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STATEMENT BY CURE TO CITY COUNCIL

December 18, 1969

Citizens United for Racial Equality, believing that continuity in a human relations program is essential, urges the City of San Diego to continue funding CIC until another human relations agency is actually functioning. We believe it is a public service as vital as the police department, fire department, or health department. Like these agencies it might be dispensed with for a brief period of time, but it is scarcely worth the risk. Perhaps it is most akin to the health department in that the absence of its services might not be immediately apparent, but the consequences of this neglect would occur later, perhaps in epidemic proportions, causing considerable pain and requiring extreme solutions.

While we have long supported and admired CIC for their untiring work, their imaginative programs, and their resulting effectiveness, we are well aware of shortcomings and failures. But CIC is new, breaking new ground. Our own nation suffered through a confederacy and years of painful challenge and change before taking its present form. Is it fair to expect instant perfection and instant success of CIC? Crime rates continue to increase but we don't cease funding the police. On the contrary the police use these statistics to justify an increase in their budget. Why do we apply different criteria to CIC? In short, we see the need for change in and expansion of human relations services in the city and the county. This is what the County Ad-Hoc Committee on Human Relations is all about, and we urge you to work with them in that development. But until another agency is in operation, CIC's past performance fully justifies its continued funding.

Although the County Ad-Hoc Committee on Human Relations is not charged with evaluating CIC, the feelings of an overwhelming number of those appearing has been so strong in support of CIC's performance that much of their testimony has been to that point. There is known and open criticism from important leaders in the Chicano community. They insist unequivocally on change. At the same time they commend CIC's past performance. There is recurring talk of other critics. Some say large segments of the Black community do not support CIC. We have not seen or heard them speak before public bodies such as this. Who are they? Where are they? The support that was demonstrated before this body a year and a half ago is still there. If there is any question in your mind concerning the validity of CIC's performance or community support, public hearings should be held.

The importance of government supporting human relations efforts has been highlighted by two national figures in the past two weeks. John Gardner, Chairman of the National Urban Coalition, said a few days ago, "it is immoral for our national leaders - in Congress and the executive branch - to temporize. It is indecent for them to let us imagine that we can solve our problems without money or cannot afford to tackle them. It is criminal for either Republicans or Democrats to put politics before the nation's future." CURE believes it would be just as immoral, indecent and criminal for local political leaders to so act. We believe the appointment of Mayor Curran to the Steering Committee of the National Urban Coalition, just announced by Mr. Gardner, lends even more significance to this.

The second national figure drawing our attention to this problem was Dr. Milton Eisenhower, Chairman of the National Commission of the Causes and Prevention of Violence. The report of the Commission stated, "We solemnly declare our conviction that this nation is entering a period in which our people need to be as concerned by the internal danger in our free society as by any probable combination of external threats." This grave concern was underlined by the $20 billion the commission recommended be expended to attack the problem. Dr. Eisenhower demonstrated his own deep concern by personally delivering the report to the President.

San Diego must demonstrate its deep concern by firmly committing itself to the idea that a human relations agency is important; as important as police, fire and health, more important than promoting commerce. For example, this fiscal year the city gave $476,000 to the Conventions and Tourist Bureau. Yet complaints from the Black and Brown Coalition indicate that minorities did not benefit equally from this money in terms of job opportunities. Consequently a human relations agency is an essential adjunct in order to insure equal opportunity. Further, for a city so dependent upon and desirous of tourist trade willing to spend $476,000 to promote it, it seems the height of folly to begrudge a mere $80,000 for human relations to help preserve an image of a progressive all-American city in motion. Can a city that spent $1,000,000 for a scoreboard to tell 40,000 to 50,000 people the score of a ball game justify not spending an additional $50,000 for an agency to tell 750,000 people the score in human relations. The first concern of the city should be to keep faith with the minority community that has been built by CIC.

Therefore, we ask that the Council:

1) release immediately to CIC the balance of $80,000 originally appropriated for Human Relations for fiscal 1970;

2) continue financial support of CIC through the current fiscal year at a level of funding sufficient to continue on-going programs;

3) appropriate additional funds if necessary to insure an orderly transfer of responsibility from CIC to a new agency;

4) hold a public hearing on this matter, if you do not feel you can act favorably on this matter without such action.

It is incredible that a city of the complexity of San Diego, the second largest in California, a city whose mayor has just been named to the Steering Committee of the National Urban Coalition, a city willing to spend over $700,000 to promote its 200th anniversay, should abandon its only human relations agency with no viable alternative in sight. This lack of visible commitment will, if continued, not only violate the trust of the minority community, but seriously compromise the work of any new agency for years to come.