

folios Bevan  
Taylor

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1 CHAIRMAN KERNER: Would you like to ask your question?

2 MR. THORNTON: No, no.

3 MR. HARRISON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the  
4 Commission, Mayor.

5 I think the greatest danger facing this country today  
6 is an attitude which refuses to face up to the cumulative  
7 grievances that have been compiled with and among Negroes in  
8 this country over some four centuries. And, I think that unless  
9 the country is in a position now, I think Mr. Whitney Young  
10 put it very eloquently some few weeks ago when he said the  
11 country is now at a stage in its history when they must decide  
12 to either completely liberate Negroes in this country annihilate  
13 them. And one of the reasons I was very pleased to come before  
14 this Commission was precisely because I am very concerned  
15 that the reactionary attitude that the Congress appears to be  
16 taking to the problems facing the country. James Baldwin  
17 talked about the fire sometime. I think the fire he was referring  
18 to is here now. And I cannot emphasize too strongly that  
19 unless the men in this country who are responsible for putting  
20 forth legislation that can change immeasurably the lives  
21 of Negroes in this country, unless the city governments and  
22 city officials and industry in this country are prepared to  
23 face up to the crisis that this country is facing, then I think  
24 that the only other alternative is to appropriate more money  
25 for more National Guardsmen and more tanks and more guns and

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1 be prepared for the inevitable bloodshed that can only result.  
2 I don't mean that in the sense of a threat, in the sense of  
3 saying that if certain things are not done, certain people will  
4 do certain other things. I think it has already become all  
5 too evident that we live in a society that is affluent, that is  
6 rapidly progressing technologically, but you still have  
7 thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people  
8 that can only look on that affluence from afar and who  
9 resent the fact that they have not been allowed to participate  
10 and who see no indication from the top levels of government,  
11 city government, that says to them that something is going to  
12 happen and happen tomorrow that will allow them to perform and  
13 become a part of what this country says that it is trying to  
14 be. And once again, I want to stress that if this Commission  
15 deals at all with the question of outside agitators, with the  
16 question of, I think Mayor Cavanagh put it quite well when he  
17 referred to the shame of our cities, and the shame of our  
18 cities as well as the shame of this country, is that it does  
19 not appear to have been willing to face up to just what has  
20 been happening to Negro people in this country. And I think  
21 if Mayor Cavanagh can be accused of aiding and abetting and  
22 citing merely because he happens to have the courage  
23 and foresight to tell the truth about it, because I think in  
24 that sense that makes him almost a hero and it makes any other  
25 man who has the courage and fortitude to stand up and say, well,

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1 we have done some things that were wrong, we have treated  
2 Negroes terribly, we have discriminated, we have racists in our  
3 attitudes, we have got to change and I think that makes them  
4 heroes. If in fact, there are outside agitators involved in  
5 this whole situation in the cities and in this country today,  
6 there are rats that eat people's children, there are merchants  
7 that gouge people, there are landlords that continue to  
8 take advantage and exploit people with the aid and comfort of  
9 the state legislatures for the most part. So that -- and  
10 once again I can't stress too strongly the urgency of the  
11 situation.

12 I think that the country, if it now is -- now is the  
13 time, today, yesterday, if possible, to move forward with  
14 imaginative programs and set some priorities and that political  
15 expediency not be the chief among those priorities, that the  
16 first priority must be to begin to deal in an effective way  
17 because Negroes for the most part do not believe that this  
18 country really has its welfare at heart and until the country  
19 can do something to convince them that they are prepared  
20 to put the force and the force and prestige of this nation  
21 behind them and their rights, I am afraid the country is in  
22 very serious trouble and I think that to think in any other  
23 terms is only to invite disaster. I hate to sound like a  
24 pessimist and I hate to say I told you so, but I have indicated  
25 a number of times and a number of other people have indicated

1 some of the solutions to the problems but I think that this  
2 Commission has the responsibility and can achieve a great  
3 deal of good by going to the President of the United States  
4 and convincing him and the Congress and the people of the  
5 country and convincing them of the urgency of the situation.

6 MR. THORNTON: One other question. Mr. Mayor, one  
7 of the problems, of course, that has been mentioned many times,  
8 including by you, of the central cities and the moving to the  
9 central cities of the Negroes from the south and other parts  
10 of the country into the central cities and the movements of  
11 the white population out of those central cities into the suburbs,  
12 can you think of any alternative to just the assumption that  
13 this is going to continue, the movement of Negroes, into the  
14 central cities, and that the only plan then is to reconstruct  
15 or rehabilitate or something central cities? Is there any  
16 alternative of a plan that might stop that trend of moving  
17 towards the cities and the development of the Negro future  
18 and welfare and wellbeing back in the communities where he  
19 is, and that -- or to smaller communities instead of every-  
20 thing being moved toward the central cities that I think an  
21 estimate we heard, 80 per cent of the Negro population by  
22 1980 or before would be in our central cities? Is there any  
23 plan -- you had some excellent recommendations here on what  
24 could be done in central cities. Is there something going  
25 beyond that that might minimize to some extent, if we had some