

Welfare Rights Organization

1963-1966

Welfare Rights Groups Arise: ANC Mothers Anonymous in Los Angeles, California, committee of Needy Families, Lower Eastside, New York City, Welfare Rights Organization (WRO), Oakland, Oakland California, Welfare Recipients League, Brooklyn, New York, others in Baltimore, Boston, and Ohio.

George Wiley attended a meeting in Syracuse, New York, "Poor People's War Council on Poverty," where he met Richard Cloward and Frances Piven. He is introduced to the "Strategy to End Poverty." George met with some of the task force workers of Louisiana Civil Rights Movement, the purpose of the meeting was to recruit organizers for Welfare Rights.

May 1966

Poverty/Rights Action Center (P/RAC) begun by George Wiley meeting in Chicago plans to support Ohio Walk for Adequate Welfare.

June 30, 1966

Birth of a Movement: *The Welfare Rights Birthday*

"Walk for Decent Welfare" in Ohio, 5000 recipients and supporters participated in some part of the march from Cleveland to Columbus to protest the cutbacks and the inadequacy of the benefit levels and to demand increased grants and more humane treatment by the welfare authorities. Concurrently, throughout the country, as a result of P/RAC's efforts, welfare demonstrations were held in "24 to 27 cities" to demand changes in the welfare system. (Guida West, in *The National Welfare Rights Movement: The Social Protest of Poor Women*.)

August 6-7, 1966

First national meeting in Chicago, National Coordinating Committee of the Welfare Rights Movement formed; goal adopted; 11 states represented.

Spring/Summer 1967

First nationwide "Basic Needs" campaign; mass fair hearings requested; membership drive.

August 25-27, 1967

Founding convention of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) Washington, DC; 110 delegates from 67 local WROs, 22 states, representing 4,000.

August 28, 1967

Mothers March on Washington; 1,400 demonstrate to oppose H.R. 12080, Anti Welfare Legislation.

September 19, 1967

“Brood Mare” sit-in; NWRO leaders testify and protest before Senate Finance Committee.

February 5, 1968

NWRO National Coordinating Committee leaders meet with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Chicago to discuss Poor People’s Campaign Coalition Effort.

Spring/Summer 1966

Poor People’s Campaign, Washington, DC; NWRO leads Mother’s Day March; 5,000 march with Coretta King.

December 1968

NWRO leaders testify before Democratic National Platform Committee in Chicago.

NWRO receives \$434,000 Department of Labor contract to inform recipients of their rights re: the WIP (also known as WIN) program (signed in the last days of the Johnson Administration). NWRO only received \$105,859.21 from the Department of Labor by the end of September 1969. The Johnson Administration was replaced by the Nixon Republican administration, with its stated policy of dismantling the Great Society programs of the previous decade.

January/February 1969

NWRO leaders meet at White House with Nixon Advisor Pat Moynihan and at Health, Education, and Welfare (now Health and Human Services) with Secretary Robert Finch in early stages of Nixon Administration.

Early 1969

NWRO launches nationwide boycott of Sears in effort to gain credit for welfare recipients.

August 1969

NWRO disrupts opening session of National Conference on Social Welfare (NCSW) in New York City—nationwide publicity.

NWRO Convention in Detroit, Michigan; 22,000 members, 367 local WROs; 2/3rds from NY, CA, PA, MI, VA, OH, NJ, and IL.

December 1969

White House Hunger Conference supports NWRO’s \$5,500 Guaranteed Adequate Income Plan.

1970

NWRO fights Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan (FAP); Senator Eugene McCarthy introduces NWRO’s \$5,500 Guaranteed Adequate Income Plan.

1971

Operation Nevada: NWRO fights massive recipient cut-offs; march along Las Vegas casino strip.

March 25, 1972

Children's March for Survival; 50,000 demonstrate in Washington, DC.

July 1972

NWRO Adequate Income Proposals--\$6,500 NOW—win almost 1,000 (of 1,500 needed for majority to adopt) at Democratic National Convention in Miami (where McGovern was nominated).

December 1972

Dr. George Wiley announces his departure from NWRO to begin the Movement for Economic Justice; Mrs. Johnnie Tillmon, past chair-person of NWRO becomes its Executive Director.

August 1973

George Wiley is killed in an alleged boating accident.

1974

NWRO forced to close Washington, DC national office due to lack of funds.

June 30, 1987

National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU) is born at the 1987 Welfare Rights Meeting in Washington, DC in the struggle by the victims of poverty to defeat in Washington, DC to pass the Family Support Act.

1995

NWRU Convention in Houston

Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) lead the first March for Our Lives, 140 miles from Philadelphia to the state capitol, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. They also established a tent city on the steps of the state capitol.

1997/1998

NWRU Convention in New Orleans

June-July 1997

KWRU lead a second March for Our Lives, from the Liberty Bell to the United Nations in New York City. This march protested the human rights violations caused by welfare reform. From June 21st to July 1st, hundreds of KWRU and NWRU members and their supporters marched the 125 miles. This march was the beginning of the Economic Human Rights Campaign.

June 1998

KWRU spearheaded the New Freedom Bus Tour: Freedom from Unemployment, Hunger, and Homelessness. The bus traveled to over 30 cities across the country,

linking up with grassroots organizations of poor and homeless people fighting for their lives. At each stop, the bus gathered documentation of economic human rights violations, which were taken to a concluding tribunal at the United Nations. The documentation will be used in a formal suit against the United States through international legal channels.

October 9-11, 1998

Poor People's Summit held in Philadelphia; plans were made for the March of the Americas.

October-November 1999

KWRU lead March of the Americas with NWRU from Washington, DC to the United Nations in New York City in protest of economic human rights violations caused by the U.S. government around the world.

July 31, 2000

March for Economic Human Rights in Philadelphia during Republican National Convention.

November 2000

The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign is organizing the World Summit to End Poverty as a part of the International Campaign For Economic Justice of the Hague Appeal for Peace.

February 2002

Welfare rights activists from across the country gather at Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT to protest world poverty.