

CHILD DEVELOPMENT GROUP of MISSISSIPPI

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Rev. James F. McRae
Chairman
Board of Directors

John H. Hudd
Director

Dear Friend:

The Child Development Group of Mississippi, the largest Head Start project in the country, is currently requesting funds from the Federal government for another year of operation. Since its inception in the Spring of 1965, the Child Development Group has grown to the point where it now serves 12,000 children and their parents in 121 communities and employs more than 2,300 poor Mississippians at all levels of planning, policy-making and implementation.

The enclosed proposal represents the thinking of people in the CDGM communities to continue their development after the expiration of the current grant on September 30, 1966. It places heavy emphasis on the need for further training for our largely non-professional staff; the need for decentralization which would allow local people to have the significant experience of fully operating their own programs; the advancement of quality education in a state where many children would otherwise never experience it; and the creation of free communities competent to take a hand in shaping their lives by participating fully in making decisions which directly affect them.

Specifically, we feel that the enclosed proposal offers a viable approach in confronting the two major challenges contained in the original poverty program legislation:

1. overcoming the causes of poverty, by providing the poor with opportunities for permanently improving their conditions, and
2. promoting the "maximum feasible participation" of those affected by the project, so that the poor will develop necessary new skills and have an outlet for their productive creativity.

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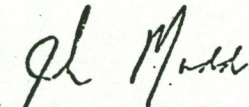
A number of individuals who have been connected with OEO from its inception feel that CDGM is one of the few programs in the country which fulfills the intent of the legislation in involving the poor at every level in a project of sufficient size and scope to alleviate the conditions of poverty in the area. We would be most interested in your professional judgement about the quality of the enclosed proposal and whether you feel we have plan which in fact represents a meaningful approach to overcoming poverty. Any comments, criticisms, or suggestions you may have would be most appreciated. Could you indicate whether you would permit us to quote from your comments, in addition to using them internally for the improvement of our program.

In addition, the enclosed article by Andrew Kopkind which appeared in The New Republic, September 3, 1966 should give you a clear picture of the kinds of pressures being brought to bear on the Child Development Group and which threaten the continuation of its work. It is our feeling that if the anti-poverty program is to develop into a vehicle which can have a fundamental impact on the lives of poor people in America, these pressures must be counteracted so that projects like CDGM can continue their important work.

If your reading of the proposal convinces you that the program it describes deserves to be refunded, we would, of course, appreciate any support you could offer us. Our current grant ends September 30, 1966, so that any action you could take will be significant immediately, (including your comments on the substance of the proposal.) If further information would be helpful to you, or you would like to continue to receive materials such as those enclosed with this letter, please let us know as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

CHILD DEVELOPMENT GROUP OF MISSISSIPPI



John Mudd,
Director

P.S. As an outgrowth of the needs which have been encountered by CDGM we are envisioning the establishment of an independent institution to be called the Center for Community Education. This would consist of a complex of training institutes for non-professional workers in pre-school education, public health, community

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velopment, administration, etc., which would simultaneously contend with manpower shortages in a variety of fields and provide our people with a new path to more productive lives in the society. Two such institutes are briefly described in Appendices II and (of the enclosed proposal.) In addition, the Center would serve as a research institute and pool of technical resources to aid local communities in the development of concrete plans in areas of economic development, job training, community development, housing, health, expansion of cultural outlets, etc. We would also appreciate any comments regarding these plans and hope to keep in touch with you as they evolve further.