

# What Bobby Wanted

By VICTOR RIESEL

WASHINGTON — After those bullets slashed down Jack Kennedy, there were moments when Bob Kennedy sat among a few friends and mused aloud about "getting out of the line of fire."

He was the head of the family — vast and patriarchal — and now with Jack gone it would need him, he would say. There had been so much death and pain. For months he walked and talked with a self-shrouded sense of doom.

He mused. But he decided to stay in the line of fire.

He mused. But he shrugged off that all-pervading sense of doom. In its place in quiet moments was a fatalism which easily became apparent when he discussed his political life in the intimacy of man-to-man, off-the-record talks.

"Who knows what can happen?" He would ask. "Look at my brother."

Not too long ago, I asked Bob to set to paper the thoughts which most pressed upon him in this campaign — the one issue which he would stress again and again. I wanted him to go beyond the rhetoric of whistle stops and courthouse steps. He agreed.

Two days before he was shot, Bob Kennedy kept his word. He sent along his thoughts on what he felt most strongly.

Here is his message, word for word, written especially for this column:

By ROBERT F. KENNEDY

LOS ANGELES — 1968 is a year of challenge. It must also be a year of change. It is a year in which we must face up to serious problems — problems which, despite increased commitments by our government, have spread and become more acute in the last half decade.

It is a year in which political leaders must confront issues — not avoid them. We must not be content merely with pointing to past achievements or the statement of self-evident goals or the labeling of new slogans.

Those of us who are candidates for elective office must, I believe, present to the public our blueprints for solving the problems our nation faces.

Space in this column does not permit my setting forth the programs and proposed actions which I have proposed in public speeches and state-

## for America

ments over the past three months.

It does, however, afford an opportunity to discuss what I believe to be our most serious crisis: the deep divisions within our society and particularly within our cities — the divisions between those of our citizens who have never had the opportunity to share in the American dream and those of us who take for granted our

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*"... our most serious crisis: the deep divisions within our society . . ."*

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jobs, the homes we live in, the education of our children, our family doctor, and the food we eat.

Let me cite some cold, hard facts which reveal the seriousness of these conditions:

—In the typical big city ghetto, barely three adult men out of five have any work at all. Only two out of five earn \$60 a week or more.

—In our urban slums as few as 30 per cent finish high school — and those that do, stand no better than a 50-50 chance of having the equivalent of an 8th grade education.

—An infant born to a Negro ghetto family is three times as likely to die in his first year

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of life. He has as much chance to live to age 20 as a white man has of living to 40.

He and his parents and brothers and sisters, along with 40 per cent of those whose skin is black, live in dilapidated, deteriorated housing, often without plumbing, more often than not infested with rats that bit as many as a quarter of a million people last year.

—When he is old enough to walk in the streets he will be among the 1-3 of all Americans who now fear to walk alone at night in the streets of their own neighborhood, for he will be 3½ times more likely to be robbed and his sister 3½ times more likely to be assaulted as the average person.

—And he may be among the 14.5 million Americans who too often go to school without breakfast or to bed hungry.

These are among the conditions which afflict 29.7 million American citizens. But these are merely statistics. They do not reflect the feeling of hopelessness, the resentment, the distant look on a hungry face.

These are the conditions which lie at the root of the violence in our cities — four consecutive summers of burning and looting.

Intelligence, compassion, and above all the will to make the sacrifices necessary to commit our full resources are the ingredients which we must have to solve the urban crisis and to save our nation from a mounting and ever more demanding cycle of hate and fear.

Despair and sorrow and resentment can no longer be attacked with thoughts and words. We have already made too many empty promises. We are long overdue for action — swift action — just action — specific and comprehensive action.

The action we take must be

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based upon the following principles:

First, we must be willing to work together — black and white, government and private enterprise, clergy and concerned citizens — with all the energy and commitment that it is humanly possible to muster.

Government alone cannot — and in a responsible society, should not — carry the sole responsibility. Not only would the cost be great, but the achievement of communication and dialogue between black and white demands the participation and involvement of concerned citizens, community organizations, foundations, and the business community.

Second, action on any one front alone will not succeed. Providing a man a job, while in my judgment the most important step we can take, will not improve the schools his children attends or assure that

*"The community itself must take the leadership through resident-controlled institutions, in its own building process."*

medical care will be available even though he cannot afford it.

Building new housing without providing social services or transportation to get to work or accessible health services will result in one slum replacing another.

Improving the quality of education or job training without any promise of a job at the end will not ease the drop-out rate. But action on all these matters in concert will build a community.

Third, residents themselves must participate in the development and implementation of local projects. The community itself must take the leadership, through resident controlled institutions, in its own building process.

Fourth, no program to attack the problems of the inner city can be conducted in the isolation of the ghetto.

Our efforts in urban America must be combined with

programs to create opportunity for the poor on the farms and in small towns and suburban communities. Jobs, education, health care, housing — all must be provided for the poor wherever they live or want to live.

Only through this kind of effort in all areas can we make it possible for both urban and rural disadvantaged Americans to live and work where they and their families wish.

At the same time, however, it must be understood that the

building of a truly integrated society depends on the development of economic self-sufficiency and security in the communities of poverty, for only then will the residents of these areas have the wherewithal to move freely within the society. Those who speak of ending the colonialism of the ghetto must therefore recognize that the economic and social development of that community is at the heart of any policy of creating full mobility.

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