

Legal Aid Lawyers and Aides Hold a Meeting in Detroit to Organize a National Union

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DETROIT, June 10—Lawyers and office workers from federally financed legal aid programs around the country met here last evening to form a national union.

Organizers of the National Organization of Legal Services Workers said the union would fight for better wages and working conditions for its members and for better legal service to the 29 million poor Americans who are eligible for them.

Delegates from 30 states heard Ramsey Clark, the former United States Attorney

General, accuse the American legal profession, and American society as a whole, of failing to provide adequate legal services to the poor.

"You must have power to be effective, and your power will be in direct proportion to your unity nationwide," said Mr. Clark, who now practices law in New York City.

Two Locals Certified

The new union has two Detroit-area locals that have been certified by the National Labor Relations Board, and about 30 local and hitherto unaffiliated unions have been formed in other areas.

As with those locals, members of the new national organization will consist of lawyers, paralegal workers and secretaries from the nonsupervisory ranks of the neighborhood legal services offices organized and financed largely through the Legal Services Corporation, the quasi-governmental agency under which Federal legal aid programs were organized by Congress in 1974.

The Federal programs are separate from municipal public defenders' offices and from such private programs as New York City's Legal Aid Society.

Some 3,000 nonsupervisory lawyers and

more than 1,000 "paralegals," who are lawyers' aides trained in the rudiments of the law, work in 900 neighborhood offices around the country. Jim Braude, president of the Legal Services Staff Association in New York City, was among the delegates who argued that the union should seek to expand the number of lawyers for the poor.

'Time to Do Something'

"When the situation reaches the point in the Bronx, where there are three admitted attorneys to handle the housing problems of a million people, it's obvious

that it is time to do something," Mr. Braude said.

Others contended that the organizing of Federal legal aid lawyers might bring wage increases that could induce young lawyers to stay longer than the two or three years most devote to the job before leaving in search of higher pay. Pay for legal aid lawyers now is in the \$14,000-a-year range.

The young lawyers and legal workers at the convention, which was to run through the weekend, have already shown a fair amount of organizational zeal, and the union has already printed T-shirts and canvas tote bags.

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