

Eisenhower Report Urges 'New Alliance' on Education, Jobs

BY BILL ALEXANDER

In a new report called *Locked in the Poorhouse: Cities, Race and Poverty in the United States*, the Washington, D.C.-based Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation calls for a "new alliance among working people, the poor and middle-income people that reverses rapidly growing income inequality." The report, co-edited by former Sen. Fred Harris (D-Okla.) and foundation President Lynn Curtis, said the new alliance should be based on the "common ground of education and re-education, training and retraining, jobs and job mobility in a global economy."

The report was launched last month in forum-style with a roster of speakers gathered in a Senate hearing room. Among them were Dorothy Stoneman, president of YouthBuild USA, Philip Coltoff, executive director of New York's Children's Aid Society, and former Assistant Attorney General Roger Wilkins, now a professor at George Mason University in Virginia.

All stated that knowledge already exists on how to correct inequities in education and employment. Speaker after speaker emphasized that no tax increases are needed to create fundamental changes in society by expanding programs that have been proven to be effective.

Coltoff asserted, for example, that Safe and Drug-Free Schools monies could be used more effectively by redirecting the funds to make up school deficits, keeping schools open beyond the 180-day school year, and prolonging the school day until 10 p.m. with after-school activities that would challenge the youth. "Right now," Coltoff said, "the Safe and Drug-Free School program is only a sign stuck in the ground in front of the school."

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, executive director of the D.C.-based Black Leadership Forum, looked at Coltoff and declared, "What you said about Safe and Drug-Free Schools goes double for McGruff, the crime-fighting dog." The mascot of the National Crime Prevention Council is heavily underwritten by the Office of Juvenile Justice Programs non-competitive grants.

The University of California's Elliott Currie railed at the "unnecessarily" high rate of contact between the police and Hispanic and African-American juveniles; he said it results in a quick release or overnight detention after a rap sheet has been made up that "carries the stigma of institutionalization" and "serves as justification for incarcerating the juvenile again." Mandatory jail sentencing "excesses," said Currie, exacerbate the problem. He called for states to "get off their \$30 billion budget surpluses" and invest more in pro-active youth programs such as literacy and job training. "We're withering away opportunities for poor kids," he said.

"We already know what works," said Harris. "These programs and policies need to be replicated at a scale equal to the dimensions of the problem."

The report is available for \$24.94 by calling (800) 462-6420. Excerpts can be found on the Eisenhower web site at www.eisenhowerfoundation.org.

