

DRAFT INTRODUCTION

America and its communities are changing with unsettling rapidity.

Most of this change has been healthy; and most of the problems it has caused tend to evoke their own solutions. This country - despite its transitional strains and its freely-voiced complaints - has an immense capacity for self-correction.

There is always a temptation - and a pressure - to over-react: to give equal ear to every complaint, to chase off after every problem, and to wind up with congeries of programs which may slow up rather than accelerate the nation's natural and long-run capacity for self-correction.

Evidence is accumulating that such has already happened in the federal government's response to urban problems over the past twenty years.

These have been years of improvisation, and probing. On balance, they have been constructive. But neither in scale nor impact have they caught up with the dimensions and force of the nation's urban trends and developing problems.

The time has come to move from improvisation over a wide front, and in sometimes contrary directions, to an effort

- a) which is aimed at selected problems of transcending importance;
- b) which is of a scale large enough to make a difference;
- c) which is not dissipated by conflicting policies and administrative arrangements;

- d) which offer powerful incentives to state, local and private initiative, and thereby move toward a "steady state" of continuous problem-solving;
- e) which begin to erase the public's skepticism -- its growing feeling that public programs are not to be taken seriously, that more is promised than will ever be delivered.

The Task Force believes that the first priorities for public action in urban America are related to the growing disparity between city and suburb. - A disparity which is expressed in the segregation between white and black, the gap between income in central city and in suburb, the uneven economic growth in our metropolitan areas, and in our capacity for response to the problems of central cities.

Today too many of our central cities have become the political jurisdictions and geographic areas in which accident, design and even progress have housed an inordinately high proportion of our problem people and an outsized share of our problems of public policy.

The Task Force on cities decided early in its deliberations to focus on these urban disparities.

We have identified two major approaches. The first is a straightforward discussion of urban segregation by race and income and some recommendations intended to alleviate its effects. The second involves a series of recommendations - some modest, some sweeping - intended to increase sharply our ability to deal with urban problems creatively, responsively, and on a larger scale than is presently possible.

We also have found it convenient to add three smaller sections to our report; on innovation, the model cities program, and an agenda for future study.

While we recommend that Federal action in these areas be altered, refocused and expanded, we admit two general caveats.

1. That our knowledge of how to deal with urban problems both physical and human is still limited. That a period of intensive and well-managed experimentation is a necessary first step in any large scale strategy for altering the pattern of urban development.

2. While we believe that the sorts of programs we are recommending should have the highest national priority, we recognize how politically and practically difficult it is to spend a larger portion of our resources on the urban poor and the central cities. This is true fundamentally because the present system of urban development works quite well for most people. Most Americans are happy in suburbs, they have done well in the system, and they look forward to doing better. Our report focuses on the disaffected and they are few. Their potential impact on American society, however, is enormous.