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February 19, 1993

Eli Segal
Special Assistant for National Service
The White House
Washington DC

Dear Mr. Segal:

I have recently had a telephone conversation with Senator Ted Kennedy regarding our MEDIA CORPS proposal. His office has also suggested that I contact you directly.

The MEDIA CORPS is a unique program that answers President Clinton's call-to-action in urging the youth of America to serve their country through a broad national service initiative.

There are over 200,000 media-trained students in universities across the country that represent a considerable source of untapped manpower. Many of these students are waiting for the opportunity to serve their country through recently acquired skills in the media.

Like the Peace Corps or the WPA, the MEDIA CORPS would enlist America's youth and artists to serve in various communities throughout the country, and develop media teaching material, as well as documenting various cultures and encouraging a media literacy.

Enclosed you will find the proposal which was sent to Senator Kennedy, along with a copy of his letter to me. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this project. If you have any questions, please call me and we can discuss it further.

Best wishes,

AUGUST COPPOLA
Chairman & CEO

AC/gd
Enclosures

Edward M. Kennedy
Massachusetts



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 5, 1993

August Coppola, Chairman
Education First
1990 South Bundy Drive
Los Angeles, California 90025

Dear August:

I enjoyed our conversation the other day. I've had a chance to review the materials you sent me on the Media Corps. It's a very interesting idea and I'd like to explore it further. I'm working with the Clinton Administration in developing ideas for their broad national service initiative, which could certainly include opportunities like the Media Corps.

There may also be some possibilities with the Commission on National and Community Service, the federal agency that oversees and supports a wide range of worthwhile service programs. I'll explore that as well.

In the meantime, I send my best wishes and I look forward to working further with you on this.

Sincerely,

Edward M. Kennedy

Eli Segal
Special Assistant for
National Service
The White House
Washington DC

THE MEDIA CORPS

A PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN YOUTH

INTRODUCTION:

One of President Clinton's campaign statements, was that he would put America's youth back to work by creating a system whereby young people coming out of college could pay back their student loans by working in their communities.

The MEDIA CORPS is a unique and exciting program that harkens back to the excitement and energy that moved a generation to action when President Kennedy announced the formation of the U.S. Peace Corps. Thousands of young people responded to that call for action and were moved to do something for their country.

Today, there is a new generation, no less idealistic and every bit as energetic to do something for their country. With President Clinton's imminent call to action, thousands of media trained college graduates are ready to return to their communities and become involved at a grass roots level in empowering their peers with the use of media.

There are 1,482 programs at universities across the country that offer communications courses or degrees with over 200,000 students enrolled.¹ Clearly this constitutes a considerable pool of manpower already media trained and eager to use their skills in the community. This is the appropriate moment to meet the challenge of participating in a national unity of our educational goals.

Through the presentation of EDUCATION FIRST! Week, and 140 hours of network programming, November 30 - December 6, 1992, EDUCATION FIRST! has demonstrated that it is capable of uniting a powerful pool of entertainment industry talent, from network and studio executives, theater owners to celebrities, have all come together to make this social commitment by prioritizing media in the service of education. As EDUCATION FIRST! moved to the forefront of engaging in the educational needs of young people, it increasingly became clear that there is also a need for young people to become involved as peer educators.

I. PREMISE

Traditionally society has recorded it's activities in ways that were expedient and accessible. Initially man recorded his activities through the plastic arts and passed on his beliefs and traditions through oral history. As text became an accessible means of recording history,

¹ The Communication disciplines in Higher Education
A Guide to Academic Programs in the United States and Canada
Garland C. Elmore
Indiana University - Purdue University at Indianapolis
pp. III - IV

societies developed substantial libraries of their past. In some cases these libraries were revered, enhanced or rewritten.

We are living in a period of cultural amnesia. 20 years from now when historians attempt to reflect on our times, there will be few documents such as letters, chronicles, and diaries that will give the inner workings of our times. The award-winning documentary on the Civil Wars uses media but relies on written communication such as letters and diaries to capture the life and dreams and indeed, experiences and tragedies of this period of our history. The future historians will not have these documents and our period will become one of a kind of amnesia. While we have preserved, through the Library of Congress, many of the television shows and indeed films, most of the out-takes particularly for television, are bulk erased. Where does that leave the future historian and indeed the future of our children to carry on our American legacy.

With the expediency of technology came the means to record more activities in greater detail at a faster rate than ever before. But the wonders of technology have also created a glut of trivial information and imagery. We are constantly bombarded with a media blitz of junk information that has resulted in a society that tunes out of itself through an information overload.

The significance of a community to empower itself with the ability to develop a media literacy can have far reaching consequences insofar as understanding its role in a larger society. If a community is able to see itself through a media mirror of its accomplishments and flaws, it then is able to affect its growth and enhance its cultural values in ways that previously have never been available. The MEDIA CORPS mentored by the media/entertainment industry and set in motion by conscientious government agencies will provide a way to remedy this situation. The media team will help to record, interview, document -- indeed, documenta the dynamic people, the families, the cultural groups that go to make up our society.

With the tremendous advances in media technology over the last few years, a unique shift is starting to become visible, the democratization of media. More information is available to more people at a faster rate than ever before. It is no longer sufficient to be text literate, we must now become computer literate as well media literate. In a democracy the power of a society is the power of the vote. Similarly, the power of the media is in learning to use media, as a learning/teaching tool, as a means of expression, as form of informative communication, and as a means of recording the activities and histories of our communities. Through the window of our networking communications, the country will be aware of the options, issues and possibilities of our future through the media.

II. THE PROGRAM

The call of our young people who are part of this media environment can be trained, educated and productive in the service of this national purpose. This call is similar to President Clinton's concept of Conversion.

We are at a time when the talents and training of young people are available to us as a nation to use in the conversion of our citizenry to become trained, educated and productive individuals.

By utilizing the vast resources of university students throughout the country, the MEDIA CORPS will enlist the youth of America to return to their communities and engage the use of media as a grass roots tool. The MEDIA CORPS will become a movement of young people interacting through media at various levels of their communities. Initially, the pilot project will involve a few select communities where the program can be tested in a controlled situation. EDUCATION FIRST! has the resources to draw upon trained media experts that will coordinate and oversee the various stages of the MEDIA CORPS project.

There will be a training staff as well as a field support staff that will constantly monitor and work with the MEDIA CORPS volunteers and local institutions and agencies.

- A. The MEDIA CORPS volunteers will be grouped in teams of seven with the following breakdown:
 - 1. 2 Filmmakers
 - 2. 1 Television/Video student
 - 3. 1 Radio/Sound student
 - 4. 1 Journalist
 - 5. 1 Law Student
 - 6. 1 Historian
- B. They will reflect their communities needs by becoming the voice of their community through media. Other communities will be informed of similar interests and issues, eventually creating a network of media communities.

They will create media teaching material that reflects the direct needs of a particular community so that the teaching tools not only are relevant to a community, but also stimulate learning at a grass roots level.
- C. They will be a form of creative expression for communities in ways that develop a strong sense of identity and belonging.
- D. MEDIA CORPS volunteers will be part of the documentation of culture and communities by creating an archive of events that pertain to their respective regions. They will initiate or work with existing archival documentation projects such as the "Shades of L.A." project sponsored by Security Pacific Bank and the Los Angeles public library.
- E. As the program becomes active, the evaluation process will be an integral part of every stage, from pilot to full attainment. The evaluation results will be used as a monitoring and enhancement tool so that all phases of the program maintain integrity and and constant evolution.
- H. Media literacy, a major movement in this country, will create not only a national unity of informed and educated citizens, it will also become a tool for comprehension of ideas and concepts that are best presented through media.

III. INDUSTRY - AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

Industry is an essential partner in the MEDIA CORPS because traditionally industry has been the innovator in every phase of America's growth. As a true partner in this national movement, industry will engage in an active exchange of resources through EDUCATION FIRST! and the leadership of the entertainment industry.

As new media technology is used in the field by the MEDIA CORPS, industry will have access to the results of field experimentation in learning patterns and media impact.

By honing their skills in direct application experience, a trained, media literate labor force will emerge with enhance skills in:

- A. Information & Communication
- B. Economics
- D. Business & Entrepreneurship
- E. Social interaction
- F. Political involvement
- G. Creative expression

The conversion of an existing labor force within industry whose jobs have become obsolete or have been lost to foreign workers will necessitate retraining. Research has shown that media is the most effective and efficient teaching tool for enhancing cognitive skills. This in turn will create new industries with new skills that an innovative American industry will utilize.

A MEDIA CORPS industry partnership will give back to the country an enlightenment and new appreciation of education as priority in every American's lives.

Industry of the 21st century must of necessity be closely involved with the growth and education of its citizenry. The image profile of industry leading the way to an educated, media literate country has long range ramifications for both industry and every individual in America.

Through industry's involvement in a MEDIA CORPS partnership, strategic goals can be achieved that result in a national unity and renewal which reaffirm basic values that are uniquely American.

IV. KEY LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT

1. NATIONAL

At the national level government involvement will be in the form of endorsing the program in conjunction with President Clinton's program to encourage America's youth to become involved in the rebuilding of America by paying off their student loans through community service. Because EDUCATION FIRST! is a national organization, it is able to bring together major media resources that will unite and support this movement.

2. STATE

The state level of involvement will be in the form of encouraging state agencies and state universities to cooperate and support the MEDIA CORPS in every possible way. Universities could become media resource centers for the MEDIA CORPS volunteers. Through the MEDIA CORPS communities will find universities accessible and in many cases less intimidating.

3. REGIONAL-INTERSTATE

In many cases, through industry's involvement a regional/interstate sectioning might become appropriate. Some industries might have a special interest in a particular region of the country because of their particular type of industry or clientele, such as local television affiliates who sometimes service a variety of regions.

4. CITY & COMMUNITY

The real effectiveness of the MEDIA CORPS will be in its ability to work with and through local institutions as well as at a grass roots level. By utilizing existing institutions and agencies, the MEDIA CORPS will interface with local citizenry so that media is the mirror and window of their community. Through various research activities initiated by EDUCATION FIRST! it has clearly been demonstrated that a time capsule of a community's activities is essential to refresh the cultural amnesia created by junk media, and it becomes critical for America to refocus its resources in a rejuvenation of educational awareness.

CONCLUSION

The MEDIA CORPS is symbolic of the tradition America has had by turning to its own resourcefulness in finding solutions to its own problems. This then, is a renewal of a strength that has been at the heart of the American spirit. Much like the CCC camps and the WPA projects of the Great Depression, and more recently, the NASA space program and the Peace Corp, this call to action is a voice waiting to be heard by a new generations of Americans poised and ready to serve their country. They are armed with ingenuity, training, and idealism. The youth of this country are prepared to meet the challenge of education through media and participate in the forging of a new society where education is a priority and sustaining democracy is an educated choice.

The pilot project funding for the test sites is approximately \$1.5 million, with the oversee revenue for concept, direction and evolution of approximately \$350,000 for EDUCATION FIRST!