

Mayor's Comments to Atlanta Service-Learning Conference

June 30, 1969

White House Motor Inn

70 Houston Street, N. E.

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Total Attendance: 300

Purpose of Conference

To explore existing service programs involving youth and government in urban, domestic, and foreign setting and develop a metro-Atlanta model of service-learning between area colleges, government units, agencies and students.

Two day Conference sponsored by:

Urban Corps

VISTA

Peace Corps

Atlanta Colleges

Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Inc.

Teacher Corps

Southern Regional Education Board

- D R A F T -

Introductory remarks - welcome to Atlanta, etc.

"We cannot, any more than past generations, see the face of the future," Ralph McGill has written. "But we know that written across it is the word Education." Education today is rapidly changing from the old monolithic forms of yesteryear. Today's youth are demanding educational reforms. Many of our young people are in fact creating a new kind of education through their off-campus service activities. The service-learning concept is not new but its youthful applications are having a new effect on both domestic and foreign problems. Whether young people are serving in the Peace Corps in Zambia or working in Cabbage Town as a VISTA Volunteer they are having a learning experience.

They are learning that education doesn't end at the classroom door. In fact those of you that are Urban Corps interns will probably be amazed at your own learning experience after this brief summer.

The Urban Corps is an excellent example of educational innovation coupled with service. Interns will see the problems of our city by actually participating in city government as well as private agencies. They will be learning through a practical extension of their academic studies. In short, they help the city, expand their education, and help pay college expenses - all in one.

This Urban Corps is truly a student program. I first heard of this idea of relevant internships in city government when a group of student leaders from various Atlanta colleges came to City Hall with the idea more than a year ago. These students wanted a way to learn about the city and perform a service by actually working in it.

After many meetings and a great deal of encouragement by Dan Sweat of my staff and Bill Ramsey of the Southern Regional Education Board, we provided a group

young activists some support to see if this program would work. Almost all of the planning, development of jobs and placement was actually done by students. From what I hear, the intern jobs are very challenging and exciting. Just the physical appearance of City Hall has been greatly improved by all these young faces. Naturally there will be some disappointments and I'll assure you that you'll become frustrated and you'll see that we do have some almost un-solvable problems. I urge you not to become discouraged but to help us find new ways of correcting the ills of our seemingly archaic system. We need your youthful enthusiasm and you'd be surprised how it will change the attitude of those in our city who have been laboring, almost alone at times, for change and progress.

We in the city hope that this brief exposure to our problems and potentials will attract some of you young people to return after graduation and pursue this as a career. Governing our cities is this nations greatest problem. It is an exhaustive but rewarding experience that you young people must now begin to take responsibility for.

I hope the Urban Corps is only a beginning. Already we're having predictions of three-fold expansion of this intern program for next year. Just the fact that nearly 1,000 students applied this year is astounding, and when one considers that Atlanta has almost 40,000 students and nearly 35 colleges we can begin to see the potential. We need this focused, aggressive concern of young people. We need more movement between the two worlds of academia and city.

In New York, an outgrowth of their intern program has been a rapid exchange of ideas and personnel between city government and universities. We need this amiable relationship of university and city in Atlanta. We have just begun an Urban Life Center at Georgia State which all local colleges are being asked to participate in. We in the cities must take greater advantage of our universities and vice versa.

As John Gardner has said, the three main purposes of the university are research, teaching, and service to the community. We've seen how students are serving the community already but there are still many unexploited potentials inside our college gates.

If we look at the history of higher education we note that the greatest impetus was with the Land-Grant University almost 100 years ago - a system built to aid our agricultural society. Today our society is urban. But by comparison, our education system has not properly responded to our change in society. We need more people working on our cities problems. If the discipline of city planning can be used as an example, we will recognize the dramatic crisis. In all our universities combined we graduate less than 400 planners per year. More graduates of Medieval History are put on the job market than are urban experts.

What do we in the cities do for manpower? We must innovate and try to compete with industry for talent and we are in the disadvantage." Hence another reason why our cities are ungovernable.

Key urban persuasion posts are occupied by lawyers, ~~doctors~~ undertakers, clergymen, businessmen, bankers and social workers. These professionals have been produced by universities. These people are usually consulted on a technical or specialized problems, but the solving of these problems depends on related matters almost always falling outside the expertise of the consultant. In other words, the key experts in our urban society - through the exercise of their expertise - enter a realm of generalization for which they haven't been properly prepared by undergraduate or professional education. Therefore, universities should try to expose their professionals in urban areas to some type of urban education. The simplest method is by practical experience such as the Urban Corps, and the eventual solution is more teaching in urban concepts.

We must not neglect the professor in our plan for community involvement of our universities. Ways should be found to involve professors in areas of their

academic prowess in the city. Perhaps we should have an Urban Corps for professors too! I am sure that there are needed areas of research in the city that would interest many college instructors. This would insure that teaching does indeed remain relevant to our actual needs. In order to facilitate this dialogue, we must have more cooperation between colleges. Students and faculty should be able to more freely move between campuses. Atlanta colleges are unique and should keep their individual identity, but should encourage exchanges. We have great medical schools, law schools, schools of urban design and the greatest predominantly Negro college complex in the world.

We've only looked at the city as a laboratory, let's see how the city can help the university. Many young innovators on the urban scene could serve as guest lecturers or associate professors in our colleges. A vivid example of this is Bill Allison, now Director of EOA, who serves as an associate professor at Georgia Tech. This type of exchange should be greatly encouraged and ways should be found to foster and develop both professor-city exchanges and administrator-campus exchanges

We must not only research problems but we must implement them too. Often times a very good report is written - only to gather dust - or is written not with an eye for implementation. It is the same with residents in our deprived neighborhoods. They are tired of being studied. They want help. Research must be balanced by practicality and kept relevant.

Our cities will not go away. They will expand and multiply. We must plan for that. We must demand help from our universities.

The Urban Corps should only be a beginning. We need youthful enthusiasm of young people in VISTA, returning Peace Corps volunteers, Neighborhood Youth Corps enrollees, service groups on campus, adult education tutoring by students in the dozens of service projects. We need more exchange between our city and our campuses

on all levels. I hope this Service-Learning Conference explores all these possibilities and presents them to people who will act~~to~~ develop and carry them out.

Ralph McGill always said the South was the most exciting area of the country and the most exciting part of the South was to be young and taking part in its development. Those of you who are students today must accept this challenge of developing the South and our city, and those of you who are educators must help them.