

LETTER ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITY

August 1, 1967

Honorable Nelson A. Rockefeller
Governor of New York
Albany, New York

Dear Nelson:

It was very encouraging to receive your telephone call this morning. As a matter of fact, it indicates beyond doubt that I have been entirely correct in my assessment of where the real leadership among the Republican Governors lies.

In response to your request, I am happy to furnish the following observations and information concerning the steps taken in Maryland to alleviate the recent racial stresses:

Before the riot in Cambridge occurred we had been working for about three weeks in an effort to quiet tensions there. I had sent in my most highly qualified Negro staff member and he was apparently making progress with the responsible members of the community. The appearance of H. Rap Brown and his inflammatory speech (a copy of which we were able to record) caused an outburst of violence and burning in the town. Prompt action by the State Police and National Guard restored order by the next day and we have been able to pull the Guard out without provoking further incidents. Brown is being extradited from Virginia to face charges of inciting to riot and arson. The case is well documented and should be successful.

Realizing that an immediate grassroots effort had to be undertaken in Cambridge and believing that because of the violence it should be spearheaded by the local private sector instead of government, I stimulated the organization of a bi-racial committee which is now operating very effectively. The objectives are to provide relief for the victims of violence and to begin digging into the long-range causes of the trouble. My role was simply to encourage a recognition of the problem and provide the impetus for the initial meeting.

Immediately after the Cambridge outbreak I provided all the news media with a definitive statement of my position, stressing that the firmest governmental action should occur where the people of the slums were exercising restraint and self-control. The Mayor of Baltimore and I together began a crash program