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FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: NEW INITIATIVES

Address by Alan K. Campbell, *Chairman*, U.S. Civil Service Commission

It is a particular honor to be asked to address you in the name of Ralph Bunche, certainly one of the leading public figures of my generation. The story I remember best about Mr. Bunche is that when he had finished his work at Harvard some years before I arrived there, had completed his Ph.D. and was waiting for commencement, he received a notice to report immediately to the Dean's Office. He was convinced that the reason for the notice was that he had not paid all his bills and that, until he did, he would not receive his degree. Since he did not have the money to pay his bills at that moment, he decided the best thing to do was to avoid the Dean's Office and perhaps he would get the degree without their noticing. They nonetheless sent out somebody to find him because what they wanted to tell him was that he just won a Harvard Sheldon Traveling Fellowship which permitted him to spend a year abroad at Harvard's expense. I have taken a great deal of pride in the fact that some years later I had the honor of also winning that Fellowship. So the combination of Texas Southern and the School of Public Affairs and Ralph Bunche all make this occasion a very important one to me.

I do want to talk to you about some of the things we are trying to do at the U. S. Civil Service Commission, things which I believe will be of interest to you and hopefully will also have your support. As was suggested by Walter, the Federal work force of 2,800,000 people is the largest single work force in the Western world and the management and operation of it is a very major undertaking. The President is convinced that we can do a better job at that than we have been doing; that we can produce a system which will be more effective, more responsive to citizens, and deliver better service, and that we will be able to do so without excessive cost. Therefore, reorganization of the Executive Branch is one of the major goals of this administration. To carry out this objective, the President has established a reorganization team located in the Office of Management and Budget. Acting as the leadership group for that team is an Executive Committee for the overall reorganization. The President, himself, is Chairman of that committee. The other members are the Vice-President, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors and myself as Chairman of the Civil Service Commission. It is an active committee that meets regularly and is a measure of the President's commitment to his reorganization promises made during the campaign. There are now 33 projects underway. They will begin to make recommendations to the President over the course of the next few

months, and you will, I think, be reading a lot in the media in February, March, April, and May about the major reorganization efforts which are being undertaken.

One of the major projects, and one which will be among the first to make its set of recommendations to the President, is known as the Federal Personnel Management Project. This group is co-chaired by the Associate Director of the Office of Management and Budget for Management and by me. The President has instructed us to give the present Personnel System of the federal government a thorough review that touches on every aspect of federal personnel management, including equal employment opportunity and affirmative action policies and practices, to which, as you know, the President has a very deep commitment.

For the past six months we have been involved in this project and, only yesterday, made our first report on tentative recommendations to the overall leadership of the President's reorganization efforts. I am pleased to report that the response was affirmative and strong.

Many of the policies followed by the Civil Service Commission, as well as the federal government in general, in the personnel field, are good; and one should not start out with the assumption that everything in the past has been ineffective or incorrect. For example, the federal government is a leading employer of veterans. Veterans now make up 50 percent of the federal work force and you can contrast that with the 25 percent that veterans are of the total national work force. However, this particular accomplishment of the Civil Service System has had its unfortunate consequences in relationship to its impact on the employment of non-veterans, and particularly women, and I will comment upon that in just a moment.

The Government also has not done as badly as rhetoric would sometimes suggest in relationship to the employment of minorities. Recently, a major study came out of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, done by an economist named Richard Freeman. He examined the kind of employment that minority college graduates are finding and their employment opportunities in the public sector versus the private sector; and I will comment a bit on some of those findings and their relationship to some of the initiatives which we are undertaking in just a moment.

Unfortunately, the other side of that picture is that most of the employment of minorities and women in the federal government is in the lower paying grades—grades 1 through 7, out of a grade system which has 18 grades. In part, this is a result of veterans preference. Veterans preference, as you know, is a system whereby veterans are given additional points on their exams in terms of getting employment and having

very strong rights in relationship to continuing employment whenever there is a reduction in the labor force. Since veterans are predominantly white and 98 percent male, these extra points indeed substantially increase what would not otherwise be the case—the employment of white males at the expense of women and to a lesser extent of minorities. By the way, these comments I am making about veterans preference were first made to the American Legion Convention in Denver, where the reception was somewhat less than friendly; and afterwards, one of the Legionnaires came up to me and said he did not understand what I was complaining about since we had given them, by which he meant non-veterans, 50 percent of the jobs, which he thought was generous.

I am simply pointing out by this example of veterans preference how two federal personnel policies with totally different origins and purposes interrelated and how any effort to change one necessarily requires adjustments in the other. In short, I am saying that reorganization and the changing policies as they relate to the federal personnel system as well as to the total Executive Branch are a very difficult undertaking.

Now let me turn directly to the question of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action in the Government as it operates, and changes which we have made or are in the process of making.

Much of the good news, if you will, comes from an analysis I have already mentioned of national hiring trends, which found that opportunities for college-educated blacks were increasing generally, but most rapidly in the federal government. I urge your attention to this report by the Carnegie Commission if you have not seen it, because it contains data and information we have not had before. For example, Dr. Freeman points out that in 1970 more than half of the black men with four or more years of college were government workers, that is federal, state or local, compared to 27 percent of the white males with similar levels of education. Seventy-two percent of black women graduates were employed by government compared to 56 percent of white female college graduates. What is interesting to me about that figure, in addition to the difference between black females and white females, is that a high proportion of women who are college educated are undoubtedly making their careers in government work—72 percent for black females and 56 percent for white females. He also notes that black college men are more likely to have managerial positions in government than in the private sector. In 1970, 14 percent of black male graduates working for government—federal, state, and local—held managerial jobs, about the same as white graduates; that is 15 percent. By contrast, only 13 percent of black college men were managers in the economy as a whole compared to 20 percent of white college men.

Not only are black college men more likely to become managers with government rather than with private industry, but black managers in government earned more than black managers in the private sector. Black managers employed by government had 25 percent higher earnings than all black managers, while white government managers had about the same pay as all white managers. Incidentally, that is another point which I think is worth making—that today, on the average, one does not take a pay sacrifice to work with the government. Through the comparability system of the federal government and through the very strenuous activities of unionization at the state and local levels, the government now is very nearly on the same level of pay for similar jobs as is the private sector. It is not the case, as is often argued in the media, that federal workers earn more than their private sector counterparts; but it is true that, on the whole, the two systems are today very close together.

These and other observations made by Dr. Freeman concerning the employment of minority college people reflect that progress is being made and that the public sector, federal, state and local, has indeed been contributing to that progress. That is the good news. There is, however, bad news; and to misstate that word, I think that the bad news is badder than the good news is good.

The data I now rely on comes from the Civil Service Commission itself, and it is the data that we are using as the basis for making some very major policy changes. These data indicate that minorities and women generally, not just the college-trained and highly skilled minorities that Freeman writes about but all federally employed minorities and women, are well represented but only in the lower paid grades—grades up to 7, which is about midway through the total system.

In grades 1 through 4, the lowest grades of the General Schedule—that is, the white-collar pay system—76 percent are women, 21 percent are black and 4 percent are Hispanic.

In grades 9 through 12—and that will give you some idea if you do not know the grade system, my colleagues here in the Civil Service Commission will be checking me out, 9 through 12 would run from approximately what—\$15,000 to \$22,000—is that pretty close, okay, thank you—we are talking middle grades, 20 percent are women, 2 percent are black and 2 percent are Hispanic.

In the supergrades, grades 16, 17 and 18, which are the highest paying grades—salaries running from the \$42,000 a year to \$47,500 a year—women and blacks represent 3 percent of employees in those grades and Hispanics 1 percent. Fantastic underrepresentation, the product of many historical forces obviously including discrimination, but other matters too, such as veterans preference as already discussed, the

character of agency promotion systems, the limitations on promotions, the whole system of how one draws job descriptions, and the like, help to explain this very low representation in the highest grades. There is another factor before getting at the issue—what if anything can be done about that—that is important for you to understand because it sets the framework within which we are trying to make major policy changes.

The federal work force is not growing in size. Federal employment has remained stable at less than three million employees for many, many years, and federal employment, as a proportion of the total population or federal employment per thousand population, has, in fact, been going down now for at least two decades. The rapid growth of government in recent years has been entirely at the state and local levels of the system where the direct services of government are provided—welfare services, education services, fire and police protection, sewage and water facilities and the like. I should point out that much of that is paid for by the federal government and they, in a sense, contracted out to state and local governments to perform it; and therefore, it is state and local governments that get the increase in employment rather than the federal government.

Now, without the kind of growth that exists in a rapidly expanding work force, administrators must try to achieve affirmative action goals within a fixed number of jobs. This, of course, is much more difficult to do than if you have a gross increment which you can use in an effort to accomplish worthy social purposes. As it is, federal employees, once they have been in the system for three or four years generally advance only when attrition—that is retirement, transfers, resignations, discharges, of which there are not very many—creates vacancies. When these vacancies occur in the higher level jobs, most are filled by promotion from within as opposed to bringing in people from the outside. Candidates, therefore, for these higher level jobs are those who now hold mid-level jobs. If minorities and women are not well represented in the mid-range of jobs, and they are not, they will not be well represented in the higher-range jobs either. At present, women and minorities account for only 5.2 and 5.9 percent, respectively, of jobs in grades 13, 14, and 15, which are the grades from which people are promoted to the top jobs in the system. In fact, the only improvement in the representation in the top-level jobs in this system in the past two years has come about through non-career, that is, Presidential political appointments; there has been no improvement as far as career appointments to the top of the system are concerned.

I think it well for us to recognize, too, as we all struggle today in the area of equal employment opportunity that it is more difficult to make

progress when the accomplishments, when the movement ahead, when the promotion in the acquiring of a job by one person means somebody else does not get it. That was not a result in Brown versus Topeka where, in fact, there was a place for everybody in the public schools. Granted, quality varied very tremendously from school to school; nonetheless, it was not a matter of somebody replacing somebody else. In the current situation, whether you are talking about admissions to law school, to medical school, or whether you are talking about federal jobs, there is a competition going forward; and it is that situation which has produced the Bakke case and out of which is going to come a great deal more dispute and conflict in this field. Now, what are we trying to do about it at the Civil Service Commission?

Let me, if I may, just run through the initiatives that we have thus far taken and those that we plan to take. One of the first things we as a Commission did after taking office, was to adopt a new policy for filling the higher level positions within the Civil Service Commission itself, not a large agency by federal government standards—eight to nine thousand employees. Nonetheless, we noticed that the Commission as the agency responsible for affirmative action throughout government had disappointingly few women and minorities at the top grade levels. In fact, we were no better and, in terms of some of the top grades, were worse than the rest of the government.

To do something about this, we adopted a policy whereby job vacancies at grade 15 and above are filled only after strong affirmative recruitment directed toward minorities and women as well as candidates within and outside the agencies. Further, we are now giving credit in terms of job experience for a much broader range of experiential background than is traditional within the federal or other civil service systems. There is an art, as some of you who have done work in this field are aware, in writing position descriptions. If you get good enough at it, you can write a position description so there is only one person in the world qualified for that job; and if your desire is to hire that person, then you set out to write that description. I am not suggesting that that has been the practice; I am suggesting, however, that we need to broaden those job descriptions in order to be able to cast our net more widely for potential employees in managerial ranks.

We also have established a new managerial development program and the Commission is now identifying those positions in the grades thirteen-to-fifteen range which we are calling developmental. This will enlarge the agency's reservoir of talent for managerial jobs. Federal employees both inside and outside the Civil Service Commission, as well as people with private sector experience, will be considered for these positions. They are described as developmental, which means

that we will be able to put people in them who do not have the full set of what are thought to be the appropriate requirements for those positions. In other words, they are opportunities for people to grow into the jobs, as opposed to being already prepared for them.

This, I think, demonstrates what I and Civil Service Commissioners Jule Sugarman and Ersa Poston mean when we talk about affirmative action. It does not mean that we will, or desire to, appoint unqualified people to jobs. That would destroy the very principle of a merit system. Furthermore, it would be no favor to those who would be so appointed. Rather, it means that we must make every extra effort to identify and attract qualified minorities and women, simplify the way we hire and promote them, and create jobs for those who show good potential but who are not quite ready to be managers.

It is our hope that these initiatives taken by the Commission will in fact be followed by the other agencies in the federal government, and there is already evidence that that is happening. Another major move which will have tremendous impact across the government has to do with the use of special appointing authorities — that means outside of the normal system of appointing people — when we find that there are occupations in the federal government where it is clear that, for whatever reason, there is inadequate representation of women and minorities. What we are doing is simply this — we are doing an occupation-by-occupation analysis of the more than two hundred occupations in the federal employment system which have more than two thousand employees in them. We are doing an analysis of each one of those occupations on the basis of the labor market which supplies that occupation. If it is engineers, then we look at the proportion of women and minorities in the engineering profession. If it is accountants, we do the same thing for accountants. We do it at entry level as well as higher levels in the system. If we find that, on the basis of that relevant labor market, there is inadequate representation in that occupation in particular agencies and departments, we will grant them special authority to make appointments on a probationary basis of people in those occupational areas in order to overcome the underrepresentation problem in relationship to that occupation. The figure we are using is the figure of 80 percent; that is, if 10 percent of the graduates in engineering schools are black and we find that in the hiring of new engineers the federal government is hiring less than 8 percent black, this triggers the necessity for special action, and we are designing a system by which we will undertake that kind of special action. This proposal is not yet adopted; it is out to the departments and agencies for comment. There will be a public meeting about it in Washington on November 11; and it will be controversial because it will be argued that it is in violation of

merit principles. It will be argued that it is reverse discrimination, and we will argue that it is indeed consistent with merit and that it is not a matter of reverse discrimination — it is a matter of good, effective recruiting.

Another significant new program and one that I think will be of particular interest to those of you here who are associated with the School of Public Affairs, is the Presidential Management Intern Program — a program which the President created with an Executive Order signed in the Rose Garden the latter part of August, a ceremony attended by both the Dean of the School of Public Affairs here and the President of this University. It will bring to the federal government each year 250 interns who are graduates of Public Management Programs from across the country. Those graduates who are selected will receive a two-year assignment at a grade 9, which now pays a bit over \$15,000 a year. If, during the two-year appointment, the intern demonstrates high quality, the intern will be able to move into the competitive service, assuming there are positions available, without further examination. More information on this program, including instructions on how to apply, will be available to those of you here in the Public Affairs School through the office of Dean McCoy who will have the enviable task of making nominations of students for the program in the first round. I assume that you all will get on the good side of Walter. The best way to do that is to get “A” grades.

The significance of the Presidential Management Intern Program as the new means to equal employment lies in the strong affirmative action clause which the President put in the Executive Order. Under these procedures, every effort will be made to insure that qualified minority and women graduate public managers will be nominated and considered for internships. Once selected, the intern will have the chance to earn a federal career appointment on the basis of his or her performance. This is also, I believe, an advantage to the government as an employer because no test, however valid, however good, can match the testing instrument of observation of on-the-job performance. This program will give managers two years to judge the ability of these interns to perform adequately.

I would further make this point — perhaps it is a point that is restricted to those here associated with the Public Affairs School, faculty, dean, and students. This program is a severe test of whether those schools are doing the kind of job that those of us who have been associated with them over the years believe they are doing, because there will be, at any given time when the program is in full swing, 500 graduates of such schools in the federal government. They will be observed and carefully watched by managers who have been trained in

other ways — managers who are likely to have a critical eye as to the quality of what we are doing in relationship to job performance — and I think that puts a very special kind of obligation on those of us who believe there is such a thing as a public management profession and that there are ways of training for it.

Finally, another initiative to increase the ways people can enter the federal career service is our proposal to expand the present Federal Co-operative Education Program to include persons enrolled both in community colleges and in graduate training. Originally established only as a means of filling jobs in shortage categories, primarily engineering and accounting, the Co-op Program was expanded to cover liberal arts students in the late 1960's; but conversion of liberal arts Co-op students to "career" appointment non-competitively was not authorized until 1974. A new Executive Order is now before the President and I anticipate that he will sign it in the next few days. This will authorize the Commission to establish other cooperative education programs without having to go to the President each time for an Executive Order. Anticipating that we will be granted this authority, we have already developed a proposal for graduate level programs. The Graduate Level Work Experience Program will be open to candidates who have completed all requirements for an undergraduate degree and have been accepted as full-time graduate students in a field directly related to positions for which they are being considered. The program would cover all entry level positions leading to careers in administration and management, engineering and accounting, and in physical and life sciences. Initial work assignments which they will take on while going to school, for a minimum of sixteen weeks during a two-year Master's Program, will be at either grades 5 or 7 paying \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year. Successful completion of the Co-op Program, assuming availability of jobs, will lead to conversion to the competitive service. I do not believe that there is any initiative in relationship to entry into the federal service which is more important than this one.

I would point out again that it is a program which is not overwhelmingly endorsed. There are those who argue that it is inconsistent with the merit principle. Let me point out that this year in Congress in the case of the current Co-op Program at the undergraduate level, language was written into the report of the Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Navy that none of the money being appropriated to the Navy in that bill could be used for Co-op Programs because, the report argued, such programs represented reverse discrimination. We were able, in the Conference Committee between the Senate and the House, to get that language removed. However, it remains a continuing problem; and I urge those of you who have a stake in the Co-op Program,

and I believe we all do, to be aware that we may on occasion need to call on you for political support. These are not matters which go unnoticed in terms of Congressional committees and full Legislative activities. By the way, in the current undergraduate Co-op Programs operating, 35 percent of the people in those programs are minorities.

Those are the initiatives we have already undertaken. We will be in full operation within a matter of the next few months. If I may say so, I do not think it is a bad record in terms of getting started; and we think it can make a substantial difference. In the meantime we have the total Federal Personnel Management Project underway. It related to fundamental changes in the character of the Civil Service system. I do not intend to go into detail about it with you except to say that the philosophy which underlies it is to increase managerial flexibility — to do that and to provide at the top of the system a Federal Executive Service in which you will have more of a grade and person system rather than a grade and position system. The guarantees and protections in these jobs will be less, although there will be a parachute back to the original positions employees came from before entering this Executive Service. We also intend to reduce the kind of automatic annual step increases in the salary system and to go instead to an incentive pay system where employees may indeed be rewarded for outstanding work rather than its being an automatic process. We hope also to build, by establishing a separate agency, a greater protection of the merit system against abuses, be they political abuses, bureaucratic buddy abuses, or whatever. We believe that we are in the process of rewriting the Civil Service Law of this country; that there will be a Civil Service Reform Act, hopefully passed by the next session of the current Congress; and that it will bring new life and new vigor to the Federal Career System.

That System today has in it people of outstanding qualities — people who perform under very difficult circumstances, very well indeed. We believe it is possible to capitalize on that talent by bringing greater flexibility, greater opportunities for initiative to the system and, in doing that, hopefully, we will be able to restore, at least in part, public confidence in the federal service — a confidence which has been badly hurt over the past few years, for reasons one need not go into. I believe that the total quality of a society is very much dependent on how people see and view their government and the people who perform governmental functions and, therefore, a restoration of a greater pride in our total society is dependent upon our accomplishing this in relationship to the federal service.

I believe that by our actions in opening up the system, by moving strongly in affirmative action areas we will, not quickly, but I hope certainly, over time restore that public confidence. It is a kind of

confidence that I like to see people have — that they felt relative to a great public servant like Ralph Bunche. And it is my belief that schools like the School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern are training the Ralph Bunches of the future; and let me assure you that we are going to do everything possible to make sure that those people can find jobs in the federal government.

Thank you very much.