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THE FLATLANDS

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

Volume 1, Number 3

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10¢ a copy

Acorn: Where Bunnies Hop



Editor's Note: The Acorn Redevelopment Project is an embarrassing eyesore, especially for Oakland's Redevelopment Agency. For over four years it has been one big empty "bunny field" to use Councilman Rilea's term.

The following article explains what the original aims of the Acorn Project planners were and why they have not yet been realized.

The people who once lived in the Acorn project area have little to be glad about. They have been moved off their land for four years, and the land is still empty. Many of them owned their own houses in Acorn and would have been willing, with or without financial assistance, to rehabilitate their own houses. Some were ready to develop small projects themselves, but somehow all the area went to the development group directed by the local Assemblyman. There were about 1600 families living in Acorn, but only 850 new units of construction are planned, and Redevelopment Agency spokesmen themselves have admitted that less than 20% of the people living in Acorn could afford the rents of the new housing.

The Redevelopment Agency pays a fair market price to homeowners, in Acorn and elsewhere, but \$8,000 for a house sold in West Oakland won't buy a house anywhere else in Oakland, and homeowners have been bitter at what happens when the Agency or BARTD moves in. The Redevelopment Agency did the best it could in relocating people, but many people moved before the Agency contacted them, and a substantial number moved either into housing beyond their ability

to pay or substandard housing. The federal law requires the formation of a citizens committee of people in the renewal area; yet this committee was never formed, and the wishes of the people in the Acorn area were never taken into account. If they had, the project would have been rehabilitation, not demolition.

There are those who say that the process of relocation in West Oakland was not so bad, that with federal financial assistance and hard work by the Agency the pain of moving was minimized. And so it was—minimized. But the resentment created by the Acorn project is real, and adds to the underground fire that smolders in Flatlands.

For over 20 years the housing of West and North Oakland was allowed to deteriorate. The city did nothing and the local banks were unwilling to loan any money for the people to fix their own homes. In the years after World War II the city built several housing projects; the projects were built like barracks and located next to an industrial area in West Oakland. Most of the people who originally lived in the Campbell Village area moved out; and the Negro community, which was just beginning to organize against city hall, was for the time being, broken up.

In 1954 a small group of self-appointed merchants met and gained the support of the Tribune's publisher and local business leaders. Their aim was to try to bulldoze a reluctant city council and mayor into rebuilding blighted areas. By 1958 they had succeeded in getting the Clinton Park code-enforcement project, and the General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP).

The GNRP included the Acorn
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RELOCATION--Or How to Pay Higher Rents on the Same Income

BY RUTH GOODMAN

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Six thousand flatlands families lost their homes in the last five years because of government action. Current plans for Redevelopment, Code Enforcement, BARTD, and the Grove-Shafter Freeway promise that at least 6,000 more will be forced to move before 1970. Where are these people going to go? What is the city of Oakland doing — NOW — about the problem of "relocation"?

(This is the second of three articles on the housing problem in Oakland. The author, a graduate student in Community Organization at the University of California, is working with the housing committee of the Corporation of the Poor.)

Federal Housing laws require that persons forced to move by redevelopment be relocated in decent, safe, and sanitary housing within their means. To do this

the Oakland Redevelopment Agency must obtain listings of housing units at rents "to meet the income limitations of families to be displaced," help people find homes that they can afford and give advice on loans and credit.

This is hard to do effectively in Oakland because there is not enough low-cost housing. The average rent for "modest housing" in the Oakland flatlands (West, East and North Oakland, below MacArthur) for one bedroom is \$88; for two bedrooms, it is \$108. Even in the redevelopment areas themselves, the rents for the new housing are too high for the people that are "relocated out."

—In the Acorn Project (about 800 units), one bedroom apartments will be \$80-\$107, two bedrooms will cost \$110-\$120.

—In Oak Center (about 1,000 units), the rents have not been fixed definitely yet — but they will certainly be higher than in Acorn. Even the rents for rehabilitated units in the area will

be from five to ten percent greater than the present "average rent for modest housing."

WAITING LISTS

Public housing also fails to meet the needs of families forced to move because of redevelopment. A one-bedroom apartment in public housing costs between \$36 and \$77 for a family of three with one child — the exact amount depends on their income. (For families affected by government programs, like redevelopment, the maximum income allowed is \$4725; for other families it is much lower). According to the Redevelopment Agency's own figures, there are 1,800 families and individuals who qualify right now for public housing in the Oak Center, Corridor, and Peralta redevelopment areas. The City of Oakland has a total of 1,422 units of public housing — all filled of course, and with a waiting list of over 1,000.

(When it comes to "rehabilitation" rather than "relocation"

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RELOCATION,

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the Redevelopment Agency does seem to do a bit better. For homeowners with incomes under \$3,000 a year, "Rehabilitation Grants" of up to \$1,500 will be made available for fixing up run-down and unsafe property. So far the exact amount of money available to Oakland for this program has not been determined by the federal government. But no matter how big the federal grant is, rehabilitation will solve only part of the housing problem in Oakland; there will still be thousands of homeowners in the flatlands whose homes are beyond rehabilitation and who need to move; there will still be thousands of tenants whose apartments are demolished because their landlords refused or could not bring these units "up to code."

"Helping" You Move

The Redevelopment Agency is also supposed to help people move — not just given them advice, but provide cash payments to cover moving expenses and help them get started in a new home. There are two kinds of payments.

— The "Relocation Allowance" provides up to \$200 for a family that has to move. A family can qualify in two ways: (a) If their house is torn down by the Redevelopment Agency; (b) If their landlord is ordered to rehabilitate their house or apartment, does rehabilitate the unit, and then raises the rent more than 10 percent. This kind of assistance applies only if the Redevelopment Agency helps a family to move. If they move on their own, that's their own hard luck.

— The "Relocation Adjustment Payment" provides up to \$500 for a family that has to move. To qualify, a family must (a) have an income low enough to get them into public housing, (b) not be on Welfare, (c) move into standard private housing. The Redevelopment Agency does not expect that many families will qualify under this narrowly restricted program.

That's how Redevelopment helps flatland people move. Or is it that they only help us to pay higher rents to landlords who profit from the increasing shortage of genuine low-cost housing in Oakland?

Redevelopment, Code Enforcement, BARTD, and the Grove-Shafter Freeway — everywhere the story seems the same. And it's not only in these cases that the city and other government agencies fail to meet their responsibilities to low income people.

Not Enough Public Housing

The terrific public housing shortage doesn't just affect people in redevelopment pro-

jects. It hits people on welfare whether they have to move or not. The rental allowance for "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" (AFDC) in Alameda county is \$38 a month for a family of three, \$54 for a family of nine — the lowest in the bay area and one of the lowest in the whole state. Compare these allowances with the "modest" flatlands rent of \$88 for a one-bedroom apartment or \$108 for a two-bedroom. Add to this the waiting list of 1,000 families, and it is clear why most AFDC families in Oakland can't get into public housing, why many people are so discouraged about the help they'll get from the "All American City" that they don't even put their names down on the list.

The city's building and housing department will be inspecting 13,560 housing units in coming years. If the houses are not "up to code" the landlord will have to fix the place up (and raise the rent) or the tenant will be evicted. Already 3,150 Oakland families have lost their homes in this way. By the time BARTD and the Grove-Shafter Freeway are completed, at least 1600 more units will be demolished and their tenants forced to move.

Who's Job to Find Low Cost Housing?

All these relocation problems are outside of the Redevelopment Agency's legal responsibility. The Relocation service in the building and housing department is supposed to take care of them. Julian Thomas, head of the service, estimates that it handles about 120 families a year. In the past five years about 5,000 families lost their homes because of government action other than redevelopment; Building and Housing took care of about 600 of them.

Building and Housing's relocation service consists of supplying families with lists of vacancies. No funds are available to help with moving or other costs. Landlords can say in their listings that they don't want "large families," or Negroes, or Mexican-Americans, etc. Building and Housing accepts the practices of Oakland realtors and landlords as they are. It applies no economic pressure to change the notoriously segregated housing patterns in Oakland.

Since BARTD affects the whole bay area and not just Oakland, it might seem reasonable that it provide relocation services on its own. The answer to this possibility is simple: BARTD doesn't.

City and/or State Responsibility?

The Grove-Shafter Freeway comes under state as well as city responsibility. In November, 1965, the state Department of Highways stated that they "had a commitment" to pay the moving costs for families and business



Photos by Howard Harowitz

affected by the freeway. The relocation assistance would be up to \$200 for a family, and up to \$3,000 for a business. It is available to people only if they make a special point of asking for help. The state has done nothing to publicize the program.

Public Housing Doesn't Pay

"Low cost housing is simply not profitable for the private housing market" — that's what all the realtors and builders tell us. In Oakland, too, the Redevelopment Agency, the Housing Authority, and the Building and Housing department seem unable to meet the needs for decent,

low-cost housing. They seem to echo the slogan we always hear from downtown, that what Oakland needs most of all is "more industry" and a "better climate for business." Public agencies in the area of housing put this slogan into effect in their own way:

— They accept without question the right of private business and real estate to "make a profit," regardless of the human costs in segregation and overcrowding.

— They do everything they can to increase the real estate values of the big landowners in the flatlands, do everything they can to increase the tax base (and lower the tax rate) in Oakland.

— They refuse to initiate policies of active cooperation with poor people which might run counter to the interests of the businessmen who dominate the City council and the governing boards of the Redevelopment Agency and Housing Authority.

What Can We Do?

For all these reasons, the housing problems in Oakland are not being solved — and it doesn't seem likely that they will be solved until flatlands people get a bigger say in how things are run. In the next issue of The Flatlands, I'll discuss some of the things that we can do to change the housing situation in Oakland.

The House of the Living Dead

BY A WELFARE RECIPIENT

Editor's Note: Two organizations, the Welfare Rights Organization (WRO) and the People's Defense Union (PDU) have workers who are welfare recipients themselves. These workers can go with you to the Welfare department or call the Welfare department to try to solve your own problems with welfare. If you come across any problems with

A.C.W.D. such as mentioned in this article, telephone WRO at 832-9019 or PDU at 835-5078. If you have a problem and also have any free time, go to a WRO or a PDU meeting (times, dates and places are listed in The Flatlands) and help fight for your rights.

You are without food; your rent is due, there is harassment and possibly eviction by your landlord; your children need clothes, the school is after you to get your children in school because the law says it is compulsory for all school-age children to be in school; where do you go for help? The Alameda County Welfare department, located at 401 Broadway, is the place. It is a very impressive building, which could be the office of some prosperous business but isn't. This is the house that reflects the morality of society.

Into this building go the proud man who has worked all his life but has lost his job due to automation, and must have help; the mothers, where the fathers have run away from their responsibilities, must go; the children of unwed mothers. Each has a sad story to tell, but to whom? After you are assigned to a social

worker (who is a student in sociology and in no way could be of help to the person they interview, but must follow the wishes of the supervisor) you tell your story. Before you are through "selling your soul" in filling out an application, you will be reprimanded, scolded, harassed, and manipulated. It is just like Confession.

Welfare Hypocrisy

THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE SAYS THAT ALL WHO SEEK SHALL BE INFORMED, INSTRUCTED, GUIDED, AND GIVEN SERVICES OF THE NATURE THAT WOULD BENEFIT THE RECIPIENT. The social worker is supposed to function in a constructive, advisory, helpful and encouraging attitude, according to Jack Wedemayer, Director of the California Social Welfare department. The A.C.W.D. does not follow through on this. After you have filled out all the papers, sometimes you are turned down.

When you are turned down, this could mean:

1. You have more than \$600 in personal property. Personal property consists mainly of cash on hand, money in the bank, cash value of insurance policies, and

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GOOD FAIR and THE "DEPRIVEDS" A Fairy Tale

Once upon a time there was a country called Richland. Everybody in Richland was pretty and happy and rich. Only one thing troubled their happy lives. The "depriveds" would occasionally step out of line.

The "depriveds" were the people in Richland who kept the economy in shape. They were the workers who in eight hours of work produced \$300 worth of goods but who were content with \$16 pay for their work. The happy citizens of Richland used the "extra" \$284 to buy more machines so that next year the "depriveds" could make \$400 worth of goods in eight hours and maybe get \$18.50 pay. Some of the "extra" went to buy fancy cars and stuff but that was OK since the rich citizens had the "know-how" that allowed the "depriveds" to work in the rich people's industry.

There were always bunches of "depriveds" who didn't work at all. Although the rich people hated these "lazy depriveds" in their secret hearts the rich people knew that without a bunch of unemployed "depriveds" around there might be a shortage of workers and then they might have to pay their "depriveds" \$20. Of course, that was unthinkable.

When some rich people began feeling guilty about the "depriveds" who got kind of hungry and cold out there in the streets of Richland, they invented "good-fair." "Good-fair" was a big machine. This is how it worked: the "depriveds" would go to see the machine. Its lowest buttons would, after some grinding about, give out a questionnaire, of about 100 pages, in Latin. After the "deprived" filled out this questionnaire he fed it into the lowest slot.

Sensing a growing unrest in the "deprived" sections of the Richland population, a group of Richlanders sought to explain the unrest. They decided that "depriveds" were psychologically incapable of productive work because of their long unemployment. They recommended psychotherapy. The fact that the "depriveds" had no money was a minor detail they overlooked.

As the Richlanders began using bigger and better machines, the ranks of employed "depriveds" dwindled and those of unemployed "depriveds" swelled. One day the weather was very hot and the "depriveds" having nothing to do, rioted. They were beaten and shot. The Richlanders were scared. The "depriveds" had to be stopped. They were given two more jobs and one more truant officer. All was well again in Richland.

One day a "deprived" or two got to talking and wondering whether they could do any-

thing about their "deprivedness." They decided to get elected to the Rich-Council. Then they could decide to give more money to "depriveds" through "good-fair" and eat every two days. The "depriveds" were most excited. But strangely, so were the rich people.

Riddle: Why?

Answer: Because they controlled the Rich-Council and thus could control or buy out any "deprived." Which they promptly did.

What did the Richlanders fear then? Nothing. Except—they got awfully upset when the "depriveds" started meeting together and talking. You see, they knew — deep down — that there were more "depriveds" than Richlanders — and that in "Otherlands" the "depriveds" took away the rich people's property.

But they needn't have worried because they'd done a good job of "brain-soaking" the "depriveds." The "depriveds" thought that it was OK to earn \$18.50 or a meal every third day because Richland was a free state and the Rich-Council was "reasonable." And when the "depriveds" did get together they squabbled so much they didn't have time to fight the "good-fair" machine's "snaggles" or the Rich-Council or anybody.

A flashing sign then said "GO AWAY — DON'T CALL US — WE'LL CALL YOU." Two weeks later the "deprived" would get a form, in Latin, saying "You forgot to answer Question 135, subsection A, number 4." The "deprived" filled out the new paper and was granted an "interview." Row Two of the machine's buttons asked him more questions and was granted enough money to rent a half a room and eat every third day for a month.

When this system was in operation for a couple of days, a huge outcry arose from the rich citizens. It was unfair to the "depriveds" who were employed to give aid to unemployed "depriveds." It made them more lazy and shiftless.

The machine was adapted to meet these outcries. Built into its heretofore "efficient" system were a series of "snaggles." The "snaggles" were designed to make it hard for shiftless "depriveds" to be happy with their hearty meal every third day. The favorite "snaggles" were:

1. Holding up a check and when and if questioned about it, explaining, in Greek, the delay and sending the check even later.
2. Refusing to approve budgets which gave more than 1/6 of 1% to rent.
3. Installing TV cameras to check the mating habits of "depriveds."

This silenced the opposition for a while.

Acorn, Continued from Page 1.
project, and four other projects in West Oakland.

The Acorn Plan

The Acorn plan tried to solve, in a small way, Oakland's major problem of industrial/middle-class move away. Total clearance was decided on from the beginning, with the resale of about half the land to light industry, and the other half to a developer who would build middle-price housing for middle-class whites and Negroes. The federal government pays two-thirds of the cost of Acorn, the city pays the other one-third. Financial assistance for moving was made available to both businesses and families living in the 161-acre Acorn site.

Homes Gone, But Land Still Empty.

The industrial "sales" portion of the Acorn plan has moved fairly well; with huge federal subsidies, amounting to over \$7 million, land in the Acorn area has sold for about \$1.00 a foot, a "giveaway" for prime land located close to the heart of town

—and yet, eight years after the Acorn project was planned, large amounts of industrial land in the area is still unclaimed, and has been empty for over four years.

The housing portion of the plan has been even slower. The problem of getting middle-class whites to move into the Acorn area, surrounded by industry and deteriorating housing, scared away prospective developers; finally the Beneficial Development group offered to develop the area. Assemblyman Byron Rumford is on the board of Beneficial, and Acorn lies in his old assembly district. But Rumford's outfit is broke; it put up only \$34,000 to acquire the rights to develop Acorn housing, rather a small amount for property the city paid about \$5 million dollars to purchase. And still not a single house has been built in Acorn; the city believes it must first "rehabilitate" the Oak Center area, to make the Acorn neighborhood acceptable to middle-income whites. And now Proposition 14, the fair housing bill, is holding up federal funds which are necessary for the housing project.

House of Living Dead

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your interest in cars, trucks, or motorcycles. Things like household furniture, TV, trade tools, or cars or motorcycles used on your job, to look for work or to take part in an approved training program, are not counted as personal property.

2. You can get aid if you have some income, which is not enough for your family to live on. Income usually means earnings and support payments. If your income consists only of support payments, the entire amount will be deducted from your aid (which we think is wrong because it should be banked for the children's benefit). If your income consists of earnings, the entire amount will NOT be deducted. You will be allowed to keep \$25, plus the cost of transportation, union dues, and usually baby-sitting. Any additional income above this will be deducted from the rent.

But, if you do go to work, you are to report to the welfare department that you are working. If you DON'T report your earnings, you could be committing FRAUD (for overpayment). The State Department of Social Welfare destroys any desire to work by this deduction clause in the code.

How to Reduce The Welfare Rolls

The Welfare department is great in assuming that a home is unfit or the children are neglected because of the lack of money to do what is right. They DO NOT want you to do what is right and they will refer people to police, probation, or parole so that in one way or another there is a reduction in the overall welfare load.

The example that is often used in the State Department of Social Welfare manual is the section C.155 on "Spouse-like relationships" which states:

A man will be considered to be assuming the role of spouse if it has been found that he is not married to the mother and not the father of any of her children, but that:

1. He is in or around the home and is maintaining an intimate relationship with the mother, and that
2. (a) either he has assumed substantial financial responsibility for the ongoing expenses of the A.F.D.C. family, or
(b) he has represented himself in the community in such a way as to appear in the relationship of husband or family, or both.

Sex and Fraud

Number one in this situation is ALWAYS used and either part of number two will be used in looking for cases of FRAUD. The catch word in number 1 is INTIMATE which means "close in friendship or acquaintance; confidential; familiar." If there is just a hint or suggestion that a friend is stopping by too often, or he has stayed overnight or has bought some food, this section can be used against you. The law says you are entitled to have guests and friends. If these guests or friends want to buy some food so that you can be treated to a decent meal to counteract the starchy diet that the recipients have to live on where is the recipient breaking the rule? There is a great social injustice being committed which should be straightened out.

MAKE THIS PAPER SPEAK FOR YOU!

THE FLATLANDS is Oakland's only independent newspaper. Its success or failure depends on you.

If you wish to submit an article or know of a story or event that should be covered, contact any member of the Editorial board or call Sandy Close (845-2193) or Darrow Bishop (848-5152).



Tenant's Rights

Editor's Note: Landlord-tenant problems have always been very difficult for tenants to solve because poor tenants do not have the money to see a lawyer. So when a landlord does something illegal, there is often no way for the tenant to know about it.

This article will try to outline some of the major landlord-tenant problems and what tenants can do. These points are only indications of what the tenant should watch out for. The law is very complicated.

With the opening of the Neighborhood Service Centers, lawyers are supposed to be available now to poor people. The tenant should see a lawyer wherever possible to protect his rights. (Center addresses: West Oakland, 724 - 14th St., phone 835-2164; North Oakland, 5th and Market, phone 655-2355; Fruitvale, 1411 Fruitvale Ave., phone 536-9685; East Oakland, 90th and Holly St., phone 638-0702).

An example of self-help which worked very well in San Francisco gives some idea of what

tenants can do when a landlord refuses to keep his property in good condition. The tenants banded together and refused to pay rent until repairs were made. What they did was put their rent money in a bank account marked for rent (called "escrow") so that they could pay the rent to the landlord when repairs were made. This also showed the judge in court that the tenants were not just trying to avoid paying the rent. They had the help of a lawyer. HOWEVER, this method is not legal in California. There is the possibility that the landlord will evict all the tenants and collect the back rent through legal proceedings. However, this is VERY expensive for the landlord. Thus, as a tactic, if ALL the tenants of a building or SEVERAL from any one landlord band together and stick together for all the time it takes, AND if their demands for repairs are reasonable and are things which a landlord can do, this tactic might work.

In addition to putting pressure on landlords through withholding of rent, tenants have certain

The Poor Speak Out



In the following series of interviews, people of the flatlands speak out about their problems with the welfare department and with their landlords.

Mother of five, white, resident of West Oakland, welfare recipient, husband not living there.

"I think it was November or December my landlord raised the rent from 70 to 90 dollars. He said it was because of the new paint he put on the outside of the house and the increase in property tax. The note from the landlord said, 'Please pay this 20 dollars this month within three days of this note or I will raise your rent 20 dollars more . . . totalling 110 dollars.'"

The AFDC (Aid for Dependent Children) gives me \$48 a month for rent. The landlord raised the rent in September from 65 to 70 dollars. I didn't mind that. But when he raised it to 90 dollars for painting the outside of the house that was going too far. After all, I don't live on the outside of the house.

I called a lawyer. He said there was nothing I could do about the rent raise because in California there isn't any rent ceiling. But since my landlord didn't give me legal notice of raising the rent, I didn't have to pay it that month.

I've done quite a bit of repairs. That was before they raised the rent. If you make any repairs you can deduct them from the rent. But you better have a receipt. Otherwise they can get away with not paying you."

Mexican-American, father of 11, welfare recipient, resident of Fruitvale, interviewed through an interpreter.

"More than one year I have been here. I can't find a job, a kind of job that I can raise my children on. When they understand me there isn't any work. When there is work they don't understand me.

I was an agricultural worker in Mexico. I came up here to see if I could live better. It's better here. I had no refrigerator or stove in Mexico. Only it's very difficult when no one understands you.

I have gone to welfare twice. Some friends told me about it. I went with my wife. We walked

in the office and one of the people sitting in the waiting room translated for us. We were given an application blank and this woman in the waiting room filled it out for us. The second time we took a friend to interpret. The welfare department doesn't speak Spanish.

My landlord treats me O.K. She's a Mexican. She lives way up on the top of a hill some place. There are a lot of roaches here. She doesn't know. She comes down here the third of every month for her money."

Mother of six, white, resident of West Oakland, husband not living there. Not a welfare recipient.

"I don't like welfare. They invade your privacy too much. They can come any time of the day or the night they want to. They don't have any right to do that. You can't go outside to work without reporting it and they don't give you enough to live on. I don't want any part of these people. Neither do my children. When I work, we have \$378 a month to live on. When I don't work we have \$278. But I don't want any part of welfare. I've been on it before. I know what it's like.

Everybody's all hot to do something but I've never seen where anything's been done. These people down here try to help themselves but they're going nowhere except in circles. I'd like a place built where people that needed immediate help could go and get it and only after they'd gotten it fill out the red tape. If you go and lose a day's work and get no help you're worse off than ever."

Mother of five, Negro, resident of East Oakland.

"There are seven of us and a pet dog. The landlord said he don't care what you have so long as you pay the rent. We walked all through the house on a friendly basis. He say the day after I move in he'll have the light man put the utilities in. I moved in on the 16th of March. He hasn't put anything in.

The day after we moved in, the landlord came and told my kids the dog gonna hafta go or you gonna hafta move. The landlord said he'd changed his mind - the dog was too big. When we called him he say

"I give you a week to move out" and then he hung up. I'd paid from the 16th to the 1st. Why should I get out before then?

The ice box and the living room is all on one line. The wires is all raw here and the plugs open. I called PG&E to get some lights put in myself. They told me this house was condemned for anything except gas. There's a water heater in the bedroom that leaks gas. Landlord promised to move it out but it's still here. Whole place has got this fresh paint and all - look nice. But the hazards lie under. We'd rather have a dirty wound and a live person than a clean wound and a dead person.

I wish you could see in my little buffet drawer how the rats done messed in there."

Member of WRO, Negro, resident of East Oakland.

"The farce of Oakland began some years ago now, when the cleaving axe first started cutting into West Oakland. They were 'cleaning out slum' housing and they said it would rebuild decent housing for the poor and low income families. That's what they said, but in reality they had other plans. That was to build high rise apartments with waterfront facilities for the 'haves' to sun and fun. Our so-called leaders of the city of Oakland had hopes of stopping the 'exodus' of whites to the suburbs; but as usual our city leaders awoke much too late. The 'haves' were fleeing to suburbia and industries along with them - leaving the poor jobless and without housing too. So worried about the race to the suburbs, our leaders then permitted a plan to build and sell housing - a plan which was financially inadequate - it too fell through. Through the years when property - demolished land lay in waste, many good solid homes were given the ax; many which could have been rehabilitated also were demolished. Still our so-called Code Enforcers have looked the other way while the 'absent owners' collect 'blood money' through their exorbitant rents for their rat-infested fire traps. It is time the code was enforced on these blood thirsty, money hungry slum peddlers. How long must we cry about these outrages?"



San Francisco China Town

Oakland Baby, The Time Has Come

BY WILLIE THOMPSON

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the beginning the Poverty Program in San Francisco was run by the power structure. But the poor took a stand and won at least a partial victory. Mr. Willie Thompson, in the following article encourages the people of the flatlands to stand firmly together to fight for their rights against the powers both in city hall and the O.E.D.C. Mr. Thompson is a member of the Western Addition Area board of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco and author of "Enemy of the Poor."

San Francisco is no more capable than Oakland of getting a job done. If the people of Oakland believe that the people of San Francisco can outdo them, the people of the Oakland flatlands will always be looking up to San Francisco. But, just because San Francisco got maximum feasible participation first, doesn't mean that Oakland can't get it too.

There has been only a weak attempt to involve the poor in the Oakland program. Norvell Smith is so busy trying to keep poor people out of the program that he laps up everything Shriver says, trying to prove that Shriver is against maximum feasible participation of the poor. If Shriver is against maximum feasible participation of the poor, why doesn't he send Jaguar-driving Norvell Smith a letter saying so. Norvell Smith is the enemy of the poor. There is no discussion of the poor in Smith's and Wilson's "Issues" paper (March 8, 1966). The word poor appears in the paper only once. The word power doesn't appear at all. In Oakland there is no discussion of power, just a primitive and savage use of power by the police, courts, and the bureaucrats. If there are people who are poor on the O.E.D.C., they are referred to by another name.

Sergeant Shriver said that the instead of behind it . . . The fight has just begun."

poor have the final power to violate programs that do not include them and thwart their successful execution.

The great moment of truth for Oakland arrived on March 12, 1966, when most of the target area representatives walked out of the O.E.D.C. (The San Francisco walkout came on Aug. 12, 1965). The Oakland statement said, "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."

How could anyone believe that the answers to the problems of the poor could come from a corrupt city government or a stuffed bureaucrat. Your patience was long-standing. "He who would be free must strike the blow," said Frederick Douglas. The first blow has been struck—now drive it home. Programs have been changed to fit the needs of the people in San Francisco and in Philadelphia. You can do it here.

In San Francisco while the poor starve some high salaried director thinks up cute ways of getting the people to participate, few of which work. We have not been able to convert our victory over the mayor into programs for the poor. The victory was an important one and we would like to feel that we have shown the way. But we have grown fat on our victory (our "leaders" are now working for the Economic Opportunity Council) Oakland must not do the same. Your troubles and responsibility begin with your successes . . . "Remain organized and preserve whatever alliances you may have. You should stay in a state of readiness and should attempt to be ahead of the game."



POWER FOR THE POOR

BY EVAN GOLDER

Editor's Note: A lot of people in Oakland are talking now about Saul Alinsky. Saul Alinsky is a professional organizer of the poor.

In the following article, Rev. Golder of the West Oakland Christian Parish explains why the flatlands needs Alinsky and what might happen when and if he comes to town.

The name of the game is power—the game is tricky and dangerous. It is a game the "flatlands" community of Oakland is not allowed to play. Where now do we see any flatlands or minority organization powerful enough to put money into the pockets of flatlands people? There isn't any. Power comes only with organization, and it should be no secret to anyone that the flatlands of Oakland just aren't organized in a powerful way.

This is where Saul Alinsky comes in—because Saul Alinsky is a professional organizer. Through his foundation, the Industrial Areas Foundation (known as the IAF), Saul Alinsky has been organizing poor and ghetto communities for over 25 years. Some of the best known of these are in Chicago (the Back-of-the-Yards in 1939 or the Woodlawn Organization in 1959, for example). The IAF is currently in Rochester, New York, and in Kansas City, Kansas.

POWER TO ACT

The purpose of any Alinsky-style organization is to have power: the ability to act. You build a strong and powerful organization so that you can be able to call as many of the shots as

the next guy—or as city hall. The key to building this organization is self-interest. This means that if an organization of any kind is going to be built which will last, it has to combine the self-interests of a whole lot of groups. No one's going to join unless they are going to get something out of it.

If you and I are organized for our own self-interests—for how we can help ourselves—then our organization is going to threaten someone else, because our self-interests are going to be in direct conflict with their self-interests. Simply put, this means that we can "fight city hall"—and there is absolutely no reason why we shouldn't.

The other reason for being organized—besides having power—is to have representation—representation that the flatlands would pick themselves.

An IAF organization is democracy in action in the ghetto. Every single little tiny group there is represented. Every citizen that belongs to any organization at all in the flatlands would be represented in the "umbrella" organization that would be built.

This does not mean that there could be a so-called "mass organization" that would actually involve all of the people. This kind of thing just doesn't exist. Actually, if merely two percent of the population were involved in any way in the building of an organization, that organization would be the most powerful political and economic block in town. In Oakland's flatlands, such an

organization would need about 2,500 people participating in some way (even little ways) in the organization.

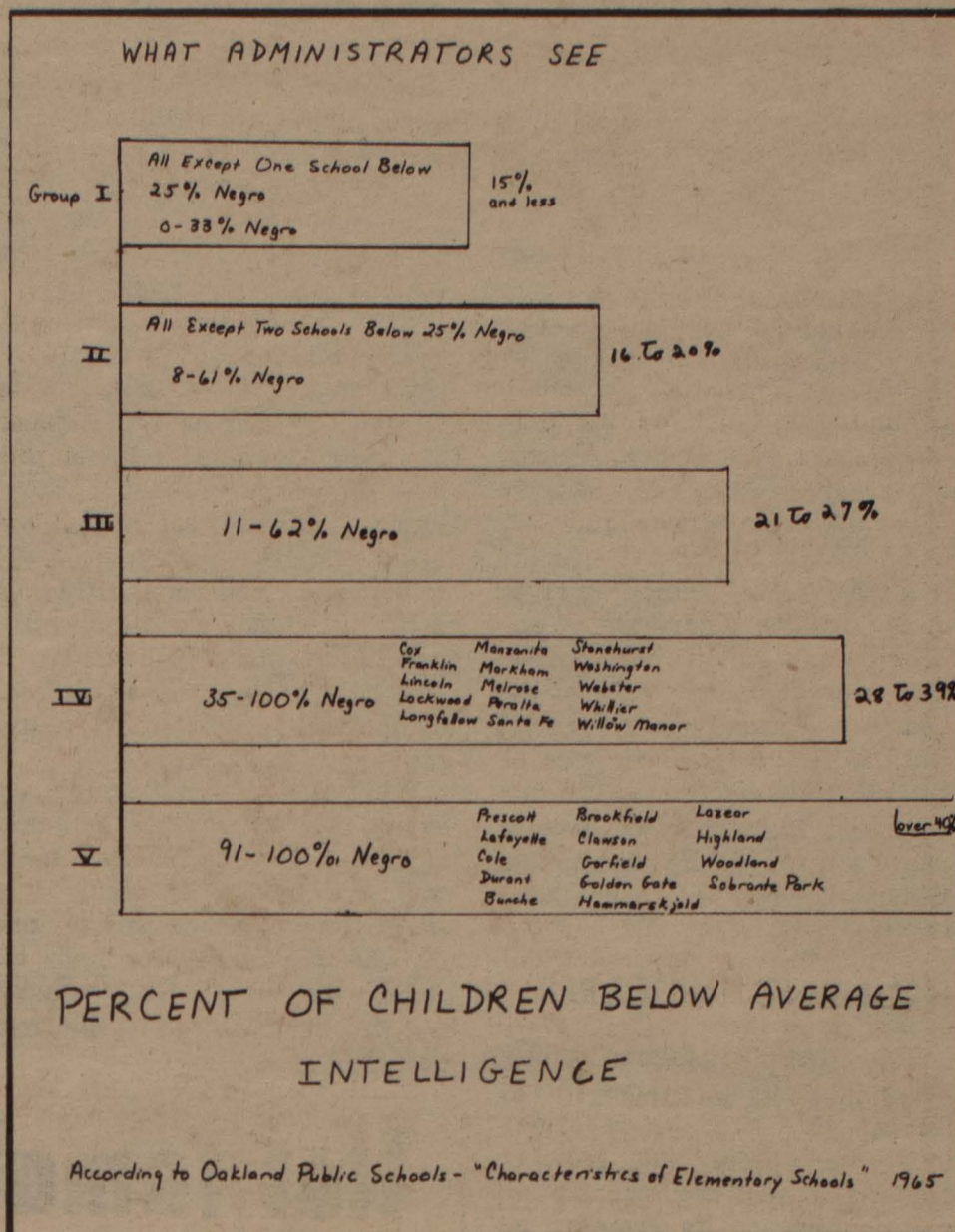
WHITE ORGANIZER

The key difference between an Alinsky-type organization and anything else that Oakland has seen is that Alinsky is willing and ready to take the people seriously. When the IAF comes to a city, it only sends one organizer. This man does not become the president or chairman of the new organization that is built. In fact, hardly anyone ever hears of him because he doesn't make speeches, doesn't get his name in the paper, and doesn't make decisions for the new organization. He is the expert on organization, the "pro" that helps the thing get built, but it isn't his group; it belongs to the people.

The professional organizer is an outsider, and often a white outsider at that. At first this seems like a bad thing, but it actually is an advantage. This is because the organizer can then be the scapegoat for a lot of the hostility that often divides new groups. Better to pick on a professional organizer who's trained to take it, than a brand new organization which might fall apart just like the others before it.

Alinsky takes the will of the people so seriously that he does not even come to a community unless the invitation itself comes from the group of people that want to be organized. Why, for example, should anyone want or

continued on page 6



What School Administrators See

The ability test is the way that Oakland public schools justifies its poor education of flatland students. Students all over the city are given ability tests. These tests depend on reading level. The results for hill schools are always higher than flatlands schools because hill students get better education and therefore can read better. After the ability test scores are "graphed" the hill children just come out looking a lot "smarter." The schools then say that the "smarter" hill children will do better in school because they are "smarter." This means that flatland children who do poorly because they haven't been taught to read in school are doing "as expected from their tests." This justifies the schools in not making any improvement in education. Why should they if flatland children are just not "smart"? The test scores do NOT show "smartness." They DO show how poor the education really is in the flatlands. The test scores prove ONLY that Oakland is failing to educate a large proportion of its students.

TENANTS RIGHTS

Continued from p. 3.

other ways of getting repairs made. If there is a condition in your apartment which really makes it difficult to continue living there you can notify the landlord in writing. Tell him that you want repairs made. Then give him enough time to try to make the repairs. If after some time he has not even indicated that repairs will be made, you can (after seeing a lawyer if possible) make the repairs yourself. Before doing this you should photograph the condition you want repaired to prove how bad it was. If you do repair yourself, you can only spend up to one month's rent to do it. You should know, however, that some landlords will try to evict you rather than make any repairs.

Another thing you can do if the apartment is in bad condition is to call the Housing department (Phone: 273-3991). Ask them to please send someone out to inspect your house. If they find that something in your house is below their health rules, they will tell the landlord to repair it or take some action to solve the problem. However, landlords may try to get even with tenants by evicting the tenants. If this happens to you SEE A LAWYER AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER.

Some landlords use very illegal ways of getting rid of tenants. Some of these are: coming into your apartment without your permission and without an order from a judge saying he can come into your apartment. If a landlord comes in without permission or a court order you can sue him.

If you have not paid your rent when it is due, the landlord will

try to evict you. In order to do this he has to give you notice. This has to be written down and handed to you or to someone in your house who is not just a child. If he can't find anyone to give notice to, he has to put notice up on a wall or door or someplace where you can easily see it when you return. He also has to send you a copy in the mail if he doesn't give it to you personally. The notice you have to get must be three days before you are to move. If you do not move, the ONLY way the landlord can make you move is with AN ORDER from a judge saying YOU MUST MOVE (or similar words). The time limit is usually five days. Don't let the landlord scare you by giving you 48 hours notice UNLESS you see the order of the judge saying just that.

Can't Put You In Jail

DON'T be afraid if the landlord threatens to have you put in jail if you don't pay your rent. He can't do that. If the police should come, they usually don't do anything but tell the landlord to see his lawyer. In fact, if the landlord tries to get into your apartment without permission to move you out, YOU can call the police. Then see your lawyer, because you can also sue him for coming into your apartment without permission.

IMPORTANT: In any case where you have problems with your landlord where he won't repair, or tries to evict you or anything else, don't try to solve the problem without legal help. If you make some mistake the lawyer might not be able to do as much to help you. So you should see him as soon as the problem comes up. Don't wait until the last minute.



Photo: Harvey Richards

VIVA LA HUELGA!

The Delano grape strikers are nearing their 300 mile goal from Delano to the state capitol in Sacramento. As the FLATLANDS goes to press the strikers have already won an historic agreement with Schenley, Inc., to negotiate and are on the verge of winning a similar agreement with Di Giorgio Corporation, the largest grower and packer in California. At this point the National Farm Workers Association are calling off the nation-wide boycott against Schenley.

Cesar Chavez, the NFW president, won the agreement in Los Angeles while the marchers were spreading heulga in Stockton and

Lodi.

The Marchers' schedule for Saturday and Easter Sunday, the concluding days of the march, are as follows:

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

8:30 a.m. - Leave Freeport
4:00 p.m. - Arrive at Lady of Grace church in West Sacramento
5:00 p.m. - Dinner
7:00 p.m. - Rally

SUNDAY, APRIL 10

(Easter Sunday)
9:00 a.m. - Easter Service at Lady of Grace church
11:00 a.m. - Leave for state capital building
1:30 p.m. - Arrive at state capital building for rally and

appeal for rights

3:30 p.m. - Leave for Lady Guadalupe church for candle ceremony

4:00 p.m. - Fiesta in South Side Park on 7th Street

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Power for the Poor

Continued from Page 5.

try to organize the flatlands just because someone else thinks it should be done? What do the people in the flatlands think? This is the first question that Alinsky would ask.

This principle holds true even if another group is putting up the money for the IAF to come to a community (such as the flatlands). At first glance, Alinsky looks quite expensive, because it usually costs between \$150,000 and \$250,000 for the IAF to come to a city. (This figure is arrived at by figuring a formula of approximately \$1.50 per person per year for each year of the contract - usually three years.) But, if flatlands power can be built for this price, how does this compare with what we have to show now for all the government money that has been poured into Oakland?

RUBBING THE SORES

The IAF organizer usually stays in a city only three years. During this time he is hiring local staff people and training leaders so that the organization can continue on its own after he leaves. If he has done his job well, no one will even notice when he slips away after his time is up. By this time, the new organization should be entirely self-supporting. It should be making all its own money, hiring all its own staff, and making all its own decisions. It should be a powerful enough organization to be able to deal equally with either the business interests or city hall. It should have enough muscle to decide what is best for all of its people, and to be able to go out and get it.

Alinsky is criticized by people who say that they agree with his goals but not with his tactics. This is because the man has a fantastic imagination and picks tactics that are both unusual and effective. Last year when discussing Oakland with a group of ministers, he asked "Did you ever consider picketing the churches because they aren't really being Christian?" Or, in talking about banks, "If you had fifty people and you gave them each two dollars to open an account in a bank, and then the next day they each closed out their accounts, and then the next day they opened them up again and so forth, it wouldn't be too long

before the bank might see things your way."

There's really no question that the flatlands need to be organized in some professional way. All the amateur efforts to date have only made small gains at best. Some people would rather have Alinsky in Oakland than have a "Watts" in Oakland.

The new mayor would just as soon have Alinsky stay out of Oakland so that he could launch his new programs without this kind of pressure. But if Mayor Reading means what he has said about opening opportunities for minorities and actually takes steps to do that, the Alinsky organization won't bother him. It will be free to focus on the real symbol of oppression in this city, the man in the Tower.

Right now it's as simple as saying that the name of the game is power, and the flatlands have not been invited to play. It's about time someone was invited in who knows how to help us change the rules. Saul Alinsky and the IAF seem to be the best choice in sight.



Hot Tamale BY JACK ORTEGA

SPANISH-SPEAKING ADVISORY GROUP

On Tuesday, March 29, 1966 a meeting of Spanish-speaking people was held in East Oakland. The entire meeting was conducted in the Spanish language.

The meeting was called to form a Spanish Language Advisory Committee. The committee would ask for direct representation to the Oakland Economic Development Council (OEDC).

None of the people in attendance had ever been contacted or communicated with in regard to any area of the Poverty program.

None of the people there knew of employment training programs, legal aid services, health and welfare benefits, social service activities or anything of the millions of dollars being put into helping the poor and disadvantaged. (I wondered why no one ever has used the Spanish speaking resources?)

As far as these people were concerned these monies would be for other people. Little would ever really filter down to the poor. (How familiar this is to the Mexican - only he calls it the "Mordita" - the bite.)

The people naturally mistrusted, misunderstood and

doubted whether we really had anything meaningful and helpful for them. (Maybe we had sold out to The Establishment). At first the meeting sounded like another "gringo con job" with its promises and deceptions, vagaries and deceit. But the chairman began to relate to the group and the group realized the chairman was really one of them. The group asked questions, discussed the various programs that were presented, commented on personalities and expressed a genuine desire and pleasure in continuing on with the association.

The meeting was conducted by Abe Tapia, chairman of the Mexican-American Unity Council and a postal clerk from east Oakland. He chaired the meeting in a quiet, personal, clear manner that encouraged questions and participation. The polite form of address was used as a sign of respect for those present, and a recognition of individuality and worth of the person.

When ladies entered late in the meeting, the entire male assembly stood up to offer their seats, even while the chairman spoke. Roberts Rules of Order were not

used. Rather the chairman used a gavel of respect for the Assembly.

In the last six months of the Poverty program this was the most civilized meeting this writer has ever attended.

The purposes of the existence of a Spanish Speaking Advisory Committee are 1) to make the administrators and policy makers of the various programs, agencies, bureaus and departments aware of the special needs and problems faced by the Spanish speaking people; 2) to help us to "catch up" to the level that will enable us to more fully participate in political, social and economic involvement simply to upgrade our involvement; 3) to help the Mexican in this North American society to get out of the sewers of frustration, insecurity, ignorance and doubt and to get our children into significant positions of leadership to better ourselves; 4) to be able to determine our own destiny in regard to services and programs instead of doing what someone else thinks is good for us (not too much hot sauce); 5) to be able to find a dignity in participation in Anglo-run institutions and services (the bull servicing the cow).

We are not "prima donnas" or aloof virgins in putting ourselves together this way, but a

"now we begin movement."

Existing structures have not been able to adapt, to provide, to assimilate in this native culture. They have been inflexible.

Mexicans do not come into this country under a quota system like the rest of the world. Annually thousands cross the border. There will always be Mexican-Americans, Spanish speaking people in this country.

We cannot be measured or evaluated by Northern European mores and Anglo-Saxon customs in being "dealt with" and "treated for" but must be considered as of a different culture. "Anglo" institutions just ain't making it with us, daddy.

Even at the local Advisory Committee level we could not compete.

For the past six months the Mexican has not been able to be heard. He has been bulldozed, stampeded, and confused.

El respeto ajevo es la paz
The respect of others is the peace.

UNITED FRONT

An Ad Hoc Committee on Education in Oakland is being formed. Its first meeting was on April 6, at United Christian church, 1601 Fruitvale. Over 125 people attended.

The Ad Hoc Committee will present a united front to the school board demanding action on such issues as de facto segregation, the use of Federal funds, and the separate and unequal policies of the Oakland public schools. We will no longer be content with administrative studies and surveys that accomplish nothing.

If you are interested in joining us, call 652-7276 or 533-4158. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 13, at 7:30, 1601 Fruitvale.

CORE Win

The Oakland chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality has signed an agreement with Goodman's banquet hall in Jack London square. The agreement came about only minutes before several hundred CORE pickets were scheduled to picket the hall, then being used for a testimonial dinner for Assemblyman Robert Crown.

Goodman's is the first restaurant in Jack London square to agree with CORE to hire a substantial number of minority employees for all future jobs; submit progress reports to CORE; notify organizations (such as unions) of the terms of the agreement.

JOBART & BART: TABLE TALK

On March 25, the negotiating teams from JOBART and BART met at BART's office, 814 Mission Street in San Francisco.

JOBART presented its demands regarding BART's activities in Oakland. The two main areas emphasized were:

HOUSING: Complete relocation of the people who are forced to leave their homes because of BART.

EMPLOYMENT: Hiring of a substantial number of Negroes and Mexican-Americans and other jobs being created by BART in the bay area.

JOBART and BART agree on the two major problem areas - real estate activities and jobs - but the emphasis is different.

BART's major concern is giving a fair market price for the property of the people they are displacing.

JOBART's major concern is with the people who are being

forced to move. JOBART feels that BART has two primary responsibilities: building a railway, and not inconveniencing humans unnecessarily. This involves a recognition of the social inequities which many people, such as Negroes and Mexican-Americans suffer as members of minority groups. BART has not considered this inequity in its payments for their property.

Mr. Fike repeated the relocation demand of JOBART: "Get these people another place to live . . ." If the state law is holding back BART from relocating these people, then, "Mr. Stokes, . . . the state law is your problem, not ours . . ."

Curtis Baker (JOBART) then informed Mr. Stokes, "You better give me something to take back to West Oakland and if I have to take back bad news, I will. We will fight. . . You must change now . . . the poll tax was made by the rich to abuse the poor . . . YOUR law is designed

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Photo: Annie Richey

SKILLED FOR WHAT?

Letter to the Editor:

A few weeks ago on the 500 block of Chester street in West Oakland three employees of BART were nailing boards onto windows. To my surprise they say you didn't hafta be a skill worker to nail boards to windows and on homes which have been taken by BART. When I was taking their photo they asked me if it were my home they was working on. I said no but it will be very soon because I live right near on Center street. The men say they be there tomorrow which they were.

Skill workers! I'm no skill worker but I could do this mailing

on boards if I weren't pass 60. You can't get a job even at 45. Can't borrow no money at 60 unless you have thousands all reddy in bank. When BART give you less than you can buy a home for how can you pay for a new place?

BART said I were lucky not to have two or three mortgages on my home. How am I gonna pay for someplace else? Yet I've got good clean credit record since 1930 in California.

ANNIE L. RICHEY
539 Center St., Oakland

Ideas, criticism of The Flatlands Newspaper are welcomed

EDITORIAL PAGE

THE FLATLANDS

933-12th St.

Oakland, California

Phone: 893-2283

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FLATLANDS SAYS:

Unity is more important than numbers. That's why the Oakland power structure is so strong. But when there is unity and numbers together, that's the strongest weapon of all. It could be the weapon of the poor. But it isn't. The poor of the flatlands are like crabs in a pot of boiling water, each clawing at the other and pulling the other down in his own private struggle. In the end, no one gets out of the pot at all.

The soldier on the front line doesn't care much who's standing next to him, so long as his gun's pointed in the right direction. He doesn't stop to look at the color of the other guy's skin or ask him how much he takes home every year. When the poor face the power structure, the situation is basically the same. Politics, like war, makes strange bedfellows. The issues the poor are fighting for are far too important to be sacrificed for the sake of any one individual's prejudices or any one group's complaint. What one man thinks is a crucial point within an organization is far less crucial than the united front the organization can achieve as a whole.

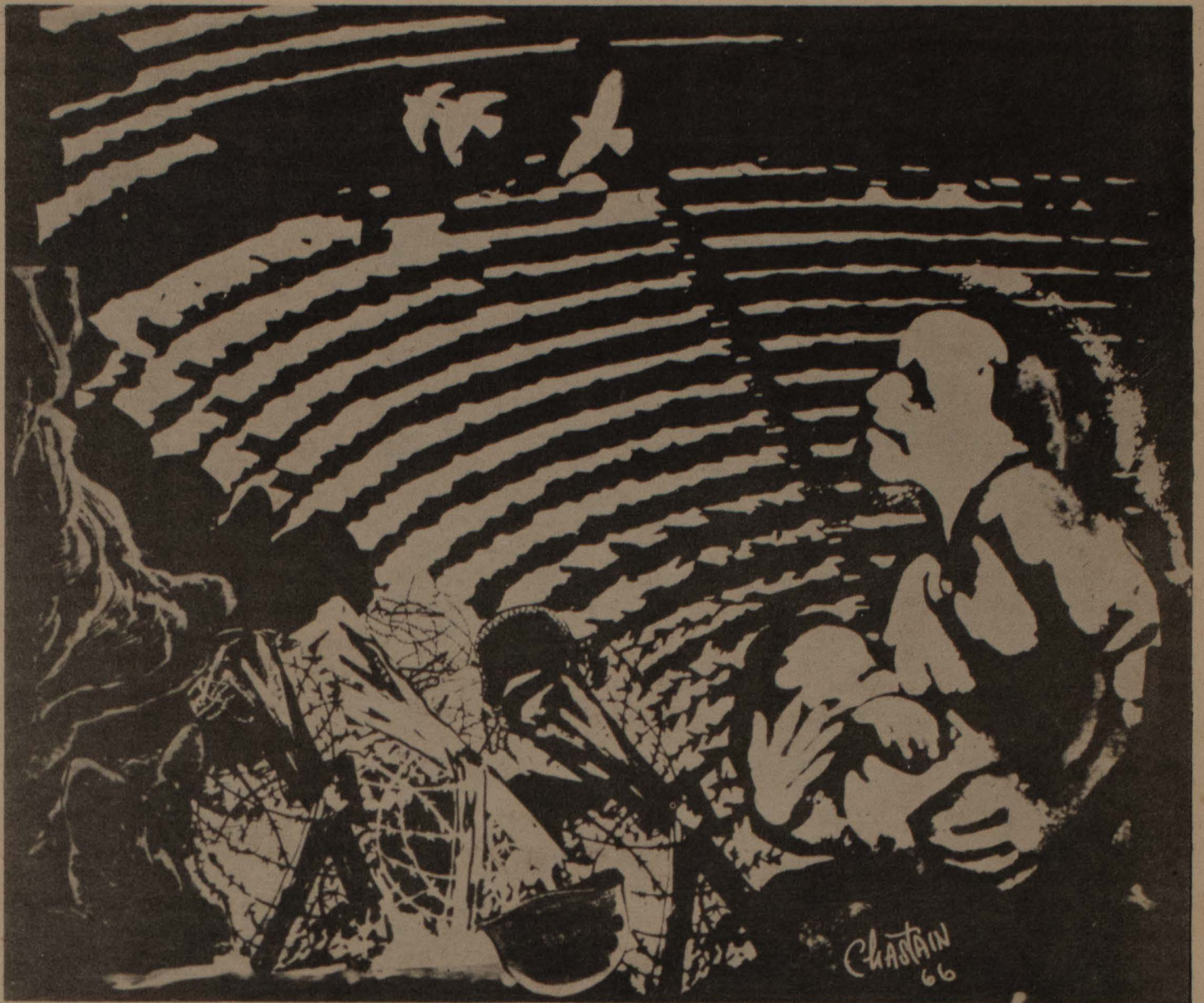
In any organization of people differences are bound to arise. They can't be dealt with by splitting the organization up into sub-committees, each with its own particular grudge to nurse. That will only defeat the issue at hand. Those who haven't been active before won't know which committee to join and won't want to get involved in a factional fight. Energies of all the committees will be wasted both in duplicating efforts and in fighting one another over how the work should have been done. If one group of people in an organization thinks its political tactic is better than the other's it should put its point of view to a vote. If it is still in the minority, it should compromise. The need for unity and numbers is the most important tactic of all.

For the sake of unity, the leaders of the poor can no longer give and take criticism of each other's groups and tactics in a personal way. They can no longer afford to identify so closely with their organization that they see any attempt to change it as a personal attack against themselves. That type of attitude will only make them resist the need for flexibility within the ranks of the poor. Personal antagonisms and ambitions have to be ignored.

FLATLANDS says that even if there is just one issue two people or groups in the flatlands have in common, it should be enough for them to unite. Otherwise they will be like two men, each with only one leg to stand on. Unless they start walking together, they will never get anywhere.



Helping Prepare for the Fashion Show
Sponsored by the West End Help Center.



BY W. CHASTAIN

Faraway and Middleclass

BY ELIJAH TURNER

The middle class Negroes with their phony white middle class standards and their Uncle Tom attitude is the greatest enemy to the civil rights movement in Oakland. The middle class Negro in Oakland is situated directly between the Flatlands Negro and the white power structure. The Negro from the flatlands cannot communicate with the power structure because the power won't listen to him, but instead get their Uncle Tom answers about the flatland problems from the middle class Negro. The answers to the problems from the middle class Negro to the white power structure are the answers that the white power structure wants to hear.

HOW THE POWER STRUCTURE STUDIES OUR PROBLEMS

After the Watts revolt, the mayor of Oakland decided to have a meeting to find out what was the attitude of the Negro in the ghetto and what could be done to prevent a Watts from happening in Oakland. Not one Negro from the Negro ghetto was invited to attend the meeting. The only Negroes who attended the meeting were those middle class Negroes from the hills who were just as far from the Negro ghetto as the mayor. And they told the mayor and the power structure exactly what they wanted to hear and that was that everything in the Negro ghetto was fine and that they didn't have to worry about too much trouble. This was probably done in one of the most skillful Uncle Tom methods. It was impossible for the Negro from the hills to express the attitude of the Negro from the ghetto because he just didn't know and he didn't have the guts to say that he didn't know.

"WE KNEW HIM WHEN..."

The Negro middle class has forgotten about many of the civil rights organizations except for the NAACP and they are not doing anything except lying to satisfy the white power structure. And holding a membership card to show when they happen to enter into a civil rights convention to convince people that they are still for civil rights. Toward the active civil rights organizations such as Oakland CORE, Western End Help center, Welfare Rights and many of the other active

JOBART & BART -TABLE TALK

Continued from Page 6

by the rich at the expense of the poor. Stokes, you have no type of understanding for the people in West Oakland."

Eugene Drew (JOBART) then called Mr. Stokes' attention to the seriousness of the situation, stating that either BART accepts its social responsibility for displacing the poor people of Oakland or JOBART would need to consider other steps. Mr. Drew pointed out that "You people (BART) are operating on taxpayers' money and are responsible to the people."

Over the weekend, BART agreed to JOBART's demands of a moratorium on contract-letting and eviction notices until the next meeting.

The second negotiating meeting between JOBART and BART was held March 31 at the First A.M. E. Church, 37th and Telegraph in Oakland. Housing, jobs, and the "Richmond Wall" were discussed.

JOBART's demands regarding housing included the following main points:

Actual costs of moving be covered by BART; the purchasing cost should be the criterion for the evaluation of "just compensation" to be paid by BART; comparable housing should be located for the people displaced, public notice of eviction should be given; a uniform way of contacting people whom BART is forcing to move.

The first half of the meeting centered around JOBART's major housing demand of relocation. Mr. Stokes, spokesman for BART at the previous meeting had stat-

organizations they take the same attitude as the white power structure takes.

Many of the middle class Negroes have their high paying jobs and political positions as a result of the more active civil rights organizations but now they turn their backs on them.

The only time the Negro gets to talk to the Negro politician is just before election time and after he gets elected to office he forgets the Negroes who voted for him.

If one was to give an Academy Award for acting in the scene of Uncle Tom's Cabins, the middle class Negro would get the award every year because they are the greatest group of Uncle Toms on the face of this earth and especially in Oakland.

ed that relocation was the city's responsibility. Messrs. Drew, Turner, Fike and Rev. Williams (JOBART) reopened the issue at this meeting, stating that it was BART's responsibility to see that adequate facilities were available and functioning to relocate the people being displaced. Mr. Fike asked if BART had made any attempt to review the relocation services of the city of Oakland to find out how well they meet the needs created by BART. Mr. Stokes (BART) admitted they had not. He said BART would do so before the next meeting of JOBART and BART (the week of April 4).

The second half of the meeting centered on the issue of the "Richmond Wall." JOBART is demanding that BART stop plans for constructing a ground level transit line in Richmond and for erecting an eight-foot wall — "Richmond Wall" — along racial lines.

James Van (JOBART - Richmond) asked Mr. Stokes if BART was aware of the impact on the people because of the planned division or wall — 88% of the members of minority groups in Richmond would be cut off from the main area of Richmond by eight-foot high fences.

Mr. Stokes replied that BART had complied with the city of Richmond in its planning, that the present plans provide cheaper transportation and the easiest access for poor people in the ghettos to commute to jobs outside their local area.

Rev. Williams and Mr. Van (JOBART) then explained to Mr. Stokes that JOBART is raising a social issue. Therefore, the question really is: whether BART is exercising its social obligation. Is BART sympathetic to what this planned division will do to the city of Richmond, shutting out 20,000 residents, forcing them to live behind a "BART WALL?" The people involved do not want a street level structure that will re-enforce the existing racial lines.

In reply, Mr. Stokes stated that the city of Richmond would not approve BART's original plan to build an aerial transit line. BART had to change its plans to a ground level structure.

Both parties agreed to continue the moratorium for one more week to give time for further study and consultation with the city of Oakland and city of Richmond officials. BART agreed to broaden the moratorium to include final planning for the transit system in Richmond as well as contract-letting and eviction notices in Oakland.

The Flatlands PROFILES



Mrs. Vera Bumcrot

Editor's note: Mrs. Vera Bumcrot has lived in Oakland since 1943. Her first husband, whom she married at 16, left her with six children to being up on her own. Her experiences with the Welfare department, the Probation department, and the Oakland public school system have made her an outspoken community leader and defender of the rights of the poor. She serves now as chairman of the Kennedy Tract association, and member of the Fruitvale Target Area Advisory committee and of The Flatlands editorial board.

"I guess I could tell you a story that would write quite a book. I was born February 9, 1927 in Denver, Colorado. I went to school there, at least up to the 10th grade. My family, I guess they would consider us middle class. That's because we were not actually starving. It was in the Depression. We weren't really what you would consider poor although we were struggling like everybody else.

My mother and father had done a lot of farm work - whatever was in season. Then when Roosevelt started the WPA my parents both joined. My mother made dresses for women on relief and my father dug ditches.

During the war we heard there were a lot of jobs out in California and the wages were good. We moved out here in July, 1943. My father went to work for Bethlehem Steel. We lived for a while in a little store on West Street. Then we moved to Hayward. It was all country then. We stayed with my aunt and uncle and their nine kids in a two-room shack. We slept like sardines.

I was 16 at the time - the oldest of the kids. I was supposed to be going to school but I went to work in the tomato fields, and then got a job at Friden Calculators making airplane parts. I didn't know anyone out here. I didn't know my way around. I didn't find any social activities for people my age. Things are still the same. There's still nothing for the kids.

I married at 16. I was shy about meeting boys. But one night I was going to a dance with my girl friend and we met these sailors on the street. One of them was from Alabama. He told me he was from the Klu Klux Klan. If girls crossed him he said they would get the same treatment niggers got. He had a knife on him. I got scared and ran off

and left him and asked this other sailor if I could walk with him. I didn't know it at the time but he had a knife and was drunk too. I got stuck with him the whole evening.

That was in December, 1943. Two weeks later this sailor asked me to marry him. My father had old fashioned ideas. When he got drunk, he'd get violent. I didn't love the boy but I figured if I married him I'd get out from under my father's dictatorship.

After we were married my husband was transferred to Memphis. That's where I first saw some of the conditions the Negro had to live with. In Denver we were completely integrated. In Memphis, if you met a Negro on the street he had to get off and let you pass. One day I got kicked off the streetcar because I refused to take an old crippled Negro man's seat. The bus driver told me, "I don't know where you're from, lady, but out here white women don't stand up."

I couldn't take this, the way they treated the people. We were all brothers under the same skin. My husband was from Kentucky so he was used to this sort of thing. He's say after all, Negroes aren't human beings. Why should you get so upset. The whip's the only language they understand. In the two weeks I stayed in Kentucky, my husband's family called me a dirty Mexican and low class. They were very frank about their opinions of me.

I wasn't happy with my husband but we began having kids one after the other.

I felt I had to keep the marriage together. But after a while he just done me too many arated. By then there were six children. He was supporting them until one week he just took off and left town.

The Welfare department sent a 60-year old social worker to see me. I had to tell her my whole life history. She had never been married. She asked me all these personal questions. Finally she asked me if I was pregnant. All things blew up. I got nasty with her. She told me she had to have all this information, so I just said if you have to know how many times I go to the toilet, you can shove your welfare up your ass. I waited three months after that to hear from Welfare. My kids were getting a little hungry. So I took a walk down to the Welfare office and ended up with the

same lady. At first she didn't recognize me but she did when she read the files. Since I was so nasty with her, she said, I couldn't get money. I said I was asking for some of my own money back, not for charity. I was a tax payer and a property owner.

"How do you figure the money's coming from you?" she asked me. I said where does welfare get its money? She said from the state. I said where does the state get its money? She said from the government. I said where does the government get its money? She said from the people. So then I said what do you think I am? I'm the people. Then I got up and told her I was going to abandon my kids at the police department because I couldn't bear to see them crying every night; and I was going to pay any more taxes, and I would tell the whole story to the Oakland Tribune. She got a little shook up. That's how I got on welfare.

I never had any privacy when I was on welfare, but I never took any baloney from them either. And they never cut me off.

My mother didn't want me to remarry. She felt the children would be worse off with a step-father. It took me a year after I met Mr. Bumcrot before I ever went out with him. He was driving a truck for Western Gillette. Now he drives one for Walkup Merchants.

My third eldest son, Jim, had an accident when he was 11 years old. He got caught between the bottom of a truck and its back wheels. I think it did something to him. After that he used to steal things. He'd always do it in front of people. It was as if he wanted them to help him. He needed psychiatric treatments. The clinics were overcrowded and there was a three year waiting period. One time he got in trouble and the judge told me he had no choice but to put him away till he was 21. That was when he was only 15. So I felt the best thing was to send him to his father in Ohio. He was made a ward of the court and sent to Ohio for two years. My boy didn't want to go but it was with the promise that he would come back to me in two years.

They never did give him any psychiatric treatment in Ohio. The courts here failed to get the Probation office couldn't him. Last summer a Probation officer came to see me for the first time in two years. I told him Jim had gotten into trouble only twice. So then he said if Jim came back into the state he would be locked up till he was 21. I went to Legal Aid. They're so busy I don't think they've done much on it. They told me that the Probation office couldn't keep him from coming into the state because of his having a juvenile record.

What got me really started in working in the community was last June, the 26th, when my baby was going across the street from my mother's house and he got hit. We told the ambulance to take us to the East Oakland hospital where we had a private doctor and teamster's insurance. But the driver took us to Highland. From 5:30 to 7:30 my baby was unattended. Then he went into a coma. I got hysterical. They hadn't even wiped the blood off of his face. They finally got an ambulance and took us to the East Oakland hospital and he got his emergency treatment.

I was very bitter about High-

Flatlands Calendar

APRIL 9 -- 23

SUNDAY, APRIL 10

Delano Grape Strike Rally at state capital building in Sacramento, 1:30.

MONDAY, APRIL 11

Oakland Housing Authority, meeting, 935 Union St., 3:00 pm.
Oakland Town Meeting, WEST Auditorium, Oakland Public Library, 8:00 pm, Topic: Free School Lunches.

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

Kennedy Tract Association, meeting at Lazear School, 824 29th Ave., 7:30 pm.
Board of Education meeting at 1025 2nd Ave., 4:00 pm. (Every Tuesday).
Oakland City Council meeting at City Hall, 7:30 pm. (Every TUESDAY).
East Oakland Parish meeting, 1601 Fruitvale Ave., 8:00 pm (Every Tuesday).
West Oakland Christian Parish meeting, 933 12th St., 8:45 am.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13

Ad Hoc Committee on Education, United Christian Church, 1601 Fruitvale Ave., 7:30 pm.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14

Excerpts from a play based on Dick Gregory's autobiography, "Nigger," 7:00 pm at the Thurgood Marshall School, FIRST United Presbyterian Church, 2619 Broadway.

DEADLINE DAY FOR VOTER REGISTRATION. REGISTER NOW TO VOTE IN THE JUNE PRIMARY ELECTION

SATURDAY, APRIL 23

OEDC meeting (War on Poverty), Franklin Recreation Center, 1010 E. 15th St., 8:30 am.

If you have an important date for the FLATLANDS readers, call 848-5152.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

The Kennedy Tract Improvement association was formed in July of 1965, to improve community living conditions. One of the first projects we undertook was the formation of a nursery school.

This community has no playgrounds or parks nearby. The juvenile rate is very high. The school does not even furnish any playground equipment outside of two tether balls and a few climbing bars.

Kennedy Tract association is fighting now for more street lighting, bigger and better sewers, and repavement of a yard to be used as a playground.

One major problem we had in our neighborhood was that our school children had to walk to and from school on the railroad tracks or on the street. Today these children have a fenced walkway made possible through the pressure put on the city by the Kennedy Tract association.

In July, a work-study student came around. I guess I jumped on the bandwagon then. I told her we had no community recreation for the kids, or anything that would stop juvenile delinquency and keep the kids off the street. She called a meeting at the church and asked the people about their complaints. Naturally I had some. She asked me if I wanted to chair the meeting so I did. Then when elections came for setting up the organization they voted me to stay on. I feel like I'm heading for another nervous breakdown. I see a bunch of things coming to a boiling point. I see a big explosion coming either by me or the people.

The people are getting pretty dissatisfied. The schools are on our back for trying to get recreation equipment. We just getting a bunch of runaround.

They want to put enough pressure where I'll drop out. But I don't give up that easy. If I can get something done for the people in this community I'll do it till I drop in my tracks.

Success is My Right

BY CURTIS LEE BAKER

Oakland to me is the hottest TOWN in the world to open up. I am saying this because I have white poor members as well as Kneegrows in my help center. They seem to be more madder than the world of suffering blacks.

The mayor pull out because sooner or later his evil ways will be the main cause of the poor fighting back. The police chief of this city and most of his officers, they have no understanding I mean for the poor of all races, so if this shame of fighting come to this city the poor of all races will be fighting the same one cause—the Uncle Toms and the Evil White powers.

For the Ramparts, I don't think too much of their write-up. They are only talking about all the bad, thinking of the poor that is being hurt, but they did not say anything about the readers of the Oakland newspaper, and how it keeps the truth from the poor people. Nor did they say anything about the true leaders like myself and Mark. But we was the ones more so that help them to get their stories so they could write the living truth about this dog City we live.

I am a man of love but I hate what my people are going through and suffering because of a few damn mad Gods so-calls. The powers have set themselves up as Gods, but we know that they are only outright dogs.

Success is my right. This is the name of this poem. This poem is my life.

"I look up and ahead. I watch for the goodness and the blessings which surround me. I believe I have faith from above and beyond I gain my strength. I use my will to remain strong—never to let fears or doubts overtake me. I am grateful to my loved ones and the kindness my kinfolks, my neighbors and my friends show me if any have I. This and all I have in hand has been given me to improve myself, and I must become worthy even at the price of death to deserve the happiness which flows for me from well-being. Thus, it is for me to see, to know and to use. All the tools given me to make my success will not long stay bright unless I use them. The future is mine and it is meant to be full of goodness and happiness. Success is my right and I shall try in every way to work to earn it."

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