

TO John St

NOTES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR MEETING OF  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL  
November 16, 1965

Last week, I met with several dozen newspaper people brought together by the Associated Press for a seminar on the poverty program. I told them that in the last year I have done ~~lots of~~ <sup>some</sup> travelling throughout America, carrying the message that this Administration intends to win the War On Poverty. I also have been doing some looking and listening regarding public reaction to the poverty program. I can sum up that public reaction by saying that the War On Poverty has broad general support, but that there is also much misunderstanding about how it works, what it seeks to do, and how it ties into other public and private programs. I can tell this Council group today, in addition, that we do have some problems. I want to mention them briefly and frankly.

1. Job Corps Publicity:

I know how unfair it is for papers to play up incidents like the one this weekend. It was not a riot -- race or

any other kind -- but it sure made the whole program look bad. On the other hand, I now have four Job Corps boys working in my own office, and they are doing a fine job.

I am particularly concerned about this publicity now because of the Job Corps placement program we are launching. ~~I have made~~ this program a special interest of mine and I hope to do everything possible to help. Obviously, the placement program will suffer if the Job Corps image is that of rioters or bullies.

Query: What more can be done to get the positive story of Job Corps out to the American people?

2. "Involvement of Poor" Issue:

I think it is most unfortunate that this issue had to be fought on the front pages of the American press.

Of course, once the issue was raised, there had to be

clarification from the Administration, and I tried to help in my comments to the Associated Press seminar last week.

But I wish I knew who was responsible for leaking to the press the fact that there were discussions going on between two government agencies. Completely apart from the merits of the argument in this case, it will be a sad day for the government if it becomes impossible for government officials to have frank discussions, for positions to be articulated and then debated -- without fear that the differences will be aired in the nation's press.

I have no basic trouble with the present law and with the present policies of OEO on the issue involved.

But the issue is a difficult one; it requires careful and sensitive handling; it needs constant review.

I hope <sup>that</sup> what last week's unfortunate public squabble will not inhibit further discussions and further deliberations on this basic question.

For example, I am troubled about the implications of the Syracuse situation -- where an OEO grant to the University evidently legally permitted the use of Federal money to pay for bail required in a sit-in situation.

~~I am not sure this is wrong -- but~~ I hope we can discuss this within the Executive branch without being accused of being anti-people or anti-social action.

3. Pressures for More Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) Funds:

I am disturbed about the demands for Neighborhood Youth Corps projects which we will not be able to fill. As you know, I have been particularly concerned about employment opportunities for youth. Because of the relatively few months in which the Neighborhood Youth Corps program

operated last year, the number of enrollees was relatively high. Because of the twelve months this year, and because of additional communities that are interested, we may be having to reduce drastically the number of youths involved in many of our cities.

Query: Assuming that the money situation remains basically unchanged, what more can we do in government generally, and in the private sector, to increase the number of jobs available for young people, both in and out of school?

4. Inter-Agency Cooperation -- Project "React":

This past year, I have met with literally thousands of city and county officials. More than anything else, I heard about the troubles these local officials were having understanding the respective roles and programs of the various Federal agencies, the seeming duplication

of programs, the inconsistency of regulations, and the procedures needed to get assistance.

The Economic Opportunity Act recognizes this problem and tries to meet it in a number of ways, including the creation of this Council. I think the time has come for the Federal government to meet this problem head-on. Of course, the new Department of Housing and Urban Development will deal <sup>in fact</sup> with this question.

I am hopeful that a discussion of Project React at this meeting will help get the inter-agency coordination in the poverty program that we have been looking for. There will never be, and there should not be, in the Economic Opportunity program itself all the funds and all the resources needed for an all-out attack on poverty in the respective communities. But if the

programs run by other agencies could be intelligently linked with the poverty programs as such, we could start getting some real results. And the public at large would be less confused -- and less critical of Federal efforts



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