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This issue is given over to a commentary recently presented by L.A. CORE Chairman Emeritus Earl Walter over FM station KPFK.

THE PRESENT DISAFFECTION IN LOS ANGELES CORE

Earl L. Walter, Chairman Emeritus

Having served as chairman of L.A. CORE for the past twelve years, we view the present -- what we choose to call -- disaffection and subsequent splintering as a usual occurrence which has happened several times before in CORE's short history. We suspect all similar organizations have to go through the same process in their development. The difference in respect to CORE presently is that in the past problems of this kind were small and un-noticeable, as CORE in the past was small. Moreover CORE is one of the leaders in the present Civil Rights Revolution, the most significant occurrence in this country in our time, and hence everything we do takes on added significance -- and rightly so. But basically the problem is the same internal one we have been surviving and overcoming all the time and is principally related to growth and development. We have referred to the phenomenal growth of CORE in past commentaries, and to the influx of large numbers of persons with varied motivations, some of which (and we think these are few) are not basically related to the civil rights struggle. In the past, CORE has been traditionally composed of a small group of very dedicated and highly disciplined individuals who understood and accepted the moral integrity of the movement. Of late it would appear that we have had in addition to these, more than our share of the dissident elements, the malcontents and the "I can do anything better than you" types. Fortunately they have been woefully outnumbered, and group feelings have served to maintain the moral integrity which is the essence of our strength.

A second way in which the hazards of growth are manifested can be observed in noting the group's attitude towards action rather than talk or discussion. Formerly there was so much talk, talk, talk by everybody else and so little action that we were compelled to cry out persistently for action because we saw the crying need. And this cry was attractive to the young, the new and the adventuresome. And the cry has been heeded at its face value. But we are discovering now that such a cry, especially to the uninitiated, can lead very easily to the other extreme, where there is action, action, action, with no thought or planning or even goals. Obviously both extremes are at best nebulous and sometimes disastrous.

In addition the revolution itself has had its effect on the group. For as the group has helped to shape the revolution, the revolution has helped to shape the group. The high points and the low points, the stresses and the strains challenge the stability of individuals, and these forces surely affect the stability of the group which is composed of individuals. Tension is created that is meant to be constructively channelled; but the hazards of destruction are necessarily there also. Not every one of us in the movement has outgrown that conditioning which makes heroes out of the real villain in terms of human behavior. If we are not fully committed to nonviolence, in a period of tension it is quite easy for us to become perpetrators of hostility rather than victims, and thus to lose the advantages that the philosophy offers.

Despite the hazards we have mentioned the group most decidedly has maintained its stability and moved steadily forward holding on to its moral integrity. Witness

the recent annual elections in CORE. In these elections an overwhelming majority supported a point of view which recognized the need to push full speed ahead with direct nonviolent action -- but well-planned, reasoned action, in the spirit of good will, and calculated to involve the largest possible portion of the entire community. This direction has been recognized as the demand of the revolution itself in the present era. Our sense of responsibility should insist that we do no less than meet this demand.

The movement will go on and fortunately we in CORE intend to move with it. Frankly we feel that the pulling out of the small number -- some 20 or 30 -- will have a positive effect. Whatever positive contribution they can make to the overall effort on their own will be applauded by us. Moreover they will discover their possibilities or limitations as the case might be without any hampering by us. On the other hand we can without being hampered by them pursue the new direction we envision. Neither will bring a discredit to the other. Surely the problem is serious and ominous enough for many varied approaches.

Our conviction, however, is that the most meaningful contribution can be made in the direction which has been outlined by the new administration headed by Art Silvers, and the key of which is in going out from door to door talking individually with the people where the most pressing problems are, as a means of discovering their greatest concerns and working with them towards dealing with these problems. The hope is to expand the activities and program toward total community involvement as a resource for the large and massive assault on the more complex and serious problems of de facto school segregation, full employment, and open occupancy in housing. The arsenal needed for this assault necessarily must involve the entire community and move in the direction of the general strike, boycott, or work stoppage.

The success of this assault and the forward movement of the revolution will depend on the abilities of those of us actively involved to readjust, guide and mass the forces available to us. Intelligent foresight and our ability to think clearly about the issues will carefully measure our success. For our strong moral position, as has been stated before, and our ability to think, is the advantage we can gain over the adversary.

But the real issues in our opinion go much further than defeating the adversary, for merely to exchange behavior patterns would only restate the problem by rearranging the factors and shifting one group to another side of the formula. This, we submit, we have had enough of in the past. It is basically the cause of our unhappy predicament. As Baldwin has stated it, the oppression and dominance of one human being over another always has been and always will be a recipe for murder.

The need now is for growth, change, and development. The arena in which we have been operating has been filled with violence, fear and hostility. We have no choice but to change this by our own example in exhibiting a more human type of behavior. Anything less than that is not worth all the suffering that has already been experienced, to say nothing of what needs to be faced in the future. Our society, our culture, needs a better behaving human being. We should accept our responsibility in creating this being. The problems of our society are the responsibility of all of us, including the oppressed; and should be shared as such. With this approach we should feel more shame than fear, more guilt than hate. It is in this direction that we must move if a better human being is to emerge.

As we cope with the day to day problems relating to discrimination and the more long-range action programs for its elimination, the ominous question that should always guide our actions is the one that begs to know what we are creating. The answer, hopefully, should always be, a growing, maturing, creative type of human behavior quite in tune with historical development.