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Emergency Convocation: The Urban Coalition

Washington, D. C.
August 24, 1967
The Shoreham Hotel

Steering Committee

Co-Chairmen:
Andrew Heiskell
A. Philip Randolph

I. W. Abel
President, United Steelworkers
Pittsburgh

The Honorable Ivan Allen, Jr.
Mayor of Atlanta

Arnold Aronson
Executive Secretary, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Washington, D.C.

Roy Ash
President, Litton Industries
Beverly Hills

The Honorable Joseph M. Barr
Mayor of Pittsburgh
President, U. S. Conference of Mayors

The Honorable Jerome P. Cavanagh
Mayor of Detroit

Frederick J. Close
Chairman of the Board, Aluminum Company of America
Pittsburgh

The Honorable John F. Collins
Mayor of Boston

The Honorable Richard J. Daley
Mayor of Chicago

The Most Rev. John F. Dearden
Archbishop of Detroit

Gilbert W. Fitzhugh
President, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company
New York

Dr. Arthur Flemming
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President, National Council of Churches
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Henry Ford II
Chairman, Ford Motor Company
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The Honorable Milton Graham
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Andrew Heiskell
Chairman of the Board, Time, Inc.
Chairman, Urban America Inc.
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Joseph D. Keenan
Secretary, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Washington, D.C.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Atlanta

The Honorable John V. Lindsay
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Columbus (Indiana)

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Walter Reuther
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David Rockefeller
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President, The Rouse Company
President, Urban America Inc.
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Rabbi Jacob P. Rudin
President, Synagogue Council of America
New York

Theodore Schlesinger
President, Allied Stores Corporation
New York

Asa T. Spaulding
President, North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company
Durham

David Sullivan
President, Building Service Employees International Union
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable James H. J. Tate
Mayor of Philadelphia
President, National League of Cities

John Wheeler
President, Southern Regional Council
President, Mechanics and Farmers Bank
Durham

Roy Wilkins
Executive Director, National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People
New York

Whitney Young, Jr.
Executive Director, National Urban League
New York



On August 24, 1967, 1,200 leaders of American life met in Washington at an Emergency Convocation called by the Urban Coalition. The Coalition, representing business and the professions, organized labor, religion, civil rights groups, and local government, was established July 31 in response to the urgent need for action in behalf of the nation's cities.

This report includes the Statement of Principles, Goals, and Commitments ratified by the participants of the convocation. Its text follows the opening remarks of Andrew Heiskell, co-chairman of the convocation. The Statement was read by Co-Chairman A. Philip Randolph.

Following the Statement are the keynote address by Mayor John V. Lindsay and responses by Bishop John E. Hines, Roy Wilkins, Henry Ford II, George Meany, Whitney Young Jr., Joseph D. Keenan, David Rockefeller, and Walter Reuther. Also included is the text of a telegram by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

In this room, at this convocation of the Urban Coalition, the leadership of religion, business, unions, local government and the civil rights organizations is meeting to make a major commitment. We are here to commit ourselves publicly to an all-out effort on the part of each one of us individually and, more importantly, of all of us collectively, to turn law and principle into reality, to bring equality of opportunity to every one of our citizens.

We are here because we know that anything less will mean disaster for our cities.

But we must also be honest with ourselves, as well as our fellow citizens, by committing ourselves, not for the season, or the year, but for years to come. For even with the greatest concerted effort it will take years to reach our goal.

We are here, representing many aspects of our society, because we know that the problem is too vast and complex to be resolved by any one sector. Our joint presence is testimony to that realization.

While we are here to seek economic solutions we know also that many of the answers lie in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

We are here to determine how we can assist our various governments, many of whose inadequacies are in part the result of our indifference.

We ask ourselves how free enterprise can better participate in the social process. Not only because it should but because, surely, it stands to be the first victim of the failure of that process.

We ask ourselves not only whether the unions are playing the proper role in maximizing employment opportunities but also whether they could play a new and invaluable role in the chain of communications necessary to this survival of the city.

We ask ourselves whether our legislators know and care about the plight of our cities. For though this convocation is addressing itself to the future of our underprivileged it is in a deeper sense dealing with the future of urban America. We believe that the crisis of our cities requires a commitment of national resources

equal to the dimensions of the problems we face. This commitment is in truth an investment in the future of our society. The failure to move on urban problems is not only socially disastrous but economically unsound. Each year of delay in funding programs will inexorably require enormously greater expenditures in the future.

Mainly we ask for a higher level of imagination, for the ability to think in terms of the future rather than the past.

Of course money is needed—much money over the years.

But we also seek other goals:

Governments that are responsive to their peoples rather than mired in their vast bureaucracies.

Businessmen who recognize that in the long term their profit statements can only be healthy by reflecting a healthy society.

And, most importantly, civic leaders who feel and care. Our commitment must clearly demonstrate our belief in social progress and true equality of opportunity for every citizen. Just as there is a growing gap between the most underdeveloped nations and our western world, so there is a growing gap between an underprivileged minority of our citizens and the vast bulk of our affluent society.

The goal of this Urban Coalition is to make clear to the nation the imperative need of the task ahead and the priorities the country must set for itself in order to achieve its goals.

Statement of Principles, Goals, and Commitments Emergency Convocation: The Urban Coalition

Introduced by A. Philip Randolph

We are experiencing our third summer of widespread civil disorder. In 1965, it was Harlem, and the disaster of Watts. In 1966, it was the Hough area of Cleveland, Omaha, Atlanta, Dayton, San Francisco and 24 other cities. This summer, Newark and Detroit were only the most tragic of 80 explosions of violence in the streets.

Confronted by these catastrophic events, we, as representatives of business, labor, religion, civil rights, and local government have joined in this convocation to create a sense of national urgency on the need for positive action for all the people of our cities.

We are united in the following convictions:

We believe the tangible effects of the urban riots in terms of death, injury, and property damage, horrifying though they are, are less to be feared than the intangible damage to men's minds.

We believe it is the government's duty to maintain law and order.

We believe that our thoughts and actions should be directed to the deep-rooted and historic problems of the cities.

We believe that we, as a nation, must clearly and positively demonstrate our belief that justice, social progress, and equality of opportunity are rights of every citizen.

We believe the American people and the Congress must reorder national priorities, with a commitment of resources equal to the magnitude of the problems we face. The crisis requires a new dimension of effort in both the public and private sectors, working together to provide jobs, housing, education, and the other needs of our cities.

We believe the Congress must move without delay on urban programs. The country can wait no longer for measures that have too long been denied the people of the cities and the nation as a whole—additional civil rights legislation, adequately funded model cities, anti-poverty, housing, education, and job-training programs, and a host of others.

We believe the private sector of America must directly and vigorously involve itself in the crisis of the cities by a commitment to investment, job-training, and hiring, and all that is necessary to the full enjoyment of the free enterprise system—and also to its survival.

We believe the sickness of the cities, including civic disorder within them, is the responsibility of the whole of America. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every American to join in the creation of a new political, social, economic, and moral climate that will make possible the breaking of the vicious cycle of the ghetto. Efforts must be made to insure the broadest possible opportunity for all citizens and groups, including those in the ghetto, to participate fully in shaping and directing the society of which they are a part.

This convocation calls upon the nation to end once and for all the shame of poverty amid general affluence. Government and business must accept responsibility to provide all Americans with opportunity to earn an adequate income. Private industry must greatly accelerate its efforts to recruit, train, and hire the hard-core unemployed. When the private sector is unable to provide employment to those who are both able and willing to work, then in a free society the

government must of necessity assume the responsibility and act as the employer of last resort or must assure adequate income levels for those who are unable to work.

Emergency Work Program

This convocation calls upon the federal government to develop an emergency work program to provide jobs and new training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed consistent with the following principles:

—The federal government must enlist the cooperation of government at all levels and of private industry to assure that meaningful, productive work is available to everyone willing and able to work.

—To create socially useful jobs, the emergency work program should concentrate on the huge backlog of employment needs in parks, streets, slums, countryside, schools, colleges, libraries, and hospitals. To this end an emergency work program should be initiated and should have as its first goal putting at least one million of the presently unemployed into productive work at the earliest possible moment.

—The program must provide meaningful jobs—not dead-end, make work projects—so that the employment experience gained adds to the capabilities and broadens the opportunities of the employees to become productive members of the permanent work force of our nation.

—Basic education, training, and counseling must be an integral part of the program to assure extended opportunities for upward job mobility and to improve employee productivity. Funds for training, education, and counseling should be made available to private industry as well as to public and private nonprofit agencies.

—Funds for employment should be made available to local and state governments, nonprofit institutions, and federal agencies able to demonstrate their ability to use labor productively without reducing existing levels of employment or undercutting existing labor standards or wages which prevail for comparable work or services in the area but are not less than the federal minimum wage.

—Such a program should seek to qualify new employees to become part of the regular work force and that normal performance standards are met.

—The operation of the program should be keyed to specific, localized unemployment problems and focused initially on those areas where the need is most apparent.

Private Employment, Assistance and Investment

All representatives of the private sector in this Urban Coalition decisively commit themselves to assist the deprived among us to achieve full participation in the economy as self-supporting citizens. We pledge full-scale private endeavor through creative job-training and employment, managerial assistance, and basic investment in all phases of urban development.

The Honorable John V. Lindsay

We meet today not to express concern, though we care deeply.

We meet not to debate, though we seek solutions.

We meet today to formulate action.

The seeds for today's meeting were planted some nine months ago when the late Stephen Currier, as president of Urban America, sought new ways to improve the life of our cities. Steve Currier's deep personal concern resulted in a meeting with 15 mayors from across the nation to discuss the development of a strategy to increase the national commitment to solving city problems. That meeting was held last January.

Its major recommendation was for the formation of an Urban Coalition composed of leaders from business, labor, religion, and civil rights who would join with the mayors to raise a national voice on behalf of the cities.

Today's meeting is the culmination of that process. That coalition must now be forged.

Our task is not to recount the tragedy of urban violence or to deplore its causes. Our message to the nation is not a new one. We shall let others lead the nation in rhetoric. Our mission is straightforward:

We are the beginnings of a national coalition of those with a stake in the city and its people. We must have the will to act.

If words have failed to create a national awareness about the agony of an urban slum, they have too often succeeded in arousing false hopes and unfulfilled expectations. Many new programs have been oversold. Some have been offered as the means of ending poverty, wiping out slums, or curing illiteracy. We routinely are dazzled by the trappings of new programs and then disappointed by their performance.

When these claims are followed by increased urban violence, much of America concludes that the programs "just don't work" and "just don't matter." But the poor, whose daily lives are left unchanged, are frustrated anew by more empty promises.

Perhaps this coalition must demand first a new atmosphere of candor. We must hold each program up against the yardstick of the awesome need for jobs, for homes, and for classrooms. We must no longer promise cures in months when we know treatment will take years or even some decades.

In short, we must close the gap between promise and performance.

For the problems have their roots deep in our national history and the tide is still running against us in the cities. For fifty years this nation has witnessed a mass migration of poor, uneducated and unskilled Negroes from the rural South to the cities of the North. In the past 15 years alone, five million Negroes have followed this well-worn trail.

In a similar period, over four million Spanish-speaking migrants from Puerto Rico, Mexico and Cuba have become a part of this nation—in New York, of course, but also in Florida, Texas and California.

And every year the ghettos grow by another half million people.

The problems caused by this growth are not issues for partisan political advantage, nor the responsibility of any single administration. These are truly national

problems, from which no city, no state and no citizen can escape.

This coalition consists of outstanding citizens from all walks of life. We can take pride in our efforts to improve the cities. But few of us, I fear, have worked long enough and hard enough.

Few of us have accepted personal responsibility for urban progress and have pursued it vigorously in business, social and political endeavors.

We must translate the present urban crisis into immediate and personal terms.

We must perceive its consequences within a national perspective.

Simply stated, the system which has worked so well for most of our citizens is failing the poor. We in this room have an enormous stake in free enterprise and representative government—the very principles threatened by this crisis. For millions of Americans have no real stake in the present social order and economic system.

The people in the ghetto have found barriers to decent housing, to union membership, and to corporate employment. They often are members of a broken family and almost always the product of an inferior school system. For them, the promise of American affluence is as close as a television set and as remote as 100 years of poverty and prejudices can achieve.

Every city in this nation is crowded with the despairing and the disaffected. They are not fighting a man, a program, or a symbol. They are challenging a system and a society which has failed to respond to their needs.

In the past, this society has proved adaptable to the most severe pressures, internal and external, depression and war. Today we again are asked to fashion a response to a comparable national emergency. Again, we look first to the private sector to demonstrate its ability and willingness to lead in a time of national crisis; to serve the nation by meeting the employment and capital needs of the ghetto.

Only the concerted action of the advantaged Americans, beginning with those in this room, can make this happen.

It will require sacrifices in dollars and in comfort.

It will require each of us to contribute to the Urban Coalition in our individual and institutional capacities.

This coalition offers no panaceas. Our Statement of Principles proposes no simple solutions. But it commits each of us to action.

This coalition must mobilize itself to tap unused resources throughout the community:

—Mayors must establish direct communication with ghetto residents—to bring them into the mainstream of American life. We should take as our special mandate the seeking out of those sources of tension—those youths under 25 who possess the power to spark either creative change or fiery holocaust.

The alternatives to a massive and concerted drive by the private sector are clear. They include the burden of wasted human and physical potential, the deterioration of the healthy environment basic to the successful operation of any business, and the dangers of permanent alienation from our society of millions of citizens.

We propose to initiate an all-out attack on the unemployment problem through the following steps:

—In cooperation with government, to move systematically and directly into the ghettos and barrios to seek out the unemployed and underemployed and enlist them in basic and positive private training and employment programs. We will re-evaluate our current testing procedures and employment standards so as to modify or eliminate those practices and requirements that unnecessarily bar many persons from gainful employment by business or access to union membership.

—To create a closer relationship between private employers and public training and emergency employment programs to widen career opportunities for our disadvantaged citizens. To this end, we will proceed immediately to promote "Earn and Learn Centers" in depressed urban areas that might well be the joint venture of business, labor and local government.

—To develop new training and related programs to facilitate the early entry of under-qualified persons into industrial and commercial employment.

—To develop large-scale programs to motivate the young to continue their education. Working closely with educators, we will redouble our efforts to provide part-time employment, training, and other incentives for young men and women. We also pledge our active support to making quality education readily accessible to deprived as well as advantaged young people.

—To expand on-the-job training programs to enhance the career advancement prospects of all employees, with particular emphasis on those who now must work at the lowest level of job classifications because of educational and skill deficiencies.

We pledge to mobilize the managerial resources and experience of the private sector in every way possible. We will expand part-time and full-time assistance to small business development. We will strive to help residents of these areas both to raise their level of managerial know-how and to obtain private and public investment funds for development. We will work more closely with public agencies to assist in the management of public projects. We will encourage more leaders in the private sector to get directly and personally involved in urban problems so that they may gain a deeper understanding of these problems and be of greater assistance.

We pledge our best efforts to develop means by which major private investment may be attracted to the renovation of deteriorating neighborhoods in our cities. We will explore and encourage governmental incentives to expedite private investment. We will develop new methods of combining investment and managerial assistance so that the residents may achieve a leadership position in the development of their areas.

Housing, Reconstruction, and Education

This convocation calls upon the nation to take bold and immediate action to fulfill the national need to provide "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family" with guarantees of

equal access to all housing, new and existing. The Urban Coalition shall, as its next order of business, address itself to the development of a broad program of urban reconstruction and advocacy of appropriate public and private action to move toward these objectives, including the goal of rehabilitation and construction of at least a million housing units for lower-income families annually.

This convocation calls upon the nation to create educational programs that will equip all young Americans for full and productive participation in our society to the full potential of their abilities. This will require concentrated compensatory programs to equalize opportunities for achievement. Early childhood education must be made universal. Work and study programs must be greatly expanded to enlist those young people who now drop out of school. Financial barriers that now deny to youngsters from low-income families the opportunity for higher education must be eliminated. Current programs must be increased sufficiently to wipe out adult illiteracy within five years.

This convocation calls upon local government, business, labor, religions, and civil rights groups to create counterpart local coalitions where they do not exist to support and supplement this declaration of principles.

This convocation calls upon all Americans to apply the same determination to these programs that they have to past emergencies. We are confident that, given this commitment, our society has the ingenuity to allocate its resources and devise the techniques necessary to rebuild cities and still meet our other national obligations without impairing our financial integrity. Out of past emergencies, we have drawn strength and progress. Out of the present urban crisis we can build cities that are places, not of disorder and despair, but of hope and opportunity. The task we set for ourselves will not be easy, but the needs are massive and urgent, and the hour is late. We pledge ourselves to this goal for as long as it takes to accomplish it. We ask the help of the Congress and the Nation.

- Labor must break down antiquated and artificial barriers to apprenticeship and membership. The skills which have been long developed and closely guarded must be passed to those who lack the means to earn a livelihood.
- Business must undertake an aggressive campaign to recruit and train the unemployed and underemployed. We need affirmative programs, with new employment standards, more flexible testing procedures and new job classifications.
- Religious leaders must support the efforts of the central city poor, and not be content with a conscientious—yet often theoretical—concern for their woes. Our churches must bring together the despairing slum-dweller with the affluent suburbanite—bridging the critical geographic and economic gap which remains unaffected by any governmental program.

All of this implies a personal will to act on the part of each of us. We must seek the same will in the nation at large. Whatever one might think of the competing demands on the nation's resources and attention, it is clear by any standard that urban needs are being short-changed. The riots receive more than their fair share of press coverage, but programs aimed at their causes are slighted. They are the first priority of congressional investigations, but not of congressional legislation.

We will not change the stark realities of ghetto life by merely increasing the appropriations of present urban programs. No doubt this is necessary. But we must have new and bolder steps.

The people of the ghetto, based on my experience, want visible signs of change—tangible proof that this nation views the urban crisis with a sense of urgency and is doing something about it.

This coalition proposes an Emergency Work Program with the creation of one million jobs for the presently unemployed.

This alone will not solve our urban crisis.

It alone will not end the rioting.

But it will be a symbol of good faith by the Congress and the Administration—and, therefore, by the nation—that we intend to act. Such a program must be the first step in a series of innovative, massive, urban measures.

This coalition has committed itself, as its next order of business, to the development of a broad program of urban reconstruction. This will mean a vastly stepped-up program of housing and public facilities construction.

Much of this must be done by the private sector, with appropriate governmental incentives.

We have issued a call for private investment in the ghetto. Much can be accomplished on a voluntary basis. But we must also develop a broad new program which will make it economically attractive for businesses to locate in the ghetto, just as we have made it lucrative for them to enter certain foreign markets. Only governmental incentives can stimulate the necessary level of private ghetto investment.

We need only look at the streets of urban America to get a sense of the need for programmatic innovation.

We are speaking of a national emergency as serious as any we have faced in world affairs.

It has reached the point where we must respond accordingly. Let us rise above the arena of partisanship and sectionalism. Let us all—Republicans and Democrats, from North and South alike—agree on the need for immediate action. And let us together take the necessary steps.

Some say that we are powerful enough to meet our pressing urban needs without reducing our other commitments—national, international and interterrestrial.

If that is true, let's do it.

Let's meet the challenge to our urban civilization honestly and forthrightly, with programs strong enough to match the magnitude of our problems.

Our international commitments should not be allowed to weaken our resolve at home. If our defense commitment, our commitment to space, or any other commitment made before our urban areas were beset by agony are blocking a vigorous effort to end those agonies, those commitments should be reassessed.

Our priorities, as I and other Mayors have argued, should be reordered.

It is possible that this country will take a different course—that a reaction will set in across this nation not only against the lawless hundreds, but against the law-abiding thousands as well. Progressive measures might be cut back and denied to avoid the risk of rewards for the rioters. This country might take that vengeful course.

But when vengeance is done, the slums will still be with us. They will be no less fetid, depressing and explosive than they were before. The only change will be that with each passing month, all of it will be worse—more festering, more inflamed, and infinitely more perilous.

My belief—and I think it is shared by the mayors of this country—is that a national policy of retribution will not curb rioting.

But it could cripple those of us who are charged with the responsibility for the cities where rioting has broken out—or can erupt at any time.

In the years ahead, this meeting may be evaluated on our response to the gravest domestic challenge since the Great Depression of the Thirties.

Will it be said that we lacked the skills to solve our problems?

I think not.

Will it be said that we lacked the resources?

Of course not. It can only be said that we lacked the will.

But do we?

To respond effectively, I must—to employ a verb I have urged upon others—review my own rhetoric:

For what I have said so far lacks immediacy.

It has not been specific.

It has not answered the questions that all of you would like to ask. One might be:

"What do you want us to do?"

Or: "What can we do to help?"

Or, more pragmatically, "What is this coalition all about?"

I think that this gathering, this coalition, one possessing the capacity to influence, persuade and govern millions, should begin by thinking in terms of one.

One man. One woman. One child. One job. One home.

One human element of the environment we call a ghetto or slum.

I hope that you take everything that I have said, everything that you have read, everything you have seen, and everything you will hear at this conference and apply it to one human being.

I'd like you to find that individual and make it your task to bring him out of the slums—to make him part of the other America, the one all of us live in.

Specifically, I suggest that as the nation's leaders in business, in labor, religion and education, you can enable every division, every chapter, every parish and every affiliate, to undertake that task.

It's not going to be easy. You'll have to find him. And what you find may not be to your liking. He may be illiterate. He may be indifferent or antagonistic. But you can try, and my city—and I believe this can be said of any city—will do everything in its power to help you.

For what we are talking about is more than providing jobs; we are talking about the introduction to our affluent society of those who have been excluded from it because we simply haven't taken the trouble to do the hard, unrewarding work that is needed to overcome that exclusion.

I'm not talking about enlisting a cab driver who lives in a house with a clipped lawn and a new car in a training program for tractor drivers. I'm talking about the bedrock poor, whether they live in Harlem or in Appalachia, and what I'm recommending is an intensive, 24-hour program, carried on for five days a week and, if necessary, a full seven.

For the harsh fact is that if we truly want to conquer poverty in this country, we're going to have to teach people to read and write . . .

To learn what bus will get them to work . . .

To assure them that their children will be cared for during working hours . . .

And to encourage and inspire them so that they can overcome the very real and poignant burdens that the poor undertake when they strive to break out of poverty.

In any event, they need our help, and we cannot wait for them to ask.

Each corporation, each labor union, must begin now—to employ the unemployable, to train them, to work with them night and day, to move them forward. This is our responsibility.

If each of you would initiate the program I have suggested—urging and persuading each one of your jurisdictions to do what I have outlined—we could accomplish what no one has accomplished; we could conquer the social and economic apartheid that exists in our nation.

Halting violence in the streets cures only a symptom. Our larger interest should be in restoring health and pride to those who abhor the riots, but who need our help if they are to take their place in an affluent America. To do that, they need encouragement, they need jobs, they need recognition, they need all the elements of pride.

Pride may open the doors that have been closed to us by the ghettos.

It works both ways, you know; when we despair about our ghettos because we have despised and discriminated against them, we should consider that in

the slums it is we who are excluded and hated—and for reasons perhaps better than ours.

But if the power gathered together in the nation's capital today can and will devote its talents, intellect and conscience to a dispersal of the concept of oneness, then this coalition will have justified its title as well as the hopes that its sponsors have placed in it.

For this is an historic moment. Never before in our nation's past has such a broad and powerful group of private citizens joined cause on an issue of public concern. We must make certain that the resources represented here today are mobilized for the betterment of our cities.

It would be all too easy for this coalition to become just another well-intentioned, crisis-inspired, one-day attempt to spark urban change. We should be realistic about what can be accomplished here. We cannot solve anything today. But we can make a beginning.

We must deliberately set in motion the undramatic but essential machinery which can carry our commitment forward beyond this meeting. We shall need formal organization, dedicated leadership, and financial support.

We immediately should formulate specific guidelines which can be followed by every business in the land to implement the pledges of the private sector as proposed in the Statement of Principles. We must provide technical assistance and an information clearing-house that can make this possible.

We must organize vehicles for change in local communities which will adopt and act upon the goals of this coalition. One promising approach is the formation of local coalitions in cities and regions throughout the country, each with a membership that parallels our own. These coalitions can marshal a community's resources to do battle with urban blight.

We must consider ways and means of establishing regular communication with the Administration, the Congress, governors and state legislatures. We should be equally ready to support government officials when they lead on urban problems and to prod them when they fail to act. All of this must be a major topic of our deliberations this afternoon.

This coalition must strive for a new unity. We must transcend our geographic, economic, and social differences and unite around our common cause. For if today we can set in motion a new force for urban change, then this convocation will mark the renewal of hope for the American city.

More than ever before the choice is ours.

More than ever before the choice must be made here and now.

The Right Reverend John E. Hines

It is with genuine reluctance that I attempt to speak as a representative of the "religious community" to the critical and, I believe, decisive issues made painfully unforgettable in the shock and horror and loss of a rioting people in the cities of this land. I am reluctant because no one person can speak for the so-called religious sector or community—a description which, incidentally, I cannot defend.

I am reluctant because the image of the churches, at least in the years past, too often has been one of a moral and spiritual bastion from which, from time to time, have been issued divine directives and ethical judgments to which men and women have been called to conform or run the risk of being irretrievably lost. While this is a caricature of the churches and will be recognized as such by people of a broad understanding, like all caricatures there is enough truth showing to prove a point. And that point is not reassuring.

I am reluctant because mere human beings seem entitled to convincing answers to the dilemmas and frustrations and agonies of people imprisoned by desperate circumstances from a channel of God's mighty intervention in His world of men, in justice, love and reconciliation—which channel historically the churches have claimed to be—and I am reluctant because we of the churches have demonstrated that we do not have the answers, at least not in the form of discernible specifics, to alleviate the basic hopelessness, the despair of becoming, the powerlessness, and the loss of human dignity which are clearly the root of the Negro's rebellious protestations and subsequent violence.

No, I am afraid that we have unwittingly, perhaps, demonstrated that we are part of the problem inasmuch as the sickness of our society is our sickness, too. And our brokenness, highlighted by our fears for our own survival, for our institutional status, our insularity from the suffering and hostility of so many members of the human family, betrays the fact that, far from being equipped to exercise the role of the physician to the illness of mankind, we should be sensitive to the biblical injunction, "Physician, heal thyself!"

Let us be honest and acknowledge that we are here primarily because we have been shocked and bewildered by the horror that is Watts and Newark and Detroit and Milwaukee and New Haven and other urban centers of a nation whose forefathers fought for the right of self-determination, for the rights and dignity of every human being, for freedom under law, for deliverance from discrimination and for a dream which for nearly two hundred years now has been a torch to which the oppressed and shackled, in their darkness, could look up in hope. We are here because violence has rudely shattered our complacency about something very basic, something regrettably, we have taken for granted.

Let us be clear that lawlessness and violence are frightfully destructive and are not to be condoned as such. But let us be equally aware that men can become prisoners of the law unjustly, for the process of law which is abused into an instrument of oppression by insensitive men of power, thus rigidly prohibiting the rightful process of change which could bring heal-

Bishop Hines represented the National Council of Churches.

ing to the body sores and spiritual cancers that affect humankind, soon faces the rude awakening, namely, that desperate and despairing human beings will revolt against the tyrannous character of such law, inasmuch as they have no other recourse open to them by which their wrongs can be redressed. The beneficiaries of order and domestic tranquility must understand this, indeed must learn to deal sympathetically and constructively with it without hypocrisy, without illusion, and without pretense, and to respond to the violence of frustrated hopelessness. For the application of increased restrictive power only is to compound the root causes of alienation, abandon the responsible role of reconciliation and destroy the God-given bonds of relatedness by which men belong to each other inseparably, irrevocably.

Secretary General U Thant has said, "The truth, the central stupendous truth about developed countries today is that they can have—in anything but the shortest run—the kind and scale of resources they decide to have. . . . It is no longer resources that limit decisions. It is the decision that makes the resources. This is the fundamental revolutionary change—perhaps the most revolutionary mankind has ever known." I believe those words are accurate. I believe their truth places a moral question of unprecedented dimensions before the conscience of America. It is no longer a question of whether we shall do a few good things for the victims of a kind of givenness composed of powerlessness and poverty and hunger and rats and illiteracy and unemployment and second-class citizenship and hopelessness so deep it can find expression only through riots and destruction. The question now is: Shall we mobilize our capacity for wiping these shameful conditions off the face of this nation and off the face of this planet or shall we unwisely and regrettably choose other priorities? For the first time in history we are called to leadership and responsibility in the possession of the capacity to eliminate the basic conditions themselves.

In December, 1966, the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. adopted the following resolution:

"Whereas, we recognize that millions of persons are living without access to an equitable share of our nation's abundance in terms of adequate housing, education and job training employment, as well as health and medical services; and

"Whereas billions of dollars of our nation's economic resources and a concentration of manpower resources are required to establish full equality of opportunity; and

"Whereas our present set of national economic priorities of defense, space exploration and the production of super-sonic air transport must not be allowed to impede the achievement of social justice for people; therefore be it

"Resolved, that we, the General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., call upon the President and the Congress of the United States to use our nation's economic resources so as to give the highest priority to programs designed to provide for full equality of opportunity."

We need the kind of government programs which reflect a massive change in national priorities and we need the kind of funding that will prevent these programs from becoming empty promises only. The execu-

tive and the legislative branches of our government have a clear responsibility. But unless the private sector similarly changes its own priorities, the task will not be accomplished. Recognition of ghetto community organizations as legitimate agents of the poor, costly motivational and training programs for the unemployed and the underemployed, location of manufacturing plants where jobs are needed, upward mobility for our Negro brethren—all these are overdue. The religious institutions are beginning to awake a little bit to their obligation to invest the large sums in their care according to the prime criterion of responsibility to the total community and all of its citizens.

It would be refreshing if this convocation, facing its responsibility seriously as I know it will, would be emphatic and unequivocal about the right of the poor to power, and to an effective voice in the decisions that affect their destiny. The more we permit the dilution of the principle of "maximum feasible participation," even in a gathering such as this, or, more importantly, in legislation designed to aid the poverty-ridden sector of this country, the less credible we appear to men and women struggling in their misery—and the less likely we are to build our part of a bridge between the alienations. The basic dignity of man depends on and demands of us a new style of operation in which we confess our lack of answers and acknowledge our lack of right to prescribe what is good for our brothers! For the best of well-intentioned programs is doomed to failure if it does not from the outset involve those whom it would benefit!

Someone has suggested that the tremendous job that stands before us depends almost entirely upon two factors: men and money. His point, in part, is that enormous numbers of people must be recruited to do a tremendous variety of jobs simultaneously; there can be no doubt about that. What is less distinguishable is that any amount of money can make the decisive difference. What Detroit, for example, seems to be telling us is that poverty is more a state of mind than a state of material want. This is what the great prophets of the biblical tradition also have said.

What makes poor people poor, most of them also black, as Mr. Roy Wilkins has reminded us, is a kind of anguished culture that is almost impossible for people outside to comprehend. To which the editor of *Commonweal* adds, "The anguished culture refers to the fact that vast numbers of black Americans and particularly their dynamic nucleus, the youth, feel no sense of identity with this nation. Their sights were encouraged to broaden when the Supreme Court decision of school integration 13 years ago came about but the realization of identity has not accelerated apace.

Perhaps they are earning more money. Perhaps more of them have jobs. Perhaps a training for skilled posts but they do not really belong in the white man's society and that is what hurts infinitely more than whatever solace is offered by their material improvement."

What is being said is that no antipoverty program will work unless and until poverty itself is redefined and ministered to in human rather than material terms alone. Only God-filled men and women, God-filled institutions, can really help to affect this basic problem.

The religious community is slowly stirring to its enormous potential for taking part in God's creative action in society and in history. We are beginning to understand that it is only through our sharing and the pain and suffering of the dispossessed and the despairing that our own renewal can possibly come to be. This meeting itself is a sign of hope, but let us take care that it not turn out to be just another chapter in the story of hopes created and then snuffed out. For we are in a moment of passing grace that God has given us and that may never recur, and in which we are given the priceless opportunity to gather to act.

Roy Wilkins

Only two days ago John McCone testified before a Senate Committee that racial strife in America could destroy our nation. I think this says in the fewest possible words how urgent it is that we throw overboard all of our routine approaches to this problem. What is posed here is not merely the salvation of a segment of our population, as important and as valued that segment may be, but the life of the nation itself. It is proper, it seems to me, that the emphasis here, in the excellent keynote address and the mood of this Coalition, is on employment and on the correcting of the notorious inequalities that exist there; inequalities made more glaring and more intolerable by the affluence all about.

You cannot read of two-car families and three-car families and four-car families, and yachts shuttling back and forth to the corners of the earth to spend a few days on the beaches, when you have no one car, no half a car, no refrigerator, no food, and few clothes; and when receptionists tell you that the job was filled today. So the emphasis is properly on jobs. But there is an emphasis also on the slums, and on housing, on the conditions under which men live—and upon education.

And this is my particular thesis. Only after we have reeducated, revamped our educational system to take care of the needs of this submerged section of our population—a section that we have neglected and pushed to one side and forced into a development of a culture alien to our own standard of values—only until we revamp that educational system from the bottom up—not from the top down—will we be able to talk to these people and to share with them the hopes and the ideals of the America we dreamed about. The saving of the nation depends upon an appreciation of its value by all the people in the nation. If you read the history of our country and it has no meaning for you or your family, and you read the ideals of our country which are great, luminous and enduring, and

they mean something to other people but not to you, and if you read about democracy and rising upon ability while you are suppressed and held down, then you read the words and leaf through the books; you are not being educated, you are not becoming an American.

Of course, with this has to go the expansion of the opportunity once one is educated. The two go hand in hand. If you learn what democracy is and you get an opportunity to participate, the process is complete.

These are old goals to those of us who have worked in this field for so many years, not prior to this election or that election, not on behalf of this candidate or that candidate, not in response to this or that crisis but simply because we believed in the people that we were dedicated to represent. We believed in their cause and year in year out we pleaded that cause. Often it fell on deaf ears and often the responses were in crisis situations.

Forty years ago James W. Johnson, who was a diplomat and editorial writer for the New York Age, a poet and later the Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said simply, "The crusade for dignity for Negro Americans is a crusade to save black men's bodies and white men's souls." And that expression of forty years ago could be the expression over this hallway because that is still the task. Let us pray that we have not begun too late.

Henry Ford II

First, I want to endorse the Statement of Principles, Goals and Commitments of the Urban Coalition. Our country today faces its greatest internal crisis since the Civil War—a crisis which demands no less than a massive national response.

The violence sweeping American cities is both a symptom of deeper ills and a critical problem in itself. Security of person and property under law is the keystone of justice for all men. The law must therefore be enforced and violence must be suppressed firmly and quickly whenever it erupts.

Though essential, enforcement of the law is not a sufficient basis for a just society. Equal justice is possible only when the law is obeyed freely and voluntarily. When violence must be countered by violence, justice is the first victim. In the heat of street warfare and its aftermath, the innocent often suffer and the guilty often go free.

When violence gains a foothold, it breeds injustice and hatred and further violence. The gravest danger we face is that this self-generating process may go unchecked until it tears our nation apart. To break the circle, we must attack the conditions of urban life which nourish hatred and lawlessness. This means, first of all, that we must find the way for all Americans to share fully in all the freedoms and opportunities our heritage promises.

The burden of fulfilling that promise is falling more and more on the already overburdened shoulders of municipal government. But the problem is not a city problem. It is a national problem with nationwide roots and the gravest of nationwide consequences. It can be attacked successfully only by a national effort embracing all segments of our national life, including business.

The primary contribution of business, of course, is to provide genuinely equal opportunities for employment, training and promotion. Much has been done along these lines, but much remains to be done—both by business and by those unions that still restrict membership on the basis of race.

In the past few years, many companies have been seeking other ways to help resolve the urban crisis. Some have participated in urban renewal and job-training programs. Others have made their managerial talents and problem-solving skills available to city governments. That business must help is no longer in question. How business can contribute most effectively will have to be worked out experimentally. I am sure we all have much to learn. In Detroit, we have established a committee, comparable to the Urban Coalition, to develop ideas for mobilizing community resources to rebuild our city, both physically and spiritually.

We must recognize, however, that nothing we can do will provide quick answers to the root problems. We must move quickly and vigorously, but be prepared for a long, slow and painfully difficult task—a

task that will be all the longer and more painful if our impatience leads us down impractical and unrealistic paths.

Even more basic than the responsibility of business to provide equal job opportunities is its responsibility to stay in business so that it can provide jobs. No business can survive if it neglects the axioms of sound management. Business cannot hire more people than it needs, or hire people who are not qualified to do useful work, or hire people for more than their work is worth. This means that the key to equal economic opportunity is vastly expanded and improved education and training for those who now receive the least and poorest preparation for a productive life.

In this connection, I think it is essential for business, government and unions to consider how current policies and practices can be modified to make it less costly for business to hire and train poorly qualified people.

Other policies and practices which make it difficult for private industry to respond to the needs of the poor should also be reviewed. For example, outmoded building codes and union restrictions on new techniques and equipment raise building costs and often make it impossible to build low-priced housing at a profit.

Some may feel it unseemly to mention cost and profit when urgent human needs are involved. The profit motive is a powerful force. It must be maintained, and it can be used effectively to help solve the urban crisis.

This is not, however, a justification for business as usual. These are unusual times and they demand unusual efforts and unusual sacrifice from every individual and organization that has the power to help.

George Meany

We welcome this opportunity to affirm the full partnership of the AFL-CIO in the Urban Coalition and to reaffirm our support for the objectives set forth in the statement of principles, goals and commitments presented by Mr. Randolph.

In the truest sense, we have been here for a long time. We were not brought here by the riots; it might even be said that we are here in spite of the riots. The course of a free society should not and must not be swayed by criminal acts—mob violence, arson, looting and murder. Neither should it be swayed by revulsion against these acts. We apply this same standard to ourselves.

Every one of the needs set forth in the statement was long ago identified and exposed by the AFL-CIO. Every one of the measures now offered has been urged by us in the past. The difference is simply this: What we called for as necessary and proper, to assure continuing progress toward a better society, has been transformed by inadequate action into a crash program.

This is not said in recrimination, but to emphasize the wide gulf between recognition and fulfillment—between a statement of principles and their implementation.

The most eloquent words and the most sincere avowals of good intentions are meaningless in themselves. It is heartening to see in this convocation so many leaders with influence and power in every segment of American life. It is encouraging to see that they have been awakened to the deficiencies and the injustices that persist in today's affluent society, and are publicly committing themselves to their correction.

This concern, this commitment, must now be translated into action. That will be harder.

Obviously the first arena will be the Congress, where we have fought so many lonely battles. But beyond the Congress are the state and local governments, many of which have far worse records. To cite only one example: Housing is one of the most urgent needs; not just open housing, but adequate housing for low-income families. Congressional authorizations have been shockingly inadequate. Yet even more shocking is the fact that much authorized housing has not

been built, because of the apathy of local governments and the resistance within some communities.

This is one barrier that surely could not stand against the combined forces represented in this room.

Of course, as the statement rightly recognizes, the key need—more immediate than housing and all the rest—is jobs at good wages for all. We have stressed this basic truth time after time; we have related it to every phase of social progress, from civil rights to education.

And to meet this one overriding need, America must have as a matter of first priority—as this statement clearly recognizes—one million jobs in socially productive work for the presently unemployed. And America must have these jobs right now.

A sweeping, all-embracing attack on urban problems, including short-range remedies and long-range cures, was overdue long before the first rioter threw the first stone. But such an attack, as we in the AFL-CIO are painfully aware, requires the mobilization of many separate forces into many individual campaigns, large and small. The great, broad goals capture the imagination and inspire the spirit; the smaller engagements, like a clash between Army patrols, are meaner, without glamour—but completely indispensable.

In a word, we must all go forth from here, not merely with a program, but with a determination to fight for it—to fight harder for it, on every front, than ever before. And I say this, not only to those newly involved, but to the labor movement as well.

I assure you, we ask for no special dispensation as veterans. We must do more and do it better. If that determination is ingrained in all who are here today, this coalition can build the foundation for America as it ought to be.

Whitney Young Jr.

That this coalition of American leadership has come together is profoundly significant. It can be our greatest hour of hope or it can be our greatest hour of shame. What we say here is extremely important but what we do when we leave here is even more important. This meeting we hope will move us from pledge to performance, from hope into reality.

The people gathered in this room have the power, the resources, to turn this country around at this critical moment in time. The one intangible thing—only you as individuals can answer it—is whether you have the will, and whether you care.

There has been much discussion in the past few weeks and months that established Negro leadership has failed and has lost influence. Historians will point out differently. They will point out that it is a miracle that established leadership has for so long a time enjoyed the support of Negro citizens—living as they are in squalor, poverty and unemployment while still retaining their hope and faith in the society. Responsible leaders among the Negro community have not failed. We have been failed by responsible white leaders who have not responded to us.

The task that you take on will not be easy, the numbers of the oppressors continue to mount strangely enough among those who themselves are but one generation removed from welfare, who are the most callous, the most indifferent, the most unsympathetic to the plight of those who have been left behind. What is needed here is leadership. Our big enemy is still silence and indifference and apathy.

As one of my colleagues in the Urban League, Bill Berry, said, "Maybe we need a new cliché." Law and order may not be what we are talking about at all and may be a completely unrealistic concept. Hitler managed to bring about the greatest order known to men with his Storm Troopers and his Gestapo. After having accomplished that feat in bringing about order, he proceeded to use it to exterminate six million Jews. We are not after order; we are after justice. It is law and justice. Without justice we neither will have nor do we deserve order. If we can but bring ourselves to be as aroused about the inciting material and climate found in our community as we are with the inciters, then we need not worry about the inciters.

Rap Brown did not cause unemployment in the country. Rap Brown did not put Negroes in ghettos. Rap Brown did not perpetuate upon Negroes inferior education. This was done by other people in the society and it is to the other people that we must look rather than seek the excuses of the excesses of a handful of people found among Negroes. If white America with all of its power—Army, Navy, Air Force and all of the important offices in the country—have not been able to suppress the crackpots among the white society—the Klan, and all of the other people—how do you

expect us with limited power and no resources to eliminate any crackpots from our midst?

I insist that the Negro has as much right to have his extremists as anybody else. If some of you are getting upset looking at Negroes who are acting ugly, I submit to you I have been long upset looking at white people acting ugly. It is criminal to loot, to snipe. It is criminal to riot. But it is equally criminal not to hire a man because of his color, not to let him live in your neighborhood.

Finally, I stand before you as the representative of a people who have been in this country for over 400 years. A people whose sweat and toil helped build this country, whose music gave it a soul, whose architects and lawyers and doctors have made great contributions, whose bones lie across the face of this earth fighting in defense of this country and who today are dying in Vietnam at a rate far out of their proportion to the population. It is not right that in our society the greatest freedom that exists today is the freedom to die in Vietnam! If one can die in Vietnam, one must be able to live—and as people—in this country.

The Negro has said in a thousand ways that he believes in America in spite of his difficulties, his obstacles. In all of the ways I have described, time has now come for responsible, intelligent, sensitive, humane, decent human beings to say to the American Negro "I believe in you" and demonstrate it tangibly. We got ten thousand jobs yesterday in Detroit. Those jobs were there before the riots. Are we going to have to wait for riots in other cities to find jobs?

An ancient Greek scholar was once asked, "How do we achieve justice in Athens?" to which he replied, "We shall achieve justice in Athens when those who are not injured are as indignant as those who are," and so shall it be in America. Then, and only then, will we achieve justice in America: when the people in this room become as indignant as those who are actually suffering the daily indignities and humiliations the Negro people suffer. That you are here is an indication that that first step has been made. I have faith in the success of this venture.

Joseph D. Keenan

I think that one of the most significant things about the Urban Coalition and this convocation that we have called is the different elements of our society that are represented here. I am delighted at the make-up of the coalition. It represents groups which have not always seen eye to eye on many issues. And I am pleased to have business, labor and the other groups working together to help our cities and their people.

This convocation is a call for action. Calls to action are not new. But the alliance of all the different elements represented here *is* new, and very significant. I think it shows that we have reached the point of common sense in dealing with our most pressing problems. We are united in our sense of urgency. We are united in our call to Congress and to the nation to act now on our urban problems and to provide equal justice, equal opportunity and equal progress for every citizen.

For some of the segments represented here, a public commitment of the kind we are making today is a new experience. Labor welcomes their involvement. But we couple this welcome with a warning that they may expect to face the same kind of attacks from some quarters that labor has faced for so many years.

This kind of commitment is not a new experience for labor. We committed ourselves a long time ago to the job of helping to find answers to the kind of problems we're talking about today. Labor's attitudes and activities are a matter of record. We pointed out needs; we proposed ways to meet them; we recognized the need for Federal Government action to solve many of our nation's problems. And we made ourselves downright unpopular with a number of groups in our society.

But this has not deterred us. We are here today to reaffirm our commitment, and with an even greater sense of urgency. We hope that whatever opposition they may face will not deter those who are involved for the first time in this kind of commitment.

There is always opposition to calling on the government to help in solving our problems, even when they become national in scope. But these urban problems are too big and much too complex for local governments and other local groups to handle on their own.

Furthermore, the unplanned explosion of our metropolitan areas—and many of the urban problems it has generated—has crossed the boundary lines of cities, counties, and even states.

It is going to take a massive national effort to meet these problems and rebuild our urban areas—where some three-fourths of our population now lives—and provide enough jobs and training, enough decent housing, enough community facilities and enough public services to meet their needs.

The time to start this massive national effort has long since passed. The ugly events of this and recent

summers have shown tragically and forcefully that we cannot delay a moment longer.

Jobs are needed *now*. Decent housing is needed *now*. And equal access to both is needed *now*.

Yes, it will cost money. But this is an investment that is in our own self-interest. This is an investment in people. When we invest in America's people, we strengthen our nation. When we remove the barriers and help every citizen reach his highest possible level of achievement, we contribute to the well-being and progress of all of America.

Most of us lack any real concept of poverty. We are too far removed from it. We may see some of the outward signs of inequality and neglect and poverty, but most Americans don't have any real understanding of what it is like to live under those conditions.

We come home from our jobs and see in the paper that millions of our countrymen are living in poverty. We feel a tinge of sympathy, of course, but we don't fully realize what this means. Our youngsters won't go to bed hungry, or without medicine if they need it, or without decent clothes to wear to a decent school. But too many children of the poverty stricken will go to bed without these things, and—most tragically—without any hope that tomorrow will be better.

It is hard for us even to imagine the feelings of despair and of desperation that their conditions breed.

If more of us understood this better, we would have been doing more about it before now.

We can't just read about these things, and feel sorry. We have to *do* something about them. We have to become involved in changing the conditions of despair and desperation under which too many Americans exist.

If this convocation can inspire a massive involvement in ending our urban crisis, it will mark a major step toward the kind of America we want.

I say it is the *duty* of all Americans to become involved. I say it is the duty of each and every one of us in this nation to join not only in the moral commitment to equality and progress that we have made, but also in the concrete programs of action that must now begin.

David Rockefeller

If all of us here today are intensely aware of our cities and their problems, we are sure to be even more so in the future.

At present, some 140 million Americans out of a total of 200 million are classed as urban dwellers. By the year 2000—just 33 years from now—at least 280 million Americans out of about 340 million are expected to be living in urban areas. This means that our already vast facilities must be more than doubled, and it gives us very little time in which to do this.

These facts, considered in the context of the recent violence, only compound the problem. They gravely challenge those of us gathered together in this Urban Coalition to determine whether the future of our cities will hold continued misery for many or lasting promise for all. This meeting gives great hope of creating the new sense of urgency, cooperation, momentum and dedication which is so badly needed. Yet we must not forget how little we will have finally accomplished unless we swiftly transform our principles into reality.

For business and private enterprise especially, the realization of our hopes and goals will require ever-greater concern and effort. The efficient production and distribution of goods and services has always been at the heart of erasing poverty in any area, and American business can be proud of its part in the many accomplishments which have made this nation and its people the richest in the world. In the seven years between 1959 and 1966, to give a recent illustration, our dynamic economic growth helped reduce by nearly one-third the number of our citizens officially classified as living below the poverty level. Maintained prosperity and growth will continue to be the key to the eradication of the social evils that are spawned by poverty.

To sustain such growth and progress, however, it is necessary that we clearly convey our concern and determination to enable all Americans to share satisfactorily in the fabric and fruits of our society. People who lack a stake in our society are easily incited to the violence which, in turn, is a great deterrent to prosperity and therefore self-defeating. To this end, we must bring a new sense of urgency to the many problems that plague the depressed areas of our cities.

Our central cities are crucial to the economic health of our nation, and we must press aggressively to achieve the goals which have been proposed to this

Convocation for employment, education, housing, managerial assistance and basic investment.

Basic to the accomplishment of these goals must be the close personal involvement of businessmen and other leaders from the private sector. In the past, too many of us have felt that doing a good job in making our companies successful was an adequate contribution. But today, we see that we cannot leave to others direct involvement in the solution of our urban problems. The same successful managerial techniques which have been applied to our businesses must be brought to bear when dealing with our social problems. These responsibilities cannot be left solely to the public sector. For if we fail to respond promptly we can be sure these problems will only be magnified with the passing of time.

It is perhaps a sad commentary on human nature that we all too often have to wait for a crisis to give us a clear shock of recognition, but we have before us now a unique opportunity to make the best of a very disturbing situation. The task of breaking the bonds of poverty is one that must fall very heavily upon the shoulders of all of us here today. By accepting this challenge and providing positive alternatives to acts of desperation, we can help turn the displaced energy of urban disturbances into a creative force so that our cities may be able to regain their proper place as symbols of dignity and progress for all.

Walter Reuther

It has been said that the genius of a free society is its capability of achieving unity and diversity. I am very pleased to be here because, as you know, currently Mr. Ford and I are sitting on opposite sides of the table in Detroit. But on the great issues that face us and the crisis that challenges us all, I am privileged to sit on the same side of the table with Mr. Ford and to work together to find the answers.

I believe that we could agree that this convocation represents the broadest coalition of diversity that has ever been assembled in this city. But the test of our unity will not be measured by how generous and noble are the words that we utter or how pious the platitudes may be that we put together in a document—the real test is what are we going to do to take the words and to translate them into practical and tangible action as they relate to the problems that we face.

The Communists and other critics of our free society have been preaching that our free society is essentially composed of competing, conflicting and irreconcilable economic pressure groups and that we are incapable, as a free people, of rising above the loyalties to our respective pressure groups except when we respond to the total challenge of war—when we are driven by common fears and common hatreds. And the crisis before us today is essentially a testing of our beliefs and our basic faith in democratic values. Are we equal to this response because we share common hopes and common aspirations? Are we equal to a total effort in response to the challenging and rewarding purposes of peace?

The crises in our cities were not created by the disadvantaged minority who live in the ghettos.

The crises in our cities have been created by the indifference and the complacency of the great mass of Americans who have enjoyed the advantages and the increasing affluence of our society. We need to understand that the revolution of rising expectations is not a phenomenon limited to Asia and Africa and Latin America. The dynamics of that revolution are at work in America; as long as people are denied their measure of justice, they are going to struggle to get their place in our society. The tragedy of poverty in America is that it is more destructive of human values than is poverty anywhere else in the world. The poor in America are not only robbed economically, they are robbed spiritually because they are shut out of society. They are denied any sense of belonging and participating, and they are denied that measure of human worth and human dignity that only belonging to society can give a human being.

And so we need to look at the problems in the city. They are not new problems. They are problems of long standing. They are only becoming more desperate and their solution is becoming more urgent. The late Carl Sandburg, reporting a riot in the slums, wrote these words: "No slum is separate from the community. The

slum gets its revenge. These people are no longer satisfied with weasel words and insincere promises." When did he write those words? In 1919 after the Chicago race riots.

And what have we done in these years? We have been long on pious platitudes and short on practical performance. What is needed are not new promises; what is needed is the fulfillment of ancient promises. Let us not, in this hour of crisis, try to save the national conscience by noble talk about how far we have really come. Progress is a relative matter. We need to judge where we are, not from where we have come, and how much farther we must go to give substance and meaning to the concepts of human equality and equal opportunity. We need to understand that freedom is an indivisible value and that there can be no halfway house on the road to freedom and first class citizenship for every American. Let us not act in anger but in understanding, because the task before us will take a full measure of commitment, of courage and of human compassion.

The document says that we must reorder our national priorities. We must put first things first and we must then commit ourselves and our resources in a measure equal to the dimensions of the challenges we face. I believe we are at that place in our history where America must look within itself; we must say to ourselves that half-way and half-hearted measures, programs and policies of too little and too late are not equal to the challenge that we face. When we are faced with the challenges of war, no one pretends that we ought to meet that challenge by a half-way effort. And I say in this situation no less than a total, massive effort will be equal to the dimensions of the challenge that we face.

What we are doing here today ought to be the first step in the building of a grand alliance of men and women of good will, of all races, of all creeds, of all political persuasions. We need to join together in searching for rational and responsible answers in the light of reason. For if we fail, then the vacuums of our failures will be filled by the apostles of fear and hatred—white and black—and they will search for answers in the dark of night and the spirit of brotherhood will yield to the spirit of bitterness and bloodshed and we will tear asunder the fabric of our free society.

We have the resources in America to do this job. We have the technological know-how. What is lacking is the sense of national commitment and national will and a sense of national purpose and each of us must share the responsibility of helping to arouse the conscience of America to a sense of great urgency.

The hour is later perhaps than many of us realize. We must mobilize the private sectors, we must mobilize government on every level, and then we also must knock on the door of Congress and somehow we must persuade Congress to get off dead center and to move with a sense of realism and urgency in response to this crisis.

We need to move on the job fronts, on the housing fronts, on the educational fronts, and many other fronts. History will judge America in this period—not by its technical capability that enables an American astronaut

to walk safely in space—but rather by the national commitment and the sense of social and moral responsibility by which a nation commits its resources to the task of building a better society, in which justice and equality and brotherhood can make it possible for people to live as neighbors in peace, so that every American can walk safely on our streets. This, I believe, will be the test.

Let this convocation be the beginning and let us move forward to build this working alliance at every level of our society, in every community, in every neighborhood. Only as we mobilize the people of this country can we bring to bear upon the structure of our society those leverages of influence which are essential to get this nation moving. And I believe that in this effort we can help America achieve a more realistic reordering of its national priorities, a greater sense of national unity, a clear sense of national direction, and perhaps most important of all, a deeper sense of national purpose.

What is the American dream about? It's not about the volume of our gadgets. It's about building a society in which everyone can have access to the opportunities of growth and development and a sense of human fulfillment. That is the area in which we are failing.

This ought to be the beginning of mobilization of this country's people so that in this hour of testing—when the call to America is to be equalled by the call to greatness—America can be equal to that challenge.

Let us go to work for we must not fail America in this hour!

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is with the deepest sense of regret that I find I cannot be with you today as you deliberate on what is clearly the most realistic, relevant, and moral response yet to emerge to the grave domestic crisis of which we have been made so painfully aware this summer.

Sheer physical exhaustion following intensive activities in several cities over the past few months and our SCLC convention last week have caused my physician to insist that an immediate brief period of rest is imperative if I am to continue in good health.

My heart and my hopes, however, are with you today in the Emergency Convocation of this long-dreamed-of and desperately needed Urban Coalition.

One of the most impressive indications to me of the importance of the task to which you set yourselves beginning today have been the many letters and communications I have received from mayors across our nation in affirmative response to my appeal last month for a massive federal employment program. Our society can and must provide an opportunity for all of its citizens to contribute their energy and talent to the development of a meaningful life for all our people.

Recognizing that the test of the Principles, Goals, and Commitments sounded in our call for this Convocation is not so much what you say today, but what you do in the weeks and months to come, I pray sincerely that the Congress will heed your pleas and that your counterparts in cities across the nation will follow through on the commitments you make on this day.

Text of telegram read to convocation



The full proceedings of the Emergency Convocation, including workshop reports and floor discussion, will be published and distributed at an early date.

