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Letter to Elmer Learn from Willard Thompson
University of Minnesota archives

August 18, 1965

Dr. Elmer Learn
Assistant to the President
Morrill Hall 202

Dear Elmer:

Some weeks ago Cameron Thomson in conversations either with Vice President Hubert Humphrey or someone from his office was told that the University of Minnesota was missing excellent opportunities to benefit from federal funds because it did not have a center for urban affairs.

This, of course, was alarming news to Cameron and he immediately began to make inquiry. As a result it was suggested by Cameron that Tom Anding of the Upper Midwest staff (who also has been part-time in the office of Orville Peterson) be sent to Washington to talk with persons in the Vice President's office. It was suggested that John Borchert and I accompany him.

I don't know whether John has reported to you on that meeting.

The three of us had lunch with Neil Peterson, one of Vice President Humphrey's assistants, who explained that the Vice President had been told by the President that he was to have special concern for urban affairs. He indicated that there was a possibility that urban affairs centers would be supported nationally in strategically located institutions and repeated that the Vice President was disappointed that there was not such a center at the University of Minnesota which might be designated the instrument for this region.

John Borchert explained that even though we did not have an urban affairs center as such, the University was making a major contribution in this area and that discussions were presently underway on the ways in which we might coordinate these efforts in some type of center.

The National League of Cities is deeply interested in this area and has in part been responsible for the increased interest on the part of the Vice President. At a recent meeting of the National League of Cities

discussions were held on a proposal for urban observatories which would have relevance for this particular program. Mayor Arthur Naftalin was among those present for that discussion and he indicates that the University of Minnesota would be seriously considered as the location for such an observatory.

Among the persons who have been central to these conversations at the national level is George M. Belknap, Director of Research Development for the Housing and Home Finance Agency in Washington, D.C. Dr. Belknap is interested in all of the things we are doing here at the University as the instrument for the administration of funds from Title VIII of the Housing Act in Minnesota. Dr. Belknap would be interested in visiting the University to discuss the future of Title VIII (which has not to date been funded but which he hopes will be) and related matters at our convenience.

If it were to prove agreeable with those who have concern for urban affairs here, I would like to suggest that we try to arrange a meeting at the Center for Continuation Study sometime early in the fall to develop ways in which the University might best muster its resources in this area and mount a program of maximum effectiveness. I am assured by Dr. Belknap that he would enjoy taking part in such a conversation. I am sure that Art Naftalin and others would be equally interested if it were agreed that they should be introduced to the discussions.

I hesitate to press unduly for such a meeting, but I do think that it might prove profitable.

Sincerely,

Willard L. Thompson, Dean
General Extension Division
and Summer Session

cc: Donald K. Smith
John Borchert
Tom Anding

WLT:ss