible in the direction of having a majority of its members chosen from the elected Target Area Advisory Committees. Vote: Ayes 11, Noes 7" (from the Minutes of Meeting No 17, February 23, 1966, 8:00 p.m., Lazear School Auditorium). Then, at the more secluded and remote location of the Dunsmuir House, after discouraging public attendance, the chairman declared, while dispensing with a reading of the minutes, that the action quoted was "only a guide" and was to be discussed today.

In light of the action taken at the previous meeting, a motion was introduced by a target area representative "that the membership of the O.E.D.C. be increased to sixty, with five additional delegates to be elected from each target area committee." This would have given the target area committees a simple majority of representation on the O.E.D.C.

The Council soundly defeated the motion, by a roll call vote of 21 to 6, thereby reversing their previous action and resolving to maintain the status quo and to keep the target area committees in their place (powerless to responsibly serve the poor in their neighborhoods.)

Though we were prepared to consider alternate plans, such as trouncing by the council, carried on in an atmosphere lacking in openness, without the spirit of creative problem solving, and chaired by a man who had conspired to build an air-tight case against the poor (20 minutes of quotes from federal sources on why there should not be more participation by the poor), there was nothing left to do but present our statement and quit the proceedings.

Our requests are simple; a simple majority of elected representation from the target area committees on the O.E.D.C.; some effective voice in the operation of the centers and programs in our neighborhoods; definite amounts of money set aside for strictly self-help programs; whether it is used or not; and staff and community organizers assigned to the committees to aid us to more effectively serve our neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Gerald Leo
Chairman, Fruitvale
Mrs. Helle-Liesel Sabato
OEDC Delegate, East Oakland
Mr. Sherwin Harris
OEDC Delegate, West Oakland
Rev. Robert Olmstead
Chairman, North Oakland
Rev. Bradford Bryant
OEDC Delegate, Fruitvale
Mrs. Frances Hedgespeth
OEDC Delegate, North Oakland
Mr. Ralph Williams
Chairman, West Oakland
Mrs. Gwen Green
OEDC Delegate, North Oakland



CONVENTION OF THE POOR

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Convention of the Poor, held in Oakland February 26-27, was attended by representatives of the poor throughout the state of California. Discussion groups covered three topics: housing, welfare, and the War on Poverty. In the following article Mrs. Juanita Barnes, co-chairman of the Convention (along with Katherine Himes, Welfare Rights Organization, Richmond) reports on what she felt it achieved. As a member of the Chestnut Court Tenant Union, she sat in on the discussion group on housing which she also reports on in fuller detail.

The first state-wide Convention of the Poor was held in West Oakland the last weekend in February. There were delegates representing Welfare Rights Organizations, Tenant groups, and Anti-Poverty groups from all over the state of California.

Plans were made at the convention to form a State Federation of the Poor, as well as state-wide councils of different tenant welfare and anti-poverty groups throughout California. The federation would serve as an umbrella for all the smaller councils. This would provide a chain of communication between the different State councils. For instance, the tenant councils would know what W.R.O. councils were doing through the Federation; thus if there were certain issues that W.R.O. councils were working on, which the tenant groups felt they could help with, they would be able to do so through the Federation.

In the opening session of the convention each delegation was given time to express its views. Then we broke up into the three discussion groups with each person attending the one he was most

Ideas, criticism of The Flatlands Newspaper are welcomed

Mr. Harvey Peters
OEDC Delegate, North Oakland
Mr. John Henderson
OEDC Delegate, West Oakland
Mr. Reuben Smith
OEDC Delegate, West Oakland

interested in. I was interested in all, but unfortunately was able to attend only one, which was on housing, public and private.

In the discussion dealing with public housing, we found that although we live in different sections of the state, we share the same problems, the most common being the unwillingness of the Housing authorities to think of us as people with feelings and desires who only want a fair chance to live and serve in the community as people and be treated decently and not dictated to.

In our discussion on private housing we talked about the absent slum lords who charge outrageous rents for these slums and about how they should be made by law to fix them up and made to rent them at reasonable rents so poor people would be able to pay the rent and have a little money left for food.

Each group made resolutions pertaining to its topic. The convention as a whole passed a resolution to have something done about Fontana in Southern California. The convention voted and sent telegrams to government officials protesting the terrible conditions in that city.

Several representatives from different state and federal agencies were invited to the convention's dinner session which was highlighted by the Fontana delegation. They told of the total lack of interest and consideration shown by the "Establishment" towards the poor people in their town. I think the convention gave them hope and courage that they are not alone in their struggle.

The convention gave poor people the opportunity to get together and communicate with each other and from this communication came the feeling of togetherness and courage: togetherness in our fight for equality and justice and the right to function as citizens of our communities; courage to go on fighting until something is done and every man will be able to stand up and truthfully say "I know I am a first class citizen."

There will be another convention of the poor in April or May. The exact time and place will be decided upon at a planning meeting in Fresno on March 26 and 27.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The following Letter to the Editor concerns the March 12 OEDC walk out. Mr. Joel Ross, who wrote the letter, is not a member of The Flatlands editorial board. His position on the walk out, however, closely represents that of the editorial board.

Editor, The Flatlands:

I'd like to say something about the walk out March 12 by OEDC representatives from the Target Area Advisory Committees. I was there as an interested observer from the Fruitvale area because I wanted to see whether the advisory committees could get the 51% representation they wanted. At an OEDC meeting a couple of weeks before, the OEDC had voted to give the advisory committees this kind of representation at the March 12 meeting. Supposedly, the meeting would only take up the means of carrying out the policy that had been approved.

Delegates from the advisory committees had gotten together and decided on two different motions to present to the OEDC that morning. The first motion would have given them immediate 51% representation, but was not really expected to pass. The second would have given them a controlling voice after a time, by filling up vacancies with advisory committee representatives.

But no one even got a chance to present the second motion. Judge Wilson had proposals of his own in mind, and they didn't add up to any 51% representation elected from the advisory committees. He rammed those proposals through so ruthlessly that the advisory committee delegates had no choice but to walk out. They had been patient for a long time and all it got them was a slap in the face.

The reasons Judge Wilson gave for cutting short the advisory committees sounded pretty good if you didn't think about them.

They boiled down to saying that the advisory committees weren't representative enough of the poor and the poverty areas, and that not enough of the members they did have attended meetings. So he was going to have the OEDC hand-pick delegates from the poverty areas to make up for these deficiencies.

Well, hell. Maybe the committees aren't representative enough, but it's not because they haven't tried to be. Besides, they're a lot more representative than the OEDC and its members who live in the hills.

As far as participation goes, of course no one's going to spend a lot of time at meetings where nothing can be done but make noises about issues. When advisory committee members have spent hours making decisions about programs that vitally concern them, the "important people" on the OEDC have brushed over their decisions and judgments as if they were hardly worth considering. Only a fool would be willing to keep on com-

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ing to meetings that have that kind of result.

That's why the 51% representation is so important. It's the only way the target areas can make their voices effective. But Judge Wilson's proposals were designed to cripple the voice of the flatlands, and make the OEDC look good at the same time. As long as the poverty areas are split into little groups, all the "important people" can continue to make all the decisions. They want Negroes fighting Mexican-Americans, and hand-picked delegates responsible to no one but themselves fighting with advisory committee delegates.

Because of course we're going to have arguments. A lot of us have different ways of looking at things, and different needs and backgrounds. But the differences should be hammered out in our own back yards, not when we're up against the hill people. That's why the advisory committees are necessary as an organization of poverty area delegates to the OEDC.

As I write this, it's up to the advisory committees to decide what to do next. I can't speak for any of them. Already Judge Wilson has sent committee members a letter politely threatening to kick them off the OEDC if they won't buckly under, and find other "indigenous representation," as he puts it. There have been hints that some of the "self-help" programs may be cut off if the advisory committee representatives interested in them don't back down.

If, by the time this is printed, the target area committees decide to back up their delegates, I hope other organizations will do two things. One is refuse to send delegates to fill advisory committee vacancies. If Wilson and his group only want flatlanders as window dressing, to make them look good, make them show it to the world by having to hand-pick delegates who are not representative of anyone but themselves.

The second thing is to make sure that the advisory committee are as representative as possible. If there are groups that are being left out, they should insist on adequate representation. They'll probably be able to get it. It's only by sticking together that we'll be able to get what we want and deserve; the power to decide on issues that affect.

Of course, the advisory committees may decide not to back up their representatives. In that case, there's not much more to be said, except that the poor will have lost another battle in the war on poverty. —JOEL ROSS

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EAST OAKLAND'S BLACK SHEEP

EDITOR'S NOTE: The East Oakland Advisory Committee was the only one of the four Oakland target area advisory committees which did not formally withdraw its support from the Oakland Economic Development Council at the time of the March 12 walk-out. One East Oakland Advisory Committee delegate to the OEDC, Mrs. Helle-Liesel Sabato, did join the walk-out but without the support of her committee chairman. In the following article she explains her reasons for joining the walk-out and urges the people of East Oakland to make their own views known to the Advisory Committee.

I have been involved in the War on Poverty for a long time. I have been dissatisfied with the whole thing for a long time. My gripe is not just how the Oakland Economic Development Council is acting. My big concern is really East Oakland Target Area D.

If you go and listen to the East Oakland Advisory Committee at one of its infrequent meetings, you will hear the voices of three people. These voices tell us how well we are doing on our own. They tell us that we are bringing in more poverty program services to East Oakland by working alone and not getting involved with the other three target areas. Why, they ask us, should we be concerned about what's going on in West Oakland, North Oakland or Fruitvale?

These three people are very good at making general encouraging remarks. But if you ask for any specific answers like how many people apply for help at the East Oakland Area Service Center (where free legal aid service, family service and other services are offered to the poor), you will be put off from one meeting to the next. You may still be waiting for your answer.

I have sat through a number of pleasant and unpleasant meetings as a member of the East Oakland Advisory Committee and one of its delegates to the OEDC; our meeting last Saturday was the most unpleasant of all. After a long discussion about the minutes of our previous meeting, we agreed that the personal opinions of the secretary should not be reflected but that only the action taken during the meeting should be recorded.

Then we came to the question of why I had walked out of the OEDC meeting of March 12, along with representatives of the three other target area advisory committees. I was the only delegate from the East Oakland Advisory Committee who joined the walk out. Now it was time for my trial.

Mr. Gilmore, the Chairman of our committee, gave a short run-down of what went on at the March 12 workshop meeting for those who had not been able to attend it.

Then I was given the floor but not really long enough to explain my position. I was followed by several other members who spoke on the walk out. When I tried to get the floor back, Mrs. Spears, secretary of the committee asked to be heard first. Mrs. Spears moved that I be asked to resign. As she put it, "I am sick of being told what to do by you poor white trash."

I seconded her motion with a "thank you for the compliment, Mrs. Spears." The meeting disrupted into a hectic discussion. Four of us decided to leave since it was impossible to continue the meeting intelligently.

The East Oakland Advisory Committee has still taken no formal stand to support the March

FLATLANDS SAYS:

On Saturday, March 12, delegates representing the North Oakland, West Oakland and Fruitvale Target Area Advisory Committees and one delegate from the East Oakland Advisory Committee walked out of the Oakland Economic Development Council workshop meeting in protest over the refusal of the OEDC to give the committees an effective role in running the Poverty Program.

The issues involved in the March 12 walk out are discussed in several articles in this issue. (See Letters to the Editor, "East Oakland's Black Sheep"; and "Why the Walk Out?"). The Editorial Board of THE FLATLANDS wishes to make its own position on this issue clear. We support the walk out 100%. Moreover, we urge the Target Area Advisory Committees to boycott future OEDC meetings at least until their demand for 51% representation on the Council is met.

Those who participated in the OEDC walk out took a big gamble. They gambled that at least three of the four Target Area Advisory Committees would be able to stand together on any future action they would take. But as the current issue of THE FLATLANDS goes to press, the Advisory Committees appear to be divided, even within their own groups, as to what to do next. The crucial question is whether their delegates should go back to the OEDC as observers or as participants. Should the Advisory Committees fail to reach an agreement on this question, leaving even one committee out on a limb, they will have played right into the hands of the people they are fighting. The leadership of the poor will be split.

Those who favor returning to the OEDC as participants say that unless the representatives of the poor fight the "structure" from within, the "structure" will be able to pretend they don't exist. Going back as participants, they argue, doesn't mean they can't walk out of the Council again.

THE FLATLANDS says that the Advisory Committees are the closest thing to representatives of the poor that the Poverty Program has. The Advisory Committees have been fighting the structure from within for a long time, and they have gotten nowhere. That's why their delegates finally walked out.

The basic concept of the Poverty Program—"maximum feasible participation of the poor"—is a revolutionary one. The present administrators of the Oakland Poverty Program have consistently shown that they are unwilling to accept its consequences. If there is to be a revolution at all because of the Poverty Program, they are dead set determined to control it.

THE FLATLANDS says that if the Advisory Committees do at this stage send their delegates back to the OEDC, even as participants under protest, they will in effect be accepting this control.



Mexican-American father & daughter, East Oakland

12 OEDC walk out. I ask the people of East Oakland to speak out now and let your representatives on the Advisory Committee know what you feel. My action in walking out of the OEDC workshop was not only to protest against the lack of authority the Advisory Committees share in running the Poverty Program; it was also to focus attention on the unrepresentative way our own Service Center and our Advisory Committee are being run.

I ask you people of East Oak-

land to get involved in community activity: to make these groups really speak and work for you. Do not close your eyes to what is going on by saying "let the other fellow take care of it!"

The difference between success and failure for the Poverty Program in East Oakland can be put into these five words: "I did not have time." We poor people must make the time if we are to have some say in our future, and get ourselves into a fuller life and out of our poverty rut.

THE FLATLANDS EDITORIAL BOARD

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Hot Tamale by Jack Ortega

There are nearly two million Mexican people in the state of California, one hundred and ten thousand in Alameda County and nine thousand in the Fruitvale target area.

We are the largest minority in this state, the highest in school dropout rate, the most people in prisons, the highest number of unemployed, the lowest amount of students in colleges, and the least represented in government.

We are unique. We are the native culture of this state who have contributed music, architectural design, laws, respect for the soul, foods, love songs, hot sauce, plants, tequila, and use and misuse of our beautiful Spanish language.

We nourish through the public trough of civil service and school systems specially trained policemen who can handle us, expert investigators (who learn their Spanish in high school), "research aces," specialized health personnel who fight Montezuma's Revenge, titled directors, and statical genuises who study us through IBM cards. We give jobs to welfare champions who save the County money by sending us to work on the farms, understanding District Attorneys who let us "cop out," all super-educated and trained to look into the Mexican and who of course make a living for themselves.

We support toothless advisory boards, do-nothing panels, emasculated Human Relations Commissions. We support politicians who use our vote, the army who kill us in groups in the National Guard, growers who exploit us, and businessmen who take advantage of our language barrier.

Nowhere are we included in determining our own destiny. We

are not allowed to control policy, to direct programs to fit our needs or to make our own decisions.

The cultural differences are ignored. As a result we are not competing in civil service exams, the courts of law and the main stream of the economy.

We give but we do not take. It's like a two-way street that has all the traffic going in one direction.

We are the white's best friend because we are quiet and polite. We are the political party's best block vote because we never ask or get political appointments. We are the city administrators' best "boys" because we give him a Mexican sombrero to wear during the Cinco de Mayo Festival. (And he lets us have our picture taken with him.) And we are the county supervisor's best constituents because we don't vote for anyone. (He likes tamales. "But not too much hot sauce, please.")

We in the Mexican-American Council of Alameda County are not going to be just extensions of someone's will, a puppet or a pawn. We are going to be involved at all levels of government and all levels of program organization. We are going to question how, why, and where grants are spent. We are going to participate in anything and everything that could benefit our children and community. You are invited to stand up and join us. Call Jack Ortega, vice chairman of MAUC (Mexican-American Unity Council).

HABLA UD, ESPANOL?

Spanish Speaking Advisory Committee Meeting
April 29, 7:30 p.m.
Franciscan Hall, 1500 34th ave

DON'T BUY DELANO GRAPES OR SCHENLEY PRODUCTS

BOYCOTT CHECK LIST:

SCHENLEY PRODUCTS

Bourbon:	Wines:
L.W. Harper	Roma
Ancient Age	Cresta Blanca
J. W. Dant	Dubonnet
Old Charter	
Cutty Sark	

Blends and Scotch:	Other hard liquor:
DeWar's White Label	Carioca rum
O.F.C.	Coronet VSQ Brandy
Melrose Diamond 12	Cherry Heering
MacNaughton	Seager's Gin
Order of Merit	Coates Plymouth Gin
Long John	Samovar

Table Grapes from Delano

HUELGA

For information on how you can help strengthen the boycott in Oakland call
The Mexican-American Unity Council - 2336 - 62nd Ave.
Oakland (569-4130)

Flatlands Calendar

MARCH 26 --- APRIL 9

SATURDAY, MARCH 26
O.E.D.C. meeting (War on Poverty) at Franklin Recreation Center, 1010 E. 15th St. at 8:30 a.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29
Oakland City Council meeting at City Hall, 7:30 p.m. (Every Tues.)
Bd. of Education meeting at 1025 2nd Ave., 4 p.m. (Every Tues.)
A joint meeting of the West Oakland Service Center and the First Unitarian church, program presented by the Health department. **OPEN TO ALL**, at the First Unitarian church, 14th and Castro, 8 p.m.

Spanish Speaking Advisory Committee meeting at Franciscan Hall, 1500 - 34th Ave. at 7:30
PIL (Peralta Improvement League) general meeting at Cole School in audio visual room, 7:30-9:30. **VERY IMPORTANT**

THURSDAY, MARCH 31
Lecture on Negro writers, Dr. John Summersette, speaker, at Brookfield Recreation Center, 525 Jones St., sponsored by Merritt College and the Oakland Recreation department. 7:30 p.m., admission free
Charm and Chatter Class at Lockwood Social hall, a free social hour for women offering trimmastics, grooming pointers and coffee time, 1-3 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 1
The Saul Alinsky Groups meet at 12 pm at the Centinal Presbyterian Church, 24th Ave. and Foothill blvd.
LIL (Lockwood Improvement Lg.) general meeting at Lockwood Social hall at 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2
Spring Festival Fashion and Talent show at the Western End Help center, 816 - 21st St., 3 p.m. - 2 a.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 4
23rd Avenue Improvement Lg. meeting at Manzanita School, 23rd Ave. Improvement League meeting at Manzanita School. Program on County Supervisorial candidates, 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7
East Oakland Advisory Committee meeting at Service center, 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9
DEADLINE DAY FOR VOTER REGISTRATION
REGISTER TO VOTE FOR THE PRIMARY ELECTION IN JUNE

If you have an important date for THE FLATLANDS' readers call 848-5152.

together at that time. It wasn't a police state the way Americans would call it - it was a Gestapo state, much worse. When the police found my father they let him free because they knew he was a veteran.

Because my father was Jewish I was not allowed to take part in the exam for higher education. That was already in 1933. In Germany you went eight years to elementary school; only about 5% of the children got to go on to higher education, if they passed the exam. I was not even allowed to take the exam for middle school. Americans don't know how lucky they are - free education.

My father was taken to prison for the third and last time in the end of January, 1942. That's when the Germans started losing the war in Russia. They would take all the political people who were still free because they were afraid of a rebellion in Germany.

After four weeks in prison, my father was taken to Auschwitz Concentration camp. He died the end of April, 1942. The day he died I saw his face in the clouds. I had been very close to him. When the news came somehow it was like I already knew. It didn't break me like it did my mother. She had to go to the Gestapo to get his papers. She made one remark in the hall of the Gestapo building to a political friend of my father's - she said "They have killed my husband." The Gestapo heard her and for that they put her in prison for two weeks.

I had started a job in 1940. The Party wanted every boy and girl to join a work camp, but my employer told the authorities I was sick. When things got tighter and they wanted to take half Jews away, my employer offered to take me to Heidebreck, East Germany, where he had a private office and no one would know me. I violated everything - I didn't report to the police or the Gestapo that I was moving. I guess the more you live with danger the calmer you get. I wish I had some of that calmness now when I sit on the East Oakland Advisory Committee.

Things started getting worse for Jews in 1938. The neighbors close to us were very understanding - as long as they knew us. The people themselves were very generous but everyone was afraid of speaking out. Like people in East Oakland, they did not question anything. Not many knew where the Jews were taken when they were taken away. They were taken at night. The few who did know and spoke out were in concentration camps themselves. There were as many Germans in the camps as Jews only it was easier to survive if you were a German. If you were Jew and still survived the first 6 months in camp you had a pretty good chance.

My father had decided to stay and fight the Nazis in Germany as early as 1933, even though he was a Jew and he knew what Hitler was planning to do. My mother said OK to this on the condition that she could christen us children. My father always said, stay out of prison. In prison you are helpless.

The end of the war was strange. I got a phone call from my boss. He said "You are still in the office?" I said, "Yes, why not?" He said "Do you know the Russians are 20 kilos away?" I said I hadn't thought there was anything I could do. But I sat in the train station for 10 hours, and then I caught the last train back to Dresden.

In February 1945 we lost everything, my family. We were bombed out. My mother and I began to walk north, away from the Russian advance. Stalin was the sister of Hitler - we knew that. The same system - camps, forced labor, discipline, it had been in Russia even before it was in Germany.

Then came the surrender.

Most people were glad it was all over. A lot couldn't take the defeat but still felt it was better than the bombing. A lot of people got rich on it.

I stayed 10 years in Hamburg after the war. Since my father's death almost, I had had to decide everything for the family. My mother was completely lost. The pressure was too much, and in 1946-47 I had a breakdown. Then I started to work in the headquarters of the Socialist Party. The Socialists were the strongest individual party at the time, but the other parties made a coalition to defeat them. The Socialists had a very strong leadership. They were fighting to get all the soldiers out of Germany and make the area neutral.

In 1948 I went to England to see my brother. That life in England fascinated me. Everybody had a lot of time. The whole community was based on friendship. It was so relaxed.

The next year I went to Sweden but I couldn't live there. Everyone was too satisfied. They had no problems. You leave a bag on the street and maybe somebody would watch it for you even without your asking. Coming from a country where no one trusted anyone, this was too much. England struck me. They were more politically oriented. Germany had been trained to obey. No questions asked. That's the school system. You do what you are told. It's hard to get out of the system once you've been raised in it. I'm glad I had a Jewish father who taught me what one person could do to change the whole situation; to be able to respect and make up your own mind.

I had a lot of different office jobs then. But I didn't like Hamburg. Hamburg was too cool for me as an outsider. I moved to Stuttgart in 1956. That's where I met my husband who was in the US Army.

We came to California in February, 1958. We lived on San Pablo and 17th. My husband was with the SP railroad. My husband really didn't know what he wanted. That's what's wrong with a lot of people. Unless you know, you will stay down on the bottom. He was laid off Christmas 1959. He hasn't worked since. Hundreds of people got fired by SP then. We lived like everybody else in poverty.

Then I began to wake up. I saw my neighbors buying their homes. If they could do it, I could get off welfare too. But everything failed.

In the summer of '63 we were cut off of welfare. We were only a family of six and Welfare said we could live on farm labor plus pay \$2.50 a day to get to and from the farms.

That's when I signed my kids up at the child care center and I got a job.

It was when my kids started school that I realized I couldn't keep my pledge not to get into politics in America. I wanted to have some say in the way of educating my kids. I noticed hardly any parents took part in PTA. There I found out Baymont Community District Council, to improve my neighborhood. I also got involved in the War on Poverty. There was so much to be done.

All the parks and nice things are in the hills. There is nothing down here in the flatlands. Unless you have a car you can never get up there. Welfare gives me \$1.70 and my husband .90 cents a month for recreation. We couldn't even see a movie for that.

Why I stick with the East Oakland Advisory Group is that I see the same thing happening here that I saw in Germany in 1933. A few people tell you what to do and nobody questions it. If three people can run everything in the Poverty program in this area and other people drop out and don't fight, that's it.

A NICKLE—A PICKLE

Continued from Page 3.
well as in the poverty target areas. Instead of giving free lunches to needy children the school administration charges less to all Oakland school children because this means it will receive more money from the government. The funds California receives depends on the number of lunches served that are subsidized. Therefore by giving the minimum subsidy of 4½ cents to as many lunches as possible, rather than the maximum of 15 cents to fewer lunches, the school administration receives more financial support from the government.

Rod Duncan adds:

Are there kids in Oakland who go home from school hungry because they haven't been able to afford the price of a lunch?

Many people in Oakland know there are.

But in testimony presented to the State Board of Education meeting in San Francisco recently, a lobbyist for the Oakland School Board testified to the contrary.

Angered by testimony from East Oakland Parish representatives Jim Reed and attorney Roderic Duncan, lobbyist Arthur C. Pokorny demanded an opportunity to answer. Reed and Duncan had charged that Oakland authorities were misusing federal funds paid to them for school lunches. Duncan charged the Oakland Board with "a classic example of ostrich-type thinking" in refusing to use what little free lunch money it has for children whose parents are on welfare.

Negro dentist and Board Member Daniel Collins asked Pokorny, "Does the (Oakland) Board recognize that any kids are hungry coming to school?" This testimony followed:

Pokorny: "Yes, and we believe that we take care of these emergency cases of hunger."

Dr. Collins: "And do you believe that the kids on welfare rolls come to school hungry?"

Pokorny: "If they do, they get meals. They do not come to school continuously hungry and when we find such a case . . . we are usually able to effect a solution . . ."

Dr. Collins: "So you can say to this Board that to your knowledge, that no kid consistently comes to school hungry unless you do something about it."

Pokorny: "This is correct. We can say this to the Board."

The East Oakland Parish is presently collecting a list of parents who would be willing to testify before the Board that they are not able to provide funds for school lunches for their children.

Duncan charged that federal law requires the Oakland Board to spend the federal money it receives in the lunch program on needy children. But, he said, presently policy is to spread the federal money evenly over every lunch served in Oakland cafeterias, whether the child comes from a well-to-do family in the hills, or a poor family in the flats. The result is that the federal money takes under a nickel off the price of every lunch. If hill-area children were forced to pay the full cost of their lunches, many more hungry children could be fed, Duncan stated.

Earlier in the week Duncan had told the Oakland Board that if they do not change this policy, he planned to file a law suit in federal court challenging the legality of the procedure.

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The Flatlands PROFILES



Mrs. Helle-Liesel Sabato

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mrs. Helle-Liesel Sabato was born on June 8, 1923, in Dresden, Sachsen, East Germany. Her first memories are of her father being taken to prison by the Nazis. When she came to America in 1956, she promised herself that she would never be hurt by political activities again. Despite this promise, she is now a leading spokesman in East Oakland for the rights of the poor.

My experience starts in 1932. I was in Dresden with my family. I was 10 years old. Since my father was for helping people we lived in a low income neighborhood. That also meant he would have money for traveling and books.

There were five of us in the family, and my grandmother. That was the time Hitler came up and I saw how the Nazi movement acted. They would take you from the back, all the people who had spoken up against them. They came at night, not during the day. They couldn't face you.

My first real memory - that was seeing my father taken away to prison for not doing anything. My father was Jew and the editor of a socialist paper, the People's Paper, Volkszeitung.

Going to see my father in prison once a month left a deep im-

pression on me. They said they were only protecting him from his enemies. The Nazis made political prisoners pay for their food in prison. That was because they were being protected. But my mother refused to pay for my father's food. She fought the whole time to get him free. After nine months he was allowed to go but we had to move 20 kilometers from our former home. That was so people wouldn't recognize us.

My parents bought a little neighborhood store where they existed more or less. In 1937 they closed the store because my father had established a sales route selling goods to food stores. Then the Nazis, in 1939, made every house where a Jewish person lived have a star of David on its front. Our landlord used to take the star away every time they came to put it on.

In the same year, the Nazis pressured all the people whom my father was working with not to take any business from him. On the 9th of November they came and took him away to prison for the second time. That was also the time they burned all the synagogues except for two in Germany.

Every Jew who fought in World War I was freed in Dresden after 10 days, except for my father and one other man. The police and the Gestapo were not working