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Mr. W. P. Kelly
Director, Job Corps
Office of Economic Opportunity
Executive Office of the President
Washington, D. C. 20506

March 13, 1967

Dear Mr. Kelly:

In reply to your letter of March 8 concerning my appraisal of the Job Corps Center near Kalamazoo, I'm pleased to make a few observations. Before doing so, however, let me have the privilege of congratulating you for carrying forward a significant educational venture in our time. I believe the undertaking is commendable and that the results will prove that the Job Corps is a positive contribution to American life and a sound investment in our economy. On March 3, Meyer Schwartz interviewed me for my impressions of the Job Corps Center between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. I tried to give him my general impression as it has emerged during the months of our relationship with the center.

Except for a minor fracas in the streets of Kalamazoo on the evening following an address made by Sargent Shriver at the Job Center, things have gone rather smoothly between the community and the Center. I think there is no intention here to exaggerate minor infractions of the law by members of the Center. I think that they have not been excessive or difficult. For the most part there has been excellent cooperation between the officials at the Center and the officers and citizens of Kalamazoo. I hope and expect that this cooperation will continue.

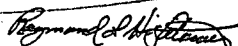
I have made no detailed assessment of the financial benefits of the Center to Kalamazoo. I do know that a considerable portion of those employed at the Center live either in the city of Kalamazoo or nearby. Furthermore the young men from the Center shop in Kalamazoo. I am sure that the merchants appreciate the trade and generally are pleased to have them visit their stores and shops.

We have had many examples of fine community participation. They have shared in ~~projects~~ in Kalamazoo, and several groups with whom they have worked have commended them highly. It is my understanding that some members of the corps rather regularly visit the homes of friends they have made in our city.

I am acquainted with a number of the men and women working with the Center at Fort Custer and have served on an advisory board having to do with community relationships. For a few months now the Center has maintained a downtown address in Kalamazoo to which corps members may gather when they come into or leave Kalamazoo. ~~I shared in the dedication of this place,~~ and as far as I know it has been a good adjunct to the community program here.

I think the relationship between the Job Corps Center and the City of Kalamazoo is being rapidly normalized to such an extent that we are beginning to assume that everything will go satisfactorily. Because this is not necessarily so, I would appreciate any suggestions from you which would help to improve the prospects for continuing good relations between people from this community and the members of the Job Corps Center at Fort Custer.

Sincerely,


Raymond L. Hightower
Mayor, City of Kalamazoo

RLH:td