

The answers cannot be indefinitely evaded or postponed, for several good reasons:

1. The argument that we lack the resources to fulfill our commitments is not valid.
2. The problems thrown up by our reckless and shortsighted exploitation of science and technology do not go away. They remain, and worsen.
3. The victims of the gap between promise and reality are no longer docile and reconciled to their fate. They impatiently demand fulfillment of the promise. This is true in a double sense. This wealthiest of nations has an unfulfilled responsibility to the poor of our cities and rural areas and to the struggling peoples of the have-not lands where peace depends on greater assurance of social and economic development.

The rub here is not lack of progress, as doctrinaire extremists allege. There has been much progress, and progress continues. The rub lies in the relativity of progress. There is a revolution of rising expectations here in the United States as well as in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. It derives from a quickening sense on the part of the poor, the deprived, and the discriminated against, concentrated in our cities and scattered in rural areas, that science and technology have put material affluence within the reach of all. That they are still denied it, they now understand, is not the fault of science and technology but of economic policy and political decision.

The progress of recent years, while real, has constituted only a slow-moving, marginal attack on poverty, unemployment and underemployment, inferior education and housing, the general deterioration of our urban centers, and the patterns of discrimination and segregation that keep racial and ethnic minorities from equal opportunity and first-class citizenship. We are not moving fast or far enough to correct the injustices and inequities that frustrate and embitter their victims and divide our communities.

The presidential messages are replete with evidence of the volume of unfinished business on the national agenda.

The President reminds us:

Despite our prosperity, there are still more than 10 million families whom we classify as poor.

* * * whether we will move constructively to deal with the urgent problems of our cities and compassionately to bring hope to our disadvantaged; or whether we are willing to risk irreversible urban deterioration and social explosion.

With respect to unemployment, the President states:

The question for our day is this: in an economy capable of sustaining high employment, how can we assure every American, who is willing to work, the right to earn a living?

We have always paid lip service to that right. But there are many Americans for whom the right has never been real * * *

The President notes that the United States ranks 15th among the nations of the world in saving the lives of babies. Regarding housing, he reports:

New housing construction is far less than we need—to assure decent shelter for every family.