

AN URBAN SERVICE CORPS FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUTH: NOT JUST JOBS, BUT GOOD JOBS WITH A FUTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1975 was not a good year for working people. Unemployment in May 1975 hit 9.2%, and was still rising. President Ford's 1975-76 budget and economic projections forecast a jobless rate of at least 8% for the rest of that year and the next.¹ While average yearly unemployment has exceeded 5% for eleven of the past nineteen years, our current troubles are clearly the most serious economic recession since the 1930's.

For young people in the ghettos of our major cities, however, the word "recession" has a cruelly different meaning. For them, a recession would be an improvement. Throughout the postwar years, minority teenagers and young adults have had unemployment rates consistently higher than those of the rest of the labor force. During the booming sixties, when national unemployment was only a little more than 3%, the jobless rate among Black teenagers was 30%.² The rate hovered around 25% for Puerto Rican youth during the same period, and federal surveys found 20% of young Chicanos out of work.³

The past five years have only made minority youth unemployment worse and have widened the gap between them and their white counterparts. The 1972 Black teenage jobless rate was 33.5%, over twice that for whites of the same age (14.2%).⁴ The current economic slump has sharpened this persistent problem into a crisis. One single stark comparison makes this point most dramatically: while mass unemployment during the Great Depression never topped 25%,⁵ the official first-quarter 1975 unemployment rate for non-white inner-city teenagers was 43.2%.⁶ For these young work-

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1. N.Y. Times, Feb. 4, 1975, at 1, col. 5.

2. TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND, THE JOB CRISIS FOR BLACK YOUTH: REPORT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND TASK FORCE ON EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF BLACK YOUTH 3 (1971).

3. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, SPECIAL SURVEY ON YOUNG PUERTO RICANS AND CHICANOS (1971).

4. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, MANPOWER ADMINISTRATION, MANPOWER REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, at 211, Table A-5 (1975).

5. *Id.* Table B-10.

6. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, LABOR FORCE DEVELOPMENTS: FIRST QUARTER 1975, at 12, Table 8 (1975).

ers, a jobless rate of mere recession dimensions would be a tremendous improvement.

Even these federal statistics do not capture the whole problem. Many young inner-city workers have simply given up the job search, and are consequently not counted among the unemployed. Professor Bernard Anderson of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance and Commerce has estimated that a true measure of Black teenage unemployment would exceed 65%.⁷ By this estimate, 570,000 of the nation's 880,000 Blacks between the ages of 16 and 19 cannot find work. "What this means," Anderson added during a recent Associated Press interview, "is that a very large number of black teenagers, especially in the inner-cities, cannot look with any optimism on holding a full-time job for any length of time between now and adulthood. . . I don't want to scare anybody. I don't want this to be a horror story. But we have a problem here. This is why we have a high crime rate. We have hundreds of kids standing around doing nothing. This is why we have a teenage gang problem."⁸

Compounding the unemployment problems of ghetto youth are those of subemployment. Many young people work fulltime and still do not derive adequate income. Others can only find part-time jobs even though they want to work fulltime. Sar Levitan and Robert Taggard have computed an Employment and Earnings Inadequacy Index (EEI) and have shown that earnings inadequacies are a more serious social problem than the incidence of actual unemployment.⁹ Since EEI figures do not include inner-city youths but instead concentrate more on "mainstream" sectors of the labor force, these findings are all the more remarkable. There is no reason to think that subemployment is any less severe among inner-city teens; indeed, some of Levitan's earlier research¹⁰ suggests that it is even more widespread among this group.

Ghetto youth joblessness is not only tragic in scope, but also frustrating in its complexity. It is in many ways a hidden problem. It receives widespread attention only in periods of high mass unemployment, creating a concern which fades as the economy heats up again; or in the wake of urban violence, when many commitments are made as much for public relations value as for any other reason. It is a hidden problem, too, because we have chosen not to look for it. Most of our labor statistics deal with broad national trends or with the problems of the "mainstream" work force. Critical definitions, such as the objective standards for "actively seeking work" (a prerequisite for being counted as unemployed) are biased against young workers who seek jobs through personal contacts and word-of-mouth channels. Youth joblessness has not created a distinct constituency with political "clout" because, while the problem is a constant one, the directly affected group is not: young people, grow older. Moreover, inner-city youths have

7. *Cf.* New Haven Register, Mar. 12, 1975, at 6.

8. *Id.*

9. Levitan, of George Washington University, is a leading analyst of manpower and poverty problems and policies; Taggard has been active in manpower programming in New York City and at the Federal level.

10. S. LEVITAN, & R. TAGGART III, *EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS INADEQUACY: A NEW SOCIAL INDICATOR 88-90* (1974).

no tradition of organized conventional political activity, and their electoral participation rates since the advent of the 18 year-old vote have been notoriously low.

Most troublesome and frustrating of all is the structural nature of the crisis. High jobless rates during the prosperous sixties show that this labor market problem cannot be solved by a simple expansion of society's purchasing power. Policies designed to attack the ghetto youth unemployment problem, then, must be targeted specifically to ghetto youth, and must not—indeed cannot—be contingent upon full employment in the economy at large. Young people in the inner-city simply have unemployment problems *all the time*.

It might be argued that targeted programs have already been tried, through Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and other youth manpower policies. Programs directed at young people were indeed a big part of the War on Poverty. They were based on a general "cycle of poverty" theory which held that poor families pass poverty on from generation to generation. The cycle could best be broken by concentrating on young people, for they still had the time and flexibility to learn new values and a way of life which would enable them to succeed.

The War on Poverty manpower strategy thus concentrated on changing young workers. Young minority workers didn't do well on the labor market, it was argued, because the cycle of poverty deprived them of the education, work-related values, and experience necessary to get and keep a good job. A program meeting these needs would enable young workers to function in the labor market on a competitive footing. Hence most War on Poverty programs offered occupational training, literacy and math lessons, and pointers on health, grooming and job-hunting. Jobs supplied by these projects were seen mainly as providing an income incentive to join or remain in a program, or as a means for imparting "work experience." They were not supposed to be a direct start on a lasting occupation, but rather were part of the process of changing young workers.

The results were discouraging. Millions of dollars, public and private, were poured into Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and other projects in dozens of cities. Thousands of young people had at least some contact with one kind of corps or another. Yet many programs were plagued by high dropout rates, racial tensions, antagonisms with host communities, and bitter "alumni" whose later experiences in the job market did not match the promises they had been given. While any program can point to a few individual success stories, ghetto youth unemployment is worse than ever today.

These problems did not stem from insufficient funding and commitment. Were this the case, we should still expect War on Poverty programs to have been effective for the young people they did reach. There is little evidence, however, that training programs decisively improved the long-term labor market prospects of their graduates.¹¹ And these training programs were

11. See S. LEVITAN, *YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ACT* (1963); S. LEVITAN, G. MANGUM & R. TAGGARO III, *ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN THE GHETTO: THE PARTNERSHIPS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS* (1970); and S. LEVITAN, *EMERGENCY EMPLOYMENT ACT: THE PEP GENERATION* (1974).

begun in the tight labor market of the sixties, a very favorable economic environment for placing young workers in jobs.

In our judgment the problems with programs designed to train young workers were a consequence not of the level of funding provided, but of the theories and assumptions on which these efforts were based. Youth manpower programs should not have concentrated solely on training young workers. They should have emphasized changing the labor market itself.

II. IS "THE" LABOR MARKET REALLY TWO LABOR MARKETS?

What we decide to do about unemployment—whether we try to change workers or the labor market itself—depends upon how we explain its persistence. As recently as the twenties many economists did not even include joblessness in their theories of the economic system, assuming that people out of work were there by their own choices. Today, however, unemployment theories are a matter of spirited debate.

Until recently, two explanations of unemployment have dominated the field. One, with a neo-classical economic heritage, is the "job search" theory. Job search theorists hold that persistent unemployment of specific groups in the labor force is voluntary and temporary. It is argued that workers have unrealistically high wage expectations. This, combined with relatively generous unemployment compensation available for extended periods of time, means that workers are inclined to spend more time searching for a new job, thus increasing the jobless rate. Proposed remedies include re-orienting workers' expectations of the labor market and decreasing the amount and duration of unemployment benefits.

Another, more widely accepted approach to the unemployment dilemma is the "human capital" theory. Workers enter the labor market with varying amounts of human capital—education, skills, work orientations or experience. Those possessing the most human capital are hired first and get the best jobs; those with few assets must wait at the end of the labor "queue" (i.e., line of persons waiting to be brought into service.) These are the last hired and first fired. Blacks, women, and youths are over-represented at the tail end of the queue, the argument goes, because they have fewer of the assets needed for a good job. This theory leads to the conclusion that the way to help disadvantaged workers is to increase their human capital through job training programs and work experiences. This theory will be readily recognized as the approach underlying such War on Poverty programs as Job Corps and Neighborhood Youth Corps.

A new perspective has recently emerged which departs from both the job search and human capital views. The "dual-labor-market" theory posits a labor market divided into two sectors: a "primary" sector, with preferred, well-paid jobs offering security and advancement, and a "secondary" sector of undesirable, intermittent, low-paid jobs. Secondary-sector jobs offer little or no security, and no hope of advancement. It is important to note that "primary" and "secondary" do not mean white-collar and blue-collar. An industrial job offering attractive pay, fringe benefits and chances for security

and advancement is a primary-sector job. Temporary clerical work, involving as it does intermittent work, unpredictable weekly earnings, frequent shifts from employer to employer, and no probability of promotion, is secondary-sector work despite its white-collar nature. The essential characteristic of secondary-sector jobs is that they are dead-end, and not that they may involve menial work. Because their secondary-sector jobs do not allow financial or occupational security and progress, young workers move quickly from job to job, suffering frequent unemployment and constant financial problems and frustration.

Another key point of the dual-labor-market theory is the contention that, while most workers in the secondary sector are capable of learning and performing well in primary-market jobs, there is little mobility from the secondary to the primary sector. There are a number of reasons for this. Outright racism and sexism mean that women and minorities are underrepresented in the primary sector. This may be because employers (or labor union officials) assume that these workers lack ability, or that a lack of formal schooling disqualifies many of them from good jobs. Or it may simply be a consequence of prejudice or of reluctance to antagonize white employees. Other barriers to mobility cited by dual labor market theorists include a tendency by employers to insist on unnecessarily high levels of education from job applicants, and to regard young workers' habits and attitudes not as adaptations to the intermittent, dead-end jobs of the secondary market, but as indicative of a lack of motivation and ability. It is not suggested that ghetto youths are capable of immediately moving into the executive suite, but rather that these barriers keep them out of the entry-level jobs and informal learning experiences which can lead to lasting careers.

Job-search and human capital theories suggest a need for changing young workers. Hence the job training programs which are intended to increase the supply of trained laborers. The problem with this approach is that there is no guarantee that jobs will actually be available for graduates of such programs.

The dual-labor-market theory, by contrast, emphasizes changing the labor market itself by breaking down the barriers around the primary market and opening up jobs. These are "job creation" strategies, which increase the demand for the labor and abilities of secondary-sector workers, such as inner-city young people. Thus, we should concentrate on increasing the available supply of good jobs, rather than training people for jobs which may never be available.

The dual-labor-market theory has critics, to be sure. Research on some of its main points is as yet incomplete. It has been criticized for asserting that hiring decisions are not made on the basis of human capital or productive ability, while failing to fully explain how such decisions are indeed made. Other critics suggest that the theory may not take adequate account of the influence that a job applicant's apparent lack of appropriate work skills and habits has on hiring and promotion decisions by employers.¹² Despite these

12. See Feldstein, *The Economics of the New Unemployment*, 33 THE PUBLIC INTEREST 3 (1973).

limitations, the dual-labor-market theory provides useful insights into the unemployment problems of ghetto youth, and into why the programs of the past have not served them well.

III. NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CORPS: WHAT WENT WRONG?

The Neighborhood Youth Corps is a prime example of a War on Poverty youth program. In the sixties, the Youth Corps consisted of in-school and out-of-school programs combining training and "work experience" to keep young people in school or get them to resume their education. It was open to teenage boys and girls. Program sponsors often were local school districts. It was, in short, a "human capital" program designed to increase the labor-market assets of its enrollees.

In 1970, a major federal evaluation concluded that the Youth Corps programs had been extremely beneficial to young Black women, but of little help to many young black men.¹³ Why the diversity of outcomes?

A critical difference was in the kind of work experiences offered young men versus young women. A dual-labor-market perspective would lead us to expect that if Youth Corp work experiences had some of the characteristics of primary-sector jobs, then young people would stay with them because of the opportunity to do interesting work and to compete for advancement. If, on the other hand, the Youth Corps jobs were like those already available in the secondary sector, then young workers would likely treat them like any other secondary job, staying with them only until something better came along.¹⁴

This seems to have been the case in the Youth Corps. Jobs for young women were much more desirable than those for young men.¹⁵ Although they paid no more, they offered para-professional work which brought young women into contact with teachers, nurses, librarians and other professionals providing positive role models and constructive supervision. Jobs given to young women offered a pleasant work environment, marketable skills, and a real chance of getting a good job following the Youth Corps experience.

Jobs given to young men, by contrast, were definitely dead-end. Floor-sweeping and leaf-raking were common Youth Corps jobs for young men; they offered no chance of advancement or of acquiring marketable skills. The supervisors of young men were frequently untrained and unsympathetic. Both young men and women thought of their supervisors as "the most important figure in the program," according to the Youth Corps evaluators,

13. The seminal work in this area is G. BECKER, *HUMAN CAPITAL* (1964).

14. A concise and interesting discussion of the dual labor market theory appears in P. Doeringer & M. Piore, *Unemployment and the Dual Labor Market*, 38 *THE PUBLIC INTEREST* 67 (1975). For other dualist points of view see the works of (among others) Lester C. Thurow, Bennett Harrison, Charles Betsey, Thomas Vietorisz, Howard M. Wachtel, Barry F. Bluestone, P.J. Andrisani, and Paul Osterman.

15. For critiques of the dual-labor-market theory see Wachter, *Primary and Secondary Labor Markets: a Critique of the Dual Approach*, in *BROOKINGS, PAPERS ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES* 637-93 (1973); and Cain, *Toward a Summary and Synthesis of the Evidence*, in *INCOME MAINTENANCE AND LABOR SUPPLY: ECONOMETRIC STUDIES* (G. Cain & H. Watts eds. 1973). A radical critique of the dual-market view, as well as a categorization of various theoretical approaches, appears in D. GORDON, *THEORIES OF POVERTY AND UNDER-EMPLOYMENT: OTHERDOX, RADICAL AND DUAL LABOR PERSPECTIVES* (1972).

but the supervisors of young men "were similar to the types of supervisor the enrollees had known in jobs they held before entering the NYC program."

In essence, the young women were offered work with at least a few primary-sector job characteristics, while young men were given just another menial job. As a result, the young women were more likely to stay in the Youth Corps, complete their training and education, and derive lasting benefit, while young men drifted into and out of the program.

High dropout rates for young men in the Youth Corps do not indicate that recruits were unmotivated or didn't want to work. Indeed, the evaluators found that the "NYC enrollees entertain(ed) educational and occupational aspirations very similar to those of middle-class youth". Rather, young men acted rationally. They stayed with the Youth Corps only as long as a better opportunity was not available, just as the dual-labor-market theory would predict. The Labor Department's analysis reached a similar conclusion, observing that enrollee's reactions "may mean that they expected little of the program except as a "tide over" experience . . . this was an attitude more prevalent among males than the females . . ."16

IV. NOT JUST JOBS, BUT GOOD JOBS

A youth manpower policy based on the dual-labor-market approach must not merely open up jobs for inner-city teens, but must open up jobs with at least some of the characteristics of primary-sector occupations. To be sure, not every young person can occupy challenging, interesting and well-paying positions. In our economy, there will always be relatively menial, entry-level, mundane jobs to be filled. But menial labor need not be secondary-sector work. If entry-level jobs offer security, good pay, and a chance to move into something better, then they have at least some primary-sector characteristics. A national manpower program for jobless youths should avoid perpetuating the dual-labor market. Instead federal programs should pay relatively well, offer interesting work, provide a chance for advancement, and must be permanent, rather than summertime or intermittent job opportunities. And all of this must be backed up by a lasting commitment, regardless of whether the rest of the economy is booming or slumping. How do we do this?

A. *Public Service Employment*

Public Service Employment (PSE) is a widely accepted strategy for creating jobs during periods of high unemployment. PSE jobs are typically with public agencies at various levels of government, or with non-profit institutions such as hospitals. Private industries and individuals can at times benefit from PSE too, as is the case with police patrols funded by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

The New Deal was PSE's finest hour. The National Youth Administration financed public service jobs for unemployed students and school dropouts. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) created a wide variety of administrative, professional and clerical positions for people without the

16. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR MANPOWER ADMINISTRATION, *THE NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CORPS: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH* (1970).

construction skills needed for public works. Robert Moses' liberal interpretation of the CWA mandate got its workers involved in construction work as well. Many other "alphabet-soup" agencies of the 1930s were PSE strategies, too, including WPA, PWA, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA).

PSE emerged again in 1963, this time directed specifically at young people. Senator Hubert Humphrey and Representative Carl Perkins proposed the Youth Employment Act (YEA) to the 88th Congress. YEA would have provided jobs for disadvantaged young people in public agencies and facilities, and in private non-profit institutions. YEA was never enacted, due at least in part to the Kennedy administration's preference for job training. YEA was later substantially altered and transformed into the Youth Corps and the Youth Conservation Corps.

More recent PSE programs have included the Emergency Employment Act of 1971¹⁷ (commonly known as the Public Employment Program or PEP), CETA and the Emergency Jobs and Unemployment Assistance Act of 1974.¹⁸ These federal programs have provided funding for public service jobs at the state and local levels. PEP and early CETA guidelines emphasized transitional jobs eventually leading to permanent, locally-funded public- or private-sector jobs. The Emergency Jobs Act, though, changed CETA into an anti-recession policy to counteract widespread unemployment.

PSE's main virtue is efficiency. Public Service programs have very short "start-up" times and transfer income to recipients almost immediately. Very little funding is absorbed by administrative costs: Sar Levitan and Robert Taggard found that 94% of the funding for PEP went directly into worker's salaries and benefits, with only 6% needed for overhead expenses.

The list of useful tasks appropriate for PSE workers is almost endless. Therefore, people can be put to work quickly and the economic benefits are felt immediately. Bennett Harrison of MIT has argued persuasively that PSE not only puts money in worker's pockets quickly, but also generates the earliest benefits in terms of increased tax yields and demand for goods and services.¹⁹ Other anti-recession policies involve much longer delays. Public works projects take time for design, planning, and approvals from the proper agencies. Investment tax credits, increases in government spending, and tax cuts entail delays as well, because it takes time for consumption of goods and services to be turned into an increased demand for labor.

PSE, then, is an effective anti-recession device. But it may still not be the most effective way to attack the problems of inner-city youth. One basic reason is the structural nature of unemployment among young ghetto workers, who suffer depression-level unemployment rates even in years when the economy as a whole is booming. Simply heating up overall economic activity by creating PSE jobs will not decisively improve the long-term job prospects of ghetto teens.

17. Pub. L. No. 92-54, 85 U.S. Stat. 146.

18. 29 U.S.C. §§ 801-992 (1970).

19. Harrison, *Comment of a Radical Economist*, in *PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS HISTORY, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS* (A. Gartner, R.A. Nixon, & F. Reissman eds. 1973).

PSE has other problems. Not every sector of public service is equally flexible in adding or cutting jobs. While many youngsters are capable of doing useful work in hospitals, for example, the health care industry is highly institutionalized, and it is difficult to rapidly alter levels of service and staffing. Another problem is more political: It is doubtful that any administration would advocate an extensive PSE program for ghetto and minority youths until the job problems of primary-sector workers have been largely alleviated. Ironically enough, when that is accomplished, PSE expenditures for youth might well be ruled out as inflationary.

Finally, there is the critical problem of targeting. Since heating up the whole economy will not substantially solve the ghetto youth unemployment problem, jobs created must be matched up directly with young inner-city workers. Yet the Nixon/Ford "New Federalism" has allowed state and local governments to select projects and participants for PEP and CETA. Such decentralization increases the risk that federal guidelines spelling out intended beneficiaries will not be followed. The PEP and CETA experiences illustrate this point: while a wide variety of people have benefited from these programs, there has not been a clearly defined target group. This, coupled with local discretion in hiring, has led to widespread "skimming" of the eligible population through selection of the least disadvantaged persons. Hiring practices have reflected a clear bias against youth, women, and minorities. Federal officials can withdraw funding for local programs, but this sanction has not been used because of the harsh unemployment consequences and unpalatable political repercussions it would entail.

B. *The Urban Service Corps*

Instead of youth programs grafted onto existing federal efforts, we need a new, federal strategy directed specifically at unemployed inner-city young people. The program must create jobs, must involve a sustained commitment on the part of both government and recruits regardless of the phase of the business cycle, and must provide compensation and opportunities comparable to those found in the primary sector of the labor market. Such a program might be an "Urban Service Corps" (USC), which could take the form described below.

USC would be highly structured, somewhat like the military, and would offer a wide variety of occupational opportunities. It would not be a one-shot effort employing young people to rake leaves for two months at the minimum wage. Rather, recruits would enlist for several years, work at interesting and useful jobs, enjoy job security and climb up a promotion and income ladder within the Corps itself.

USC would offer a career, not just tide-over jobs. As with the military, top-performing recruits could look forward to promotion to more responsible technical or administrative positions according to prescribed standards and time-tables. Others would at least be assured of a secure, decent-paying job for two or more years. Training and improved work habits would be an integral part of the USC experience. The environment would be a supportive one, offering counseling, health services, and other "fringe benefits" much like those of the primary sector.

The all-important difference between USC and the Job Corps or the Youth Corps is that, rather than providing training for jobs outside the program which no one can guarantee are available, good jobs would be an integral part of the USC itself. USC is a job creation strategy. Consistent with the dual-labor market perspective, USC would be as much like the primary market as possible.

USC would have to be a permanent federal program with funding guaranteed for at least ten years. Federal administration would be essential in order to make sure jobs reach the intended target group. USC workers could be assigned to state, municipal and community agencies to perform local tasks on a contractual basis. However, they would continue to function as Corps members, and not as employees of these agencies. Local governments and other beneficiaries of USC tasks would be required to maintain previous employment levels in order to prevent replacement of existing jobs by the USC.

Recruits would get a guaranteed job and income over a minimum 2 or 3 year period, with the option of re-enlistment for as long as ten years. Choices would be available regarding type of work and location, with options limited at the entry level and opening up significantly as recruits gain skills and seniority. Dismissal would be only for gross misconduct. Jobs would be carefully structured to take into account recruits' skills—or initial lack of skills—and would be scaled in terms of desirability, location and pay so as to provide real incentives to stay with USC and to climb its job ladder. Ideally, enrollment would be open to all within the target group. If budget constraints limit the size of USC then enrollment could be on a lottery or first-come- first served basis.

USC could take on any number of worthwhile tasks: urban conservation, strip-mine reclamation, rebuilding of roadbeds to allow high-speed rail service, or another labor intensive task the public interest may suggest is suitable for the USC. This diversity of tasks, coupled with an extended period of enlistment, means that young workers could gain experience at several kinds of work in various parts of the country, and see many sorts of useful consequences of their work.

The USC concept has its problems and unresolved questions, to be sure. A major consideration is conflict with organized labor; many potential USC job areas, such as municipal services, are those in which labor unions have legitimate job-protection interests. An operational USC unit must somehow create jobs for young workers while avoiding undercutting union labor and producing conflict over jurisdiction. Other questions must be resolved: Should USC be a residential program? Should members be in uniform and subject to military-style command and discipline? How are the capital costs of USC projects to be financed? What about the job problems of young people in suburban and rural areas? All of these problems will have to be resolved before USC can become a reality. At this point, though, let us explore what one kind of USC project might look like.

An especially worthwhile USC task could be urban conservation. Reversing the decline of our older urban neighborhoods, parks, and central business districts has long been a matter of public concern and a subject for

legislation. Early programs emphasized blight clearance and new construction. In recent years, though, the bulldozer has given way to rehabilitation and preservation as a neighborhood-saving strategy. Urban conservation implies preserving and strengthening the existing fabric of a city's older neighborhoods, not obliterating them. Clearly this is an area of urgent needs. The human tragedies of ghetto life, coupled with national needs for energy conservation and environmental protection, provide ample justification for a massive effort.

Urban conservation is ideally suited to the capabilities of an Urban Service Corps. A city could turn over an entire neighborhood to USC for a variety of projects and purposes. The city would continue to provide basic services, while USC would tackle an area's extraordinary needs. USC would move in as a corps, rather than as supplementary labor for existing city agencies. The various "brigades" and "companies" of USC would saturate the neighborhood and work together in coordinated fashion, and would be on duty 24 hours a day. USC's stay in a neighborhood would be measured in years rather than in days, and residents would be involved in setting priorities and evaluating performance.

USC could undertake an extraordinary variety of public service and public works tasks in a target neighborhood. USC workers could be assigned to public housing projects and could enjoy numerous alternative placement opportunities. For example, drawing on the St. Louis Housing Authority's highly successful experience with Tenant Management Corporations (TMC), USC workers could assist TMCs in public housing management. USC workers could serve as resident manager aides, building and lane monitors, maintenance and custodial workers, security aides, and social service and youth service workers.

USC enrollees could also be placed with a wide variety of public and private agencies which serve public housing, such as day care programs, visiting nurses, counseling programs and others. Subject to union approval, USC enrollees could also assist maintenance workers with renovation, substantial rehabilitation, landscaping and general beautification of public housing units.

The network of USC services could be extended beyond local housing authorities to public and private agencies throughout the target neighborhood. A range of security, maintenance and social services could be provided, preferably under the supervision of municipal agencies and neighborhood groups. In a variation of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation's highly successful Home Improvement Program, USC workers could undertake "cosmetic" renovation to improve the exterior appearance of run-down private homes and apartment buildings, shops, and public buildings such as schools and libraries. USC could also landscape these buildings and provide periodic rubbish removal and other clean-up services to the neighborhood. Where possible, USC projects should be linked to formal neighborhood preservation programs or other concerted improvement efforts using local community development block grant funds and other resources.

USC workers could also be deployed to maintain other key municipal facilities which are the economic, social and cultural lifeblood of cities. USC

could provide maintenance, beautification and security services for the city's parks and recreation facilities and mass transit facilities. They could be assigned to downtown business districts to maintain the buildings, grounds and streets around municipal buildings, coliseums, theaters, shopping malls and other major generators of shoppers, tourists and entertainment-seekers.

Since the various USC activities would be contained within a designated geographical area, a highly structured incentive system can be devised rather easily. It would include a clear job ladder, levels of responsibility, and possibly even "ranks." These jobs would match the entry level skills of USC enrollees, and offer the potential for advancement to more responsible and higher skilled slots within USC or the cooperating public and private agencies.

The key to the urban conservation strategy is USC's saturation of a specific target area in order to achieve highly visible and immediate results, thus triggering other economic and social benefits. These might include community beautification, increased property values and tax revenues, higher rental income, immigration of moderate and middle income families, and investment by private landowners and lending institutions.

If there were an extended federal commitment to USC, urban conservation would provide a stable and virtually insatiable source of work for USC member, thus eliminating any fear of temporary jobs or layoffs. Recruits could work their way up into supervisory jobs and skilled occupations. These factors, together with attractive rates of pay and supportive services, would mean that USC jobs would have primary-sector characteristics. An Urban Service Corps constructed according to the dual-labor-market theory, and tested and refined in demonstration projects, would represent a totally new direction in youth manpower policy.

V. CONCLUSION

The concept will inevitably encounter difficulties in design, legislation and implementation. It cannot be considered a panacea: ghetto youth unemployment is so deeply rooted in our social and economic system that multiple strategies are essential. But the Urban Service Corps does offer a new approach to the most troublesome and intractable unemployment problem in our economy. It offers not only jobs, but good jobs. A USC graduate will have received not just income, but job security, a multi-year career, a sense of accomplishment, new work habits and attitudes and an important credential to aid re-entry into the job market.

It also has wider implications. Over the next few years, the most puzzling and potentially explosive problem we face will be that of reforming the distribution of income, services and resources in a sluggish economy. Social legislation of the sixties, in general, provided for reallocation at the margin, through more access to the new jobs, the new income, the new goods which society produced. Reforms of this sort can be perfectly designed and implemented, yet will stand or fall on the assumption of sustained, significant economic expansion. We see this today, as many of the gains of women and minorities have been wiped out by recession. In the seventies, we will apparently be denied the luxury of an expanding economy, and yet still we

must deal with the "social dynamite" of ghetto unemployment. It is a difficult policy problem, to be sure. It is also a touchy political situation, for it involves changing the very structure of our labor market and a substantial shifting of resources from the "haves" to the "have-nots". Yet it must be done.

The Urban Service Corps will likely bear one of the highest total price tags of any social program we have ever undertaken. The cost of recruiting, training, equipping, paying, and guaranteeing multi-year careers for hundreds of thousands of young people will run into the billions. But in a sense we are paying these costs even now, and receiving none of the benefits USC offers to society. We pay the cost of ghetto youth joblessness through our mushrooming welfare and social service obligations and our foregone income tax revenues. We pay through higher crime rates, too, since the frustrations of idleness or of providing for a family in hard times can drive young people into illegal activities. We pay in terms of lost and damaged property, injuries, increased law enforcement costs and a jammed-up legal system. We pay in deteriorated and vandalized housing, declining property values, lost equity, and abandoned neighborhoods, and in the costs of constructing duplicative schools, streets, sewer systems, and other public facilities in the new communities which replace the abandoned neighborhoods. We pay in lost taxes, purchasing power, economic activity. And most tragic of all, we pay in terms of alienation, frustration, and fear, for when a whole segment of society is denied a chance for productive and fulfilling work, millions of opportunities for personal development are lost forever. Compared to these "social costs," the price tag for fighting inner-city youth unemployment begins to look reasonable indeed. It may just be that the most imaginative, humane and direct way of dealing with this tragic problem is also, in the long run, the cheapest.

SECTION II:

THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS
MOOT COURT COMPETITION



**FREDERICK
DOUGLASS**

MOOT COURT COMPETITION

b.a.l.s.a. washington d.c. 1976