

MAYOR'S REMARKS MADE BEFORE
UNITED COMMUNITY CORPORATION

May 27, 1965

It is a great honor for me -- Both as Mayor and as a member of the Board of Directors of the United Community Corporation -- to welcome you here tonight.

We have in the United Community Corporation an organization which can help overcome the ignorance and the intolerance which has crippled so many thousands for so long.

In Newark, as in every major city in the land, we face problems in housing, in education, in creating fuller employment and in ending poverty and wiping out racial intolerance.

The UCC -- working with other agencies devoted to progress in our city -- can play a key role in solving these problems.

We need an organization like the UCC -- an organization with expert knowledge of the technical steps involved in anti-poverty proposals and with the time and the staff to stimulate and coordinate the diverse groups at work to improve our city.

Now the UCC is here, it is organized -- it is a going concern.

And now it is time to say some things which -- if said earlier -- might have been misunderstood.

I would like to offer at this time -- in as constructive and cooperative manner as possible -- my conception of what role the UCC must play in the community.

Some may not like what I say -- but I believe if they listen with an open mind, they will see I am suggesting a course that will steer us all to a better, more unified city.

It is the UCC's job, in my judgment, to act as the eyes and ears of the anti-poverty program and to suggest and coordinate programs developed from the information gathered from the poor themselves.

The UCC's job is one of social service.

It is a sensitive job -- one with some clear dangers.

We need only look to New York or to Cleveland or to so many other of our major cities to see the dangers involved.

We have avoided major criticism in Newark so far because of a high degree of unselfish cooperation.

Although the Economic Opportunities Act allowed me the opportunity to establish any type of community action group I preferred, it was clear to me from the start that a private group wholly divorced from any suggestion of political influence was best.

Many warned me against allowing a group to be formed wholly apart from the city structure. The same warnings were sounded in New York and Bob Wagner listened - - I hope events in the long run will prove I was right in rejecting these warnings.

I felt - - and I still feel - - that whatever is good for Newark is good for me.

I fought to keep politics out of the UCC and I believe I succeeded. The UCC would not be structured the way it is if I hadn't.

Therefore, I commend Dean Heckel and others who have constantly warned about political interference in the UCC - - We must not have any.

But, ladies and gentlemen, when talking about politics it is vital to remember that politics is a sword that cuts two ways.

We have emphasized keeping politics out of the UCC but now lets remember the reverse - - lets remember to keep the UCC out of politics.

The UCC must not concern itself with empire building - - for where there is an empire there will soon be emperors fighting for the throne.

The UCC's goal should not be to become a major pressure group - - it must seek to help other agencies not overshadow them.

The UCC's first responsibility is not to sell itself to the public, no matter how deeply some members feel the need for publicity.

Its first responsibility is to sell itself to the organizations which must voluntarily cooperate with the UCC if the UCC is to have a function - - It must sell itself to the governmental agencies and to the civic and welfare groups which make up the component parts of the UCC.

The UCC, my friends, must not come to see itself as a giant which can dominate the many independent agencies anxious to improve this city.

It's proper role is as a social service agency, advising its component organizations as to what is needed and helping with the immense detail work needed to guide programs through to approval.

The anti-poverty law is drawn to give preference to programs developed with the cooperation of a community action group such as the UCC, but such cooperation in most cases, my friends, is not mandatory.

The UCC must serve the needs of the community by assisting in the dialogue between the poor and the many agencies anxious to serve them.

It cannot foster a program on the Board of Education which the Board of Education does not want - - The public school education of the children of Newark is a legal responsibility of the Board of Education and it cannot be delegated to any other agency.

It cannot foster a program on the Department of Welfare for the Department of Welfare is charged with the legal responsibilities which, again, cannot lawfully be transferred.

So it is with other city agencies, with the Housing Authority, with county agencies, with state agencies and with most private organizations bound by their own charters and their own laws of incorporation.

In short, the UCC cannot - - and must not - - intrude itself on the legal responsibilities of others.

It must seek the cooperation of others, it must persuade and convince - - it cannot mandate.

This is a job, which in my judgment, must be done with a minimum of fanfare.

The job of the UCC is not to talk or to blow up its chest with pride - - its job is to help other agencies produce.

This is an unselfish job, my friends - - a job that should go largely unsung.

My plea tonight - - my warning to all of us deeply committed to the UCC - - is this:

If the UCC builds itself into a major publicity force and begins to think itself not as a social agency but as a political counterweight - - then, ladies and gentlemen, it will be in trouble.

Political force, my friends, always generates counter-force.

If the UCC is swayed by pressures generated by amateur politicians or if it allows itself to be misguided by ambitious citizens anxious to make reputations for themselves, then the UCC will fail. And I say the UCC must not fail.

I say the potential benefits to the city of Newark are too great for any of us to allow it to fail.

We in the political community have leaned over backward to give the UCC room to organize - - at a rate, by the way, which has made many people unhappy.

Now it is time for those in the UCC to lean over backward to avoid allowing the UCC to become anything but a hard-working social service organization devoted to the agencies and the causes which will promote the public good.

If the UCC oversteps itself, if it begins to concern itself with high-powered public relations and publicity-seeking than the smooth coordination of workable programs, then all of us will suffer.

We have raised the hopes of our citizens too high to have them smashed on the rocks of unnecessary bickering for credit.

I have promised the poor of our city a better deal and I intend to see that is what they get.

If the UCC accepts its role as a helpful social agency, anxious not to enhance its own reputation but to enhance and improve the performance of its agencies-- then we shall all benefit.

The proof of this can be seen in what the UCC has already accomplished -- without press agents.

It has established three Area Boards -- boards which can serve as sounding stations for all our citizens; it has helped the Board of Education with its \$600,000 Head Start Pre-School program; it has helped the Housing Authority establish a Neighborhood Youth Corps; it is assisting the Senior Citizens Commission in drawing up anti-poverty proposals; it is assisting the Welfare Federation, the Pre-School Council, the Mt. Carmel Guild of the Archdiocese of Newark, the Blazer Youth Council and the Seton Hall School of Education.

It has done this work quietly but effectively.

In conclusion, let me say the UCC must not seek headlines -- it must seek the needs of our poor.

The UCC must not concern itself with public reaction -- It must concern itself with public results.

It is not the UCC's job to waste time worrying about ways to increase its dignity and self-respect.

Its job is to worry about ways to increase the dignity and self-respect of the citizens of Newark.

It is time, ladies and gentlemen, to stop worrying about reputations and start worrying about results.

Thank you very much.