

OPENING REMARKS

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

CLEVELAND, OHIO

MAY 6, 1966

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*Youth Opportunity
20,000 Employees
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✓ A year ago the President asked me to serve as his liaison with local government officials. I began my public career in local government -- as Mayor of Minneapolis -- and I have a vivid appreciation of its importance in our federal system.

Because I know how remote Washington can sometimes seem to public officials with local responsibilities,

✓ I have sought in these past months to open the channels of two-way communication and keep them open. That is why I am with you today.

Over 75 per cent of the people of the Great Lakes region live in urban areas. One of the greatest questions facing us is whether these people -- and the people of other urban areas throughout the country -- will live well or badly.

This Administration is pledged to help meet this challenge.

But the prime responsibility is yours.

It is your communities that will have good schools or bad ones.

It is your communities that will have decent homes or slums.

It is your communities that will have racial harmony or racial antagonism.

It is your communities that will either wage intelligent, coordinated drives on the causes of poverty -- or will ignore this social cancer.

Our explosive population growth and rapid urbanization have combined to place unprecedented burdens on local government.

Today there are over nine million American homes which should not be lived in, but are. Four million of those homes have no running water or plumbing.

There are millions of children who run the risk of winding up on the welfare rolls a few years hence if something is not done.

One out of every three children now in fifth grade will not finish high school, if the present dropout rate continues. Every mayor should have established task forces within his city so that each dropout or potential dropout can be personally contacted and helped.

There is a general shortage of good, wholesome water . . . of clean, fresh air . . . of parks and playgrounds . . . of all the things that are needed to make life liveable.

DROP
out.

Small cities as well as large ones face the converging forces of growth and decay. They also are plagued with slums, urban blight, traffic and parking problems, cascading demands for services and the shortage of tax revenues to meet them.

No single community can meet these demands alone and without help. That is why there are more than 50 major programs of federal assistance to local government. During this fiscal year there will be a total of 13.6 billion dollars in federal aid payments to state and local units.

The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, passed by this Congress and signed into law by President Johnson, is designed to help meet these problems.

This Act established the Department of Housing and Urban Development -- putting in the President's Cabinet a spokesman for the needs of the urban majority of Americans.

Now it ~~is~~ ^{will be} possible to administer more effectively the wide range of federal programs affecting urban life. The best of the existing programs have been extended and expanded.

Big cities
L Many people seem to think the Department's urban programs are just for the big cities. The opposite is true. The biggest users of these aids are the cities and towns that you represent.

L More than half -- and in some cases, 90 per cent -- of the new Department's programs are in towns of 50,000 population or less.

L Some 428 towns with less than 25,000 people are undertaking urban renewal programs.

L Nearly half of the loans for college housing -- 1,356 of them -- have been made to schools in towns of less than 50,000 population.

Some 858 communities of less than 25,000 -- with the help of Public Facility loans -- are replacing or getting new water and sewage systems, municipal buildings, hospitals, or other community facilities that you find it so difficult to pay for.

Most of us haven't yet thought of mass transit as a problem in the smaller communities, but for many it most certainly is.

The Department recognizes this, and has approved five capital grants, under the Urban Mass Transportation Act, for towns with less than 75,000 population.

The Federal Housing Administration has expanded its activity in outlying areas, so that more and more residents of small communities can buy homes with FHA mortgage insurance.

Of the 2,377 localities with public housing, 1,967
(or 83 per cent) of them have less than 25,000 population.

I have one last figure to give you that I find most encouraging.

Most of the problems you are here to discuss result from haphazard growth. Most of ~~your~~ ^{our} communities weren't planned with a thought for future needs.

Long after planning was recognized as sound practice for business, it was regarded as heretical or even dangerous for government.

Today we have learned that to correct the mistakes of the unplanned past, and prevent even more serious mistakes in the future, we must plan.

This takes professional help, and most communities just cannot afford it alone. And so we offer assistance in the form of grants to pay for planning.

↳ I think the need for this help is demonstrated by the fact that over 4,200 communities with less than 50,000 population are today using federal urban planning grants.

↳ Very recently, we have formulated two new programs that may lead to a whole new lease on life for many middle-sized American cities.

Demonstration Cities } Your towns may well be the major beneficiaries of the demonstration cities program that the President has asked the Congress to approve.

↳ It calls for revitalizing about 70 selected cities with massive programs of physical reconstruction, rehabilitation, and social services. Federal grants will be available to meet 80 per cent of the cost of administering the program, and of the required local share of federal grants-in-aid.

↳ It is designed so that cities of all sizes may participate. But as a practical matter, it may turn out that cities with smaller populations will be able to make the best use of it.

For instance, a large metropolitan city may be able, under this program, to renew one or two blighted neighborhoods. But a smaller city, with problems of smaller scope, might be able to renew itself completely.

The new rent supplement program also can benefit small cities in a special way. Many of you have had to do without federal low-income housing for your needy, your elderly, and your handicapped, because our public housing program often doesn't suit small communities. Projects have in the past usually been huge projects on large sites. They require special municipal services. And often they are difficult to absorb into a smaller city's social structure.

By using the rent supplement route to low-cost housing for low-income people, you may have private builders construct housing with a capacity suited to your city.

It may be scattered throughout the community, where that is desirable. It will be maintained by the private landlord, just as any other housing in your city is maintained.

L Federal assistance will come from FHA financing to the private builder, and government payments directly to the private landlord of the difference between the renter's payment of one fourth of his income, and the total rent. Such payments will be made only for tenants who qualify for public housing. ✓

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As you can see from this summary I have given you, our federal urban programs have been designed -- and are being administered -- with the needs of medium and smaller-sized cities very much in mind.

But none of them can be fully effective without your help. You know the local conditions and local problems. Above all, you know your people. You can best determine how to use these federal programs, and how to supplement them with local funds.

It is you who must supply the talent, the dedication, and the leadership to make your cities better places to live.

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