

AN ADDRESS

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For most of the post-war period—for over twenty years—our nation's cities have been in danger of being overwhelmed by an urban society, a society which litters our countryside, clogs our highways and blights our cities.

Today there are 90 million motor vehicles on our almost 3 million miles of paved highway.

Daily we each dispose of 4 pounds of trash, a total of 10 million pounds in our metropolitan area, 540 million pounds throughout the nation.

Our poor number over 30 million, most are children (15 million) or elderly (5 million).

Of all families headed by an elder American (65 or over) 44% have an income of \$3,000 dollars or less.

Thirty-seven per cent of all Negro families have an income of \$3,000 dollars or less.

Almost 70% of the household heads in poor families have no more than a grade school education.

Today of this nation's 193 million people, virtually 7 out of 10 live in urban areas. Our farm population which was 15% of our total population in 1960, today accounts for less than 10% of our population.

Each year 3 million infants are born. All must be educated.

Each year sees the formation of more and more families, who must be provided with employment, housing, and transportation facilities.

Each year an ever increasing number of us reach the age of 65, and our elderly, if they are to enjoy their retirement years, will require improved medical and health services, leisure time, and recreational activities.

Each year every additional 1000 metropolitan residents require an additional:

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4.8 elementary school rooms

3.6 high school rooms

1.0 hospital beds

100,000 gallons of water

1.8 policemen

1.5 firemen

Each 1000 residents urbanize 100 acres.

Spreading urbanization has made acute the needs for adequate transportation, schools, open space, recreational areas, sewer and water facilities. The congregation of a large number of people in compact but overlapping communities has generated new needs, has given rise to an unending chain of political and socio-economic problems.

The strength and vitality of our older central cities has slowly eroded. Our older cities have so far been unable to compete with the attractiveness of suburban green and the age of the motor car.

With rising incomes and aspirations many have left the cities to search for their own plot of grass. Business and retail activity soon follow their former customers.

Into our old central cities come the new immigrant, the displaced farmer, the Negro, the Puerto Rican, almost penniless, inexperienced and often friendless, to live in slums or to generate new slums through simple overcrowding; to find that they are unable to secure employment. It is here that poverty, limited skills, and ignorance keeps them. That our old central cities are centers of anti-social behavior of crime, delinquency and mental illness should come as no surprise.

These are the problems of our municipal governments, induced by population growth, mobility and prosperity.

And yet, the Great Society which we all seek must, as Walter Lippman has pointed up, be built if it is to be built at all in the great cities, which are now the center of American life.

We were not prepared for affluence, for the metropolis. The results of unpreparedness are obvious; bulging suburbs and blighted cities, racial tensions, delinquency, polluted air, water shortages, inadequate mass transit facilities, clogged highways, depleted municipal revenues and mounting tax rates.

We were unprepared because we were slow to leave the farm, we were reluctant to admit that the desires and needs of a highly mobile

urbanized society differ greatly from those of a society comprised of relatively separate, self-contained individual communities.

But thanks to the Housing Act of 1949 and later additions which substantially altered inter-governmental relationships, we, the creators and creatures of our urban society, now have a clearer understanding of what must be done, agree on how it is to be done and are prepared to act.

The renewal process taught us that we cannot concern ourselves solely with projects and neighborhoods but that our concern must be for the community at large that the revitalization of a community depends not only upon the adequacy of residential housing but also upon the adequacy of transportation, the vigor of the business community, the adequacy of its parks and playgrounds and its educational programs. It taught us that massive surgery is both expensive and painful, nor does it allow for selectivity. To retain the worthwhile while discarding the valueless.

We now realize that housing is not the only social need of residents, that they need and expect—they deserve—improved educational programs, better recreational activities, more open space, improved health and welfare services and more and better economic opportunities. We now know that to wait for blight and decay to appear before taking corrective action is to fight yesterday's battles.

On the horizon is the City Demonstration Act, a program which laboratories, the cauldron into which we pour the energies, talents, and resources of our municipalities, of our technologists, and our universities to dispel the myths and discover the realities of our urban ecology.

Slowly a nation of individualists, accustomed to the idea that each person must fend for himself as an independent unit, moves into an age of interdependence; slowly recognizing and organizing the institutions which such an age requires.

Reluctant state legislatures, long viewed by political scientists and other public figures as 17th-century anachronisms unable and unwilling to conduct the business of 20th-century government, to adequately cope with the problems of urbanism, have begun to challenge the old order.

Our own legislature has, in recent years, established a commonwealth service corps, revised its housing and code enforcement laws, revitalized and reorganized our entire educational system and ap-

proved a sweeping racial imbalance law. It has reorganized our mass transportation system. It has just passed a major revenue program and we, the cities, are the principal beneficiaries. We will now be better able to service the rising needs and aspirations of all our citizens.

We have discovered that the age of the motor car and mobility make it impossible to easily discern and separate purely local concerns from those concerns which are regional or national.

Health and welfare problems are not evenly distributed among communities, nor are the problems of race and aging. They are not because the Negro, the poor and the elderly are city dwellers; city dwellers because they lack mobility for various reasons, some self-imposed, some economic, some social and some political. The cities have the poor in health, education, and income.

Today we recognize that to ask our older cities to continue to provide for the education, health and welfare of the disadvantaged, be they young or old, is to admit that the disadvantaged will always be with us and at the same address.

We recognize that the problems of the poor and the neglected are the concern of all, that each of us has a right to safe and sanitary housing, that all are entitled to the opportunity for social and economic improvement.

We now realize that a child, who has been deprived of educational opportunities, of parental guidance, care and example, will not suddenly emerge as a mature young adult ready to take his place in society.

We now understand that what Little John d'd not learn, Big John does not know.

We have the Office of Economic Opportunity and its many educational, retraining and cultural programs. We are beginning to heed Jane Addams who long ago warned us against doing good to people. "One does good, if at all, with people, not to them." We are asking the poor to help us, to mobilize themselves, to assist us in developing neighborhood centers for health, education and recreation.

And so it is that we slowly admit that the organizational, financial, and legal prescriptions necessary to sustain and promote the growth of an agrarian society may be neither sufficient nor germane to the problems of an urban society. We reluctantly part with habit.

Today we have the new cabinet post, the Department of Housing and Development, to foster the growth and development of our urban areas, to deal with the problems of our cities.

Tomorrow we may have a new cabinet post, the Department of Transportation, to foster the development of a coordinated transportation system, to permit travelers and goods to move quickly, conveniently and efficiently.

And so we see developing a new federalism. A creative federalism which began because of the growing awareness that the urban problems of physical and social decay are national problems and that to resolve them there must be a reallocation of all our nation's resources. A federalism not based on separate functions for each level of government but of shared functions for all levels. This new federalism has given to our cities an unprecedented opportunity to deal more effectively with our urban environment.

I am convinced that we will attain our visionary Great Society and that our great cities will serve as its foundation, for our nation will no longer permit the plundering of its cities, for we now realize that a society which allows the plundering of its cities is in no position to protect the assets of the country.

I would be more secure in my belief that the Great Society will be ours, more secure that the passage of time will prove me to be more sage than charlatan; if I did not have to ask who is to build it. Who is to build this Great Society?

As a nation we have the technical competence, the mechanical, the electrical and the civil engineering skills to plan, design and construct the highways, the schools, the water and sewer facilities, and the housing necessary to satisfy the physical demands of our citizens.

The emerging dynamic or creative federalism, organizational changes and new methods of finance present us with an opportunity to subject our urban environment to the "scientific method," the tool which has contributed so much to our technological advance but has as yet directly contributed so little to social progress. We can now ask the questions.

Are our existing organizations and institutions mere anachronisms or do they bear some resemblance to reality?

Are our core cities, like the dinosaur, destined for extinction?

Is it true that 60 years ago, our central centers were the "melting pots" of America, the great synthesizer only because people lacked mobility and could not escape?

What are the real needs, social, economic, and political of an urban society?

We may ask, but in many communities who will answer?

The crisis of the Great Society may well be the lack of human resources.

Here in Boston age and retirement continue to deplete our roster of administrative, professional, and technical personnel.

The Great Society will not Topsy-like "just growed." It will not come about because of some grand vision or legislative fiat, it must be built. If all we have is grand visions and legislative victories, we may win battles but we will surely lose the war. For laws are not self-executing, nor are public facilities self-constructed.

Whether families will live in pleasant, attractive neighborhoods or slums depends upon public decisions, made by public officials, as to housing, and the location of schools, clinics, parks and playgrounds.

Whether business activity flourishes or dies is partly the result of the decisions of public officials as to traffic flow, transportation facilities, parking, and zoning.

Whether health and welfare programs are utilized or unused depends on the decisions of public officials as to an evaluation of the services desired, the location of clinics, and the availability of professional personnel. The management of local governments in an urban environment is a complex activity. It requires able, skilled and mature men and women.

Yet our local governments face major manpower shortages while our youngsters rush to the Peace Corps to accept the challenge of underdeveloped nations or to Vista to accept the challenge of Appalachia. Do they not realize that to find the same challenge, the same opportunity for significant service, they need look no further than their own community.

Any growing enterprise must compete for manpower and all must face the possibility of manpower shortages. The competitiveness of our local governments is severely inhibited by its public image. Any unit of government has a reputation and presents an image to the public based upon its performance. For too long politics and public administration have been depicted as "a strife of interest masquerading as a contest of principles" or the "conduct of public business for private advantage." For too many years local governments have been forced to labor under *the shame of our cities*. The public only reluctantly remembers that Lincoln Steffans was commenting on the realities not of 1966 but of 1904.

For too many years cities have operated under rigid, negative, and overprotective civil service systems, designed more to reward persistence and stamina than talent.

For too many years cities have been depicted as bankrupt enterprises and able and ambitious people do not go to work for failing organizations.

Cities themselves have not been active recruiters of talent, nor in providing programs of continuing education or developing in-service training programs.

Universities have only recently turned their eyes from the national and international horizons, and to focus attention on metropolitan and local issues.

A Great Society demands excellent people and excellence in all its people.

The stewards of this society, the architects, builders, artisans and craftsmen, must be equal to the task, for the social, economic, political, and ethical values of our constantly changing urban environment must be understood if our communities are to be suitable places in which to live and work.

Our success in building a Great Society will be judged not only in terms of our ability to deal effectively with physical blight, in achieving a land-use plan and transportation system more in tune with 20th-century criteria than those of the 18th century, but also in terms of our ability to deal effectively with the social and moral issues of our times.

Our ability—you and I, creators and creatures of our urban environment—to deal effectively with the social and economic issues of today, to restore in the less fortunate a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, to secure for all the jobless, the aged, the deprived—the good life: to liberate the poor from the chains of poverty, to liberate the aging from the bonds of boredom, illness and idleness, will in a large measure determine whether we will realize our dream of the Great Society.

If we fail we will be the greatest of cowards for we will have much to be ashamed of.