

WELFARE

Reform efforts provoke response

By Madeleine Adamson

WASHINGTON—Welfare reform was President Carter's first peace offering to blacks and poor people disgruntled with his lack of attention to their concerns. But if the first in a series of regional conferences on welfare reform held here Oct. 23-25 is any indication, those the move was designed to pacify are growing more angry instead.

The conference's reaction to Carter's "Better Jobs and Income Program" was overwhelmingly negative. Everyone quickly adopted the acronym "JIP" for the program, saying the plan gyps poor people. But on questions of strategy there were sharp differences of opinion.

The Washington conference, and others to follow in Detroit; Birmingham, Ala.; Northampton, Mass.; Portland, Ore.; and Salt Lake City are co-sponsored by the Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law, the Food Research and Action Center, the Movement for Economic Justice and the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice. The idea is to bring together representatives of grass roots poor people's organizations and advocacy groups to explore the impact of the Carter welfare reform proposal and develop a response.

It was five years ago that the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) claimed its final victory with the defeat of President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan. In the ensuing years poor people's groups, already declining in 1972, virtually disappeared.

Now, with welfare reform rearing its head again in the form of a presidential proposal strikingly similar to Nixon's, a remarkable number of poor people's groups are resurfacing.

Most of the 150 participants at the Washington conference were recipients of AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children)—the major category of the current welfare system. Many were leaders of welfare rights organizations still active in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, West Virginia and elsewhere in the Mid-Atlantic region. The groups are skeletons of what they were in the heyday of NWRO, but they appeared alive and eager to mobilize.

The politics of welfare reform is complex. There are some parts of the Carter proposal that poor people's groups have advocated for years—a federal standard, a minimum guaranteed income and universal coverage.

On the other hand, the benefit level is grossly inadequate, the program would divide roughly the same amount of money between a larger number of people, and it treats people with equal needs unequally. It creates jobs that poor people need and want but does so at the expense of the current CETA program, demeans them with coercive and unrealistic work requirements, and limits their pay level to the minimum wage.

Welfare recipients and poor people's advocates in the North easily see that the few gains won under the Carter program are not enough to merit supporting it. For those in the South, however, the increase in benefit levels is substantial and quite appealing. Conference participants had mixed reactions to this problem. Some, like Roxanne Jones of Philadelphia Citizens in Action, accused the administration of a divide-and-conquer strategy, and argued for a compromise that would benefit everybody. Others, however, said that the bill benefited nobody and said that it needed to be killed.

Various interest groups were invited to present their views at the conference, and opponents of the bill found some allies. Mary Logan, lobbyist for the AFL-CIO, won applause for her statement of labor's opposition.

Bob Hill, representing the National Urban League, was forced to justify Ur-

ban League executive director Vernon Jordan's praise of the Carter plan as a reaction to the initial rhetoric and not the substance of the bill. Hill said now that the details are in, the whole bill should be scrapped and that he'd like to accept the conference's challenge to involve welfare recipients in the development of the Urban League's position.

The Women's Lobby, a Washington-based lobby group, came under attack for its indecisive position on the bill. The antipathy many welfare recipients felt toward the largely middle-class women's movement was evident in a heated exchange about women and work.

The debate over strategy began early and never ended. In the conference's opening session, Richard A. Cloward, co-author with Frances Fox Piven of *Regulating the Poor*, received enthusiastic response to his brief synopsis of the central thesis of their recently released *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed and How They Fail*. "Poor people win, if they win at all," he concluded, "only in the streets, only, in short, by causing trouble."

Bert De Leeuw, coordinator of the upcoming regional conference and director

of the Movement for Economic Justice, called for a strategy to change the climate of the debate over welfare reform through bold and dramatic mass action by poor people. He and Hulbert James, a former NWRO field director, pushed a strategy of demonstrations demanding jobs.

Other suggestions ranging from "kill the bill" to an incremental lobbying approach received support as well. A major point of debate was national lobbying versus local action. Recipient leaders spoke persuasively and from long experience for their various positions. But in the end, so much time had been spent on understanding the intricacies of the bill that there was not enough time to find out whether the question of strategy could be resolved.

All that was agreed upon was a set of 12 "Alternative Welfare Reform Recommendations," including an income floor of \$10,000, comprehensive child care, 65 weeks unemployment compensation, increased availability of funds, and realistic career-oriented job training.

The conference did not come to agreement on a plan of action. Nonetheless, a small group led by former NWRO officer and associate director Faith Evans held a

press conference announcing an all-out assault to stop the bill.

Conference organizers hope following conferences will develop a more unified and clearly defined response to the Carter proposals.

John Kramer, counsel to the House subcommittee on Welfare Reform and a long-time friend of welfare rights groups, however, told the conference not to "run at the Carter bill with daggers because you might get cut up by all the other groups running at it with daggers; it will die by itself."

Whether Kramer's prediction is right or not, welfare reform is providing the impetus for poor people's groups to get together and talk about local organizing again after some long silent years.

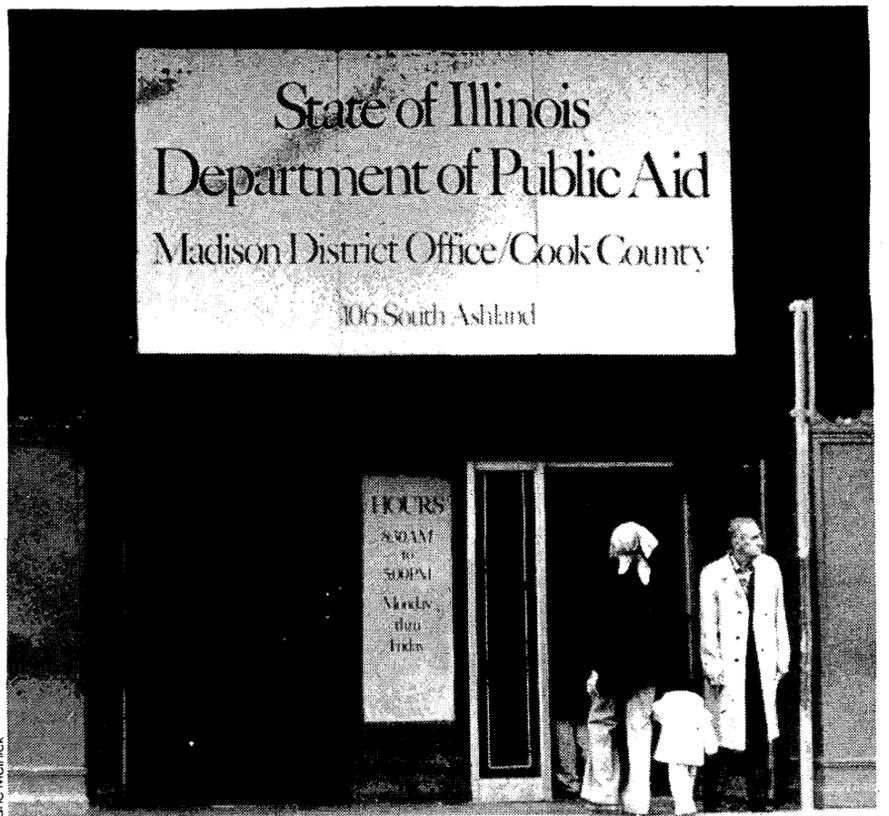
Madeleine Adamson is editor of Just Economics.
For more information on the upcoming regional conferences on welfare reform—Northampton, Mass., Nov. 18-20; Salt Lake City, Dec. 3-5; Portland, Ore., Dec. 10-12—contact the Movement for Economic Justice, 1735 T Street NW, Washington, DC 20009, phone 202/462-4200.

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IMMIGRATION

Immigration coalition takes on Carter

There was widespread agreement: Carter's immigration proposals must be rejected.

By Delfino Varela

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS—Over 2,000 Mexican and Latino activists converged here Oct. 28-30 to formulate a position and plan of action on federal immigration policy. Composed of representatives of most of the large Mexican and Latin community organizations, the gathering represented the broadest coalition ever put together to deal with the immigration issue. Representative groups included the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the Mexican American Political Association, CASA-General Brotherhood of Workers, Raza Unida party organizations from several states, as well as an assortment of left political groups including the New American Movement and the Socialist Workers party.

With such a wide ideological spectrum represented at the conference there was a great deal of disunity and dissatisfaction on the part of many delegates. But there was agreement that the Carter immigration plan had to be rejected and that the only acceptable immigration solution would be unconditional amnesty for all

people without documents now in the U.S.

There was also agreement among conference speakers—which included Jose Angel Gutierrez, founder of the Raza Unida party, Antonio Rodriguez, president of CASA, and Ruben Bonilla, Texas chairman of LULACS—that the most objectionable part of Carter's immigration proposal was the use of sanctions on employers who hire workers without documents.

This would put the employers in the position of arbiters in what is often a complex legal issue as to whether or not a particular worker has the right to accept employment in the U.S. The provisions would be a ready tool in the hands of unscrupulous employers to discriminate against workers with high seniority or against activists, as well as an excuse for discriminating against all Latino or foreign-born workers.

Participants were not convinced that Carter's proposal to beef up civil rights law enforcement activities would be an effective counterweight, as the Civil Rights Commission is now three years behind in processing complaints. Proposed increases in personnel would leave it in the same place given the expected rise in complaints that would be filed.

Carter's plan to grant permanent residence to those undocumented workers who have lived continuously in the U.S. since January 1970 was seen as too limited, since it would help only some 10 to 25 percent of those without documents.

The proposal to create a special class

of non-deportable persons for those who have lived in the U.S. continuously since between January 1970 and Dec. 31, 1976, was seen as totally unacceptable. Workers in this category would be put in legal limbo; able to work, pay taxes, but unable to receive any federal or state benefits. This was categorized by many as a form of wage slavery.

The greatest divisions among the delegates came over plans for action. The Socialist Workers party insisted that a delegation be sent to Washington on Nov. 18 to coincide with a series of local demonstrations and actions around the country. This would be followed by a possible national mobilization early next year, after local organization and lobbying had been accomplished.

Follow-up action to the conference, however, is primarily up to the constituent organizations separately, and according to their own perspectives.

There were many expressions from delegates that the struggle of Chicanos and Latinos in the U.S. is parallel and complementary to the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere. At the end of the conference it was unanimously agreed that the conference be dedicated to the memory of Steven Biko, a leader of the South African liberation struggle who was recently murdered in his jail cell by the South African government.

Delfino Varela is active in the effort to reform immigration laws and works with Mexican-American Social Service in Los Angeles.

THE BORDER

Torture case stirs border town boycott

By Tom Barry

AGUA PRIETA, SONORA, MEXICO—"Chicklets? Gum? Candy? Solamente 50 centavos, señora."

"Quiere el shoeshine, señor. Only 10 centavos."

Each day the street *huercos* of this border town swarm around the entry station from Douglas, Ariz., looking for likely *turistas* who might buy some chewing gum or who may want their shoes shined. Always hustling, these small vendors from the ages of six or seven keep their sales pitch going tirelessly all day—each centavo means that life in Agua Prieta will be a little less harsh.

Today, Saturday, Oct. 22, the hawkers and the shoeshine boys also carry a pitch for a "boycoteo" of all the Arizona border towns from Douglas to Yuma. "Don't buy in the U.S. border towns until there is justice in the Hanigan case. Don't shop in Douglas," they shout together at the Mexican cars lining up for Saturday-shopping in the American supermarkets and dime stores across the border.

Everyone nods in recognition for the Hanigan case has been the most talked about subject in this frontier area for the past year.

On Aug. 18, 1976, a prominent Douglas ranching family kidnapped and tortured three men from Agua Prieta and later sent them fleeing across the border naked and bleeding from shotgun and knife wounds. One man, Manuel Loya Garcia, was hit 125 times before he escaped the spray of birdshot from the shotguns of Pat, Tom, and George Hanigan.

On Oct. 9, a year and two months after the brutal episode, an all-Anglo jury found the Hanigans not guilty despite such tell-tale evidence found on their ranch as the burnt clothes, belt buckles, and food of the men also discovered near a windmill on the ranch—the place where the Mexican men say they were beaten and tortured—with spent shotgun shells and traces of blood.

Among those passing out the yellow and black leaflets explaining the boycott is Frank Barraza, the young Douglas city councillor who helped organize the boycott and the protest. "We plan to boycott every Saturday until the Justice department comes in and investigates this incident and the trial. We intend to show that the people of Mexico are concerned about the case and its consequences. The court let the Hanigans go even though everybody knew they were guilty. So if a boycott is what it takes to get justice, it has to be done."

Tension and violence along border.

Tension is nothing new along the U.S. Mexico line. It's a tension of race, culture, class. On one side of the line, whites are in control; on the other side, it's all brown faces. In Douglas, despite the 75 percent Chicano population, only English is the accepted language; in Agua Prieta, everyone speaks Spanish. On one side of the border, the wealth of the ranchers is conspicuous; on the other side poverty is everywhere.

And on the American side Mexicans become "aliens," "illegals," "cheap labor."

Lately, the Border Patrol in Douglas has been picking up an increasing number of undocumented workers from across the border. Chief Border Patrol agent Herbert Walsh says the agency deported 782 undocumented workers this August in the Douglas area, and almost 5,000 in the last year, up almost 50 percent from the previous year.

Also rising, say area residents, is the number of burglaries in southern Cochise County. "I don't know how many times we've tracked them to the border fence. Most of our problems come from Mexico, but there is little we can do," says Sheriff Jim Wilson.

County citizens petitioned last month for increased police protection and stepped up border patrol, and have called

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Leaflet passed out along the border.

for a mounted police guard along the border.

In the old Phelps-Dodge copper mining town of Bisbee, the residents recently formed a posse of 60 people to hunt down a suspect Mexican from Chihuahua named Carlos Cano. "We're going to get that Mexican," declared the sheriff, leading the posse on horseback.

Area Border Patrol supervisor Drexel Atkinson sees the problem this way: "Every illegal alien is a potential burglar."

Frank Barraza notes that while the Hanigan incident was unusually brutal the inhuman treatment of Mexican workers in Cochise County is rather common. He tells of children being sheared and tarred by ranch hands and workers being shot without any police investigation.

Margo Cowan, director of the Tucson Manzo Area Council, one of the three public immigration service centers in the country, says, "The only difference in this case is that it made the press, most of the cases of brutality that plague undocumented workers never come out in the open."

The acquittal of the Hanigan brothers (George Hanigan, their father, died before the trial began) outraged many residents of both cities, bringing 1,500 demonstrators out to protest on the Saturday following the announcement of the verdict.

Gathering at the border, protesters called for the intervention of the Justice department. "For months and months we waited for the case to come to court, but it was delayed so many times. Then we waited for the verdict to come, but now we have been silent too long and have to do something to ensure that justice is done here," said Barraza.

Under the windmill.

Manuel Loya Garcia, Eleasar Ruelas Zavala, and Bernabe Herrera Mata crossed the border together that day last August to look for work at the ranches outside Douglas.

The men had, of course, been across the border many other times to work as field hands in the cotton and vegetable harvests. And, like thousands of other Mexican migrant farmworkers, Manuel, Eleasar and Bernabe had on several past occasions been picked up by the Border Patrol, the Migra.

This trip all three men had ranches to go where the foremen were expecting them. On foot, they were stopped at the well on the outskirts of the Hanigan ranch in Elfrida to fill their bottles with water.

About to continue their hike, the men were stopped by the Hanigan brothers and their father and told at gunpoint to get in the pick-up truck. At the ranch windmill, the truck stopped and the Hanigans announced they were going to teach the Mexicans a lesson they wouldn't forget.

At the trial the three men told how George Hanigan watched with a shotgun as the brothers Pat, 26, and Tom, 22, built a fire and threatened to shove the men into it.

One by one they were taken out of the Hanigan truck and forced to the ground and bound by hand and feet. "Piece by piece, they began cutting off our hair and clothes," said Garcia, who also said that \$37 was taken from him by Pat Hanigan.

Zavala told how Pat Hanigan, brandishing a knife, had said, "I like your balls, I would like to cut them off." Then talking a hot metal rod from the fire, Han-

igan said he was going to burn his genitals and cut off his penis.

Zavala told also of being dragged across the rocky desert ground and then hung by the neck from a tree branch for a minute. Then letting him down, Pat Hanigan took the rod and touched the men's feet with the burning hot metal. "The skin of my feet were stinking real bad from the burning," remembered Zavala at the trial.

Run for their lives.

After an hour of torture and beating, the Hanigans untied the men one by one and told them to run for it.

Their feet badly burned, without any clothes, and severely shaken, the men ran for their lives. As they ran, the Hanigans opened fire. "As the pellets hit, I felt as if a whole bunch of bees were sticking to my body and my legs."

Individually, the men reached the border, not knowing if their companions were dead or alive.

All the men were treated at the Civil Hospital in Agua Prieta. Dr. Ramon Barrossao, hospital director, testified at the trial corroborating the men's stories. He told the court that Garcia had received 125 pellet wounds, Mata had 47 gun wounds, and all of the men had severe outer-skin abrasions on their wrists and ankles. In addition, their feet had burn wounds from the metal rod, and blisters from the long walk back to the border through the scorched desert.

Evidence didn't matter.

On Aug. 19, the day after the torturing at the Hanigan windmill site, a cursory search by detective Grant Gonzales, formerly of the Border Patrol Strike Force, found traces of Type O blood (two of the men have blood type O), parched remainders of the Mexican's clothing, their belt buckles in the ashes of the fire, the key to Garcia's suitcase (which Garcia said he had left with Hernandez in Agua Prieta), shot gun shells from the Hanigans' guns, blood on the clothing of the Hanigan brothers, and the scattered remains of the red bologna and the bread the men said they carried with them from Mexico.

However, the jury—all from the boomtown region around the Army intelligence base in Sierra Vista—startled the residents of Douglas and Agua Prieta by finding the Hanigans not guilty on 22 counts of kidnapping and assault.

"I was astounded," said prosecuting attorney Pat Elliston. "It's difficult to believe that on those facts we could not get any kind of verdict."

The guilty verdict brought a strong reaction from the Mexican government. "This cynic jury has just declared open season on illegal aliens," said Mexican Consul Raul Avaleyra. And Mexican Interior Minister Mario Moya Palencia called the torturing of the Mexican citizens a "flagrant violation of the human rights of our countrymen" and an example of "racial sadism" seen frequently along the border.

On Oct. 11 the Tucson Manzo Area Council presented a petition to Asst. U.S. Attorney Bates Butler in Tucson asking for a federal investigation of civil rights violations in the case. Butler has since authorized a FBI investigation of the incident, but Frank Barraza and others in Douglas and Agua Prieta say they are not satisfied with superficial FBI inquiry and want a full-scale investigation by the Civil Rights Division of the Justice department.

Barraza says the not guilty verdict raises numerous questions about the future of justice in Cochise County and says that people won't rest until there is justice in the Hanigan case. He explains that the boycott is aimed at the merchants because they have supported the power structure in the county, which has allowed discrimination and injustice to continue in the county.

Tom Barry writes for *Seers Rio Grande Weekly* in Albuquerque.