

POA BOOK
NELSON

September 11, 1964

Memo of Conversation with Jim Ridgeway

The structure of the book seems to be this:

1. Today American streets are filled with rioting derived from bad slum conditions and education, poor housing, all of the symptoms of poverty. A substantial portion of the chapter ought to go into the myth that riots are Communist-inspired, examining Goldwater's stupid ideas on this point and pointing out that there is a far deeper cause that any thinking person will see. This might be a brief chapter setting out the mythology of the right wing and saying that there is both the human need to end poverty and a political one to do it before it rips the country apart in riots.

2. Second chapter. Here it will be necessary to outline those people who could work and who should work describing precisely how we now must embark upon a specific program to put them to work. Here we can take up the myth that a fully expanded economy will put everybody to work. There are two objections to this: (1) it won't occur because we do not have any way to bring it about, and (2) inevitably this leaves the bottom-of-the barrel people still at the end of the line in the worst possible positions. (3) But there are jobs to do which could put these people to work. Here describe specifically the problems of the cities, the problems of conservation, a long series of jobs which we will have researched saying what we need is a Federally-funded program, administered by the states, which will put unemployed people to work to repair the environment in which they live. (4) Now hit the conventional kinds of poverty



going into problems of those people who cannot work either because they are too old or sick or with children. Listing here that this country is too wealthy to let these people suffer in the midst of poverty. This is the whole welfare section .

3, Chapter 5. Both of these general points, putting people to work who can work, and helping those who can't work, should derive low-cost money. There is a way to pay for it: (a) defense cuts, (b) tax-reform, which will not only bring in more money but help out the poor people.

4, Final Chapter. Moreover there is need for a comprehensive program of economic expansion which will help bring in tax revenues as well. The way to do it is not only through tax relief by stimulating the economy--the trickle-down theory--but rather through our specific program of pumping money into the economy through putting unemployed people to work on socially-needed projects. This is a better way. (See Galbraith's book in which he takes up this whole series of arguments and we can take a good deal of material from him. The book on affluence.) ~~But~~ Not only must expansion be done this way, but we must direct the expansion into socially-useful purposes: particularly important, it is necessary to emphasize certain regional developments such as Appalachia, the rural South, the upper Mid-West. We are beginning to move in these areas with the Appalachia Program but we ought to think of TVA as an example. This socially-useful investment should be keyed together in a comprehensive national program of full-employment expansion which would direct the expansion of the proper areas of the country and also put people to work. In order to do this we need to go on to indicative planning.

5. The book will start with the riots, and end with a rational solution, putting people to work who can work, providing welfare for



those who need it, and showing that through a reform of the tax system plus cuts in the military budget, we can easily pay for it. "Along the way it would take up most of the kinds of simple liberal programs that Humphrey has mentioned in his book. It should also introduce the new ideas such as : (a) the Constructive Work Program , (b) the Poverty Program, (c) the mobility of poor people and Federal way-station for a newcomers program, (d) the extension of Congressmen's offices , (e) perhaps a Consumer Council etc. etc.. It should also go into specific problems of slum reconstruction and building of schools using co-ops etc. We will have to add in a page or two on programs like the Poverty Program which retrain etc. but still point out that they do ~~not~~ not provide jobs.

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