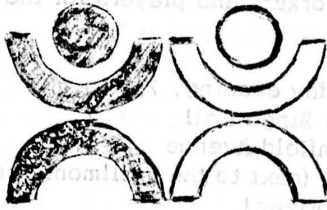


## UNDERSTANDING



THE COMMUNICATION MEDIA FOR OPERATION UNDERSTANDING  
44 Belmont Avenue, Newark, New Jersey 07103

June 1973

### STELLA WRIGHT RENT STRIKE

In March, Stella Wright Tenants found a sympathetic judge - Joseph Walsh. Or was he made sympathetic by continued pressure from the tenants, members of Operation Understanding, and the Concerned Citizens for Stella Wright joined to the steadily deteriorating conditions in the projects?

Judge Walsh made a personal inspection of Stella Wright. He put pressure on the Newark Housing Authority to reach some agreement with the tenants. He publicly declared that the high rise public housing projects were "horrible failures" and probably should be discontinued. He told the NHA that he could not order hundreds of tenants evicted.

As a result, the tenants and the NHA entered a TEMPORARY 60 day agreement. The tenants agreed to pay April and May rents into a special fund to be used exclusively for repairs according to the priorities set by the tenants. The tenants agreed to work with the local management to try to get some clean up action started on the project level. The tenants also agreed to have monitored elections in all the projects.

In return the NHA finally admitted the high rise projects were failures and agreed to work with the tenants to seek alternate solutions, especially in the form of alternate housing. The NHA agreed to urge the immediate appointment of at least one tenant to the Board of Commissioners of the NHA. It agreed to seek means to improve the security system on the project level. It recognized the leadership of the striking tenants at Stella Wright and Columbus Homes completely; and partially at Scudder, Kretchmer, and Kretchmer Elderly. Finally upon payment of the April rent into the special strike fund, the eviction actions were withdrawn.

This agreement expires June 1st. It will be extended only if progress has been made. So far there has not been very much progress. The Rent Strike, the conditions and the direction of public housing in Newark, has by no means been resolved.

### OPERATION UNDERSTANDING BINGO GAME

Through the efforts of a relatively few people - about 40 - the Montclair Friday Night Bingo Game has been successful.

On May 7th O.U. turned over \$2,500 to Stella Wright Christian Community for its Housing Program. We hope that this will be the beginning of a regular flow of funds.

But where is the rest of O.U.? We have been struggling. We need your help and support. We need more workers and more players.

Can you give one Friday a month to work our bingo? Can you give one Friday a month to play our bingo?

Contact us and offer your help. Drop us a note and we will contact you.  
Or call Adele Kane, evenings, 483-8341.

We especially need workers and players for the summer.

Remember: Bingo  
Every Friday evening, 7:45 p.m.  
Montclair Bingo Hall  
408 Bloomfield Avenue  
Montclair (next to the Wellmont Theatre)  
\$1000 in prizes!

### SWCC HOUSING PROGRAM

We mentioned that O.U. is raising funds for the SWCC Housing Program. We'd like to tell you a little bit about that program.

The people of Stella Wright run two bingo games of their own. The funds from one go toward the operating expenses of the Christian Community. The funds from the other have been put aside toward a program that may provide some housing other than the high rise project.

The plan is to use the funds to purchase homes - one by one. With the funds, down payments will be made on multi family units or singles, and the rents will go toward the mortgage payments and the maintenance of the homes. At a later date it is hoped that the homes can become cooperatives or even purchased by a single family.

SWCC hopes to begin looking for its first home this June. When we find that home, we are again going to appeal to O.U. If home improvements and interior decorating are needed, we hope to form volunteer teams to help do this work.

This will be a further opportunity for black and white, city and suburbs to work together. And we're going to do it!

If you are interested in becoming involved in this plan, write to us at O.U. and we will give you further information. Or we will be glad to hear your suggestions.

### WE HAVE A BINGO FOR EVERYONE

If you can volunteer a Friday afternoon to work at the Stella-Wright Bingo Game, your help will be greatly appreciated.

You could arrive at 12 noon and leave at 3 p.m. The Continental, 982 Broad Street, just south of Newark's City Hall is the bingo hall. There is plenty of parking right across the street. We have plenty of players for this bingo, but could use a few more workers.

Remember Operation Understanding and Stella Wright are working together! If you can help drop a note to O.U. or call Mrs. Louise Brummell, SWCC Center, 9:30 a.m. - 12 noon, 248-1441.

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If bingo is not for you, or if Newark or Montclair are not convenient and you would like to contribute, have your own fund raising dance, card party, etc.

### ST. LOUIS RENT STRIKE:

#### A Model for Settlement

Many have surely heard of Fruit-Igoe Housing Project in St. Louis and

the famous rent strike of 1969. That strike lasted 9 months and resulted in the demolition of 2 1/2 vacant buildings of the 33 building project.

Four weeks ago, Tom Comerford and Mike Callan, one of the tenants' lawyers, visited St. Louis to see what had happened there since '69.

They found, first of all, that the action was not at Fruit-Igoe, but in the other projects and in the St. Louis Housing Authority itself. As a basis for settling the strike, all 5 Commissioners and the Board of the SLHA resigned and were replaced by 2 tenants, and 3 others who were approved by the tenants. Also the Public Housing was separated from the Urban Renewal and a new Executive Director was appointed with the approval of the tenants.

As a result of these and many other changes, the SLHA is functioning today smoothly and harmoniously. Conditions are still poor, but this is due to the failure of HUD to live up to its obligations. The tenants and the housing authority - they are almost one and the same - are doing the best they can with a bad situation.

There is a plan in the SLHA and a direction and everyone's effort is channeled in a positive way. The Central Office has cut its staff to 25. 40% of all those employed by public housing are tenants. For two of the seven city projects, Tenant Management Corporations have been formed which operate the projects completely. A Tenant Affairs Board has been set up with paid full time tenant representatives from each of the projects. Nothing can happen at the projects without the knowledge and the approval of the Tenant Representative.

This reorganization of the SLHA was not done with the attitude of usurping power, but rather of attaining the basic tools to do a very difficult task.

Over 90 color slides were brought back from St. Louis together with the complete story. Perhaps we will be able to present this story fully at a later time, because St. Louis provides a living example of what can be done when people put aside political patronage and selfish motivation and work together for common goals. When this happens everyone profits.

The visit to St. Louis magnified the irresponsible and negative role played by HUD. Also, in comparison, the damaging effects of the inability of Newark's Mayor, City Council and N.H.A. to work together for the good of the people is highlighted.

St. Louis: an example to the country! Keep the pressure on for Newark.

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#### BABYLAND NURSERY - AN APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Last fall after 4 years of hard work by dedicated advocates of infant care, especially for families of low income, Babyland Nursery reached agreement with the State of New Jersey for Babyland to be a "Pilot Project" for the state in infant care.

A second nursery was necessary. A site was found and under the able direction of Father Linder of Queen of Angels it was completely renovated and was able to begin full operation early in January. This could not have been accomplished without the assistance of many volunteers.

Babyland I at Scudder is operating with a full staff. However, because of the tight budget Babyland II (755 South Orange Avenue) must rely on volunteers in order to assure that the same quality care and attention is given to all infants.

Volunteers are desperately needed - you are needed!

Come to the nursery and get acquainted - try your skills.

Volunteers can: Assist with early childhood education projects - work with small groups of children.

Clerical help needed to assist with the record keeping that accompanies such a project.

Every day care giving.

Adults with teaching ability to help staff members attain GED diplomas so they may start courses in local colleges.

Call now. Teenagers and mothers with pre-schoolers are welcome.

For more information call - Medley Christopher 994-2523  
Regina 375-3143

### NEW COMMUNITY

The New Community Corporation housing will consist of six, five story buildings with an interior courtyard. They will have two elevator shafts separate from the buildings connected to a system of elevated sidewalks so that each apartment has its own outside entrance. All entrances are open to view and elevators are built for maximum security. The buildings are of concrete slab construction with brick exterior.

The preliminary working drawings are with the state. Costs are being negotiated between the Architect, the Builder and the Housing Finance Agency for the State of New Jersey. Approval has been given for Federal Interest subsidy prior to January 1973. Building should begin shortly after the signing.

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Operation Understanding wants to wish Phil and Pat D'Entremont and their family best of luck on their move to Georgia. Both helped Operation Understanding immensely. Without people like them O.U. could not exist. May God be with them.

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These are growing projects which will not change the world but they are seeds of goodness because Black and White people can work together. The flowers will begin to blossom as people move from high rise to their own homes or to New Community. More flowers will blossom as these babies grow into childhood and adulthood because a few people cared.

Does not God live at the height of heaven, and see the zenith of the stars?

Job 22:12