

Regarding our living environment, he tells us:

Many rivers—and the air in many cities—remain badly polluted.

Referring to the responsibilities of government in promoting the general welfare, the President states:

I regard it as a primary purpose of government to expand the opportunities for all citizens to share in our economic and social progress. For most, this means the opportunity for rewarding employment. For millions who are retired, disabled, or otherwise unable to seek active work, a share in prosperity requires wise and humane programs of income maintenance and social insurance. For all, it means full access to education and to health care.

This is an all-too-familiar inventory, partial and restrained, of the flaws and anomalies that mark our state of general material affluence. It understates the magnitude and urgency of our situation, because it scants the elements in our dilemma which cannot be measured statistically—and because it takes insufficient account of the degree to which the life of the whole Nation, of affluent majority and deprived minority alike, is improverished, degraded, and distorted by our common failure to set our national house in order.

This common failure, and our awareness of it, are surely among the chief sources of the spiritual disquiet that reigns among us, alienating ghetto youth and the youth of the affluent suburbs alike, infecting all of us but the incurably complacent with an irritable frustration at the thought that we, citizens of this wealthiest and most powerful of nations, do not live up to the most elementary and fundamental of our democratic professions and commitments.

This malaise lies deeper than governments, budgets and gross national product. Government alone cannot cure it. Yet governmental leadership and initiative, governmental planning, and adequate budgets to meet priorities, must inevitably play a key role in any genuine, practical efforts to make America whole by coping with the many problems that beset us.

What, then, are our true priorities? What must we do that we are not doing to make America whole and to promote our true national interest?

We have increasingly allowed ourselves to be ruled by two assumptions:

1. That the future of America is more at stake in the cities of Vietnam than in the cities of the United States—to the point that in the next fiscal year the Federal Government will be spending in Vietnam—in 1 month—almost twice its contemplated annual outlay to improve the elementary and secondary education of children from low-income families; and

2. That our outlay for war in Asia requires a reduction in our commitment in Detroit, Newark, Watts, and the other American centers of poverty, discontent and incipient rebellion.

Surely the greatest threat to American democracy today lies in our failure here at home to sense our true priorities and to mobilize our resources to keep our commitments to our own people.

Yet, whatever may be said of the first assumption—it is being ventilated in this election year—we should all be clear about the second; it is false.

American wealth and power are unique in world history and in the world today. There is enough wealth in this country, enough slack and