

NOTE: This is an interim report on follow-up to the June 10 Policy Council meeting.

MEMORANDUM

THE URBAN COALITION ACTION COUNCIL

June 14, 1968

TO: Members of the Policy Council

FROM: John W. Gardner

SUBJECT: Meeting with House of Representatives Leadership,
June 11, 1968

Andrew Heiskell, Arthur Flemming, Clarence Mitchell and I visited leading House members on June 11. We had conversations with Speaker McCormack, Majority Leader Carl Albert, Whip Hale Boggs, Appropriations Chairman George Mahon, Minority Leader Gerald Ford, and Ways and Means Chairman Wilbur Mills.

Although we talked about all of the various objectives of the Coalition, we gave special emphasis to the desirability of sparing the crucial urban programs in the \$6 billion budget cut. We also stressed the severe and very immediate need for the 75 million dollars for the OEO summer job programs and the 25 million dollars for Headstart.

We received the following reactions from the various members of Congress:

The Speaker, Mr. Albert, Mr. Boggs. They did not wish to make any cuts in the urban programs and hoped the Urban Coalition would help them prevent such cuts. They offered hope that, if the Republican leadership would go along, the 75 million dollars for jobs could be restored in the regular supplemental budget. The Senate would have to add it.

They felt this could be done even though the President has not requested it.

They told us that Congress will cut approximately three billion dollars, leaving the rest to the President, and felt that the President would have wide discretion to provide funding for urban programs.

George Mahon. His attitude was quite negative. He said that the Kerner report had contributed substantially to the unrest, and furthermore, the country could not buy its way out of riots. He felt that whatever was done on the Hill would make no difference.

When we stressed the need for 75 million dollars for the OEO summer job program, he responded that he had been told by the Bureau of the Budget that there would be 40% percent more jobs this year than last and that although this was not the best situation, it was "pretty good". He did not explain how the Budget Bureau arrived at its estimate.

Gerald Ford. Mr. Ford said Congress would cut around three billion dollars and the rest would be left to the President. He was somewhat optimistic about the 75 million dollars for OEO summer jobs and stated that possibly this could be accomplished. He stressed that it could be accomplished far more easily, however, if the President were to ask for it. He indicated that if it were to come back from the Senate it was possible that it could be sustained in conference.

Wilbur D. Mills. We had a long session with Mr. Mills who stated unequivocally that the \$6 billion could be cut without touching any of the crucial programs for the cities and the poor. He told us that Congress would cut around three billion dollars and stated further that cuts would be made in research and development and foreign aid.

He indicated that he favored the OEO program, and at the same time said that it was in some trouble. The request is 2.18 billion dollars and he stated that Congress probably would appropriate two billion.

He said further that all new "starts" in public works would be stopped. The highway program would continue; however, no new dams and other such public works projects would be built. He said that the Bureau of the Budget and the President agree with this.

In addition, he said that he believed the President was fully aware of the need to provide full funding for programs that affect urban areas.