

Phone (202) 283-4433

FOR RELEASE AFTER:
10 A.M., Saturday
April 27, 1968

CAMPUS AND CITY
Commencement Address
by Robert C. Weaver, Secretary
Department of Housing and Urban Development
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 27, 1968

SUMMARY

WHILE THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1968 HAS MADE MANY ACTIONS POSSIBLE, IT HAS MADE NOTHING INEVITABLE. It is an important first step -- to relieve overcrowded housing, to remove artificial barriers of discrimination, to make possible many efforts to improve schools and job opportunities. But it must be vigorously enforced. It demands that community leaders prepare a climate to carry it out without resort to penalties and punishment. But most of all, this Act signals the need -- now more than ever before -- for the Nation to turn its attention toward making certain that there is enough good, decent housing for all who need it, at prices they can afford to pay.

Until recently, there had been no great concern for urban problems on college campuses. Traditionally universities in urban areas were alien in their own communities. And colleges removed from large concentrations of population not only lived in, but also identified with, small, uniform communities.

But today there is a growing realization that we are an urban people. Our urban universities increasingly are communicating and cooperating with their neighbors. Suburban colleges are seriously concerned about the problems of the city.

Indeed, what is commonly identified as "the crisis of the cities" has become the domestic issue of highest priority. Thus, one need no longer take the time to justify a discussion of this matter in an academic or any other setting. Nor need one belabor what the subject encompasses.

It is hardly necessary even to remind you of what our major urban problems are -- from pollution in the air to traffic jams on the streets. Few of our people are unaware today that poverty and racial injustice are also urban problems that compel national attention.

Our Nation has made a good many promises -- from the first one promising life and liberty, to a more specific one in 1949 when the Congress, in the National Housing Act of that year, first

declared every American's right to a decent home in a suitable living environment. And it was not until President Johnson called for six million low- and moderate-income houses in ten years in the Housing and Urban Development Bill of 1968 that we first proposed massive action to redeem that promise.

Today nearly two centuries after our Nation first asserted its independence and its ideals, our 200 million people are still searching for ways to redeem some basic promises.

More than a century ago, when Alexis de Tocqueville was writing about democracy in America, he said Americans are irrepressible optimists. That is, he said, they believe the only problems they have not solved are those problems they have not yet tried to solve.

De Tocqueville made another observation about Americans that is equally true and pertinent today when he wrote that every action to achieve reform in this country seems to sharpen our awareness of conditions that are unbearable.

In his words: "The sufferings that are endured patiently as being inevitable, become intolerable the moment that it appears that there might be an escape."

Thus we are experiencing a revolution of rising expectation for what can yet be done, as well as its counterpart, a revolution of rising frustration over what has not yet been done.

It is the measure of American society today that we now have a new and impressive list of intolerables.

I think it is significant that we now know those intolerables quite well and we have little trouble identifying them...

-- Joblessness for some of our people that is three or four times the national average.

-- Schools for some that do not educate for the competitive world of work.

-- Housing for millions of Americans that are not homes but hovels.

-- Neighborhoods in which there is so little hope for a good life that many feel no compulsion to protect lives and property, even their own.

-- Communities in which there is too little transportation, too little clean air, too little in recreational facilities, and too much lawlessness.

x x x

Difficult as these conditions will be to change, there are others that are even more deeply rooted.

Only a few weeks ago, the man who symbolized the effort to accomplish change without violence was shot down.

His death, no less than his life, symbolized the deeper changes needed.

We know the slayer, whether or not he was alone in his actions, was not alone in his feelings.

That is a deep tragedy, and a more difficult condition to change.

We know that those who committed acts of pillage and plunder, while they may have been relatively few in their own communities, were not alone in their frustration and rage. And their violence -- deplorably -- did not evoke a widespread effort even to protect their own communities. For many who reside therein do not identify with this society.

These are deeper tragedies, and deeper conditions that must be changed.

x x x

The essence of urban living, and its unique attraction, is diversity. Urban areas are diverse in land use, types of housing, employment, educational and cultural facilities, and people. Indeed one of our current imperatives is to extend diversity beyond the limits of the central city so that the suburbs and the newly emerging areas can take on this true attribute of urbanity.

People move to urban areas in order to find greater opportunities fuller lives, and a sense of participation. So far we have not extended the realization of these aspirations to the latest newcomer,

but we should and we must. You and your contemporaries are the Americans who will be called upon to meet this issue.

We no longer have mass unemployment, as we did in the 1930's. But we do have class unemployment. We have pockets of poverty. We have want in a generally affluent society. Some of the most difficult of our problems are in rural America. And they require much attention.

But today the locale crying out for effective reform is urban America where seven out of ten of our people reside. It is, in particular, the core cities where the poor and disadvantaged among our growing urban population are concentrated. I suggest that the central cities offer excitement and challenge to those youth of today who want to match their talent and enthusiasm against our society's most difficult problems.

Equally challenging are the entirely new urban communities which will be developed over the next few decades. In the core cities we are directing our energies toward repairing and modifying old but still existing patterns. We are attempting to restore and revitalize what has fallen into decay. In the newly urbanizing areas, we have an opportunity to create new patterns and novel arrangements without being hampered by obsolescence and past neglect.

Actually what we are concerned about is more than better housing -- and more of it -- or a better and larger volume of public facilities. We are concerned about the totality of the

environment -- how we can relate various parts to each other, how we can arrange open space, how land is used, and, equally important, how these physical aspects are coordinated with the myriad of personal and human services that urban life requires.

As an urban Nation, we must also insist upon deep concern for the quality of urban life. That means, among other things, cities and suburbs that are aesthetically attractive and so designed as to serve the needs of man. It requires equal access for all racial groups to the total housing market -- and for that to be meaningful, it also requires that we provide an adequate supply of decent low- and moderate-income housing.

x x x

On April 11, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which opens the way for many American families to live in the housing of their choice, based only on income and desire.

This legislation is an important first step -- to relieve overcrowded housing, to lead to the removal of the artificial barriers of discrimination that created slums and maintained them, and to help make it possible for many families and many communities to extend their efforts to improve opportunities for schools and jobs.

We have long felt that a free and open housing market is essential to a free and open society. But while this Act has made many actions possible, it has made nothing inevitable.

It must be vigorously enforced. It demands -- now more than ever -- that community leaders and concerned citizens prepare a climate in which the spirit of open housing can be carried out without resort to penalties and punishment.

But perhaps most of all, this legislation signals the need -- now more than ever before -- for the Nation to turn its attention toward making certain that there is enough good, decent housing for all who need it at prices they can afford to pay.

x x x

For too long there has been an attitude of fatalism about American cities. Too few of us recognized that urban communities are the works of man. Their attributes, no less than their defects, are the reflection of what their residents have wrought. Their future will be determined by the aspirations and actions of those who inhabit them.

The realization that we can modify the urban environment has been basic to the greatly expanded programs for the cities proposed and initiated by this Administration. We have not solved the problems but we have made a start in meeting them, demonstrating the Nation's potential capacity to deal effectively with its urban crisis.

For we have a program which comes to grips with the major aspects of housing and urban development. We have, in the Model Cities Program, for example, a mechanism which will enable us to deal with the human as well as the physical and economic needs of

those who are concentrated in our urban pockets of poverty. We are seeking sizable funding for these efforts. And we are resolved to push for the enactment of both enabling legislation and the appropriation of the required monies.

x x x

It is currently popular to say that we must expand greatly the resources devoted to urban problems. And that is a valid observation. But it is only a part of our need. Equally important is the development of more knowledge and capability in dealing with urban matters and the training of more competent people to carry out the programs that more money would facilitate.

To list but a few of the things that need to be done, let me suggest the following.

Our technical and scientific knowledge is unprecedented. It is utilized by industry, with the consequence of fantastic production of goods and services. Indeed, a large element in the urban problem is the consequence of applying scientific methods to agriculture.

The result has been greater production of foods and other farm products with a steadily declining number and proportion of our people in agricultural pursuits. Those no longer employable on the farms move to the urban areas where they are often equally unemployable.

The challenge now is to adapt and utilize this technical and scientific knowledge to deal with the problems of housing and urban development. Here for the first time, science and technology face the difficult issues of adjusting race relations, training those now unemployable, and motivating those now disenchanting. These issues are far easier to identify than to resolve.

For the tools so effective in getting a man to the moon must undergo great refinement and reorientation if they are to be effective, say, in reducing the cost of housing or facilitating a systems approach to urban development and redevelopment. They must undergo the most sophisticated adaptation if they are to be useful in solving complex and cantankerous human problems.

In a society so impressed by technology, there is always the danger of assuming that scientific approaches are fool proof. Computers, systems analysis and associated machinery and methods are no better than the basic data that are fed into them. Their results can never surpass the validity of the programming and the perception of the programmers. Some have identified this as the GIGO process: namely, garbage in means garbage out.

Even when -- and I say when advisedly -- we do tame the computer, refine the data, and surmount the problems of programming, we shall still have a missing ingredient. That is a cadre of trained people capable of carrying out the analyses and competent to administer the programs indicated.

Obviously a college campus is an appropriate setting in which to discuss these matters. For it is on the campus that ideas are nurtured. It is here that research flourishes. It is here that data are questioned and upgraded. And, of course, our institutions of higher education prepare the men and women who do most of the professional work and a great deal of the administration. Research and training are most important pursuits on our campuses, and you who are in college and graduate schools can be vanguards among those who will discern knowledge and manage the operations that can change and improve urban life.

So I say to you that the urban frontier, with all of its complexities and problems, is an avenue to exciting and meaningful careers. Despite much current oratory, there are no simplistic solutions. Remember there are three basic ingredients required for solutions. They are money, brains, and bodies. The rewards for meaningful involvement are great, both because of the importance of the problems and the elusiveness of the solutions.

x x x

You who graduate today, like it or not, will be the generation of city builders and rebuilders. Yours will be the major responsibility for bringing into the mainstream of an urban America those who for hundreds of years have been subjected to discrimination and deprivation.

This will demand of you difficult choices, innovative approaches, and real commitment. It will mean attack upon, and victory over, entrenched vested interests. But there can be no escape. For yours is a role of necessity.

All of us will have to make painful adjustments to achieve the urban America that should be ours.

But I cannot believe that your generation -- questioning as it does established values and established institutions -- will dodge or hide from the central domestic issue of our time.

Of course, as I have suggested above, as you face up to each difficult problem and as you attempt to break down each barrier to a free and open society of opportunity for all, you will need more knowledge and better tools for achieving your objectives. But this Nation has the required resources. We can develop the know-how, and we can train the people needed to get the job done.

The task ahead involves more than physical, social, and economic reform, as basic as that is. In addition, there must be involvement -- in two directions -- a new receptivity on the part of those who have and a new participation on the part of those who have not. For the haves, this means not only protestations but tangible evidence that they care about those who so long have been ignored and neglected. For the have nots, it calls for responsiveness and performance.

My generation will bequeath to you an impressive arsenal of methods to rebuild the deteriorated areas and some exciting concepts relative to the creation of new patterns of urban life. But we will only be able to suggest how meaningful involvement and effective participation on the part of the disenchanting can be developed. Together we can perfect these techniques; yet yours remains the major responsibility. Yours, fortunately, is the greater capacity -- for the changes required are less jarring to you than they are to your seniors.

Basic to all of our efforts is a most painful process. That is to look within ourselves to find the essence of what is right and what is wrong in American society. For we created that society -- and we, therefore, can recreate it.

What I am asking you to do is to take, in effect, a fresh look at the American dream. It is not some pastoral dream of long ago, some dream of lonely peak and quiet pond. It is the dream of today, the dream of busy streets, the dream of an unfenced society. It is the dream of the city which offers excitement for all and participation for all. That will be the realization of the promise of America in an urban environment.

This Nation has already talked too much, and done too little.

We are already too late to avoid the calamity of broken
lives and broken dreams.

The time is now to let action speak for itself.

#