



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE LUNCHEON FOR TRADE ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES TO ENLIST SUPPORT FOR THE YOUTH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM, WASHINGTON, D. C., MONDAY, JULY 27, 1970.

I invited you because I wanted to prevail upon you for assistance in getting the entire transportation industry involved in employment and training programs for youth, particularly minorities and disadvantaged youths.

I am cognizant of the support you have given this program in the past, and I am also aware of some of your efforts to stimulate members of your associations this summer. I want you to know that we appreciate this. On the other hand, I believe we can and should intensify and increase our efforts.

As you know, the President's Council on Youth Opportunity was established in 1967. Every summer since 1967, the Federal government and private industry have travelled the perilous route, from June to September, of hastily throwing together programs in an attempt to keep the summers cool.

This year the President's council has shifted its major emphasis from a hodgepodge of short-term summer efforts to the development of comprehensive year-round programs of employment and training. For instance, here in the Department of Transportation this summer our employment target for hiring disadvantaged youth exceeds 2,000, and we expect to retain about 350 of these young people on a part-time basis after they return to school.

We recognize that the greatest demand for youth employment is during the summer months; however, we are aware that many young people need part-time jobs in order to remain in school. Others, who are not likely to go on to college, desperately need meaningful job-related training on a part-time basis in order to begin equipping themselves for the world of work upon finishing high school.

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Earlier I made reference to minorities and disadvantaged youth. I know that all of us want to believe that this great nation of ours provides the opportunity for every young person to escape poverty and deprivation. We want to believe that if only excellence is pursued, the individual can make it. But, we must not delude ourselves. Ascendancy from the depths of poverty requires more than pulling oneself up by one's own boot straps in a society where our rapid growth of technology is exceeded only by our fervent zealous quest for knowledge. Couple this with the fact that the majority of minority group youth are recipients of a seriously inefficient education and we recognize that special programs will be required to enable them to break the poverty cycle. Unfortunately, public schools attended by low-income minority groups annually spawn thousands with less than adequate education and need additional help to move directly into our industrial or commercial society.

This month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics issued a comparative breakdown on white and minority youth unemployment during the months of June since 1967. I won't bore you with the grim statistics for each of these years. I'll simply refer to June 1970. Unemployment for white youths 16 to 21 years of age was 15.3 percent in June 1970 while joblessness for other minorities in the same age group during the same month was 34 percent.

As grim as these statistics are, they do not illustrate the total picture. They do not reflect the destruction of the will to work that frequently results from the inability to find employment -- nor do they provide any indication of the slow and difficult task of reorientation and rehabilitation required to enable the victims of unemployment to become productive citizens.

Gentlemen, I have asked you to join me here today with the hope that together we can decide upon specific measures which the transportation industry and the Department of Transportation can begin to undertake for the long-range benefit of our disadvantaged young people, the transportation industry, and the country.

This past spring, I designated Mildred Goodman Chairman of a Department of Transportation Youth Opportunity Committee to work full time on coordinating this Department's efforts to seek out jobs and training opportunities for youth within the transportation field. The head of each operating administration present here designated a member of his staff to serve on the committee with Mrs. Goodman. To date, the Department has written letters to approximately 8,000 transportation industry employers. Additionally, in conjunction with the Departments of Labor and Housing and Urban Development, our Department has contributed \$500,000 toward a one and a half million dollar transportation assistance grant. These funds will be used by mayors and other jurisdictional authorities to provide transportation for disadvantaged youth to and from employment and training sites.

To sustain and increase the impact of the steps your associations and the Department have already taken, I would like to request each of you to designate one staff member on a loaned basis to work with Mrs. Goodman and the member firms of your associations. We need assistance from you in making direct contact with your membership. Working from his own office, one of your staff members could be of invaluable assistance to us by soliciting cooperation from your association's members. I would hope that your staff person could obtain pledges of jobs and training opportunities along with goals and timetables. Remember we are talking about getting these firms to develop and carry out year-round programs which would include part-time jobs and part-time training during the school year as well as the summer months.

For instance, on a part-time basis, railroad engine repair shops might provide mechanics training, airline stewardesses could provide inner city youngsters classes in good grooming, highway surveying crews could offer on-the-job training, etc. I do not want to enter into an involved discussion here of specific contributions each firm could make; however, I do want to emphasize the fact that once we are able to obtain the commitment of management within the firm, innovative, imaginative programs can evolve.

All training need not necessarily be related to a specific job. Let me give you an example of a cooperative venture undertaken by a firm and a school system. Twenty-five low-achieving eighth graders were placed in a special aerospace program which included aviation-related academic subjects, field trips with parents and teachers, small group tutoring on aviation problems, and a regular private flying course. The students chosen had evidenced behavioral problems in school and had performed below par. At the beginning of the project, test scores indicated that the students were reading below grade level. A year later, 19 were at or above the ninth grade reading level.

While grades went up, absenteeism from school dropped. Teachers commented that flight students came to school even when they were sick. Most important was the evidence among the flight groups of high aspirations and more realistic vocational goals. After two years in the program, most of the students indicated their hope to attend junior college or technical school and the most popular job choices were pilot, aviation mechanic, and electronics technician.

I do not know all of the details in connection with the resources required to carry out this project. The point I wish to make is that prior to initiation of this project, someone had the will and the commitment to become involved in an effort to provide an opportunity for a group of disadvantaged young people. Consequently, ideas emerged and a new kind of project developed.

I would like to mention one other matter and then ask Henry Shine, Executive Director of the President's Council on Youth Opportunity, to say a few words to you, after which I would like your responses to my request for assistance from a member of your staff and any other suggestions you would like to offer in support of a transportation industry-wide effort to increase opportunities for disadvantaged youth.

Although we are emphasizing jobs and training opportunities for youth from 14 to 21 years of age, industry officials also should be encouraged to provide additional contributions that are unique to their trade and which would otherwise be idle. For instance, airlines might be encouraged to furnish brief air tours of a city for disadvantaged youth between the ages of nine and 13 who rarely leave their neighborhoods. At least 18 airlines have provided such tours in the past. We have a ruling from the Interstate Commerce Commission that railroads can provide free point-to-point transportation for poor youths in connection with specific kinds of programs. There is much we can do. There is much we must do.

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