

The Harlem Scene

There's a New Man Under the Picket Sign

by Marlene Nadle

There's a new man coming on the scene. No longer will the ranks of the civil rights movement be filled only by Negro and white professional men doing their duty at the Civil Rights Social and Athletic Club. Nor will it be a few young militants making all the sacrifices.

The backbone of the struggle, according to Blyden Jackson, one of the leaders of East River CORE, will be the products of the slum—the unemployed, the illiterate, the jailbird, the prostitute. "For us," he said, "there are no undesirable elements in this fight."

He and other Negro leaders believe that, if the civil rights battle is going to be won, they must mobilize the untapped human resources found in the Negro ghettos and add their bodies to the arsenal. They must reach the Negro masses and move them from despair and cynicism to action.

"To build this grass-roots

movement," Jackson said, "you have to go into the streets, the homes, the barber shops, the bars, the warehouses, and the poolrooms and talk to the people. You have to speak their language. You don't put on a white shirt and tie and go up to one of these cats and say, 'I think you have a sociological problem you and I ought to discuss.' You say, 'Come on, baby, there's a meeting.' You don't feed them abstractions about brotherly love and the essential goodness of the white community. You tell them what The Man or Whitey has been doing wrong and what they can do about it."

Military Precision

This kind of active recruiting of the bodies needed for the struggle is being carried out with almost military precision by East River CORE. The entire chapter is broken down into small teams of about 10 people. Each team is assigned to a specific area and has a captain. Their objective is to get to know and be known by all the people

in that area.

Working in even smaller teams of two, which are almost always integrated to avoid the distrust and resistance an all-white team might engender, the CORE members look for the key people on the block. When they find the strong ones and the angry ones, they try to involve them, convince them that non-violent direct action can get results, and use them to organize the rest. Once the team has someone from the block who is willing to introduce them around an apartment building or hold a meeting in his apartment, getting to the others becomes easier.

Block-by-Block

This block-by-block technique of mobilizing the ghettos will all for the long battle ahead, of stockpiling the bodies to be used in future demonstrations, of preparing for the possibility of nation-wide synchronized social dislocation, will be carried out across the country. Representatives from CORE chapters in Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Lexington, and many other cities are being sent for one-week training courses with East River CORE.

The instruction in the method of mobilizing the ghettos will all so emphasize the need to talk and work on concrete issues that affect the people directly in their daily lives. Norman Hill, the program director of national CORE, who advocates the concrete-issue approach, also stresses the need to select issues in which results can be seen quickly. He believes that issues and projects should be selected where the likelihood of success is good, so that each victory will help build the forces.

These requirements were met

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Moses-Defender Farbstein Gets Blasted by Haddad

Robert Moses has become a major issue in the hotly fought 19th Congressional District primary between Representative Leonard Farbstein and reformer William F. Haddad. Two weeks ago Farbstein rose up in righteous wrath over Haddad campaign literature which indicated that the former crusading

City-planning critic Jane Jacobs, who lives in the West Vi-

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in the recent successful effort to get a traffic light installed at the intersection of 131st Street and Fifth Avenue. When East River CORE learned while working in the community that many of the mothers were concerned about children who had been injured on 131st Street, they attended a meeting called by the PTA of P. S. 133 and, along with other organizations in the area, helped plan a project which would secure the traffic light. By cooperating with and working through the established community organizations, by letting the local groups and the desires of the community dictate the project rather than imposing it from the outside, East River CORE is building mutual cooperation with the groups and a strong organizational base for future projects.

This technique of using small concrete issues which carry emotional weight and meet the felt needs of the community reaches the man in the street. Ordinarily this man will walk by a demonstration because he is too far removed from the issue and too wrapped up in the immediate problems of existing. But when the project is improving conditions in the particular school his children attend, when his or a neighbor's apartment is fixed through a rent strike, or when the streets where Mrs. Jones's child is killed is turned into a play street, he will be willing to participate.

"If an incident develops during a demonstration and people see Joe or Jack from up the block getting knocked around, the man who may have just been watching other people demonstrate will tend to get involved in the demonstration himself," said Arthur Williams, another member of East River CORE. Once a person is involved in one demonstration, Williams continued, he can usually be counted on for others. If people are educated to see how their particular problem is related to a city-wide or nation-wide problem, he believes that they will take part in projects of larger scope.

When asked if he was optimistic about the possibility of the apathetic Negro masses being moved, Williams replied, "If you had asked that same question three years ago about Southern Negro share-croppers, people would have said it couldn't be done. Now the Southern Negroes are facing fire hoses and police dogs unafraid. What SNCC has done in the South, we can do here."

Into Competition

But the apparent success of this technique creates an additional problem. The integrationists are cutting into the same base that has traditionally supported Nationalist and Muslim causes. They are putting themselves into open competition with these

groups for the mind and body of the ghetto Negro.

The potential intensity of this conflict is suggested by an incident which occurred on the Saturday night following the Birmingham bombing. On that night, when the temper of Harlem seethed, some CORE members decided to take a sound truck to the corner of 125th Street and Seventh Avenue and try to enlist supporters for their program. It was unusual for CORE to go to this corner, which has traditionally been considered Nationalist territory. Any integrationist who tried to mount the makeshift crepe-paper-covered platform there was soon jeered off it.

When the CORE group pulled up to the curb, a crowd of Nationalists, Muslims, and uncommitted Negroes had already gathered to listen to the speaker who was preaching black supremacy and the separation of the races. Using the sound system in the truck, the CORE members began to talk about their program for integration and improvement of conditions in schools, housing, and jobs. They talked about Birmingham and Mississippi. They asked, "Where were the Nationalists during the crises in the South?"

Moving Plea

The hostile Nationalists in the crowd began to heckle them. The friction grew. The police came, strutted about a bit, and left. The heckling continued. The antagonistic Nationalists were on the verge of physically driving the integrationists off the corner when others in the gathering began to insist that the CORE members be allowed to get out of the truck and speak.

Judy Howell, a 16-year-old girl with CORE, stood on top of the truck and gave a moving plea for this program. At one point when things began to get particularly hot, she said, "It looks like us black children are having trouble all over."

Many in the crowd responded by forming a protective ring between Judy and the hecklers. The youthful militancy of the integrationist caught the emotions of the crowd. The integrationists beat the Nationalists at their own tactics and held the corner for the first time in the memory of Harlem.

Some Conversations

When the rally broke, there had been some conversions. One teenage boy said, "I never knew CORE existed till I heard them on the corner of 125th Street and Seventh Avenue. I've lived in Harlem all my life. I hunted rats on 118th Street instead of squirrels. I used to holler through the walls every morning and tell the kids next door to go to school. I go with the group that gets action."

This teenage boy, in his ripped jeans and \$1.75 sneakers, without a button-down shirt or button-down manner, will be the kind of person who, in ever-increasing numbers, will be found under the picket sign. He and the other products of the slum, whether they are domestics or delinquents, bookies or barflies, will be one of the critical factors in the ultimate success of the civil rights struggle.

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