

As a catalyst for positive action in Newark, as an instrument to solve problems when they arise and as the creator of agencies to handle long-range programs geared toward improving the quality of life of the city's residents, the Greater Newark Urban Coalition holds a unique position in the city.

It's a relatively new organization, forged on the anvil of civil disturbance in 1967, and created in June, 1968 — through the support of an aroused and concerned business community.

The riots in 1967, stemming from pain and anguish, brought among other things, a new awareness of a variety of problems and responsibilities. Since that time, a process of healing old wounds and warding off new ones has



Gustav Heningburg

The Urban Coalition: Mediator, Advocate, Ideagiver, Catalyst for Positive Action

been in effect, and the Coalition has been an integral force toward peace and positive change as the city has gone about the task of rebuilding.

The Coalition, despite limited funding and staff, has become involved as mediator, arbiter, peacekeeper, ideagiver, advocate and sometimes even instigator for progress in some of the jarring events that have occurred here, as in other major cities in the nation — teachers' strikes, racial turmoil, public housing disputes, jeopardized programs and too few jobs.

Over the last six years, the Coalition has fulfilled the promise of its name: Webster's defines coalition as "a body formed by the coalescing of originally distinct elements; a temporary alliance of distinct parties, persons or states for joint action."

The Urban Coalition's 30-member board reflects the full range of forces in Newark itself, including representatives from the business community, government, labor and the varied ethnic and racial factions that make Newark unique.

Board members include Donald MacNaughton, chairman of the board of Prudential Insurance Co.; Maurice Ve-

neri, president of the Industrial Union Council, North Ward Democratic Chairman Stephen Aduato, an outspoken champion of the city's Italian community and Kaimu Mtezezi (David Barrett), a prominent member of Imam Amiri Baraka's Temple of Kawaida.

The creation of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition brought not only a new social agency to Newark, but a new kind of social agency, as well — one that sponsors no programs. Unlike the traditional social agency which identifies a problem, writes a proposal, obtains funding and finally, administers a solution-oriented project, the Coalition has no projects.

That is not to say, however, that the Coalition does not have "A Program." Instead of designing and running specific projects, the Coalition takes on issues and problems as they come, often conceiving and gathering resources for a program, then stepping aside, handing it over to others to run, and moving on to new tasks.

As a result of such efforts, the Coalition has been at least partially — and in some cases fully — responsible for the establishment of:

- The Minority Business Loan Program, initiated by the Coalition in 1968, through which the city's leading commercial banks — First National State, Midlantic National, Fidelity Union Trust, First Jersey National and Broad National — made \$1 million in loans to minority businesses.

With the Coalition providing direction and staff — and the cooperation of the Small Business Administration and the Interracial Council for Business Opportunity — by 1969 another \$1 million had been committed and operation for the program was turned over to the ICBO.

- Minority Economic Development and Cultural Enterprises (MEDIC), designed to aid and initiate minority owned businesses, which became an autonomous agency in 1969 after the Coalition had brought together the combination of resources to make it work.

- The first guide to minority businesses in Newark, created through a joint effort of the academic and business sectors and coordinated by the Coalition.

- The Newark Construction Trades Training Corporation, which since 1971 has identified, recruited, and trained minority workers — more than 730 men so far — for work in the traditionally "white only" construction industry.

- A revitalization plan for inner-city shopping districts, undertaken with a grant from the National Urban Coalition, which has already led to a grant from the High Impact Anti-Crime Program and aid from leading corporations for redevelopment of the once-thriving Bergen Street shopping area.

- The Recreation Planning Council, which during the summers of 1969 and 1970 filled an important void by serving as a funding, evaluation and coordinating mechanism for recreation projects throughout the city. Funded by the business community through the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce, the council's efforts culminated in Oct., 1969, with a "Love Festival," which brought a diverse group of more than 60,000 Newarkers together for the first time.

- The Newark Defendants Employment Project, the first community-based criminal justice reform project in the country.

- A counselling and assistance program for returning Vietnam veterans, initiated with a \$15,000 seed money

grant from the Coalition to Rutgers University.

- The Citizens Advisory Committee to the Newark Fire Department, created with the help of the Coalition to assist in recruiting, fire prevention, education and community relations.

Simply listing the programs created or coordinated by the agency falls short of communicating the intrinsic effectiveness of the Coalition, whose role has gone far beyond mere mobilization of resources.

In scores of instances, the Coalition has served as a catalyst and acted as a kind of gadfly, reminding business and government of their responsibility, leading the thrust for constructive change and stepping into volatile disputes to ease tensions and bring some resolution.

Much of the Coalition's success can be attributed to its forceful, often controversial president, Gustav Heningburg, whose wide range of interests and concerns — combined with a seemingly endless reserve of energy — have made the agency's efforts felt on almost all fronts in Newark. Independent and impassioned, Heningburg has led the Coalition beyond the scope of most community agencies — attacking, and at times changing, the grim reality of Newark life on an institutional level.

He has done this with the aid of a small professional staff: Janet Foster, director of Administration and Fund Raising; Richard Roper, director, New Jersey Education Reform Project; Carl Venable, director of Economic Development, and Fernando Zambrana, Community Relations Specialist. A staff of five clerical workers is also vital to the Coalition.

The construction industry, in particular, has felt the impact of the Coalition's campaign. With the support of a number of other Newark-based social

agencies, Heningburg led and won the fight for minority employment — with quota requirements sanctioned by law — on almost all construction within the city.

After a long and bitter conflict with builders, government agencies and unions, the Newark Affirmative Action Committee, which is still headed by Heningburg, changed the employment practices in the Newark construction trades.

Black and Puerto Rican trainees and apprentices are today employed in every aspect of construction work and have to date earned a total of more than \$16 million.

Much of the affirmative action fight focused on the city's most expensive and ambitious construction project—the new Newark International Airport. And after the construction jobs were gained, the Coalition pressed on to ensure there would be minority businesses providing retail outlets, goods and services in and for the new transportation complex.

Simultaneous efforts were underway to make certain that a proportion of jobs at the airport, once the new terminals were opened, would go to black and Puerto Rican Newarkers. With the aid of the Port Authority and the airlines, the Council for Airport Opportunity with offices in Newark, was established to serve as the conduit for airport employment training and upgrading.

Meanwhile, despite setbacks caused by union balking and government funding problems, the Newark Plan for affirmative action in the construction industry has gained the full support of the city administration and has been acknowledged as the most effective and far-reaching program of its kind anywhere in the country. Minority workers, in the numbers required under the Newark Plan, are presently employed at construction sites throughout the city, including the N.J. College of Medicine and Dentistry.

The Coalition also brought legal action against the Newark City Council last year to have a Council blight declaration of 146-acres of land adjacent to Newark International Airport declared null and void.

The Coalition's action came after a series of articles in The Star-Ledger pointed out that the land was worth \$100,000 an acre. The court overturned the blight declaration as well as tax

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abatement sought by a major motel corporation near the airport. Superior Court Judge Irwin I. Kimmelman granted the Coalition's petition.

But perhaps the most important accomplishments of the Coalition are the most intangible, arising from the agency's unique crisis intervention role.

When black students took over a building at Rutgers-Newark in 1969 to protest the lack of programs for minority students at the school, Heningburg stepped in as an outside neutral force, able to talk to students and administration, and helped resolve the conflict before police had to be called in.

When the longest teacher strike in history hit Newark's public schools in 1970, Heningburg again entered as mediator, helping to re-establish communication between the Newark Teachers Union and the Board of Education.

Last year, when residents in the lower West Ward fought against establishment of a much needed state-sponsored halfway house for prisoners, Heningburg intervened, helping to dispel the fears of residents in the S. 10th Street neighborhood and urging sensitivity by state officials to their very real apprehension. The facility was accepted eventually by the neighborhood.

Late last year, Essex County College became the focal point for potential trouble when students staged a boycott of classes to protest the appointment of a new vice president. Once more, Heningburg stepped in as mediator, and while the problem has still not been resolved, the Coalition's efforts quelled tensions at the school and allowed normal activity to resume.

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The Coalition president has also, at times, gone outside the city limits to lend assistance. When minority students at Livingston College in New Brunswick staged a protest, he was on the scene. When Rahway State Prison became the site of a riot by inmates on Thanksgiving Day, 1971 — holding the prison warden as hostage for a time — Heningburg joined other black leaders in entering the prison, speaking to inmates and bringing their demands to officials.

Gov. William T. Cahill later credited Heningburg and the others for resolving the prison uprising without the fatal consequences of Attica.

When a different type of crisis — the energy kind — hit Newark along with the rest of the country this winter, it was the Coalition that spurred the city government to devise an energy-saving plan, and when hearings were finally held to determine the extent of the crunch in Newark, Heningburg acted as chairman.

Most recently, Heningburg has worked with tenants and the Newark Housing Authority in an attempt to settle the four-year rent strike in the city's public housing projects.

And, although the Coalition has been instrumental in bringing millions of dollars in government and foundation monies to Newark, its own budget has never exceeded \$250,000 a year.

Initially, the Coalition was supported exclusively by the business community. This year, corporate donations will account for about half the agency's budget, with the remainder contributed by foundation money and individual expressions of financial support.

In 1971, the Coalition began its first organized, year-round fund raising effort, and two years ago, the most adventuresome and ambitious money raising event in recent Newark history took place when the original cast of the Broadway play, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope," was presented at Symphony Hall, bringing about \$16,000 in profits to the Coalition, and bringing to the city hundreds of suburban residents who had not been in downtown Newark after dark for years.

MacNaughton, the Coalition's first chairman, describes it as "one of the most positive forces in the city," contending, "it has done what its name implied — brought together the various elements of the community which must work together if the city is to survive and prosper again."

According to MacNaughton, "It is not perfect," but during its nearly six years in Newark, "it has done well and has accomplished more than anyone had the right to expect." ■

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