

# SENATOR PROBING URBAN CRISIS

## Harris Tours Slums in Atlanta

By ALEX COFFIN

The young black man leaned back against the table in the Summerhill pool hall, stared at the husky U.S. senator from Oklahoma and complained, "There's lots of promises when it's hot. But things are worse now. The programs are nothing but a joke—like you're doing now."

Sen. Fred Harris of Oklahoma heard that and more of the good and bad as he led an investigative team around Atlanta Wednesday as a follow-up of the Kerner Commission report three years ago.

After the driving and walking tour through Bedford-Pine, Cabbagetown, Grady Homes public housing project and Summerhill, Harris admitted that his mission is not only to find out what the status of the urban crisis is now but also to find ways to dramatize it to the public.

Later, in his car, Harris slumped back and muttered, "Over and over, for five, six even 10 years we've been going back (to ghettos) and hearing the same complaints about the same problems."

Harris and New York Mayor John Lindsay are co-chairmen of the National Urban Coalition's Commission on the Cities. The commission's first stop in evaluating the urban situation was in Atlanta. Lindsay didn't get here, but the commission later will go to Los Angeles, Newark, Detroit, El Paso and Tucson.

Harris talked Wednesday about "once again elevating the public consciousness" to the urban woes, which are "festering" without adding to the "hopelessness." He said that all Americans must see that their own interests are involved in the troubles of other Americans.

Further, he said, his commission will spotlight the work of such persons as Mrs. Susie LaBord at the Grady Homes Day Care Center. When the commission team arrived at the center, Mrs. LaBord grabbed Harris' hand and took him to see all the facilities and to listen to the youngsters sing.

Harris also was impressed with the work at the Savannah Street Mission, operated by Mrs. Nancy Roden for Church Women United, in Cabbagetown.

The team got out and walked around Bedford-Pine, where they heard of poor housing, inadequate medical facilities and rats. The next stop was at the grave of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

On Savannah Street, Mrs. Roden complained of unemployment and stressed to Harris that her neighbors don't want a Model Cities program there.

The rap session in the Summerhill pool hall featured young blacks saying they didn't want trouble but merely for government not to "jive" with them, but tell it "like it is." One said government is "elusive" and is "playing games. If they want to move us out, I can dig that. Just tell us! But when I say something, they say, 'You're a Black Panther.' Hell, I'm just a



HEARS COMPLAINTS  
 Sen. Fred Harris

man. You dig?"

At another session in Summerhill, Mrs. Mattie Ansley, Mrs. Alice Nixon and others told of inadequate housing and unemployment as well as poor schools that drive youngsters away.

"It's not pat," Mrs. Ansley said, "Just 'cause there's no rocks or burnings. It's not as cool as it looks."

She complained that those in power "don't want the poor to come up. They just give enough to make the poor think they have something."

Outside, Harris told newsmen

that the examples of what a few persons are doing "must be spread around. We won't change the world, but maybe do something right around you."

The commission will publish a two-part report in May. One part will be an in-depth staff study and the other will tell what was seen on the tours of the cities. More attention will be devoted to drug abuse and the environment than in the Kerner Commission (National Advisory Commission of Civil Disorders) report, Harris said.

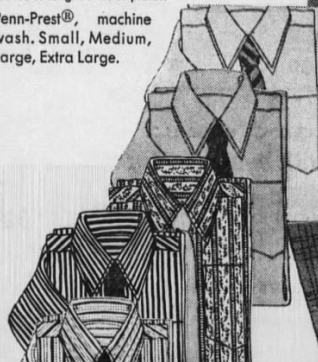
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