

# White Panther Party Defends Welfare Recipient's Rights in Marin

The White Panther Party, despite our deep belief that we should survive by our own enterprises, realizes that a lot of poor people are having a hard time surviving in Marin, and should be entitled to welfare, especially considering the county budget, which runs into tens of millions of dollars annually.

Why should the poor people of the county not seek welfare, when no jobs are being created? Why should they be forced to move out of the county, only to leave room for more expensive housing to be built? It is obvious that the county government is going to make it as hard as possible for the poor and lower middle class to survive there.

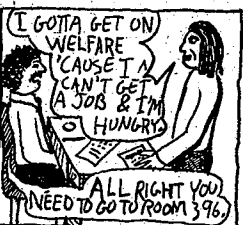
In order to stop the county from cheating desperate people, we instituted a Welfare Rights Program. Previously people who sought welfare were treated like expendable peons, and while some were granted the minimal pittance, others were brushed off with lies that the county just didn't have the money. After a certain period of time they were told to either take the menial, below minimum wage jobs the county offered, or starve. Information was demanded, such as who you lived with, who the father of your unborn child was, and other irrelevant questions, most of which are illegal to begin with.

Our workers arrive at the county welfare offices at 8:00 AM every morning, Monday thru Friday, and spend the day talking to each person who comes in, offering their services if the person has a question about a certain regulation, or what to put on their application form. Because people are so often intimidated by the county's workers, we also offer to attend the interview with them, and demand that the person be helped according to the welfare code. This strategy has been amazingly successful. Quite often a person will come in who is destitute and will ask for temporary aid until they are able to lo-

cate some work. Even if they are granted aid they are refused immediate cash, and are told they will just have to wait for their check, even if it's for several days. When these people complain to us, we confront their worker and remind them about the petty cash fund that is supposed to be used to provide cash on the spot. In one case we had to go all the way to the administrative chief to obtain petty cash for a homeless man on crutches (who was later sent by his worker to spend the night at a crash pad in SF that doesn't exist).

After a person has been on general assistance for a month, he or she has to appeal their case before the county Board of Supervisors, and to prove to them why they should continue to receive aid. While the social worker, or legal representative (and the recipient) plead the case, these pompous baboons take it very lightly, preferring to sit back in their regal chairs, reading the scab Independent Journal newspaper, savoring a big cigar, and insisting that the person before them is simply too lazy to get a job. Even people with obvious medical problems, if they're granted a two-week extension, have to spend that time running around collecting letters from doctors, and spending hundreds of hours sitting in the welfare office waiting to see their workers about their case, in order to re-appeal it before the board.

Many people were harassed when they protested giving information concerning who they live with. They were told that nothing could be done for them because that information was required under the regulations. In one case, the eligibility worker tried to close the interview on that basis. Her supervisor was summoned, and she conceded that there was no law stating that an applicant had to give out that information. Much of our job is simply investigating what the law really states, and how the de-



partment contrives it under the name of the law. Many times if a person misses an appointment, their aid is cut off. If there is a valid excuse, it's up to the worker how much to harass the recipient. One man missed an appointment to get medical testing, which he had to do in order to be effectively treated. He had telephoned to let his worker know he would not be there. She insisted that he would be cut off, until one of our workers went to see the head of the department, who agreed that it would not be necessary to appeal the denial, and consequently he was reinstated.

Often when a person is awaiting another form of assistance, such as Unemployment Benefits, Social Security or Aid to the Totally Disabled, they apply for General Assistance, to survive on until they start getting their other payments. One man was expecting to get unemployment checks in two months, and applied for general assistance until then. His worker told him that he would have to sell his musical instruments and report for role call every morning at 8:00 AM in order to be eligible for GA. We convinced her that these stipulations were ridiculous because, 1) he was blind, therefore unemployable, and 2) he was a musician and needed his instruments to get any work that he could do.

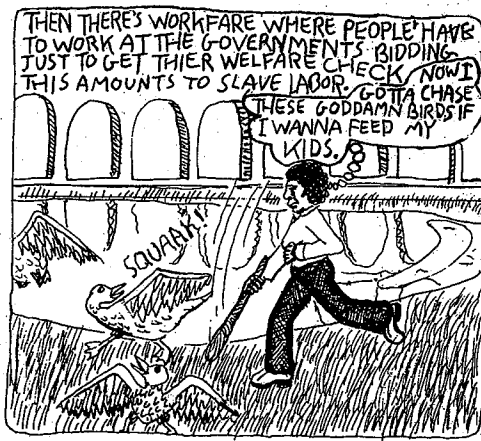
One of the most prevalent situations involves single mothers with children who can't work and can't afford child care. The welfare department likes to take special steps to discourage them. They're often harassed with unannounced home visits by social workers, threatened with impri-

sonment in a mental institution and loss of their children on the grounds that they're incompetent mothers. One woman, a victim of terminal cancer, tried for two weeks to get an Aid to Families With Dependent Children grant, but was consistently denied it because she didn't have birth certificates for her children. Her worker finally waived the need for birth certificates, but not before the poor woman was reduced to calling Suicide Prevention for help (the telephone number is clearly posted in both county welfare offices).

Although they claim to help as many people as possible, it's obvious that the county of Marin is just as determined to harass and intimidate poor people as they are determined to deny us tax money that is rightfully ours.

With the institution of the White Panther Party Welfare Rights program, the fascist Marin county administrators started to squirm since they realized that they weren't going to be able to control the people in the way they've been accustomed to. The bombing of the HEW offices in SF by the Women's Brigade of the Weather Underground is another example of desperate people dealing with a fascist institution that theoretically is 'helping' the poor.

Until the county rulers start making it possible for people in Marin to set up their own enterprises with tax money, we will continue to demand welfare rights for every ill, elderly or unemployed person in the county through this program.



Touch

# COMMUNITY CONTROL OF POLICE

## WPP 4 Point Program



### WITNESS ALL POLICE INCIDENTS

When citizens are stopped by police, there is a tendency for passers-by to shrug their shoulders and be glad it's not them being stopped. This attitude leaves citizens at the mercy of police, and sometimes this leads to abuses. If you encounter a police incident, you have a right and a responsibility to see to it that the citizen involved has community support, if needed. All it takes is for you to approach slowly, and ask the citizen if a witness is needed. The police have no right to prevent you from doing this. You are not obstructing justice. If they try to intimidate or discourage you, which unfortunately they often will, tell them clearly what you are doing, and if they persist, take their badge numbers.

If the citizen says he doesn't need a witness, leave. If you're not serving a purpose, don't hang around just for the entertainment.

If he says he does, ask his name, his phone or address, and who he wants contacted if he's arrested. Find out why he is being detained. Your presence is likely to discourage illegal acts by police, but if such acts occur, be sure to remember the exact details. Don't give legal advice, least of all to the police. It's up to the citizen involved to decide how to handle the situation. You are only there to verify subsequent complaints. Try to speak as little as possible. Don't hassle, antagonize, or abuse the police officers. It isn't a game.

After the incident, if there is any apparent abuse, call the complaint number. Get names of other witnesses, and addresses. Arrange to get witness' statements as soon as possible.

### 2 FORM COMMUNITY DEFENCE GROUPS

When a citizen is arrested, it is difficult for her or him to organize legal support, bail contacts, community support, etc. from a cell. Even after being bailed out, following through on complaints is an exhausting job for one per-

son, and this is the reason that most people let things drop, instead of pursuing attempts for redress of grievances.



The solution to this problem is to organize support beforehand so that it is available when it is needed. Every citizen should be able to call a friend from jail and be sure that this friend will be able to take care of the business necessary to activate justice. A defense group would include one or two lawyers, someone familiar with the local media, a doctor or a community health worker, a bailbondsmen, or someone familiar with the system for obtaining bail on short notice; and a few good typists, speakers, diplomats, etc.

When these groups are functioning, it will be much more unlikely that police will risk breaking the law to hurt someone they don't happen to like. Obviously, there are minorities who need these groups more than others - Blacks, youth, ex-cons, Communists, etc. But this defense against police crime is crucial to the entire community, consequently less oppressed people will also help these groups. In fact, this is one of the areas where cooperation between different elements of the community can best be manifested.

### 3 ARM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SECOND AMENDMENT OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The revolutionaries who framed the Constitution were not so naive as to think that the freedom of a people could be safeguarded by

words on paper alone. Consequently, they took steps to insure that the state could never disarm the people and leave them helpless in the face of armed tyranny. What freedom there has been in America since that time has depended on the ability of Americans to defend their rights.

Today, the threat of state and right-wing terror remains great. Former Attorney General Mitchell warned 'This country has a history of vigilante action.' As the pressure for social change increases, the temptation to violent, illegal means of repression also increases.

Police in Marin County are relatively disciplined and law-abiding at this time. But what guarantee is there that one group or another of psychopaths won't get it into their heads to give Nixon, et al, a little extra-legal help? We advocate protecting ourselves against this sort of thing.

Possessing and training with firearms is no more dangerous than doing the same with automobiles. The important thing is not to take guns away from people but to educate people to know when and how to use them if and when a real need arises. It is much safer to have a weapon and never have to use it than to need one and not have it.

tion. We haven't forgotten Fred Hampton and Kent State.

But our opposition to illegal police tactics doesn't mean that we believe in obstructing police when they are carrying out legitimate services. On the contrary, we think that the members of a community should actively cooperate in the enforcement of just laws. To think that the police alone can stop wanton murderers, rapists, and heroin pushers is as foolish as thinking that the police are not necessary at all.

As police departments become more responsive to the needs of the community, rather than special interest groups or profiteers, their alienation from the community - especially from the youth and minorities - will also decrease, and combined community efforts will be more successful at stopping crime. We don't think it follows from the fact that someone is employed as a police officer that she or he is a mindless robot ready to follow any orders whatsoever. So we don't treat police as though they are mindless.



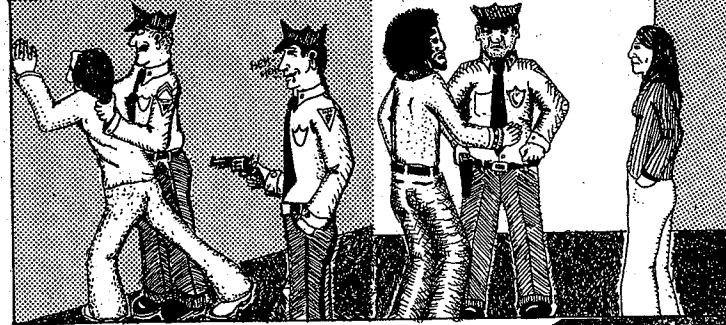
### Standing Order from the Chief of the Berkeley Police to all the men on his force

Subject: Arrest Procedure

All officers are reminded that when an arrest is being made passers-by, onlookers, or potential witnesses have an inherent right to observe the arrest process and to communicate with the arrestee to the extent that such communication in no way interferes with the arrest process. Under ordinary arrest situations these witnesses should be able to hear any conversation between the officer and the prisoner.

Officers are expected to use good judgment in arrest situations and restrict the practice of demanding that onlookers leave the area only in those instances where the 'onlookers' definitely pose a threat to the safety of the officer, prisoner, or the witness.

### A BUST WITHOUT A WITNESS... : A BUST WITH A WITNESS.



### 4 SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL POLICE

The four-point program is designed to guard the community against police terror. It is formulated in response to the increasing tendency of dominant politicians to rely on physical force to political opposi-

