

ELECTION

Cleveland elects insurgent mayor

Ten years ago Cleveland was the first major American city to elect a black mayor. In 1971 it became the largest city to elect a Republican mayor. This month Cleveland voters chose the youngest big city mayor, one who calls himself a populist.

Dennis Kucinich, a 31-year-old native of Cleveland's ethnic neighborhood, parlayed 10 years of brash headline grabbing and citizen opposition to bossism into a victory over both Democratic and Republican party machines.

Kucinich, a marverick Democrat, defeated party-endorsed Edward Feighan, 30-year-old state legislator and nephew of a former Cleveland Congressman, by 3,000 votes of the 183,000 cast. Both Democrats had outpolled Republican Mayor Ralph Perk in an October primary. Perk had originally been expected to retain the office for a fourth term.

Kucinich's victory was all the more dramatic considering the lack of traditional political, economic and labor support (the UAW alone supported him). He countered the lack of money and organization by seizing upon popular issues.

Most observers, including Cuyahoga County Republican chairman Bob Hughes, credited Kucinich's victories to citizen anger over the sale of the municipal light plant to a private utility (ITT, May 18) and property tax abatements of some \$30 million for downtown office complexes.

The sale of the light plant and the property tax abatements crystallized community anger. "For thousands of little people, Kucinich articulated their feeling that city government has been a gigantic ripoff," one veteran reporter commented.

The two local issues contributed to what local reporters called the "Tuesday Massacre." Seven city council members were defeated, including the former mayor's son and his only Republican colleague, and the seven-term Democratic majority leader.

The election, in part, pitted downtown interests against neighborhood needs. Another Perk program that Kucinich attacked and promised to kill was a \$50-million "People Mover," an elevated computer rapid transit for downtown.

"People were plain fed up with downtown getting all the attention and the people getting nothing but unreliable garbage collection," says Pat McCabe, an organizer for Active Clevelanders Together (ACT), a city-wide grassroots organization.

Cleveland prides itself as the third largest corporate headquarters city for Fortune 500 companies. Corporate interests have traditionally dominated city governments and the political agenda, favoring downtown development to the detriment and neglect of the city's neighborhoods.

But city financial problems, neighborhood deterioration and lack of city services have forced citizens to organize. Citizen groups never let up pressure against the abatements. Despite overwhelming votes in all government committees and before the full city council, where the vote was usually 30 to 3, community groups faithfully testified at every public opportunity. Even after defeat and rebuffs, the groups continued to circulate educational material during the campaign. Using a network of neighborhood, civic and senior citizen groups, the Ohio Public Interest Campaign distributed 30,000 pieces headlined: "You Can't Run Cleveland if You Sell It Out." Other groups added some 25,000 informational pieces on abatement and Muni Light. Candidates were continually challenged on the issue at public meetings.

"It shows that people trapped in urban centers can be mobilized for their own benefit," says one organizer who goes on to add that it will now be necessary for the same forces to advance specific programs to deal with neighborhood

problems, and to see that the new mayor does not co-opt citizen-pushed issues without keeping his campaign promises.

The day following the election Kucinich appeared before the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, a business organiza-

tion combining downtown business and the Chamber of Commerce. Jokingly, he twitted the business executives that the lunch could be "the Last Supper of business interests." He went on, however, to pledge cooperation with business, but

he reiterated his opposition to programs dear to the hearts of business executives. Both abatement and the People Mover are "dead," he told them, and the sale of the Muni Light plant would never be concluded under his administration



Dennis Kucinich articulated the popular feeling that city government was a gigantic rip-off, winning without traditional political, economic and labor support.

Wide World

LABOR

Undocumented workers sue over conditions and pay

SAN MATEO, CALIF.—Northern California nurseryman Donald Garibaldi once prospered from the use of undocumented or "illegal" workers from Mexico. But this fall his Ano Nuevo Flower Ranch here is reaping nothing but problems.

Garibaldi recently fired eight workers after they challenged deductions from their pay checks. The workers went to the San Mateo District Attorney to complain. The DA investigated and discovered that Garibaldi was withholding \$10 a month as a fee for protection from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and \$45 a month rent for cardboard and plastic lean-to's located on his property.

He called in the Health department, which found that five cardboard and plastic lean-to's, an old trailer and a shed housed 40-60 workers, sometimes as many as five men in a 12x8 lean-to.

One worker testified in a sworn affidavit: "I lived on the ranch with two other persons in a shed formerly used to store insecticide cans... The dimensions of the shed were four feet by eight feet, just large enough to accommodate one double mattress on which the three of us slept. The shed had no windows or sanitary facilities. The odor of insecticides permeated it. The roof was full of holes."

There were only two toilets and one shower for up to 60 workers. (Garibaldi recently upgraded the conditions of those toilets, but raised the workers' rent as well.)

The San Mateo DA filed civil charges and a consumer fraud suit against Garibaldi on Oct. 5. The civil charges seek to fine him for past health code offenses and enjoin him from further violations. The consumer fraud complaint alleges that Garibaldi gained unfair advantage over his competition by deducting the rent and protection fees directly from the workers' paychecks.

Since the DA's actions would not return any lost wages to the workers, San Mateo County Legal Aid filed suit Oct. 11 on behalf of eight Año Nuevo work-

ers seeking back pay and the difference between what they earned from Garibaldi and the federal minimum wage.

Susan Jackson, a Legal Aid lawyer, described how "the workers received a maximum pay of \$1.78 an hour, 72 cents below minimum wage. In addition they were never paid overtime." Legal Aid computes that Garibaldi owes each of the workers an extra \$1.97 an hour for overtime for up to 20 hours a week.

All of the undocumented workers involved have been granted immunity from deportation until the court proceedings are finished.

The DA could have filed criminal charges against Garibaldi but chose not to, according to Assistant DA Joseph Klagsans, because, "We could not go in as speedily with criminal charges since the scheduling in criminal hearings is pretty much controlled by the defendant. Also to prosecute the matter criminally is a lot harder. You have to prove criminal intent beyond a reasonable doubt. The existence of the dwellings satisfies the burden [in a civil case] and we prove by preponderance."

The first case of its kind in San Mateo history, the action by the Año Nuevo workers has stimulated activity by other undocumented workers. Workers on a nearby ranch threatened to strike and forced the dismissal of a foreman accused of brutality.

Jesus Carbajal, a former Año Nuevo worker, now an Immigration Counselor for the non-profit International Institute, points out that the effects of the Año Nuevo case will spread. An increasing number of undocumented workers, he says, no longer think that deportation is worse than suffering low wages and miserable living conditions. "Año Nuevo will be an example to the workers," he adds. "Sure, they are illegal, but they can still use the system to get the guy that is screwing them."

Todd Darling is a California free-lance writer. This article was done with assistance from The Fund for Investigative Journalism.

WELFARE

Poor people's representatives meet in Detroit

Approximately 225 people came to Detroit from 13 states in the Midwest Oct. 29-31 to share their concern about welfare reform. It was the second in a series of regional conferences sponsored by the Movement for Economic Justice, the Center for Social Welfare Policy and Law, the Committee on Racial Justice of the National Church of Christ, the Food Research and Action Center in Washington and the National Clients Council on Carter's welfare reform proposals (ITT, Nov. 9).

Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich) described welfare issues as a struggle between the powerful and the powerless. While admitting that Washington listens more to the multinational corporations than to the poor, he stressed the need for the poor to make their concerns known to their legislators.

Frances Piven and Richard Cloward argued that the poor are a political force when they take direct action, but the poor lose power, they said, when they believe their civics lessons and rely on the lobbying process.

In small workshops participants discussed the implications of Carter's proposals, particularly the work requirements. Most welfare recipients in attendance felt that proposed public service jobs were likely to be dead-end jobs with no chance of advancement. They were also concerned that they would be forced to take jobs from union members and would not be permitted to join unions themselves. Many argued that public jobs should be created in local neighborhoods, under community control to fill community needs.

Bert de Leeuw, from the Movement for Economic Justice, said he hoped the conference would help to develop a nationwide network of poor people's organizations and that out of this, and the other regional conferences, would come the beginnings of a new poor people's movement.

—Reva Fahrneback and Judith Transue

LAND

Acreage limits under fire

By Ken Coughlin
WASHINGTON—Barely three months old, the Interior department's effort to break up large, federally-irrigated landholdings in the Western states is under heavy attack, much of it orchestrated by those who have the most to lose if proposed regulations become law (ITT, Oct. 12).

In California, agribusiness interests have staged a series of protest demonstrations up and down the water-rich valleys, from Sacramento to San Diego. In Washington, a prominent official of the Agriculture department has been caught lobbying to save his spread in California; the Interior Secretary has suggested the law needs revision; and President Carter has openly sympathized with California's big growers.

The proposed regulations have also come in for heavy criticism at a series of public hearings in western states, where the testimony has been heavily weighted against them and the law that made them necessary.

The regulations propose to limit ownership of farms irrigated by federal water projects to 160 acres per person or 640 per family or business. They are based on the 1902 Reclamation Act by which Congress established federal water projects for western lands, attempting at the same time to prevent their monopolized use by rich growers and absentee corporations.

The measure was never enforced. Last year, however, a federal judge ordered the Interior department to draw up rules of enforcement. Proposed rules were announced in late August by Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus. If they are allowed to stand, big landholders will be compelled to sell off thousands of "excess acres" located in federal water districts.

Officially, those who hold the big acreage are waging their battle through the Westlands Water District and John Brodie, manager-general counsel for the District and one of the highest paid officials (\$80,000 a year) in the state of California.

Brodie and his consortium of large landowners are doing all they can to convince the Bureau of reclamation and the Interior department that the regulations as proposed are unfair to growers.

Unofficially, big money is also at work to ensure that the new rules are never enacted. Rallies are being staged and funds are being collected, giving the appearance of a widespread farmer rebellion against any redistribution in the West.

George Ballis, founder of National Land for People in Fresno, which has spearheaded the movement for redistribution, has already felt the reverberations. "They [the large growers] will raise a million dollars," he says.

In San Diego, 50 huge tractors circled the convention center where the California Republican party was holding its annual meeting.

In the Imperial Valley, where 70 percent of the land is in absentee ownership, one rally attracted 10,000 people. One observer noted, "There aren't that many farmers in the entire Imperial Valley; they're shipping them in from San Diego."

Back in Washington, other pressures have been brought to bear. Assistant Agriculture Secretary Robert Meyer, owner of more than 1,500 acres in the Imperial Valley, discussed his opposition to the 160-acre decision with top administration officials and members of Congress, and even arranged a meeting between fellow Imperial Valley landholders and Gay Martin, assistant secretary of the Interior, the man charged with preparing the new regulations.

Although Meyer was ordered by President Carter to desist from his lobbying activities, opponents of the regulations may have found their most effective representative in the President himself. In an interview with a group of farm editors Carter said, "I think other people can be adequate spokesmen [against the regulations],

including myself, and I think the Secretary needs to know that."

"Seventy-five years ago," he went on, "320 acres for a husband and wife for irrigated land was all they could handle. Now, with massive development and large machinery, a larger acreage is necessary for an economically viable farm operation."

Supporters of the proposed regulations, however, challenge the President's view. "National Land for People has members who are making a living on a lot less than 160 acres," says Ballis. "One of our members who raises 90 acres of cotton cleared \$30,000 last year. I don't think Carter understands irrigated farming."

With the President calling for a change in the law, the Interior department, never happy with the prospect of enforcing the act, sounded relieved. Carter's statements, said Leo Krulitz, Interior solicitor, "are not inconsistent with our view here." If evidence garnered from hearings on the proposed regulations suggest changes in the law, he said, "I don't think we'd hesitate to recommend those changes to Congress."

Later, Interior Secretary Andrus tried to clarify his department's position. He said that although some amendments to the 1902 measure might be needed, "the law doesn't need that much rewriting."

Andrus said he opposed a one-year

moratorium on enforcement, which was suggested to President Carter by several western senators at a recent White House meeting, and expressed support for the general proposition of returning the land to family farmers.

For the present, forces both on Capitol Hill and in the administration seem content to wait until the returns from the hearings are in before lowering the boom on the 1902 law.

Ken Coughlin is assistant editor of Rural America (1346 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, subscription \$10/year) where an earlier version of this article appeared.

Sam Silver



When the Interior department convened public hearings in Sacramento, they were met with a ring of pickets, bused in by the California Farm Bureau, decrying what they saw as government interference in their rights to private ownership.

Californians testify on land regulations

By Sam Silver
SACRAMENTO, CALIF.—Interior department solicitor Leon Krulitz came here Nov. 7 and 8 to preside over a set of public hearings that may help determine the future of agribusiness in California. At stake were proposed regulations from the Interior department that would limit the size and ownership of farms receiving federally subsidized water, issued in accordance with the 1902 Reclamation Act. (See accompanying story.)

California is the state most directly affected by the law and proposed regulations, with up to 1.8 million acres irrigated by federally subsidized water. It is also the site of some of the most flagrant violations of the 1902 law.

When Krulitz called the hearing to order at 9:00 a.m., Monday, Nov. 7, the Sacramento Convention Center was ringed by a legion of pickets organized by the California Farm Bureau and bused to Sacramento in 13 Greyhound buses from Hanford, in the heart of the Westlands Water District.

Not surprisingly, the solicitor discovered that nobody currently owning excess federally irrigated land wanted to give it up for distribution by lottery—as the regulations propose—to those seeking land. The biggest shock, however, was what appeared to be an about face by the State of California.

Richard Rominger, California's Secretary of Food and Agriculture and a member of Gov. Jerry Brown's cabinet, told the hearing, "We do not believe 160 acres is a magic number... The concept

of limiting the farm family to lineal descendants is much too restrictive... The use of a lottery is unnecessary to achieve the goal of promoting family farms."

Krulitz responded to Rominger's statement at a press conference the next day, expressing surprise at the state's position, "given the fact that early in the year the state's proposal for a cooperative agreement set out restrictions on excess land sales in Westlands beyond the proposed regulations in a number of instances."

Krulitz was referring to an agreement between California and the federal government, published in October 1976, regulating sales in the Westlands district, which contained provisions very similar to the proposed federal regulations.

The state's opposition to the federal regulations apparently stems from the fact that the provisions would apply to all federally subsidized irrigation in 17 western states and not just to the Westlands district. The would include the Sacramento Delta region and the Central and Imperial valleys in California—districts less publicly tainted with the aura of conglomerate agribusiness than the Westlands and containing many more voters.

Farmers testifying against the regulations told the solicitor that 640 acres was a more logical limit to land ownership; some even called for the family farm definition to be as high as 1,200 acres.

Angus Wright of the Environmental Studies department of Sacramento College testified in favor of the regulations, saying, "It is a small percentage of producers growing relatively low value crops

under heavy federal water subsidy who will be most significantly affected."

Don Villarejo, speaking for the California Agrarian Action Project, painted a picture of greed taking over California farming: "In 1964 there were 4,000 farmers growing canning tomatoes on an average size farm of 45 acres in the Central Valley. By 1972 there were only 600 farmers and the average size of each farmer's holdings rose to 10 times the former figure."

David Nesmith of National Land for People said, "The rights of private property have nothing to do with reclamation law. No one is required to use subsidized federal water."

Cliff Wilcox, a farmer-environmentalist, however, warned of adverse effects of the law. Dividing a 640-acre farm into four 160-acre sections would mean that 12 acres of farmland would be lost to concrete because it is against the law to land-lock farms, he said.

Frank Bennett added to the confusion by citing differences in crops. "One acre of strawberries will make you \$13,000, the same as 100 acres of barley. With strawberries you need a pair of gloves and a basket; with barley you need tractors and harvestors."

Clearly, Krulitz and Andrus will have no easy job in sifting through the testimony presented at Sacramento, and it remains to be seen if the rules as they will be published next March (at the earliest) will actually change the character of western agribusiness.

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