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Letters from the Executive Director Jonathan Brock

Jonathan Brock
Task Force on Excellence in State and Local Government Through Labor-Management Cooperation

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Letters from the Executive Director Jonathan Brock

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The Secretary of Labor's Task Force
on Excellence in State and Local Governrnent
Through Labor-Management Cooperation

May 10, 1995

Dear Colleague:

The Secretary of Labor's Task Force will meet again in Washington, DC on May 16 and 17 in room N-3437. Working groups of the Task Force have returned from a series of regional meetings in the Northeast, Southeast and Southwest, where we saw first hand examples of labor-management cooperation resulting in service delivery and work quality improvements in professions ranging from public safety, to education, sanitation, parks, health care cost containment, health care, libraries and others. Our challenge has been the lack of sufficient time to hear from the many examples from every region that have come to our attention.

Much has been learned about major enhancements in service and job quality, cost efficiencies and other improvements. We are working to catalogue the ingredients and techniques that have contributed to the success of these cooperative efforts so that we can usefully assist interested parties to use cooperative approaches to the benefit of the public service. We expect to produce summaries of those visits to be available soon after our June hearing in Washington, DC.

The next and last regional visit will be June 5 and 6 in the Midwest. Once completed we will have visited or heard first hand from over 50 workplaces in more than 15 states. In addition we are receiving dozens of completed surveys describing successful labor-management cooperative ventures. We have visited and heard from work units in both union and non-union jurisdictions and have heard from numerous experts and representatives in various labor and management communities. A number of the Task Force members or I have also met with executive boards and other officers of many labor, management, academic and neutral groups interested in promoting cooperation that leads to excellence in public service. The agendas from our regional meetings are attached for your information.

At our next hearing in Washington, DC on May 16 and 17, after an initial summary of information from our regional work, we will focus on issues connected to the debate over contracting-out or privatization as they relate to service improvements and labor- management cooperation. Our regional visits have given us some insight into the subject, and we have invited experts representing a range of viewpoints to discuss with us their observations on how public service can best be improved. Part of the presentation on the second day will include examples of public employees working to reduce costs and improve service in jurisdictions where contracting-out has been a subject of discussion and action.

Our purpose is to dispassionately hear the various points of view on the subject and factor into our work some useful observations that contribute to a strong and effective public service and which put some essential issues into a practical perspective. We hope you can join us for what promises to be an interesting two days.

The next full Task Force meeting in Washington, DC will be on June 22 and 23, and we tentatively expect to discuss the effects of budgets and budget systems and financial issues on labor-management cooperation.

If you would like further information or have questions, please contact Ms. Leslie Redd with my offfice at the Cascade Center for Public Service, University of Washington, at (206) 685-0523. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Brock
Executive Director
The Secretary of Labors Task Force on
Excellence in State and Local Government
Through Labor-Management Cooperation

The Secretary of Labor's Task Force on Excellence in State and Local Government Through Labor-Management Cooperation

May 31, 1995

Dear Colleague:

In just a few days the Task Force will visit the Mid West for its fifth and final regional meeting. Task Form members will visit Indianapolis, Indiana and Madison, Wisconsin on June 5 and 6, respectively. Observations from the full set of regional hearings will be discussed at the June meeting of the Task Force in Washington, DC.

As you can see fom the enclosed agenda, the cities of Indianapolis and Madison, and the represented unions including AFSCME, the Teamsters and Laborers International Union, will be presenting to the Task Force a number of examples wihin their jurisdiction. Indianapolis has been receiving a lot of current attention for its efforts at service improvement. Madison has had well known quality improvement efforts over a period of years. The lessons and contrasts should prove valuable.

Union and management representatives Som be states of Indiana and Wisconsin will also discuss their efforts in the realm of labor-management cooperation.

In addition, the Task Force will hear briefly from a joint labor-management committee from the city of Peoria, Illinois that has achieved substantial health care cost savings, and learn about successful committed joint improvement efforts from the Cincinnati Felon of Teachers and Cincinnati Public Schools.

The next hearing in Washington, DC is June 22 and 23, at which the Task Force will hear discussion regarding budget and pension trends, and hear from elected officials.

If you would like to attend all or part of the Mid West meeting, or if you know of examples that should be brought to the attention of the Task Force, please contact Leslie Redd at (206) 685-0523. Please also call her if your organization would like to submit a statement on any issues before the Task Force.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our efforts.

Sincerely,

Jon Brock
Executive Director
for the Task Force

The Secretary of Labor's Task Force on Excellence in State and Local Government Through Labor-Management Cooperation

June 13, 1995

Dear Colleague:

June Meeting on Finance, Budget and Pensions

The Secretary of Labor's Task Force will meet on June 22 and 23 in Washington, D.C. at the Labor Department, Room N-3437, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW. We will hear testimony on subjects related to the financial pressures on state and local government and on budget practices. We have found in our research to date that the financial status of state and local jurisdictions is important in many dimensions of compelling and developing cooperative relationships and service improvement. In particular we are finding that changes in budget and accounting practices often accompany and are key ingredients to service improvement. We will have information presented by the National Conference of State Legislatures on state and local financial trends, and later from representatives of the Government Finance Officers Association and KPMG, a private firm assisting many municipalities in developing cost accounting systems in conjunction with cooperative labor relations.

We will also hear testimony on public sector pensions, recognizing the importance of stable benefits in the employment relationship and in the relationship overall between labor and management. We will hear from a number of experts including former ERISA Administrator Ian Lanoff and Harold Schaitberger, the Legislative Counsel of the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems.

Joining us also on that day will be Albert Shanker, the President of the American Federation of Teachers. Mr. Shanker had previously been scheduled to testify in January, but was unable to attend at the last moment. Although AFT was ably represented by Ed McElroy, the AFT Secretary-Treasurer, we are pleased that Mr. Shanker can join us.

On the second day of the hearing the Task Force expects to hear from a number of elected officials on their views of the relationship between those in elected office and promoting cooperative labor relations, especially in today's environment.

We will also, on June 23, discuss our collective impressions of the set of five regional hearings just completed. This should be a stimulating and useful discussion.

Midwest Visit to Madison, Indianapolis

Our final regional working group meeting was completed last week. This meeting was in the Midwest, where we visited Indianapolis, Indiana and Madison, Wisconsin. In addition to reviewing the highlights of labor-management cooperative efforts in each city, one recently involved, and one with a longer history, we heard from four other jurisdictions: Cincinnati Public Schools and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers with an impressive and comprehensive program, a recent FMCS sponsored effort in the State of Indiana, and a program from Wisconsin state government involving the entire Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations working with AFSCME, the State Engineers Association, and the Wisconsin Professional Employees Council.

In Indianapolis, we got a first hand look at one of the most highly publicized current examples in the country and learned a great deal from representatives of the city and AFSCME. In Madison, where there has been a TQM program since the mid 80's we also learned a lot and saw the results of years of cooperative effort among the city, AFSCME, Laborers, Teamsters, Fire Fighters, and Police. These and other examples from previous hearings will be discussed in the session of Friday, June the 23rd.

Field Visits Completed

We have completed our field hearings. In 10 days of field work we sought examples from five distinct regions of the country. Meeting in various sub-groups of the Task Force we visited or heard directly from 16 state examples, 28 city examples, and four county examples. In identifying site visits we relied substantially on jurisdictions from whom we had received completed surveys as well as on suggestions from knowledgeable observers from both labor and management.

We will in July wrap up the main research phase with some testimony on the high performance workplace, discussing civil service reform as it relates to service improvement and will have a presentation looking at private sector examples. We will also consider the role of neutral agencies in promoting labor-management cooperation in pursuit of service excellence.

Thank you again for your interest in the work of the Secretary's Task Force. If you would like further information or have questions, please contact Ms. Leslie Redd with my office at the Cascade Center for Public Service, University of Washington, (206) 685-0523.

Sincerely,

Jon Brock
Executive Director

Attachment: Preliminary Agenda

The Secretary of Labor's Task Force
on Excellence in State and Local Government
Through Labor-Management Cooperation

June 29, 1995

Dear Colleague:

The *Secretary of Labor's Task Force on Excellence in State and Local Government* will meet again on July 10 and 11 in Washington, D.C. at the Labor Department, Room N-3437, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW. On those dates, we will focus on four issues: the role of neutral agencies, related legal issues, the effects of civil service and characteristics of a high-performance workplace. The Task Force will also discuss its future work plans.

June 22-23 Hearing

At the meeting in late June, we had a very useful discussion of financial issues affecting state and local government that might also have an effect on cooperation and service improvement. We also heard a stimulating presentation from Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, which covered a wide variety of issues that affect both labor-management cooperation in educational settings and the impact on improvement of education.

We also reviewed the results of our five regional work group meetings, beginning to identify common ingredients and conditions that contribute to a cooperative labor-management relationship and service improvement. There were some remarkable results to report, and we noted some common threads that seemed to be present in situations where cooperation had resulted in service and world life improvements. At the same time, positive results were found in virtually every kind of situation imaginable. They were found in historically difficult circumstances, in both extreme and less extreme financial circumstances, in a variety of political and legal settings in all parts of the country, and in a broad range of services and professions.

In general, the Task Force felt that we had identified key ingredients, and now must explore how those ingredients played into the process of gaining cooperation and improving services. We will also explore how parties were able to create or call upon those ingredients. The Task Force seemed optimistic about the possibility of analyzing this data further to identify and bring forward information that would improve public service effectiveness, efficiency and quality of world life. We will continue to world on analyzing and discussing the issues and opportunities identified.

July 10-11 Hearing

The first morning of our July hearing will begin with a discussion of the role of neutral agencies. We will hear from John Calhoun Wells, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. The FMCS has had a long standing and highly regarded program in assisting public and private sector parties to work and bargain in a more cooperative and productive manner. Shlomo Sperka, director of the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, and recent past-president of the Association of Labor Relations Agencies, will also be present. Joining him will be Dan Ellis,

chairman of the Oregon Employment Relations Board, an organization which has pioneered a state-level program to help parties work more cooperatively in bargaining and quality efforts. (in our visit to Oregon in February, we heard from many parties who had benefited from this program.) Following their discussion, we anticipate hearing about other legal issues affecting the capacity of parties to world cooperatively.

In the afternoon, a panel chaired by Jerome Rosow, founder and president of the Work in America Institute, will be our major activity. The Institute hats been exploring and encouraging labor-management cooperation and quality of work and work life efforts for nearly two decades. Mr. Rosow has invited representatives from AT&T Capital and from Magma Metals and the United Steelworkers of America to describe their experiences, and he will draw from their testimony and his own experience to identify characteristics and ingredients of high-performance workplaces.

On Tuesday morning, we will begin with a discussion of the effects of civil service on work-place cooperation and service improvement. In our regional visits, we have seen many examples of reforms of the personnel system to reflect service needs. We have invited representatives of the National Association of State Personnel Executives and the International Personnel Management Association to talk with us about trends and the needs they have identified. We also hope to hear from some other practitioners and experts who have been recently engaged in cooperative service improvements that have included changes in civil service and other personnel practices.

With these issues explored, we will have completed exposure to the main issues in our work plan. On Tuesday afternoon, we expect to discuss the Task Force's future work plan and the best ways to make progress.

A short press release should be available in the next few weeks to provide a general progress report on Task Force activities, should any of you wish to have it for your organization's newsletter.

We have received useful letters and comments from a number of you, and we appreciate the input. If you would lice further information or have questions, please call Ed Hilz with the U.S. Department of Labor, (202) 219-6098.

Sincerely,

Jon Brock
Executive Director
The Secretary of Labor's Task Force
on Excellence in State and Local Government
Through Labor-Management Cooperation

September 6, 1995 Labor Task Force Letter

The Secretary of Labor's Task Force
on Excellence in State and Local Governrnent
Through Labor-Management Cooperation

September 6, 1995

Dear Colleagues:

Since you have been following the progress of the Secretary's Task Force, I thought you would be interested in what we have learned during our regional visits.

Regional Summary
Enclosed is a summary version of the briefing that was given during our June hearing in Washington, D.C. Even though it is in draft and outline form, you will gain some insight into the depth and breadth of information we have received.

Since February, sub-groups of Task Force members have made site visits to five regions of the country, and have seen or heard first hand about service improvements or efficiencies from examples in 28 cities, 16 states and 4 counties. We have seen examples in education, law enforcement, public works, social service, administrative functions and other government services. We have seen positive results in nearly every political, legal and historical setting, some arising from very difficult relationships and issues, some from more agreeable beginnings.

At the front of the document there is a list of geographic locations that the Task Force visited. The Task Force will be developing a summary of these examples so that interested parties can contact us or the sites themselves for further elaboration.

The Task Force is continuing its work in analyzing the data we have gathered in the field, by submission and in the Washington, DC meeting and will later move to determine the contents of its report.

September Hearing
The Task Force will meet briefly on September 13 and 14 in Washington, D.C. to hear some additional testimony. Wednesday morning leads off with testimony from Thomas Donahue, the President of the AFL-CIO. On Thursday morning, we will be hearing from a number of elected officials including Mayor Paul Soglin of Madison, WI and from heads of prominent shcools of labor studies and labor relations. An agenda is enclosed for your review.

Thank you again for your interest in the work of the Secretary's Task Force. If you would like further information or have questions, please contact Ms. Leslie Redd with my office at the Cascade Center for Public Service, University of Washington, (206) 685-0523.

Sincerely,

Jon Brock
Executive Director

Enclosures