



THE

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REPORT
ON
CALIFORNIA WELFARE ADVOCACY
CONFERENCE
IN GALT, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 19-21
1978

BACKGROUND OF THE GALT CONFERENCE

Within the past year, a special regional conference of all welfare rights organizations was held in Salt Lake City to try to create a strong national Welfare Rights Movement again, as we had in the 60s in response to the Carter Welfare Reform attempts.

At Salt Lake City the California delegation had a Caucus meeting and elected representatives for the nation-wide Welfare Reform Coalition consisting of:

1. Lavinia Smith, Wages for Housework
2. Bruce Curtis, Center for Independent Living of L.A.
3. Teresa Reese Cowan, San Diego
4. Robert D. Watson, Welfare Recipients League, Inc.
5. Ron Washington, 504 Committee
6. Moice Palladino, National Welfare Reform Coalition

During this caucus meeting it was agreed among all of the participants that California would have a state-wide conference to try to deal with some of the problems the Movement has had in California.

On June 19, 1978, a special conference was held in Galt California, 25 miles out of Sacramento. This conference was sponsored by The Welfare Recipients League, Inc., CRLA Food Law Center, State Office of Economic Opportunities and many others. Special recognition should be given to Mike McNamar, Attorney at Law for Sacramento Senior Citizens project, Daniel Murphy, Marysville CRLA and Kevin Aslanian, who did most of the leg work in putting the conference together.

The organizers of the conference felt that the conference should be held where there would be maximum participation.

There were two organizing meetings; one in Los Angeles and one in Sacramento. Most of the information was done through the mail.

The conference organizers decided to meet at a Catholic School 25 miles out of Sacramento to insure that all of the participants will spend two days with each other and share ideas and experiences when not attending the workshops.

Announcements of the conference were mailed out to all legal services offices and to all welfare rights and other community organizations. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to determine their experience and their needs that the conference could satisfy.

CONFERENCE GOALS

The purpose of the Conference was to accomplish three major goals:

- a. To solidify the Welfare Rights Movement in California;
- b. To create a priority program that all recipients organizations could unit behind on a state-wide basis;
- c. To have the Recipients Organizations and Legal Services work together in their mutual endeavors of initiating institutional changes through litigation and advocacy insofar as federal and state welfare laws and regulations are concerned.

GALT CONFERENCE- FIRST DAY 6-19-78

The conference opened, after there were over 100 persons registered, with a lunch and a open session to discuss Proposition 13, that had by this time become the most important issue.

Ralph Abascal of CRLA and Dorothy Lang of the Western Center on Law and Poverty lead the discussion which basically formulated the strategy for the days and weeks to follow. In fact the movement to confront Proposition 13 was basically born in Galt California that afternoon.

Ralph emphasized that the need of stronger lobbying effort on the part of Welfare Rights Organizations and Legal Services offices representing their clients throughout the state to reduce the damage that will result from Proposition 13.

As a result of this meeting various committees were formed composing of legal aid staff and welfare rights representatives to monitor the effects of Proposition 13 on Health Care and General Assistance. These Committees agreed to have subsequent meetings and they have had numerous meetings around the State since then.

One of the significant acts that resulted from this conference is that many of the participants were a part of the state-wide filing of law suits

against the counties because of inadequate general assistance grants. The day before Thanksgiving over 22 lawsuits were filed against various counties asking that the general assistance grants be raised to a decent living level.

At the Recipient Workshop (there was a Legal Services workshop also going on at the same time), there was a discussion of how Proposition 13 would effect the poor affldthe group:agreed that the areas most affected by Prop. 13 would be (1) the cots-of-living increase;(2) homemaker-chore services;(3) meals on wheels for the elderly; and (4) health services for the poor. It was also anticipated that there may be massive cutbacks in the General Assistance grant levels.

The need for a state-wide network to coordinate the efforts of the various welfare recipient organizations throughout the state was stressed by all of the people at the workshop.

It was decided to coordinate these activities through the following method:

- 1.Each recipient organization will send a representative to the state wide coordinating committee that will be called the California Welfare Rights Organizations Coalition or CCWRO;
- 2.The Coalition will meet in a centrally located place as needed;
- 3.Each representative would be responsible for keeping their group informed of the issues being dealt with by the Coalition and also present the Coalition with the group's point of view;
- 4.That a phone tree be developed to insure communication;
- 5.That Kevin Aslanian look into funding for future meetings;
- 6.The Coalition would temporarily operate out of the offices of WRL.

2n DAY

It should be pointed that while the recipient were having their workshop, the paralegals and lawyers were meeting next door planning state-wide action to help the recipient organizations in their fight to prevent cutbacks as a result of Prop. 13 and to resolve other legal problems identified by the recipients.

The RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION workshop started at 9:30 a.m. The subject for discussion was to identify issues that would have state-wide implications.

The group discussed a number of issues and decided to launch a state wide campaign on the issue of Immediate need. Attachment "A" demonstrates all

of the issues considered by the workshop.

The workshop established the following guidelines for the campaign:

1. Each county recipient organization will set up a meeting point at the local county welfare offices to determine if applicants have received the emergency assistance benefits they are legally entitled to. If it is determined that they have not received the emergency assistance benefits that they are entitled to by Section 11266 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code, then they will be asked to file for a fair hearing. The Fair Hearing will be completed and filed with the State every second and fourth Tuesday of the month.
2. Copies of the Fair Hearings will be mailed to the W.R.L. offices who will act as a clearinghouse.
3. It was agreed that no hearing will be withdrawn just because the claimant received emergency assistance, after we intervened. The rationale for this was that we should have never been needed to intervene in the first place.

Steve Y¹Barra, Deputy Secretary for Children and Adult of the California Health and Welfare Agency was the keynote speaker after Dinner. He discussed the need of more effort on the part of the welfare rights organizations to lobby the California legislature with the legal services folks. He pointed out that every special interest in the State has been coming to Sacramento to protect their "pet programs" from the chopping block. The absence of the Welfare Advocate was very noticeable in Sacramento, and we need to be there to protect the present programs serving the poor.

FINAL DAY

On the last day of the Conference, the recipient workshop had a joint meeting with the paralegal/lawyer workshop to report the priorities chosen, by the recipient workshop.

Because of all of the activities going on in Sacramento regarding the buy-out Bill that provided \$5 billion relief to the counties and cities, the discussion centered around what can the participants do. It was decided to go down to Sacramento and stage a small demonstration to show that there are welfare advocates concerned with the lives of needy children.

Once arriving at the Capitol, we joined our disabled sisters and brothers in their confrontation of Governor Jerry Brown.

PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY KEVIN M. ASLANIAN

EVALUATION OF THE GALT CONFERENCE

While at Galt, we accomplished many things to help strengthen the voice of the poor. We created a positive action program and had opened up the communication gap between recipient organizations throughout the State. We left the Conference with more optimism about the future of the Welfare Rights Movement in California and with a greater awareness of the problems that each of us faced when dealing with the local welfare bureaucracy.

From the Conference numerous committees were formed to combat the Prop. 13 cutback in the area of health. A committee was set up to combat the general assistance grant cutbacks. This Committee was the major force behind the 22 lawsuits filed all over the state of California on Thanksgiving.

The Immediate Need campaign never really got off as we hoped it would, but there was some effort throughout the State. The California Welfare Directors Association had a meeting to discuss the campaign. In Santa Cruz county the Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance that was ruled unconstitutional later, prohibiting the distribution of the campaign materials inside the welfare department. Tulary county had a story criticizing and outraged about the fact, that we called the welfare bureaucrats what they are- LAW BREAKERS! In Santa Clara county the cops were called on some welfare rights fighters, who were distributing the campaign materials to waiting applicants. The cops told the welfare advocates that they cannot distribute the materials. The Welfare advocates left and called the police department complaining about the officer who improperly disallowed them to distribute the materials. The Police Department, after consultation with the District Attorney's office, told the county welfare department that the Welfare Rights Fighters have the constitutional right to distribute materials inside the welfare office.

The New Coalition was successful in defeating two of the most repressive bills introduced in 1978 in the legislature. The Coalition had a meeting with the newly appointed Regional Director of HEW, Mike Murray to discuss various problems regarding the State's non-compliance with federal law.

The question on whether Galt was successful will be decided by us and by what we do at home. THE GREAT CAUSE THAT SO MANY OF US HAVE SACRIFICED SO MUCH FOR WILL NEVER DIE FROM OUTSIDE ATTACKS! IT WILL SIMPLY DIE FROM OUR OWN MISUSE AND NEGLECT.

WE HAVE IT WITHIN US TO DECIDE WHETHER THE MOVEMENT WILL SUCCEED OR WHETHER IT WILL SIMPLY VANISH AS A CREDIBLE MOVEMENT. ONLY WE CAN MAKE THAT DECISION!

ATTACHMENT #1

1. IMMEDIATE NEED. The Coalition decided to make this issue their primary issue. The matter is being litigated and the various welfare rights organizations are monitoring the system;
2. CA-7. It was decided that this matter should be referred to the lawyers for litigation because the existing system violates the California law.
3. Child Care Funds. It was decided that we will support efforts to increase funding for Child Care;
4. AMENDING PROPOSITION 13. It was decided that we will support the efforts of others;
5. TRANSPORTATIONAL EXPENSES AND OTHER WORK RELATED EXPENSES. Referred to litigation;
6. WIN Sanctions. Because WIN sanctions are illegal, it was decided to refer the matter to litigation. Case has already been filed in the Sacramento Superior Court that is limited to WIN sanctions for AFDC-U families that are not federally eligible.
7. PATERNITY QUESTIONNAIRE . This matter was referred to Western Center on Law and Poverty and other Women's Organizations. It was also decided to introduce legislation through the Western Center;
8. General Assistance Program. It was decided that this is one of the primary issues that we should work on.