

File

August 15, 1969

O/FSI/VTC - Ogden Williams

Paul J. BROWN, Class XX

I called in Mr. Brown to discuss his performance at VTC. I noted that he had great energy, strong basic motivation, and other pronounced positive qualities but that he had acquired a certain reputation among students which minimized his effectiveness. In the first place, he talked too much, and particularly on subjects which he did not know much about, and secondly, that he was somewhat a self-appointed guardhouse lawyer. I told him that if he went to Viet-Nam, he would be expected to do a serious job, which I knew he wanted very much to do, without giving all and sundry the benefit of his personality. He would also be expected to exercise better sense of priorities and not make a big deal out of administrative details and the like. I said that he would encounter much frustration in Viet-Nam, and some of his ideas might be opposed by others. When that happened, he might be tempted to take refuge in the fact that he was a black man and assume that was why he was being opposed. This would be an easy way out, but, in fact, people in Viet-Nam would not care whether he was black, white, or blue. They would judge him as to whether he was a serious guy or prima donna.

Mr. Brown's reaction to this was excellent. Without being subservient, he said he understood what I was telling him and would make a real effort to curb these tendencies ~~more~~ which minimize his effectiveness. He emphasized his sincere desire to do a good job in Viet-Nam and his enthusiasm for the assignment. He said he appreciated my frankness in letting him know how he appears to others.

I believe Mr. Brown can make a considerable contribution if he does, in fact, change his techniques, as indicated above. He does have good human qualities, energy, and motivation, which, I believe, he should be given a chance to exercise. In my view, his self-assertion is the reverse side of what may be a basic shyness due to his experiences in life, and he should be given the benefit of the doubt, after which I would expect a very sincere and loyal response on his part.

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