

STATEMENT
ATLANTA URBAN COALITION STEERING COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 29, 1967

During the last two decades accelerated migration from the farms, vastly increased living standards, the automobile, and other social and economic factors have changed our nation from rural to urban. Three-fourths of America's 200 million citizens now live in cities.

This rapid urbanization is unparalleled in any nation in world history. And the problems forced upon communities unprepared for this dramatic change is likewise unmatched in the development of national populations.

For ten years or more economists, sociologists, political scientists, and others have urged action by local, state and federal governments to plan and implement programs to meet this changing environment.

In urban areas local governments possessed neither the fiscal nor human resources in sufficient quantity and quality to do more than brace the dike against the on-rushing tide.

State government turned a deaf ear.

The federal government expressed concern, established some promising programs and formed a new Department of Housing and Urban Development to deal with city problems. But the Congress in too many instances failed to register the sense of urgency the urban crises demand, with an apparent unawareness of the critical dimensions of the problem, the nation's resources have been allocated to the race for space, agricultural supports and defense - but little to the needs of the cities.

The result is now a tragic chapter in American history. Riots, racial disturbances, civil disobedience in city after city throughout all parts of the country have cast a lasting imprint of inaction and indifference.

And in each troubled area the story is the same: Poor people. Lack of job skills. Unemployment. Unsound housing. Inadequate parks, schools. Absence of realistic municipal services. Lack of motivation. Loss of faith and of hope.

What can be done?

Nothing short of a total commitment of all community resources and a reassessment of priorities by our national government can produce results

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on a scale large enough to sufficiently change the direction of our cities.

It isn't enough that we have a city government of concern and compassion for the problems of the poor and disadvantaged. This same concern and compassion must be felt by business and by labor, by education and by our religious institutions and our civil rights leadership.

The necessity for cooperation and coordination of resources has been recognized by leaders of these sectors of our environment at the national level. As a result an Urban Coalition has been formed to seek ways to mobilize the unused resources throughout the urban areas of the nation and to do battle with urban blight.

The Steering Committee of the national Urban Coalition has called upon our businessmen, our churchmen, our educators and our labor unions to join with our mayors and public officials to develop and implement programs which will provide jobs, decent housing, education and a better life for those trapped in the current of the urban crises.

The Coalition met in an emergency convocation and adopted a statement of principles of great promise. It called upon local government, business, labor, religion and civil rights groups to create counterpart local coalitions to support and supplement this declaration of principles.

We believe the very essence of success of the national Urban Coalition lies in the development of strong local coalitions.

Past and present efforts in Atlanta to build a great city and to meet the needs of urban growth have resulted directly from an unstructured coalition of leadership in all areas of community life.

We believe our chances for continued and expanded successes can be made possible only through mobilization and full utilization of all resources available to us.

We, therefore, pledge ourselves to work together in an Atlanta Urban Coalition for the betterment of our community, and urge all groups and organizations to join us in our efforts.

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We further endorse the declaration of principles of the national Coalition and pledge to lend our talents and our labors to their fulfillment.

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Mayor of Atlanta

Al Bows, Vice President
Atlanta Chamber of Commerce

Robert J. Butler, President
Atlanta Labor Council

Dr. John W. Letson
Superintendent
Atlanta Public Schools

Dr. Harmon Moore, Executive Director
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Erwin Stevens, President
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