

UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE AND AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA (UAW)

By WALTER P. REUTHER, PRESIDENT

There is an anxiety in the Nation, strangely mingled with complacency and an indifference to the unsolved social and economic problems that contribute to our troubled mood. The President defined the mood as restlessness and questioning in his state of the Union message, and touched upon some of the reasons for it in listing a number of our persisting problems, including:

* * * the gulf for some Americans between the promise and the reality of our society.

Stating that we could not "change all of this in a day," the President added:

The issue is not whether we can change this; the issue is whether we will change this.

I know we can. I believe we will.

In confronting these two gaps—the gap between promise and reality and that between "can" and "will"—we reach the heart of the American dilemma. It is inescapable. It crops up in every issue before the Congress. It is implicit in every assumption underlying every budgetary allocation. It surfaces on every page of the Economic Report. It haunts our preoccupation with "crime in the streets"; it is at the center of the racial crisis; it dominates the national debate over our proper course in Southeast Asia.

It is not an economic dilemma, although it involves economic choices. It is not a technological dilemma, although it has to do with our response to the new technologies. It is not a military dilemma, although it is expressed in our attitudes toward what President Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex. It transcends partisan political alignments, although all parties, major and minor, who recognize its existence may claim a monopoly of wisdom in dealing with it.

It presents itself to us in all these aspects because it permeates the body and soul of the Nation. It is a crisis of values and purpose, of ends and means. It poses the question: What kind of America do we really want? It asks: What do we seek to do with the unprecedented wealth and power at our disposal? It demands to know if we really believe in a constitutional democracy with equal justice under law, or only in an "I'm all right, Jack" regime of selfishness, a feudalism of special interests in which the poorest and weakest among us are ignored, neglected, or driven to the wall.