

December 1979

American Continental Council
Chicago Nexus**WITNESS THE LOCAL**

It is good to be here in Chicago and good to have met so many of you. I have told many of you some wild stories that were true, some exciting tales and it just reminded me of when the ICA first came to Gibson. We have come a long way. You know something great happened. I know all of you have heard about the great Labor Day Parade and Fun Day and I had to tell that story over and over for a while. But now I can just be at ease because there are great events happening all around me and I can talk about one and know I'll have another one tomorrow. And that's great.

The people here at Council asked me what would be a key event of the last six months. Now we've had many events in Gibson in the last six months, believe me, but the greatest and the most recent is the seventeen people that we have here at this Council from Gibson - that's the latest and the greatest. Now I thought it was great that we had nine people at the Human Development Training School - and it was and two of them belong to me. I recruited them from Wilmington when I was down there working with them on their Town Meeting. There are just so many great and wonderful things happening.

Sometimes I'm a little bit prone to tell you just the rosy things, but that's not the way it is "On the Way." I love those Way Conversations; I'm learning a lot every day. There have been many struggles within this victory, this glorious day when I'm walking on the water, I'm pretty much aware that tomorrow is out there, but I'm not afraid of tomorrow, and it will be just as exciting. But now this event of the seventeen people here started some months ago when a good group of us in Gibson worked like mad on a HUD grant for about three months, not knowing that we didn't have a chance to win that because we had not previously participated. But working together on it was a great experience.

We really did need housing and sewers and that sort of thing in Gibson. The last week the we were working on the great Gibson Labor Day and Family Fun Day - you know how crucial those last days are - well we got wind of another housing proposal and it looked like something we just might win. It is difficult to do things in a big hurry. A lot of the ICA people had been all over the world away from Gibson and everybody in Gibson had a big job to do on our celebration for Labor Day and it left about one member to finish up that housing proposal. One of the requirements for that was to choose a specific area for its use. Well, there are always a few that resist and don't jump on the band wagon; we're aware of that too, like all the rest of you. But the very night of the guild meeting that we had to really get that Labor Day Parade and Family Fun Day mapped out and clear, a few of these negative people got to thinking over this housing thing and they didn't like where this housing area would be and they really got very flustered. And while we were down working out the final details for the Fun Day they pounced on the City Council. And that was a bit of a frightening experience. They had never had an event quite like that and the --mayor got kind of horrified and was ready to do anything to make peace at any sacrifice. When we got out of our guild meeting and got wind of this we followed through and worked on these obstacles to get everybody on board. Everybody wanted to be in on the Labor Day Parade and Family Fun Day but you almost felt that they wanted to get through so we could get on with the other things at hand. I think the storm really did break loose at that Parade.

Since then things have really come alive in many ways. I've been living in Gibson for fourteen years and I never did see more than one person announce that they were going to run for Mayor and nobody knew who was running for city council and other offices. I want you to know that we had thirteen people running; all of them got their pictures in the paper with large write-ups and we really broke all records. We had the most people registered to vote in that election of any place I've ever heard anyone tell of. Eighty-five percent of the people voted - Eighty-five percent. You know I was up here a week during that time, and some of the people had asked me to run for mayor and then I wasn't available. My daughter said some people called here while I was gone and she said "Well, Mama doesn't need to; we've got a good one running." Our new Mayor is here and some of you have met her. But you know I did learn some things; I did run for council. I didn't campaign and I lost. The next time I'll know. I say that's a part of

being "On the Way." It's a learning experience and that's the way you learn, by doing. I never take anything for granted.

We do know that we have a good mayor, we have a good City Council to represent us and many new things are happening, along with a lot of negative things and all of it bursting forth, it seemed, in great power. But there is something about recognizing the contradiction - like some people say, your disadvantages - something that I am learning. I think we would all benefit by it if we could remember that there are advantages in every disadvantage. If we could operate knowing that at the time that it's happening - that's a pretty big order - but, it would make all the difference in the world to everyone in every situation. -

We learned that this new aliveness is one of the greatest things that ever happened to Gibson; never have a lot of those people really cared about Gibson or what happened there. And I would say that the most negative people really got involved in what was going on in Gibson and publicly said that they'd like to be a part of what's going on. And really, most of them now can't really buy out very well, win or lose, because of the great statements they've made. They've committed themselves. Then we've learned that they are a part of the community and that the community is there to embrace everyone and through that contradiction or that difficulty or that disadvantage, whatever you want to call it, there was a great advantage for us, I think one of the breakthroughs is that the community enabled us to find structures to care for our community and to care for all of the community - to see the community as a whole, to be ready and willing to move forward with whatever the present day brings forth.

And like I said before, (I was up here before and I stuck my neck out and said that we had great things coming) you just go ahead; all eyes are already on Gibson, you just keep them there. It's going to be the greatest year that we have ever had. One of the main tasks that I have been given the privilege of is inviting people to come to Gibson and I try to do it well. So I've already invited a lot of you people to come, but if I've missed anybody be sure to come to visit us in Gibson, North Carolina, and I'll be glad to give you a personal tour. Thank you.