Arkansas from pollution by the plan and endorsed ACORN's efforts. The Arkansas press, aided by ACORN, picked up the news item and carried it across the state.

Harvard responded to the pressure by underwriting a $5,000 'fact finding' report by the Investor Responsibility Research Center in D.C.; on the strength of the report, the student- faculty- alumni Advisory Committee for Shareholder Responsibility asked the Harvard Corporation to support ACORN's demands. The Corporation eventually wrote a letter to Middle South urging the installation of the pollution controls.

Back in Arkansas, AP&L made one last try to capture favorable headlines before the start of the upcoming PSC hearing. Chartering a plane, AP&L invited a number of ACORN's farmers, several state officials, and the press on a tour of several other coal burning power plants, in order to convince everyone of the plants' harmlessness. The trip backfired, however; ACORN found out that one of the plants on the itinerary was violating federal pollution standards daily, and that another one had just installed pollution controls. ACORN members distributed leaflets to that effect on the plane, AP&L lost its chance for a public relations coup, prompting one official to state that every time they were in the public eye with ACORN they lose.

By this time ACORN's farmers had intervened in the PSC hearings. With the assistance of an environmental lawyer from Washington and several pollution experts, the farmers managed to convince the Commission to cut the plant's size in half (down $500,000,000); in addition, the Commission reserved the right to order AP&L to install the sulfur dioxide scrubbers at any time during the plant's construction if the Commission were to determine that the controls were feasible. The results were significant in terms of cutting down on the sulfur dioxide; on another level, the campaign succeeded in upping the price of profit in Arkansas; perhaps other corporations will think twice before trying to save money by increasing the environmental costs to the citizens of the state. And on yet another level, the campaign made popular --and politically feasible-- the neo-populist, anti-Middle South Utilities sentiment that so many of Arkansas' young politicians are running on in 1976

PINE BLUFF CONVENTION CENTER

Back in 1971 the voters of Pine Bluff approved a $4 million bond issue for a civic auditorium complex. Three years later, the Mayor announced that the as yet unbuilt facility was now an $8 million convention center-- and that the additional $4 million would come from (and take all of) the next three years worth of federal revenue sharing money

Pine Bluff's ten local ACORN groups, which had been counting on that revenue sharing money for much needed drainage improvements, police and fire protection, sewers, and parks, decided to oppose the Mayor's plan. They demanded and got a public hearing, which was completely dominated by anti-convention center ACORN members. ACORN followed the hearing with an announcement that the organization was going to gather enough petitions to put the question of whether or not to spend more than the original bond issue on the ballot as a referendum. Three days (and 1,000 signatures) after the canvassing began, the Mayor read the writing on the wall and withdrew his plans. The architects were told to redesign the plans in order to keep the project within the original cost limitations.

A post-script; 1975: The Convention Center still hasn't been built, and inflation has already forced the estimate for the newly revised Center up over the $4 million mark again. The City Council quickly passed a 1 per cent meal tax to help pay for the overrun -- and ACORN just as quickly collected enough signatures to put the tax on the ballot as a referendum. This time the Mayor refused to back down. The result: ACORN was victorious at the polls, and the tax was repealed.

Pulaski County Quorum Court

In June of 1974 ACORN elected 195 ACORN members to the Pulaski County (Little Rock) Quorum Court. The Quorum Court -- the unwiedly county legislative body that at last count had 467 seats -- had long been dominated by the powerful County Judge (the county's chief executive officer). The Judge and ACORN had never gotten along (ACORN had been exposing corruption and conflict of interest in county government since 1972, and the Judge had emerged as the most vocal defender of his county's property tax administration during the course of ACORN's property tax campaigns), and early in 1974 the ACORN Board made the decision to run members for seats on the Quorum Court.