

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Annual Board Meeting

Skyline Inn

Washington, DC  
January 27, 1977

It is an honor to be here today to help thank Roy Wilkins for all he has done as Chairman of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

I always have regarded Roy Wilkins and the Leadership Conference as the driving force behind landmark legislative achievements by Congress in the protection of the civil rights of all Americans. Roy Wilkins has led the Leadership Conference in promoting the social and economic welfare of millions of our citizens who otherwise would be without an advocate before their government.

It has been my privilege over the years to work closely with Roy and other members of the Leadership Conference toward the accomplishment of these legislative objectives, in the spirit of mutual respect and firm friendship.

We all know the depth of Roy's commitment to justice, to equal opportunity for all Americans, to making the democratic process work, and to what he has called "the most radical idea of the 20th century - abolition of racial segregation." We all know what a profound mark he has made on the history of this country.

I worked closely with Roy on the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964 and 1965. As Chairman of the Leadership Conference, he served as representative and coordinator of all the civic, labor and church organizations committed to equal rights for all Americans. His energy, his dedication, his pragmatism, his clear vision of what had to be done, and his realistic assessment of how reform best could be accomplished, were invaluable in securing passage of that legislation.

I also have worked with Roy in the effort to assure equal opportunity for black Americans and decent living conditions for those in the inner city. He has worked as hard and long to end economic discrimination as he has to end legal and political discrimination.

I am particularly proud that the State of Minnesota can claim Roy Wilkins as a native son. He grew up and began his career as a journalist and a powerful civil rights advocate in Minnesota.

Perhaps Roy's greatest contribution to America has been his untiring effort to make the democratic system work. He has used effectively the tools of democracy -- the lawsuit, the ballot box, the political rally, the well organized lobbying effort, and the written and spoken word. He has used these tools for the best of causes: The extension of basic human rights to all Americans and the guarantee of constitutional freedoms for everyone.

Under Roy's leadership, the NAACP initiated numerous court cases in defense of legal rights of black Americans, ranging from the right to equal pay for equal work, to the right to demonstrate peacefully.

He has been a master at using the strength of an organized minority to bring about constructive change - and at using the power of his own persuasive abilities and of this country's highest ideals to build majorities.

Having won so many battles for legal, political and economic rights, he is the first to acknowledge that much remains to be done to establish genuine equal opportunity in America.

Today on his retiring, after a quarter of a century as Chairman of the Leadership Conference, we must pledge to him that we will continue his fights and live up to his ideals and expectations.

The Leadership Conference must continue its firm commitment in the cause of full equality.

That is why I want to propose to you today an agenda for practical action in this critical year. It is an agenda addressed to the urgent problems of all of our people -- but it recognizes that these urgent problems have crisis proportions for black people.

First and foremost, we must deal with youth unemployment. Teenagers and young adults suffer from higher unemployment rates than any other group of workers. We have 20 percent youth unemployment -- triple the rate for adults. For black youths in our central cities the rate has averaged over 40 percent. That is staggering. This enforced idleness struck an average 3.5 million youths last year.

Joblessness tells these young people that they have no productive role to fill in our society, that they have been rejected by society even though they desperately want to participate.

We may not be able to see the psychological and emotional damage, the insecurity, and the alienation that unemployment causes young people. But we can see the skyrocketing crime rate it has caused among those under 25, and the increased drug and alcohol abuse among our Nation's youths.

We no longer can fail our youth. For too long this nation has ignored this segment of our population, and the result has been a shameful waste of our most important national resource.

But solving the youth unemployment problem is just the start. Until there is full employment in America we cannot be satisfied.

Unemployment, both adult and youth, drains billions of dollars out of our economy in lost production and revenues, and bleeds away millions more in welfare and unemployment compensation. But it costs more than that. It adds up to a terrible price in broken families, in the attitudes of our children, in the rising crime rate, in skills forgotten and work habits never formed, in permanent alienation from society and -- the most costly -- the loss of self respect.

Of course there are those who are telling us that we simply will have to pay the price and more -- because there just isn't any room for the unemployed in the system.

But let me tell you something. If the greatest free nation in the history of mankind has to get down on its knees in fear of something as abstract and as arbitrary as these so-called "free market forces," well, then we're through. We might just as well haul down the flag, lock up the Capitol, go home and admit that we don't have the courage or the imagination to govern ourselves.

But I don't think the American people are going to stand for that. They know that market forces aren't written up on a stone tablet. They know that they're not supernatural powers which we have to worship. The figure of 7.9 percent unemployment isn't written into the Constitution or stamped on the Liberty Bell.

But a lot of people have been telling us that reducing the adult unemployment level to three percent is unrealistic, that it is idealistic, that it can't be reached without intolerable levels of inflation. Well, I don't believe that -- and I believe the figures bear me out.

But let me tell you something the critics don't mention.

When someone comes along and says that five percent unemployment is the best we can do, you and I know what that means -- it means ten percent or more unemployment for blacks and other minorities.

Now, there are those who say the idea of full employment is alarming. Well, I wish they would take a walk with me through some of our cities. I'd show them something really alarming.

Like the fact that the richest nation on this planet is willing to sacrifice the suffering of millions of Americans to some notion of "price stability" for the wealthy.

Like the fact that black family income has sunk to a mere 58 percent -- little more than half -- that of the average white family.

Like the fact that in this country of two-car garages and matching sets of lawn furniture, there are children crying from hunger and families broken by poverty.

Like the fact that in this land of hot-lather shaving machines and electric can openers, there are millions of Americans who have never seen the inside of a decent school or a doctor's office.

My friends, if you want to see something truly alarming, you don't have to look very far.

So, full employment is the broad base on which to build our progress. But there is much more to be done.

Our cities simply can't wait any longer. I have said before that neglect of the cities works a terrible discrimination against the millions of people who live there. Worse yet, it is a form of national blindness -- because the city is America's tomorrow.

Make no mistake about it: By the end of this century -- which is not far off -- this nation will have over 250 million inhabitants. And 85 percent of them will be living in cities with populations of 50,000 or more.

So, when we talk about our cities, we're not talking about some kind of foreign country. We are talking about nothing less significant than the future of more than four out of every five American citizens.

We are talking about the future of almost all our children and grandchildren -- black and white alike.

And yet there are people who want to retreat from our cities, who want a policy which says, in effect, "You're on your own."

But let me remind those people that one of this nation's proudest accomplishments was the Marshall Plan. In that program, we put our strength and our resources on the line, and we rebuilt the cities of Germany, of Italy and of England, to the wonder and admiration of the world.

Now, do you mean to tell me that we can't make the same effort to rebuild our own cities, right here in the United States of America?

Of course we can. And I'm not talking about going out and putting a bird-bath in a park somewhere, taking a picture of it, and saying, "Well, hallelujah, we've rebuilt the city." Because we've seen that kind of policy in the past, and we know that it won't work.

I'm talking about a major, three-part initiative to restore the economies, the buildings and the governments of our cities.

A full employment program will go a long way toward rebuilding urban economies. But it must be joined by a vigorous effort to see that investment and employment programs are aimed at areas where the problem is worst. We can develop incentives which encourage businesses to locate new activities in depressed center cities. And we can establish a Domestic Development Bank to help state and local government create that investment climate.

To back up that effort, the Federal government can use its considerable procurement and employment expenditures to point the way to the truly needy regions of our nation.

And to ease the burden on our exhausted city treasuries, the Federal Government must assume primary responsibility -- once and for all -- for financing welfare and health programs for the disadvantaged. In addition, it must make sure that its taxation and regulatory policies actively promote -- and not retard -- the development of our cities.

But restoring the economies of our cities is not enough to make them desirable places to live and work. That task requires a roster of creative and exciting possibilities. For one thing, we can use the resources of the Domestic Development Bank to restore our public buildings, day-care centers and school facilities, and in doing so, restore our civic pride.

But our most vital priority must be the improvement of our cities' housing stock. This need not mean new construction. The bulldozer has somehow become the symbol of progress in our cities. And we too often have confused building cheap for building well.

Instead, we are going to have to conserve what is best in our neighborhoods. We must repair where possible and rebuild where necessary. And that means changing our thinking from the old, "throw-away" concept of the neighborhood which characterized so much of our so-called "urban renewal."

We should encourage a good mix of low-income housing in new and restored areas. And in doing so, we are going to have to realize that low-income housing must not be low-quality housing. As we expand our public housing programs, we will have to acknowledge that low-income housing is sometimes more expensive than middle-income buildings, and plan accordingly.

And in the private housing sector, we must take strong measures to put home ownership back within the reach of more American families.

Whether public or private, however, it is not enough that we build well and restore carefully. We must see to it that our cities once again are a suitable living environment for human beings.

Quite simply, nothing less than a genuine national policy of full employment, coupled with a determination to revitalize our cities and maintain their role as strong centers of trade, culture and communications, will serve to restore economic hope and the promise of productivity to the black community and indeed to all the American people.

This agenda gives the priorities we must follow. We must make this effort to convince our new President and the new Congress that these are the issues which must be stressed.

Continued progress toward equal opportunity and equal treatment for all Americans, the goal that Roy Wilkins has worked so hard for all his life, is possible in the months and years ahead if, and only if, this effort is made. But the threat to progress is great.

We must redouble our efforts to sustain the momentum for equal opportunity and justice. If we fail to do so, our dreams for reaching the "promised land" so eloquently described by Dr. Martin Luther King, will be greeted with growing cynicism by a new generation of frustrated and angered young Americans.

This must not be allowed to happen. Our challenge is to recapture for America the greatness that is based on decent and righteous actions. We have overcome many obstacles together, but a long journey still remains before us. In these first days of America's third century, let us join arms and walk together down that road toward free equality and justice for all.

- Clarence Mitchell - <sup>new</sup> Ch
- Ron Brown - new Legal Director

REMARKS OF

SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL RIGHTS  
ANNUAL BOARD MEETING

Ray Wilkins

SKYLINE INN  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JANUARY 27, 1977

A. Philip Randolph  
Honorary Ch

- Ray Wilkins Ch

- Clarence Mitchell

- Bayard Rustin

Andy Burnett

Ron Brown

Joe Raub  
Arnold Aronson

(Paul Douglas)  
(Philip Hart)

↳ IT IS AN HONOR TO BE HERE TODAY TO HELP THANK ROY WILKINS  
FOR ALL HE HAS DONE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON  
CIVIL RIGHTS.

↳ I ALWAYS HAVE REGARDED ROY WILKINS AND THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
AS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND LANDMARK LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS BY  
CONGRESS IN THE PROTECTION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF ALL AMERICANS.

↳ ROY WILKINS HAS LED THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE IN PROMOTING THE  
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELFARE OF MILLIONS OF OUR CITIZENS WHO  
OTHERWISE WOULD BE WITHOUT AN ADVOCATE BEFORE THEIR GOVERNMENT.

↳ IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE OVER THE YEARS TO WORK CLOSELY WITH  
ROY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE TOWARD THE  
ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THESE LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVES, IN THE SPIRIT  
OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND FIRM FRIENDSHIP.

h WE ALL KNOW THE DEPTH OF ROY'S COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, TO  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL AMERICANS, TO MAKING THE DEMOCRATIC  
PROCESS WORK, AND TO WHAT HE HAS CALLED "THE MOST RADICAL IDEA  
OF THE 20TH CENTURY - ABOLITION OF RACIAL SEGREGATION." WE ALL  
KNOW WHAT A PROFOUND MARK HE HAS MADE ON THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY.

h I WORKED CLOSELY WITH ROY ON THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACTS OF 1957,  
1960, 1964 AND 1965. h AS CHAIRMAN OF THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, HE  
SERVED AS REPRESENTATIVE AND COORDINATOR OF ALL THE CIVIC, LABOR  
AND CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTED TO EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL AMERICANS.

h HIS ENERGY, HIS DEDICATION, HIS PRAGMATISM, HIS CLEAR VISION OF  
WHAT HAD TO BE DONE, AND HIS REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF HOW REFORM  
BEST COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED, WERE INVALUABLE IN SECURING PASSAGE OF  
THAT LEGISLATION.

L I ALSO HAVE WORKED WITH ROY IN THE EFFORT TO ASSURE EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY FOR BLACK AMERICANS AND DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS FOR  
THOSE IN THE INNER CITY. L HE HAS WORKED AS HARD AND LONG TO END  
ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION AS HE HAS TO END LEGAL AND POLITICAL  
DISCRIMINATION.

(X) L I AM PARTICULARLY PROUD THAT THE STATE OF MINNESOTA CAN CLAIM  
ROY WILKINS AS A NATIVE SON. L HE GREW UP AND BEGAN HIS CAREER  
AS A JOURNALIST AND A POWERFUL CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE IN  
MINNESOTA.

L PERHAPS ROY'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICA HAS BEEN HIS  
UNTIRING EFFORT TO MAKE THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WORK. L HE HAS USED  
EFFECTIVELY THE TOOLS OF DEMOCRACY -- THE LAWSUIT, THE BALLOT  
BOX, THE POLITICAL RALLY, THE WELL ORGANIZED LOBBYING EFFORT,  
AND THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD. L HE HAS USED THESE TOOLS FOR THE  
BEST OF CAUSES: THE EXTENSION OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS TO ALL  
AMERICANS AND THE GUARANTEE OF CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOMS FOR EVERYONE.

↳ UNDER ROY'S LEADERSHIP, THE NAACP INITIATED NUMEROUS COURT  
CASES IN DEFENSE OF LEGAL RIGHTS OF BLACK AMERICANS, RANGING FROM  
THE RIGHT TO EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK, TO THE RIGHT TO DEMONSTRATE  
PEACEFULLY.

↳ HE HAS BEEN A MASTER AT USING THE STRENGTH OF AN ORGANIZED  
MINORITY TO BRING ABOUT CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE - AND AT USING THE  
POWER OF HIS OWN PERSUASIVE ABILITIES AND OF THIS COUNTRY'S HIGHEST  
IDEALS TO BUILD MAJORITIES!

↳ HAVING WON SO MANY BATTLES FOR LEGAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC  
RIGHTS, HE IS THE FIRST TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MUCH REMAINS TO BE  
DONE TO ESTABLISH GENUINE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA.

L TODAY ON HIS RETIRING, AFTER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, WE ~~WE~~ PLEDGE TO HIM THAT  
WE WILL CONTINUE HIS FIGHTS AND LIVE UP TO HIS IDEALS AND  
EXPECTATIONS.  
EXPECTATIONS.

L THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE MUST <sup>will</sup> CONTINUE ITS FIRM COMMITMENT  
IN THE CAUSE OF FULL EQUALITY.

X L THAT IS WHY I WANT TO PROPOSE TO YOU TODAY AN AGENDA FOR  
PRACTICAL ACTION IN THIS CRITICAL YEAR. L IT IS AN AGENDA ADDRESSED  
TO THE URGENT PROBLEMS OF ALL OF OUR PEOPLE -- BUT IT RECOGNIZES  
THAT THESE URGENT PROBLEMS HAVE CRISIS PROPORTIONS FOR BLACK PEOPLE.

①  
FIRST AND FOREMOST, WE MUST DEAL WITH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT.

L TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS SUFFER FROM HIGHER UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

THAN ANY OTHER GROUP OF WORKERS. L WE HAVE 20 PERCENT YOUTH

UNEMPLOYMENT -- TRIPLE THE RATE FOR ADULTS. L FOR BLACK YOUTHS

IN OUR CENTRAL CITIES THE RATE HAS AVERAGED OVER 40 PERCENT.

THAT IS STAGGERING. L THIS ENFORCED IDLENESS STRUCK AN AVERAGE

3.5 MILLION YOUTHS LAST YEAR.

L JOBLESSNESS TELLS THESE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT THEY HAVE NO

PRODUCTIVE ROLE TO FILL IN OUR SOCIETY, THAT THEY HAVE BEEN

REJECTED BY SOCIETY EVEN THOUGH THEY DESPERATELY WANT TO

PARTICIPATE.

WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SEE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL  
DAMAGE, THE INSECURITY, AND THE ALIENATION THAT UNEMPLOYMENT  
CAUSES YOUNG PEOPLE. BUT WE CAN SEE THE SKYROCKETING CRIME  
RATE IT HAS CAUSED AMONG THOSE UNDER 25, AND THE INCREASED  
DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG OUR NATION'S YOUTHS.

WE NO LONGER CAN FAIL OUR YOUTH. FOR TOO LONG THIS NATION  
HAS  
HAS IGNORED THIS SEGMENT OF OUR POPULATION, AND THE RESULT HAS  
BEEN A SHAMEFUL WASTE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESOURCE.

BUT SOLVING THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM IS JUST THE START.  
UNTIL THERE IS FULL EMPLOYMENT IN AMERICA WE CANNOT BE SATISFIED.

Full Emp

UNEMPLOYMENT, BOTH ADULT AND YOUTH, DRAINS BILLIONS OF DOLLARS  
OUT OF OUR ECONOMY IN LOST PRODUCTION AND REVENUES, AND BLEEDS  
AWAY MILLIONS MORE IN WELFARE AND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION. BUT  
IT COSTS MORE THAN THAT. IT ADDS UP TO A TERRIBLE PRICE IN BROKEN  
FAMILIES, IN THE ATTITUDES OF OUR CHILDREN, IN THE RISING CRIME  
RATE, IN SKILLS FORGOTTEN AND WORK HABITS NEVER FORMED, IN  
PERMANENT ALIENATION FROM SOCIETY AND -- THE MOST COSTLY -- THE  
LOSS OF SELF RESPECT.

OF COURSE THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE TELLING US THAT WE SIMPLY  
WILL HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE AND MORE -- BECAUSE THERE JUST ISN'T  
ANY ROOM FOR THE UNEMPLOYED IN THE SYSTEM.

- 3% - 4%  
now 5%  
to be considered  
full emp.

↳ BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. ↳ IF THE GREATEST FREE NATION  
IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND HAS TO GET DOWN ON ITS KNEES IN FEAR  
OF SOMETHING AS ABSTRACT AND AS ARBITRARY AS THESE SO-CALLED "FREE  
MARKET FORCES," WELL, THEN WE'RE THROUGH. ↳ WE MIGHT JUST AS WELL  
HAUL DOWN THE FLAG, LOCK UP THE CAPITOL, GO HOME AND ADMIT THAT  
WE DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE OR THE IMAGINATION TO GOVERN OURSELVES.

↳ BUT I DON'T THINK THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE GOING TO STAND FOR  
THAT. ↳ THEY KNOW THAT "MARKET FORCES" AREN'T WRITTEN UP ON A STONE  
TABLET. ↳ THEY KNOW THAT THEY'RE NOT SUPERNATURAL POWERS WHICH WE  
HAVE TO WORSHIP. ↳ THE FIGURE OF 7.9 PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT ISN'T  
WRITTEN INTO THE CONSTITUTION OR STAMPED ON THE LIBERTY BELL.

BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TELLING US THAT REDUCING

THE ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL TO THREE PERCENT IS UNREALISTIC,

↳ THAT IT IS IDEALISTIC, THAT IT CAN'T BE REACHED WITHOUT INTOLERABLE  
LEVELS OF INFLATION. WELL, I DON'T BELIEVE THAT -- AND I BELIEVE  
THE FIGURES BEAR ME OUT,

↳ BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING THE CRITICS DON'T MENTION,

WHEN SOMEONE COMES ALONG AND SAYS THAT FIVE PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT  
IS THE BEST WE CAN DO, YOU AND I KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS -- IT MEANS  
TEN PERCENT OR MORE UNEMPLOYMENT FOR BLACKS AND OTHER MINORITIES.

↳ NOW, THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THE IDEA OF FULL EMPLOYMENT IS  
ALARMING. ↳ WELL, I WISH THEY WOULD TAKE A WALK WITH ME THROUGH  
SOME OF OUR CITIES. I'D SHOW THEM SOMETHING REALLY ALARMING.

*For example,*

~~like~~ THE FACT THAT THE RICHEST NATION ON THIS PLANET IS

WILLING TO SACRIFICE THE SUFFERING OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS TO

SOME NOTION OF "PRICE STABILITY" FOR THE WEALTHY.

L LIKE THE FACT THAT BLACK FAMILY INCOME HAS SUNK TO A MERE

58 PERCENT -- LITTLE MORE THAN HALE -- THAT OF THE AVERAGE WHITE

FAMILY.

L LIKE THE FACT THAT IN THIS COUNTRY OF TWO-CAR GARAGES AND

MATCHING SETS OF LAWN FURNITURE, THERE ARE CHILDREN CRYING FROM

HUNGER AND FAMILIES BROKEN BY POVERTY.

L LIKE THE FACT THAT IN THIS LAND OF HOT-LATHER SHAVING

MACHINES AND ELECTRIC CAN OPENERS, THERE ARE MILLIONS OF AMERICANS

WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN THE INSIDE OF A DECENT SCHOOL OR A DOCTOR'S OFFICE

MY FRIENDS, IF YOU WANT TO SEE SOMETHING TRULY ALARMING, YOU  
DON'T HAVE TO LOOK VERY FAR.

SO, FULL EMPLOYMENT IS THE BROAD BASE ON WHICH TO BUILD OUR  
PROGRESS. BUT THERE IS MUCH MORE TO BE DONE.

OUR CITIES SIMPLY CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER. I HAVE SAID BEFORE  
THAT NEGLECT OF THE CITIES WORKS A TERRIBLE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST  
THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE WORSE YET, IT IS A FORM  
OF NATIONAL BLINDNESS -- BECAUSE THE CITY IS AMERICA'S TOMORROW.

h MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT: BY THE END OF THIS CENTURY --  
WHICH IS NOT FAR OFF -- THIS NATION WILL HAVE OVER 250 MILLION  
INHABITANTS. AND 85 PERCENT OF THEM WILL BE LIVING IN CITIES WITH  
POPULATIONS OF 50,000 OR MORE.

L So, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT OUR CITIES, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT  
SOME KIND OF FOREIGN COUNTRY. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT NOTHING LESS  
SIGNIFICANT THAN THE FUTURE OF MORE THAN FOUR OUT OF EVERY FIVE  
AMERICAN CITIZENS.

L WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ALMOST ALL OUR CHILDREN  
AND GRANDCHILDREN -- BLACK AND WHITE ALIKE.

L AND YET THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO RETREAT FROM OUR CITIES,  
WHO WANT A POLICY WHICH SAYS, IN EFFECT, "YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN."

L BUT LET ME REMIND THOSE PEOPLE THAT ONE OF THIS NATION'S  
PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS WAS THE MARSHALL PLAN. IN THAT PROGRAM,  
WE PUT OUR STRENGTH AND OUR RESOURCES ON THE LINE, AND WE REBUILT  
THE CITIES OF GERMANY, OF ITALY AND OF ENGLAND, TO THE WONDER  
AND ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD.

NOW, DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THAT WE CAN'T MAKE THE SAME EFFORT  
TO REBUILD OUR OWN CITIES, RIGHT HERE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?

L OF COURSE WE CAN, AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT GOING OUT AND  
PUTTING A BIRD-BATH IN A PARK SOMEWHERE, TAKING A PICTURE OF IT,  
AND SAYING, "WELL, HALLELUJAH, WE'VE REBUILT THE CITY."

~~BECAUSE WE'VE SEEN THAT KIND OF POLICY IN THE PAST, AND WE KNOW  
THAT IT WON'T WORK,~~

L I'M TALKING ABOUT A MAJOR, THREE-PART INITIATIVE TO RESTORE  
THE ECONOMIES, THE BUILDINGS AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF OUR CITIES.

A FULL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD REBUILDING  
URBAN ECONOMIES. BUT IT MUST BE JOINED BY A VIGOROUS EFFORT TO SEE

THAT INVESTMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS ARE AIMED AT AREAS WHERE

THE PROBLEM IS WORST. WE CAN DEVELOP INCENTIVES WHICH ENCOURAGE

BUSINESSES TO LOCATE NEW ACTIVITIES IN DEPRESSED CENTER CITIES,

AND WE CAN ESTABLISH A DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT BANK TO HELP STATE AND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREATE THAT INVESTMENT CLIMATE.

TO BACK UP THAT EFFORT, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN USE ITS  
CONSIDERABLE PROCUREMENT AND EMPLOYMENT EXPENDITURES TO POINT  
THE WAY TO THE TRULY NEEDY REGIONS OF OUR NATION.

AND TO EASE THE BURDEN ON OUR EXHAUSTED CITY TREASURIES,  
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST ASSUME PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY -- ONCE  
AND FOR ALL -- FOR FINANCING WELFARE AND HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR THE  
DISADVANTAGED. IN ADDITION, IT MUST MAKE SURE THAT ITS TAXATION  
AND REGULATORY POLICIES ACTIVELY PROMOTE -- AND NOT RETARD -- THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CITIES.

BUT RESTORING THE ECONOMIES OF OUR CITIES IS NOT ENOUGH TO  
MAKE THEM DESIRABLE PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK THAT TASK REQUIRES  
A ROSTER OF CREATIVE AND EXCITING POSSIBILITIES. FOR ONE THING,  
WE CAN USE THE RESOURCES OF THE DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT BANK TO  
RESTORE OUR PUBLIC BUILDINGS, DAY-CARE CENTERS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES,  
AND IN DOING SO, RESTORE OUR CIVIC PRIDE.

*Housing*

BUT OUR MOST VITAL PRIORITY MUST BE THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR  
CITIES' HOUSING STOCK. THIS NEED NOT MEAN <sup>just</sup> NEW CONSTRUCTION. THE  
BULLDOZER HAS SOMEHOW BECOME THE SYMBOL OF PROGRESS IN OUR CITIES.

AND WE TOO OFTEN HAVE CONFUSED BUILDING CHEAP FOR BUILDING WELL.

INSTEAD, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO CONSERVE WHAT IS BEST IN OUR  
NEIGHBORHOODS. WE MUST REPAIR WHERE POSSIBLE AND REBUILD WHERE  
NECESSARY. AND THAT MEANS CHANGING OUR THINKING FROM THE OLD,  
"THROW-AWAY" CONCEPT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHICH CHARACTERIZED SO  
MUCH OF OUR SO-CALLED "URBAN RENEWAL."

WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE A GOOD MIX OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING IN NEW  
AND RESTORED AREAS. AND IN DOING SO, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO  
REALIZE THAT LOW-INCOME HOUSING MUST NOT BE LOW-QUALITY HOUSING.

AS WE EXPAND OUR PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMS, WE WILL HAVE TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT LOW-INCOME HOUSING IS SOMETIMES MORE EXPENSIVE  
THAN MIDDLE-INCOME BUILDINGS, AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

AND IN THE PRIVATE HOUSING SECTOR, WE MUST TAKE STRONG MEASURES TO PUT HOME OWNERSHIP BACK WITHIN THE REACH OF MORE AMERICAN FAMILIES.

WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, HOWEVER, IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT WE BUILD WELL AND RESTORE CAREFULLY. WE MUST SEE TO IT THAT OUR CITIES ONCE AGAIN ARE A SUITABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT FOR HUMAN BEINGS.

QUITE SIMPLY, NOTHING LESS THAN A GENUINE NATIONAL POLICY OF FULL EMPLOYMENT, COUPLED WITH A DETERMINATION TO REVITALIZE OUR CITIES AND MAINTAIN THEIR ROLE AS STRONG CENTERS OF TRADE, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS, WILL SERVE TO RESTORE ECONOMIC HOPE AND THE PROMISE OF PRODUCTIVITY TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND INDEED TO ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

↳ THIS AGENDA GIVES THE PRIORITIES WE MUST FOLLOW. WE MUST  
MAKE THIS EFFORT TO CONVINCE OUR NEW PRESIDENT AND THE NEW  
CONGRESS THAT THESE ARE THE ISSUES WHICH MUST BE STRESSED.

↳ CONTINUED PROGRESS TOWARD EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND EQUAL  
TREATMENT FOR ALL AMERICANS, THE GOAL THAT ROY WILKINS HAS  
WORKED SO HARD FOR ALL HIS LIFE, IS POSSIBLE IN THE MONTHS AND  
YEARS AHEAD IF, AND ONLY IF, THIS EFFORT IS MADE. BUT THE  
THREAT TO PROGRESS IS GREAT.

↳ WE MUST REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM FOR  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND JUSTICE. IF WE FAIL TO DO SO, OUR DREAMS  
FOR REACHING THE "PROMISED LAND" SO ELOQUENTLY DESCRIBED BY  
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, WILL BE GREETED WITH GROWING CYNICISM  
BY A NEW GENERATION OF FRUSTRATED AND ANGERED YOUNG AMERICANS.

THIS MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN. OUR CHALLENGE IS TO  
RECAPTURE FOR AMERICA THE GREATNESS THAT IS BASED ON DECENT  
AND RIGHTEOUS ACTIONS. WE HAVE OVERCOME MANY OBSTACLES  
TOGETHER, BUT A LONG JOURNEY STILL REMAINS BEFORE US. IN THESE  
FIRST DAYS OF AMERICA'S THIRD CENTURY, LET US JOIN ARMS AND  
WALK TOGETHER DOWN THAT ROAD TOWARD FREE EQUALITY AND JUSTICE  
FOR ALL.

#

#

#

#



# Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)