

THE UMBRELLA

EL PARAGUAS

THE LOWER EAST SIDE UMBRELLA SYSTEM
130 EAST 7th STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10009

SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE PLANNED

Several informal meetings have been held to discuss convening a second conference of Lower East Side individuals and groups to develop long range and immediate programs to improve our community. The steering committee has decided that a second conference tentatively called for mid-April should be held on a theme such as the first annual conference which was the L. E. S. Conference on Unity Planning and Action. That meeting started a housing movement under community control (The Coalition for Human Housing) which has produced 815 units of housing for the poor. The first conference also helped to strengthen the existing movement for community control of our health services.

One titled suggested for this year's conference theme has been Unity Through Joint Planning. As yet no title has been decided on and other suggestions are welcome. 16 workshops for the conference have been suggested such as Housing, Education, Drugs, Health, Welfare Rights, Inter-group relations, Training and Employment. Workshop
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NUEVA VIDA

Nueva Vida, Inc. (New Life) is the name of a coalition of groups on the Lower East Side who have banded together to secure a lease from the City of New York to manage the 15-story so-called Christadora House on the corner of 9th Street and Avenue B. as a multi-purpose community center.

At this writing more than 25 groups - churches, private agencies, block associations, tenant groups, day-care centers, pre-school programs, manpower groups, girls clubs, artists coops, and others - have joined the open membership cooperation. Each group has one vote on the board of directors. The purpose of the coalition is to make it possible for the community to lease, renovate and maintain Christadora House for community programs.

The City of New York owns the building on 9th & B. Thirty years ago it was built as a residence and recreation center. The first five floors of the building house a pool, gymnasium, two auditoriums, large library and assorted meeting rooms. The top ten floors are divided into three-room suites, suitable for dormitory, office or
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

HORIZON HOUSE

by
FRED STANTON
resident

Four months ago with 14 other fellows, I helped open this house.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE cont.,

subcommittees in Housing and Drugs have met twice, and the inter-group relations subcommittee has met once.

The steering committee for the conference suggests that organizations now working on the issues included in the workshop list be asked to take responsibility for organizing the workshops. This includes inviting speakers, deciding specific topics for each workshop and developing a program of action out of the workshop discussions. In addition it is hoped that those groups who wish to participate in planning the conference will join the steering committee.

The steering committee will receive all proposed workshop agendas for review and will plan the general sessions. A large mailing has gone out for each of the initial committee meetings but as usual its difficult to reach everyone, so if you're interested and want to join, ask questions or wish to make suggestions for the second annual conference, please call or write to Ernesto Martinez, 153 Delancey Street, New York, N. Y. 10002, telephone 673-3940.

material for this article submitted
by Ernesto Martinez, Temporary
Chairman, Second Annual L.E.S.
Conference.

NUEVA VIDA, cont.,

other use. The top floor has a restaurant and another small gymnasium and sun roof. In 1947, the City bought the building to be used by the Department of Social Services. In 1966, it was vacated by the City people, and used by the Tompkins Square Community Center. In the winter of 1969, the building was shut down because of alleged use by so-called subversive groups.

Since late summer of 1969, Nueva Vida has been gathering its troops. In early October the group was incorporated. At the close of October, the new corporation was successful in negotiating an 11 month lease from the Department of Real Estate. At this writing, Nueva Vida is attempting to secure a 35 year lease from the City of New York to assure that the building and the programs in it can enjoy long-term continuity. The hearing on the proposal comes up before the Board of Estimate on Thursday, the 12th of March.

If the Board of Estimate approves, Nueva Vida will submit its bid to the Department of Real Estate for use of the building. The plan is to finance the repairs and maintenance of the building by renting space on the top ten floors to groups that apply. A few floors will probably go to groups who enjoy substantial funding and can pay commercial rates. They will make it possible for small

- 3 -

groups, without adequate funding, to also lease space on the other floors at minimal or token kinds of rents.

The lower five floors will be reserved as public space for use by the whole community on a first-come, first-served basis. Hopefully, when the gymnasium and pool areas are repaired, the building can be open to serve the community 14 to 16 hours a day. Christadora House has the potential of being a focal point in the north east neighborhood of the Lower East Side for cultural, recreational, educational, religious and social activities. Nueva Vida has a big job cut out for it. There are numerous repairs to be made, insurance to be secured, and safety factors to attend to before the building can open its doors. Funds must be raised before the City will even consider a bid for the use of the building.

If you have questions about Nueva Vida, want space in the building, know of sources of funds, or can volunteer to do some of the day to day business of keeping Nueva Vida alive, call Flo Parkinson (982-0320), chairman of the board.

EDITORIAL

In the last few months the Lower East Side has had to face a number of crises: the local school board elections, the Cooper Square and 14 B-C housing proposals, Nueva Vida's bid for a lease for Christadora House, the continuing no-action status of Gouverneur Clinic, the steadily deteriorating drug addiction scene, and others. Some of these issues have been with us a long time, others are of more recent origin. Some, such as Cooper Square have at last been happily resolved, but must still remain in a state of doubt and contention.

Through its trial and turmoil runs a recurrent theme: the desire of local citizens to make the critical decisions affecting their own lives. This is the unstated principle which underlies each of the struggles that have taken place or are now taking place in our community.

Unfortunately, we tend to live from crisis to crisis. Our concern or indignation is aroused by a certain issue and we devote all our available hours and energies to it until it is resolved or fades away or we become exhausted. And then we go about pursuing our rather narrow personal interests until the next crisis confronts us. Because each crisis is seen and treated as a separate problem, and each citizen has his own particular area of concern, it is very difficult to get really broad community support for any position or program, and any sense of continuity tends to break down.

Most issues are by their very nature divisive. One man's meat is another man's poison. And even a group which may share a similar attitude toward a given problem may disagree on the solutions to that problem - as we have seen recently in the matter of the local

- 4 -

school board elections. So the tendency is for a community (meaning a relatively small geographical area with some degree of economic and ethnic homogeneity - in this case what we call "Lower East Side") to break up into factions or action groups - "special interest" or "pressure" groups we call them when we disagree with their positions.

Each faction tends to believe its position is the only reasonable or just one, and that it speaks for the whole community. The amount of support it receives will be determined by the degree to which these beliefs are true. But whether its adversary is another community faction, the city administration or a state agency, whether the battle is won or lost, the action group will rarely succeed in uniting more than a segment of the entire geographical community - and then only for the lifetime of that particular crisis; while the quality of life throughout the community continues to decline until the next crisis produces another action group.

How can we break this pattern which seems to produce such short-lived and disconnected results and which "unites" the Lower East Side in name only? Is there any issue on which there could be truly broad community agreement, which would reduce rather than increase factionalism, which could produce a continuity of community action from crisis to crisis? We believe that there is and that it is to be found in the principle we referred to earlier: the desire for self-determination. By this we mean specifically local, democratic self-government: the return to the citizen of the power to make **those decisions which most intimately affect him and his immediate community.** (Together with this power, of course, must go the community's fair share of city, state and federal funds with which to implement its citizens' programs.)

We believe that this is the one "issue" which could unite the Lower East Side, supply continuity of programs, give hope and incentive to those who have dropped out of the political process, and confound those who seek to divide us (fractions or action groups can be attacked as "extremist," "radical," "racist," "repressive," etc., but who could accuse an entire city district of advocating and revitalizing the democratic process and expect to arouse much indignation in the hearts of even the most die-hard reactionaries?).

We will have more to say of this question in the future. For the moment, we would like to remind the citizens of the Lower East Side that before long the city will be proposing - or actually establishing - "neighborhood city halls" in each of the Urban Task Force communities. The city hall, the Task Force and the new expanded local planning boards are to be combined in some (as yet unknown) manner to create what the city used to call "decentralization" and

- 5 -

now calls Neighborhood government.

It must be understood that all members of the planning board, the Task Force and, so far as we know, the staff of the neighborhood city hall will be appointed. We are told that this system will create a "two-way flow of communication" as well as "improve the quality of services in the neighborhood." Possibly. But will it indeed be anything that can legitimately be called Neighborhood "Government" - or will it instead be a more subtle and perhaps efficient form of the colonialism we have all grown used (if not resigned) to?

It certainly bears little resemblance to what we had in mind when we spoke above of local, democratic self-government. We were referring, of course, to an elected local government - a community council of from 12 to 20 members, say, with its own elected officers, complete and final jurisdiction over matters of local concern, and the appropriate funds from the city and state to carry out its policies. In short, democratic government - not only of the people and for the people, but by the people.

Is this the issue around which the Lower East Side can at last unite? We ask the question while there is still time for thought and discussion and planning. For if we do not learn to plan and act before the crisis is upon us, we will once again become its angry, frustrated and divided victims.

We plan to run more editorials in these pages in the future, and would welcome any responsible comments or articles on community problems from our members or readers.

HORIZON HOUSE cont.,

I was thirty-two years old at the time, the eldest of the group, the youngest being fourteen. I had been on drugs for 17 years. Nine of these were spent in institutions of some kind; jails, hospitals, etc., and because of another arrest, one in a long line of over 20, all stemming from the use of narcotics, I was once again on my way back upstate, back to more years of incarceration, mental anguish and existence in a state of stagnancy. It was during this time, while awaiting sentence, that I first heard of Horizon House and of therapeutic communities.

I had just about given up all hope of ever living a decent normal life. I didn't like myself very much. In fact, when I would allow myself to think of what I had become, of all the wasted years, of being addicted and locked up, of the running, the hiding, of the hurt and pain done to my family and friends, I'd then hate myself even more.

- 6 -

It wasn't a good feeling and as I look back and think of all those who died and are missing from the scene, the overdoses, the ones upstate with years still to do, the Marshalls, the Jennies, the Jimmys, Gwens, Bobbies and so on, I can't help but wonder, why not me? Was I spared for a reason? Is there still a chance after all these years?

I found the answer on September 15, 1969 in Supreme Court, when a sympathetic judge decided to give me one last chance and instead of sending me back to jail, paroled me to this house. I didn't know it then, nor did I realize it for a while here (at Horizon House), but that judge not only saved my life but gave me a new and useful one.

It wasn't easy for me when I first got here, but then growing pains never are. No one likes being told really where they are at, or made to take a real good look at who and what they are. And this is what I had to do. I had to start growing up again after all these years. From an immature, irresponsible baby (for only a baby does as he feels without regard to consequences), to an honest responsible grown-up: One who stands on his own two feet, makes his own decisions and does what he has to; who doesn't act off his feelings but stops and thinks first; who doesn't run or resort to a crutch when problems arise, but faces and deals with them squarely and honestly to the best of his ability. I had to go from one end of the stick to the other, from years outside, of complete negativity (lying, cheating, stealing) to one in here of all positivity (honesty, truthfulness, etc.) before I could be allowed to fall back to what society considers the normal pattern of life.

This is what happens in Horizon House. They are in business of saving human lives, because the addict doesn't live, he exists. Here there are no bug doctors, no social workers, no do-gooders, but only ex-addicts; people who have gone through what we are going through now and who we can relate to and feel comfortable in doing so because, before our eyes are the living proof that it can be done. The staff are all ex-addicts, all our "role models." All that is asked of anyone coming into this house is that we have a sincere desire to want to help himself, because that is exactly what this is, a "self-help program." He has to trust in the environment here. He will be shown the way, but it has to come from him, no one else can do it for him.

The house is just that, a house, where addicts of all ages, colors and backgrounds living in harmony as brothers and sisters, where for many, they come face to face for the first time in their lives with love and concern. They learn how to express real feelings and that by helping themselves, then, they can eventually help others.

- 7 -

They are taught that in order to keep something you must first give it away so that others will grow as you are growing. They grow up together, live, eat, work and sleep together. They go to groups, encounters, morning meetings, school, and seminars and they learn to trust and confide in each other as brothers and sisters do. It is not all work either. They rap constantly, relating their feelings, getting rid of garbage and the cancer, identifying with one another. They go out on trips, they watch T.V., play and they grow, grow. Everything they receive they get on a learning basis. Nothing here is given to them just for the sake of giving. They earn it.

As this rebuilding, this growing-up process takes place, as the positive comes into being and the negative is being replaced, they are growing daily. The garbage leaves and for the first time in many years they begin to feel good about themselves. That they are useful human beings, that they can and will be respected citizens again, that they can do without drugs.

They have stopped living and acting as a dope fiend lives. They are not once again, putting off until tomorrow, what can be done today.

They are doing it today, right now, in Horizon House.
I am doing it.

- Fred Stanton

FREE MUSEAM DAY

A.W.A.R.E.

Starting this week the Museum of Modern Art is opening its doors free of charge on Mondays from 2 to 9 P.M. (53rd Street between 5th and 6th Avenues).

Mobilize yourself and your neighbors to go to the weekly meeting of A.W.A.R.E. (Addiction Workers Alerted to Rehabilitation and Education). The meetings are held at 7 P.M. Tuesday nights at Trinity Lutheran Church, corner of 9th Street and Avenue B.

UMBRELLA MEETING

Because several of our officers have been ill we had to postpone two meetings. We are planning two meetings in the near future. One will be devoted to the subject of drug addiction - and why the various addiction agencies are not working together for the good of our community. A second meeting will confront the issue of the new local planning boards and "little City Halls" the City is setting up: Are they really a step toward local self-government?

We also have an Umbrella election - of our Chairman and Vice Chairman - before the end of March.

All members will receive a notice of the time and place of our next meeting.

- 8 -

EDUCATION DECISION BY ACTION

The Board of Directors of ACTION FOR PROGRESS have declared the school board elections to be a fraud and contrary to the interests of the people of the Lower East Side.

They have, therefore, voted against the participation of the agency in the school board elections.

The staff has been instructed by the Board to engage in an intensive effort to advise, inform and involve the community in school issues, for the purpose of developing meaningful community control of the schools. The agency and its staff is ready to work closely with all other Lower East Side groups and organizations looking to bring about programs and methods that really work toward making our schools responsive to the people of the community.

ACTION FOR PROGRESS stands for real community control and will work to develop the means to effect community involvement on all school issues.

The agency is ready to utilize in cooperation with other groups whatever means are necessary to see that schools educate our children and meet the needs of the community.

WHAT IS THE UMBRELLA SYSTEM?

The Lower East Side Umbrella System is composed of community organizations which provide social, economic or cultural programs to the Lower East Side. An attempt to improve the lines of communication, and coordination, between the many agencies working within the community, its basic purposes are to publicize to the community the efforts of the many local organizations as well as to serve as an information switch-board and public forum - both through its Newsletter and through a series of public meetings to be held on various topics of vital concern to the community.

The by-laws of the Umbrella System expressly prohibits it from seeking any outside funds or participating in any programs of its own - thus insuring that it will not compete either financially or functionally with any of its members. Strictly a self-help organization, the Umbrella is a tool by which local organizations, through their own efforts, can work together to improve the quality of their assistance to the community. Special emphasis is placed on the inter-relatedness of all social programs. Anyone interested in the youth of our community, for instance, must also be concerned about local school boards, drug addiction, street academies, jobs, housing, recreation and health services, for none of these programs can be attacked independently with any effectiveness. Each is a part of the general crisis confronting our community.

It is in an effort to relate these different problems and the organizations that are contending with them that the Umbrella System was formed - so that we all may work together more effectively to improve the quality of life on the Lower East Side.

Any local organization providing a program to the Lower East Side community is eligible to join the Umbrella Syatem - and concerned individuals, city-wide agencies, political clubs, etc. are invited to become Associate Members (who, although not eligible to vote, are entitled to full floor privileges).

Any community organizations wishing to join the Umbrella System - or desiring more information - can fill out the form below and mail it to: Lower East Side Umbrella System, 130 East 7th Street, New York, N. Y. 10009. Membership entitles each organization to one vote at Umbrella System Council meetings.

Name of Organization

Address

Name and Position of Authorized Representative

Wish to become voting member

Wish more information

- - 10 -

BY-LAW AMENDMENTS

According to the provisions of the Umbrella by-laws the Umbrella System executive committee hereby submits proposed amendments to said by-laws. They are simply improvements of unclear language in the original version. They will be submitted for a vote at the next Council meeting for approval by a two-thirds majority.

1. Change official name from "Lower East Side Umbrella Organization" to "Lower East Side Umbrella System."

2. Section 2. (STRUCTURE) - b) shall be changed to read: Its governing body shall be the Umbrella Council. Its members will be organizations, not individuals. Each member organization will be entitled to one vote in the Council. There will be two classes of membership in the Lower East Side Umbrella System:

(1) REGULAR MEMBERS: Local community groups and organizations providing programs and services to the Lower East Side community shall be eligible to become Regular Members with full voting rights;

(2) ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: Governmental organizations, agencies, sub-agencies, etc., political organizations and similar groups which are located in or whose programs and activities are directed toward the Lower East Side community shall be eligible to become Associate Members with all the rights and privileges of Regular Members except the right to vote.

Several people from an organization may attend and speak at the Council meetings, but only one person may represent and cast a vote for that organization (providing it is a Regular Member).

3. Section 3. (OFFICERS) - b) shall be changed to read: The officers will be elected individually by a majority vote of the Council. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast (not including abstentions there shall be a run-off election between the two (or more, in the event of a tie) candidates receiving the greatest number of votes.

4. Section 3. (OFFICERS): The present paragraph "b)" ("Holding office does not entitle one"...etc.) shall become paragraph "c)"; and each paragraph under Section 3. thereafter shall be correspondingly re-lettered.

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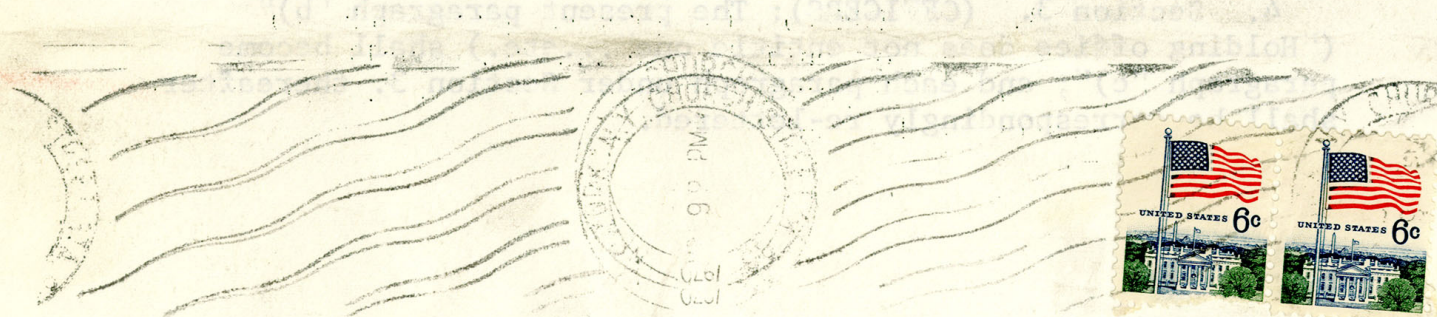
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3. Several people from an organization may attend and speak at the Council meetings, but only one person may represent and cast a vote for that organization (provided it is a Regular Member).

4. Section 3 (ELECTIONS) - (b) shall be changed to read: The officers will be elected individually by a majority vote of the Council. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, (not including abstentions there shall be a run-off election between the two (or more, in the event of a tie) candidates receiving the greatest number of votes.

5. Section 4 (OFFICERS): The present paragraph (b) "Holding offices shall be for one year and shall be renewable."



213

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