***Challenge Faced at Black Springs***

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(EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the last of a three-part series dealing with the problem of civic improvement in what is probably Washoe County’s most blighted area—the community of Black Springs, located on old Highway 395, about six miles north of Reno.)

Help appears to in sight for Black Springs.

It is, at least, if those who have already expressed concern will follow through with their intentions to get help for the sub-standard living area located a few miles north of Reno.

While few people have been unaware of the situation that exists in Black Springs, many more eyes focused on the area a couple of weeks ago after several legislators visited the community and issued a public statement.

In letters to the editor of the Journal, citizens indicated that they had driven out to see for themselves.

“The devastation was unbelievable,” wrote one citizen who signed herself “Shocked.” She said it was a heartbreaking sight.”

She continued, “It’s hard to find a shrub, a tree, a blade of grass, or any sign of cultivation… Here is a challenge for government agencies, churches, service clubs, public spirited citizens—anyone who cares.”

Another reader writes, “Why can’t things like this be stopped now before it goes any further? I’m afraid of what it will look like in another few years.”

Members of the League of Women Voters also went out to Black Springs, during the recent thaw, to see for themselves what the area holds.

Bishop Divine Ruth Turner of the LWV reports “Septic tanks were running over into the yards. There were open septic tanks that needed covering and gave off an offensive odor.

“The run-off from the septic tanks also crossed the water line making the water dangerous for usage. The water was running down the roads and we had to drive down the wrong side of the streets.”

Bishop Turner said the LWV has sent a letter to the county commissioners asking that something be done about Black Springs.

Assemblyman Woodrow Wilson, R-Las Vegas, was on of the legislators who first spoke out on the problem at Black Springs.

“I think it can be corrected,” Wilson said. He cited a similarly “deplorable situation” in the Indian Colony within the city of Las Vegas, in which the senators in Washington managed to get help for the people.

Wilson explored several possible solutions to the Black Springs problem.

“State and health officers could start condemnation proceedings, but the county doesn’t want to provide housing elsewhere for them,” he said.

“When you see a situation like this where there are Negroes involved, that’s what laws are for—to change the situation.”

Wilson noted that water and sewer lines go to nearby Stead Air force Base, and that individual ranches and homes have sewer lines running to heir property.

He said he felt that if the county would make an “honest effort” something could be done, Instead he said county officials are “ducking dodging and conniving” to avoid the problem.

**Entitled to Services**

“The people in Black Springs are paying taxes to the county,” he said, “and they’re entitled to some services.”

In response to County Engineer George Oshima’s figures for paying the streets of Black Springs, Wilson exclaimed, “were not asking for the county to go out and pave the roads!”

He said a grader could be rented for about $30 an hour, and the people could put in the labor to improve the roads, haul the gravel, and bring them up to minimum standards.

“They’re wiling to do it if given an opportunity and the direction,” Wilson said. “This type of community activity in regard to improving themselves.

“With the proper attitudes on the parts of the county government and the people of the community—wanting to eradicated a menace to the total community—then and only then can this blighted area be made a decent place to live.”

Wilson continued, “We’re not asking for any special consideration with hasn’t been given other people… The county has, in other areas, gone beyond what it is stipulating here for Black Springs.

“The County permitted this ‘unofficial’ subdivision. Shouldn’t it be required to bring the roads up to specifications where they meet the county standards? If it allowed this situation to be created, it should be responsible for bringing the area up to a livable condition,” he concluded.

**Project Suggested**

At a recent meeting of a new group in Reno called “the Committee of the Concerned,” the possibility of developing a project in Black Springs for the Community Action Program was suggested.

The Rev. Willie Wynn, who is connected wit the action program in the 15 rural counties, explained the program which is funded through the federal War on Poverty plan, through the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Volunteers are now working on a survey in northeast Reno, to determine the needs there and will then go on to Black Springs, the Rev. Mr. Wynn said. They are attempting to up-date a study completed a year ago by Dr. Elmer Rusco of the Bureau of Governed research at the University of Nevada, which reports on “poverty, Rev. Wynn said.”

**To Be Available**

Results of the survey will be available to anyone who wants to use it to plan a project for the Community, Action Program, Rev. Wynn said.

The project is presented to the Community Action association director, who works out a program for funding, then sees that the project is carried out.

The OEO has a program through which money can be loaned to finance the entire plan. The Rev. Mr. Wynn explained.

If an action program center were established, it would be operated by the people in that community. “the action program would send in representatives to train the people to see that the project is carried out,” he said.

Whatever the solution may be, the basic formula for improvement has been spelled out clearly. The people of Black Springs must be willing to help themselves, and they must have the cooperation of the “outsiders,” whether they be county officials, state legislators or other interested individuals.