

N-VAC

non-violent action committee

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Statement of N-VAC before Los Angeles City Council

Nov. 9, 1964

I am here today representing the Non-Violent Action Committee which is know as N-VAC. N-VAC is a local group which has involved itself deeply in fighting discrimination in the Los Angeles area. We of N-VAC feel that racial problems are acute in our city and the need is pressing to find some solutions before there is a total breakdown of relations between the minority community and the power structure.

We respect those councilmen who wish to establish a Human Relations Bureau for Los Angeles and their desire to bring about better relationships between the various ethnic groups and to afford the minority community better opportunities for advancement. However we do not feel that the proposed Human Relations Bureau is the right way of doing it.

We already have the County Commission on Human Relations and another such commission would be a waste of money and a duplication of effort. The County Commission has an extremely capable staff and it is doubtful that the city would be able to hire men equal in calibre and experience to Dr. Buggs and his assistants.

Some solutions to this city's problems in race relations must be found now. Our problems are steadily worsening. A new commission would call for more political appointees to study the situation and call innumerable conferences etc. but we cannot see any progress gained by simply applying larger numbers of well-meaning citizens to the task of trying to decide if a problem exists.

The main purpose of the proposed bureau appears to be to promote racial harmony. This sounds fine, until we explore it further. Is the main purpose of such a group simply to stifle protest and to provide an extra buffer between the citizens in the various groups? N-VAC maintains that Los Angeles does not require more people dedicated to

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'putting out brush fires' but does require a direct tackling of the problems that cause them.

As long as Negro American and Mexican American people in our community are treated as second class citizens there will be 'brush fires'. We do not need a new expensive department to tell us that there is no police brutality, no job discrimination, no housing discrimination, no inferior segregated schools, no potholes in the streets, we need rather to change these conditions if Los Angeles is not to turn into a divided community with hostile factions retreating behind barriers. The people of the minority community know these conditions exist and they know they are worsening. A new commission will mean nothing to the general public and will only lighten the conscience of those people who recognize the conditions but who are not sufficiently brave to take direct steps to change them.

N-VAC calls for a defeat of the proposed ordinance setting up a City Commission and asks the City Council to assume the burden of directly tackling the problems. The minority people of Los Angeles can no longer be fooled by the appointment of a few more people to investigate, research and educate. They know what the problems are and they demand solutions. Los Angeles due to its sprawling nature has a chance to avoid further serious troubles but the appointment of yet another commission to gloss over facts, will not help.

N-VAC suggests that, instead, the City Council support a joint City-County Commission by using the planned money to enlarge the staff of Dr. Buggs and work with the Board of Supervisors to increase its effectiveness. We suggest that the joint Commission be granted subpoena powers for their investigations and be empowered to publish their findings on the complaints they investigate. We suggest they be ordered to bring recommendations for action to the City Council after these investigations.

In these times of consolidation of government it would be a backward step for the city of Los Angeles to create a separate commission with resultant expenses. N-VAC therefore urges the Los Angeles City Council to adopt our proposals for the benefit of all the citizens of our community.

Thank you.