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April 16, 1975

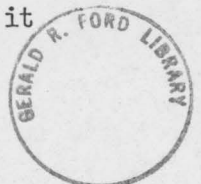
Affirmative Action Congress
Executive Board & Committee Chairpersons
Room 812, Health & Welfare Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

This is in response to your letter dated March 18, 1975, which was a response to a letter I addressed to the Governor on March 6, 1975.

You stated that I drafted, finalized, and submitted the letter to the Governor without prior review or approval of the members of the Sub-Committee for Spanish-speaking Programs. However, my letter was a mere reiteration of the verbal recommendations which I submitted to the Congress for Affirmative Action at the meeting held February 27, 1975. Not one of the committee members or anybody else, for that matter, raised any objection then. However, I can assure you that any recommendation submitted in the future by the Sub-Committee for Spanish-speaking Programs will have the explicit consent of its members and the final approval of the officials of the Executive Committee.

Regarding your statement: "The letter was one submitted at a rather untimely situation, due to the fact that a total program is at stake rather than an integral element of it," I seriously question what is meant by "integral". This word means: "essential to completeness or lacking nothing essential", besides its mathematical connotation. Ironically, my letter to the Governor is precisely a plea for the Spanish-speaking people to become an "integral" part of the Affirmative Action Plan.

Another one of my concerns is your statement: "Although it is agreed that lack of cultural awareness and languages of other minorities is a clear disadvantage, to say that minorities cannot relate to the effects of systematic discrimination is not true. Realization of indigent socio-economic conditions results from living in that respective environment, which in essence affects Blacks, Spanish speaking, American Indian, Oriental, Women, etc." Your inference which is based on a distorted premise presupposes that since all minority groups are victims of the same oppressive social forces, it



Affirmative Action Congress
Page 2
April 16, 1975

follows that they can deal with each others problems effectively. Only parochial minds will disregard the deep cultural and/or linguistic barriers that come between minority groups.

Indeed, cultural factors alone even among Spanish-speaking people themselves is so conducive to division, that there is no real unity among Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Mexicans. That's why we lack a national association for the advancement of the Spanish-speaking people like the black folks have. That's why my letter to the Governor advocates the rights of all Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans.

Further on, I am accused of excluding from my letter other minority groups. The deliberate distortion of my views contained in this accusation is reprehensible. As Chairman for the Sub-Committee on Spanish-speaking Programs, I was merely identifying problem areas covered by Affirmative Action in terms of the Spanish-speaking people. That was a specific assignment and in no way should it be construed as an exclusion of other minority groups from my concern.

Finally, you strongly disagree with me when I called for the Spanish-speaking to plan and implement their own Affirmative Action goals. Allow me to strongly disagree with you again. Fighting discrimination is the business of all minorities. Planning, devising, and finding our own ways to eradicate it is not divisive in itself. It is merely a tactical maneuver geared to achieve the same goals we are all striving for.

Oscar Pumarejo
Chairman for the Sub-Committee
for Spanish-Speaking Programs



Affirmative Action Congress

March 18, 1975

Mr. Oscar N. Pumarejo
Department of Welfare
116 Health and Welfare Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Mr. Pumarejo:

This is in response to your recent March 6, 1975, letter to Governor Milton J. Shapp pertaining to Spanish Speaking representation recommendations which you submitted to the Affirmative Action Congress. The Congress is deeply concerned about opportunities relative to all minorities and women. Although we may be desirous of program development and implementation for the Spanish Speaking, we must ensure that the groundwork for such progressive action is established. The establishment of the Affirmative Action Congress' Sub-committee for Spanish Speaking Programs was a viable vehicle for initiating such a concept. In this manner the Congress as a whole would be supportive of input from the Sub-committee on Spanish Speaking and be effective in implementing programs within their own respective agencies.

The Executive Committee and Committee Chairpersons of the Affirmative Action Congress have received various critical comments regarding the content of the above-mentioned letter. We have reviewed these comments and have evaluated their effect on the entire Affirmative Action Program and impact on its present status. Specifically, our concerns are:

(1) The letter to the Governor is signed by you with the title of "Chairman, (Committee on Spanish Speaking Problems within the Congress for Affirmative Action)". It is our understanding that the Sub-committee for Spanish Speaking Programs has not, as of this date, held a meeting of all its members. We are of the opinion that this letter was drafted, finalized and submitted to the Governor without the prior review and approval of the members of the Committee. Consequently, your letter's personal opinions and generalizations did not represent the exact views of the Sub-committee, nor of the Congress in its entirety.



(2) All positions stated or expressed in any manner representing the Affirmative Action Congress must have approval by the elected officials of the Executive Committee. In this particular case, prior approval of the letter was imperative due to the present dilemma of the Affirmative Action Program. The letter was not considered of the overall strategy being developed by the Congress members. Although we feel your recommendation was valid, the negative sweeping statements and generalizations eliminated its honest intent. Also the letter was one submitted at a rather untimely situation, due to the fact that a total program is at stake rather than an integral element of it.

(3) Another concern was the statement, "Remember: neither black nor white are equipped either linguistically or culturally to deal effectively with our problems." Although it is agreed that lack of cultural awareness and languages of other minorities is a clear disadvantage, to say that minorities cannot relate to the effects of systemic discrimination is not true. Realization of indigent socioeconomic conditions results from living in that respective environment, which in essence affects Blacks, Spanish Speaking, American Indian, Oriental, Women, etc.

We are advocating the inclusion of all minorities and women in the Affirmative Action Program. There are many Blacks, White ethnics and women who are in total agreement, as to the importance of additional Spanish Speaking Affirmative Action programs and Affirmative Action Officers. The exclusion of them in your statement does not do justice to their sincere efforts.

You go further on to state "We must solve our own problems, fight our own battles, and plan our own Affirmative Action goals." We must strongly disagree with you. Although input from the Spanish Speaking is imperative, it is also essential to realize that we are all part of the problem and its solution must be conceived from a state of pluralism. We must all fight together regardless of color, race, nationality, religion, sex, etc., in unity against those oppressive systems that perpetuate separatism, racism and ridicule the principle of democracy. We are supportive of your sincerity, but we must accomplish the task together.

Executive Board

and

Committee Chairpersons



March 6, 1975

The Honorable Governor Milton J. Shapp
Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Governor's Office
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Governor Shapp:

I am writing regarding the recommendations which I submitted to the Congress for Affirmative Action, at the meeting held February 21, 1975, in relation to inadequate representation in most areas covered by Affirmative Action. Three astericks following names of Compliance Officers indicate the areas where the Spanish-speaking people are represented-- only five of them (corroborated by attachment dated February 21, 1975). With this kind of arithmetic, how can we be protected against discrimination? We are as protected as a barefoot man crossing a burning desert with only a jar of water to make it! Indeed, this farcical situation makes a travesty of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Executive Directives #13, 21, and 50, and callously undermines our struggle against discrimination.

Let's quote three words from Dr. Martin Luther King when calling for his people to stand up for their rights after suffering centuries of oppression and humiliation: "all, here, now". I am standing on the same principle: "all, here, now". All Puerto Ricans, all Mexican-Americans, all Cubans -- here, now! Our quiet endurance, our docile frustration, our growing despair, -- if ignored --, will lead to an explosion of hatred and violence. An explosion that will be heard from New York to Los Angeles, from Chicago to Miami. The time bomb is set and the clock is running out. Whether it goes off in ten or twenty years is immaterial. What matters is the ability of leaders to look beyond their own time and space to avoid a potential confrontation.

We cannot defuse the whole bomb; but we can disassemble our part from it. Remember: neither black nor white are equipped either linguistically nor culturally to deal effectively with our problems.



The Honorable Governor Milton J. Shapp
Page 2
March 6, 1975

We must solve our own problems, fight our own battles, and plan our own Affirmative Action goals. Therefore, I am recommending that the following departments, commissions, or councils hire Spanish-speaking Affirmative Action officers, -- the sooner the better!

Agriculture
Civil Service Commission
Commerce
Community Affairs
Education
Governor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Health
Justice
Labor and Industry
Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation
Military Affairs
Board of Probation and Parole
Transportation
Pennsylvania Commission for Women

I have selected these particular areas because of their critical importance in terms of the Spanish-speaking people for your immediate consideration. Eventually, all segments of Affirmative Action must follow in the same direction.

Note: You will find attached an extensive list of key Spanish-speaking contacts throughout the Commonwealth.

Respectfully yours,

Oscar N. Pumarejo

Oscar N. Pumarejo, Chairman
(Committee on Spanish-speaking
Problems within Congress for
Affirmative Action)

CC: Ernest P. Kline, Lt. Governor
Leonard M. Black, Exec. Dir., Governor's Affirmative Action
Council
Sylvia Walter, Chairman, Congress for Affirmative Action
Bolivar Rivera, Exec. Dir., Governor's Council on Opportunity
for the Spanish-speaking
Marie Keeney, Dir., Pa. Commission for Women
Deputy Secretaries (Responsible for Affirmative Action)
Equal Opportunity Development Specialists
Affirmative Action Officers
Acting Affirmative Action Officers
All Presidents of Spanish-speaking organizations in Pa.

