CONTRIBUTION OF THE AJC TO THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

DRAMATIC SETTING FOR THE CONFERENCE

The White House Conference on Children and Youth met in Washington the week of December 3 in a climate taut with the tensions of the world situation. Nearly 6,000 delegates coming from every state in the Union, as well as several hundred foreign observers, came to discuss those factors which make for a healthy personality in children and youth and how these ends could be achieved. The delegates represented a cross-section of every profession and discipline that concerns itself directly or indirectly with the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual life of the child.

In addition to the 6,000 professional and lay people who participated directly in the Conference, some 100,000 people participated indirectly. Several hundred national voluntary organizations serving children and young people had, during the preceding twelve months, set up discussion groups and studied their own programs in the light of the Conference focus. Nearly forty departments, agencies and bureaus of the Federal Government were conducting studies and making technical information and other special resources available for Conference purposes. In every state, official White House Conference committees appraised conditions confronting children and moved ahead on recommendations and programs of action. Regional, county and local committees cooperated with these autonomous state conferences. Furthermore, for the first time in the history of the White House Conference, youth itself was invited to participate; 500 young people were official delegates and played a most important and active role in the Conference.

EMPHASIS OF THIS CONFERENCE

This meeting was the fifth in a series of White House Conferences on Children and Youth which have been convened every ten years since 1900 by the Presidents of the United States. Unlike the four previous decennial conferences which were concerned primarily with the physical and economic phases of child life, the central concern of the 1950 Conference was "to provide each child with a fair chance to achieve a healthy personality." Its purpose, as officially stated, was: "to consider how we can develop in children the mental, emotional and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and to responsible citizenship, and what physical, economic and social conditions are deemed necessary to this development."

Thus, those personal, familial and social factors which tend to make or mar the "health" of the personality - about which we have learned so much during the past decade - were the primary concern and emphasis of the Conference. This was reflected in the reports issued after more than a year's preliminary study and consultation by the Advisory Councils on National Organizations, on Youth, on the Federal Government, State and Local Action, and the Technical Committee on Fact-Finding. The question of how to achieve
a healthy personality was reflected in the preliminary meetings conducted by all the different groups which were involved in these deliberations during the course of the year.

The keynote of the healthy personality had been set in the first call of the Conference. It permeated the pre-Conference stage and the final meetings during the week of December 3, and promises, even more strongly than before, to give influence and direction to the post-Conference thinking and planning.

THE ROLE OF THE AJC IN PRE-CONFERENCE PLANNING AND CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

The Youth Division of the AJC recognized from the outset how important it would be for the AJC to play an active part in this national Conference on Children and Youth. The Youth Division saw a tremendous opportunity, in the light of the Conference's stated focus on the healthy personality, to help influence, guide and implement the objectives of the Conference so that we could project some of this agency's themes into the streams of influence of this great national channel. The effects of prejudice and discrimination as they relate to the making of a healthy personality, the role of the church and synagogue, the family and the schools as social institutions which develop personality, the whole question of civil liberties, and the mass media of communications whose content can help shape individuals and social institutions - all these concerns which make up the warp and woof of AJC's program were here the potential concern of the White House Conference. It was up to us to seize the opportunity to help make these interests and objectives real and solid for the Conference in all its preliminary planning, the actual Conference deliberations, and the post-Conference implementation.

We believe this goal has thus far been signally well accomplished through the active, numerous and strategic influences we have wielded in the Conference.

AJC CONTACTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

After proposing, twelve months ago, that we concentrate our efforts to play an important role in the Conference, Samuel S. Fishchohn was appointed liaison between the AJC and the administration of the White House Conference. Our responsibility was to keep closely in touch with the developing program of the Conference, to help guide and steer two of the important Advisory Councils, as well as the fact-finding unit, and to involve ourselves, in addition to several other members of our staff, in pre-Conference planning and active participation in the Conference program. This was done in a variety of ways which, over a period of months, began to have a definite impact upon the agenda of the Conference, upon the preliminary meetings held by national organizations serving youth, and upon the Youth Advisory Council. Below is a succinct account of the many ways in which the AJC, through members of its staff, helped to influence and guide the Conference,
particularly in those phases of its objectives bearing upon the furtherance of better intergroup relations, the dissemination of sound scientific knowledge of the effects of prejudice and discrimination upon the emotional health of the child and related problems dealing with civil rights, the improvement in the character of mass media, the furtherance of the principles of youth participation and the development of youth councils, the support of Federal aid to education, the defeat of the released time recommendations, etc. We think it is in order here to state that Miss Katharine Lenroot, Secretary of the Conference and head of the United States Children's Bureau, Melvin Glasser, Executive Director, Dr. Helen Witmer, Director of the Fact-Finding Staff, and Juanita Luck, Consultant to the Advisory Council on Youth Participation, each paid tribute to the rich contribution of the AJC to the thinking, agenda and fact-finding of the Conference. Both Miss Lenroot and Mr. Glasser told us that no other single agency had made as great a contribution.

PRE-CONFERENCE PLANNING AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES OF AJC STAFF

Messrs. Samuel S. Fishzohn, Kenneth Clark and Moses Jung were involved in major pre-Conference activities. A brief outline of their responsibilities follows.

SAMUEL S. FISHZOHN

Member of two of the four important Advisory Councils of the Conference - the Advisory Council on National Organizations and the Advisory Council on Youth Participation. We were active on the following committees and projects:

a. Reports Committee, which prepared the report by national organizations on programs and services issued in printed form to every delegate of the Conference. Six members of national organizations constituted this committee. Our joint responsibility was to prepare a summary of the reports submitted by several hundred national organizations. In a preliminary questionnaire prepared by the Reports Committee, outlining to national agencies how they were to prepare their individual reports, we proposed that a question relating to the problem of prejudice and discrimination be included in the questionnaire. This proposal was accepted and yielded significant replies which were used in the final report. Samuel Fishzohn wrote Chapter II of this seven-chapter report. This is one illustration of many others that could be given of how the whole theme of prejudice and discrimination was salted in at the Conference through AJC spearheading.
b. Committee on Intergroup Relationship. This ad hoc committee, established during one of the pre-Conference meetings in Washington of the national organizations, was in part an outgrowth of the recommendation made by the Director of the AJC Youth Division (before 300 representatives of national agencies) that the problems of prejudice and discrimination be included in the questionnaire which the Reports Committee was to prepare. This committee proposed a resolution - which we helped to prepare, that the Advisory Council on Participation of National Organizations strongly recommend to the White House Conference that it give proper recognition to those problems of discrimination in intergroup relationships which threaten the unity of our American democracy. This resolution continued to say: "We urge the fullest consideration of permanent and important emphasis, in the preliminary studies and on the agenda of the December program, of the whole subject of prejudice in its relation to the emotional health and total growth of the child."

c. Planning Committee of Preliminary Youth Advisory Council Meetings. We were one of seven national program directors who worked actively on plans for the two-day preliminary conferences of young people held in March and in August. At the March meeting, the young people went on record urging the White House Conference to recognize the importance of stimulating the establishment of youth councils throughout the country. This recommendation was clearly the outgrowth of AJC's promotion of youth council programs through the National Social Welfare Assembly during the last three or four years. (Youth United for a Better Home Town, Make Way for Youth, Youth Council Survey, etc.)

We also proposed to the National Social Welfare Assembly that the 15-page memorandum on youth councils, which was based on our study of youth councils, be mimeographed and presented at the final Conference meetings to Panels 4, 12, 21 and 22, and Workshops 20, 30, 31 and 33. These were work groups or panels which discussed youth in relation to the community and dealt with such themes as "patterns of community planning for and with children and young people" and "the effect of prejudice and discrimination on healthy personality development."

d. Member of Nominations Committee for Officers on the Advisory Council on Youth Participation. This committee consisted of thirteen youth representatives and two adult members of the Advisory Council, of which the AJC Youth Director was one. On this committee we were able to guide the young people toward nominating a cross-section of officers which would include as far as possible representatives of different racial and religious groupings.
e. Finance Committee. This committee consisted of six members of which the Director of the AJC Youth Division was one. It considered ways and means of meeting the White House Conference anticipated deficit of $50,000. The plan that it recommended was accepted by unanimous vote of more than 300 national organizations that attended the Advisory Council meeting on May 26.

f. Planning Sub-Committee for Special Program Presentation by Youth. This was the committee which worked on plans for the dramatic presentation of the youth report before 6,000 delegates on Monday night, December 4.

g. Recorder for the Work Session on Prejudice and Discrimination which was held in October at the time of the meeting of the national organizations. The ten-point program which we helped steer, direct and write in this work session was presented the next day before some 300 delegates of the national organizations. All ten recommendations from this work session were passed by the 300 members at the plenary session. The discussion at the work session and in the plenary session regarding these recommendations of action relating to prejudice and discrimination, was another illustration of the kind of educational process that people who attended the preliminary sessions of the Conference were experiencing in this area.

h. Recorder of Workshop No. 22 - The Mass Media of Communication as Channels for Influencing Personality Development. As both Recorder and member of this work group, we were one of the leading advocates of the recommendation that the television companies reserve 20% of their channels for educational purposes so that programs of the type best suited for the development of a healthy personality in children and youth be more widely promoted.

i. Showing of "Make Way for Youth". We recommended to Marvin Beers, Director of Communications, that "Make Way for Youth" be included on the agenda for the Conference; we had given him a preliminary screening of the picture several months ago. The film was shown in the session on Motion Picture Showings on Monday, December 4, and listed in the printed program for the Conference.

DR. KENNETH CLARK

Dr. Clark, Professor of Psychology at City College, was engaged by the Department of Scientific Research of the AJC and assigned to the staff of the White House Conference on a full-time basis for several months. During this period Dr. Clark:

a. Served on the Technical Committee on Fact-Finding, for which he did a research and writing job on intergroup relations.
b. Wrote a 203-page report entitled "Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development."

c. Worked closely with the fact-finding staff of the Conference and helped to deepen the Conference's whole concern in the problems of prejudice and discrimination and their effect on personality development. A summary of Dr. Clark's study on prejudice was included in the printed digest of the Fact-Finding Committee, copies of which were distributed to the 6,000 delegates at the Conference.

d. Served as a member of the panel on Concepts of Personality Development and their Meaning on Work with Youth.

e. Took part in Work Group No. 20, dealing with The Effects of Prejudice and Discrimination on Healthy Personality Development. He organized more than twenty people during the plenary session of the Conference to help promote and support the basic recommendations against prejudice and segregation, among them Miss Lillian Smith, the author of "Strange Fruit"; Mr. Charles Bennett of the American Friends Committee; Dr. Benjamin Mays, President of Morehouse College; and Mrs. Ruby Hurley of the N.A.A.C.P.

DR. MOSES JUNG

Dr. Jung was another member of the staff who was assigned for a part-time, three-month period to work for the fact-finding study of the Conference on the section on Religion. His basic concern was related to the special contribution of religion to the development of a healthy personality in children and youth. In this connection Dr. Jung:

a. Served as the expert in the field of the Jewish faith, working jointly with two other experts representing the Protestant and Catholic faiths, to produce a joint document on religion and wholesome personality development, a digest of which appeared in the printed fact-finding report which went to every delegate.

b. Served as Chairman of Panel No. 24 - The Role of Religion in Personal Life.

c. Participated as a member of Panel No. 5 - Developing a Personal Philosophy of Life in a World of Conflicting Values.

DR. JOHN SWALLOW

Dr. Slawson served as Chairman of Panel No. 14 - Concepts of Personality Development and their Meaning on Work with Youth. His panel members
were Fritz Redl, Bruno Bettelheim, Herbert Chamberlain, Kenneth B. Clark, Gertrude Wilson and Ernest O. Melby. There were some 250 delegates attending this panel. Part of Dr. Slawson's opening statement follows:

"The White House Conference on Children and Youth has collected an impressive array of facts on the conditions that produce distortions in the personalities of adolescents and the manner in which these can be corrected and prevented.

"There is no guarantee that democracy will be preserved and fostered if we do not make sure that the adolescent of today will become the mentally sound and emotionally healthy adult of tomorrow. For, in the last analysis, a political unit can never excel in quality the capacity of its constituents for self management; and adults who in their childhood or adolescence are subjected to conditions that result in personality distortions, uncorrected and untreated, are thereby hampered in their capacity for such self management and hence in their contribution toward the democratic way of life."

DR. J. V. THOMPSON

Dr. Thompson was Chairman of Work Group No. 8 - The Role of the Church in the Development of Healthy Personality. The group produced two resolutions, one favorable explicitly to the use of released time, the other in opposition thereto. Both resolutions were forwarded to the sectional committee (Dr. Olson, Chairman), the vote of the group being 85 for released time, 15 against it.

Five sub-groups were then used to consider (a) the unique contributions of religion; (b) church, synagogue, temple, and the family; (c) church, synagogue, temple, and the community; (d) church, synagogue, temple, and leadership training, especially dealing with recruitment and the training of both professional and volunteer leaders; (e) the church, synagogue, and the temple in overcoming prejudice and discrimination.

DR. SAMUEL FLOWERMAN

a. Dr. Flowerman participated as a member of Panel No. 19 - The Effect of Discrimination and Prejudice on Healthy Personality Development.

b. Dr. Flowerman was appointed Chairman of an Advisory Committee set up to guide and consult with Dr. Kenneth Clark on the outlines and memoranda he produced on the subject of the Psychology and Sociology of Prejudice. This committee met several times and worked intensively with Dr. Clark, making suggestions on order of presentation, considering different ways of interpreting data, and deciding on inclusion of data not originally incorporated in the report.
PHILIP JACOBSON

a. Mr. Jacobson participated in Workshop No. 9 - Contributions of the School to Healthy Personality in Children and their Families.

b. In his workshop he moved the adoption of a recommendation in opposition to the program of Released Time; also one on Federal Aid to Education.

c. He was appointed a member of the Resolutions Committee of his workshop and was charged with the preparation of recommendations on Federal Aid to Education and the problem of the introduction of spiritual values in the public school curriculum. All three recommendations (on Released Time, Federal Aid, and spiritual values) were adopted by the workshop group. The Federal Aid Resolution was accepted by the representative of the National Education Association present in the workshop, was incorporated in the final recommendations submitted by the Recommendations Committee of the Conference, and adopted intact after a heated debate on the floor at the plenary session.

d. Mr. Jacobson helped organize and participated actively in caucusing on Church-State problems with a considerable number of delegates. He also helped organize the floor fight which brought about the final result and victory for separation of Church and State.

AJC EXHIBIT OF MATERIALS

Mr. Walter Myden was responsible for setting up the exhibit and was on full-time duty at the booth explaining the work of the AJC, and more particularly the functions of the Youth Division, to the many delegates making inquiries. We quote part of Mr. Myden's report on our exhibit:

"The booth of the AJC at the White House Conference was designed to convey a single brief message - 'Wipe out discrimination; give every child a chance for a healthy personality.' This slogan, superimposed on a carefully selected photograph which pictorially told the same story as the slogan, was the feature of the AJC display. The booth contained a selection of materials from several AJC departments, i.e., the Youth Division, Scientific Research, Community Services, and the National Labor Service.

"The booth attracted numerous favorable reactions from passersby who commented on the success of the exhibit. Observable nearby booths did not draw this kind of response. The booth also served as a point of gravitation for various delegates and became the message center for them. This became extremely important as the plenary session reached the stage..."
of preparing and adopting resolutions. In the final stage of the Conference the AJC booth became the caucus center for the groups that were promoting resolutions in opposition to segregation and to released time in the schools. Rabbi Borowski pointed out that the greatest compliment which could be paid the AJC was the fact that its booth had become the focal point for the most progressive thinking in the Conference. It was there that Lillian Smith drafted her resolution against segregation.

"Mrs. Herbert Lehman visited the booth and complimented us on the excellent impression which it created.

"As for the materials that were displayed at the booth, most people who stopped to look did so with a degree of seriousness which was encouraging. Of these, approximately 200 took order lists on which they had marked their selections.

"From a public relations point of view, the exhibit booth was extremely successful, not only in helping to bring our position to non-Jews, but also to Jewish delegates at the Conference."

POST-CONFERENCE PLANNING AND MACHINERY

Throughout the pre-Conference activities, it was becoming increasingly apparent that there was a pressing need for the better application of knowledge concerning ways to improve the well-being of children. Almost from the outset it was agreed that the Conference must not lose the benefits of its findings by failure to set up adequate machinery for follow-up programs on national, state and local levels.

The AJC, among others, through the Director of its Youth Division, repeatedly emphasized to the Conference administration and to the committees with which he worked the importance of creating follow-up procedures to implement the findings and recommendations of the Conference.

The plenary session voted overwhelmingly for the establishment of machinery and channels of communication for post-Conference programs. The action approved includes the following provisions:

1. The formation of a national committee as an advisory and consultative group. Such a committee is to work through all the groups which have a primary concern for the well-being of the nation's children and youth.

2. The chief purpose of the follow-up effort is to be the dissemination of the findings of the Conference, the stimulation of action on its recommendations and the promotion of research designed to fill in the gaps of knowledge which the Conference has brought forth.
The provisions for continuity are to be implemented by including on this new national committee five selected members from each of the present Advisory Councils.

4. The formation of state and local follow-up organizations.

5. On-going activities should be effected by the National Committee through the existing Advisory Councils for Participation of National Organizations, Youth, State and Local Action, and through such technical committees as may be indicated.

POST-CONFERENCE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM OF THE AJC

The White House Conference was, in our judgment, a tremendously important and successful venture in behalf of children and youth. The staff of the Conference, many on the national committee, and a great many of the leadership participants were people who set the emphasis of the Conference on the importance of the emotional health of the child. This pervades all of the literature that was produced and disseminated at the Conference; and it was highlighted in the agenda and thinking of the panels and workshops. This advanced approach to psychological health on the part of so many groups is of tremendous significance and encouragement to the AJC because it can make our relationships with many national and local groups considerably easier and more productive than we had reason to believe was the case several months ago. While we did not create this salutary climate, we played an important role in its development.

We have not had time in this summary report of the Conference to think through fully the specific implications for the AJC program that can be evolved from the Conference platform. It will require perhaps many meetings of many members of the staff from different Divisions to think through in what manner they can utilize the findings and recommendations of the Conference. There are implications in the area of youth participation, youth councils, inter-group education in schools, problems of civil rights, the use of mass communications, and broad relations to Protestant and Catholic groups, which must be carefully thought through for active implementation.

At this writing we can only list by way of suggestion a variety of recommendations which we have culled from the proposed platform which was presented at the plenary session of the Conference. The recommendations we have listed below verbatim represent only a small number of the many resolutions that were presented. They were not all approved as proposed. We have selected these, however, on the basis of their direct or indirect relatedness to the program and interests of the AJC. (The Conference will shortly have available a revised version of the "platform" which will embody the recommendations and resolutions as finally accepted or amended in the plenary session.)
CULLED FROM THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE PLATFORM

SECTION I (Furthering Healthy Personality Development in Children and Youth)

1. The expansion of research on development and adjustment, and that such research include longitudinal studies of relations and factors that affect behavior and adjustment. In this way there will be provided a continuing understanding of infants, children and youth and a sound basis for practices. We further recommend support by public and private agencies in extending research pertaining to healthy personality.

7. That children be provided with opportunities that are wide in range and challenging in nature, emphasizing exploration, participation, and social experience in an environment that is rich and stimulating; and that expectations of achievement should be in harmony with each child's ability and growth.

SECTION II (Furthering Healthy Personality Development Through the Family, the Church, the School, and Other Social Institutions)

6. That more emphasis be put on the effects of recreational activities on the personality of the individual.

7. That youth have an equal chance with adults to participate in planning and carrying out recreational activities.

11. Further Federal aid to the States for educational services, in tax-supported public schools, without Federal control, to help equalize educational opportunity; the issue of auxiliary services to be considered on its merits in separate legislation.

12. That all professions dealing with children have, as an integral part of their preparation, a core of common experiences on fundamental concepts of human behavior including the need to consider the total person as well as any specific disorder; the interrelationship of physical, mental, social and cultural forces; the importance of interpersonal relationships; and the role of self-understanding; and emphasis on the positive recognition and production of healthy personalities and the treatment of variations; and that lay people be oriented through formal or informal education to an understanding of the importance of the foregoing concepts.

SECTION III (Making More Positive the Influence of Religious, Social and Economic Forces on Personality Development)

1. Recognizing knowledge and understanding of religious and ethical concepts as essential to the development of spiritual values, and
that education today in many cases is not meeting the needs of children and youth in this regard, this group recommends the following:

A. That every community study some plan for teaching religion to all children within the community in keeping with the laws of the State and the desires of the parents.

B. That responsible and representative agencies initiate a conference of representatives of all religious groups to prepare text-books which will consider religion as a social phenomenon and explain the tenets of each religious and ethical group for use in public schools.

C. That wherever possible the religious foundations and institutions near the campuses of public and church-related institutions give courses in the study of religion which will be open to all students and for which credit is given to the student towards graduation. In order to be recognized to participate in this program the foundations and institutions must maintain standards comparable to those of the university.

3. Increasing action in support of the program recommended by the President's Commission on Civil Rights because it represents our faith in and practice of democracy.

6. That in view of television's unprecedented growth and its potential as a medium for mass education, the television industry accept its great social responsibility.

7. That the Federal Communications Commission reserve television channels for non-commercial educational television stations so that some part of the limited number of frequencies to be allocated by the Commission may be reserved for educational uses and purposes.

13. That the participation of children and youth in times of community stress should be in agreement with their stage of development and designed to minimize their anxieties.

SECTION IV (Children in Special Situations)

23. That racial segregation in education be abolished.

SECTION V (Mobilizing Citizens for the Improvement of Conditions Affecting the Personality Development of Children and Youth)

1. That community groups and community leaders re-examine their attitude
and procedures in the light of findings of this Conference, and make appropriate adaptations and changes.

2. In order to insure proper assessment, creative planning and appropriate action with respect to meeting the needs of children and youth that communities undertake the following tasks on a continuing basis:

   a. Develop broad community interests.

   b. Obtain the broadest possible community sponsorship.

   c. Obtain where necessary technical assistance in planning and carrying out the program.

   d. Initiate or organize studies and gather facts that are focused on specific problems according to priorities.

   e. Interpret the facts, and inform the community as to their significance.

Since goals and methods are closely intertwined, that in undertaking these tasks the methods used be based on the following principles:

   a. People as individuals and as groups should be helped to help themselves. Professional workers should find their role in giving such help.

   b. It should be recognized that differences and stresses may be present and can be utilized positively.

   c. There should be broad based participation of all groups without discrimination as to age, sex, race, creed, national origin or economic level.

   d. Fact-finding should be used as part of a total educational process.

   e. Channels of communication between individuals and groups should be provided for the purpose of not only furthering common social objectives but also for the improvement of relations between groups.

   f. Since the community is served by both public and private agencies, which have a common concern for meeting the needs of children and youth, the endeavors of both in planning, assessment and financing should be utilized.

3. That greater emphasis be placed by the various professions on
utilizing methods and seeking new means of bringing the parents into participation in thinking and planning with and for their children.

11. Recognizing that youth has rights and responsibilities for better community living, that progressive opportunities be provided for youth to participate vitally in community activities and planning in order that youth may early have the preparation and experience for leadership and community service. Further, that the professional workers accept their responsibilities to stimulate the community to see that these opportunities are provided for youth.

12. That youth representatives be placed on community boards of various agencies in order that they may participate in the planning, developmental and operational phases of the total community programs.

Submitted by
SAMUEL S. FISCHZON

December 19, 1950