

# Center Carries On In Founder's Spirit

By EDWARD NORTON  
Staff Writer

The stairway smelled of urine, the stench just as strong as it was three years ago. Not much has changed at 235 Graham Ave.

Three years ago, the building baked in the July sun. Children frolicked in the tarry streets, dancing around a young, pretty, guitar-carrying nun.

The Rev. John Simonet nervously explained he was setting up a Catholic Community Center in the heart of the black ward—its aim was to help the community, not to make converts to Catholicism.

The start of the CCC was helter-skelter. Father Simonet didn't know where he would get furniture for his third floor apartment. Two years later he quit—the CCC, the priesthood and work in Paterson.

Simonet is now married and living somewhere in the West. The third floor apartment once his home is office quarters for his replacements, the Rev. Paul Knauer, 30, and the Rev. Pat Erwin, 26.

## Debt To Simonet

They have taken the reins, and are quick to tell of their debt to the red-haired, explosive Simonet.

"We're accepted. We've been on his gravy train," said Father Erwin. Father Knauer nodded.

The young priests have had their problems. On a wet day last week, they talked of the

street carnival the CCC sponsored this month that almost turned into disaster. The carnival got unwanted notoriety when a pack of youths decided to parade in the downtown area without a license.

To the bigots and the unconcerned, the priests can be lumped as do-gooders, their plans pipe dreams. They have many dreams.

Fathers Knauer and Erwin are working to publish a weekly community newspaper.

It will be called the Passaic-Paterson New Press.

"It'll express what the people are thinking," says Father Erwin, who has been working with the paper's black founders.

## Credit Union Goal

The pair have hopes for a credit union, among other expanded services at the center. There is much they want to do, and progress has been limited by their degree of community involvement. The center is not in coalition with black churches. The latter have been quiet in the local struggle for equality—often leaving to firebrands the chance to voice community discontent.

The CCC has two pluses working in its favor. One is the summer program that sees hundreds of kids get a week or two away from the city with white families. Father Simonet worked from scratch on this project, and last year about 1,200 kids escaped the streets for a brief

vacation.

This summer the success has not been so great, with only about half last year's children sent away.

The second, maybe most important plus the CCC has is Miss Eibel Williams, a school teacher who can speak with

wry humor about her role as executive secretary and trustee of the CCC. Her ability is recognized by the priests—as it was the other day by one pool player who left the hall downstairs to ask her to settle a bet by naming the original 13 colonies.



REV. PAUL KNAUER



REV. PATRICK ERWIN