



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2.30

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

109-S-69

OVERVIEW REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, AT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY CONFERENCE, INTERNATIONAL BALLROOM EAST, WASHINGTON HILTON, WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 13, 1969.

Prior to introducing our most distinguished guest speakers, I would like to recap just briefly some of the high points of our equal employment opportunity effort here at the Department.

While I don't like to go overboard with statistics or quotas, it is a fact that in a results-oriented program -- which this is -- our "numbers" constitute the ultimate measure of success or failure.

For example, since February 1, 1969 (close enough to the magic date of January 20 for our purposes) well over 12,000 people entered on the rolls of this Department. About 7,000 of them were civilian employees, and just since the date of our last conference in April, over 5,000 were recruited for the Coast Guard military. On the basis of experience since the April conference, we can say that about 1,000 or 15 percent of our new civilian hires were minority group persons and among the Coast Guard military about 500 or 1 of every 10 recruits was a minority.

The FAA accounted for approximately 4,500 of our new civilian hires, with about 450 or one of every 10 persons being a minority group member. The rate of minority group hiring in other elements of the Department ranged from 34 percent or 270 of 800 new civilian hires in the Coast Guard, to 33 percent or 100 of 300 new hires in the Office of the Secretary, and

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to 26 percent or 230 of 900 hires in the Federal Highway Administration. The fact that our minority group hiring rate in both civilian and military employment is almost double our overall rate of minority group utilization -- 7.8 percent civilian and 6 percent military -- indicates we are making progress. The outlook for the 1970 budget year indicates we will have even greater opportunities to bring qualified minorities into the work force of the Department. All of you here today are the officials and managers who must do this job. As far as I'm concerned, it's a priority assignment.

I am delighted to report that since our last Equal Opportunity Conference there have been several actions that can be counted as breakthroughs. A black has been appointed to a hearing officer position with the National Transportation Safety Board, a supergrade position. We now have a Negro among the four members of the Departmental Contract Appeals Board and another Negro has been appointed to a hearing officer position on the FAA Regulatory Council.

I consider these to be important first steps. They are evidence that we can get results.

At our last conference I emphasized that the lack of even a single black among our almost 300 supergrade positions was inexcusable, and was an indictment of this Department as a true equal opportunity employer. Correcting this deficiency has been one of our major tasks. Not as "tokenism," and not to provide a "showcase" for the black community -- but to serve as dramatic and concrete evidence of our commitment.

As of today, we have seven minority group employees on board in supergrade positions. We have another seven in process. In addition we now have three minority group persons holding executive level positions. That we have done this is, I think, a solid indication that we intend to fulfill our pledge. We will continue to seek qualified men and women from minority groups -- especially as we expand our activities in aviation and in public transportation.

And let me be quick to point out that we did not hire these people simply because they were members of minority groups. We hired them, and put them in supergrade positions, because they were qualified. In fact in most cases they were without question the best qualified of all applicants. Yes, my friends, good people are available.

But we cannot stop here. To make sure this effort is maintained, I am directing our personnel and civil rights people to establish procedures to assure that we continue this aggressive outreach action to identify qualified minority candidates for consideration in filling every supergrade position in this Department.

Let me now touch on the matter of training.

President Nixon's new Executive Order stresses the need to provide for the upward mobility of our minority employees. Training is the key to success in this effort and training is big business in the Department of Transportation.

Since our last conference, over 11,000 civilian and military employees received formal training. Over 9,000 of these were civilian and almost 2,000 were Coast Guard military personnel. Among the civilians, about 8 percent or one of every 12 employees trained was a minority group member. The Coast Guard military did slightly better with one of every ten persons trained being a minority. Almost all of the civilians trained (9,159) were in the FAA, where 7 percent or 1 out of every 14 trainees was a minority group employee.

Another area of vital importance is that of minority group promotions. Here again, the numbers are the measure of how well we will succeed in assuring the upward mobility and full assimilation into the work force of our minority group members. Six hundred and twenty-one minority civilian employees received promotions since May 1, 1969. That is almost 12 percent of the 5,286 employees promoted during that period.

FAA again accounted for the bulk of these promotions (4,228) and over one-half (349) of the minority promotions.

On the military side, Negro representation in the commissioned officer ranks of the Coast Guard more than doubled -- from 11 to 23.

Total minority group representation among Coast Guard officers stands at 1.2 percent -- a low figure, granted, but a whole lot better than it was before we started this program.

The activities of the Department are worldwide, and with installations and employees in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, the need for increased minority group utilization throughout this country is obvious. Each of our field facilities and activities must demonstrate, by the presence of minorities in meaningful numbers and in meaningful occupations, that we are in fact an equal opportunity employer. You are the only people who can do this job. I am asking you to do it.

My final point here at this session concerns the women of the Department.

Far too often we see the failure to stress the fact that our efforts to increase meaningful equal employment opportunities for women are a vital and integral part of our total Equal Employment Opportunity program. In the Department of Transportation, we cannot afford to make this mistake. As of June 30, 1969, this Department had almost 9,000 female employees. They constitute 15.3 percent of our civilian work force. However, only 602, or less than 7 percent, of these women are employed in positions above grade GS-9. This, however, reflects a significant increase from the

previous year when only 498 females held positions in this category. We have one female employee holding a supergrade position and we now have one woman holding an executive level position in this Department.

Much more needs to be done to assure that our female employees have a full opportunity to perform at levels fully commensurate with their abilities and potential. We still have careers in the Department of Transportation with only negligible utilization of females. Some of these occupations, such as air traffic control which employs only 284 females in a total work force of over 20,000, present obvious opportunities for the greater utilization of women.

Gentlemen, I said at the conclusion of our morning session that I would speak for only about ten minutes this afternoon prior to introducing our guest speakers. I have exceeded my time already, and I know you are eager to hear what they have to say.

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