

# Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1968

The Detroit Public Schools will receive \$6,000,000 to squander in the next three years from the Federal government for a special project to “enrich” five inner-city-schools.

Among other things, they will increase the staffs in these five schools—but at a heavy price they won’t publicly admit: the reduction of personnel available to the rest of the city’s schools. That’s the tragedy of most “crash” programs; with only a limited amount of teachers to utilize, school boards are more interested in “showcases” for their national public relations image than they are in genuine overall improvement of their antiquated systems.

Another “crash” program two years ago, the development of special “skills centers,” practically depleted the entire Detroit system of all its school social workers (formerly called “visiting teachers”). So that badly-needed assistance for the seriously emotionally disturbed—never in great quantity in the first place—was reduced to about zero.

Of course not! A white life is still worth at least twice as much as that of a Black man.

The “model youth” slain in Trenton was a college sophomore majoring in religion. He had apparently been walking down the street and was caught in the middle of a confrontation between cops and looters. The cop who killed him, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (a white newspaper) could only claim that there was looted clothing near the boy’s body. Not even that he tried to stop the young man before shooting.

Even the white leaders of Trenton were stunned by the slaying. He was not a typical “dropout,” so, in their eyes, was more entitled to live. One white social worker was sure that “he was there by accident or else he was there as a peacemaker.”

The boy’s stepfather is a correction officer at Trenton State Prison. And the young man himself was a member of the mayor’s youth council.

One of his Black neighbors commented, “The man did everything right and wound up dead.”

While Washington, D.C. was burning a few weeks ago after Rev. King’s death, good old LBJ called in some Negro leaders to talk things over. The only somewhat Black militant he invited was Floyd McKissick, of C.O.R.E.

McKissick got to the White House coordiro, and then found out that he was going to be surrounded by a bunch of “Tom’s”—Roy Wilkins, of NAACP, Whitney Young, Jr., Bayard Rustin, etc.

According to CORE’s No. 2 man, Roy Innis, etc. “didn’t see Stokely, Rap, Elijah Muhammed or any other black brothers” in the White House assemblage. “It was just the old team—the people who don’t represent anybody.”

McKissick would have still considered going in if his two aides, Innis and Wilfred Ussery, could have accompanied him. But when told he had to face LBJ and the “Toms” alone, he just walked out.

Meanwhile, evening activities at the White House were not disturbed by the curfew. While Washington Blacks were being shot down and slammed into jail cells, the special guests for a Presidential reception honoring the Chancellor of Austria were allowed on the streets. And the President condemns violence!

A typical lie of the white press was seen in the headline of the Lansing State Journal: “Halt Violence: King’s Widow.” Actually, Mrs. King said no sudden thing. The text of the article, a UPI dispatch, indicated that despite a plea from the White House that she ask for an end to the violence which wracked the country following her

husband's killing, she refused to specifically call for it to end, though she reiterated, with some obvious futility, that her husband "gave his life in search of a more excellent way, a more effective way, a creative rather than a destructive way."

As I indicated several weeks ago, the Detroit Public Schools are anticipating a great shortage of teachers next fall. If you somehow qualify, it's not too bad a deal. Regularly certified teachers start off at \$192.00 a week for 39 weeks.

Things are so hopeless in most Black schools, that supervision of your work is quite minimal. So if you think you have a special thing for kids, you'll probably have a lot of freedom in your relationships with them—and pick up some good bread at the same time.

Will the white community of Trenton N.J. collect money for the black "model youth" executed by a white cop during the week — long Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "riot testimonial," in the same way that four Negro ministers in Cincinnati are collecting money for the white widow of a white art student who was allegedly killed by a mob of Black youths?

# fifth Estate

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