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Recommended Citation

Tempo, Vol. 18, no. 2 (1972, autumn), p. 45-48

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“This is an American program. The Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc. (OIC) offers all of us in America — and in the world — an opportunity to join together in lifting up the unskilled and underprivileged.”

LEON SULLIVAN

Helps the Minorities Help Themselves

Who will inherit the mantle of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as primary spokesman and most effective leader of Black America? By far the most promising candidate is another minister, The Rev. Doctor Leon H. Sullivan, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

The average white American has never heard of Leon Sullivan, but he is known to progressive blacks all over the country. He is a potent force in Philadelphia. The national business community has recognized his ability

and sought his help—he is on the boards of directors of General Motors, Girard Trust Bank, and the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society. The federal government, also recognizing his genius, has awarded millions of dollars directly to his self-help programs, rather than through other agencies that might spread the money in other directions.

Leon Sullivan is a spellbinder, able to lift and sway people . . . preaching to his congregation, demanding

help from a group of manufacturers, or exhorting the helpless and the hopeless to help themselves, he is always convincing and inspiring.

The root of Sullivan's power is spiritual. He is a deeply religious man, militantly engaged in the struggle to improve the lot of his own people, and of all the poor and disadvantaged. His ideals are high and strongly held.

Many another black leader is fierce in his demands and beloved of his followers, but unable to help them in any real way. Sullivan's special talent, rare in a highly spiritualistic orator, is the ability to think in very practical terms, to plan wisely and carefully, and then to carry out his plans.

SULLIVAN AND GENERAL MOTORS

After becoming a director of General Motors on January 4, 1971, Sullivan announced his three initial goals at GM:

- Renewal of GM's faltering black dealership program to add 50 new black dealerships within three years; help from GM in the form of money and management training to help new black dealers; a model black dealership in Philadelphia.
- Establishment by GM of 10 auto-mechanic training centers for core-city blacks, to train a minimum of 1,000 mechanics the first year, 3,000 the second, and 5,000 the third year.
- Hiring of an initial 225 blacks for GM's junior and middle management and sales executive corps; 1,000 black executives in three years.

On February 15, 1972, GM's new chairman and chief executive officer, Richard C. Gerstenberg, spoke in Washington at the Industry Awards Banquet held by Sullivan's main self-help enterprise, Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America.

He was not reporting directly on Sullivan's goals, but noted:

- GM's black dealerships increased from 12 to 16 in a year, including a new one in Philadelphia. And on March 15, GM announced a new, intensive 18-month training program for 25 prospective minority dealers per class, to be administered by the University of Detroit and GM, with emphasis on practical experience.
- No specific mention of auto-mechanic training centers; but GM lent funds and donated equipment for OIC's Automotive and Appliance Service Center and provides technical training, while GM's Philadelphia dealer organization works with OIC to place

graduates; and GM minority-race workers increased from 67,000 or 11.2% in 1965 to 89,000 or 15.1% at the end of 1971.

- No specific mention of 225 blacks for management. But GM has recruited 100 black engineers from black colleges since 1968; GM has contributed nearly \$1 million to the United Negro College Fund over the last 10 years; General Motors Institute has established a pre-freshman program to enable disadvantaged students to pass entrance exams; on March 31, 1972, GM announced a 30-week concentrated training program for prospective automotive district managers and service managers, with over one-fourth of the first class black.

So Leon Sullivan is by no means GM's tamed tiger. In fact, he directly opposed GM policy, as well as the other 22 directors, when he voted at a GM board meeting, and then stated publicly, that GM should get out of South Africa if Apartheid is not ended.

As to whether he will get rich at GM, it's not very likely. Sullivan has only a token \$800 worth of GM stock. By contrast, six of his fellow directors each owns over \$800,000 worth, and one of them owns over \$8 million worth. Sullivan has often said that his sole income is about \$15,000 per year as pastor of Zion Baptist Church, and that that's all he wants for himself.

CAREER

Leon Sullivan was born in 1922 at Charleston, West Virginia. He received his formal education at the all black West Virginia State College and at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Twenty-five other colleges have since granted him honorary doctorates. Ordained a Baptist minister in 1940, he served in Harlem for several years as one of the late Adam Clayton Powell's militant civil rights workers.

Sullivan says he was getting a big head in Harlem, and was sent to a small church in South Orange, New Jersey. In 1950, he went as pastor to Zion Baptist Church, Philadelphia's largest black church. At the time it had a congregation of 600, which has since risen to over 5,000.

Juvenile delinquency was Sullivan's first target in Philadelphia. His own altruistic and ascetic life was a good example, but it was not enough. Many of the young people he was trying to straighten out were not only unemployed, but considered completely and hopelessly unemployable.

Between 1959 and 1963, Sullivan led a coalition of 400 ministers who persuaded their black congregations to

enforce "selected patronage" against firms that were slow to hire blacks and Puerto Ricans. Sullivan says that about half a million blacks backed this boycott. Applied against one firm at a time, it became very effective in knocking down racial barriers to employment. The campaign ended in 1963 after 300 Philadelphia companies had agreed that there would be no more racial discrimination in hiring—only capability would be considered.

Winning this campaign made Sullivan a national leader in the black struggle. He visited Atlanta, where he helped Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy with their boycott, called Operation Breadbasket.

Now that Philadelphia companies were willing to hire capable people of any color, Sullivan realized there was truth in what employers had been telling him—that many blacks could not handle anything better than menial jobs. That was the genesis of OIC.

OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTERS

Sullivan started holding evening classes in a black Philadelphia ghetto, then day classes, to teach marketable skills. He found that many of his students were too deficient in reading, writing, and arithmetic to make use of a skill, so he added prevocational education. Then he realized that many ghetto "unemployables" were so psychologically downtrodden that they were unable to apply themselves to any study at all, so he started them with psychological reconditioning. Going even further, he began sending recruiters out to find the unmotivated and to offer them opportunity.

THE DISADVANTAGED

It is difficult for the average white American to realize the depth of discouragement and failure experienced by many ghetto blacks. Poorly educated to begin with, unable to cope with jobs or other responsibilities, they are defeated in one encounter after another and left numb, convinced of the total futility of their lives by the age of 25 or 30.

To such a person, the niceties of punctuality and regular attendance at a job are meaningless, because he cannot even conceive of holding a job for any length of time. Problems of health or family or money may also be more than he can solve, and much more pressing than the requirements of his job.

Many government programs to train ghetto blacks have foundered because they simply were not designed to provide help to the great extent that it was needed by their clients.

THE OIC FEEDER PROGRAM

When a new student walks in, or is brought in by a recruiter, a pleasant surprise is that there is no application form by which he may be "weeded out." Everybody who comes in is "weeded in."

The trainee enrolls and is assigned a counselor. This teacher determines his interests and desires, helps him to clear up any personal problems that might interfere with his training, and gets him started in informal instruction stressing positive attitudes, pride in himself, and the motivation needed to become a productive citizen. The counselor helps him to establish goals, also the motivation to achieve them.

After four or five days of the introductory period, the trainee goes into regular feeder classes. Among the subjects taught are reading, writing, arithmetic, typing, personal finishing and job finding, Civil Service examination preparation, consumer education, vocational orientation, test orientation, and English as a foreign language. The last is especially for Puerto Ricans. They can learn to read and write English in 90 days.

Flexibility is stressed, so the trainee stays in the Feeder program for two weeks to three months—until the teachers decide he is ready to tackle skill training.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Flexibility remains the watchword in OIC's main effort, teaching marketable skills. For example, the curriculum is tightly geared to the job market. The object is not simply to teach a skill, but to make sure the trainee obtains a job as soon as he knows how to perform it. If a glut develops in a certain vocation, instruction ceases until workers are needed again. At four centers in Philadelphia, about 30 different skills are taught.

Corporations foreseeing a need for certain specialists, such as welders, can arrange with OIC to train the number of workers they need. The length of training, again, depends on the needs of the student. The counselor continues to help, advise, and even lend money to the student who needs it. Some 97% of trainees are placed in jobs, and the retention rate is very high.

TYPICAL STUDENT

Quoting Leon Sullivan, "The average age of an OIC trainee is 27, and the average grade attainment is the 10th grade. One third of those who come to us are on relief, and 80% of those who come have incomes beneath the poverty level. Most of the men are hostile

toward society, and most all of the men and women are hopeless. OIC begins to turn that hopelessness into hope. OIC teaches that genius is colorblind. OIC teaches that it's not important where a man came from, but where he's going that counts."

Racially, OIC was started for poor blacks, but soon included Puerto Ricans. Now it also includes poor Appalachian whites, Mexican Americans, American Indians, and even Eskimos. Leon Sullivan believes that in time most of the trainees will be white.

EXPANSION

The first Opportunity Industrialization Center was established in 1966 in an abandoned police station and jail. The motto placed over the door says: "We help ourselves." Sullivan's Zion Baptist Church parishioners raised \$40,000 to refurbish the building, and industrial patrons donated more than \$200,000 worth of equipment, furniture, teaching aids, and materials. The Ford Foundation made a grant of \$200,000. Since its inception, OIC has been a client of Touche Ross.

Within a year, the word had spread, and cities all over America were inquiring about OIC. A separate organization was established, the OIC National Institute, to answer questions and help set up the OICs wherever they were wanted. Foundations gave large grants, as did many corporations and the federal government as well. Now there are over 100 OICs scattered across the United States. Most of them have been fostered by ministers.

Sullivan made a jaunt across Africa, and with the help of U.S. AID funds, helped local citizens to establish OICs in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia. There are also OICs in the Dominican Republic and British Honduras. Sullivan says, "Indeed there are inquiries for the establishment of OICs throughout the black world, as well as throughout South America and Asia."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Sullivan says, "OICs have trained and placed in jobs 75,000 Americans, now earning \$400 million a year. It is

the goal of OIC in the 70s to train and place in jobs one million men and women . . . adding \$20 billion in wages to the economy of the country. Considering the economic multiplier of money generated as the result of dollars earned, the sum total of money that will be added to the gross national product of the country will exceed \$100 billion."

ZION INVESTMENT ASSOCIATES, INC.

Sullivan has demonstrated considerable finesse as a financier. In 1962 he persuaded 200 of his parishioners to invest \$10 per month for 36 months in a community corporation, Zion Investment Associates, Inc. This "10-36 Plan" was later opened to over 6,000 investors, and raised more than \$500,000.

A nonprofit housing project, Zion Garden Apartments, became possible because Zion Investment provided seed capital. The housing was built with 90% government financing, then refinanced with an FHA loan for the full development cost, so the seed capital was returned.

A 16-store ghetto shopping center, Progress Plaza, was built with \$400,000 of Zion's money and \$1.3 million from banks. It provided space for 10 black businesses, jobs for 200 local residents, and fairly priced merchandise of good quality in a convenient place.

Progress Aerospace Industries, Inc. was formed in 1968, with \$200,000 from Sullivan's parishioners and \$300,000 from a bank. It also had orders from General Electric for \$2,575,000 worth of parts. Of the 160-man initial work force, 100 were "hard-core unemployables" whom the company was to train under a \$522,000 contract from the U.S. Department of Labor, 50 were skilled workers, and the remainder were management—mostly black managers taken from GE with GE's approval.

Sullivan has also led his 10-36 group in acquiring office buildings, starting entrepreneurial training-center programs, and creating a lending enterprise for aspiring black businessmen.

No, Sullivan is certainly nobody's tame tiger.

CORRECTION

The winter issue of TEMPO, in the section on new partners, lists Robert J. Eichel as a new partner in Santa Ana who "joins us through merger with Smith & Harder." This is incorrect. Mr. Eichel withdrew from Smith & Harder before joining Touche Ross, and that partnership is being continued by all of the other partners. Our apologies to Smith & Harder.