

NATIONAL LABORATORY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS,
Urbana, Ill., December 10, 1968.

Hon. JOHN V. TUNNEY,
Member of Congress,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN TUNNEY: Thank you for your letter of 3 November which, because it was addressed to me at the University of Illinois in Este Park, Colorado, traveled about a bit before it arrived. Moreover, a case of bronchitis has delayed my answer longer than I would like.

First of all, as a citizen and also as a behavioral scientist, I am delighted with the basic intent of the bill (H.R. 13211). No one could agree more with your view that our society, "Must take a creative and comprehensive look at the ecology of our environment, concerning itself not only with the physical implications of the environment, but with the psychological and social implications of the conditions and interactions of the ecology of the environment on man." The idea of establishing a "Council of Ecological Advisors in the Executive Office of the President" is, I believe, entirely sound. I agree that it is exceedingly important that the larger part of the Council membership be composed of behavioral and social scientists, social and community planners, and public administrators. I believe the Council should also include biological and medical scientists. Although these are not explicitly mentioned, I am confident that you meant them to be included, for many of the effects of such ecological conditions as "air pollution, water pollution, solid wastes, atmospheric radiation, and environmental noise" operate at least partially through physiological and bio-social mechanisms.

One problem concerns the definition of "the problems of the ecology of the natural environment." Lines 6, 7, 8 and 9 of page 3 of HR 13211 give illustrations which tend to focus entirely on the physical aspects of the environment. The population problem is another ecological condition important for our day. Moreover, the social ecology of the ghettos and of the slums of our inner cities are exceedingly important as causes of poverty and of incompetence. I am taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of one of my own papers entitled TOWARD THE PREVENTION OF INCOMPETENCE. Pages 13, 14 and 15 describe very briefly some of the social ecological conditions which foster incompetence and the poverty which follows. The pages following page 15 describe a tentative prescription which the Office of Economic Opportunity has been authorized to try out. My main point here, however, concerns simply the matter of definition. Should you not include the problem of population and the social conditions of poverty along with those of air pollution, water pollution, solid wastes, atmospheric radiation, and environmental noise, etc. if our society is to take the compre-