

Include data
on Puerto Ricans

PROPOSAL
NEWARK CONVENTION COMMITTEE

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The Problem

Newark is a city that has undergone a rapid population shift in the last 30 years. In 1940 10.8% of Newark's population of 430,000 inhabitants was black. In little more than 25 years, according to a 1967 Rutgers report, the black population of the city reached 52%, in addition to about 10% spanish speaking residents.

Dispite the high proportion of black^{and Puerto Rican} people in the city the political and business life are still run by whites. For example, there are only ~~two~~^{three} black city councilmen out of nine, ~~neither~~^{two} of which is highly respected in the black community. The highest position held by a black person on the police force is captain; and blacks comprise only about 15% of the entire police force. Of the six administrative departments under the mayor's office (fire, police, finance, health and welfare, public works and law) one is headed by a black person, Mrs. Larrie Stalks, who was appointed in 1967. Blacks are meagerly represented in city decision making, planning and development agencies such as the Housing Authority, Zoning Board and City Planning Board. There are three out of nine blacks on the Board of Education, one of whom, Harold Ashby, is the Board's president. The mayor's Human Rights Commission, a bi-racial board with no enforcement power, is presently headed by a white person though formerly headed by a black person, James Threatt, who left the city for another job.

It is evident that Puerto Ricans hold no positions of power or influence in city government. Rather, the Puerto Rican community has been represented by appointed "Spanish speaking" politicians often more loyal

to the establishment ⁽²⁾ ~~that~~ the community.

Added to this pattern of exclusion are serious social problems indicated by an unemployment rate for blacks of 11%, a 32% drop-out rate for the years 1962-1966 in the public schools, the highest maternity mortality and infant mortality rates in the nation, and the highest venereal disease rate and new tuberculosis cases for all cities.

Needless to say the problems of Newark are symptomatic of the decay that exists in urban centers throughout our nation. However, there is a strong feeling in many quarters of our community that the leadership needed to effect social change and conciliation of community factions is not present. Consistent with the historical development of ethnic leadership in the cities of America the black population in Newark, representing more than half of the total population of the city, is now prepared to provide leadership in helping to shape a new future for Newark.

In May of 1970 a municipal election will be held in which a mayor and nine councilmen will be elected. This proposal outlines the need to develop unity through a Black convention in the City of Newark that will seek to solidify the entire community and choose candidates for each office who present the best hope for a new future.

The Proposal

Last fall prior to the citywide special councilmanic election for two seats; (one at large and one in the East Ward. A second at large seat was opened after the convention.) the United Brothers sponsored a black convention that attempted

to narrow the field of candidates for the councilmanic positions and develop an organized cadre of workers to support the convention choices. Though the effort fell short of its goal there were several positive aspects in the previous convention which provide the basis for our present strategy.

1. The field of candidates was narrowed to perhaps the most significant extent ever achieved in the black community in Newark. Therefore, it appeared that the notion of one candidate being selected discouraged the usual number from entering the campaign.

2. The convention established a sense of accountability of candidates to the people. The fact that each candidate had to address the convention and submit to questions concerning his past record, community activities and program for the future provided a possibility to develop a black political leadership that is responsive to a constituency.

3. The convention provided an opportunity for the citizenry to engage in discussion and evaluation of major issues through workshops and panels.

The major criticism of the last convention was that the representation was not broad enough (to effectively unify the community in its operation and decisions).

For the 1970 election a new convention committee has been established that is representative of the major political, labor, civic, professional, educational and religious organizations in the black community of Newark. Though this committee is an adjunct or sub-committee of the Committee for Unified Newark

it is autonomous and plans to establish its own headquarters, staff and financial accountability.

An executive board of the convention committee includes a spectrum as diverse as John Bugg of the United Brothers, James Pawley of the Urban League, Mrs. ^{Max}~~Sally~~ Cook of the National Council of Negro Women, ^{Miss Hilda Hildalgo of Arizona} and the Chairman is Robert Curvin of Rutgers University.

The convention committee is seeking to involve all segments of the black and Puerto Rican community. It also seeks to operate on the basis of a win strategy that seeks to gain a fair share for all people of the city; that is, a termination of the political domination of a single ethnic group and an end to the corruption and filth that predominates in Newark.

The convention will select the candidates it deems best suited to carry out a program for change in Newark and will hopefully offer each candidate selected specific financial and manpower resources. The convention will be held at Clinton Place Jr. High School on November 14, 15, 16. A total budget of the expenses necessary is attached.