

JULY 20, 1967.

THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY,
Washington, D.C.

GENTLEMEN: We here at All Saints' Church are most concerned about the conditions of the Headstart Program in Orange County. I am confident you have heard a great deal about the trouble that the OEO is having in Orange County and we would like to be of any help we can.

First let me say that we studied the Headstart Program beginning last October and finally in May of this year assented to a summer Headstart Program here at All Saints'. Our Vestry (our governing body) was concerned that we render as much service as possible and receive no remuneration for it. For the most part, this is the way the Center is operating here at All Saints'.

However, my concern is with the apparent lack of organization or ability to carry through a program with the local office. My criticism is not primarily of the local office but with the federal personnel who have been sent to occupy positions here which positions were applied for by local people quite capable of handling them. Also, I am concerned about federal personnel who come in to make observations and initiate changes that are detrimental to the children we seek to help through this program.

The program was to have 100-120 children placed at the Center here at All Saints'. On the first day there were in the neighborhood of 30 children only. We were told that many of the children missed the busses or simply didn't show up. We were told that this situation would be worked out during the first week. We also discovered that the children we had were not those we were told we would have but those who should have reported to some other Center. The following day we had a few less children but not the same ones that we had the previous day. By the end of the week, we had built back up to about 25 children who were coming regularly. This continued during the following week. In order to build the enrollment, the teachers were out ringing doorbells and soliciting children to attend the school. They had built up the enrollment to 47 with an additional 8 who were planning to attend.

Then on July 13th when the children normally would have arrived at 8 o'clock there were still no children here by 8:30. The teachers had not been notified of any change, I had not been notified of any change and no one seemed to know what was happening. Later on during the day, 16 children appeared but none of these were our regular students.

Upon investigation with the local office, I was told that they didn't know what was going on and would find out. Later on that day, I was told that the representative from Washington had been here the day before and was not satisfied with the Center. In particular, he was distressed that the racial guidelines were not being followed. It was apparently he who rearranged the children. Now nearly a week later, we are back up to about 70 children and things do seem to be settling down a little bit. Of course, the program is nearly half over for the summer.

The thing that I strenuously object to, and those who work with me also strenuously object to, is that the indications on the part of the man from Washington are that the concern is not primarily to help children or to alleviate poverty but to deal with the issue of integration. We are delighted to have any persons of any race or background as members of our congregation or participants in the school, but when it becomes necessary to take 4 and 5 year old children and subject them to as much confusion and changing in their little lives as happened during the first three weeks of this program here, I seriously question its value. More important, I seriously question the value of the guidelines insofar as they appear not to be guidelines but rigid rules. Making pawns of children to satisfy an unrealistic racial-political issue is not only unbecoming but is cruel.

The routine line we hear from the local office is that it is the government's desire that this become a completely local operation. As far as I am concerned, I have grave doubts that it will ever function in terms of the values it seeks to establish and goals it seems to fulfill until such time as the guidelines are modified and the program is, indeed, left up to local individuals.

I regret that such a high ideal and fine objective is so botched up as to appear to be hurting little children and setting the program back instead of moving it forward.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM H. FOLWELL,
Rector, All Saints Municipal Church.