

Gardner Sees Peril in Dissent; Offers Plan to Rebuild Society

By HENRY RAYMONT
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WASHINGTON, June 8 —

John W. Gardner, sounding much like a political candidate, offered today a seven-point program of national conciliation to rebuild "a cohesive society despite the tensions of daily life."

Mr. Gardner, chairman of the National Urban Coalition and a former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Johnson, said that the program, based on a rededication of America's moral and political values, was intended to counter despair, "a luxury that can only be afforded by people who have nothing important to do."

"Those of us who are in the thick of action," he said, "must believe we at least have a chance to work for a better future."

Speaking to a luncheon audience in the ballroom of the Shoreham Hotel here on the second day of the annual convention of the American Booksellers Association, Mr. Gardner warned against what he called the "serious pathologies of dissent" that have arisen in the nation, together with "the frightening trend toward repression."

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The tendency of many dissenters to despair of bringing about change by working within the political system, he continued, reflects a failing of the American people generally to believe in their institutions.

Mr. Gardner contended that the Nixon Administration was showing a similar impatience through "the increasing inclination of some governmental and law enforcement agencies to invade our civil liberties."

In an expansive analysis that developed the ideas he presented in his new book, "The Recovery of Confidence," Mr. Gardner offered a program that called for "a shared vision" by all the segments of the community. He outlined the program as follows:

¶ "We cannot talk about the path ahead without talking about the guiding values by which we may judge the correctness of our course.

¶ "We cannot talk of our guiding values without a program for building those values into our institutions and laws and customs.

¶ "We cannot talk of an agenda for social action without talking of the means through which we hope to accomplish such action.

¶ "It is only through the political process that we can medi-



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John W. Gardner

ate the collision between the deep currents of demand for change and the enormous capacity of social institutions to resist such change.

¶ "We cannot talk of a health tradition of criticism without noting on the one hand the serious pathologies of dissent that have arisen in the land and on the other hand the frightening trend toward repression.

¶ "We cannot talk of the rebirth of a nation without talking of a rebirth of individual responsibility.

¶ "It is fashionable today to be pessimistic and to speak ill of our society, but we cannot hope for success in the hard tasks ahead without some measure of confidence. We must believe in ourselves."

Mr. Gardner's address drew a standing ovation from about 2,500 publishers, booksellers and authors who attended the luncheon. A score of well-wishers rushed to the dais after the speech, among them Mrs. Natalia D. Murray, the manager of New York's Rizzoli Bookstore.

"I'm a naturalized American citizen," the gray-haired woman told him with a trace of an Italian accent. "And I want you to change over to the Democratic party so that we can vote for you for President."

Obviously pleased with the compliment, Mr. Gardner, a registered Republican, smiled and shook her hand over the speaker's table. Pressed by others on his political plans, Mr. Gardner simply smiled and walked away, waving cheerfully.

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