

Mayors Seek Coalition to Fight Crisis in Cities

By Robert E. Baker
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Eight big-city mayors—led by Republican John V. Lindsay of New York and Democrat Jerome P. Cavanagh of Detroit—yesterday called for a new coalition to fight the crises in the cities.

The group, meeting here on the eve of President Johnson's State of the Union message, also defended present Federal programs and said it would be "catastrophic" if they were cut back.

The coalition envisioned by the mayors would consist of business, labor unions and leaders of the civil rights movement.

The purpose is to develop a national consensus that will make the solutions to urban problems a top national priority.

The catalyst for forming the coalition is Urban America, Inc., a non-profit organization

concerned with the quality of life in cities, whose president, Stephen R. Currier, had invited the mayors to yesterday's meeting.

The mayors told reporters after the session that they had talked about the problems of their cities and how they have attempted to handle them. The next step, they said, is to establish a list of priorities for the coalition and to reach agreement on common objectives.

They stressed that they were concerned with more than Federal money. Currier said they would solicit help from "many other interests in this country."

Cited as city problems were dwindling taxes, rising welfare costs, housing deterioration, shortages of operating revenue and transportation snarls.

Currier described the coalition effort as an educational one that would project ideas.

"Ideas are pretty persuasive," he said.

But Detroit's Cavanagh added that the coalition would also have "political muscle."

"Obviously, every mayor is a political creature of sorts," he said.

Cavanagh said the Urban America coalition effort would differ in its emphasis from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities. He heads both groups, which he characterized as city lobbies. Urban America, he said, will have a broader base and will be "an articulate voice on the national level."

Cavanagh, who previously had called on President Johnson to reconsider any planned cuts in poverty, housing and education programs, yesterday took the occasion to support the full \$200-million funding of the War on Poverty's community action programs.

New York's Lindsay put in

a plug for "reasonable" funding of the Administration's demonstration cities program and said the Federal Government should consider taking over all welfare programs.

The action by the mayors yesterday was significant for two reasons. It further voiced their support of antipoverty programs, reportedly now in jeopardy, which some of them had initially opposed.

And the proposed coalition may provide new spirit and direction for the civil rights movement.

Mayors attending the Urban America session, in addition

to Cavanagh and Lindsay were Theodore R. McKeldin Jr. of Baltimore; T. G. Curran of Denver; Robert K. High of Miami; Henry J. Maier of Milwaukee; Joseph M. Barr of Pittsburgh, and Harold Tollefson of Tacoma, Wash.

Also attending were representatives of Mayors Ivan Allen Jr. of Atlanta, John Collins of Boston, Richard Daley of Chicago, Richard C. Lee of New Haven, James J. Tate of Philadelphia, Terence Schunk of Portland, Ore., and John F. Shelley of San Francisco.