

NCUUA

National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty

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REPORT ON NCUUA'S PARTICIPATION AT THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ISSUES
CONVENTION, LOUISVILLE, KY, Nov. 21-23:

NCUUA was invited to participate in the first National Democratic Issues Convention held in Louisville, Ky, Nov. 21-23. The Convention was sponsored by the Democratic Forum and was meant to bring into discussion with Democratic party activists some of the issues that should be dealt with at the Democratic Convention in 1976.

NCUUA was represented by Irma Zigas, Barry Lynn of the UCF, Louise Ransom, AFA, Steve Grossman, Amex-Canada, and Henry Schwarzschild, ACLU. Seven of the ten potential Presidential candidates were there and large delegations from labor unions, farmer's groups, women's groups, the Congressional Black Caucus, the New Democratic Coalition and local democratic party activists were present. 2000 folks attended.

The Convention was set up into forums covering 2 days. The first day's program dealt with Energy and Growth, Economic Growth and Economic Justice, Law-Order and Justice; Our Role in the World-New Economic and Political Relationships. The second day included Post Vietnam Foreign Policy and Future Democratic Issue Activity.

Groups were invited to set up booths and distribute literature. Present in addition to NCUUA were such groups as the BI Bomber Campaign, CALC, Friends Comm. on National Legislation, People's Bicentennial Commission, Comm. for a Dem. Foreign Policy, Nun's Network, National Women's Political Caucus and pro and anti abortion groups.

The Convention was not set up to allow issue oriented groups access to the podium; the only way one could question the panelists and the candidates was to ask questions from the floor and that was strictly controlled. Consequently a great deal of lobbying and maneuvering took place.

The five Amnesty Representatives did a good job. NCUUA's booth was the largest and most colorful; in addition we coordinated our efforts so that someone was at the microphones at all forums; we also managed to get to a few panelists and wrote questions for them to ask; in addition we were able to write questions for other groups to ask, and we were able to interview all the candidates.

Wherever and whenever the issue of amnesty was brought up it received a favorable response and applause. Gov. Shepp, Sen. Bayh and Rep. M. Udall all publicly committed themselves to unconditional amnesty.

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was obvious that they would not have volunteered the information unless they were asked. In fact, Rep. Udall told Steve Grossman at a press interview, that amnesty is not a vote getter and he would not bring it up unless asked.

Senator Hart's press aide said that it was quite obvious that amnesty was a popular issue at the convention but that we should bear in mind that the folks present in Louisville were not all the democrats in the country and certainly could not be construed as representing such.

In addition to our lobbying we made contact with members of the Congressional Black Caucus. They were upset that the issue of unemployment and jobs for all was not a major focus at the convention. They held their own meeting at which NCUUA's representatives were invited and our support was requested in a press conference held the next day. We spoke about the plight of the less than honorably discharged veterans, and the need to be aware that black vets with bad discharges are the second highest group of unemployed people in the country.

We made contact with people from Alaska, Texas, Arkansas, Idaho and found that most people were interested and supportive but lacked information. Amax-Canada prepared a one sheet leaflet which we reproduced and 2,000 people were leafletted. Over 250 people signed petitions and in addition many people took petitions with them back to their home states. We met new families of resisters, and were interviewed by both national and local media. We were helped enormously by the People for Amnesty in Louisville, specifically Jean and George Edwards who chauffeured, housed, tended the amnesty booth and without whom we would have been totally inadequate.

We also were able to bring Friendshipment materials with us and were able to make people aware of the fact that it was all well and good to talk post Vietnam, but that recognition, reconstruction and amnesty-Vietnam was still an issue that had to be dealt with by the people in the U.S. and the Government.

Whatever the evaluations that should and could be drawn from our experience in Louisville, it was quite clear that we had made an impact and that we had to pursue the issue in the upcoming election year.

Three of the candidates (Shapp, Udall and Bayh) declared themselves for unconditional amnesty. Harris has already taken a pro position. In addition we made contact with aides of the other candidates. Jackson is opposed, Carter is for pardon, his reasoning is convoluted and still escapes us. It is recommended that a concerted effort be made to follow the candidates on the primary route and try to have people present constantly bringing up the issue. The first primary state is Iowa in January 1976, then in short order Florida, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. We are requesting campaign schedules from all the candidates and will then map out a strategy to have our regional and local contacts present in the primary states.