

From the Office of
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Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D.-Minn.) called for "definite action" at the forthcoming session of Congress on extending the coverage and liberalizing the benefits of the nation's social security system, in an address last night (Wednesday, Nov. 18) before a meeting of the Communication Workers Union in Minneapolis.

Calling attention to hearings on the social security program just opened by a special subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, Senator Humphrey warned:

"We can study social security to death, and it won't feed any hungry people. It's time for action, not more talk. Both political parties have promised such action. There's no excuse for stalling further."

As "minimum improvements" in the present program, Senator Humphrey called for:

1. Extension of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance coverage to those not now covered by the program.
2. Increasing the amount of old age insurance benefits.
3. Increasing the amount of insurance benefits for widows and orphans.
4. Liberalizing the retirement test from the present \$75 a month to at least \$1200 a year.
5. Reducing the retirement age from 65 to 55 for persons who have to retire prematurely due to physical disability.
6. Providing for the rehabilitation of persons who are physically disabled.
7. Providing for hospital insurance for all persons age 65 and over.
8. continuing the \$5 a month increase to old age assistance recipients.

Extended coverage, Senator Humphrey said, should "enable farmers, farm hands, ministers, college and university instructors, and other groups not now covered to be included in the program".

In regard to benefits, Senator Humphrey added: "At the present time, the average amount of the insurance benefit is only about \$85 to \$90 a month for a couple aged 65 and over who have retired since 1952. I believe these payments should be increased so they will average at least \$100 a month. At the present time, many aged widows are receiving only about \$45 a month. I believe their benefits should be increased to \$60 a month. Benefits of orphans are averaging about \$30 a month. They should be increased."

By increasing the amount of the retirement test and changing the requirement from a monthly to an annual basis, he said, "many insurance recipients will be able to earn additional amounts to supplement their insurance benefits."

"Many persons become physically unable to continue their work, as they become older. They should be allowed to draw their retirement benefits if they are physically unable to work".

Senator Humphrey's comments on other points in his program included:

Rehabilitating disabled: "At the present time, we are rehabilitating only about one-fourth of the number who become permanently disabled each year. We should provide funds from the insurance program to rehabilitate insured disabled persons, and thus aid in returning thousands of persons to productive activity."

Hospital Insurance for Aged: "Most aged persons do not have hospitalization insurance. The costs of hospitalization insurance for the aged have made it difficult for Blue Cross plans and private insurance to cover the risk for older persons."

Continuing increase in old age aid: "Congress voted in 1952 a \$5 a month increase per recipient in funds available for the payment of old age assistance. This increase expires on October 1, 1954. In May 1953, the average payment to assistance recipients in Minnesota was \$45 a month. If the Federal increase is allowed to expire, Minnesota will lose \$5 a month for each old age aid recipient. I shall urge continuation of the increase."



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