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UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20415

AIR MAIL

YOUR REFERENCE

SEP 8 1966

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford Medical Center
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I appreciate your writing to me for information about the minority group statistics program. The Commission's jurisdiction covers only those employees who work directly for the Federal Government as civil service employees. The Secretary of Labor is responsible for enforcing equal employment opportunity among Government contractors, and therefore would be setting the rules for minority group surveys of the employees you seem to be directly concerned about.

My response to your letter must necessarily be limited to the statistics program in effect for Federal civil service employees. You may wish to write to Secretary Wirtz for information about the program for contractor employees.

In the few years that we have run minority group statistical surveys, we have not attempted to define the racial designations used in the survey. We have left this decision up to each participant in the survey: when supervisors make the survey by a visual head count, they decide the racial or national origin designation for each employee; when a self-designation system is used, each employee makes this decision for himself. Supervisors have been given no criteria for racial designations other than to designate each employee in the category he would be regarded in the community.

We recognize that the few racial and national origin designations we use lack precision, but I believe it would be foolhardy for us to venture where anthropologists and geneticists fear to tread.

This year we have authorized agencies with automatic data processing capability to use a confidential, automated self-identification system for collecting and maintaining minority group statistics. Agencies without ADP capability continue to use the supervisory head count. In our view, the automated system has a number of advantages

over the supervisory head count, among which are: (1) it is voluntary, so that the employee is free to decline to participate; and (2) the employee designates his own preference for minority classification.

We are using only those racial or national origin minority designations that are considered necessary -- Negro, American Indian, Spanish American, and Oriental; these are the categories in which there has been a significant number of complaints of discrimination. We have resisted enlarging this list to include any religious or other groupings.

I believe a certain amount of race-consciousness is necessary if we are to make substantial progress in our fight against discrimination. We can no longer sit back and say, "We have no discrimination in the Federal service because our regulations prohibit it." The time has come to mount an aggressive campaign that will truly open new opportunities to minority group members for employment and advancement in the Federal service.

As one writer recently put it, "In equal employment opportunity, we have moved from color discrimination to color blindness and now to color consciousness." The middle period of color blindness was really an excuse for doing very little. Many persons who fought discrimination for years -- and this includes sociologists, civil rights workers, and personnel administrators -- have reluctantly come to realize that color blindness was not enough, and that if we ever are going to defeat discrimination we have to provide some basic data that will establish the extent of the problem and thus form the foundation for intelligent corrective action.

That is what the minority group statistics program is all about. It is an effort -- especially when combined with automated personnel records -- to provide basic data about the location of soft spots in Federal civil service employment. The data should show Federal managers those occupational and geographical areas of employment in which greater efforts may be needed to achieve equal employment opportunity -- without sacrificing the principles of the merit system and without giving preference to minority group members.

The need for solid basic data in this program is as essential as the need for data in many scientific and business endeavors. Without such data, we are reduced to running a third-rate equal employment opportunity program.

I recognize the dilemma you express in your letter as one we must continue to grapple with. I feel, however, that the minority group statistics system we are operating in the Federal civil service -- emphasizing voluntariness, confidentiality, and self-designation -- if nothing else, reduces the dimensions of the dilemma. I do not say we have a complete solution, but I do feel that the remaining risks are ones we have to take if we are really determined to achieve the goals of the equal employment opportunity program.

Sincerely yours,


John W. Macy, Jr.
Chairman