

It's Good Business to Solve Cities' Ills, Provide Jobs, 200 Businessmen Hear

By ALEX COFFIN

More than 200 top businessmen, most of them from the Southeast, gathered in Atlanta Wednesday and generally agreed that it's simply good business to expand job opportunities and help solve urban problems.

The regional conference—business, rather than “social welfare” oriented—was held at the American Motor Hotel by the National Urban Coalition in cooperation with the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and city government.

A slide presentation, speeches and workshop discussion centered on the words of the keynote speaker, Gerald L. Phillippe, chairman of the board of General Electric Co., who said:

“What this situation boils down to is that at a time when business sees a wide need for a more effective labor force, the urban labor market will provide

us with less than ever in terms of quality and quantity.”

“The cities are going to be his principal market place, and, more importantly, the prime source of his labor supply.”

Rodney Austin, personnel manager for Reynolds Tobacco Co., said. “The point of the Urban Coalition is that you can change things.” But, Austin, warned, business should “clean up, eliminate duplication, then fill the gaps.” in the field of employment.

Austin, who headed one of the workshop discussions, told of Winston-Salem, N.C. Mayor M. C. Benton's urging the business community to be informed realistically concerned, committed and massively involved.

Phillippe said it this way: The Urban Coalition “is trying to see if it can generate more action at all levels of the business community — some-

thing tantamount to a national head of steam — to try and turn this ghetto situation around.

“If we businessmen are not going to take major role in tackling, and eventually solving, the problems in our cities, then who will?”

The frequently heard problem of getting the jobs and the people together got a full airing. Also, the problem of the underemployed.

Phillippe said that effective program must be geared to the ghetto, even the neighborhood in the ghetto. And, he said, real work opportunities must be provided. “What we should offer is a hand-up, not a hand-out,” he said.

New hiring techniques and practices must be used—taking into consideration the prior experiences and present attitudes of the urban dweller of today, Phillippe said.

Dr. Lawrence D. Reddick, executive director of Opportunities Industrialization Center Institute in Philadelphia, said earlier in the day that employers must be concerned with those unemployed who have given up looking, those who work full time for part-time pay and those who work part-time but want to work full time.

Skills that are marketable must be provided, Reddick said.

In some cases, James J. Forth of General Electric, said, firms can lessen skill requirements because of recent technological advances. “Also, the skill of the worker can be increased,” he added.

The morning workshops featured a film prepared by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta city government, the Community Council of the Atlanta Area and Economic Opportunity Atlanta.

The film pointed to the paradox of the existence here of “jobs needing people” and “people needing jobs.”

And while white-collar jobs will increase greatly in the years to come, the great increase in the central city population will be among the unqualified.

“Unemployment can stop growth in its tracks” and “strengthen the market by decreasing the tax drain” were other points made by the film.

Several expressed concern that not enough businessmen involved themselves in the operation of the schools—who supply the “most important raw material,” according to Eugene Rowen, administrative director of Plans for Progress. “They (businessmen) remain aloof and allow what they wouldn't from other suppliers.”

William Flynn, director of the STEP program of the National

Urban Talks to Draw 250

Some 250 business leaders are expected at a regional National Urban Coalition job conference at the American Motor Hotel Wednesday.

The major address will be by

Gerald L. Phillippe, chairman of the board of General Electric Co., at the luncheon.

Workshops on various phases of employment opportunity will be held at morning and afternoon sessions.

The National Urban Coalition was formed last fall to serve as a super lobby for urban areas and to inform the public about urban problems.

Mayor Ivan Allen formed a local coalition a few weeks ago.

Association of Manufacturers, warned those in attendance earlier in the day:

“Attending conferences is not a substitute for action following the conference.”