

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CITIZENS ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE**

ROOM 139, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION/500 WEST TEMPLE/LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012/625-3611, Ext. 64605

M I N U T E S

FULL COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, April 15, 1970
TIME: 7 p.m.
PLACE: Board of Supervisors Hearing Room

Robert Mitchell,
Chairman

Raymond Arbuthnot
Dr. John C. Bollens
Davis Brabant
John D. Byork
Maurice Rene Chez
Roc Cutri
Dr. Warren S. Jones
Mrs. Ray Kidd
Harlan G. Loud
P. S. Magruder
Kiyoshi Maruyama
Irvin Mazzei
L. E. McKee
Ferdinand Mendenhall
Louis Rogers
George Shellenberger
Mrs. Benjamin Erick Smith
William Torrence
Gus A. Walker
Burke Roche,
Executive Secretary

Members Present:

Robert Mitchell, Chairman
Ray Arbuthnot
Davis Brabant
John Byork
Maurice Rene Chez
Dr. Warren Jones
Irvin Mazzei
Louis Rogers
George Shellenberger
William Torrence
Gus Walker

Members Absent:

Joseph Bishop
Dr. John C. Bollens
Roc Cutri
Mrs. Ray Kidd
Harlan Loud
P. S. Magruder
Kiyoshi Maruyama
Ferdinand Mendenhall
Mrs. Benjamin Erick Smith

GUEST SPEAKERS: Speakers Representing Mexican-American Community Organizations

Mr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. He introduced himself as Chairman of the Economy and Efficiency Committee and said he would like to make a brief statement before introducing the first speaker. He described the committee's manner of operation and explained that the committee consists of 21 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The members serve without compensation of any kind. He said since its establishment in 1964, the committee has submitted recommendations to the Board of Supervisors resulting in a number of major changes in the government structure.

In July, 1969, the Board of Supervisors requested the committee to conduct a study of the County charter. In complying with the Board's request, the committee concluded that it should confine its study to key issues, including the appropriate size of the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Mitchell explained that the purpose of this meeting was to hear speakers representing organizations in the Mexican-American community present their views on these charter issues.

Mr. Mitchell emphasized that the speakers were designated by the Mexican-American community organizations, not by the committee. Mr. Roche and he had met with Mr. Miguel Garcia and Mr. Bert Corona to establish the procedures for the meeting. At the request of Mr. Garcia and Mr. Corona the meeting was scheduled for the evening in order to get better representation from the community.

Mr. Mitchell then introduced Mr. Esteban Torres, President of the Congress of Mexican-American Unity, who it had been agreed would introduce the other speakers.

Mr. Torres said he would like to make a brief statement before introducing the speakers. He said that the speakers represented a broad cross section of the Mexican-American community. They had come to speak on behalf of equal representation of all citizens of Los Angeles County. They had come also to speak on behalf of efficient administration of County government. He said that 15% of the County's population is Mexican-American, a total of one million Mexican-Americans living in the County. Each of the Supervisors, who represent about 25% of the population, is an Anglo. Because they were not raised as "a Chicano" they do not understand the basic needs and basic aspirations of the Mexican-American community.

Mr. Torres said the present boundaries of the supervisorial districts have been drawn in such a way that the Chicano vote is overwhelmed by the Anglo vote. If the Board were increased by two additional members, each supervisor would represent a smaller constituency which would allow him more time in solving the problems of his district. The addition of two supervisors would not cost more than \$100,000.

Mr. Torres said they were launching a campaign that night to provide better representation for all citizens of Los Angeles, a campaign for more efficient administration of the County's government, and a campaign to give Chicanos in Los Angeles representation on the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Torres then introduced the first speaker Mr. Eduardo Aguirre, Chairman of the League of United Citizens to Help Addicts. Mr. Aguirre said that there were no Mexican-Americans on any policy-making or decision-making level in the County. In all the commissions and committees in the County there are no Mexican-Americans. There are no Mexican-Americans on the Board of Directors of the two health clinics in East Los Angeles. Mr. Aguirre criticized the organization of the new drug abuse center in East Los Angeles. The community did not participate in its establishment and operation.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Aguirre said that his people mean to lay claim to what is rightfully theirs and to keep on laying claim to it. They want to avoid war and bloodshed. They are therefore asking for cooperation to participate in working out their own problems.

Mr. Torres next introduced Mr. Richard Calderon, currently a candidate for the 29th Congressional District. Mr. Calderon said the speakers were there for a very simple reason. That is to have some say in the formulation of their destiny. He said the County situation is not unique. The Mexican-Americans have the same problem throughout the State. Out of 80 State Assemblymen, there is only one Mexican-American. Among the 15 City Councilmen, there is no Mexican-American. Among the five members of the Board of Supervisors there is none. The result is that when the Mexican-Americans are concerned about issues, they have to go to the offices of other people - people who are not familiar with their problems - and try to educate them and influence them to work in their direction.

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 15, 1970

Page 3

The Mexican-American community has no representative, not because it is not unified - the community is unified - but because the community has been gerrymandered and emasculated politically. Mr. Calderon said that he and the other speakers were the moderates in the community who were still interested in using the electoral process to improve conditions in the community and resolve the problems affecting it. He said the community wants meaningful change, and he was confident the committee would recommend the necessary change.

The next speaker was Abe Tapia, President of the Mexican-American Political Association and also a candidate for the Assembly in the 45th Assembly District. Mr. Tapia said that they should not need to beg for something that rightfully belongs to the people. All they were seeking was equal justice. He said he hoped the committee would have the courage and conviction to be radical enough to say, "Look it is long overdue."

He said that all they were seeking was a chance to work coequally with everyone else. They were simply trying to get a part of the action. The final solution, he concluded, if there is to be peace and tranquility, is for all people to work together.

Mr. Torres next introduced Judge Leopoldo Sanchez, Judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles. Judge Sanchez said that he wanted to explain why he felt that even with the committee's responsibility for cutting costs and increasing efficiency, it should still recommend an increase in the Board of Supervisors.

He said he would like to start out by asking why there should be a Mexican-American on the Board of Supervisors. Can't the present Board represent everyone? He said the present Board has not been effective in attacking the problems in the Mexican-American community, problems of employment, crowded schools, low income and poor housing. If the Board can do a good job with respect to the problems that are peculiar to the Mexican-American, then why hasn't it?

Judge Sanchez said in conclusion that he thinks a Mexican-American would be better able to solve some of these problems that are causing unemployment, school dropouts, problems which cause people to go on County aid. This will improve the efficiency of County government, and in the long run will cut costs.

Mr. Torres then read a telegram from Congressman Edward Roybal, which the Congress of Mexican-American Unity had received that morning. Mr. Roybal explained that he could not attend the meeting because his vote was needed on the Family Assistance Act of 1970. The telegram was accompanied by a statement supporting the campaign of the Congress of Mexican-American Unity. The statement was included as part of the record of the meeting and is attached at the end of these minutes.

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 15, 1970

Page 4

Mr. Torres then introduced Miss Irene Tovar, representative of the Latin-American Civic Association. Miss Tovar said that the Mexican-American community has been receiving inefficient services from the County. The reason is that there hasn't been adequate employment in various County agencies of Mexican-Americans who are sensitive to the needs of the people. As a result programs are initiated that are alien and sometimes insulting to the community. The community then rejects those services, and this finally results in a waste of money.

Miss Tovar pointed out that Chicanos are also taxpayers. She demanded that the voices of the Mexican-Americans be heard, and that their money be put to service their community better. Mexican-Americans are now the victims of taxation without representation. She said that if the committee really wants to keep the idea that democracy still has a flicker of light in the Chicano community, it should begin by requesting a Mexican-American member on the committee to provide constant input. The committee should also strongly recommend that there be two added seats on the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Torres next introduced Mr. Manuel Sanchez, member of the Chicano Law Students Association. Mr. Sanchez said that he felt the real issue before the committee was whether or not the notion of democracy and political representation in the power structure transgresses ethnic considerations. As a corollary to that issue he referred to de Tocqueville and his concept of the tyranny of the majority. He said he would like the committee to wrestle with those two concepts when it determines what it should recommend to the Board of Supervisors.

Section 25001 in the California Code, which deals with the drawing of boundary lines in county districts, addresses itself to four considerations that should be evaluated by individuals who are going to draw these lines. These four considerations are geography, topography, population, and community of interest. It is a question whether the community of interest concept has been taken into account in this county or any other county in California. The specialized community of interest in the Chicano community has not been recognized. Ethnic groups have not been perceived as a community of interest. Mr. Sanchez said he perceives it that way, and Chicanos perceive it that way. That is why they were here tonight.

Because the County's efforts to solve the problems facing the Chicano community have not been sufficient, the Federal government has had to step in with Federal programs and Federal money. The remedy still isn't sufficient. It hasn't been sufficient and it won't be sufficient until the officials in a local given area are able to discuss what those problems are and establish their own remedies. That is the role of County government. But the Board of Supervisors has been inadequate in performing this role. The Chicano community in the future must have adequate representation in the power structure to establish the kinds of programs and the kinds of things that are needed in the community.

The next speaker was Mr. Richard Martinez, Chairman of the Mexican-American Students on the Campuses known as MECHA CENTRALE. Mr. Martinez said that he, like other Chicano students, was skeptical that anything would be done. He said he is skeptical because he feels that the committee is not really listening to the speakers. But, he said, the committee has a chance to right a wrong. You are not giving us a chance, he concluded. We are giving you a chance.

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 15, 1970

Page 5

Mr. Torres introduced Mr. Carlos Cruz representing Catolicos por la Raza. Mr. Cruz said that the revolutionaries are not the students and poor people, they are those who refuse to make just changes for the betterment of all society. He said that in his opinion the committee was not going to do a thing about the request made to it, unless it is much different from the holy church or the Board of Education and other government agencies which the Mexican-American people are fighting with constantly.

He said that what his group is doing is educating the Mexican-American people that they do not have a County government that respects them, they do not have a church, and they do not have educational systems. In all sincerity there is a threat in the air. The threat is to practice what democracy preaches. This is that "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

The next speaker was Mr. Manuel Aragon, past Executive Director of EYOA. Mr. Aragon said that the recommendation to add two more supervisors reminded him of the man who thought he could not afford fire insurance until it was too late. There is a crisis in local government, not just in Los Angeles but all across the country. The Federal government recognizes this, and that is why it insists on citizen participation in all its programs involving the war on poverty and model cities. By doing this, it has said, "Look, local government isn't working any more. It isn't representing anybody. So that in order to make sure the people we are serving are represented, we're going to demand that citizens participate in these programs."

The committee on economic development has said the same thing. It has said that city and county government are no longer responsive to the people. In comparison with other agencies, County government is not representative. For every 500,000 people in California, there is at least one state senator. There is one assemblyman for every 250,000 people. In Los Angeles there is a city councilman for every 200,000 people. There is one supervisor for every 1,500,000 people in Los Angeles County. To increase the Board by two would still not make it nearly as representative even as the State Senate.

It is doubtful that the committee realizes how strongly the emotions in the Mexican-American community have built up just in the last few months. The people who are testifying before the committee tonight are trying to work through the system, but they are often called traitors in their own community and are told if they don't get out of the way pretty soon, the militants will get them out of the way to get to the Establishment. The committee could establish something here in Los Angeles that would help teach other people across the country how to reform local government to make it responsible to the citizens it is supposed to represent. The time to act is now, Mr. Aragon concluded, and we expect the committee to do so.

The last speaker was Mr. Bert Corona, past president of the Mexican-American Political Association. Mr. Corona recalled the "Zoot Suit Riots" 29 years ago and the presentation he made to the Board of Supervisors about how the riots could be ended. The Board appointed a committee known as the Los Angeles Board

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 15, 1970

Page 6

of Supervisors Committee Against Discrimination which eventually became the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission.

Basic problems, however, are still not solved. The Mexican-American community does not have representation on the County Board of Supervisors not because its people are not capable, not because they don't want it, but because there has been a purposeful deliberate gerrymandering to exclude them. What the speakers this evening have been trying to say is that efficiency in government must always be based on well-rooted representation.

Efficiency in government must be based on solid representation which takes into account the natural grouping of people. The Chicanos can only be represented by someone who is rooted in their group, someone who lives in that community and who understands it linguistically, culturally, socially, and who is part of the heritage. There is no other substitute for this kind of representation. Mr. Corona said that what the speakers were really talking about is the political health and stability of Los Angeles County.

Concluding the program, Mr. Torres thanked the committee for taking the time to listen to the spokesmen from the Mexican-American community. He pointed out that it is evident they represented a broad cross section of the community in the County of Los Angeles. They all represent organizations that are a part of the Congress of Mexican-American Unity, now numbering some 305 organizations. He again urged that the committee very seriously consider the comments which they had heard which reflect the anxiety, restlessness and frustration of the community.

Mr. Mitchell thanked Mr. Torres. He said that the comments had all been recorded and will be considered by the committee in making its recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.