

A NIXON JOB OFFER IS HELD REBUFFED

Liberal Reported to Decline VISTA Post Because He Disagrees With Policies

JUL 14 1970

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 13 —

The White House choice for director of Volunteers in Service to America is reported to have rejected the appointment because of sharp disagreement with President Nixon's Indochina and domestic policies.

Authoritative sources said today that Richard Blumenthal, a 24-year-old liberal, had told the White House he could not accept the post because he would not be able to express loyalty to Mr. Nixon's programs.

However, Donald Rumsfeld, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, denied that this was so.

Mr. Blumenthal, who is serving a six-month tour of duty in the Marine Corps at Parris Island, S. C., came to Washington Saturday for six hours of meetings with Mr. Rumsfeld at the director's home and at the White House.

Former Moynihan Aide

Before entering the Marine Corps in April, Mr. Blumenthal served on the White House staff of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a counselor to the President. He was approached in January about the VISTA post, but no firm offer was made at that time.

The sources said that the White House sought to convince Mr. Blumenthal Saturday that by taking the post with VISTA, a domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps, he could help convince young dissidents that the Administration was mindful of their concerns about war, racism and poverty.

But Mr. Blumenthal was said to have replied that he would not serve as "window dressing" for an Administration whose policies he disputed and that he disagreed with Mr. Rumsfeld's efforts to make the antipoverty agency more sub-

Continued on Page 16, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

dued than it has been since it was organized in 1964.

Under Mr. Rumsfeld, VISTA, which has been without a director for two years, has recruited older, more conservative volunteers and has taken punitive action against some younger volunteers who have become adept at organizing the poor politically.

A number of volunteers, who feel that it is imperative for the poor to be able to place pressure on local and state agencies, have formed the National VISTA Alliance to press the issue. They are preparing a conference, to be held here July 27-29, to clarify their internal protest.

Sources close to Mr. Blumenthal said that he had sided with the VISTA dissidents and that he had found it difficult to get an audience for their views among White House superiors.

Opposed by Mitchell

By one account, the name of the President himself was invoked Saturday in an effort to persuade Mr. Blumenthal to take the job.

Mr. Nixon was said to have been determined to establish



Associated Press

Richard D. Blumenthal

some rapport with young people by appointing Mr. Blumenthal, though a petition was presented to him last week bearing the names of 91 members of Congress who opposed the selection.

The sources said that Mr. Blumenthal, who encountered opposition from Attorney Gen-

eral John N. Mitchell because of his liberal views when his name was proposed earlier in the year, had said that as something of an "outcast" in the Administration, he would not be able to defend the agency successfully before Congress, where he said it was already vulnerable to opposition.

In addition, Mr. Blumenthal is reported to have said that he was sure to undergo questioning about his views on such issues as the war in Southeast Asia, school desegregation and domestic priorities and that he could not in good conscience support the Administration's approach in public.

In an interview, Mr. Rumsfeld disputed these accounts. He said that it was "too bad" for Mr. Blumenthal and VISTA that such speculation had been spread.

'Not a Yes-No Matter'

Mr. Rumsfeld confirmed that Mr. Blumenthal was in Washington Saturday, but he said it was "absolutely not so" that the young marine had expressed opposition to Administration policies or to the new directions of the agency.

The issue of the appointment was "not a yes-no matter, but one of a number of things under discussion," Mr. Rumsfeld said. He added that it was doubtful

Mr. Blumenthal could become director of the agency because he would not be finished with his military obligation until next fall.

Asked whether someone else was close to being nominated to the post, Mr. Rumsfeld said that there were several candidates but that he had not submitted a name to the President.

Mr. Rumsfeld's account clashed with that of others in Washington, who said that the planning had progressed to the point that it was suggested that Mr. Blumenthal could be given a Marine Corps assignment here for the last two months of his tour. This would enable him to work in off-duty hours at the agency in preparation for becoming its leader.

Mr. Blumenthal, who is from New York and is a political independent, was said to have told the White House that the President should find "a Republican who could defend with real loyalty what the President is doing."

The agency has been without a director since July 1, 1968, when William H. Cook left it to become Ambassador to Australia.

President Nixon nominated William Ford, a Michigan Negro last year, but Mr. Ford declined, citing personal reasons.