

Policy Rift Denied as Cause of VISTA Post Rejection

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WASHINGTON, July 14 — Apparently yielding to White House pressure, Richard Blumenthal said today that his decision to decline appointment as director of Volunteers in Service to America—VISTA—had not been based on disagreement with Administration policies dealing with the poor. Mr. Blumenthal, a 24-year-old former White House aide, was quoted and paraphrased in newspaper articles this morning to the effect that his disagreements with Administration policies made it impossible for him to accept a nomination to head the poverty program.

A three-paragraph statement from Mr. Blumenthal, who is serving a six-month tour in the Marine Corps, was made public by the White House after he had telephoned it from Parris Island, S. C.

Although he said that he believed "the Nixon Administration has shown a commitment to ameliorating conditions of the poor," he did not dispute reports that he had had sharp disagreements with President Nixon's Indochina policies.

Disagreement Reported

Articles in The New York Times and other newspapers this morning, which were based on discussions with the 24-year-old marine and other officials, said that Mr. Blumenthal's disagreement with Administration policies covered a wider area than just poverty programs.

The Washington Post quoted Mr. Blumenthal on a conversation with Donald Rumsfeld, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity—"I told him I didn't think I could do a good job defending the President's policy."

The reversal in support of the President's poverty policies was said to have resulted after heavy pressure was brought on Mr. Blumenthal by Mr. Rumsfeld and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the White House counselor on whose staff the former aide worked.

The two Administration figures were reported to have told Mr. Blumenthal that his statements had hurt the position of liberals who remained with the Administration.

Their argument was said to have persuaded Mr. Blumenthal to issue his formal statement even though it contradicted some parts of his earlier discussions with journalists.

In the earlier reports, The New York Times reported that Mr. Blumenthal had told Mr. Rumsfeld that he would not serve as "window dressing" for Administration policies he disagreed with, including Mr. Rumsfeld's effort to make the domestic counterpart of the Peace Corps more subdued.

The National Vista Alliance, a national organization of volunteers who have organized to

fight these efforts, issued a statement regretting the failure of Mr. Rumsfeld to find a permanent director for VISTA.

However, the alliance, which is holding a national conference here on July 27-29, was reported to be happy that Mr. Blumenthal had brought a spotlight on Administration efforts to eliminate controversy from the poverty program.

In a related matter, four Senators from the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Com-

mittee have written to Mr. Rumsfeld expressing "alarm" at new VISTA policies designed to limit the expression of young people.

Senators Alan Cranston of California, Harold E. Hughes of Colorado, Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, and Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota, all Democrats, signed the two-page letter, sent last Thursday.

They expressed delight with Mr. Rumsfeld's decision to rescind his April 22 order to deny

draft deferments retroactively to VISTA Volunteers but said that recent newspaper articles and letters from volunteers had led them to believe that he was moving to remove or diminish VISTA as a means of constructive expression by young people.

Senator Kennedy has tentatively scheduled a meeting with Mr. Rumsfeld later this week in an effort to seek answers to questions posed by the new VISTA policies.