

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 16, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

As the new year begins it occurs to me that you might find useful a general assessment of the position of Negroes at the end of the first year of your administration, and of the decade in which their position has been the central domestic political issue.

In quantitative terms, which are reliable, the American Negro is making extraordinary progress. In political terms, somewhat less reliable, this would also appear to be true. In each case, however, there would seem to be countercurrents that pose a serious threat to the welfare of the blacks, and the stability of the society, white and black.

1. Employment and Income.

The 1960's saw the great breakthrough for blacks. A third (32%) of all families of Negro and other races earned \$8000 or more in 1968 compared, in constant dollars, with 15% in 1960.

The South is still a problem. Slightly more than half (52%) of the Negro population lived in the South in 1969. There, only 19% of families

of Negro and other races earned over \$8000.

Young Negro families are achieving income parity with young white families. Outside the South, young husband-wife Negro families have 99% the income of whites! For families headed by a male age 25 to 34 the proportion was 87 percent. Thus it may be this ancient gap is finally closing.

Income reflects employment, and this changed dramatically in the 1960's. Blacks continued to have twice the unemployment rates of whites, but these were down for both groups. In 1969 the rate for married men of Negro and other races was only 2.5 percent. Teenagers, on the other hand, continued their appalling rates: 24.4 percent in 1969.

Black occupations improved dramatically. The number of professional and technical employees doubled in the period 1960-68. This was two and a half times the increase for whites. In 1969 Negro and other races provide 10 percent of the other-than-college teachers. This is roughly their proportion of the population. (11 percent.)

2. Education.

In 1968, 19 percent of Negro children three and four years' old were enrolled in school, compared to 15 percent of white children.

Forty-five percent of Negroes 18 and 19 years' old were in school, almost the equal of the white proportion of 51 percent. Negro college enrollment rose 85 percent between 1964 and 1968, by which time there were 434,000 Negro college students. (The total full time university population of Great Britain is 200,000.)

Educational achievement should not be exaggerated. Only 16% of Negro high school seniors have verbal test scores at or above grade level. But blacks are staying in school.

3. Female Headed Families.

This problem does not get better, it gets worse. In 1969 the proportion of husband-wife families of Negro and other races declined once again, this time to 68.7 percent. The illegitimacy ratio rose once again, this time to 29.4 percent of all live births. (The white ratio rose more sharply, but was still only 4.9 percent.)

Increasingly, the problem of Negro poverty is the problem of the female headed family. In 1968, 56 percent of Negro families with income under \$3000 were female headed. In 1968, for the first time, the number of poor Negro children in female headed families (2,241,000) was greater than the number in male headed families (1,947,000).

4. Social Pathology.

The incidence of anti-social behavior among young black males continues to be extraordinarily high. Apart from white racial attitudes, this is the biggest problem black Americans face, and in part it helps shape white racial attitudes. Black Americans injure one another. Because blacks live in de facto segregated neighborhoods, and go to de facto segregated neighborhoods, the socially stable elements of the black population cannot escape the socially pathological ones. Routinely their children get caught up in the anti-social patterns of the others.

You are familiar with the problem of crime. Let me draw your attention to another phenomenon, exactly parallel, and originating in exactly the same social circumstances. Fire. Unless I mistake the trends, we are heading for a genuinely serious fire problem in American cities. In New York, for example, between 1956 and 1969 the over-all fire alarm rate more than tripled, from 69,000 alarms to 240,000. These alarms are concentrated in slum neighborhoods, primarily black. (See Appendix One.) In 1968 one slum area had an alarm rate per square mile thirteen times that of the city as a whole. In another the number of alarms has, on average, increased 44 percent per year for seven years.

Many of these fires are the result of population density. But a great many are more or less deliberately set. (Thus on Monday welfare protestors set two fires in the New York State Capitol.) Fires are in fact a "leading indicator" of social pathology for a neighborhood. They come first. Crime, and the rest, follows. The psychiatric interpretation of fire-setting is complex, but it relates to the types of personalities which slums produce. (A point of possible interest. Fires in the black slums peak in July and August. The urban riots of 1964-1968 could be thought of as epidemic conditions of an endemic situation.)

5. Social Alienation.

With no real evidence, I would nonetheless suggest that a great deal of the crime, the fire setting, the rampant school violence, and other such phenomenon in the black community have become quasi-politicized. Hatred -- revenge -- against whites is now an acceptable excuse for doing what might have been done anyway. This is bad news for any society, especially when it takes form which the Black Panthers seem to have adopted.

This social alienation among the black lower classes is matched, and probably enhanced, by a virulent form of anti-white feeling among

portions of the large and prospering black middle class. It would be difficult to overestimate the degree to which young well educated blacks detest white America.

6. The Nixon Administration.

As you have candidly acknowledged, the relation of the administration to the black population is a problem. I think it ought also to be acknowledged that we are a long way from solving it. During the past year intense efforts have been made by the administration to develop programs that will be of help to the blacks. I dare say, as much or more time and attention goes into this effort in this administration than any in history. But little has come of it. There has been a great deal of political ineptness in some Departments, and you have been the loser.

I don't know what you can do about this. Perhaps nothing. But I do have four suggestions.

First. Sometime early in the year I would gather together the administration officials who are most involved with these matters and talk out the subject a bit. There really is a need for a more coherent administration approach to a number of issues. (Which I can list for you, if you like.)

Second. The time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of "benign neglect." The subject has been too much talked about. The forum has been too much taken over to hysterics, paranoids, and boodlers on all sides. We may need a period in which Negro progress continues and racial rhetoric fades. The administration can help bring this about by paying close attention to such progress -- as we are doing -- while seeking to avoid situations in which extremists of either race are given opportunities for martyrdom, heroics, histrionics or whatever. Greater attention to Indians, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans would be useful. A tendency to ignore provocations from groups such as the Black Panthers might also be useful. (The Panthers were apparently almost defunct until the Chicago police raided one of their headquarters and transformed them into culture heroes for the white -- and black -- middle class. You perhaps did not note on the society page of yesterday's Times that Mrs. Leonard Bernstein gave a cocktail party on Wednesday to raise money for the Panthers. Mrs. W. Vincent Astor was among the guests. Mrs. Peter Duchin, "the rich blond wife of the orchestra leader" was thrilled. "I've never met a Panther," she said. This is a first for me.")

Third. We really ought to be getting on with research on crime. We just don't know enough. It is a year now since the administration came to office committed to doing something about crime in the streets. But frankly, in that year I don't see that we have advanced either our understanding of the problem, or that of the public at large. (This of course may only reveal my ignorance of what is going on.)

At the risk of indiscretion, may I put it that lawyers are not professionally well equipped to do much to prevent crime. Lawyers are not managers, and they are not researchers. The logistics, the ecology, the strategy and tactics of reducing the incidence of certain types of behavior in large urban populations simply are not things lawyers think about often.

We are never going to "learn" about crime in a laboratory sense. But we almost certainly could profit from limited, carefully done studies. I don't think these will be done unless you express a personal interest.

Fourth. There is a silent black majority as well as a white one. It is mostly working class, as against lower middle class. It is politically moderate (on issues other than racial equality) and shares

most of the concerns of its white counterpart. This group has been generally ignored by the government, and the media. The more recognition we can give to it, the better off we shall all be. (I would take it, for example, that Ambassador Holland is a natural leader of this segment of the black community. There are others like him.)

Daniel P. Moynihan

Attachment

TOTAL ALARM RATES IN THREE NEIGHBORHOODS

1962-68

TOTAL ALARMS PER SQUARE MILE

11000
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000

Neighborhood #209
Brownsville

Neighborhood #212
East New York

Neighborhood #271
Flatlands

1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968

FIGURE 1

