

A NEW COALITION FOR THE URBAN CRISIS

Remarks of Senator Walter F. Mondale  
Anti-Defamation League, New York  
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*Walter Mondale*

*Conrad*

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

The Declaration of Independence was five months old when Thomas Paine wrote those words in The American Crisis. Here on another December night, nearly 200 years later, they still speak to us.

Today we face another American Crisis, born at least partly in the failure of a way of life. America was to be a living demonstration that "all men are created equal," that among their "inalienable rights" are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

I

"These are the times that try men's souls," as Thomas Paine declared.

We have just endured the third long hot summer in a row. In one of the great agonies of modern America, our city streets turned into battlegrounds. We saw Americans turn on one another. We watched death and destruction and disgrace in Detroit and Newark and New Haven. There were other cities, too, and there will almost certainly be more.

Thomas Paine would have recognized our response to last summer's tragedy. We are not the first to seek the solid

help of commissions, investigations, hypotheses, reports, and recommendations. Despite the efforts that are even now being made, there is need today to demand what he demanded then -- the one critical response that still has not yet emerged among us.

What we needed most in the aftermath of this summer's destruction was a sense of urgency about the problems of our cities. We have certainly gotten something less than that. There has been no effective effort to bring change in the corridors of power.

I speak particularly of the response of Congress. This week we were faced with a House-Senate conference report on the Social Security amendments which needed little more than the revival of debtors' prisons to mark it as a complete return to the darkness of centuries past. That legislation was only the most recent manifestation of a dangerous mood of repression.

This profoundly wealthy and enlightened nation has made promise upon promise of greater opportunity. Yet the injustices have been laid out for all of us to see. We truly deserve Gunnar Myrdal's judgment in Challenge to Affluence that "There is an ugly smell rising from the basement of the stately American mansion." That smell is in the air. It mingles with the bitter odors of gunpowder and charred ruins in American cities across the land.

It may yet be said of us that we found our answers to these injustices in ideas generated from White Citizens' Councils, in programs that provided more sophisticated riot weapons, in

legislation that set limits on the number of children who could be supported by welfare payments and nearly dismantled the Office of Economic Opportunity.

I hope not, but there can be little doubt that souls are on trial this winter.

## II

"The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country ... ;" Paine continued. We have some apologizing to do in our own ranks today.

The Anti-Defamation League is rightly proud of its heritage of dedication to the strengthening of democracy. Those of us who call ourselves "enlightened" or "liberal" -- whatever our politics, whatever our theology, whatever our occupations -- have reason to take some satisfaction from what we have accomplished. Together we have righted some wrongs and opened some opportunities.

We have brought better housing to low-income families, first through rent supports and now through home ownership proposals. We have poured new money into education for the deprived, and we have created the Teacher Corps.

We have founded the Office of Economic Opportunity. We have brought manpower development and training programs into being. We have mounted better health care programs for the poor. We have made civil rights a reality for many, especially in voting and public accommodations.

But clearly we have not done enough. The evidence is there for us to see.

We have let too many cities crumble and decay.

We have allowed too much of rural America to become a domain of despair.

We have watched racial patterns of living entrench themselves across our nation.

We have tolerated educational systems hardly worthy of the name for millions of Americans.

We have accepted insensitive law enforcement and inadequate public services for those who are powerless to help themselves.

We have acquiesced to a philosophy of "thus far and no farther" for members of minorities in our corporations and our labor unions and our governments.

We have supported technology without planning, and corrupted the beauty and the health of America.

We have fled from our mistakes and left those who could not join us to strangle in the poverty and exploitation and segregated hopelessness of our ghettos and exhausted farmlands.

We have too often placed our faith in national solutions to local needs, expanding some bureaucracies when the failure of their smaller prototypes was all too clear.

We have continued to legislate at all levels primarily for the politically potent American middle class -- we have enhanced our own material well-being and increased the gap between those who have and those who have not.

We have authorized some generous programs for the needy and approved niggardly appropriations for them; and we have raised great hopes and dashed them to pieces in the process.

We have bravely called the Negro forth to take his place now in our society and our economy; and when he showed signs of doing it we have fearfully cried out "not this place; not this way; not yet."

We have been cocky; we have been inflexible; we have been hypocritical. We have rested on our rhetoric and glamorized our good intentions. We've sought easy answers to difficult problems and shied away from the real battles with the reactionary, the selfish, and the insensitive -- and we have also hidden from the evidence of our own naivete.

"Summer soldiers and sunshine patriots" -- this American winter of discontent has been too hard for too many of us. We have warmed our hands and closed our eyes and dreamed -- and now we are awakening to racial bitterness, human frustration, and the alienation of millions of Americans for whom there are only nightmares.

### III

"... but he that stands (the service of his country) NOW deserves the love and thanks of man and woman," Paine concluded.

The first step in overcoming this bitterness, this frustration, this alienation is simply to recognize that we deserve it. Simple justice is not appeasement. It may be painful to recognize our failures in specific terms but standing the service of our country in this crisis demands that recognition. We must recognize the reality of our failure.

Tom Wicker wrote recently in the New York Times of the dissent that is sweeping the nation. He said it gives "focus



and energy to a profound but voiceless discontent with the land of the free and the home of the brave -- to a deep sense that something (is) wrong, some failure (is) distorting and perverting the idea of America."

Wicker went on to say: "From reality man reaches toward promise, fails and in an agony of failure finds his greatness by reaching again."

It is in that reaching that we will stand the service that Paine calls for.

The next step that is required is a change of attitude -- a massive commitment or recommitment to human beings who are in need. We must understand that these are all Americans, that they are all children of God, that they are all individual human beings who aspire and who fail.

I notice, for example, that in the pamphlet "ADL: Purpose and Program," the following statement is made:

"ADL believes in integration -- the acceptance of the Jew as an equal. It is opposed to assimilation -- the loss of Jewish identity -- for this would represent, in ADL's view, a defeat and not a triumph of the Democratic process."

That statement is remarkable in its distinction and its implications. Let me repeat it, changing only one word:

"ADL believes in integration -- the acceptance of the Negro as an equal. It is opposed to assimilation -- the loss of Negro identity -- for this would represent, in ADL's view a defeat and not a triumph to the Democratic process."

That's what I understand to be "black power" in its best sense -- integration but not assimilation, keeping a Negro

identity as ADL has sought to keep a Jewish identity, wanting to preserve a sense of what it is to be Negro as ADL has sought to retain a sense of what it is to be Jewish.

That is a part of the commitment that we must make -- not setting a price on participation that will defeat the Democratic ideal of group identity within the American framework.

Nor can our commitment allow us to stop with improving the ghetto, though we certainly must do that. A "golden ghetto" is still a ghetto, and separate is not equal.

There is now no economic, political, moral, or other justification for segregated housing. On this one issue alone liberals and conservatives alike can be condemned.

As the chief author of the federal Fair Housing bill, I have found nothing more frustrating than trying to make real progress on this issue -- which for the first time involves Northerners, not just Southerners -- and call upon this nation to declare the principle that we are going to live together and not separately.

The Anti-Defamation League has been a real leader on this issue, in both the corridors of Congress and the courts of this land. I am deeply grateful for that. You know what we all must come to know:

That segregated housing is the simple rejection of one human being by another without any justification but superior power;

That we have closed our hearts to our fellow human beings to the extent that we have closed our neighborhoods to them;

That an open society cannot truly exist without open housing, and a national fair housing law is an absolute necessity.

There is another facet of this commitment to overcome alienation as well. It is a willingness to break out of old molds, to assess all the resources available, to build a new coalition that can obtain greatly expanded support. In the Congress, at all levels of government, and in the public conscience, we must begin to generate full opportunity for all Americans.

This coalition will require some new thoughts and new relationships. The so-called "liberals" of our society, for instance, will have to admit that they have been remarkably unintelligent about some things.

We will have to recognize that business is not evil, that it has a role to play.

We will have to understand that government cannot do everything that remains to be done -- that the best of all our resources must be put to the task.

We will have to recognize that Washington is not the only problem-solving center of the nation.

We will have to recognize a responsibility to make this policy commitment a practical commitment on the part of precinct workers, union members, and the electorate who provide their power base.

We have reason to be proud that this fall the first Negro was elected mayor of a major city in this country -- Carl Stokes



of Cleveland. And we can be proud of the election of Andrew Hatcher in Gary, Indiana, too. But there is a darker side of those elections that none of us can ignore.

In Cleveland, only one out of four white Democrats voted for their party's candidate. And in Gary, one of our great union towns only 17 percent of white voters voted for Mr. Hatcher.

Those ought to be sobering statistics. They ought to help us understand the magnitude of the task that is still before us.

In turn, our so-called "conservatives" must come to understand that true conservatism will use government -- to provide work, to protect health, to develop recreation and better environments, to halt discrimination.

In short, they must be convinced that some good things won't make a profit and government must be there to make these good things happen.

Furthermore, there must be a new willingness to take and share responsibility in this commitment.

We must develop a new partnership to assess the public and private resources available and assign their roles.

This partnership will recognize that some things are best done in the private sector, some in the public sector, and some through joint effort. In fact, it will recognize that the total effort must be a joint one if it is to be accomplished at all.

A final characteristic of this commitment must be the abandonment of the awful neutrality that blocks progress in

the name of fairness, the tragic failure to understand that equality in the face of handicap is really discrimination.

In business, as one employer has put it, employers must learn to see their task as one of screening people into jobs because they need help, not screening them out because they lack skills or good work habits or education or whatever else. Our great employers can no longer hold themselves at arm's length from the social problems of the nation.

And in our schools, teachers and administrators will have to abandon their sense of "fairness" and involve themselves with the children who need their help. They, too, will have to see their job as screening people in instead of out. They must accept a commitment to promote success rather than judge failure, to make winners of those who begin the race with heavy handicaps.

In both business and education, the standard must not be equal effort toward the deprived, though that would be an improvement in many schools and offices. It must truly be an extra effort in the name of humanity to work people into the system by whatever ways are necessary to get them there and keep them there.

Suppose we somehow manage this commitment.

Suppose we recognize our failures. Suppose we dedicate ourselves to integration without assimilation, to living together instead of separately, to breaking out of old and ineffective patterns, to sharing responsibility, to abandoning neutrality in the name of humanity.

We will have come a long way, but one great effort will remain. We will still have to find a way to translate this commitment into power in places where it really counts.

It takes more than rhetoric to deal with real problems and real people. Whitney Young, Director of the National Urban League, appeared before the Senate Subcommittee on Government Research this past summer on the day after he and several others of our responsible civil rights leaders had appealed for a stop to the riots which were even then taking place.

One of the Senators complimented his courage and forthrightness and his leadership in that public affirmation of responsibility.

"I appreciate the compliment," said Mr. Young, "but it's not transferrable in the ghetto. I have to have something in my hands."

This has been one of our major problems. Our neutral acts have spoken much more clearly and loudly than our fine words. There has been too little, and it has come too late, and lately we have been taking some of it back. We simply haven't "told it like it is."

Those of us who think alike must stop spending all of our time with each other and set out to persuade where that is possible, and to overpower where that is necessary.

The public must be convinced that urban programs and new legislative ideas and new combinations of business and government structures are not the work of left-wing radicals attempting to undermine the free enterprise system.

We must create a constituency that will support these programs, not because they are profitable but because they are right.

Local leadership in the business community is difficult but it is vital to the provision of real opportunity. Recently in Minneapolis, for example, a group of businessmen stepped in to finance a pilot city program while the anti-poverty bill was stalled in Congress. This is one way to demonstrate by action that we are interested in more than fairness, that we are not neutral.

Employment and job training is a second major area where business can contribute. Industry has the classrooms -- the work benches and office desks -- that can be used to do this job. It has the experience, the teachers, the understanding of what success means in that business world. It also has jobs that can lead to economic power.

One of the most potentially encouraging developments to follow the social disarray of this past summer has been the creation of the Urban Coalition representative of the leadership of American society and including an impressive cross-section of top business leadership.

This Coalition may bring a new sense of urgency and effective action at all levels of government and in the private sector. It may mark the beginning of an effort of sufficient magnitude to deal with this enormous problem. But this hope is still to be realized.

We have seen business leaders respond impressively in a few instances.

Ford Motor Company, the employer of our distinguished guest, has been in the forefront of this kind of effort. Ford's reaction to the riots in Detroit was a decision to go into the ghettos, to find men out of work, to offer them employment on the Ford assembly line. Normal application procedures which would have screened many of these men out were dropped, and men were hired on the spot. The effort was to find 5,000 men from the inner city and give them the opportunity to earn a living with a regular job. This required something more than neutrality.

Of course Ford has not been the only firm so involved. Its rival, General Motors, has also sought employees in the ghetto. So have Honeywell, Control Data, Warner & Swasey, General Electric, and U.S. Steel, to name a few.

In the process these companies have learned some new truths about residents of the ghetto. Aero-Jet General, for example, opened a plant in Watts to make tents for military purposes. There were 75 jobs available, and 5 500 applications. That should mark the death of at least one myth.



There can be no doubt ~~that~~ there is much that business can do by ~~itself~~ in cooperation with existing government ~~programs~~ to bring employment and other necessary services to the needy of this country.

But even in terms of encouraging private business to undertake real efforts, the Coalition up to this point has achieved only modest success.

President Johnson announced the other day that 500 of our largest corporations were contacted last month about their willingness to hire the unemployed and the under employed. Of the 500, 23 said they would help, while 29 refused. An additional 85 expressed an interest, and something over 350 have not committed themselves. Perhaps they want to be neutral.

For there are materials risks in making these humanitarian efforts. There will be higher absenteeism, at least for awhile. There will be higher unemployment insurance premiums at least for awhile. There will be higher supervisory costs at least for awhile.

On the other hand, individual human beings will know that they have not been forgotten, at least after awhile.

Employed Negro workers will recognize that the militants are wrong, at least after awhile.

Deprived American human beings may feel that "white America" is becoming just "America" at least after awhile.

There are still other signs of translation of this commitment into action in the private sector. The recent decision of

the insurance industry to invest a billion dollars in the mortgage market for low-income families is a real breakthrough. Many savings and loan associations have now pledged money to finance rent supplement projects. There are signs that labor unions will soon pledge part of their retirement funds for this type of housing.

I hope that the Coalition will continue to press for a great increase in an effort by corporations throughout this country to follow the example of the few that have already moved so impressively.

But this is only part of the job of the Urban Coalition. If that is all, it accomplishes, a good deal of what we had hoped for will not be realized.

While there are many areas where business now can act alone, there are many other areas where only government can act or business and government must act together. In those areas it is essential to establish a new sense of urgency and a far broader coalition in the Congress, in state legislatures and city governments, in school boards and the rest.

And this, in my opinion, is perhaps the greatest challenge of all to the business element to the Urban Coalition.

To put it frankly, the liberals in the Congress are already supporting these measures. But the Senators and Congressmen who make up the conservative forces, and who have typically represented the interest of the American business

community, have not yet responded to the declarations and statements of purpose and sense of urgency expressed by that same business community in the Urban Coalition.

Many programs have been proposed which directly relate to the objectives of the Urban Coalition. Perhaps the best example was the Emergency Employment Act, a proposal by Senator Clark, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, which was later modified by Senator Prouty, a Republican from Vermont, and Senator Clark to authorize \$1 billion to provide employment by the Federal Government as an institution of last resort.

At its August convocation in Washington the Urban Coalition had issued a dramatic call to the Government to "reorder national priorities" and develop an emergency work program to provide jobs in the cities. The Coalition sought at least a million "meaningful" and "socially useful" jobs immediately, along with job training programs and low-income housing.

Those of us who sponsored the Clark and Prouty measures repeatedly pleaded for broader support from the conservatives on the grounds that the Urban Coalition had called for just such a measure. I think we were able to pick up a few votes on that basis, but the original Clark proposal was defeated 54 to 28 and the compromise Prouty proposal was defeated 47 to 42. I did not sense that the Urban Coalition, representing the business community was effective in bringing added strength to our cause.

And there are other examples of timid and parsimonious response to national problems. Rent supplements is a classic example of federal assistance designed to increase the role of the private sector in supplying housing for low-income families. This program survived in this session with a puny \$10 million appropriation and then only on the condition that non-profit sponsors contribute five percent of the capital costs of housing projects -- virtually nullifying the effectiveness of that program for non-profit corporations.

In the House the rent supplements were cut out entirely and 93 percent of the Republican Congressmen voted against the program. As you know, in a riotous moment, the House voted down the rat control bill. The House Agriculture Committee with a Southern Democrat - Republican alliance voted down a bill for nutrition of children we know to be starving in Mississippi and elsewhere. And because of the strength of conservative opposition we were able to appropriate only half of what the President asked for model cities.

Continuing the Office of Economic Opportunity depended on turning it over to local governments, whether or not those governments share the objectives of the program. Just keeping the program has been hailed as the great liberal victory of the Congressional session, and the appropriations are yet to come.

And as I speak to you tonight we are confronted with a social security conference report which is so backward and medieval that some of us feel it is worse than no bill at all.

Without quibbling over details, it is quite obvious that we will never be able to mount a program proportionate to the problem unless the business leadership within the Urban Coalition can translate its viewpoint into support for good programs among a substantial portion of the conservative leadership in the Congress. Short of that, we will have only token improvements at best.

I repeat that the problem is not within the liberal element of the Congress. It is the necessity of translating the rhetoric of the Urban Coalition into the reality of committed, urgent support -- into votes from the conservatives in Congress. Only the business community can do this. Up to this point, the Urban Coalition has virtually failed in this effort.

In addition to these traditional programs -- public housing, social security, aid to dependent children, rent supplements, interest subsidies, credit guarantees, model cities, and the rest, there is a compelling need to shift the profit incentive through tax policy.

Tax policies have been used by the business community for years to encourage such things as holding and improving property, buying new equipment, and finding and improving mineral holdings. These economic incentives brought about by tax policy cost the taxpayer billions of dollars a year and are pretty much taken for granted.



It is ironic that we seem unable to consider the use of tax policy to find and improve human beings. whether for training manpower, providing employment, creating a profitable opportunity to build housing in blighted areas, or for other efforts to improve the environment and the hope and opportunity of the dispossessed in urban and rural America. For some reason we forfeit the opportunity of using the tax tool to provide incentives when it comes to human beings.

If anything, the sheer fact of economic growth ought to justify the immediate use of the tax tool for this purpose. For one thing, it costs less to put a person on his feet and make a taxpayer out of him than to keep him and his family on welfare.

More important, it is well recognized that the lack of trained human talent is the biggest impediment to rapid and healthy economic growth. It is as important as bricks and mortar and equipment. Trained talent is in critically short supply.

So not only a sense of humanity but also the hard facts of economics justify a radical change in the incentive offered to private businessmen to search out, to hire, to train and hold, to improve and motivate the disadvantaged in American society. Such an effort is obviously in the best interest of a growing and a healthy economy.

Once again, the business community could be most helpful here. Because of its experience with economic incentives, it could help us shape wise and effective tax reforms to achieve a new human objective.

While it goes beyond the scope of these remarks, the same can be said for wise and creative use of credit guarantees, land cost write-down policies and interest subsidies such as those that we have proposed to bring home ownership within the reach of lower income families.

There is a need to throw away the mold, to forget norms and mores, to shape a total, balanced, public and private effort that uses every tool at our command to guarantee full opportunity for every American.

There is not the slightest chance that this will be done unless the business community joins in the effort. We can't do it; you must do it. Business investment, managerial talent, and the great resources of imagination in industry can all be put to the task, once the commitment is made.

No doubt this involvement will mean the restructuring of government as well.

Government is the place to establish national goals and priorities. In spite of Vietnam, a supersonic transport made it through the Congress this year, \$142 million and sonic booms and all. We found \$4.5 billion for space and \$4.7 billion for public works, yet we could not find the resources for more than the most beginning attack on the problems of American cities. And we barely stayed even in welfare programs and education, while some wanted us to move backward.

Some of our most important services are not by nature profit-making enterprises. Yet we do need better education, better public and low-cost housing, better police and fire protection, better street maintenance and repair, better transportation systems, more open spaces, better parks and playgrounds, and a host of other efforts which may not be profitable for private business.

In our new partnership, private business must recognize the necessity for adequate programs and pledge itself to the public expenditures that will be required. There is no other way to do it. It costs money to give people help and protection and opportunity.

In these times that try men's souls, standing to the service of our country is going to require an action partnership of public and private efforts.

It will have to be a real partnership. Government will make it possible for business to do what it can; business will help make available the technology and imagination that enables government to show what it can do.

But those laws, those programs, those experiments will finally be only as brave, as creative, as genuine, as committed as the men who pass the laws and appropriate the funds.

Here is where the last great effort must come. It is not enough for Urban Coalitions to meet with Members of Congress who already favor progress. There aren't enough of us to get the job done, and there are two -- and only two -- alternatives for success.

Those who obstruct the effort toward full opportunity must either be convinced or beaten. It does no good to commit yourself to human objectives that require the support of Congress and then remain neutral in the political arena. Somehow the true commitment must also translate itself into real support for committed lawmakers -- financial, political, energetic support.

It makes no difference to me -- and it should make no difference to you -- whether a candidate you support is a Republican or a Democrat.

It makes no difference to me -- and it should make no difference to you -- whether he is running for the Senate, the House of Representatives, a state legislature, a city council, or a school board.

It makes no difference to me -- and it should make no difference to you -- whether he is white or black, Christian or Jew, rich or poor.

In the crisis we face, there can be only one lesson. When the lawmaker has to make the choice between encouragement and repression, what will he do?

If his vote will be for a commitment to human repression, you should support him. If his vote will be a denial of justice, equality, acceptance, participation -- or even if it is just neutrality -- then you must convince him or defeat him.

We are not going to get any farther with rhetoric. From here on, to get where we must go, every one of us must have to put his commitment on the political action line.

The political neutral in this American crisis can never be more than a summer soldier or a sunshine patriot. Whitney Young summed it up for us very well in his testimony this past summer.

"Our appeal is a very simple one," he said. "We are at the crossroad. I repeat, it is right down to liberate or exterminate the Negro in this country.

"The Negro has said to America in a thousand ways over 400 years that we believe in America, and now it seems to me that the time has come for America to say to the American Negro that 'I believe in you.'

"That is our simple appeal."





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