

Negro Stand Snags U.S. Ghetto Plan

WASHINGTON (AP)—The federal government is having trouble giving away \$1.5 million to finance an experiment in breaking down barriers between police and Negroes in slum sections of the nation's capital.

The problem: Negroes oppose the project.

The snarl underscores the deep distrust that both sides agree already divides Negroes from the police in a city marked by recent riots and frequent shooting incidents. Four policemen and six Negroes have been killed in recent confrontations.

"Police are increasingly seen as an occupying force in hostile territory," top Washington police officials admit in a preamble to the antipoverty proposal.

To try to ease this tension, the Office of Economic Opportunity wants to give police \$1.5 million to set up a series of storefront centers in the Negro ghetto.

Police would provide around-the-clock emergency services for neighborhood residents in need. Citizens' councils would help run the centers. Ghetto teen-agers would be enlisted in youth patrols.

"You would have a paid network of police informers," objects Wilbert Williams, a Negro leader.

Williams and other opponents

of the program are insisting on more neighborhood control over the police in the service centers. But a top OEO spokesman says the main reason for their resistance is simply "they don't want to fund the fuzz."

Gerson M. Green, the energetic young OEO official who is trying to spearhead the police experiment, believes law and order is necessary to reversal of poverty in the ghetto, but thinks it cannot be achieved unless the police can secure the cooperation of the neighborhood community.

Two out of three residents of Washington are Negroes. Four out of five policemen are white. Patrick V. Murphy, the city's director of public safety, says, "Police have come to occupy the role of a coercive, adversary force especially in Negro inner-city areas."

Murphy has taken the leadership in pushing Green's experiment. The proposal was unveiled a month ago at a news conference by Murphy and Walter Washington, the city's appointed Negro mayor.

Under a 1967 change in the law, the OEO's local antipoverty wing, the United Planning Organization, can veto an experimental program in its province. To OEO's surprise, it did so.

Williams, a member of the UPO board and head of its advisory council of the poor, led the attack. Among other things, Williams argues the hard-pinched antipoverty money should be spent on programs that visibly help the poor, not on the police.

Wiley A. Branton, UPO's executive director, says his organization wasn't consulted in the planning and argues ghetto residents will hardly embrace a police program that is being imposed on them.

"The distrust is a deep-seated thing," says Branton.

The squabble has settled into an exchange of memorandums, disputes over technicalities, counterproposals and countercharges, and an OEO argument that UPO didn't have enough board members present to make its veto legal. At any rate, OEO can override the veto, and probably will do so if it can't reach a compromise with UPO.

The birth pangs hardly point to any assurance of success for the experiment in improving relations between police and the poor. But an OEO spokesman stresses the need for the project with the simple argument: "Nothing else has worked."