

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON - September 12, 1966
RECEPTION FOR DELEGATES TO URBAN AMERICA CONFERENCE
FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY - expected at 5:00 PM EDT

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

-----THE WHITE HOUSE-----

Welcome to the White House! I am delighted to have you here, and I only wish that I could be attending all of your sessions because the topics sound so very worthwhile.

It has been a long, hot summer for everyone, and I can think of no more appropriate way to freshen up the news from the cities than for city experts to have a working conference, such as this one.

Mr. Currier tells me that your focus is not on architectural abstractions, but that you are probing for solutions to the day-to-day problems faced by a majority of Americans:

--How can we all live in comfortable, pleasing surroundings?

--How can we move about swiftly and conveniently in our cities?

--How can we improve our working environment -- and can it improve us?

--How -- and where -- do young people, and mothers, and little children, and weary executives use their precious hours of leisure time?

A little over a year ago, some of you were here for the White House Conference on Natural Beauty which was called by my husband. We were acting on faith then, probing for beginnings in the overwhelming task of bringing new life to our cities. In the ensuing months, the tides of popular support have brought about a significant legislative record on the national level, a host of state natural beauty conferences, and a mounting list of municipal and local action programs. Things that couldn't have happened a year ago, are happening now!

All of us who live in cities or who have been putting our shoulder to the wheel to improve city conditions have confidence in the ability to make the city of tomorrow liveable and attractive. After all, we are the sum total of all the environment we've lived in.

Our challenge is not how to build -- for no nation in history has had greater technical resources at its command; nor is it entirely money -- for the richest nation on earth has money to spend, and is spending it; but the challenge to America's cities is how to govern their growth boom with beauty and with compassion for every life and its fulfillment.

Can we do it? Dare we do less?

The clamor of city victims is a spur to progress. You have seen the beacon of achievement in small and large measure. In a downtown plaza, along a waterfront, in a city block program. You know how much that means.

A decade ago, Lewis Mumford may have been the only person calling upon cities to become the citadels of human fulfillment. Now editors and housewives, citizens in every walk of life, from every point of origin, are yearning for an environment of sanity and hope, of beauty and fresh air, of honest work and refreshing pleasure.

You have come here from all quarters of America, and from across the seas, to advance the art of urban development. It is thrilling to me that leaders in business and communications, as well as public life are committing themselves to a new level of energy in undertaking the vital rescue of America's cities. From the kinetic circumstances of this Conference, I hope will come experiences to build upon, fresh resources to use, innovative ideas to follow.

Millions and millions of Americans stand to benefit over the years from what you are doing. Good luck!

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