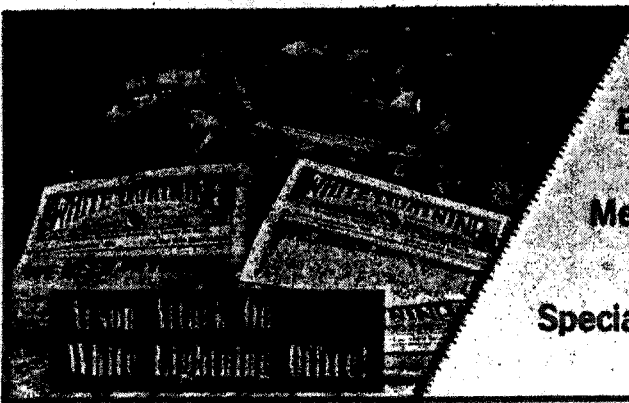


WHITE LIGHTNING

A Revolutionary Organization Dedicated To Serving The People
No. 30 March 1975 109 East 184th Street 584-5984



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P.O. Box 149
Jerome Avenue Station
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Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
Paid
Bronx, N.Y.
Permit # 1048

"Our racism is used to keep us all down. We are encouraged to believe that we have great advantages to defend and that we must defend ourselves against poor blacks who are out to take these advantages away from us."

People have raised some serious questions about the article on busing in our last issue. We welcome the criticism. We know that we can't grow unless we discuss differences and misunderstandings openly, and unless people help us to form our ideas and improve our work. None of us can shape our lives according to our real needs unless we trust each other enough to do it together.

Your response encourages us to continue presenting our views and trying to relate to the criticisms that came out of your real experience. A people's newspaper needs the full participation of all the people.

"All Power to the People" means "All Power from the People!"

Does White Lightning Fully Support The Right Of The Black Parents To Bus Their Children?

Yes, we do. Many black people feel that the only way their children can get a decent education is by attending white schools. If this is their decision we defend their right to act on it.

Black people have given support to busing because they have noted that predominantly white schools usually have at least slightly better facilities, better teachers, and send more students on to college. Many black people have given their support to busing after fighting long and hard--although unsuccessfully--for better schools in their own neighborhoods. They've organized to improve their own schools, only to be frustrated by predominantly white school boards which cared little about what happened in the black community. These struggles led many black people to see busing as the only hope for better schools.

Who Backs Busing?

Many of those who push busing, however, are not representative of the black or the white communities involved. This is true of white liberals who represent business interests and live in the suburbs. They themselves never have to face the busing issue. They push busing as something for poor blacks and poor whites to do, not as something that will involve their own elite suburban schools. They push busing because it serves to keep poor whites and blacks fighting each other while doing nothing to give them real control over their education.

Another prime mover behind busing has been the NAACP. This organization primarily represents black liberal opinion, and has always argued for integration as the solution to black people's problems in the U.S.. Busing is usually defended by the NAACP on the grounds that it will lead to higher reading scores, more college admissions, and better jobs. Insofar as the white community is better organized and politically more active, it may be true that white schools get a better shake and white students stand a better chance. But then the question is whether integration or the development of their own political power is the road to better schooling for blacks.

In New York, for example, many blacks and other third world people have seen busing as a sham solution and instead have devoted their energies to winning community control of schools. Where community control has been successful, it has led to better schools, more third world teachers being employed, and a genuine sense of community involvement in the schools. This is precisely why it is under attack in NYC right now.

We do not see school integration as any kind of real solution to the education problem. But we fully support the right of third world communities to decide for themselves what is in the best interest of their children.

Does White Lightning See Any Difference Between Poor White And Poor Black Neighborhoods?

Yes, we do. Unemployment is twice as high among blacks as among whites. Black life expectancy is much lower, while infant mortality is much higher. And it was no accident that combat deaths among blacks in Vietnam were double those of whites. The ratio of blacks to whites in prison tells the same story, a story that extends into all areas of life. As we demonstrated in our last issue, bad as the schools in South Boston are, the schools in black Roxbury are worse. This holds true across the board: sanitation, transportation, police, and health services.

Service For The Poor

Public sanitation, which is lousy in any poor neighborhood, practically doesn't exist in black areas. The trash is allowed to collect in streets, alleys, and hallways, breeding rats, roaches and disease. Conditions become so desperate right here in NY a few years ago that residents were forced to bathe in the streets to not

As any New Yorker knows, mass transit stinks everywhere. However, the worst equipment, the oldest vehicles, the most irregular schedules and routes are always reserved for the poorest neighborhoods, which of course turn out to be black. On top of that, poor whites at least have the option of taking a cab (which they can't really afford) in emergencies. Black people in many cases don't have this choice because cabbies often avoid the ghetto and pass up black people on the street.

Cops are brutal and arrogant in all poor neighborhoods. In fact, a few years ago, whites in South Boston rioted after a white youth was beaten to death in a paddy wagon. But in black communities like Watts, Detroit, Newark, Harlem, and Washington, where police are an occupying army, the riots were much more extensive and were put down with murderous brutality almost never experienced in white communities.

Public health services in poor black areas are a disaster. People coming in for emergency treatment are treated as if there were no emergency, as if it made no difference whether they lived or died. Equipment is outmoded, hospitals and clinics are understaffed, preventive medicine is ignored, medical histories are not taken, doctors are brutal and indifferent. The atmosphere is more like a slaughterhouse than a hospital.

The Condition Of Poor Neighborhoods

What about the communities themselves? Blacks are trapped in their own neighborhoods, not only by poverty, but even more by the hostility and fears of whites who don't want "them" moving in. Landlords and merchants exploit this condition by maximizing rents and minimizing services. It is these landlords and merchants and their greed for profits who fuel the racial fears of poor whites in order to create divisions and to blockbust. Once they create the desperate trap which is the black ghetto, landlords turn apartment houses into rooming houses, double rents and neglect repairs. Since most ghetto landlords are absentee landlords who hide behind a maze of agencies, brokers, dummy corporations, and legal technicalities, tenants find it almost impossible to confront them, much less correct substandard living conditions.

Merchants play the same game. Supermarket chains often remove stale produce and spoiled meat from wealthy neighborhoods, and place them in ghetto outlets at even higher prices. Inflated prices are charged for poor imitations of "high fashion" clothing and current model appliances. Like doctors and landlords, merchants are suspicious and arrogant when dealing with ghetto customers. Hard working blacks are treated like thieves and deadbeats by the very people who are exploiting them. The ghetto is hell for those who live in it, and a goldmine for those who own it.

White working class communities often reflect a higher degree of political and economic power. Whites belong to established churches, political clubs, unions, social and ethnic groups which have some clout when dealing with those in control. This power, no matter how small, prevents landlords, merchants and municipal services from exploiting the white community to the degree that they exploit the ghetto.

On the job, union membership and contracts with seniority clauses mean that whites are the first hired and the last fired. With very few exceptions, blacks have no such protection. In the current economic crisis, this can be a life-or-death difference.

Racism And The "Big Lie"

The basic facts are clear. Blacks are even more oppressed than poor whites: on the job, in the community, in the courts, in the army, in every aspect of their lives. This does not mean that working class whites profit from the misery of black people, even though we are taught to believe it by those who really do profit from racism. It does mean, however, that our racism is used to keep us all down and divided. Poor whites are tricked into believing that we have advantages to defend, and that we must defend ourselves against poor blacks who are out to take them away from us. This trickery which bombards us from all sides--schools, media, churches, labor organizations, politicians, local gossip inflamed by landlords--all serves as the basis for much of our racism. The very organizations that add a drop of stability and well-being to our communities end up crippling us by cutting us off from those who share our oppression and who we need to overcome our common slavery.

It is no secret that many poor whites hate and fear poor blacks. It is no secret that by this time, after years of suffering that hostility, many blacks have come to hate and fear poor whites. Whites have been brainwashed into believing that they have to protect what little they have from the "assaults" of blacks. Blacks have been led to believe that it is poor whites who stand between them and a decent life. This is the "Big Lie" which serves to weaken and enslave all working people in America. How can we overcome it? This is the basic question that we in White Lightning have been asked. This is the question that we will try to deal