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August 8, 1969

Mr. Clay Coss, Editor
Civic Education Service
1733 Kay Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Coss:

In reference to your letter of June 11, I have been asked to shed some light on the issue of student involvement in terms of what the Atlanta Urban Corps is attempting to do.

Atlanta Urban Corps (AUC), on whose staff I serve, is an organization whose purpose is to channel student energy and talent into service-oriented jobs in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

AUC began its operations this summer. There are "Urban Corps'" functioning in approximately 20 other American cities. These range very widely in terms of the numbers of students enrolled and the scope of the programs involved.

Our operation is composed of approximately 225 students, placed in 17 city government departments and 38 private service agencies (a complete list is attached). We have a staff of approximately 20, all of whom are students.

Our financing comes from several sources: The City of Atlanta, The Southern Regional Education Board, some of the agencies with which our interns are working, various local businesses, and The Federal College Work-Study Finance Program.

Although our presently ongoing jobs terminate at the end of the summer, we have already made plans to continue our operations on a limited basis during the regular school year, and are planning for a program to involve 1,000 students next summer.

AUC subscribes to, and bases its existence on the relatively new educational theory of service-learning. This proposition contends that a significant additional dimension to the higher educational experience is to be found outside the formal classroom setting. It responds to legitimate cries for relevant educational experiences by contributing to efforts to revise the structure of higher education in a way that would allow more for the training of practitioners than of merely academicians.

AUC maintains a full-time Education-Evaluation staff of four and a consultant staff of five faculty members whose collective responsibility it is to make as significant as possible the educational experience of our interns. The staff makes

So, in the final analysis, the success or failure of our program and others like it depends on whether this very real obstacle can be overcome. If those in the establishment are disposed to change, students are willing to work with them to achieve it. If there are enough in the establishment who are determined to resist change, then students are prepared to do what is necessary to force it. And if this be the only way to achieve change, even though destructive tactics may be used, the effort could prove indeed to be the most truly constructive action that could be taken.

Sincerely,

Tim F. Rogers
Atlanta Urban Corps

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Enclosure

cc: Sam Williams, Director
Atlanta Urban Corps

cc: Mr. Dan Sweat ✓
Office of the Mayor
City of Atlanta

regular visits to interns in the field, aiding in any appropriate way their adjustments into their jobs, and helping them to evaluate for themselves their experience in terms both of the learning and the service aspects involved. Working with the faculty consultants, Education-Evaluation staffers also plan a regular program of seminars designed specifically to enhance the educational experience of the interns. Finally, a constant evaluation of the agencies in which our interns work is carried on, so as to assure that the jobs in which we place interns sufficiently involve both service and an opportunity for learning.

Ideally a service-learning organization such as the AUC provides a significant part of the answer to the question of how student dissent and dissatisfaction can be channeled into constructive action. There are two basic criteria which must be met if it is in fact to be so.

The first is that students must agree to involve themselves in such an effort. They must commit themselves to the idea that significant change can be achieved through working with "the establishment." By and large, we have found a good response by students in our area. Just in our first summer of operation, we had a good many more students apply than could be placed. True, a key factor in this response was the desire, indeed the necessity, for many students to earn sufficient amounts to enable themselves to continue their schooling. But I believe that if students are truly convinced that a significant opportunity for constructive change exists through working within "the establishment," then they are willing to do so.

This leads to the second, and more fundamental point. In order for a program like ours to work, agencies must be willing to open themselves up for legitimate work opportunities for students. Unfortunately, some agencies with which we are working have in fact offered only make-work jobs for our interns, or have assigned them merely to assume already existant work loads in order that regular employees may be able to enjoy lessened responsibilities during the summer.

There are three basic reasons for this attitude on the part of the agencies. First, some look only for cheap summer labor. Obviously, they do not offer the type relationships we seek, and once identified, they will presumably be referred to commercial placement agencies.

Secondly, some employers are simply not convinced of the ability of college students to perform satisfactorily in positions of responsibility. Presumably after a year or two of successful efforts of students in such capacities, the majority of the doubters will see the light.

Finally, the crux of the problem emerges. This is, simply, that many people in city and other governmental agencies, and private agencies, and many of those that support these agencies are simply not interested in change. They favor the status quo. They are not interested in channeling student dissatisfaction into constructive action. They would prefer quietly burying student dissidence in make-work or busy-work functions to busting their heads, but they would prefer the latter to acceding to demands for change. Students know that the establishment is full of this kind, and are most wary of them. Indeed, they sometimes are over-wary of them and tend to brand all "over thirties" as being of this nature. If students are going to be put down they want to go down fighting and with note-not be buried and forgotten in some treadmill of meaninglessness and/or ineffectuality.