

Community Leaders in Newark Battle to Improve Negroes' Lot

Proposal to Convert a Slum Area and Naming of School Officially Spark Opposition

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

Special to The New York Times

NEWARK, May 28—A steadily growing unrest in the Negro ghetto here is forcing neighborhood leaders who have been in conflict to band together for the first time.

Black nationalists and Negro politicians of the two major parties alike joined last week to disrupt public meetings, to picket City Hall, and to change the leadership of the city's anti-poverty program.

"If the city continues to ignore our wants, there is the possibility of violence this summer," said Joe Akie El, a member of the Black Nationalist Front. "I hope not, though," he said softly, "it's always we Negroes who get hurt."

The speaker, a slim ascetic-looking young man, made his comments in a back room of a shabby restaurant run by his group. Outside, a horde of ragged children scampered in the heavy traffic of South Orange Avenue in the city's Central Ward, where thousands of Negroes live.

High Unemployment Rate

This city of nearly 400,000 people has an unemployment rate of 8.2 per cent—the national average is 3.8 per cent—and is one of five cities eligible for special Federal aid because of an unemployment rate consistently double the national average.

Its applications for aid from Washington disclose a dreary catalogue of overcrowded slums, inadequate schools with a high-school dropout rate of 32 per cent, of rising rates of crime and disease and of increasing welfare costs.

Mr. El's warning of possible racial violence this summer was echoed throughout the city last week as part of two controversies over the administration of Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio.

The first dispute involves the city's plan to turn a 14-block slum area over for initial construction of the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry.

The other involves the Mayor's attempt to have James T. Callaghan, a white high school graduate who is a City Councilman and a \$10,000-a-year county employe, appointed as secretary to the Board of Education. Negro groups wanted Wilbur Parker, a Negro accountant who is the City Budget Director and a graduate of Cornell University, appointed.

At two recent hearings on the issues, Negroes disrupted the proceedings. At the hearing of the Central Planning Board on the medical school site, a stenographic record was torn up, a wall map was destroyed, a tape recorder was hurled to the floor and eggs were thrown at the board.

The Board of Education had to adjourn its meeting without deciding on the appointment of a secretary when a crowd of about 300 shouting, clapping, foot-stamping civil-rights advocates charged that the school system was shot through with discrimination.

A few nights later, at a noisy meeting of the United Community Corporation, Newark's anti-poverty agency, three top staff executives—all Negroes—were suspended, largely at the instigation of a coalition of black nationalists and Negro political leaders who charged that they hadn't fought hard enough against the medical school site and that they had been less than militant in their efforts to aid the poor.

It is this newly formed coalition that is worrying some Newark officials and bringing warnings of violence.

"Protest is not new. It has been going on since the days of slavery. What is new is the vigor and growing unity of people who couldn't get together before," said James I. Threatt, a tall, gray-haired Negro who heads the city's Human Rights Commission.

Note of Optimism

"Under the pressure of protest and the tempo of social change, we're being compressed in a pressure cooker," Mr. Threatt added. "This is a people's revolution, and the city government must increase communication with these forces. If we don't hurry, they'll change things without us."

But in Mayor Addonizio's office there is optimism, despite the rumblings of discontent and the warning several weeks ago by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that Newark was among 10 cities in the nation where violence could erupt this summer.

Mr. Addonizio, a former Democratic Congressman first elected Mayor in 1962, said through an aide: "I do not believe there will be any mass violence in Newark this summer."

The aide, Donald Malafronte, the Mayor's administrative assistant, said he spoke for Mr. Addonizio in saying that "I expect the summer, as in the past, to be an active time with a good many demonstrations and incidents."

"But under good management, as in the past, Newark



Associated Press

Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio

does not expect violence.

will come through this thing very well."

"I do not preclude the possibility of isolated incidents of violence," Mr. Malafronte continued. "If some people are determined to have violence, there is no way to prevent it."

He accused organizations such as the Black Liberation Front, the Students for a Democratic Society and the Congress of Racial Equality of attempting to use violence as an organizing device in a time of "genuine community unrest."

Spokesmen for the students' society and CORE were not available for comment. Speaking for the Black Liberation Front, a militant nationalist group, Mr. El denied that his group favored violence.

"If we get beaten, however," he said, "we're not going to just stand there."

Mr. Malafronte pointed to large expenditures of Federal urban-renewal funds as proof that the city was not neglecting its poor. He also denied a charge by Eulis (Honey) Ward, Democratic chairman of the Central Ward, that the proposed relocation of Negroes from the medical school site was an effort to disperse black voters.

Among the others who objected to the proposed medical school are Earl Harris, former Republican Essex County Freeholder, George C. Richardson, a former Democratic Assemblyman, and Walter Dawkins, an anti-poverty official.

At the heart of the unrest is, in Mr. Threatt's words, the "growing sense of political, economic and moral power felt by Newark Negroes."

Mirage and Reality

The city, about a 25-minute drive from midtown Manhattan, rises from the industrial smoke and haze of the Jersey meadowlands like a desert mirage. Unlike most mirages, however, many of its buildings are begrimed with dirt, its homes sagging with age.

Roughly half of Newark's residents are Negroes or Puerto Ricans and many of them have come north from the rural South or the Caribbean seeking relief from poverty. In most cases, the relief, too, has been a mirage.

Conditions in Newark are perhaps best described in the opening paragraph of the city's bulky application to Congress last month for Federal Model Cities funds, proposed grants to be given to municipalities to combine urban renewal and social services in poor neighborhoods.

"Decay, poverty and the problems of racial transition are common to most older cities, especially in the Northeast. However, there are few cities anywhere in the nation where these and other urban problems extend so widely and cut so deeply as in Newark, N.J."

The application goes on to say that "among major American cities, Newark and its citizens face the highest percentage of substandard housing, the most crime per 100,000 of population, the heaviest per-capita tax burden, the sharpest shifts in population and the highest rate of venereal disease, new cases of tuberculosis and maternal mortality."

"In addition, Newark is second among major cities in population density, second in infant mortality, second in birth rate, seventh in absolute number of drug addicts and has a rate of unemployment persistent enough and high enough to make it one of only five cities in the nation qualified for special assistance under the Economic Development Act."

The application notes that the city has only 23 square miles, the smallest land area among major American cities, and almost 25 per cent of the city is covered by Newark Airport, Port Newark or almost uninhabited meadowlands.

Although Newark is a financial, transportation and commercial center, it exists to a disproportionate sense only as a "downtown" to the larger "city" of Northern New Jersey, the application says.

"The bedrooms, the fine residential neighborhoods that mark the outer reaches of most major cities, are either narrowly restricted in Newark or fall beyond its city limits," the report notes.

Because of its reception of "successive waves of newcomers" since the turn of the century, the city says, "Newark was then as it is now, a basic training camp for the poor."