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D E A R F R I E N D S

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Greetings:

Sometime ago, we quoted the columnist who pointed out that Elbie Jay seemed to follow the philosophy - "talk is cheap, so use plenty of it". It was so obvious in the Thursday night homily after the Newark, Detroit and lesser riots. Particularly the part about Prayer. Always an effective and soul-cleansing approach. We have had - Pray for Peace - even using it for a postal cancellation slogan - while we bombed hell out of Vietnam. Now Pray for Surcease from Riots. And we don't know whether God is dead, in Argentina, or has forgotten to turn up his earphone after shutting it down to escape the earlier outpourings from Elbie Jay.

Nothing else is cheap. Not the Viegnam War - at a rate of \$500,000,000 per week and more. Quite a sum, anyway it is counted - if it is counted. And not cheap in blood - unless there is some satisfaction that enemy losses are 10X our losses, according to Pentagon sources.

We have escalated in Vietnam with no noticeable gains. Maybe we will quit soon. It's five years since the big push began. Most warmakers quit in that length of time if they haven't been able to win. They are either licked or they see the light. Even King George III, no brain, did that by 1781.

The President's biggest escalation has been in his budgets. After the first corny putting out White House lights, the budget and the deficits have been ascending steeply. Running toward \$165,000,000,000 per year. And only a couple of years ago, men spoke of topping the \$100,000,000,000 mark with awe. Maybe the first 100 billion is the hardest - the next and next come progressively easier. Like the proverbial descent into hell.

We extend very good wishes to the New Commission called into being by Mr. Johnson. We hope they will seek for causes that bring on riots and arson. To get down under the layers of fat salve we have goosed on the problem. Fat salve that has benefited mostly inept politicians, gorged slum landlords, gorging loan and credit sharks and shameless landowners. After their take from our welfare and poverty and housing programs, the little good gained has cost the taxpayers of America a tremendously inordinate price.

We hope that the New Commission will see that taxing slums at the same rate as homeowners and business pay, will do more to end slums faster than urban renewal programs which reward those who have caused the decay of whole city areas.

We hope the New Commission will realize that we must make men self-sufficient, earning for themselves rather than ill-planned, ill-administered handouts. We must restore manhood and self-dignity.

We hope the New Commission will take note of Chester Bowles' article "Who Owns the Land" on the Editorial page of the New York Times of July 22nd. Will note what our land reform did for disadvantaged people in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea since World War II. Will inquire whether such land reform thinking couldn't help some part of our Negroes, Puerto-Ricans, and Mexican-Americans - rather than underwriting hopeless, sordid slum existence.

We hope the New Commission will inquire about curbs on the fantastic rise in land costs. That housing may be made available - by private building which can do it best and cheapest - instead of public authorities that have made minimum apartments in New York go to over \$20,000 per unit and over \$15,000 per unit in a cheap housing area like Tucson.

We hope the New Commission will inquire into the use of schools, idle in the summer months, when they could provide meaningful training for technical and commercial employment for idle young boys and girls.

This and other constructive steps. Anything but cheap talk. Because talk is not cheap - as all of us are becoming acutely aware.

-- Joseph Zashin