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Irate Mexican-American Units Demand Poverty War Equality

BY JACK JONES

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The growing conviction by many Mexican-American groups that the war on poverty is being waged primarily for the Negro may result in a demand that federal antipoverty spending be halted here until projects are equalized, say some Mexican-American spokesmen.

This side battle in the poverty war has reached new proportions with the demand of federal antipoverty chief Sargent Shriver by representatives of several Mexican-American organizations to investigate local programs.

Their discontent over alleged inequities broke into the open with the dismissal of Gabriel Yanez as director of the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Adult Participation Project outpost by Mrs. Opel C. Jones, director of the NAPP program.

Message to Shriver

The Ad Hoc Committee to Win the War on Poverty wired Shriver:

"The principal aim of the investigation would be to instill in the Mexican-American community the belief that the Office of Economic Opportunity is really interested in their plight and will correct those inequities that in the name of justice should not exist."

Another purpose of an OEO inves-

tigation, said the wire, "would be to bring a halt to the rising bitter feelings of the Mexican-American in the streets, that antipoverty funds and job opportunities are going principally to Negroes."

The plea contained the statement that only three NAPP outposts serve Mexican-American communities while 11 serve Negro areas, and that Teen Posts and Head Start programs are similarly weighted in favor of Negro sectors.

Some Signers Listed

Those signing the wire included Dr. Miguel Montes, member of the State Board of Education; Daniel Fernandez, president of the Council of Mexican-American Affairs; Philip Montez, executive director of the Foundation for Mexican-American Studies; Marco de Leon, president of the Assn. of Mexican-American Educators; Dr. Manuel Guerra, chairman of the education council of the Mexican-American Political Assn.; Dionicio Morales, executive director of the Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation, and Bert Corona, MAPA chairman.

Another signatory was Irene To-var, who resigned as director of the NAPP outpost in Pacoima over the firing of Yanez for what was called a

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failure to be cooperative.

The delegate agency drawing most of the fire from East Los Angeles and other Mexican-American section groups is the Los Angeles Area Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, which oversees NAPP, Teen Post and a large portion of the Head Start program.

'Proposals Turned Down'

In their unhappiness over what they feel is short shrift in the poverty war, East Los Angeles Teen Post directors and members held two meetings during the week to stir demands that a separate delegate agency be assigned to operate projects in Mexican-American areas.

Their complaints: that proposals offered by Mexican-Americans have been turned down repeatedly by the federation, that most other Teen Post areas are weighted in favor of Negroes, so that Mexican-Americans are outvoted in the project development committee, and that an impending cut-back in the countywide Teen Post program will thus affect Mexican-Americans the most.

Meanwhile, some NAPP aides, continuing their protest over the dismissal of Yanez—which the federation says cannot be final until a hearing sometime within 30 days—triggered a Thursday picketing of the Federal Building office of Rep. Ed Roybal (D-Los Angeles).

Several of them expressed the feeling that Roybal, a Mexican-Ameri-

can, has allowed Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Los Angeles), a Negro, to take the antipoverty program initiative in Washington.

Robert Ramirez, a NAPP aide and co-chairman of the ad-hoc committee, also complained that Mrs. Jones issued a directive that NAPP employes picketing during working hours would be docked. She did not take the same position when NAPP aides marched in her behalf during her controversy with EYOA, he said.

Issue of Directive Denied

NAPP headquarters said Mrs. Jones had issued no such directive. It was her much-publicized feud with Joe P. Maldonado, EYOA executive director, which resulted in her firing and subsequent rehiring when the OEO ordered NAPP separated from EYOA and placed under the federation.

Ironically, both Maldonado and Daniel M. Luevano, regional OEO director, are Mexican-Americans and find themselves targets of some criticism from East Los Angeles.

Ramirez tried to get an answer from Luevano on the Yanez matter when Luevano appeared in Pico Rivera Thursday night to help launch the newly formed Eastland Community Action Council. But the regional director indicated he feels it is a local problem.

Many Mexican-Americans in poverty projects point out that both Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Fifi Boger, Teen Post project administrator, are Negroes. They feel the federation itself does not understand Mexican-American problems.