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Van Deerlin Asks Firings In S.D. Melee

Copley News Service

WASHINGTON — Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin yesterday angrily called for the firing of any federal workers who may have been involved in disorders which finally broke up a public meeting the congressman was to address last Monday night in Southeast San Diego.

He also called for an investigation of San Diego's "Self-Help Through Neighborhood Leadership" program.

The San Diego Democrat, in a letter asking Sargent Shriver, head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, to investigate the outburst, said the incident prompted him "to complain to you in the strongest possible manner."

NAMES DIRECTOR

Van Deerlin told Shriver how he had to leave the monthly meeting of Community Action Council for Area B under police escort. Van Deerlin named Harold K. Brown, one of Shriver's San Diego project directors, as a participant in a "well-organized campaign of disruption."

"Mr. Brown is listed as director of 'Self-Help Through Neighborhood Leadership' at an annual salary of $11,500," Van Deerlin said.

He said the OEO project headed by Brown was funded to begin last July 1 in the amount of $189,713 to run through this June 30, with the stated purpose of "developing a cadre of 35 young community leaders each year, and helping this team of minority group leaders to become directly engaged in community action in the fields of employment, housing, family stability, education, etc."

Van Deerlin was jeered and heckled Monday night by Negroes protesting his opposition to the seating of Adam Clayton Powell in Congress. Alluding to this, Van Deerlin told Shriver:

"Obviously, I cannot ask nor expect the support of all my constituents, whether holding government jobs or not. But in the case of Mr. Brown, we apparently have called upon taxpayers to underwrite a course of training in riot and insurrection."

Calling for an inquiry into the operations of the self-help program in San Diego, Van Deerlin said he did not have sufficient information to recommend its suspension.

"But I do request your immediate attention to the events of Monday night," he said. "If your independent investigation supports what I have told you about it, I feel that Mr. Brown should be removed from the agency's payroll forthwith, along with any fellow staff members who may have participated."

CORE WITHDRAWAL

Van Deerlin said he has been informed that the directors of the San Diego chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, original sponsors of the self-help project, withdrew their support last November.

"You are probably weary of hearing comparisons made by critics less friendly than myself," Van Deerlin added. "But I would note that if this 'self-help' program achieved its full goals of training 35 young leaders a year, the average cost — about $5,700 — is substantially more than is needed to put a man through a year at Harvard."

At the outset of his complaint to Shriver, Van Deerlin observed that he is one congressman who "has supported every authorization and appropriation for the anti-poverty program."