

P. S. Hardly a word about family planning, mental health!

February 5, 1969

Mr. John W. Gardner, Chairman  
The Urban Coalition  
1819 H Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20006

Dear Mr. Gardner:

Thank you for your letter of January 31, inviting me to join your task force of health, and to attend its first meeting on February 13.

I'm sorry that it will not be possible for me to attend this meeting. However, I am eager to contribute in any way that I can, and if Dr. Silver thinks it is feasible, I will be glad to react by mail or by phone to the papers you are preparing.

May I mention at the outset one item of comment of the draft memorandum dated January 22. Public education about elementary aspects of nutrition and of hygiene is an indispensable part of any program for health improvement. I would like to see much more energetic use of the mass media, especially television, for this purpose and am aware of only sporadic efforts along these lines at the present time. I also believe that specifically supplemented foods should be developed and distributed through school lunch and in place of routine commodity distribution. The document as a whole has a stridently paternalistic tone, and while some of this is inevitable, I suggest that much more emphasis be placed on helping people help themselves.

Sincerely yours,

Josuah Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/jn

J. GARDNER