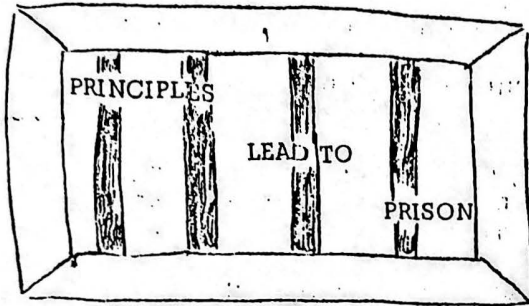


THE COMMUNICATION MEDIA FOR OPERATION UNDERSTANDING

44 Belmont Avenue, Newark, New Jersey 07103

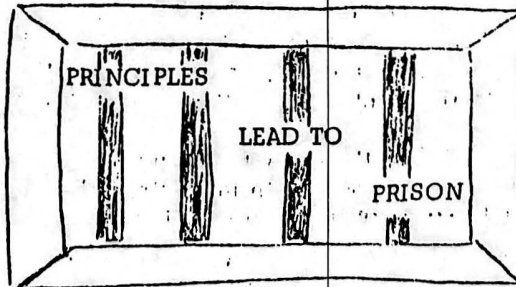
824-3110

December 7, 1972



On Monday, December 18, 1972

- 1) 3 men face prison sentences.
- 2) 200 families face contempt of court charges.
- 3) A 3 year old cry of protest and plea for help from intolerable living conditions faces unanswered extinction.
- 4) Hundreds of families face further legal action in response to their cry for help which could lead to eviction and jail.
- 5) 3 legal service lawyers face disbarment because they became involved with this case.



All this is happening in Stella Wright Homes in Newark because ...

- 1) The elevators do not work in a 13 story building where senior citizens as well as little children live ... where the week's groceries as well as the week's laundry must be carried up and down 12 flights of stairs.
- 2) There is a back-log of repairs - plumbing, broken windows, tile replacement - going back weeks, months, years.

- 3) On a recent inspection of 1/2 of the project, the City health officers found over 2,000 health violations.
- 4) The faulty incinerator system - outlawed by the state over one year ago - continues to back up with fumes, dirt and grime.
- 5) The projects are not safe to live in. There is no adequate security system. Crime, narcotics, muggings are rampant.
- 6) There are too many apartments - not with senior citizens - but with large families stacked one on top of each other, and the apartments themselves are overcrowded.
- 7) There is no tenant screening system at the projects, instead they are the dumping ground for anyone who cannot find any other housing - junkies, alcoholics, criminals, and good people.
- 8) There are no adequate recreational facilities for young or old.
- 9) And, finally, conditions are getting worse instead of better.

Over three years ago, tenants of Stella Wright Homes began negotiating with the Newark Housing Authority for improved conditions. When negotiations failed a rent strike was begun April 1, 1970.

For the first nine months of the rent strike the Tenant Association held in trust some of the tenants money. It amounted to almost \$95,000. In January 1971, the Tenant Association stopped collecting rent, and urged tenants to withhold their own money. The strike continued, but there was no improvement of the conditions. Today, over one million dollars has been withheld in rent at Stella Wright Homes alone.

For the past two years, the Newark Housing Authority has allowed the strike to continue. They have made none of the essential repairs. HUD is equally to blame in this matter. The tenants have always been willing to negotiate. But either the elevators work or they do not work.

The primary concern of the NHA over the past two years has been the Tenants Strike Fund of \$95,000, held in escrow by the Tenant Association. Three weeks ago the NHA was about to have the fund turned over to them, even though they had done nothing to remedy the deplorable conditions at the project.

But before the NHA could get its hands on the fund, the Tenant Association returned it to the individuals from whom it had been received. The Tenant Association said to the NHA: "Not one penny has been lost, but if you want the \$95,000 you must get it from the individuals who have to walk up 10 and 12 flights of stairs every day, and breathe in the fumes from the incinerators, and have their children play in the filth of the stairways."

When the Tenant Association did this, all hell broke loose. Now the NHA wants to throw people in jail, disbar lawyers, and have mass evictions. The strike must end - not because the elevators work - but because there is no more fund.

And so on December 18th at 9:00 a.m.

before Judge Irwin Kimmelman

on the 10th floor of the Essex County Courthouse

behind the Hall of Records, High Street, Newark.

3 men may go to jail: Toby Henry

(Rev.) Thomas Comerford

Edward Satterfield

200 families from the Strike Fund may be placed in contempt.

3 lawyers may be disbarred: Harris David  
Gerard Clark  
Michael Callan

Further legal action against other tenants may be taken.

But no elevators will be fixed, the overcrowding will not be alleviated, none of the other ills will be corrected.

Rosa Parks would not walk to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama because she was tired. The tenants of Stella Wright Homes, and the other projects in Newark, will not end the rent strike, because they too are tired. They are tired of having a shaft in their building instead of an elevator. They are tired of walking up 10 and 12 flights of filthy stairs and told they must pay for it.

But the tenants of Stella Wright Homes need help. They need massive help, because they are fighting, not only the NHA, but the entire system which continues to withhold needed monies from the dying cities.

The plain fact of the matter is that even if the NHA was receiving full rent payment it would not be able to provide the minimum standard of decent, safe and sanitary living conditions in the high rise, low income housing projects. On the other hand, HUD claims it can allot no more subsidy money than it is already doing without a further act of Congress.

Thus the tenants are caught in a bind. If they return to full rent payment they may have slightly better housing, but still far below standard. The problems of the elevators, the overcrowdedness, the lack of adequate security will not be solved.

If they do not pay rent conditions will continue to decline and if Stella Wright closes there is, at present, no other place to go.

It seems bleak, but we all know that America does have answers to these problems, and no one can ride through the Central Ward of Newark without realizing that America does have problems.

---

The tenants of Stella Wright Homes need your help desperately. Help them get their story to the public. Help them reach the people who can help.

Here are some of the things you can do:

- 1) Write letters to the editor of your local paper. Tell of this situation, your interest and support, and ask for complete coverage of it.
- 2) Contact larger media; Newsweek, Time, N. Y. Times, TV and radio. Ask them to cover this story. It is a big one.
- 3) If you belong to a group, civic, social or religious, involve it. You can arrange for representatives to come down, talk to tenants, and inspect the projects for yourself.
- 4) Write letters of support, calling for the involvement of public officials.

The Hon. Clifford P. Case  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20510

The Hon. Joseph G. Minish  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20515

The Hon. Harrison A. Williams  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20510

The Hon. Peter W. Rodino, Jr.  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20515

The Hon. James T. Lynn  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
H.U.D. Building  
451 7th Street, S. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20024

All others you may think influential.

5) Come to court on December 18th. Support the tenants.

---

Saturday, December 16, 1972 - 2 p.m.

at  
Stella Wright Christian Community Center  
rear basement of 260 Prince Street, Newark

Meeting of interested, industrious and influential  
people to further discuss the issues and plan future  
actions.

We especially want people of influence. If you know  
any, please bring them.

for further information call:

Operation Understanding	Stella Wright Tenant Assoc.	Stella Wright Christian
Adele Kane - 824-3110	Toby Henry - 242-6772	Community
		Tom Comerford
		Louise Brummell - 248-1441