THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 1, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: COMMISSION ON GOALS FOR 1976

1976 will, of course, be the 200th anniversary of the nation, and, we would hope, the final year of your administration. It will be the occasion for much celebration in the traditional manner. There is much to celebrate. It might also, however, be the focus of a unique national effort to bring a measure of coherence and consistent purpose to the great strivings of the present age for institutional change combined with social stability.

The project, as we discussed it, would be simple. In a month or so -- having made some judgments about various arrangements -- you would announce the formation of a National Commission on Goals for the year 1976, and charge it to prepare a schedule of work to be done, changes to be made, progress to be achieved by that date.

The assumption behind such an exercise is twofold. First, that a special effort is in order for this occasion, that America lags where it might reasonably expect to be with respect to a good number of matters. Some of these involve easily quantified, widely accepted indices of public welfare. Thus the United States lags

well behind other nations of comparable wealth in the matter of infant mortality, and is falling even further back. Other issues are more elusive, such as the quality of the urban environment, the degree of participation by citizens in public matters, but can nonetheless be estimated at a reasonable level of approximation. All in all a fascinating and important range of knowledge and inquiry.

A central fact of our time is that large numbers of Americans are coming to question how well our fundamental institutions are working. John Gardner devoted the Godkin Lectures to this subject at Harvard last week and judged they were working poorly indeed: worse, that the nation shows little capacity to understand this.

The National Industrial Conference Board recently assembled a very high-level group of (anonymous) businessmen, academics, and government officials to forecast the course of public affairs in the 1970's. The opening judgment is worth reading:

OBSOLESCENCE IN THE UNITED STATES INFRASTRUCTURE

> Obsolescence is attacking and in some cases dangerously weakening critical structural elements of U.S. society. Deterioration appears to have set in during the Forties and has been accelerated since by the increasing rate and scale of scientific and technological change. Generally speaking, and with notable exceptions,

> this is a condition which more perceptive leaders have only recently discovered, which young adults today intuitively discern and articulate, but which the majority of the public does not recognize as such.
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> What emerges from this report are the impressions that (1) many decision-makers have in past years done a poor job of anticipating and managing deterioration and obsolescence in the political and socioeconomic structure of the nation; (2) the condition is widespread, massive, and advanced; (3) it has rendered many leaders, institutions, and programs increasingly inflexible, unresponsive to public needs, and irrelevant at a time when the nation requires the best of its leadership and its institutions; (4) the most perplexing questions are how and where to begin to "get on top" of the problems of such magnitude?

Previous Efforts

Only two Presidents in the past attempted anything like a systematic and comprehensive survey of social conditions and social needs. Interestingly, they are your two Republican predecessors.

President Hoover in 1929 appointed a group of "eminent scientists to examine into the feasibility of a national survey of social trends in the United States." Thereupon a Commission was appointed, with the distinguished Columbia Economist Wesley C. Mitchell, of Research a predecessor of Dr. Burns as director/of the National Bureau of Economic Research, as chairman. The report, entitled Recent Social Trends, was published October 11, 1932. It became a classic

volume of America social science. Its basic technique was to determine the direction in which matters such as population, mineral extraction, technological invention, urbanization, crime, taxation, the arts, or public administration had been moving, and to forecast from this which way they were likely to continue.

President Eisenhower established the Commission on National Goals in 1959. Henry Wriston, also of Columbia (as President of The American Assembly) was chairman. The effort was sponsored by private foundations, and conducted through the American Assembly. The report, entitled Goals For Americans was issued November 16, 1960. It was not as ambitious a technical undertaking as had been the earlier one, but it followed a similar pattern with respect to subject matter.

Goals at Home

1. The Individual
2. Equality
3. The Democratic Process
4. Education
5. The Arts and Sciences
6. The Democratic Economy
7. Economic Growth
8. Technological Change
9. Agriculture
10. Living Conditions
11. Health and Welfare

Goals Abroad

12. Helping to Build an Open and Peaceful World
13. The Defense of the Free World
14. Disarmament
15. The United Nations

Weaknesses of Earlier Efforts

There were two principal weaknesses to the earlier efforts. Both appeared in the final months of the administration that created them. In addition, neither effort was linked either to a time table or a set of hard cost estimates. (The National Planning Association, for example, costed out the Eisenhower goals and found it would be quite impossible to meet them.)

Nonetheless, a precious precedent exists. And a maxim from the introduction to Race in Social Trends "A nation advances not only by dymanic power, but by and through the maintenance of some degree of equilibrium among the moving forces."

New Techniques

Compared to 1929, even to 1959, we are today much better equipped to make short and long term forecasts of social trends, and sophisticated judgments as to the opportunities and problems that will accompany them. Three simple examples may be cited:

Population

| | 1969 | 1976 |
|---|---|---|
| | 203.6 | 222.3 |

GNP

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1958 dollars | $ 732.6 | $ 976.5 |
| Current dollars | $ 427.0 | $1,471.9 |

GNP Per Capita

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1958 dollars | $3,600 | $4,400 |
| Current dollars | $4,550 | $6,600 |

Beyond this, as you know, the Interagency Growth Project -- after nearly two decades of continuous work -- has developed an econometric model of the American economy for 1970, and will shortly have one for 1980. I believe this will be the most sophisticated model in the world.

We are already developing, in the Budget Bureau, and in a panel of outside experts which the Urban Affairs Council is putting together pursuant to your directions concerning the Year 2000, a considerable "in house" capacity to do this work. It would seem to me essential that any effort you undertake should incorporate the most advanced methodology in this field. It is not enough that a report simply reflect the feelings of distinguished men. Moreover, the effort itself should help change the way this subject is discussed, and should make a permanent addition to the capacity of the government to carry on such activity.

The Nixon Commission

Three features would set your effort apart from any previous one. Indeed, if it succeeds, it would be an historic beginning.

First, whereas there has been a sufficiency of commissions of late, each has taken a more or less narrow area as its concern, few -- almost none -- have costed out their proposals, and none have done any cross-impact analysis which considers the degree to which change in one area affects another, so that many goals are in fact incompatable. At long last realism would come to this subject. And, painful to state, honesty..

Second, whereas almost all previous efforts, large and small, have tended to appear at the end of an administration, thus constituting a hapless charge to the incoming group, yours would be the first ever by a newly incumbent administration to establish goals which it would itself seek to attain within its own life span.

Third, whereas all previous commissions, whatever their charge, have created ad hoc machinery to carry on their work, thereafter disbanding and leaving no permanent addition to government capacity for such undertakings, yours could lay the basis for the establishment of a permanent planning and forecasting function in the Executive Office of the President. For a generation this has been an obvious need, one constantly reiterated by groups such as the Heineman Commission. Now it would become a reality.

Six or seven years being a relatively brief period with respect to most areas of social concern, it will almost certainly be necessary for your commission to make more general assessments of the issues they treat with, establishing longer range goals than simply 1976. Thus the effort can reasonably be expected to continue after that date.

The Commission Membership

Because of the historic character of such a commission it is obviously necessary that it be put in the hands of persons in whom

you have the utmost confidence, and also that the staff work be done by the Federal government itself. (Bringing in those experts that might be needed on a consultative basis.) Two "models" come to mind. First, that of President Hoover: group made up of academic experts with no political interests as such. Second, that of President Eisenhower: a body of eminent citizens, none of them academics as such, but supported by highly qualified technicians. I tend to the latter view, but have no strong feeling at this time.

Timing

I would think the commission should be asked to report by July 4, 1970, and that hopefully, there would be some input for your domestic program next Winter.

It is entirely feasible, in a pattern set by Mayor Erik T. Johnson of Dallas, that your commission could hold assemblies in cities across the nation to discuss what its findings are to be, and thereafter to meet with citizen groups to discuss how they are to be implemented. Certainly in the final report, or in your response, there should be specific emphasis on implementation: who is to do all this; how; at what cost.

Daniel P. Moynihan