

# RALLY PROTESTS JAPAN-TOWN EVICTIONS

**San Francisco, California**—About 200 residents of Nihonmachi (Japan town) here attended a rally March 10 to protest the demolition of housing in their community. The rally was held by CANE, a grass-roots organization formed over a year ago to fight redevelopment plans to turn their community into a "tourist showcase" for big business in San Francisco.

The city planners and the multi-national corporations would like to see San Francisco become the "Wall Street of the West" and a center for trade with Asia. With this in mind, they have planned to build hotels and fancy shops in Nihonmachi to attract tourism and the business conventions. Already the Kintetsu corporation of Japan controls nearly a quarter of the land in the community, including the huge Japan Trade Center.

CANE (the Committee Against Evictions in Nihonmachi) says that this redevelopment is an attack on the integrity of the Japanese community, by its destruction of low-cost housing and mass evictions. Many residents and small businesses have been forced to leave Nihonmachi because of the lack of housing and higher tax zoning.

Redevelopment began in Nihonmachi in 1958, when over 1000 residents were evicted for the construction of the Trade Center alone. Since then no new low-cost housing has been built. Residents grew especially angry when buildings often remained empty and lots vacant for years after people were evicted and buildings were torn down.

In early 1973 a new wave of redevelopment was begun,

with eviction notices to 33 families and 6 businesses. A meeting of Nihonmachi residents was held to discuss the evictions and redevelopment. Many of the older residents spoke of their experiences in the concentration camps in World War II, and how redevelopment was a further attack on Japanese-Americans in Nihonmachi. From this CANE was formed, to protect the interests of the community as well as the rights of residents and small businesses.

CANE informed residents of their rights relating to redevelopment, and challenged evictions in court. They began working with a committee of Japanese-American churches to try to get housing for elderly Nihonmachi citizens. CANE made a presentation to the federal Commission on Civil Rights on the negligences and abuses by the city's Redevelopment Agency.

In December CANE packed a Board of Permit Appeals meeting to oppose the construction of the Kintetsu Sunflower Hotel; presenting a petition with over 2,000 signatures supporting CANE and opposing the new building. CANE returned to the Board in February, but their appeal was turned down.

In spite of setbacks, support for CANE has grown among all sections of the community, as well as from other groups opposed to redevelopment plans in the Bay Area. The large turnout at the rally March 10 reflected the growth of CANE as an on-going organization fighting for the needs of the Japanese-American community in San Francisco.