Beyond GNP

By Robert F Kennedy

*Gross National Product measures the value of the goods produced and services provided in a time span. It is generally used to measure the health of a nation’s economy. Bobby Kennedy critiqued how many use this indicator to measure America’s well-being. List in the T chart below what is included and what is not included in the GNP.*

University of Kansas, March 18, 1968

Too much and for too long, we seemed to have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product, now, is over $800 billion dollars a year, but that Gross National Product - if we judge the United States of America by that - that Gross National Product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children.

Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.

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| GNP includes | GNP does not include |
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What measures would you use to evaluate the well-being of our nation?

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| GNP includes | GNP does not include |
| Industry and cars: air pollutionCigarette adsAmbulances JailsDeforestationUrban SprawlWeapons: guns, knives, nuclear weaponsTV violence | HealthEducationArtsCompassion/GenerosityRelationshipsGovernment  |

What measures would you use to evaluate the well-being of our nation?

Economics, but also physical health, healthy community, good governance, sustainable development