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NEWARK, N.J., August 15, 1967 ---- Responding to allegations by witnesses before the House of Representatives Committee on Health, Education, and Labor, which is now considering proposed legislation for the 1968 war on poverty, Timothy Still, president of the United Community Corporation, today issued a 31-page statement submitted to the House record of August 1.

The United Community Corporation is the umbrella community action agency of Newark. Its report, presented to subcommittee chairman Carl Perkins, is a reaction to testimony of Newark Councilmen Lee Bernstein and Frank Addonizio, Newark police intelligence officer William Mallard, and Anthony DeFino, president of Weequahic Opportunity Center, one of eight UCC-established area boards.

Mr. Still reviews the accomplishments of the UCC and endorses the principles of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as the most meaningful legislation for the poor in this country.

"The concepts enumerated in this law make it possible to meet and solve the great challenge of the decade," Mr. Still said. "The Economic Opportunity Act is an instrumentality for good--its precepts enhance the dignity of man."

Mr. Still said, "It can survive and it must survive."

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The UCC statement traces the development of the antipoverty from its beginnings in 1964 and its total commitment to the much forgotten phrase, 'maximum feasible participation' of the poor, to the agency's sponsoring of unique and experimental poverty programs and its thorough mobilization of citywide groups and organizations.

The report cites UCC's record in establishing the first year-round preschool program, a highly successful legal services project, the often praised high school Head Start project, besides programs for the elderly, Spanish-speaking sectors, and unemployed youth and adults.

Mr. Still also states the UCC's success in pulling together many undirected but dedicated citizens of all stations in life, offering them, by way of the poverty program, a springboard to work effectively on behalf of the poor.

"It is my firm conviction," said Mr. Still, "that the productive efforts of the UCC helped to organize the poor of our community and to give our entire community a sense of hope for the future."

He acknowledged that the poverty program was a "mere beginning of what must be done." Because of the enormity of the problems, "the root causes of discontent and disillusionment that have evolved over decades and have plagued the poor cannot expect to be eradicated in a comparatively short time," he added.

"The basic problems of unemployment, inadequate housing, inferior educational facilities, discrimination--in all its aspect-- the exploitation of the poor, the patterns of segregation that exist, and the inability of the law enforcement authorities truly to relate to

the poor in our community and the resultant grossly insensitive attitude of some police and other official agencies in the community...all of these problems can no longer be ignored," he continued.

In reviewing several contributing factors of the Newark disorders, the UCC report places major responsibility on the failure to involve the affected Newark community in decisions that will determine their future and to failure to solve in any meaningful way the basic causes of poverty.

Mr. Still mentions the decision to establish a medical school site in the heart of Newark's central ward without "advance adequate provisions for relocation of the people to be displaced" as a contributing factor, and that both white and Negro residents were "aroused" when the "community became aware that the secretary to the Board of Education was resigning and there was a refusal to consider as a proposed candidate, a man then employed as Budget Director of the city, the first Negro CPA in the state of New Jersey, who was more eminently qualified than the designee."

The UCC statement condemns the "adamant position taken by the city officials in refusing to recognize the more qualified man... an honor graduate of Cornell University School of Business Administration and the holder of a master's degree, in contrast to the other candidate, a white person, whose education was concluded upon completion of high school and whose work experience is in no way comparable to the other candidate."

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"This conduct," Mr. Still said, "caused many Negroes in the city to charge that the promises and assurances that a better life would be theirs if they pursued their education were in truth empty phrases."

Mr. Still said that the tensions already apparent in the city were heightened by this lack of concern for and lack of involvement with the community, and he cautioned that "these problems were not caused by the United Community Corporation. Nor did the UCC precipitated the incident that triggered the events of mid-July. To the contrary, our entire course of events was designed to relieve community tensions, and we did all within our power to prevent the outbreak."

The report and its appendices show that UCC activities during and after the outbreak helped restore peace and order. Yet, according to Mr. Still, the UCC was accused by the Newark witnesses as precipitating the riots.

To these charges Mr. Still said, "The testimony of these gentlemen was replete with inaccuracies, assumptions, and their testimony reflected the dismal lack of awareness...of the concerns of the people of our city."

"Their statements," he went on, "were unpardonable acts of irresponsibility and contained outlandish charges that were not supported by facts."

Mr. Still answered several charges made by the witnesses. These follow:

"I categorically deny that the conduct of our corporation can in any way be labeled as "communist" or tainted with communists."

"The councilman (Lee Bernstein) charges that several of the area boards (community centers in Newark) helped set off the incident on July 13, which precipitated the riot. We categorically deny this."

In refernce to charges that the Newark Community Union Project (an arm of the Students for a Democratic Society) contributed to the riots, Mr. Still said,

It should be made clear that the Newark Community Union Project is not affiliated nor associated with the United Community Corporation and, as a matter of fact, on numerous occasions some persons who have affiliated with NCUP and have been board members of the UCC have differed vigorously with some of the policy positions taken by the board of trustees of the corporation. I make no comment on the conduct of NCUP, since any allegations levelled against them should be answered by their representatives.

Regarding the proposed appointment of the secretary to the Newark Board of Education, the UCC president stated, " the corporation took no official position on this appointment, nor did anyone speak at any meeting in regard to this matter as an authorized representative for or on behalf of the UCC."

The statement answers other charges.

"Councilman Bernstein charged that the UCC was an 'outside political group' attempting to gain political power in the city. It is patently untrue," Mr. Still said, "that our corporation is a political group. We...seek to alter the course of our community through the types of programs referred to in effecting the purposes and policies of the Economic Opportunity Act. Moreover, our board adopted a policy that makes anyone who becomes a candidate for public office to take a leave of absence from the board to assure that there is no utilization of the corporation for political purposes."

Mr. Still concluded the UCC statement with an admonition to the two Newark councilmen testifying before the House committee.

It is apparent that the distress of Councilmen Bernstein and Addonizio with the activities of the UCC is because they reject the fundamental philosophy of the Economic Opportunity Act, which urges maximum feasible participation of the poor.

They resent involvement of the community because it impinges upon the control they seek to exercise in the affairs of the corporation. It is their contention, as testified before the House committee, and as earlier asserted in their own inquiry two years ago, that the antipoverty program should be run by the elected officials of the city and not by the people of the community.

It is this very distinction, the guarantee of involvement of the poor and other community leaders, which makes the Act unique and in the ultimate is the assurance that its objectives will be achieved.

Finally, Mr. Still comments,

The tangible results of the riot in Newark in terms of death, property damage, and injury to the people of our city is horrible to behold...It is our view that it is the responsibility of our entire community to address itself to the creation of a new social, economic, and political climate that will eradicate the ghetto...It is through active and sympathetic and sensitive support by the private and public sectors of our community that this war against the social evils of our time can be won.

The same creative thinking and action that spawned the war on poverty must be continued and expanded by discovering and devising new methods and techniques to eliminate poverty...It is my fervent hope that God will give our elected officials and other leaders in our community divine counsel to enable them to recognize that they do an injustice to themselves when they separate themselves from the community in dealing with community problems.

Timothy Still, elected president of the UCC in May 1967, has been a resident of Newark for the past 44 years. He is a consultant for the Newark Housing Authority and home secretary for Congressman Joseph G. Minish.