

Let me say at the outset that the enactment last August of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 was a historic step toward translating into positive action the Nation's concern with the plight of our cities and with the plight of the people forced to live in city slums.

But this one step, important though it was, was not enough to enable us to come to grips with the enormous, urgent, and deep-seated problems confronting our Nation's cities and towns.

Much more remains to be done, and labor welcomes further initiative reflected in the new legislative proposals before you, to carry forward this vital task. I have some facts here to emphasize the point that our cities are really bursting at the seams, but the population is growing by leaps and bounds, and the impact of this population growth concentrated in the urban centers must be taken into account and provided for if any sound planning for future growth is to take place.

And I would like to stress especially that this problem is immediate and urgent, and the immediacy and urgency of this problem is underscored by the developments that are upon us now.

Modern America must assure the provision of modern living conditions for its people. The need is for better cities and towns, better neighborhoods, and above all, for more and better housing.

Housing construction has been out of step with the rest of the U.S. economy. The AFL-CIO has estimated that, in the face of the present backlog of past deficiencies and increasing current needs for adequate housing of a growing population, the volume of residential construction should be maintained at the minimum of 2½ million dwelling units a year over 10 years.

Yet, in the first 6 years of the present decade, the total of private and public housing starts (including farm) has been far below this minimum.

In 1965, these housing starts totaled only 1,542,400 units, and in January 1966, the seasonally adjusted annual rate of these starts was still at about that level.

The accompanying table I shows in perspective our performance as shown by housing starts since 1960.

TABLE I.—*Housing starts*

[In thousands of units]

Period	Total private and public	Total private (including farm)	Private nonfarm
1960.....	1,406.0	1,252.1	1,230.1
1961.....	1,365.0	1,313.0	1,284.8
1962.....	1,492.4	1,462.8	1,439.1
1963.....	1,640.9	1,609.2	1,581.7
1964.....	1,590.8	1,557.4	1,530.4
1965.....	1,542.4	1,504.7	1,482.4

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce.

This performance has been deficient. It has been far from dynamic. For 2 years in a row, residential building has failed to keep pace with our Nation's economic progress.