Urban expert cites racial separation

By Robert Downs

One of the men in the front ranks of the battle to save our cities presented a cogent and persuasive analysis of the urban crisis last Tuesday night in the CAR's lecture hall. In one of the series of lectures sponsored by the Joint Centre for Urban Studies of Harvard, Mr. Anthony Downs, President of the Real Estate Research Corporation, declared that courage, patience, but above all, realism, will be need to preserve our urban communities.

Mr. Downs, who wrote a significant section of the Kerner Report, observed that the standard of living, services, and levels of incomes are generally improving, people are now demanding better public services. He noted that middle-class Negroes who have been largely on the move away from the ghetto, however, the economic fact remains that more than 400,000 Negroes are moving into the central cities each year, while the number of whites is decreasing. While Negroes comprise not only 95% of our suburban population but also almost 60% of the rate of the increase in suburban population.

The determination of our cities has had the effect of making them less attractive to all but the poor, a trend which has increased the tax base in most cities. Today, most new construction and most new investment is located in the suburbs. Government efforts to rectify this serious imbalance are hampered by the fact that costs have been rising rapidly, while the productivity of government services has not increased.

Cities going broke

Mr. Downs then examined the consequences of this increasing trend of rapidly rising costs and needs despite lower revenues. In addition to their declining tax bases, *cities* are going broke because their power to tax themselves is often restricted by local governments. While Negro dominance in the cities is increasing, white movement in urban areas is decreasing and federal programs have been small and ineffective.

Mr. Downs said that we must recognize that the need for rapid change through technology should be considered alongside the trend of social inertia. He remarked that the greatest change of the last few decades has been the effect of television, which has shown the affluence of the majority to the poor. He believes that television has shown not only the competencies of Negro Violence in the coverage of riots and also an exaggerated view of Negro demonstrations and incidents which will continue, however.

In the critical field of education, Mr. Downs suggested a fundamental reason for the usually high quality of suburban schools. In the suburbs, a real sense of competition exists among the schools since residents are normally free to move to another community. In the ghettos, however, the economic fact that residents cannot easily leave the area creates the lack of competition which results in the lagging quality. In a question period afterward, Mr. Downs discussed the reasons that community control would lead to better schools.

Four Suggestions

Mr. Downs suggested four general areas of action which could lead to

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