

# Anderson says Americans

1-3-75  
By JACK ANDERSON

WASHINGTON — As we move into 1975, national morale is shaky.

Across the front pages march the grim phalanxes of inflation, recession, scarcity, crime and corruption with heavy tread.

They have sent out stabs of fear that good times are forever gone and our system is crumbling under the forces of disintegration.

On Newsstands, national magazines challenge passers-by with apocalyptic

covers: one depicts a well-to-do family sitting down to a Christmas dinner of empty plates; another trumpets "The End of Affluence: The Last Christmas in America"; a third cover announces that we are "Coming Around to Socialism."

Erudite pundits blithely tell us that the edifice America has built is junk, now come tumbling down about us.

Great difficulties loom before us in 1975, no one can doubt that. But before writing off the future or jumping into a briar patch of quack nostrums, a little stock taking is in order.

Remember the 1950s? That decade opened on a surge of Korean War inflation, followed with three back-to-back recessions.

Hanging over the chronically depressed economy were two spectres that promised untold trouble. Remember? One was automation, which threatened to bring mass unemployment by wiping out millions of traditional jobs; the other was the after-effect of the postwar baby boom.

What would happen, went the refrain, when 70 million kids poured into the

## dispel doomsday pundits

school system and then the job market? The mathematical extrapolations were ghastly. At the levels of growth and capacity, which were then current, the incoming hordes would be locked out, first without classrooms and teachers, then without jobs, houses, hospitals, highways.

To ward off a catastrophe that would bring on a breakdown of society, we would have to spend more, train more and construct more in two decades than in all the previous years of our national life combined. Stagnant America lacked

the will and the vision, the critics said; it couldn't be done.

Well, we did it. What we accomplished just yesterday is worth reviewing. For if we grasp what we have done, then we shall gain a sense of what we can do. This may help us meet the challenge of reviving the economy and developing new energy sources.

Part of the story is chronicled in the book, "The Real America," by Ben Wattenberg, an author with a nose for doomsday cant and an uncanny gift for making the cold statistics come to life.

Other facts have been gathered by my staff.

Here's the story, all carefully documented:

— Since 1950, we have made it possible for — hold your hats — 74 million people to be enrolled in schools today. That's one third of the nation! Nine million are in college, more than double the 1960 figure. From our poorest homes, earning from \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year, 21 per cent enter college. Of our college population,

See ANDERSON, page A-5

(Continued From

60 per cent are the children of parents who did not attend college. Thus, while we went about our ordinary business, we produced the greatest miracle of upward mobility in human history.

— Since 1950, employment has expanded fast enough to absorb almost all those postwar babies. Manual labor and menial jobs declined. But the ditch digger re-emerged as a bulldozer operator and the maid as a bank teller.

— Since 1950, America has constructed from scratch a suburbia that houses 35 million people. In a twinkling, as it were, we erected the physical equivalent of a new nation, containing more houses, furniture, bathtubs, vehicles, stores, theaters, libraries, communications equipment, paved roads and public services than the efforts of centuries have accumulated in such advanced nations as France, Great Britain or Italy. Aesthetes may deride these lookalike homes on their quarter acres, but they represent the best material living conditions ever created for working people anywhere.

— Since 1950, the median income of the American family has doubled. With inflation taken into account, average

family income, measured in constant 1972 dollars, has risen from \$4,500 to more than \$11,000. Distress over inflation and fear of recession cause us to forget this gain. But there it is, the greatest and broadest increase in well-being ever recorded.

— Since 1950, working conditions have improved dramatically. Shameful conditions still exist in some industries and they must be relentlessly exposed. But for most people, gains have been impressive. Work begins later and retirement comes earlier, cutting 10 to 15

(From Page A-1)

years off the working life. In 1949, 61 per cent of our workers got paid vacations of two weeks; by 1972, 87 per cent got paid vacations of four weeks or more.

— What of the poor? Since 1959, poverty has been cut in half; the percentage of families below the poverty line has dropped from 22 to 11 per cent. Substandard housing fell from 16 to 7 per cent. In the past dozen years, 14 million Americans crossed over the poverty line. For those who remain below, the rate of exit offers hope. Meanwhile, food stamps, rent supplements and health care make poverty less the Dickensian horror of old.

We who have wrought these advances in our own time have not suddenly atrophied and fallen sterile, ready for the ideological embalmers. Whatever innovations the new era calls for, we'll be equal to them.