

HOPE FOR THE CITIES

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There is no more critical domestic crisis confronting America today than our urban problems.

In 1964 President Johnson said:

"Our society will never be great until our cities are great. In the next 40 years we must rebuild the entire urban United States There is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic."

Today we are making progress to meet this challenge.

I am encouraged about the future of America's urban areas.

During the months since the President designated me as the principal liaison officer between the Administration and our local governments, I have held meetings in Washington with the mayors and principal executives of virtually every city in the country with populations of over 30,000. We are now engaged in a regional program through which I hope to meet personally with the mayors and managers of all of the smaller -- but no less important -- cities.

These meetings have not been social hours. They have been shirt-sleeve sessions of give and take. The mayors and their principal assistants have worked hard. We have had key representatives of the federal agencies concerned participate actively in them.

My staff and I have talked with literally thousands of people working in local government and other experts,, We have tried to stay current with the literature.

This has been a stimulating experience and it has generated optimism and hope for the future.

There are several reasons for this optimistic outlook.

Perhaps most important, the American people are becoming aware of the need. We Americans do not run away from our problems. Whether it is the constant world-wide struggle against tyranny or domestic poverty and discrimination, we have always met our challenges. We have only to recognize and face up to them.

It is significant that almost every major periodical, such as Life, Look, and Scientific American have recently devoted entire special issues to urban America. A great number of books, symposiums, lectures appear daily all dealing with the growth of our cities.

Last year we gave Cabinet recognition to the plight of urban America by creating the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the appointment of Robert C. Weaver as Secretary.

As public recognition and the widespread demand for action increases, it is also apparent that we have the required resources, administrative, technological, and financial.

One thing years of constant exposure to local political leaders have taught me is that those who attack local administration as corrupt and inefficient are dead wrong. It is fair to say that by and large our cities are as well run and as honestly

managed as any of our large corporations. Men like Mayor Daley in Chicago, Collins of Boston, Cavanaugh of Detroit, and Lee of New Haven, to cite only a few of many, operate with a dedication and efficiency that should be the envy of any company listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Yet their problems are highly complex and difficult, their financial resources limited.

The growth of technological know-how in America is becoming an old story. There are probably more highly skilled scientists alive today than have ever lived in the history of mankind. The sum total of our knowledge appears to double every decade.

It requires the ultimate in pessimism to say that a society which can create a livable climate on the moon and put a man in it cannot successfully cope with the pollution of air and water, disposal of waste, slum clearance, and the techniques required to rehabilitate dilapidated housing.

Government is fast learning how to take advantage of the skills of our scientific community. California has assembled highly skilled task forces largely recruited from the air-space industries to study and report back on many of the vital problems affecting California's cities. These reports are now coming in. They point the way to significant progress.

I would be less than candid to argue that we have the financial resources to do everything we would like to do throughout the world immediately. But I believe America has the financial resources and is developing the techniques to involve the private

sector sufficient to cope with our cities.

Our gross national product is growing at an enormous rate.

In the 300 odd years from Plymouth Rock to 1950 it rose to \$285 billion. In the following fifteen years the gross national product has more than doubled to \$670 billion. In short, our out-put has grown more in the last fifteen years than it did in the previous 300.

Furthermore we are continuing to grow; the economy is now increasing at the rate of \$40 - \$50 billion a year. By 1970, assuming we have learned to avoid a major depression, it will be more than \$850 billion.

The astonishing growth of the U. S. economy is yielding ^{at least \$3 billion a year at present tax rates.} a mounting pile of tax dollars. Many economists anticipate that tax revenues will increase on the order of \$50 billion during the next five years.

This abundance staggers the imagination. It demonstrates that as a country we do in fact have the where-withal to make the cities a fit place to live.

Much of what I hear and read is pessimistic. It is said that city life has become intolerable and insolvable.

This is nonsense. We have many times shown our ability to improve our environment.

In the early 1930's Franklin Roosevelt pointed out that one-third of the nation was ill-housed. The country was rired

in the depths of a shattering depression. Our resources were half -- or less of today's. Our scientific know-how was still to experience the great stimulation brought about by World War II and the space age. Governments -- federal and local -- were still struggling to master the techniques of dealing effectively with social dislocations.

Housing is not far removed from the over-all plight of the cities. The explosion in housing instituted under the relatively handicapped era of the 1930's proves that we sometimes forget just how ingenious and able a people we are.

In 1934 we passed the National Housing Act which established the FHA as a new federal agency to stimulate housing and to upgrade standards. The principal device used was the insuring of lenders, principally mortgage lenders, against the loss of capital investment in residential credit.

In 1944 the Veterans' Administration was established on the same basic pattern to assist veterans buy homes.

Back in 1933 new housing starts had declined to a level of 93,000 a year.

In the 30 year period 1934 to 1963, the FHA-VA operation included the construction, the insurance of mortgages and the rehabilitation of a total of over 20 million units.

The real significance of these figures is the stimulation FHA and VA activities have had on the availability of mortgage funds and housing generally. The government programs account

directly for only about a fifth of new housing starts in this country.

The growth rate has had ups and downs. As I write this, we are experiencing a period of tight money due to the war in Viet Nam. Tight money has slowed this progress. But the war in Viet Nam will not last forever.

(By 1970 we expect to be building at a level of 2 million housing starts a year, twenty times the level of 1933.

The result of this sort of American ingenuity is that we are passing from a society of renters to home owners. In 1934 one-third of our families were home owners. Now two-thirds own their own homes. This increase is unparalleled in either U.S. history or the experience of any other industrialized nation in the world.

There are those who attack progress in housing saying the result has been to create vast sprawls of suburbia and unattractive project housing. They argue that the middle and upper-middle classes have deserted the big cities and left them to decay at the hands of the very poor. It is said that only the very rich can now afford to live pleasantly in the cities.

We do not live in a perfect society nor should we expect to. The fact is, however, that the housing revolution has made it possible for an enormous number of Americans to come closer to achieving their hopes and aspirations for themselves and their families than ever before. And this is the ultimate object

of a free society.

Attendant problems must be met and solved as they arise. The FHA-VA experience demonstrates that we can. As Secretary Weaver has put it, we live in a heterogeneous population which prides itself on freedom of choice and broad opportunities for consumer preferences. If suburbia is not utopia, we shall nevertheless have more of it in the future simply because a large number of our people want it as a matter of free choice. Every day we are learning and applying new devices to make our suburbs more attractive and more economic -- just as we are applying new techniques to make our cities more viable.

Stat ~~One of these ^{new} techniques~~ is the new Demonstration Cities program. Its purpose is to provide grants and technical assistance to help localities of all sizes make the coordinated and massive effort necessary to solve the multitudes of urban problems in neglected and run down neighborhoods.

This is done in two stages. First, the program assists localities in the preparation of planning for the rebuilding or restoration of entire areas and neighborhoods in blighted areas through the coordinated use of all of the various Federal, state and local aids.

Then follows the execution stage where supplemental grants will be made in addition to those aids otherwise available.

The overall purpose is to stimulate local initiative and innovation, encourage the maximum use of existing aid programs, and, perhaps even more important, coordinate and schedule all of the various devices currently in use to improve the environment of the cities in such a way as to bring maximum effectiveness to bear.

We have learned that fragmented attacks on slums utilizing isolated techniques on a piecemeal basis are not enough. The benefits of Demonstration Cities will be available to those communities on a first come, first served basis - which develop plans to show that they are ready to mount a full-scale coordinated attack on slums and decaying neighborhoods.

The critics of Demonstration Cities do not attack it as bad. Rather they fear that it is not big enough or that all cities cannot participate, or that only the big cities will benefit.

All communities, regardless of size, in all parts of the country are eligible to participate.

Obviously we hope that the big cities will be helped. But perhaps the greatest beneficiaries will be smaller communities where problems are not so enormous and therefore more viable. Organizationally under this program should enable many small cities virtually to eliminate slums and blight.

Demonstration Cities may be too precious. Perhaps it is too small. Its ultimate size cannot now be determined by picking a

magic number out of the air. We look upon it as a continuing effort. Its ultimate size will depend on how well it works and whether the cities themselves and their people are willing and able to mount the effort necessary to coordinate a massive effort to solve their individual problems.

There are no such things as instant slum clearance or instant human rehabilitation. These require patience and constant inquiry into new methods and techniques.

The cities with concentrations of services and functions - parks, libraries, universities, modern shopping centers, health facilities, clean air and pure water should be monuments of our society - the finest place in the world to live. They can be if we get on with the job.

I believe that the Demonstration Cities effort will prove to be one of the most promising answers to the slum-dwellers' cry for help.

As our society becomes more and more urbanized, we must do more than concentrate on new techniques to rehabilitate existing metropolitan areas.

Our ingenuity has extended to the building of entire new cities and towns that are springing up all over the country. These new communities are utilizing the most advanced and exciting concepts of planning.

One of the interesting features of new towns is that private enterprise is now building them without government financing.

New towns in America have largely sprung up since World War II. One of the first was Park Forest, some thirty miles from Chicago. It demonstrated that American private enterprise is capable of creating novel and advanced patterns of urban living.

Since Park Forest more than 100 new towns have been built or are projected. They may vary in imagination and novelty of concept, but they are all economically self-financing.

Two of the most promising new towns are near the Capitol. One is Reston, Virginia, less than 20 miles from Washington. This is a 10 square miles area which is expected to have 75,000 residents. Over 40% of the land to be developed will remain in open space, parks and recreation areas.

Columbia, Maryland, is a project of some 15,000 acres lying between Baltimore and Washington. The sponsor is exploring new concepts for the total development of a new satellite city.

Most of these new communities provide jobs, recreation, services, educational and cultural advantages all within walking distance and in a pleasant environment.

There are not enough new towns to accommodate our population explosion. They must be encouraged. I do not believe that government itself should build new towns but we should, in the constant search for new techniques, develop methods to assist private enterprise in building new communities.- perhaps through granting tax concessions or the use of guarantees to institutional financing.

Demonstration Cities and the new towns are only two of many new techniques Americans are creating to cope with urban dislocations. They have helped me reach the conclusion, after careful examination, that none of the tasks facing us are impossible even on the basis of our present knowledge - which constantly grows.

Some people say, for example, we are running short of space. Today 70% of our population is concentrated in our urban and suburban communities. These take up only slightly more than 1 per cent of the nation's land area. Even with the population explosion expected by the year 2,000 the total citizenry will take up only slightly over 2 per cent of the land.

Charles Abrams has pointed out that today we could string out the entire population of the United States along the West Coast and give nearly every man, woman and child his own private Pacific Ocean view.

We have no shortage of this vital resource - - land, space and open air. We are able to provide every city dweller with plenty of room to work, to play, or to engage in almost any type of cultural and recreational activity he might wish. Our job is to organize and plan for the effective utilization of these bountiful resources.

Water? We have plenty of water. For the country as a whole the supply of available water is enormous-about 1200 billion gallons a day. Our daily requirement for all purposes

(and much of this is restored) is only about one quarter this amount.

Last year New York City experienced what was called a water shortage. New Yorkers were emptying their reservoirs and praying for rain. Yet at the same time billions of gallons a day of fresh water were flowing by Manhattan on their way out to sea via the great Hudson River. New York City's normal water demand is about 1.2 billion gallons a day. *The Hudson's flow is ten times this amount.*

Fifteen years ago New York City -- which is dependent on the state -- was advised to build a pumping station 65 miles north of Manhattan on the Hudson to provide for an emergency supply of 100 million gallons a day or more as needed. The state, however, stipulated that the station be torn down when the then threatened drought was over. It was never used.

There was no water "shortage" in New York a year ago. There was simply a failure of political and management techniques.

We are learning and adopting ways and means of controlling pollution -- both water and air. For example, much of pollution in air is produced by soot and fly ash from coal burning plants. Today more than 90 per cent of these particles can be removed from the stack gases.

Pittsburgh is an example of what can be done if we have the desire. Pittsburgh used to be called the Smoky City. Something like 150 to 170 tons of soot and dust a month settled on every square mile of the city from Pittsburgh's stacks and chimneys.

It was hard to see the sun and the sky.

Some years ago business, civic and government leaders in Pittsburgh banded together to fight the pollution which was driving business out of the city and blighting the atmosphere for the people.

This struggle took ten years but Pittsburgh has adopted tough smoke control laws covering both industry and residential property. Today one could scarcely ask to visit a more delightful city.

Nor is the matter of polluted water insolvable. The present investment in sewers and sewage treatment works is about \$12 billion. The Public Health Service estimates that a total of some \$1.6 billion a year will be required over the next decade for maintenance, modernization and the building of new facilities. As new financing techniques and those presently used are applied, and municipalities develop satisfactory ways of recovering their costs for service, I believe this challenge will be met. Similarly our techniques to cope with water pollution become more sophisticated by the day.

There are those, for example, who attack our record in urban renewal. It is too little; it is too late. We have not provided for dispossessed families and businesses. To some degree all of these criticisms are true. Even so, the record is impressive. And we can and will do better.

To cite Pittsburgh again, this is what Mayor Joe Barr has

said about urban renewal:

"In Pittsburgh urban renewal has been the salvation of a city that 20 years ago seemed doomed to darkness and decline. It has proven to be much more than simply a means by which to rebuild the old and deteriorated sections of the city. It has become one of the community's strongest forces for economic growth.

"Our record to date reads something like this:

"Urban redevelopment has induced the investment of more than \$265 million in private capital during the last 15 years.

"It has made possible the reconstruction of more than 1,000 blighted acres.

"It has produced an average of 10 million dollars per year in payrolls generated by renewal construction and related activity.

"It has enabled us to retain the headquarters of corporations that otherwise would have moved elsewhere.

"Above all it has resulted in improved housing for the preponderant majority of families that were relocated."

This is high praise indeed, for a program that has been sloughed off as merely the application of a federal bulldozer.

According to the Agency's Annual Report for 1964, 80,000 new dwelling units have been completed or under construction. The total federal involvement was \$4.3 billion; 176,000 families and 74,000 individuals had been relocated from blighted areas.

Although I would agree that we must do more, we have learned that redevelopment works, not only in terms of slum clearance but also to rejuvenate the business community in the central cities.

Constitution Plaza in Hartford, Gateway Center in Minneapolis, Church Street Redevelopment in New Haven, and Charles Center in Baltimore, to mention only a few, are successful examples. In each instant not only were employment and business expanded but real estate taxes were appreciably increased.

It is also true that our cities are choking on their traffic problems as the use of the automobile increases and the use of mass transit systems have declined.

Since 1950 street car passengers are down 78% as lines have been abandoned. Bus riders are down 28%, subway and elevated down 17%. Today the average American uses public transit only 54 times yearly compared to 115 in late 1920's.

In 15 of Nation's 25 largest cities well over 60% of all riders enter ^{from} downtown business district by automobile.

There is nothing wrong with mass transit that modern high speed equipment cannot cure. The total U. S. investment in public transit is presently about \$4 billion. This is only a fraction of the billions that are being spent on new expressways. American cities can provide rapid transit to get people to work faster and cheaper than by car, reduce congestion and at the same time enhance downtown real estate values and tax bases.

In a free society we have no wish to penalize those who find the automobile the most pleasant or convenient way to commute to their jobs.

At the same time operating an automobile is not cheap; nor is parking. Driving in city rush hour traffic is not a

leisurely, pleasant matter.

Our chore seems obvious enough. We must make mass transit systems attractive, convenient and cheap enough so that more people will choose to use them.

This is not impossible. San Francisco and Chicago, for example, have taken great steps towards the development of new, high speed rapid transit systems that will enable commuters to go back and forth cheaper, more comfortably, and with more leisure than they could have driving an automobile.

In San Francisco, a Rapid Transit District has been formed. In spite of great political and financial difficulties a seventy-five mile system including subway, tunnel, ground level, tube, and aerial facilities has been adopted.

By 1968 the system will begin the operation of 80 mile an hour computer controlled trains. These Trains are comfortable as well as efficient and are expected to accomplish much towards relieving the traffic situation in the core city. Already even more efficient and comfortable high speed transit systems are in the works.

We are a people who have proven quick to adapt to change and innovation -- ^{Two years after the electric trolley was invented} if it is attractive enough. ^{Two years after} the telephone was perfected, 85 cities installed central exchanges.

No one, not even the driver, enjoys traffic congestion and the stench of exhaust fumes. The new techniques of scientific traffic control may alleviate the situation, but I suspect that

the good common sense of the American commuter will do even more to solve the matter of traffic congestion and fumes as soon as we provide him with an attractive and economic alternative.

By suggesting that we can solve ^{our} one urban problem if we have the will, I do not wish to over simplify them. We are not dealing solely with physical environment. As has been said, "The name of this game is People"

I have been calling the enemy "slumism" Slumism is more than a run-down section of town. It is a degraded state of mind and of being. It is the whole complex of poverty; it is illiteracy; it is disease; it is discrimination; it is ignorance; it is frustration and bitterness.

Slumism is a family of eight living in an unheated, rat-infested room in New York, or Chicago or Cleveland. Slumism is danger in the park at night or an attack on your own stairway.

Slumism spreads like a cancer through our cities, breeding hatred, disillusionment and terrifying violence. It is as much an enemy as Communism or Fascism. We must continue the war on this enemy and defeat it, just as we have so many times defeated alien tyrannies.

We are not going to defeat slumism over night. There are no instant solutions but I am confident that the American people are now demanding action and getting it.

If I am generally optimistic about our ability to provide city dwellers with an attractive, liveable environment, it is not without reason. I have spent over thirty years studying and dealing with the cities and their dislocations. This experience has taught me that we cannot blame our shortcomings on a lack of technical knowledge or a lack of financial or physical resources.

The United States has more people developing more ideas, advancing more theories, and perfecting more scientific advances than any other country or any other society in history. Our economic and raw material resources are almost beyond comprehension.

What is required if the conditions of living and working in the metropolitan areas are to improve are vision, labor, leadership and, above all, the will of the people to make it so.

I have found the awakening of a new spirit in the country, a spirit of cooperation between federal and local governments, between business and labor, between the scientific community and the manufacturer. This spirit has resulted in the kind of partnership President Johnson has talked about and the kind of consensus he constantly seeks to achieve.

2 We have proved many times that we can work together towards common goals, both in war and in peace. We have only to agree on what these goals are and stimulate the desire to attain them.

I believe that Americans have now agreed it is time to mount a full scale attack on urban challenges, utilizing all of the

weapons at our command. If we do, none of the challenges are insurmountable.

In 1907, Daniel Burnham, the architect and creator of the so-called "Chicago Plan" said,

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir mens' blood."

This is good advice for those of us who must deal with urban America on a day-to-day basis.

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