MULLS REORGANIZATION

Acadiana Neuf Meeting Today

(II Of A Series)

By ROG ANGERS, JR.

When the Acadiana Neuf board of directors meets in the War Memorial Center today to consider an Office of Economic Opportunity directive to reorganize, the stage will be the same although some of the cast has changed. The board tried again to answer the question:

How do you solve the problem of proper representation of the poor and minority groups in the official government agency that has been charged with the responsibility of administering the War on Poverty?

When Lafayette Police Judge W. E. "Huck" Robichaux quit the anti-poverty board earlier this week in protest to what he called "federal intervention," he felt that the "winds of change" were upon the poverty program and he did not want to be a part of the change. Robichaux claimed that while he meant no reflections on Acadiana Neuf board members, he believes that a small handful of people was steering control of the board that handles millions of dollars in anti-poverty programs. He knew the second police judge to resign since the October meeting. Glenn Mader of St. Landry was the other.

In the pages of the Southwest Louisiana Register are reflected the changing complexion of the board that directs the Farmers Union War on Poverty in the Lafayette area. The Register has been an editorial booster of the poverty campaign and following a social studies seminar, the present edition, Harry Liberstat, former mayor of Erath, was on the original board from Vermilion Parish. When he turned in his resignation to the Vermilion Police Jury, Liberstat observed that the OEO "directed us as a military unit in this war on poverty." Only method, communications, and human relations present occasions for difference of opinion.

When Liberstat was on the board in February, 1965, Dr. Joseph Gregoire was the Vermilion School Board member and the composition of the board was determined by the police jury and school boards of the six parishes. Other members included Rev. Ivan Arceneaux and Donald Broussard, Lafeyette; Dennis David and Allen Patout, Iberia; Madame and Martin Boy, Jr., St. Landry; M.E. Kirk and Michael Seabian, Jr., of Acadia; O.J. Beutler and Rene Calais, St. Martin; and Dr. Louis Cusson and Dean T.J. Arceneaux from the University of Southwestern Louisiana. The Register of March 4, 1965, reported that Gordain Sibille, assistant principal at Lavell High School, was Acadiana Neuf director and James Comeaux, a Northside High teacher, was assistant director.

Board Enlarged

On Nov. 23, 1965, an account in the Register revealed that the Acadiana Neuf board had been enlarged to include representation from poor and minority groups in the six parishes. Five of the six parishes matched the police juries and school boards with two new members each, while St. Landry was allowed three. Officers of the Acadiana Neuf agency were Dr. James Oliver, president; Kile, vice-president; Kirk, secretary; and Fallet Arceaux, treasurer.

New board members representing the poor and minority were included Rev. A.J. Co-Knight and Peter Vallot, Jr. of Vermilion; Lloyd Dupuchain and David May of Acadia; Dr. James A. Hendler and Rev. H.A. Hill of Iberia; Clyde Cousin and Oliver of Lafayette; Joe Jones and Newman Braun of St. Martin; and Joshua Fraley, Huey Fontenot and Marion Overton White of St. Landry.

Claims have been made that the poor are "under-represented" on the board and that "the power structure members have the controlling vote." Said the editor, according to the Register of Sept. 8, "It seems that the poor ought to constitute a majority of the board in such a poor area." And the Catholic diocesan newspaper account also quoted them as saying, "Giving the University of Southwestern Louisiana a spot on the board limits black representation. The University of Southwestern Louisiana has a lily white faculty.

Your hundreds of area citizens went to the OEO office to protest the "power structure," according to the Register. And the newspaper revealed that when the regular September meeting of Acadiana Neuf lacked a quorum, some critics circulated a letter of protest.

In October the Austin OEO office directed that Acadiana Neuf reconstitute its board membership with two-thirds representation by "the poor and minority and the other one-third chosen from public agencies." The War on Poverty agency failed to reorganize the OEO indicated that it would curtail all funds and deal directly with single action agencies.

The Acadiana Neuf board was slated to act on the recommendations at the November meeting scheduled for November...