

Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization, *Straight Talk*, Sept. 20, 1967, Housing Association of Delaware Valley Records, Urban Archives, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

# STRAIGHT TALK

PHILADELPHIA WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

WELFARE A RIGHT-NOT A PRIVILEGE

1421 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

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Vol. 1, No. 11, September 20, 1967

## WRO Considers Joining Consumers Union

Rev. Leonard Smalls, Consumer party candidate for Mayor of Philadelphia and head of the newly formed United Purchasing Service, will speak to the WRO co-ordinating committee on Thursday, September 28th. Rev. Smalls has long been active in the Consumer's Education and Protective Association (CEPA). The new purchaser's union is a co-operative of consumers who have banded together to buy major appliances, fuel oil, clothing, etc., at reduced prices from co-operating merchants. While some local groups have already approached merchants to give WRO members discounts, we will want to consider the advantages of joining with a citywide consumers group. The meeting will be at Christ Church, between 15th and 16th on Green Street, at 1:30 p.m., Thursday, September 28th.

## National WRO Officers Testify before Senate Committee

On Tuesday, September 19th, Mrs. Johnnie Tillman and Mrs. Etta Horn, national WRO Chairman and Vice Chairman, testified before the Senate Finance Committee on the anti-welfare bill, H.R. 12080. A carload of FWRO members were at the hearings to lend them support. This is the bill that 1400 WRO members, about 200 from Philadelphia, protested in Washington on August 28th. The bill is now being discussed by the Senate Finance Committee before it is presented to the full Senate.

After meeting personally with them in Washington, FWRO has followed up with letters to Senators Clark and Scott and representatives Barrett, Byrne and Green expressing our opposition to HR 12080, but more needs to be done. Local groups and other civic organizations and individuals should send telegrams immediately to Senator Russell Long, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee, U. S. Senate, Washington, D. C. We oppose HR 12080 because it would force mothers of small children to work or be cut off welfare. It also would freeze welfare rolls at January 1967 levels, thus denying aid to over 250,000 children. Finally, it makes it more difficult for two-parent families to receive aid and threatens to take children away from their mothers.

WRO recommends HR 5710, the administration bill, be substituted for HR 12080 because it would force most states to raise welfare payments and it does not punish and humiliate welfare recipients. We must let Senator Long and his committee know how we feel about this bill before it is too late.

## National Organization Formed - FWRO Charter Member

FWRO was represented by six delegates and six alternates at the first National Welfare Rights Convention in Washington, D. C., August 25 - 28th. A Constitution and Goals were established for the new organization and officers were elected. Mrs. Hazel Leslie, FWRO chairman was head of the nominating committee and presided over the elections. Mrs. Alice Nixon, Pennsylvania representative to the National co-ordinating committee, was appointed Sergeant at Arms. National figures who addressed the convention included Dr. Richard Cloward of Columbia University, James Farmer, former CORE head and Dick Gregory.

Mrs. Clara Moore, one of our delegates to the convention describes it this way:

"The Rally in Washington has brought to us the need for more unity in our poverty programs and more (universal) standards in Federally supported agencies. If we are to make advancements from poverty we must first make it nationwide. We are under the same roof, fighting the same cause. Let us join hands like we did at the convention - the English speaking and the non-English speaking - and others. Let us make a change by knowing more about the states that are up front in their human rights and the ones far behind. With the help of the national co-ordinating committee we can be assigned (locals or cities) to each other for corresponding to bring about this change. Those that are separate within their own body have a need to compromise in order to make this unity possible."

On Monday, August 28th, the entire Convention representing 15,000 WRO members across the country, moved to Capitol Hill to protest HR 12080. Philadelphia delegations were joined by 200 PWRO members and met with Senators Scott and Clark to discuss the bill. Delegations also called on Representatives Barrett, Byrne and Green and were courteously received in Byrne and Green's offices. The afternoon was climaxed by a long march of 1400 WRO members to the Health, Education and Welfare Building, where officials refused to meet with our leaders.

#### PWRO Officers and Members Meet with Georges in Harrisburg

At the request of PWRO, Secretary Thomas Georges, head of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, met with members of the organization to discuss the special grant of \$75 per child PWRO is requesting for school clothing. Secretary Georges said he realized welfare mothers do not get enough money to clothe their children decently for school, but urged the group to put pressure on their state legislators to vote the money increase. The group discussed the possibility of the DPA ceasing to pay the Housing Authority maximum rent for all welfare families, thus saving enough money to make such special grants possible. Dr. Georges agreed to meet with the Philadelphia Housing Authority to explore this possibility and the discrimination by PHA against welfare recipients applying for public housing.

Dr. Georges agreed to stop the practice where emergency checks are available only at the State Office Building (two persons in each district office will be able to sign checks in the future). He also agreed to see that transportation costs related to finding eligibility information be paid by the department. The PWRO group also asked that Civil Service requirements for state jobs be changed so that recipients can be hired as community workers, casework aides, childcare workers and receptionists; and that PWRO members be appointed to the County and State Boards of Assistance.

Dr. Georges and his staff also agreed to explore the possibilities of including WRO information in check mailings. He and Commissioner Gunderman agreed to attend a statewide WRO meeting in Harrisburg scheduled for November 10th.

#### Local Groups Should Meet with Legislators on Special Grants

At the meeting with Secretary Georges, it became clear that we must convince our state legislators that we need special grants for school clothing and more money to raise all grants. Letters aren't enough - local groups should arrange to meet with their own representatives here in Philadelphia and let them know our need is urgent. If you don't know who your representative and senator are and how to reach them, find out from your local chairman. If she doesn't know, have her call the office. Remember, these people are supposed to represent you in Harrisburg - let them know how you feel.

#### PWRO Appoints Housing Committee

In recent Co-ordinating Committee meetings it has become clear that housing problems for welfare recipients are widespread. PWRO has appointed a committee to work on housing. They had their first meeting on September 19th at Christ Church. Mr. Thomas Gilhool and Mrs. Marie Shumate are acting as resource persons. Committee Co-ordinators are Mrs. Becky Brown and Mrs. Kachryne Dunbar. If you would like to be on the committee or have housing problems, call Mrs. Brown (BA 2-5251) or Mrs. Dunbar (EV 2-0689).

#### Meetings with County Board Continue

PWRO officers are now meeting the first Friday of each month with members of the County Board of Assistance and their top executive staff in Mr. Sailer's office. At the last meeting many cases were discussed and the county staff promised to recommend to the Board that they support our special grant for school clothing request. We have noted changes for the better in Philadelphia over the summer - the rejection rate is down sharply and directives from Harrisburg have demanded that caseworkers cooperate with WRO and treat all recipients with respect. Several district WRO groups (South, West) have met with their district supervisors and others (Ridge, North) are planning such meetings soon. Caseworkers are generally more considerate of recipients - one woman even found her WRO button got her improved hospital service at PGH. In unity there is strength.

#### Coordinating Committee to be Formalized

In order to have orderly voting, local groups are asked to choose a voting alternate to the citywide coordinating committee. Each paid-up group with ten members or more is allowed 2 votes (chairman and alternate) at the citywide meetings. Please choose your official alternate as soon as possible.

### COMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 28th, 1:30 p.m. - Coordinating Committee, Christ United Church, Green Street between 15th and 16th.

Sunday, October 1st - FPRO members to be on Television - 10:30 a.m. - Channel 3 - KYW. Welfare - A Curse or a Blessing.

Friday, November 10th - Statewide WRO Meeting - Harrisburg.

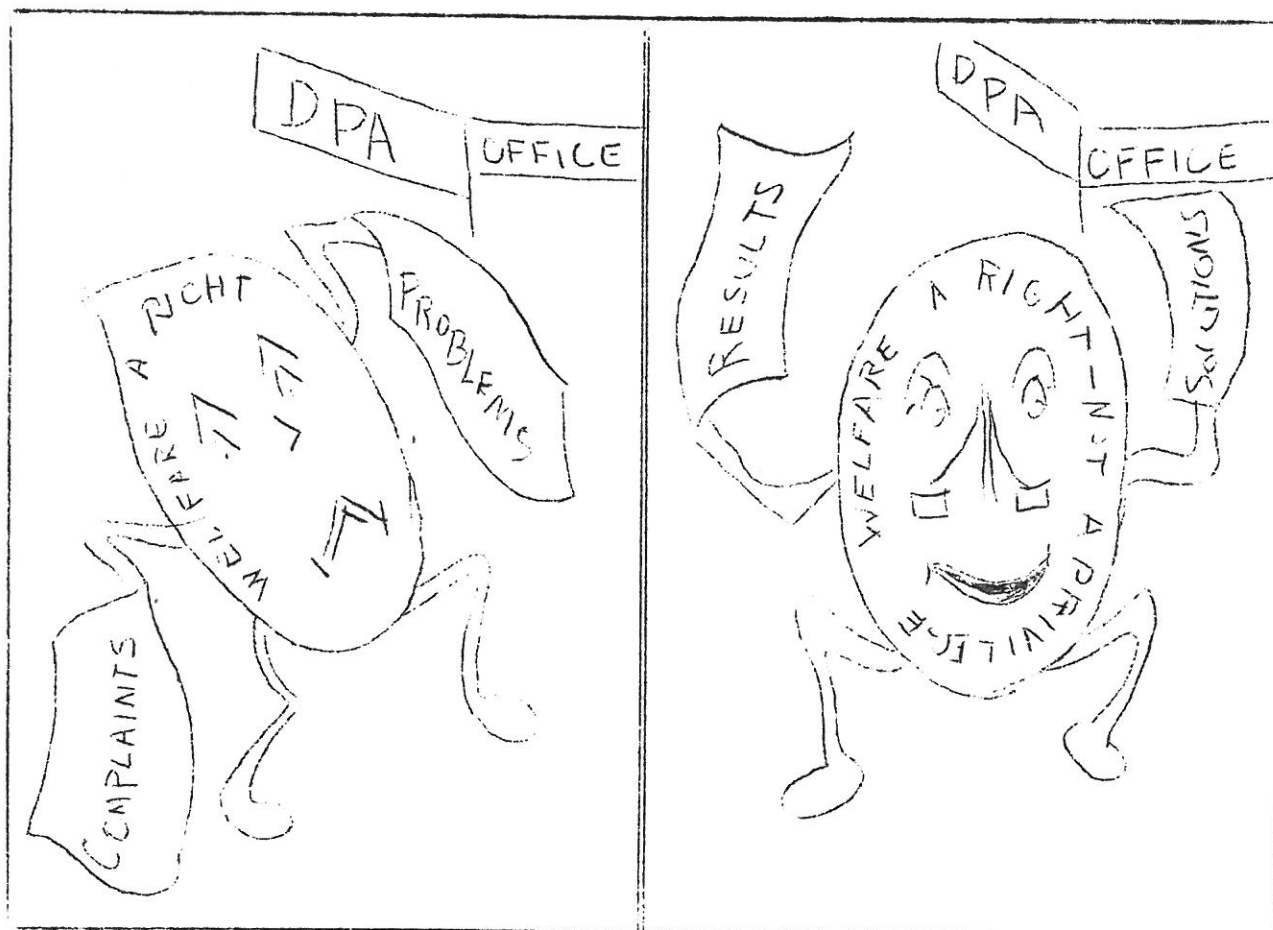
### FLASH!

Cumberland Farms Dairy Stores are selling milk at 79¢ per gallon in Philadelphia. The customer signs an IOU for the remaining 29 cents, and if the Courts tell Cumberland they must charge the state-fixed rate, the company will try to collect the IOU's. Cumberland Farms has three stores in Philadelphia. They are at 7610 Castor Avenue, 6631 Germantown Avenue and 4435 Baltimore Avenue.

### Statewide WRO Meeting Planned for November 10th

WRO leaders from throughout the State are planning the first statewide WRO meeting in Harrisburg, November 10th. Dr. Georges and Mr. Gunderman have promised to speak to the group. We will also be selecting our statewide representative to the National Coordinating Committee.

WATCH FOR FURTHER DETAILS!



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