

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

Richard Horsey, Atlanta Coca-Cola Company

SPEAKER

Mr. Whitney M. Young, Executive Director, National Urban League

SPEAKER

Dr. Michael Mescon, Professor Georgia State College and
Holder of Southern Bell Chair for Private Enterprise at Georgia State College

NARRATIVE

[This recording was made on August 12th, 1966 at the luncheon meeting membership of the Atlanta Employers Volunteers Merit Employment Association commonly called MEA. The luncheon was held at the Dinkler Plaza Hotel Ballroom the Coca-Cola Company was host for the luncheon. The recording begins with Mr. Richard H. Horsey, Executive Vice President of the Atlanta Coca-Cola Bottling Company introducing the guest speakers.]

INTRODUCTION (Richard Horsey)

Atlanta Employers Volunteer Merit Association (MEA) is made up of profit making businesses or businessman if you were to bring this concept to life. I have noticed perhaps to a decreasing extent in the most recent years and perhaps less in Atlanta than in other communities but none-the-less with some consistency. That within their own association's businessman tend to say things to each other that they like to hear, or things that they already know. And this often extends to the speaker's businessman invite to address them. I have come to the conclusion that at best this is none productive. And that at worst it promotes complacency or reactionarism.

Conservatism maybe highly regarded but complacency and reactionarism can be dangerous diseases for the businessman and his business. For the good offices of Paul Austin and the Coca-Cola Company the Merit Association of today brings you two speakers, both are imminently qualified. I have no idea what the content of that talks maybe, but somehow I have the feeling that the subject matter of neither of them will promote non-productivity or reactionarism or complacency, but would rather contribute what will be to many of us, at least, new and thought provoking ideas. Our first speaker is Mr. Whitney M. Young, Jr.; he is a Kentuckian by birth, a graduate of Kentucky State College, a Veteran of World War II. He did graduate work at MIT and the University of Minnesota. Mr. Young joined the urban league in 1948 and Industrial Relations Secretary of the St. Paul, Minnesota affiliate. In 1950 he was named Executive Director of the Omaha Urban League and taught at the same time at the University of Nebraska School of Social Work and at Kreighton University where he received an Honorary Doctrine of Law Degree in 1964. From 1954 to 1961 Mr. Young served as Dean of the Atlanta University School of Social Work. In 1961 he was appointed the Executive Director of the National Urban League and holds that post today. Mr. Young was a member of the President's Committees on youth employment and on equal opportunity in the Armed Forces. He continues as a Presidential Appointee on the commission of technology, automation, and economic progress. The Commission on law enforcement and administration of justice, and on the special presidential passport on urban affairs. He is a member of the National Advisory Council of the US Office of the Economic Opportunity, and the Advisory Council on Vocational Education of the US Office of Education. Mr. Young is also President elect of the National Conference of Social

Welfare, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Foundation and of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library and is on the Advisory Council of New York School of Social Work Columbia University and the Board of Unitarian University Service Committee. And here as I have said eminently qualified to talk with us today may I introduce Whitney M. Young, Jr.

SPEAKER (Whitney M. Young)

Thank you very much Mr. Horsey, Mr. Austin, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Brown and my fellow speaker who must suffer here to listen to another speech. When it was mentioned that this was being taped and the secretary need not take any notes it does not intimidate me exactly, it doesn't change what I am going to say but I am reminded of the fact when I had the first speech taped. As I was saying it, it sounded like Addle Stephenson but when I heard it played back it sounded more like _____ . I know these things happen. I am delighted to have this opportunity of meeting with you and especially appreciative to the Marietta Farm Association and Mr. Austin, Coca-Cola Company for hosting the affair. One of the bright spots in the whole race relations' field in recent years has been the aroused and awaken affirmative interest on the part of the American Businessman. This has been evidence to the number of ways as far as the National Urban League is concerned it has been evidenced by a greater cooperation in the seeking of employees and the upgrading of Negro employees. It has been evidence in their willingness to serve on our boards and the rather dramatic increase in the financial contributions which corporations have made to National Urban League. In 1961 it was some seventy thousand dollars from sixty companies. Today it is close to a

million dollars from three hundred companies and when I went over the list most of your companies represented in this room are also represented on that distinguished honor roll of contributors to the National Urban League. Some we might push up their contributions a bit but at least they are on the honor roll. But really I am not here to praise American business because I think if I was to be perfectly candid I still am not talking about an institution given its prestige and status in this country, and the state that it has I am not talking about an institution that is good, I am talking about an institution that is less bad, its moving has a long ways to go, but I don't want to contribute here to small complacency. Neither do I want to get our motives missed up I think it was perfectly intelligent and rational and in the enlighten of self-interest of business that it no longer regard rich relations as a spectator sport. I think that the stake is quite high and it is obvious, but I was also struck not so long ago by the fact that the Negro and the businessman have a great deal in common. We have common pairs in the sense that we both have been stereotyped in the past by the general press and the minds of the general public. Some fifty years ago the average businessman was characterized and all of the newspapers and comic stripes have a very obese fellow with dollar signs for eyeballs and gray-flannel suite and adding machine for brain. And he was thought of as a person who saw people only as impersonable cogs in some kind of industrial machine. He was regarded as fairly ascetically illiterate, not too bright a fellow without too much education and no social sensitivity. This was not done by Negroes way the general press and cartoonist characterized businessman fifty-years ago. During this same period Negroes also stereo-typed and characterized as sort of a happy go lucky pork chop eating, watermelon chewing, simple minded, crap shooting fellow who liked

to have fun on Saturday nights. So you see we have both been victims of great stereotypes. Because today we know that neither of these pictures actually fit the individuals concerned. Big businessman, enlighten businessman today, are entirely different they are socially sensitive, they participate in the civic life of their community they are highly intelligent people, well-trained, ascetically literate, they are sometimes slim, and they have hair in some cases, the old commercial image of the businessman is no longer true. I say that this is also true the Negro the old picture does not fit, that the Negro is not that simple-minded happy go lucky fellow. Than he in fact is a very serious dedicated fellow like all other citizens he has his idiots and he has his geniuses, that I think that is the way it should be there is no reason why White people should have a monopoly on crack-pots, I think if we believe in equality then we oughta have a few among the Negroes and we do. And that is the way it oughta be. But at any rate now we know that the Negro is capable if given the opportunity of mastering complex difficult data and subject matter. And as far as I am concerned I like to have fun on Monday and Tuesday nights' as well as Saturday nights. So the imagine just doesn't fit. I think the other reason that business is rightfully concerned and rightly so and so enlighten self-interest. Is a business cannot really function in a crime and in a pension and out of discord. A crime and a patriot where the fellow citizens are afraid of each other afraid of disruption and _____ and all this. This is not good for America it is not good for business. Business functions best when there is harmony and when people respect each other and when people are not afraid of each other. I think business also recognizes that the Negro can either be a conductive constructive consumer or he can become a destructive dependent kind of person. That the money will either be spent for

programs of rehabilitation and prevention or the business will spend its money for crime and for welfare. Now when I say when the Negro is a producer I've always felt this but I never was as sure of the great contributions the Negroes can make, as I was recently when I took a trip to Africa eight months ago, and my more recent trip to Vietnam. But in Africa I had the unusual experience I went over with a group of businessmen who were interested in talking about investment in Africa, business investments. They wanted me to go along to sorta give them credibility among the Africans if they had a real live civil rights leader. This might be helpful. I wanted to go along because I wanted to see if businessman of American could honest goodness invest somewhere other than in South Africa and Rhodesia, so I was curious about this, so it was a happy kind of combination. Well, at any rate we got on this plan and in a matter of a few minutes from Kennedy Airport to London and stayed on the same plane and then in a few hours later we landed at a place called _____, Kenya. Got off the plane and for the first time in my life all of the people around the plane who in the past had been white, you know the ticket takers, the guy pushing the steps up, the people refueling, the mechanics. All of a sudden they were Negroes, they were black, this can to me as a sort of a surprise, it happened so suddenly, my first reaction was to rush up and commend them on having got these jobs. You know I said they must have an awfully good FEPC in this town. But then I realized that I was in Africa and there we changed planes took an east African Airline to go on to _____, Uganda. We were seated on the plane, tightened our seat belts and they announced that the crew was coming on and low and behold when they announced it the Captain, he and the Chief Pilot he turned out to be a Negro. Now I understand it that we have a few in companies and

airlines around the country. It is one of our best-kept secrets, but there are a few. I had never seen and just to show you that even after all of my years of giving my life arguing to people about the qualifications of Negroes and that they are just as good as anybody else. Even I had been brain washed because I felt a moment of anxiety. And I suddenly said to myself this is a heck of a time to find out that I was wrong. The first time that my immediate future had been so directly affected by the laity of my statement. But at any rate I quickly got over this, I said the heck if he's here he's got to be good. Like Johnny Robinson he's got to be superior. Well, the interesting thing was he was, not just in the mechanics of touch down and take-off, routine flight, all of this is pretty routine. But in the beautiful flow of first Oxford English and beautiful Persian French, as he described the topography, the economics, the culture, the language of the country. It was beautiful lecture that would have done justice to Georgia State, Emory, Agnus Scott, or something. And then I got to this meeting and there during the course of that week I saw the few people in Africa, native Africans who had the chance for education and gotten their PHD's, from London School of Economics, or from American colleges. And I saw them there discussing with the best minds from Western Europe and from the United States. The latest theory is in economics and in educational development and agricultural development and business investment. And they were not only equal to the very best from these other countries. But in their substance of discussions, but in the protocol and the niceties, the new _____ that go on in these things. My first reaction was one of disgust, because I said "My God what we have closed ourselves in this world. Who are inability to see beneath the color of a man's skin. That we probably would have today a cure for cancer and the common cold or for heart trouble, if

somehow we hadn't written off a whole group of people and when denied them of an education because of their color. And everybody suffers but it's not Urban League like to be negative so I began to think positively what a great potential exists in this world. If we can some how free ourselves of this notion. That that little thin layer of skin makes a difference of what is in a man's head or what's in his heart. And if we can get over that than we can unleash not just human potential for our good deeds, but we can unleash some brains and minds that are capable of making contributions to all of us. But you don't have to go to Africa. It happens right in every community in which you live right in Atlanta. There are children here who have great potential. I think business is beginning to realize that. There is no law just to question what I gotta to comply with title seven or I will lose my defense contract or I may be picketed or boycott or maybe setup. I think business is beyond this. I think business now know that this Negro can be the source of a great consumer demand as well as a real valuable person in this plant. Now it isn't going to be easy for some people to do these things. I think I would make several suggestions based on my experience. I have had the chance in the last two years to talk to personally and certainly in a group with at least four hundred of fortunes top five hundred, top executives of corporations. And I have found these men to be vitally interested. But I have found some popular misconceptions. And I have some mistakes and I have found some attitudes that can stand in our way if we aren't careful. One I run into this notion that the Negro must be superior, that we are willing to hire him, but he's got to be better. And I submit to you this is terribly unfair and terribly unrealistic. To expect a race of people who had generations of slavery, who had generations of being denied the barest minimum in economic and health and educational opportunities. To

produce superior people is really an unfair assumption. But people still come to me and say I will hire a secretary if you can find somebody that looks like Lena Horne and who types 120 words a minute. Or I can hire an accountant if he's got the background of Ralph Bunch. Well, now we run out of these people pretty fast in the Negro group. I'm hiring most of them myself if I can find them. So what we gotta do is to begin to hire just average Negroes like we hire just average white people. And those jobs that we set aside for dumb white people let us have a few of those too, because we have Negroes who aren't all Einstein's. And so we want some of those set aside across the board and don't ask us to provide the impossible. Secondly, I think it's awfully important that we don't let these extra curricular things change our minds. For example, I have had people in recent days say to me well I was over your people until these riots started. Until they started shouting "black-power". And now I am sorta disenchanted. Now this bothers me to no end that people would seize upon the actions of a few, to condemn and to generalize about a whole race of people. The Negro has never done this, we have never generalized about all white people based on the activities of the clan, or based upon the fact that white people enslaved us. Or that some white people have been brutal and have jailed us and have beat us. We never generalized about all the white people, based on the fact that a white man in Chicago kills, murders eight nurses or that a man stands on a tower in Texas and shoots twelve or thirteen people. That's an individual that's not all white people. And I submit to you that what you see in the streets and the newspapers have an obsession about reporting the negatives, does not represent anywhere near all Negroes. For anyone kid that throws a rock in Chicago or _____, there are a hundred of Negro boys in Vietnam and in many cases

volunteering in Vietnam. Fighting and dying for this country and instead of telling Negro citizens, we are not going to pass the civil rights bill or we are not going to do something because a hundred people are rioting. It would be so much better to say we are going to do something we are going to pass a bill we are going to take some action. Because sixty thousand Negro boys are over in Vietnam fighting for all us. Now I saw some of the best-qualified human beings that I have ever seen in my life over in Vietnam. The Negro soldiers over there are not they are not our addicts they are not our rejects, our functionally literates. This represents the crême of the crop. These fellows are in positions of great responsibility. Many have enlisted and it is to their credit but it is a sad commentary on our society that a man feels that he can get more dignity and more economic security and more opportunity for promotion, in the muck and mire of Vietnam, than he can in the civilian life of our country. My reason for going mainly other than to say to these fellows that we are proud of you and we are concerned about you. My real reason for going was to set in motion machinery for our reentry of these fellows back into civilian life. And I have business groups already, we will be asking more that as we set this machinery up and many of these fellows are from the south. That you will take advantage of it that you would not let these fellows come back. And find that the thing that they sacrificed so much for ten thousand miles away from home does not exist right in their hometown. And I hope you will make a special effort to include them. Third, I would hope that you would keep in mind the necessity for firmness at the top and for follow through. There is one thing to sign the President's plan for progress it is another thing to put out an ad saying I am a fair employment practices company. It is another thing to say I am a member of the Merit Employment Volunteer Association. It

is another thing to put into your head that you fair employment. But there are many of you employees down the line where they just think that this is just complying with the rules and playing the game like it is suppose to be played. And they have no intentions of following through and we have had more companies remain lily white and the man upstairs cannot understand why he does not have any Negroes moving up into top jobs and nobody applying. When one little receptionist in a personnel office, simply by letting a Negro applicant standing there too long. Or by saying to him 'What do you want'? And that is all that is needed, while people who have had doors slammed in their face. And I would employ not just in your own minds and your written memos to articulate your policies, but in fact follow through. All the way down the line to see in fact that receptionist and all the people above that receptionist know that you are sincere. In the final analysts it will be how many Negroes we see there whether you are actually going all out. Now this calls for a special effort. It just can't be I've opened the doors. And I have been criticized for saying this and I continue to say it, I do think that today if we are going to actually get Negro employees we've got to go beyond saying well now we are not longer discriminating. Now the doors are open. We've got to make a special effort. Well, I don't want to tell you what to do, let me tell you what we did in the Urban League. Up until I came to the Urban League in 1961. Ninety-nine percent of our staff were Negroes. Now I knew why was mainly because you couldn't find many well-balanced well motivated white people that want to work in race relations. There were a few crackpots, a few missionaries, a few people who had political axes to grind. And couldn't find any other jobs for Negroes who had talent, but the Urban League. But now all of this has changed, today it is the most intelligent, the most enlightened white

people. The sound is best motivated, the phi beta capa, the top people in public relations, advertising, personal, who want to work with the Urban League. Until we can get top people. And Negroes today who are talented can get other jobs. Every company wants at least one instant Negro or exhibit "A". So we wouldn't get those. Now I want to change the policy of the practices. Now here 's what we did. And if you want to take notes there is no patient on this at all if you want to reverse it. What we did was to first sign the President's Past Progress. Saying that we were a fair employment agency and that we did not discriminate and that we accepted all applicants regardless of race, creed, or color. It made us feel real good and it increased our numbers from one percent to two percent. So then we took the second step and we began some informative action in recruiting. And what we did was not to go to _____, and Atlanta University looking for white people. We knew where white people were, so we went to their schools and we talked to them and begged and pleaded with them, and tried to get them to come work with us. And this helped us and we moved up to about four percent. And then as if that was not enough so we took a third step and I sent out a memorandum to all of our personnel people. We have over a thousand people employed. And I said until further notice if two people equally qualify applied, one white and one Negro hire the white person. Now I knew this was kinda discrimination and preferential treatment. But I wanted to get white people and I felt for awhile we'd have to do this, we would have to make this special effort. It took us up to about seven percent, but of course this is representative in the general population. So I had our research department look into this. And they said the problem is after doing a study most white people don't meet our standards. And you see we wrote these steps, we

made up this criteria. So what and I am not being vicious we had a criteria now and we said that we wanted people among other things who knew what it meant to be rejected. Who had a door slammed in the face, who had been told to go up in the balcony or you cannot come into this restaurant, or you can't come into this plant or take this job as a janitor even though you got a PHD. We wanted people who understood the language of the ghetto, the psychology of the poor. I think that is reasonable kind of qualifications for our kind of work. But obviously white people couldn't meet this standard. What did we do? Did we stand back and say do you want us to lower our standards? No. We took a hard look at our whole set of testing procedures and screening procedures. And we said these people have some other things that we do want and so we took some of the weight off this other thing, which white people couldn't obviously meet. You know like may _____ - express requirements. And when we added some weight onto some of these other things. And then we set up some remedial program and we hired white people, I remember David Russ, Dean Russ's son came in under that program and Adrian Zucker, _____ of the Airforce's daughter. I'm deliberately name dropping to let you know that these are top phi beta capas from Harvard and other places. We set up this program for six months we provided them with remedial kinds of experiences. In an effort to bring them up to our standards. And I want to announce to you that this is a success story, that they have turned out to be as good as if not better than our Negro employees. And today instead of one percent we have thirty percent. You see we want it to happen our _____. And we figured if we want to do it you can be as creative about doing it and you can be creative about not doing it for many years. And we could have used all the same old excuses you know about they might

be lonely, or nobody applies, or what about our Christmas Party, you know we could have had all the same kind of excuses that I have heard so many times. But we did not want that. Now if we can do this with our limited experience being _____. You see we have not been _____ for very long. What can business do with it long period of creative management and personnel practices. Now this what we are asking about way of special effort. Well, finally I do want to impress upon you that business has a role beyond the employment of people. You are for better or for worse for good or for evil the status symbols in America. In the kind of society in which we live and here I pass no judgment on our judgment on it. But never the less it is true you are the opinion makers, you're the standard setters, you're the people who set the kind of patterns that a community will follow. This means that it is very foolish, if not hypercritical for you to be talking about you employ and people and doing nothing about the local school situation looks like. If you stand back and say I will hire Negroes and yet Negroes are receiving absolutely no kind of preparation in their vocational schools, or their higher schools, or their colleges, to put them to come into your business and this is hypercritical. If you are doing nothing about housing which has so much to do with schools, here kids have a chance to study and to learn. If you are doing nothing about family life then you see you aren't really in the final analysis going to get a stable well-balanced, well-qualified employee. Business must be concerned about education it must be concerned about housing it must be concerned as it is concerned about all aspects of community life. You pay the taxes in this community more than anybody else, this is why is it so basic. And you must support responsible Negro leadership. If you know nothing else today I hope you know that this movement is either going in one

direction or the other, depending on which Negro leads that movement. Which organization, which philosophy. Now the Urban League in this town has been piddling around with peanuts, its been getting such a low amount from the chest, compared to the problem the size of the Negro population, that it's a same. You could have one little incident in this town, and the Urban League might have prevented thousands. That overnight, it could cost the community a million dollars overnight. It did seventy million in _____ in a week. Now this organization ought not to try to make it on fifty or sixty thousand, in community all over this country today the Urban League budget has been quadrupled because here is an organization that is trying to channel these frustrations this impatience into constructive lines. We are saying to people; look power don't come from chanting a slogan. Power is the green of a dollar bill, It is a maroon of a textbook, it's a ballot in a ballot box, and once you gotta do is go to school. And these are the kind of programs we run. Counseling, gatherings, strengthening family life, getting people off of relief, stopping dropouts, and this program which you support through your community chest, has got to be strengthened, and don't wait for a catastrophe, or tragedy and say well we better give the Urban League more money. This is your best bet, you will either support substantially responsible Negro leadership. Or else irresponsible leadership will take over. And that is why you got to get behind it and I would hope that you would get involved in this problem for all the reasons that I mentioned. Economic, International, and _____ self-interest. But most of all I hope you get involved in it and I meaningfully because it is right. This problem is not going to solve itself by time by the ticking of a clock. The ticking of a clock never brought about single social reform. It will solve itself because of people, people who

have conviction. We didn't get Negroes in baseball because we suddenly found a Negro who could run bases, hit a ball, and who has some intelligence name Jackie Robinson. We had Jackie Robinson fifty years, before a Negro got into baseball. Just like we had _____ Alexander here for years. But the difference was we did not have a Branch Ricky. And that made the difference, and Branch Ricky said this I have got to do, because it is right I is not an All-American game, it is an All-American white game. And when everybody said of Mr. Ricky don't rock the boat, he said I got to I got a to live with myself. And nobody quit, and everybody said customers were going to walk out and every time Jackie hit a ball he got whiter, they just applauded and everything and the boy from Mississippi, didn't run off back to Mississippi they reflected on that twenty dollar a week job picking cotton in Mississippi and they looked at that World Series check and they grabbed Jackie and just hug him, you know when he helped them get into the World Series, oh it works, it works, but you have to have some conviction, but the most important thing is what _____'s son said to me once. My father can beat me at anything, but he is leaving me with the most important thing, not wealth, not property, but he is leaving me a _____, that stands for courage and conviction and integrity, indecency, you fathers, you grandfathers, you husbands, how kids today including mine are very much concerned about human relations. And you can either stand as tall as a giant and as small as a pigmy in their eyes if you are doing something on this problem, they may never tell you but they tell me everyday in colleges all over this country; that my father is always telling me that I don't have to drink or smoke or _____ because everybody else does but after all I can have my own value system I know right from wrong stand up for what I believe in. I

know you tell them this I tell mine, nineteen year old daughter, _____ the same thing. And then these kids tell me that my parents never stand up for what is right. They never lift their finger to get a Negro in their office, in the neighborhood, in the school. So on trial is more than the Negro on trial is more than business, or churches, or educational institution. On trial is more than America and the validity of the free enterprise system. On trial happens to be each and every one of us, we are talking to Negroes everyday in trying to get them to do their job. But in many ways I think you must admit that the Negro has said a thousand ways throughout history we believe in America. He said it in fighting in every war, he said it by his patience, by his _____ crying out turn the other cheek, and love thy neighbor and faces such brutalities, humiliations and discriminations. I think the time has come that I think by your presence here today that you are going to help us save the American Negro that you believe in him. Thank you very much.