

TRAP : New leader in Oakland ?

New proposal

by Paul Cobb

for making the Poverty Program really serve the people

The recent Advisory committee elections are the result of two years of planning, debating and decision - making. The target areas are becoming more sophisticated in their relations with city government and among themselves.

Booker Emery, delegate from West Oakland to the OEDC, sums up the development and awareness of the people in the target areas by saying "We all know each other better now, we have learned valuable lessons in dealing with the mayor, Dr. Smith, and Judge Wilson - at first nobody knew their names - now we do. Not only their names but their functions

"Our eyes are open now"

"We have become wiser through our mistakes" says Bill Lowe, delegate from North Oakland.

Ralph Williams, who repeats as WOAAC chairman, summarizes the growth of the poor, "Our eyes are open now. Once we were blind - now we see what's going on - we won't be fooled - we know that doors can be opened - and most importantly we can help open them ourselves."

Now that we have 51% control in the OEDC we must make it work for us. We can become more effective if we band together on common goals.

"Best delegates were lousy"

"If there is any one lesson that we should have learned from our experiences with the OEDC so far, it is the necessity of unity.

There was an attempt, last year, to unify the Advisory committees but it failed. "TAAC's failure was inherent - it usurped the authority of the membership by bypassing them, the best delegates were lousy because they were not allowed to function," explained Bill Lowe.

We must organize again. We need an organization that is started from within the target areas. That is composed of representatives from each area. Each separate area must not be controlled by the central organization; it must serve the target areas.

Target-Area Representation And Participation (T.R.A.P.) is needed to protect, exchange ideas and aid in functions and operations of each separate area. If T.R.A.P. avoids what TAAC did it will succeed.

TAAC had little faith in character and potentialities of the poor community. Their words and acts were largely directed toward the non-poor community. They were not aware of the poor community as a reservoir of power. And this lack of faith in the poor community is a pattern that TRAP must stop. TRAP's objectives and tactics should be based on the wishes of the poor community. As Bill Lowe puts it "It must be from the bottom up."

Let us not let TRAP be our trap. There is a tendency to discontinue our individual works and efforts by belonging to a larger organization. TRAP would be composed of Representatives (delegates) from every area - and the strength of TRAP is dependent upon the strength of each area. A pyramid's strength is at

the base if we broaden the base, we can build higher.

"Community building

--the answer"

The answer is community building. We must put the accent where it counts the most - in our own neighborhoods. Remember that when we unite we must support TRAP with taxes. The taxes to be paid to be a member are hard work and coordinated efforts. Every area must produce individually to make TRAP work.

TRAP can be the hope for a vigorous active Oakland community. Let's be wise and use our maturity and experience as poverty workers to be brave enough to agree to disagree when necessary. The healing of our community problems will be a long slow process. TRAP can be a prestigious organization. But its prestige is dependent upon the prestige of each area and each area will build pride and prestige only by hard work from the bottom up. TAAC started from the top and failed. TRAP can do it if we start from the people.

TRAP will be no heaven on earth, no promised land waiting around the corner for the poor. Only the development of our individual community resources will give us power. The amount to which we develop and strengthen our own areas is the amount to which TRAP can work for us. We can have functional unity only when each separate area produces and organizes itself separately.

THOUGHTS

or: all in a few day's work

by Gloria Comfort

NOTE: Gloria Comfort sent us this sort of diary about two months ago. We're awfully dumb sometimes, and it didn't get into the paper then. So it's a bit out of date, and we're sorry for that, but it seems too good not to print just because of a couple of months. There was a note at the end, saying "To be continued - or concluded - with a 'positive' ending: 'And they lived happily ever after.'??? " We hope we can print that soon.

THOUGHTS AT RANDOM

Now, Tuesday night. Belinda Dill, 10th grader at Skyline high needs help. Four weeks ago she gave a phony address to the schools so she could go to Skyline. She had been in a fight at Castlemont and it wasn't her fault and she was NOT suspended because the administration found out it wasn't her fault.

So she gets into Skyline. Then the school investigates an absence. They find out she doesn't live in the right district. They tell her to go back to Castlemont. She can't see going back. She

doesn't understand them telling her Skyline is overcrowded. She has been there four weeks and has her books and classes and is to be in a play Friday night.

Her mother had gone down to the School Board to ask that Belinda be allowed to remain in Skyline. Mr. Benson takes the info, submits it to the board, they rule that she is #1, not a resident, #2 that the arguments are not strong enough to let her stay in Skyline. She comes over in hopes of getting help from us.

Wednesday A.M. I call Supt. Phillips. He's in a meeting, I'm transferred to Dr. Michell's office. The secretary gives me Mr. Benson. He tells me that Mrs. Dill has been informed of the board's decision. Can't you do anything? I ask. "No, the only one that can do anything is Dr. Phillips. The board carefully considered the problem and their decisions are usually final."

I tell Belinda I'll keep trying. What the hell am I gonna do? She doesn't go to school . . .

Thursday. Still waiting to hear from Phillips. Mr. Benson calls. He said Belinda can stay in Skyline until Friday so she can still

be in the school play. But she is expected to return to Castlemont on Monday. Good, that gives me one more day to work with. But what the hell can I do? Make some phone calls! Barney Hilburn isn't in. An Ad Hoc rep. says she will get on it.

Still Thursday. Joe Robinson's mother calls. Joe went to Job Corps Tuesday, they sent him back. On Wednesday of last week he is in the car with his step-father. There is a rifle in the car. There is also trouble all over East Oakland.

The police spot the rifle. It belongs to Joe. It is not loaded, it doesn't even have the clip that is supposed to go with it. The police take it for "safe keeping." They give Joe a receipt.

Sunday, Oct. 30, Mrs. Robinson goes to the police department to get the rifle. "No problem, except it is locked in the vault. Tell Joe to come in tomorrow and pick it up." Monday Joe goes to get it. Can't get it. "You mother has to be with you."

Tuesday, Nov. 1. Forget the old rifle. Go to Job Corps camp. Wednesday, et sent back to

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535-2010

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Published every two weeks

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DEMAND YOUR WORTH

Why do we who are poor, low income or what have you, stand for less than first class service where we trade? It's beyond me. I have always been poor, now by the standards of society, I'm considered to be low income - which is, in most cases, still poor. My point is this: where you shop, demand the service your dollar stands for.

For instance, why are you addressed by most salesmen behind those counters as "honey" or "dear"? Some of them even say "darling."

Go any place where the poor deal and you will find inferior service. Why don't we demand what is due us? I'll never understand why most of us put up with it.

You take that dollar away, and you will find they can't survive without it. Your dollar is boss.

A SMALL INCIDENT

A recent experience I had at Swan's Market made me decide to write this. I have always stopped at their luncheon meat counter. I asked the counter man for three pounds of lunch meat, and pointed to one kind. He asked if I wanted it mixed, and I replied that I did, but to give me what I was pointing at first.

He said, "Tell me what you want and I will pick it all up at once."

(I hadn't made up my mind yet, but I did not expect him to read my mind.) I said, "You can't pick up three pounds at once."

With that remark, he slung all the meat back into the showcase and waved me on. You had better know I was made enough to do damage. If I had been a man, I would not have to stand insults.

The incident was so small, I could not help but think him prejudiced. Now I can't say I mind prejudice in people, but when they bring it to their jobs - later.

I complained to the manager upstairs, because I found out the man behind the counter was the manager down in his department. Can you imagine a manager that small? The upstairs manager apologized for the downstairs one. This is just like my kicking you and my husband apologizes to you for me. P.S. While you're about, put a check on your Service Centers.

Your neighbor,
A Fruitvale Resident

would be a big help if I could spend some time with him and show an interest in what he is doing. He's six years old now.

Who the hell do I think I am? I can't even solve my own problems. Where do I get the nerve to tell other people I might be able to help them?