Poverty Speech - Arizona

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These diverse men, however, produced a document whose Preamble opened with these words: "We the People of the United States." Within their diversity, the Founders had left no doubt about their commitment to strengthen and preserve a union of states and people.

You meet here today to express a similar commitment. You represent different states, different agencies, different population groups, and different political views, yet your

ultimate identification -- like those 55 men in Philadelphia --

is in terms of "We the People of the United States."

Your ultimate purpose in convening this Conference --

like theirs over 175 years ago -- is to form a more perfect

union, to establish justice, to insure domestic tranquility,

to promote the general welfare, and to secure the blessings

of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

This, then, is more than just another conference. You

sense it. We all sense it.

It is a call to action

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Our Founding Fathers responded to a call which stammed

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President Johnson's declaration of war on poverty, and the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, present us with a contract common action. We have been summoned to lay the foundations of a new society -- the Great

Society. Juster Liberty. + union | quetty of life

Our Founders met their challenge -- their summons. They labored faithfully and vell. They created a new form of government -- the Federal system -- a government sufficiently strong and united, yet sufficiently limited and diverse, to serve the needs of a changing and expanding nation.

The nation's needs now are different -- yet strangely similar to what they were almost two centuries ago.

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Today we lack an army of trained and dedicated fighters

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In 1787 interstate rivalries, toll bridges, and tariff wars impeded the free flow of commerce among the several states.

Today the barriers of ignorance, poverty, disease, discrimination, and unemployment stand in the way of a new prosperity for all our people and a new spiritual greatness for our society.

But slowly and quietly the nation has begun to stir. We have, at long last, begun to challenge the economic and social injustices we had often permitted to go unrecognized and unrelieved.

In Washington, and across the nation, we are now pledging

ourselves to action on a variety of fronts to transform

these past shortcomings into future strengths. We are giving

new dimension and meaning to the promise of America.

President Johnson expressed this new sense of commitment

in his State of the Union message:

"We seek to establish a harmony between man and society

which will allow each of us to enlarge the meaning of his

life and all of us to elevate the quality of our civilization."

As our Founding Fathers struck off a new testament of

freedom in fashioning the Constitution, we are now laboring

to define a new charter of freedom for the American people.

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This is especially true if we hope to mount an effective

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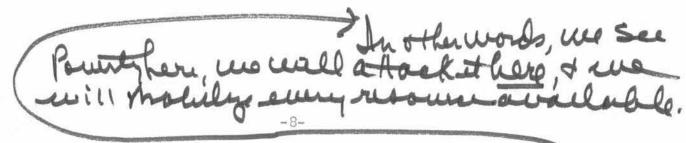
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cot union." And the spirit of America will draw new strength and vitality from your we must expand and strengthen the resources which the Federal government can contribute -- in partnership with State, local and private agencies -- toward winning the war on poverty and building the Great Society. For the first time in our history, there is an office -the Office of Economic Opportunity -- to coordinate the principal Federal programs related to the elimination of - Conservi Under the direction of Sargent Shriver, this office in less than four months has made remarkable progress in launching this comprehensive attack on poverty. The difficult early months of initial planning and staffing are now completed. Job Corps centers are opening and Job Corps recruitment is umbrway. Community action programs are going forward. Other

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for the last time, the venerable Franklin remarked:

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of America.

First, we must seek a new and dynamic relationship-a creative partnership--among Federal, State, and local
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Just as the relationship between the central government and the states taxed the genius and ability of our Founding Fathers in Philadelphia, so we must now struggle with the problem of developing procedures and understandings which use fully the special abilities and insights possessed by each level of government and take advantage of the knowledge and experience of both public and private instrumentalities.

This is especially true if we hope to mount an effective assault on the complex and interrelated causes of poverty and deprivation. In the Southwest inadequate educational opportunity, unemployment, automation, sluggish economic growth, discrimination, and disease all contribute to one

end product: a region where many American citizens are denied full participation in the economic and social blessings of this bountiful land.

We cannot permit this to continue in the Southwest. We cannot permit it to continue anywhere in America.

We must, instead, seek to mobilize new resources and to develop new channels of action in combatting poverty in its many dimensions.

This conference testifies to your explicit recognition of this fact. You are, in effect, sying: "We, in the Southwest--not you on the banks of the Potomac--Enow our own special problems and our own special strengths. But we also recognize that special knowledge and ability entail special responsibility. We acknowledge and accept this responsibility. We are ready to develop a creative partnership between the national government and the State and local governments--between public agencies and private agencies--

and between national conscience and local conscience."

Second, we must seek new dimensions of popular participation and representation within our democratic system.

When-as in this conference-representatives of all population groups, all concerned agencies, all governmental bodies--and especially, when representatives of the poor-can meet together to speak, to listen, to plan, and to act, this is American democracy functioning at its creative best. This is providing the American people with a new franchise-the franchise of service, of participation, of opportunity--open to all without regard to race, color, creed or economic position.

And when, after these hearings and this conference are concluded, your "Call to Conscience" goes out to your fellow

citizens, you will be helping to define in meaningful terms the charter of the Great Society.

This task, however, will not be ended at the close of this conference any more than it was completed at the close of the Constitutional Convention on September 17, 1787. Your "Call to Conscience" will have to be ratified in every town, city, county, region and State to which you will return. And even with ratification the job will not be over -- just as our democratic system did not emerge full blown upon the ratification of the Constitution.

The process is only beginning. And it is never-ending.

We must build -- and rebuild. We must create -- and recreate.

But as you take your leave, and go your separate ways, the

depth of your commitment and the degree of your determination

to build this great Society will be in doubt no longer.

Out of the differences, the problems, and the conflicts will emerge a new commitment to work together in pursuit of

a "more perfect union." And the spirit of America will draw new strength and vitality from your action.

Third, we must expand and strengthen the resources

which the Federal government can contribute -- in partnership

with State, local and private agencies -- toward winning the

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Such deeds—a creative partnership among Federal, State, and local governments; popular participation and representation; and increased material and physical resources—are vital components of the Great Society. In this process we must not shun diversity; process we must undergird our diversity with the sense of laboring together in common cause.

As President Johnson said with such eloquence in his

Inaugural Address: "We are one nation and one people. Our

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This spirit motivated our Founding

Fathers to launch our democratic experiment with such insight, wisdom and fortutude. And this same spirit will guide the work of this historic conference.

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