

Robert C. Wood Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 1/29/1968
Administrative Information

Creator: Robert C. Wood
Interviewer: John F. Stewart
Date of Interview: January 29, 1968
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 14 pp.

Biographical Note

Wood, Robert C.; Educator; professor of political science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1957-1970); Presidential advisor on urban affairs. Wood discusses his task force involvement during John F. Kennedy's [JFK] presidential campaign (1960) and JFK's stance on urban affairs, among other issues.

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Suggested Citation

Robert C. Wood, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, January 29, 1968, (page number), John F. Kennedy Oral History Program.

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Signed: Robert C. Wood

Date: 9/17/71

Robert C. Wood

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1, 9	Wood's background with urban affairs
2	Wood's early interactions with John F. Kennedy [JFK], 1959
3, 8, 11	Wood's task force involvement, 1960
3, 13	Wood's involvement in Edward M. Kennedy's senatorial campaign, 1962
4, 10	JFK and urban affairs
6	JFK's use of academic groups
9	Urban Affairs Conference in Pittsburgh, PA, October 10, 1960
Addendum I	Memorandum, March 25, 1960: Urban speech
Addendum II	Memorandum, January 29, 1960: Names and addresses of the attendees of the Academic Advisory Committee meeting
Addendum III	Outline of Urban Program

Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT C. WOOD

January 29, 1968
Washington D.C.

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me ask you what you were doing at the time you were asked to get involved in Kennedy operations and how you were asked to be involved.

WOOD: I was professor of political science at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] then, and my major concerns had been in state and local government -- urban affairs. That meant that I had had some previous association or active participation in state politics, enough so that I understood that when Kennedy began to put together a roster of academics, my name was given along with the others. I received a letter from him indicating his interest in having my views and asking that Deirdre Henderson come by and visit with me. I remember then thinking that this was an effective approach because I had done occasional writing for Adlai Stevenson and seen whole weeks go by putting together drafts.

STEWART: In '56?

[-1-]

WOOD: In '56 and then after, in '57 and so on, when he was just writing on urban affairs. Willard Wirtz had phoned me for a couple of these. You would work

very hard on a draft, but then maybe a paragraph would survive or a phrase. By sending Miss Henderson, what then Senator Kennedy did was have somebody come and talk to you, collect your papers and views, go away and write a draft herself or himself, and then call you about it and you'd make the changes you wanted and then the speech would come out. And the Senator would send back a note of appreciation, and your investment in time would be reasonably small.

The other thing that struck me then was that the Senator or Miss Henderson would make reference to that particular article that was not well known but the one in the field you happened to think particularly was your best one, and there was an unerring accuracy that was established rapport there.

Well, those conversations took place.

STEWART: Could you pin this down, do you remember approximately when this took place?

WOOD: This would be in the fall of '59, because then the formal organization of the brain trust with Earl Latham was, what, that fall?

STEWART: Yes, it had been set up in '59.

WOOD: Then the decision was made to put the Cambridge operations a little stronger. Cox [Archibald Cox] came in with Chayes [Abram Chayes]. My first real meeting with the President, then, was at that Sunday tea at the Harvard Club in Boston that he had -- he came in late -- for all the admirers who had been collected.

[-2-]

STEWART: This would have been in arly '59?

WOOD: January or February. That was February of '59. Then it must have been in '59 when the first letter, which I've got a copy of and can check. And then a discussion, a meeting with Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] and Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] at the law school at which we again did some work; occasional letters and exchanges; a position paper that I prepared, which I guess I've got a copy of, on urban affairs; and then some drafts of some speeches, a couple in Milwaukee. And then I think the only other personal direct contact was in the spring, at the end of a Boston trip, when Miss Henderson had a cocktail party in Pinckney Street where a lot of these people gathered -- and this was Rostow [Walt W. Rostow] and New Frontier parts like that -- and we all met then.

I did not really hear anything further until Sorensen phoned me to establish a task force after the election. I served on that task force, went to the Inauguration, carried on sporadic correspondence with various members --closer, I guess, to Chayes and Cox than any other then -- completed the task force, and then went back to work. Subsequent involvement

was almost completely with Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] when we started the '62 campaign in his senatorial race. So this is the time frame.

STEWART: Well, when you initially got involved, was it clear as to exactly what they expected of you? For example, was there a good understanding as to just how much you would contribute or could contribute?

WOOD: Oh, no. It was fuzzy, and remained fuzzy. From their point of view, they were clearly just exploring with people; and from our point of view, we were exploring. There was nothing approaching an explicit kind of commitment one way or the other.

[-3-]

STEWART: There was no commitment to support him politically, even, in the 1960 campaign? Or was there any problem with you?

WOOD: Not initially. There wasn't any problem with me. I had some earlier reservations, but I had been pretty sure that Stevenson would not be really desirable or feasible at this point. And Kennedy looked like the best, and Massachusetts had a good change to see and get a sense of him so that was no problem. The only case was really what he felt about urban affairs and what opportunity you had to get that on the agenda.

STEWART: Did you get a feeling early in the game as to just what his interest was in urban affairs, or how much he really had?

WOOD: The earliest one of the first speeches, I guess it was in the primaries in Denver when he had taken some raw material from some drafts we had prepared and then turned it into a first rate speech.... By that time, another circuit had gone on. I was a member of the advisory committee on urban affairs that Dick Lee [Richard C. Lee] chaired for the Democratic National Committee, and Ed Logue [Edward C. Logue] and two or three others served on that under Paul Butler's aegis. There was, as you know, tension between the senatorial-congressional people and that advisory committee.

The first letters that Kennedy wrote me, I responded by saying, "Here are my views." And the Democratic Advisory Committee set them down, as well as some others. So I tried to make it clear to him at this point that it was in a partisan association, not a personal one, necessarily. But I don't recall really having to confront the personal commitment thing until the famous umbrellas for Christmas episode, when he set a whole bunch of us of that group black umbrellas.

[-4-]

STEWART: I don't think I've ever heard of that.

WOOD: You never heard of this? On Christmas Eve a big box, costing two dollars and ninety cents postage special delivery, came from New York. I beat my wife over the head for paying that kind of postage at that kind of time. We opened it up, and it was a very nice, long, black umbrella that Sorensen had picked out for the fourteen or eighteen of us. So by that time, you really began to pick up the sense of campaign, but that's about the only time.

STEWART: As far as the staff is concerned, were all of your contacts with Sorensen? Did you have any, for example, with Fred Holborn?

WOOD: Holborn I'd known at Harvard and he was getting increasingly active. I would say Fred came around more than others. Sorensen and Goodwin were the other major ones. Then Deirdre Henderson, who was in secretarial capacity, was there almost weekly.

STEWART: Excuse me. I don't think you finished the answer to the question about the President's understanding and appreciation of urban problems. Can you elaborate on that, the Denver speech?

WOOD: A very competent speech, hitting the major themes, putting it in much better language, but not essentially any recognition that in five or ten years it would become the major domestic issue. Those days, just to have a politician talk about urban problems was very rare. So I took this down as a hopeful sign of recognition of a major issue; but even in the competition of the '60 task force, it was one which still stayed mostly in housing, less in the urban development field.

[-5-]

STEWART: Would you say, then, that as far as Kennedy was concerned, he was no different than any other liberal politician as far as being receptive to ideas on urban affairs?

WOOD: That's right. He was receptive to this idea in that he recognized that he had to grapple with it, as he had with Latin American policy. But, I would think, his basic preoccupation then -- that remained for some time -- was in the international front. So this was important and useful, and he realized that he had to have it, but it did not really engage his attention.

STEWART: Was there anyone else during this pre-convention period who was giving him ideas on housing and urban development?

WOOD: Yes, Martin Meyerson was then director of the Joint Center [Joint Center for Urban Affairs] and he'd been approached. Al Sacks [Albert Martin Sacks] of

Harvard Law went to one or two. But basically Martin was off, out of the country or something, and not really able to participate.

I called together a luncheon at the Harvard Faculty Club at one time in that spring, which Miss Henderson organized, in which I pulled together all the urban interests from Cambridge; and they did talk, and we did put together a position paper, among the others.

STEWART: Did you get any feeling of Kennedy's respect for academic people or just how he viewed this group who were working for him during this period? It has often been said, for example, that he was using the group, to a certain extent, for the prestige value that came from having a definite advisory group. Did you ever get this feeling or was this a problem at all?

[-6-]

WOOD: Oh, I had that sense the night after the cocktail party when we went to the Democratic state rally at the Sheraton, and he had a table of Mark Howe and some of us up in front next to the head table, where he commented really how out of place the academics looked in with the Boston pols; which was quite true for most of us. And, on the other hand, you've got to remember from the academic's point of view that they were also having the opportunity of having their ideas considered seriously by someone who was in a position of authority, so that I always felt that it was not in the aura of academics that he moved, but neither was it an unfair or untoward thing.

STEWART: There was no connection, or you had no involvement with him or any of his staff as far as the Powers [John Powers] campaign was concerned, did you?

WOOD: No, he was as aloof as he could be on that for some time. We were in with John Powers on a kind of brain trust basis, but that was a fine adventure of both sides.

STEWART: Was there ever any confusion over just who was leading the academic group at Harvard and MIT? Again, there have been stories that there was either some conflict or some confusion between Ted Sorensen, Fred Holborn, and the other people who were presumably directing the group.

WOOD: I had, by the latter part of the year, the sense that Cox and Chayes were asking me for ideas at specific times, that Deidre was the secretarial gal with considerable intense feelings about Sorensen, Goodwin and the others, and that they were out, really, in the communicative way of deciding when and how what material might be used. And I always had the impression that Ted made the final judgments on that, but I never knew firsthand. I also had the

[-7-]

impression that after Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] signed on, they operated in a more autonomous fashion and that Walt Rostow began to operate in a more autonomous fashion. But I was clearly in a sort of second echelon business in which I never really tried very much to have any direct contact. I responded to what people asked me to do.

STEWART: Was it always clear to you in preparing papers and speeches that you weren't to try to evaluate the political impact of any of your ideas and that there would be a distinction between your contribution and the political side of it?

WOOD: No, that was never clear to me in those days. President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] mad that distinction much clearer in the two task forces I ran for him than the Kennedy people.

STEWART: You were then...

WOOD: You were asked in a vague way what you ought to do about urban affairs, but nobody distinguished what to do in the real world of the tides and the trends or what to do in the political sense. So my memoranda at that time were fairly specifically gauged with some recognition of what I judged to be political reality.

STEWART: That was my basic question. Were you at all involved in the platform writing with Abe Chayes?

WOOD: No.

[-8-]

STEWART: And, as far as the campaign, you say your contributions ceased before the Convention. You had no further involvement after that until the task force?

WOOD: Oh, I guess I wrote a few speeches, and I gave a few speeches in Republican and Protestant neighborhoods. I guess I continued on with some parts, but the thing to make clear is that I was not often in contact with the Senator or his staff, and usually there was somebody else in the academic world as a transmission belt.

STEWART: Did you have anything to do with the Urban Affairs Conference that they conducted...

WOOD: Oh, yes. Oh. that comes back to me.

STEWART: ...in Pittsburgh?

WOOD: That's right. Logue, Hugh Miels and Dick Lee, some of the urban renewal

people concerned about the President and his commitment, came down here and visited him, got his commitment to do the Pittsburgh conference, then phoned me and asked me to come along. There was a meeting out at Logue's house in the Vineyard about this -- that I had to leave because I had taken my parents out to the island and I had to get them back -- in which Ed briefly outlined this proposed conference, put a young man named Bob Hazen [Robert Hazen] down in Washington working on it. And I was happy to go along, I was consulting. I went out there but was not again involved. I think, looking back on this, Lee, Logue, and some of the others were far more anxious in a political sense to get the President committed to a platform more specific than I was. I had felt that they had overstated the capacity of the cities to move, and that they had not really come up with any new programs. So that you could say that, outside the academic

[-9-]

world, Kennedy was far more closely followed by Lee and the practitioners who had a much greater stake in how he felt about it than I did.

STEWART: Do you think, in general, that this Urban Affairs Conference was, I think, the only major speech or the only major involvement that Kennedy had during the campaign in urban problems? He didn't mention that much generally in speeches.

WOOD: That's right. Well, I was on the head table of the luncheon with Governor Lawrence [David L. Lawrence], and he came into town. Meyerson and I were out there, we had to go back. Just about right as he got up to speak, we had to leave for the airport.

STEWART: But this was, I think....

WOOD: This was the major thing, yes.

STEWART: Do you feel that politically he could have done more and could have made more of the issues of urban affairs?

WOOD: Not at that time. I was surprised he made as much.... It wasn't a ringing issue, indeed, until a later time, when he turned to poverty; and President Johnson in the '65 message.... If you look at the battles we had with rent supplements and model cities, we're far from having an urban constituency here. So, I think Kennedy was ahead of his time as a thoughtful guy giving it probably a little bit more than it deserved but not as much as the people deeply concerned wanted.

STEWART: In other words, they had a realistic picture, politically, of what was involved. As far as the task force that was set up during the transition, do you recall any major differences within the group? Were there, what, five of you?

[-10-]

WOOD: Yes. Like the advisory group, again. This was the prototype and the first effort. It didn't have anything like the sophistication and the continuity and the depth that the two I chaired in '64 and '65 had. It was a slapdash one, in which the chairman, McMurray [Joseph P.B. McMurray], had a few things he wanted to say; it had a couple of bankers who had a few technical amendments; it had John Barriere of the House Banking and Currency Committee, the senior staff man, and he had some technical; and I had a few things I wanted to say about urban development, but again, I didn't passionately feel anything very much. And we met in a snowbound weekend in Idlewild, and then we met in the snowbound hotel room down here in Congress. We exchanged a lot of drafts in between. I did some work on the organization, and it was mostly a Noah's Ark of everybody putting in their own piece.

The task force report, in my judgment, in those days, had the function of pushing out some ideas that were still in pretty rough, crude form and forcing the bureaucracy of the departments and the agencies to work on them. By '64, the Budget Bureau had discovered the efficacy of using the task force to pull ideas out. And then by '65, the last one, the model cities one, we were complete with a staff of our own, operating out of the White House, in which I was devoting a major number of weekends and so was every one of my participants. And the level of people was by an order of four or five times as prestigious as the early times. So the whole mechanism had evolved by then. The first one, as I look back on it, I regard as a useful foil to the then Housing and Home Finance Agency but not productive of any great knowledge.

STEWART: There were no restraints, as far as the amount of money....

[-11-]

WOOD: Nobody in that period knew enough to put any restraints.

STEWART: Really? For example, on the amounts that would be recommended on various programs or anything of this sort?

WOOD: No. They may have communicated that to the chairman, but they sure didn't to the members.

STEWART: Did you give any thought to joining the Administration at that time?

WOOD: Not particularly. I had the ambivalence of everybody in Cambridge when I saw who was going and who was leaving. I had a couple of staff requests, a couple of highly tentative inquiries. But I was at the point of still being an associate professor, not quite with tenure, and I decided.... I guess if somebody has asked me, I might have thought about it very seriously, but nobody asked and I did not volunteer.

STEWART: Were you generally critical, or can you think of your main criticisms of the Kennedy Administration as far as housing and urban development are concerned?

WOOD: I got increasingly caught up, enthusiastic about the Administration; I identified with it more. I liked the Weaver appointment [Robert C. Weaver] appointment a great deal though I did not know the Secretary personally. And I was very sympathetic with the d-3's [Federal Housing Administration Section 221] and some of their moderate income. I think the only real criticism I had was on the handling of the proposal for the department status, and I thought that was done sort of in a campaign way and said so. But, generally, I thought things were moving along at a pretty fast clip.

[-12-]

STEWART: As well as could have been expected for that period?

WOOD: Yes.

STEWART: That's about all. Was there any other involvement? You said you did get involved in the 1962 campaign with Edward Kennedy?

WOOD: Yes, with Ted. And I remember at that time, you see, the bulk of the academic community was on the other side, for McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.] so that Jim Burns [James M. Burns], Charley Haar [Charles M. Haar], and I and Sam Beer [Samuel H. Beer] and John Plank were the only five that went for Ted. And we had a nice couple of television contretemps there, but that also involved the whole effort to change the character of the Massachusetts State Committee and the Democratic Party, and the move from Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch] to Gerard Doherty, and a whole set of other changes, and that had very little to do with the President.

STEWART: Going back to Massachusetts politics, had you been involved, for example, in the '56 chairmanship fight at all?

WOOD: No. And I had just begun generally to get involved in Democratic politics in '58. Well, in '58 I had become a town committeeman for the town of Lincoln, which was not a great, prestigious position. But in '58 and '59, I was beginning to work in state politics. And then by '61, I had gotten on the research and development committee and made a tour of the state for the state committee and had begun to get increasingly active. I had sort of made the commitment increasingly as an avocational effort in trying to change the character of the party and of the state committee and the organization, and I got more preoccupied with the state than the national scene.

[-13-]

STEWART: Again, it's frequently been said that President Kennedy -- one of his chief faults politically was that he failed to do anything about the Massachusetts Democratic Party.

WOOD: Yes, I think I may have felt a little critical then. As I look back on it, I can understand why he didn't choose.... Ted gets made at me every now and then -- the amount of efforts we put on it. [LAUGHTER]

STEWART: Yes.

WOOD: But I think that's about it.

STEWART: Okay. Very good.

WOOD: I appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-14-]

25 March 1960

Memorandum

To: Dick Goodwin

From: Deirdre Henderson

Enclosed is a copy of the urban speech with a few additions and corrections.

Page 1: Professor Wood could not find the exact figures which had been left out so he changed the original sentences.

Page 2: Note correct title of the Study Commission.

Page 3: The figure of the Americans moving from cities to suburbs has been altered.

Page 9: The 1.5 billion for urban renewal is based upon a number of estimates by such groups as the Committee for Economic Development and the Rockefeller Report so that further information on this can be produced if necessary.

Professor Wood suggests that we might want to check the figures on pages 1 and 3, with the Census Bureau, but they are the best estimates he could come up with and he thinks they are reliable.

-16-

This is the time I have come to Milwaukee in the last weeks. Perhaps I have made more recent visits than any other Kennedy but I am not by any means the first Kennedy to arrive. One D. Kennedy appears as a signer of the constitution of the Milwaukee County Settler's Club, listing the date as May 4, 1844, and his birthplace as Killarney, Ireland. But, as a more modern Kennedy I am grateful to you. You have received me always with courtesy and hospitality. I know now why Milwaukee comes by its reputation as a city which ever since 1848, welcomes liberals -- with understanding and enthusiasm.

Each time I've returned to the City I've come from the great farming areas of Wisconsin. There I have been talking about the problems of agriculture. It would be pleasant to think that there were no public problems within the city limits, but, of course, there are. We simply exchange one set of problems for another. And it is about the problems of the great American cities and what the federal government can and should do about them, that I want to talk to you tonight.

We can put the public problems of the American city in very simple terms. Basically our troubles arise from the fact that millions leave our farms for urban areas every year. Each year million rural citizens pull up stakes and move out to find urban jobs. Each year southerners migrate north to some central city -- some in search of better economic opportunities some seeking civil rights and true civil liberties.

This migration will not end quickly. Long run trends in agriculture make it plain that fewer and fewer people will work on farms as more and more machines provide the power to harvest crops. The migration will go on; it will swell with an increasing birth rate as growing prosperity enables city dwellers and farmers alike to support larger families; and it will accelerate as time goes on. By 1975, only fifteen years from now, the population explosion will sweep 55 million additional men and women into the metropolitan areas -- fifty million into existing or newly-created suburbs.

How we will care for these newcomers; how we will receive them, accommodate them, and bring them into the pattern of our urban life -- and at the same time improve the quality and situations of urban life -- presents a major challenge for the 60's. It will do us little good to develop an effective agricultural program, to solve the surplus food problem, and to ease the transition of farm communities, if our urban way of life is unsatisfactory to most Americans. If urban life becomes only that busy-day, busy-day, crowded, harassed, unattractive world of blighted areas, inadequate housing, crowded schools, congested traffic, and contaminated water, air and land which most observers chronicle, then, surely we are in trouble.

I do not, of course, have to spell out these problems for you here in Milwaukee. You have been among the first to recognize

study and take action about the problems of urban growth. The reports of your Commission of Metropolitan Problems (check exact name) are recognized as among the most authoritative in the country. The working arrangements which your county and city governments have developed contain effective solutions for many joint problems. Your collaborative suburban programs for expanded water supply, better park and recreational activities show inventiveness and ingenuity. Cities across the country will continue to look to Milwaukee as a leader coping with the problems of urban growth.

Yet, as active and energetic as you have been in tackling these problems, no one here, I believe, would claim that Milwaukee has found the final answer. More important no one believes that Milwaukee is the only city in America which is in trouble. Milwaukee's difficulties are symptomatic of a national urban weakness. Almost a generation ago Franklin Roosevelt reported one-third of the nation ill-housed. Today, even after fifteen years of unparalleled prosperity, over forty million Americans, one quarter of the nation, still live in blighted, obsolete, unclean homes. In fifty years of travel by automobile we still have not developed a coordinated program for automotive, rail and airplane travel. Two decades of suburban migration leave still unsolved the problems of securing adequate local revenues; the issue of how to preserve

park and recreational land; and the task of making sense out of the patchwork of building codes, zoning laws and municipal land use regulations which crisscross metropolitan areas. The very air and water in urban areas are becoming more, not less, polluted. In short, when the existing programs for accommodating newcomers to the cities and for controlling and directing urban growth are looked at one by one, the cynics seem right. Perhaps we really have created an air conditioned nightmare, the great American squirrel cage.

We have built roads but cannot keep up with the increasing number of cars. We rarely think of the commuter who depends upon public transportation -- who cannot afford Mr. Nixon's 'two cars in every garage', let alone a 'four day work week'. We have cleared slums by such techniques which almost guarantee the multiplication of new slums. We have set aside park lands at great effort and great cost, and then we constructed new highways across them. We have authorized costly facilities to purify our water -- but have done little or nothing to stop the increasing pollution of our rivers and streams. In short, we have run very fast in this generation to keep some semblance of law and order in our urban areas, but we gain no ground because we have avoided making thoughtful decisions upon what we actually want our cities to be.

We cannot avoid making these decisions much longer without risking disaster. With one million Americans moving from the farm to the city every year and two million moving from cities to suburbs, the tempo of expansion is too fast for us to grow like Topsy. We can no longer let the individual decisions of real estate developers, home owners and landlords determine how we shall live and work in urban America and expect everything to come out all right. When the bulldozers are chewing up three thousand acres of land each day, when "black top culture" stretches in an unbroken line from Portland, Maine to Richmond, Virginia and from San Francisco to Los Angeles, when 41 billion dollars are being spent to build highways, it is folly to try to muddle through.

This is, in short, the situation which faces us -- an unparalleled migration and an inventory of postponed, unsolved, nagging urban problems.

What can and should the federal government do to meet the challenge? Much depends upon local initiative such as Milwaukee is exhibiting but there are two kinds of measures which should be adopted in Washington. One, the federal government must put its own house in order. It must reexamine the existing programs which developed piecemeal, all the way from housing to the control of water pollution, for a variety of

reasons. Two, as it puts its own house in order, the federal government ought to formulate and help carry out a clear-out policy for directing and guiding urban growth.

Let me make it plain that by these two steps the federal government should not "take over" all urban problems. It should not be a party to restructuring of local and state government without clear local initiative. It should not pick up the tab on all the financing of urban expansion.

What the federal government should do is to make sure that its own activities make up a sensible, coordinated, well-designed package which helps -- and does not complicate -- the builders of better cities.

Let me be specific, both about our need to reorganize our present federal program and our need to provide national leadership in shaping the urban frontier. There are four great federal programs which decisively effect the development of urban areas: housing, urban renewal, urban conservation and transportation. Each of these programs arises out of special needs and circumstances. Each has a history and a specific usefulness all its own which we must continue to recognize. But as presently carried out, not one of them promotes orderly, coordinated, balanced development of our great metropolitan regions. Instead, through lack of planning,

these programs are setting one part of each metropolitan area against the other; suburb against city, county against municipality, neighborhood against neighborhood.

Consider first the housing program. The New Deal housing program designed to guarantee a decent house for every American has been subverted. For the last 8 years the program has been supporting high cost, upper-income housing, homes costing \$15,000 or more. Housing benefits are restricted to the eight percent of Americans making more than \$10,000 a year. At present they do not reach the 40 million in substandard, obsolete homes. This was not what Franklin Roosevelt had in mind. It is not what I have in mind either.

But it is not just the misdirection of the housing program in terms of need which is regrettable today. It is the lack of direction in terms of urban development. At the present time the FHA and VA housing programs encourage builder and lender to construct houses wherever they choose in the urban sprawl. Slums persist; rental housing is at a standstill; housing for minority and lower incomes groups are willfully inadequate. So we remain a home-hungry people.

In my view the time has come for us to use federal mortgage insurance programs as something more than a prop to private construction activities supporting whatever banks and land

developers request. We use these programs to stimulate housing in places where it is appropriate and desirable and to withhold aid from developers seeking further to exploit areas already suffering the pains of excessive growth. The time has come to use the federal mortgage insurance program as a positive instrument for building good communities.

Similarly the federal government should support housing activities only when guided by a general plan for the entire metropolitan area. The formulation of general land use goals should precede the granting of federal credit -- so that we build the right homes in the right places at the right times. The plans should be developed locally; their existence should be the prerequisite to federal support.

At the same time, I think it imperative that we begin to pay attention to the home owner, as well as the banker and the contractor. A sound home insurance program would protect the borrower as well as the lender. We must provide insurance to protect the home owner against foreclosure due to financial difficulty caused by unemployment or illness, just as there is now insurance while helps the bank in its time of financial adversity.

The urban renewal program needs a similar overhauling. Just as we must reorganize the housing programs so we should use our present urban renewal programs to pinpoint areas of healthy

development and to prevent urban sprawl. More is wrong with urban renewal in America today than the dirth of dollars decreed by the Eisenhower Administration. More is wrong than the piecemeal and terribly complicated administrative requirements which hamstring the program. Clearly we need to simplify and expedite the authorization of local projects. We need to provide special subsidies and tax allowances to guarantee that middle class housing finds its way into redevelopment plans. We need to review all parts of the program to insure its financial integrity. But, most of all, we need to recognize that urban renewal in the central city of a metropolitan region -- in and of itself -- can never build a healthy and physically attractive urban region. Just as the home insurance programs should be a part of a general plan of metropolitan development, so a renewal program should never be limited to one municipality in disregard of adjoining governmental subdivisions which are really part of the same metropolitan area.

We are all familiar with that painful experience of clearing a slum area and then trying to find suitable accommodations for the people who have been displaced in the process. The public housing which now exists is no answer. We also all know that it is extraordinarily difficult to find other accommodations for the displaced within the same central city without creating other slums. I propose that urban renewal be put upon a metropolitan wide basis.

More federal money should be made available to communities which have adopted a coordinated metropolitan redevelopment program than to cities or towns which persist in disregarding their neighbors. For example, the federal government might pay three-fourths of the cost of a metropolitan redevelopment program in contrast to one or two thirds of a municipal program covering only part of a metropolitan area. Further, I suggest that the program be amended to provide for open land development of residential homes and that the construction of the new housing proceeds or parallel the destruction of the old slums. We should make sure that displaced families have somewhere to go.

Urban conservation should be the third part of our answer to the challenge of the cities. We are all accustomed to think of the conservation of natural resources in unsettled areas -- of our great national parks and forests which offer unsurpassed opportunities for recreation. The cities need -- and can have -- their own resources if we move quickly to conserve them. It is all too painfully obvious in this field especially that we are proceeding on the same catch-as-catch can basis that plagues housing and renewal. Can we not revitalize, for example, the programs of Federal aid which have been proposed for the acquisition of open spaces again according to a metropolitan plan? Should we

not re-emphasize, within our existing national park program, the development of facilities in urban areas close to the great cities?

Urban transportation is the fourth, and in some ways, the most obvious problem of the cities. Here especially we suffer from the lack of foresight and direction. Transit systems are suffering financial strains, railroads are abandoning commuter service, yet even new highways are so clogged with cars as to be inadequate almost as soon as they are opened for use. We should review thoroughly the present assumption of our federal highway aid program that the automobile is for all purposes and for all times America's chosen instrument of urban transportation. (We are not now speaking of open areas or inter-city travel.) At a minimum, I want to redirect this program to authorize federal financing of rapid transit rights-of-way along new highway routes. Certainly I would want to investigate the feasibility of providing federal support for improving urban rapid transit facilities. Off hand I can see little reason why the automobile commuter is subsidized and the bus, rail and subway commuter is expected to pay his own way. We need to think not in terms of more highways or of "self-supporting" transit lines, busses, or trains (check ?) as separate enterprises. We need to think in terms of an urban "transportation system" which combines all these modes of travel in the most effective fashion for the well being of the whole region

I have talked to you tonight about a new set of federal programs to help our cities and states meet and solve the urban problems we face now and will face for at least a generation. Let me be clear about what I have and have not said. I have not advocated an extension of federal activities or increased national intervention in local affairs. I have not advocated simply spending more money -- although I should make it plain that I regard the Eisenhower vetoes of housing and water pollution appropriations as another example of the faltering Republican faith in America's strength. I should make it plain also that I would want increased appropriations for urban renewal in the amount of approximately \$1.5 billion. Nor have I recommended any doctrine of radical reforms, Constitutional or otherwise, in the institutions of state and local government -- though here again I think local survey commissions are appropriate and timely devices by which to review the effectiveness of our present structures.

What I have tried to say is that we need a new perspective about the vast urban migration which is going on about us -- a perspective less provincial than we have had in the past. I have tried to make the point that no city can go it alone in disregard of its neighbors and expect to create an environment of which it can be proud. I have tried to say that federal programs can no

longer proceed independently but must be brought together by a well conceived plan for determining how entire urban areas will develop over the next generation. I have tried to say that we need to look ahead in managing the urban revolution just as much as we need to look ahead in managing our programs of national survival.

We need have no fears of the urban migration or of the urban revolution that is upon us. It is true that America's roots have been in her farms and her small towns; that many of our ideals and aspirations have been fashioned around the legends of the pioneer, the backwoods man and the homesteader. It is also true that we have never accepted easily the idea of urban life. To many men, cities appear strange, impersonal and confusing, cold and frightening.

But cities need not be that way. When they are properly conceived and properly constructed urban living can blend the benefits of neighborhood communion with the excitement and challenge of living among a large number and a great variety of people. The good city provides privacy as well as friendship. It offers thousands of cultural, economic and recreational opportunities as well as security. It offers freedom in friends, in the choice of occupation and in the use of leisure time. It generates -- as it

has in Milwaukee -- pride in the traditions and the customs of an urban people. It promises civilization.

These are not benefits to be lightly dismissed. Instead, they are the purposes for which we must work. If we are bold enough in the years ahead, we can dream and then build an urban tradition in America which will liberate us in richer ways than we have known before.

January 29, 1960

MEMORANDUM

To: Richard N. Goodwin

From: Deirdre Henderson

Re: Names and Addresses of the Members of the
Academic Advisory Committee who attended
the Meeting on January 24

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cc: Professor Cox

- 32 -

OUTLINE OF URBAN PROGRAM

I. Introduction: The need for a recognition of the fact that we are an urban nation.

There must be a clear statement and positive leadership from the Federal government which will shape the processes of urban growth. Urban problems must be treated as part and parcel of a general indictment of American behavior. There must be a head-on collision with what appears to be the root cause of urban squalor and sprawl, and an effort to deal directly with the urgent need for us to revise our concept of the role of government in our everyday life.

An urban nation cannot continue to live according to rural folklore. The objective would be to bring political leadership to the defense of the city as a preferred way of life. As matters stand now there is no clear statement of national purpose at home any more than there is a sense of direction in our policies abroad. So far as urban life is concerned, there is no vision of what our cities might become; there is no recognition that we must positively direct and shape the processes of urban growth.

Hopefully, this approach need not be quixotic in character. First of all, it need not directly attack the grassroots ideology. Secondly, it need not advocate more government or big government. Third, it certainly need not avoid dealing with specifics - - from schools to renewal.

What it would do, however, is try to get across a message that bigness in local government organization and policy is no more suspect than anywhere else in our national existence. It would emphasize that the effective urban government is today one with some metropolitan characteristics. It would link our disinclination to face up to big challenges abroad and in military affairs with big challenges at home. And it would, in effect, put the Federal government in the position of encouraging public policies at the local level which counteract some of the more unseemly aspects of the market place (i.e. uncontrolled suburban development pollution and central business district deterioration) and which positively intervene to plan for the residential and industrial settlement of our growing population.

The pros and cons of this position, with particular relevance to this campaign, ought to be made explicit. So far as the advantages are concerned, the call for radical surgery, Federal support for substantial state and local structural changes, Federal block grants, Federal tax subventions, seems likely to deal with the problems at hand. Further such a platform can transform reasonably dull though important material on local taxes, housing and commuting, into more dramatic exposition. It can also touch the same raw

nerves that the suburban exposes and central city defenses have reached in literary fashion in the past few years. In short; it can speak of some very real and common concerns about everyday existence for most of us.

At the same time, an attempt to make this kind of appeal risks interfering with what appears to be some deep-seated psychological motivations of escape. It clearly offends some commonplace convictions about small government being best and neighborhoods being friendly. And, it clearly can offend some of the urban interests which have never thought through the implications of their position. Thus it carries the risk of interjecting new ideas and new proposals into the campaign about a set of problems which ought to be solved but don't have to be.

- A. The need to face up to the fact that the United States is an urban country and that the process of urban growth must be guided and directed in the public interest.
- B. The need to create a national policy, develop a clear statement and positive leadership for Federal government participation.
- C. Some selected facts on urban sprawl and squalor--population flux, city decline, suburban stresses and strains, etc.

II. Program: (1) Building a Modern Urban Housing Program.

- A. More encouragement to middle-class housing, below \$15,000 ~~mark~~ point.
- B. More encouragement to city housing: FHA and VA to be recognised as tools for modern policy via selective area authorizations not as underwriters of the market place.
- C. Housing as a part of general metropolitan plan--in effect excluding the principle of a workable program of urban renewal.
- D. Special emphasis for minority housing.

III. Program: (2) Re thinking Urban Renewal.

- A. A chronicle of the difficulties of the present program.
- B. Drastic administrative overall to bring program within capacities of local administrations.
- C. New subsidy arrangements to encourage middle-class housing and other more appropriate functions.
- D. New state participation especially on enforcement of health/sanitation codes.
- E. Vigorous drive to reduce the *temptations and corruptions* now visible in program.

IV. Program: (3) Urban Conservation.

- A. Federal aid to open space program.
- B. Revisions in water pollution legislation.

- C. Reorientation of national park program for more urban emphasis--within a metropolitan plan.
- D. Federal smog investigations.

V. Program: (4) Transportation.

- A. The need for a "Systems" approach in urban transportation.
- B. A new marriage of rail and automobile.
- C. Subsidies for private railroad.
- D. Developing a metropolitan plan.

VI. Program: (5) Suburban Underdevelopment Program.

- A. Technical assistance through the states.
- B. Block grants and tax credits for revenue redistribution.
- C. Detailed assistance for metropolitan planning.