

MEMORANDUM

2/9/93

TO: ACORN Offices
FROM: Zach Polett

RE: Results of Clinton Administration Meetings

Steve Kest will undoubtedly be getting out an overall report on the results of the 1993 ACORN Legislative Conference, but I want to give everyone a quick update on our meetings with top Clinton Administration officials this week:

HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros: This was a home run! Cisneros walked into the church sanctuary packed with 500 ACORN members (100 from the Legislative Conference, 300 from New York and 100 from DC, Philadelphia and Bridgeport) wildly chanting "The People, United, Will Never Be Defeated" in both English and Spanish. As he got to the stage one of the leaders pinned an ACORN button on him, which he accepted enthusiastically. At the end of his speech, during which he praised ACORN effusively (good politician) and spoke of putting "housing" and "urban development" back into HUD, he started taking questions from the ACORN leadership up on the stage. To the first question, about having his deputy secretaries meet with ACORN, he went us one better and promised that he would hold a monthly half-hour meeting with ACORN at a scheduled time every month starting the first of March, in our office or his, to get our input and work out any problems. The crowd went wild. Couldn't get much better than that. On other issues, he said he would support increased CRA enforcement; said HUD should set up affordable housing goals for Fannie Mae, Ginnie Mae and Freddie Mac; said he would use testing in Fair Housing enforcement; said that "if I can fix your HOPE 3/land trust problems with regulations then I will do it;" encouraged ACORN to apply for HOME funds; said he supported our position on insurance redlining; etc.

White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty: An ACORN delegation headed by President Maude Hurd met at the White House for over 45 minutes with Clinton's Chief of Staff, more than doubling the 20 minutes scheduled for the meeting. It was one of the first meetings McLarty's held with a non-governmental group since taking over the White House apparatus January 20. Leaders joining Maude in the delegation included National Vice-President Gloria Wilson (Little Rock), ACORN Housing Corporation President and Regional Representative George Butts (Philadelphia), Past President Elena Hanggi (Little Rock), Past Vice President and State Representative Americo Santiago (Bridgeport), and Association Board Delegate Gwen Jacobs (New York).

The pre-game show must have been unusual for such a formal White House meeting, as 3 yellow school busses filled with chanting ACORN members disembarked at the Southwest Gate of the White House, creating a flurry of uniformed White House and DC police rushing to the scene. As Ernest Edwards of Dallas ACORN took pictures and Nellie Leonard of Little Rock ACORN led people in chants of "We're Fired Up, We Won't Take It No More," and Maude and the national leadership (who had been previously cleared by Secret Service for the White House meeting) were giving their picture IDs to the guards at the gate, we were forced to repeatedly explain to the frazzled cops that this "looks-like-a-demonstration, sounds-like-a-demonstration" demonstration wasn't a demonstration at all, that people were just happy that their leaders were meeting with the President's people to rebuild America. What a hoot! A good time was had by all.

McLarty took the meeting seriously, having with him **White House Domestic Issues Director (and former Issues Director for the Clinton campaign) Bruce Reed.** The atmosphere was friendly and casual, as McLarty ran around getting coffee for the ACORN leadership before the meeting, then posed for photographs with the group after it ended. The