

I am sure that these remarks come as somewhat of a surprise to you; that you expected nebulous promises and rationalizations and possibly a light endorsement of the Kerner report. This I could not do. Some hard things needed to be said. The desperate need to confront the problem squarely justified the political risk in saying them.

I need your help, but your help would be of little value if you did not know and subscribe to the objectives for which I seek it. We can do much together — little apart. Blind militancy must be converted into constructive purpose. This cannot occur so long as you or I condone or cling to racism, black or white. We do not deserve the mantle of leadership unless we are prepared to wear it proudly and, if need be, defiantly.

Above all, I believe you represent the views of the overwhelming majority of Maryland's Negro citizens — responsible, hard-working, decent people who are as horrified by the events of the past days as you or I. These are the people who will be unjustly victimized by a hardening of attitudes in the responsible, decent white community — white people who clearly repudiated racism in the 1966 election — white people who could normally be expected to endorse the 1967 open housing legislation on referendum this November.

My greatest fear is this polarization of attitudes as an aftermath of violence. Next I fear that we cannot endure continuous tension over the next months — that our community cannot live in constant fear that any irrational provocation may cause racial war.

Together we must work first to prevent polarization and second to reduce tension. I will need your vision and your voice. Now as never before your articulate, responsible leadership is needed. I am prepared to do whatever I can to aid the innocent victims of last weekend's rampage, to alleviate clear abuses and to enlarge opportunity within the inner city.

We must do this — as I said in my report to the people last Sunday night — “not out of fear of reprisal but out of certain faith that it is right.”

So let us begin to rebuild now — to rebuild our City and to rebuild the image of Baltimore. Let us work together — not as black and white — but as responsible citizens of Maryland who uphold the law; as concerned citizens who are united in their dedication to eliminate prejudice and poverty or any conditions which create hopelessness and despair.