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REMARKS

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↳ We know what is wrong with our cities.
And we have known for a long time.

↳ Advisory councils, task forces, study groups, and Presidential commissions have studied the problem, restudied the problem, and studied the studies that studied the problem.

↳ The failure to solve the urban crisis is not ~~the~~ lack of knowledge of what to do ... it is ^{basically} ~~simply~~ the lack of a political

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commitment to do it.

Let me illustrate. Our first specific public housing act was passed in 1937.

Twelve years later, the Housing Act of 1949 boldly proclaimed as its goal a "decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family" and authorized 135 thousand new public housing units a year for the next six years -- or a total of 810 thousand new units.

Since setting that goal twenty years ago, however, we have actually built about 500 thousand units, or only two-thirds of the six-year goal announced twenty years ago.

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Why this sorry record? Because the U.S. Congress failed to provide the funds necessary to build the houses and the American people failed to demand that Congress vote the money.

Let's quit kidding ourselves. There can be no solution to the urban crisis until this nation by public and private expenditure cleans out the filth of the slums and provides decent housing for everyone. *↳ We know how to do things!*

↳ We can build highways on schedule!

↳ We can launch an Apollo mission to the moon precisely on schedule. Now why can't

we do a far more simple task -- that of building houses for people -- also on schedule?

Keep ~~America is more than separated bits of geography -- jet planes, super highways radio and TV, and a highly complex economy have seen to that.~~

Yet all over America we encounter an endless vista of municipalities with overlapping responsibilities ... with widely varying and usually outdated building codes ... with zoning regulations which lack uniform standards ... and with piecemeal rather than integrated programs to correct these deficiencies.

~~This is government by anachronism --
government suitable for the old days of
the industrial revolution.~~

Let me be candid: our present governmental structure -- federal, state and local -- is incapable of planning and achieving the living environment our wealth and technology permit ... and our survival requires.

This fragmentation of resources and programs throughout the federal system -- combined with the lack of a sustained political commitment -- has seriously crippled our capacity to act decisively over a sustained period of time.

Without cooperation and coordination among disparate governmental units at the federal, state, county, and municipal levels, resources are frittered away -- valuable time is wasted -- and the seemingly endless disagreements among governments consume the energy, confidence and vision of urban leaders.

↳ The "Model Cities Act" of 1966 points the way toward a more effective federal role.

But we also need a "Model States" program to bring state and local governments into full and constructive partnership in national urban policy.

↳ The federal government should provide financial rewards to those states which demonstrate initiative in modernizing their governmental and tax structures, including constitutional reform -- in adapting their programs and expenditures to the needs of an urbanizing society -- in creating state departments of urban affairs -- and in revising the ground rules for local action, ~~such as abolishing outworn legal jurisdictions.~~

↳ We must, in short, discard empty rhetorical appeals for good government in favor of significant financial and other incentives which will make it profitable for municipalities, counties and states to work together.

↳ In testimony before the National Commission on Urban Problems, the mayor of a large city identified a related dimension of the urban crisis. He said: "I have sometimes characterized the three major problems (of cities) as being money, finances, and revenue."

↳ Many cities are today teetering on the brink of financial collapse. ↳ The influx of low-income families into the central city has created a heavy demand for welfare and other costly public services. ↳ Yet the departure of middle and high-income families to the suburbs has eroded the tax base to support these new services.

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New approaches to solving the revenue crisis -- combining public and private energies -- must be tried.

I have proposed creating a National Urban Development Bank financed through subscription of public and private funds. The Bank would underwrite the unusual risk elements involved in meeting the hardest and most critical urban problems -- low cost private housing, for example. Securities sold by the Bank would also attract private investment capital for the revitalization of our cities. Federal funds would be appropriated to get the Bank started.

A National Urban Homestead Act could subsidize land costs for qualified private housing developments to allow the use of relatively high-priced urban and suburban land in relieving the population pressures in the central city.

A program of federal support for state equalization of vital community services -- education and welfare, for example -- within metropolitan areas would provide immediate assistance to hard-pressed local communities, particularly where the property tax has been exhausted as a realistic means of taxation.

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But as revealed by the Administration's recently completed review of the federal budget, *There will be no* ~~we can forget about any~~ concerted or large-scale assault on our most critical urban problems until we get our national priorities straightened around -- that is, until we succeed in shifting significant sums of federal money from the military to domestic concerns.



That is why I have opposed deployment of the Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system at this time.

That is why I have spoken out repeatedly in favor of negotiations with

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the Soviet Union over the reduction of offensive and defensive missile systems.

And this is why, in the end, the crisis of our cities is fundamentally a political crisis... a crisis which can only be solved if the American people render a clear political decision to get the job done.

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