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HUNTER COLLEGE CENTENNIAL

New York City

February 11, 1970

SENATOR MUSKIE: President Wexler, my good, tri-partisan friend John Lindsay,

(General applause)

Chancellor Bowker, Vice Chairman Keppel, Dean Weintraub, my good friends. First of all, Dean Weintraub, I'd like to thank you for that warm and gentle treatment of my personal and family history. I'd forgotten that I was so close to Ellis Island.

(General laughter.)

Secondly, I'd like to congratulate Hunter College. Not on the completion of its first hundred years, but on the beginning of its second. On such occasions I always think of the story of the young Maine farm boy who hadn't had much formal education. About the age of eight he was asked if he could read. He said, "Kind of." "Well, what do you mean, 'kind of'?" "Well," he said, "When I get to the crossroads and look at the sign, I can tell how far, but I can't tell whereto."

A good Maine way of saying the educational process is never complete. We're never sure where we ought to go next. But I suspect there's never been a more confused or troubled time in our country's history in that respect than

the one in which we find ourselves.

I'd like to compliment John Lindsay upon the note which he struck this morning. I can't think of a more important message to utter, than his. We ought not to allow ourselves to become comfortable over the pressure of threats to precious liberties. And we ought not to allow ourselves to become comfortable faced with the forces which threaten to tear us apart.

Romaine Rolland said something that I think all of us might think about at this historic moment for Hunter College, and for your distinguished new president, President Wexler. I'm sure from what I know of her and her record, that she will take this message with her into her new responsibilities. And I'm sure that Hunter College will, as well.

He said, "There is only one heroism in the world: To see the world as it is, and to love it." In recent weeks magazines, newspapers, television and radio have been full of news about ecology. We can all remember the old textbook pictures and what the word "ecology" conjures up: a leafy environment, trees, ferns, moss, animals moving about. But modern man knows, or soon must learn, that ecology is not just a pastoral word.

Our mountains and our forests do not stand alone in needing the conservationist's touch. The nature of

contemporary events has made it quite clear that urban life, too, is dangerously vulnerable to the distortions of man's ingenuity. As a focal point for man's happenings, the urban scene usually bears the brunt of man's mistakes and of his shortsightedness.

The ecology that governs the city, therefore, is as frail as that of nature, itself. And it is more mysterious. In the past, the nation has failed to cope with the problems of the cities because people, legislators included, have had a tendency to take the narrow and unrelated view of the urban environment. Because of the pressure of events, it is not unusual for a Senator, the Senator's concept of the city, to be conditioned by his chosen field of expertise or committee assignment.

For example, as a member of the Senate Public Works Committee, the city to me and to many of my colleagues was mainly a conglomeration of growing unemployment, congested traffic, inferior architecture, wretched planning and bad land usage. This Chairman of the sub-Committee on Air and Water Pollution, I view the city as a center of smog and pollution. It was an environmental disaster that needed more stringent enforcement of water and air standards.

My work on the Banking and Currency Committee took me into the jungle of urban economics. The field, that to this day, remains one of the land's richest mysteries. In

those Committee sessions, the city meant vast urban renewal, public housing -- I was going to say projects, it's more accurate to say planners.

Then I'm Chairman of the Senate Government Operations sub Committee on Inter-Governmental Relations. It has nothing to do with sex. It's a body devoted to the challenge of making sense out of governments, regardless of size, shape, or level. There I viewed the urban environment as the chief victim of an almost unphantomable game of duplication, bureaucracy, and what can only be described as medieval sorcery. Competition between the hundreds of little sovereignties which have developed in our major cities.

_____ was incredible.

Housing officials would not talk with road builders. Road builders would not sit with planners. Planners would not meet with architects. All uninformed. In an interesting sidelight, we also discovered that the suburbs were not immune from the difficulties facing the cities. Some areas, notably in the South and West, the traditional disparity between city and suburb was completely reversed. The suburbs often reflect a higher level of poverty than the cities.

A 1966 report of the Advisory Commission in Inter-Governmental Relations also indicated that cities and suburbs show little difference in the proportion of their adult educations with less than four years of high school, or in their

high school drop-out rates. Under education, the young and adults, it went on, is an equally serious problem in both urban and suburban segments of most metropolitan areas.

But even with these viewpoints: Public Works, Pollution Control, Banking and Inter-Governmental Relations, it was not until I campaigned for the Vice Presidency, almost as self-defeating an exercise as running for mayor, that the harsh reality of the urban condition really crashed down on me.

My home state has its cities. But they tend to be in the 25,000 to 50,000 size. All of the problems that exist in Portland and Bangor, Maine, are at times difficult and complex. At least to me they always seem comprehensive. But campaigning across this great, vast nation exposed me to some other patterns. Travel across the country, to urban communities large as New York, and as small as Hot Springs, you walk through black ghettos, and Polish wards. You caravan down Main Streets and Central Avenues through scores of municipalities. We spoke with and listened to urban residents, rested in their homes and motels, ate in their restaurants, toured their day care centers, their mental institutions, their factories and businesses.

We hopped from college to college. Maybe more accurately, we were prodded from college to college. Speaking with the young, and with their instructors. And with

police chiefs _____ Black militants _____. We talked with union chiefs, rank and filers. Everyday for weeks urban scenes flashed before us, with all its tensions, its charms, its aspirations.

We discovered in the hard way that if you've seen one city, you obviously have not seen them all.

(General applause.)

I had a view of the cities from the bottom up. A view that made me realize all the more, those ingredients that tie urban life together, rather than separate it. My lasting impression was that the American urban environment is a remarkable way of life, that need not be neither threatening or harmful. And it possesses enormous potential for enlargening the human spirit.

Improving urban life is not an unreasonable task. Cities are not inherently evil. Cities are not inherently unmanageable. Cities will not respond glowingly to violence, or to ineptitude. They will react to rational and forceful direction, to creative design, to sensitive and practical planning, to humane and relevant programs. Spasmodic responses to immediate crises provide none of these. Therefore, the first and most urgent requirement to improve urban life is a total, unrelenting, national pledge to do just that.

A new national commitment to the city must be a profound, radical and penetrating effort to marshall the

the country's ingenuity and resources against urban decay. Despite all the volumes of literature, and the barrels of records, this nation to this day has not established a comprehensive urban policy outlining what we want our cities to be. It has not assumed a national commitment to make American cities the best in the world.

The nation that has landed on the dark side of the moon seems incapable of coping with garbage collection on the dark side of a ghetto alley.

(General applause.)

Until the nation is willing to make this vital commitment to the cities, they can have no real future. Making the commitment will be difficult. Fulfilling it may be even more so. It will require daring experimentation, hardheaded realism and exceptional national political leadership.

And that leadership, if it's to do the job, must choose its priorities wisely and its alternatives prudently. There's no reason to stall because we don't know all the answers. We know enough of the answers to begin. And at the very minimum, that beginning must include, it seems to me, some rather elemental things.

We must establish a tax sharing program that gives urban areas a definite priority in the distribution of shared

revenues. I think the equity of this concept can be stated very quickly and simply in the words of Walter Heller who envisioned it. "Economic growth," he said, "creates a glaring fiscal gap." It bestows its revenue bounties on the Federal Government, whose progressive income tax is particularly responsive to growth, and it imposes the major part of its burdens on state and local governments."

We must reform the national welfare program to provide a guaranteed minimum income for all citizens, eliminating the stigma and paternalism so degradingly associated with the current system. It is difficult to comprehend how the nation has remained so attached to a welfare system that is detested both by those who rely on it for sustenance, and those who foot the bill.

The most sensible alternative deals with establishing a minimum income for all citizens. An income --

(General applause.)

An income that should permit a family head to seek meaningful employment without fear of losing payments he can receive by mere idleness. Perhaps the most sinful fault of the present system. We must undertake a massive employment program for the inner city area. Unemployment in the ghettos ranges seven and eight times higher than in the nation as a whole. Unskilled black workers are the last to be hired, the first to be dismissed, the lowest on the apprenticeship list,

and the most difficult to train.

But a man without a job is a _____ soul who can demand no respect from his family. And maintain no confidence in himself. The nation must find jobs to correct this condition.

The most immediate way is to initiate a vast urban physical renewal program geared to hiring local ghetto residents to work on projects designed to provide the ghetto with needed facilities, including medical clinics, community day care centers, neighborhood recreational facilities. In order to coordinate the employment program with improving educational standards, schools should work intimately with workers offering courses in the various trades, and arranging for incentives to be based on promotions.

The objective should be something more than providing an isolated individual with an isolated job that may or may not exist tomorrow. The objective should offer a full range of employment opportunities; highly visible to local residents on projects that would improve local conditions. We must undertake a vast inner-city low and middle-income housing programs to make some headway in the estimated 600,000 new dwelling units of this kind the country needs every year. It will require creative and efficient pre-fabricated housing techniques already used to great advantage in a number of European countries. We can and must do the same.

We must vigorously enforce open housing regulations and school desegregation guidelines that have stifled balanced urban expansion beyond arbitrary geographical city lines. We must encourage the development of new towns which can be an important ingredient in alleviating the pressures of increased population and mobility. Many of our contemporary urban ills can be delayed directly to the period of heavy industrialization and urban migrations that caught the cities flat-footed at the end of the last century and the early decades of this century.

New town planners, blessed with the insights which that experience has given us on what makes a city decay, what makes a city thrive can eliminate many of those factors that distort urban life. To do this they will require Government help to assemble land and to secure the tremendous financing required for such undertakings.

Building new towns, however, cannot be confined to rural or suburban areas. The same imagination and creativity must be applied to building new neighborhoods, within existing urban satellites. We must improve the educational opportunities of some children by undertaking an impacted aid program for ghetto schools, similar to the impacted aid programs for Federal installations.

We must demand a more enlightened view by industrial

leaders for the environment in general, and the urban environment specifically. In major industry located in a suburban community has a great deal of leverage to improve the attitude of that community toward open housing and toward an inner city resident who must find a reasonable relationship between his employment and his home.

"Manufacturers," said Gene Lowell who is the Urban Affairs consultant for the Saturday Review, "are uniquely capable of severing the suburban white noose around our core cities, making the metropolitan housing real estate market work the same for the Negro as for the white, and forcing exclusionist suburbs and exurbs and smaller cities to accept non-white and lower income families in significant volume in a harmonious manner."

(General applause.)

We must increase the level of cooperation between local, state and Federal agencies, between suburban and urban officials, between private and public citizens. This cooperation involves concepts such as Metropolitan Councils of Governments, special authorities, and local control of special community functions including education, welfare and housing. We must develop new government units that are more visible, more responsive and more alert to the intimacies of local conditions and community patterns. We must establish surplus food programs to feed the hungry, medical aid to comfort the

impoverished, day care centers to aid working mothers and community health centers to care for ghettos as well as suburban neighborhoods.

When it comes to health there is no doubt that ghetto Americans are brutal victims of national indifference. Urban Coalition's task force on health reveled the startling facts that the poor have four to eight times the instance of such chronic conditions as heart disease, arthritis, hypertension and visual impairments as the non-poor. It also showed that the ratio of doctors in the ghettos is from one-fifth to one-half of the city as a whole.

We must improve the sophistication of contemporary urban police forces, vastly overhauled and streamlined local judicial systems to provide speedy and equitable justice. We must provide for a more orderly migration of work forces from one community to another; to regressive planning related to growth and demands. Much of the present urban crisis, the Violence Commission tells us, derives from the almost total absence of positive policies to cope with the large-scale migrations of Southern Negroes into Northern and Western cities over the past century, for the numbers of Negroes living in cities grows from 2.7 to 14.8 million.

We must overhaul archaic zoning laws, building codes, urban land use policies. Presently these are based on principals that are at best out-moded, and at worst, discriminatory.

We must initiate a more healthy and positive dialog between inner city blacks and suburban whites. We need this dialog to lessen antagonism, to prove that continued hostility is disastrous, to show that the good American is ultimately neither silent nor militant, but one who cherishes his neighbor whatever his color or ethnic background.

Let's be frank. A large part of the urban issue today is race. Blacks and whites stare at each other across irrational geographic lines, and irrational personal barriers. Blacks resent white institutions reflecting white attitudes and promoting white culture. Whites resent black militancy advocating black power and reflecting the new sense of black identity.

We must reconcile these differences. We must create institutions that are free of racism. We must find ways of sharing the abundance of our society. A commitment to improve urban life is useless if that commitment is made in a vacuum. The city cannot be considered in isolation; it is a vital part of an overall environment that will rise or fall according to remote, often obscure forces.

Again, it is a matter of ecology. The city cannot improve if suburban attitudes remain rigid, inflexible and hostile, inner city citizens cannot increase their opportunities. If white Americans move their plants and their homes beyond the temporary friction, nor can the city hope to pros-

per if it continues to be the dumping ground for the rural poor who seek a refuge from the destitution of the countryside and merely add their grief to the cities' existing woes.

This inbound migration aggravates the urban crisis, further stimulates the outbound migration of whites, which in turn stimulates the urban crisis. It is a vicious ecological circle that escalates the crisis as each separate element seeks its own separate salvation.

There is room in this nation for central cities and for suburbs; compact or sprawling. And for rural areas remote and insulated. But not if each used its conditions as separate and isolated from its neighbor. There is but one America. That America is a complex interaction of forces and people which can survive only if it becomes a whole America.

I'd like to direct a special word to the young generation who will be wrestling with the urban problems of the future. You did not make the city what it is. Nor are you directly responsible for the conditions of society in general. But you will share the responsibility for saving it.

The society of the future will be even more urban than the society of the past. Streets of the next decade will be more crowded than the streets of today. More schools and more medical facilities will be necessary. Citizens will

be crying for better homes and additional recreational space. The gap between the poor and the affluent may be even more severe. And what is worse, it may be more visually apparent. That's why your generation will have no alternative but to phathom the mysteries of the urban environment. To plunge willingly into the morass of relationships that direct and govern its growth, and commit yourself to reshaping and re-directing those forces.

If the rift between black and white continues, urban education is no more meaningful. Urban housing conditions no more tolerant. The suburbs do not open more windows, business does not show more courage and Government more flexibility; if hunger and poverty are not eradicated in urban slums as well as rural shacks, then the next generation of Americans will suffer the horrible consequences of an urban society that could not sustain an important and decent way of life.

You challenged your elders to seek a new and better way of life. You've demanded reason and tolerance. You've picketed for new priorities and marched to stop hunger and erase poverty and prejudice. You've clamored for commitment and involvement. And you are right. The cities will not survive without these ingredients.

And so we ask what you will be able to do for us that we could not do for you. Balance the nation's power

with the nation's conscience. And as you move into the second century of Hunter College's life, it might be well for you to bear in mind one of the most eloquent statements of the relationship between the past and the future that I have ever read. It was written by a Swede, Rolf Edler, who said this, "Every individual carries a set of about 100,000 genes, an inheritance he has received from all the living beings who proceeded him and concentrated their qualities in him. That is the heritage he will pass on. If all the genes from the world's three and a half billion people were baked together, they would form a small ball with a diameter of about one millimeter. The components of this small ball is what holds us together as a species. And is, essentially, all we own as human beings."

(General applause.)

(End of proceedings as recorded.)