

It is against this background of hard, incontrovertible, facts that I am here to state that the AFL-CIO gives its stout support to the Demonstration Cities Act of 1966, proposed by President Johnson in his special message to Congress on January 26, and embodied in the two identical bills introduced on that same day, H.R. 12341, by the distinguished chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee, Mr. Patman, and H.R. 12342, by the distinguished chairman of its Subcommittee on Housing, Mr. Barrett.

We regard this legislative proposal as an important and auspicious step in the right direction.

At the same time, we believe that the specific recommendations proposed to carry out this program are unduly modest in magnitude. It is our view that their scope should be enlarged to make possible a truly effective onslaught on urban blight in cities and towns large and small.

This program is of strategic importance not only because it will help eradicate and help cure the festering sore spots in our cities and towns, not only because it would generate activity which would help redress a serious imbalance in the Nation's economic growth, but also, and most important of all, because it would represent a social investment assuring a large return to the whole community by rebuilding people's lives and regenerating their capacity to contribute to the common wealth.

The effectiveness of this approach is enhanced by the fact that it would bring together our resources for housing, urban renewal, employment, education, training, and social help, in one combined, concentrated attack on the most acute public needs of the community.

Slum clearance is indispensable in that it eliminates the breeding grounds for disease, crime, and deterioration of human values and human resources. But slum clearance by itself, is no guarantee against future slums.

Even new housing developments, well intended and well built, can deteriorate unless the people living in them have access to jobs, educational opportunities, medical care and hospitalization, recreational facilities, and social services.

To deal effectively with the problem of poverty, we must direct the most effective remedies against both its causes and its consequences.

Basic long-term economic programs, such as the establishment of realistic minimum wage standards, unemployment compensation standards, social security, medical care, equitable progressive tax policies, and the allocation of economic resources to employment-generating and socially useful, productive activity, provide the approach to the eradication of the causes of poverty.

On the other hand, the most immediate practical way for America to treat poverty is to make every attempt to eradicate it when and where it is found. We know that impoverished generations have, since the 1930's tended to produce subsequent impoverished generations. Therefore, as a practical matter, it is much more economical to make every effort to assist the impoverished family in the first place. Apart from all other considerations, it should be recognized that the cost of such assistance serves to offset the far greater costs to the community of relief and welfare loads to care for those of its disadvantaged citizens who are unable to help themselves.