

3/8/67

A Proposal for Task Force Agenda

Part I

The staff of the Task Force has spent most of the past three weeks attempting to outline future areas for investigation. Our points of departure have been based on Task Force discussions concerning the nature and location of urban ghettos; the definition and measurement of social deficit areas; the prospects for significant improvement in ghetto job opportunities; the possibility of moving from programs to "flows" (as defined in the Ylvisaker paper); and more focused research in such areas as housing and welfare programs.

These discussions, you will recall, were at a high level of generality and implied further decisions about which areas should be given intensive study- studies which hopefully would produce policy recommendations for the President.

In recent Task Force discussions and in interviews with a number of government officials another, more general theme has emerged to compete and, in a sense, out-flank the development of Task Force thinking on the above issues.

It appears clear that this group believes that the time has come for a sharp break with previous Federal policy-making and programming directed towards urban problems.* The need for a new "laundry list" of marginal adjustments and categorical aid programs is rejected. It is

* In fairness we might concede the Federal government has only recently begun to look at its role as solving urban problems as opposed to providing welfare payments, more housing etc. The fact that Feds feel this way now is of course a mamor advance. The fact that they increasingly are being held responsible for what happens in urban areas provides some assurance of the potential significance of our work.

felt, instead, that the President must alter or go outside the present framework (or even create a new framework) for decision-making about urban problems to seek ways and means for achieving national goals in urban areas. The task force believes that present activity and predictable future activity can be reshaped and criticized productively, but it also is convinced that such an approach offers faint promise as a source of significant innovation in solving urban problems. Indeed, the Task Force might go a step further and argue that the whole range of existing Federal programs and institutions primarily designed to solve urban problems have had a relatively minor impact on human and physical development in American cities.

This judgment (however qualified) is supported by the following -- admittedly over-simplified -- reasoning:

- 1) While the range and size of Federal activity has increased rapidly and while the institutions specifically charged with urban responsibility have multiplied and grown, general economic, social and physical trends have not altered significantly in any large city.
- 2) It seems therefore reasonable to assume that the forces shaping these trends are far more meaningful in affecting the quality of urban life than is the sum total of Federal programs focused on "urban needs".
- 3) It appears equally reasonable to conclude that the institutions, mechanisms, and dollars now available for developing urban policy at the Federal level are inadequate or misoriented in terms of understanding and confronting some of the most important questions in urban areas.

The implications of all this for the Task Force include the following:

- 1) Further infusions of Federal assistance through present or predictable grant-in-aid programs offer little hope of significantly altering major urban trends; therefore the Task Force should not commit a major portion of its limited resources to seeking new devices for such increases. Such devices, as well as adjustments in present devices, should have a place in Task Force recommendations only insofar as they spring from the kind of agenda suggested below.
- 2) The search for more effective levers for influencing urban trends is severely handicapped by the sorts of Federal apparatus and information available for dealing with urban problems.
(E.g. see attached paper on social deficits.)
- 3) The Task Force could most profitably allocate its time to assembling some of the major social and economic questions relevant to urban problems; indicating what kinds of institutions and/or devices for policy formulation are in existence or might be created to deal with such questions. (It is even possible that the Task Force might "solve" a question or two and have a basis for more specific policy recommendations.)

Questions might be modeled on the following:

- 1) One obvious goal for Federal policy is increasing income and, thus, consumer demand in the ghetto.

- (a) Where in the Federal establishment (in HUD?). Is there a means for sorting out the various policy alternatives which might be pursued to achieve this goal (e.g. negative income tax, family allowance, jobs for the poor, etc.).

The answer to such a question would include surveying existing scattered research and recommendations on the several alternatives and determining whether a basis exists already (though undiscovered) for packaging a Federal approach to fulfilling this goal. If this is so, we might recommend some method of pulling together urban-oriented policy-making on this questions. If, as is more likely the case, there is no sum total of effort which exhausts the alternative approaches to this problem our recommendations would include the need for same.

In short, the approach involves posing fundamental questions, determining if a solution is now available, and if not, what is needed to begin us down the road towards one.

One Task Force goal then becomes - at the most general level - not simply to look for the "real" levers in this urban game (we have neither staff, nor time, nor expertise to do a thorough job here) but rather to look for ways of elevating and refining the level and nature of urban policy-making.

It should not be difficult to start this process by agreeing on an initial list of questions. We already have some.

- 1) How can we increase consumer demand in the central city?
- 2) Have we systematically located and defined urban ghettos?
- 3) What is needed to create the capacity to calculate social defects in urban areas?
- 4) Where in the Federal establishment is work going forward on the possibilities to altering the flow of entrepreneurial activity to increase the share of central city.
- 5) etc.

Part II

The Task Force, it appears, is close to agreement on another set of concerns which can be approached by more traditional methods, and presumably would produce more traditional recommendations.

1) Changes in Federal assistance systems

The Task Force is justified in looking at such proposals as tax sharing, combining grant-in-aid programs etc., in terms of their relative impact on cities. It is clear that with a small input of staff resources we can contribute a city view to this dialogue.

2) Increasing the flow and consistency of investment into low-income housing in urban areas.

For whatever reason there seems to be a "neater" problem. We have considerable expertise among Task Force members themselves and should be able to assemble a set of recommendations in this area. In addition, while there are manpower, education and other Task forces, ours is the only one which will - if it chooses - look at housing this year.

3) Model cities

(a) This program represents, in a sense, the latest in Washington approaches to urban problems. We must confront and even judge it if we are to justify a major break with current approaches.

- (b) This program also represents the latest Federal response to the "ghetto" problem. Given the political, social and moral imperatives for doing something now about urban ghettos, the Task Force should make some attempt to review and evaluate the early directions of model cities.
- (c) This program also represents the boldest approach to altering the system of Federal assistance and therefore is related directly to item (1) above.