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Trouble Ahead If CIC Dissolves

The decision by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to create its own human relations commission, thus putting the survival of the Citizens Interracial Council in jeopardy, could very well be an invitation to disaster.

While the desire to have an organization working in the human relations field throughout the county is a laudable objective, there is considerable reason to question whether the course chosen by supervisors is the right one.

The Citizens Interracial Council has been eminently successful in establishing a climate in which constructive dialogue between the races could take place. Carroll Waymon, executive director of the organization, has excellent rapport with other groups vitally interested in achieving better race relations.

To suddenly withdraw county support from CIC, forcing it to dissolve at the end of this month unless the San Diego City Council performs a rescue mission today, is a reckless and imprudent move considering the volatile nature of the problems that exist.

Any organization which replaces CIC, no matter how perfect, will be required to prove its effectiveness by dealing with actual problems. That takes time. CIC has been in operation since 1964. We are letting five years of experience and progress go down the drain if CIC is summarily dissolved.

County officials complain that CIC is oriented too much toward metropolitan San Diego. That was its initial purpose. The county began helping to fund CIC only this year. It takes some time to reorient an organization from strictly urban concerns to include also suburban and rural problems. CIC, by expanding its board to include representatives from other areas of the county, was definitely making progress in accepting larger responsibilities.

There is a substantive disagreement between CIC and the county over the issue of how a human relations commission should be organized and who should have control of it.

Mr. Waymon believes, and it is difficult at this point to contradict him, that the county's human relations commission would be an instrument of the board of supervisors rather than an independent agency working constructively to solve problems which originate, in part at least, within the governmental structure itself.

What we may wind up with is a toothless and voiceless puppet afraid to speak out with the candor that is necessary if the real problems are to be dealt with.

An effort to make the human relations commission a creature of the board of supervisors is already under way. Supervisor DeGraff Austin has decided, for himself at least, how many members should be on the commission and who they should be.

Fortunately, Supervisor Jack Walsh—and perhaps in time one or two of his colleagues—is opposing Austin's proposal, which may spare any county human relations commission that is formed the ignominy of failure even before it starts to function.

Mr. Austin completely ignores, for example the need for representation of the Indian community on his commission. Apparently it is more important to him that the chamber of commerce be represented; that organization would have a delegate on the commission. The omission of Indian representation in Mr. Austin's plan is itself impressive evidence that a human relations commission dictated by supervisors would have an excellent chance for failure.

It is difficult to comprehend why the City of San Diego's decision to withhold funds from CIC and the county's action should be timed to coincide. Is the desire to establish a countywide human relations commission the overriding reason for putting CIC out of business? Or is there a conspiracy afoot here to retaliate against CIC for criticism it has directed at city hall?

If the answer to the last question is "yes," we are most assuredly headed for trouble.