

Ross Daves -

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REMARKS

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

M.S. Steele

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
EQUAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1965

A little more than a year ago, this nation declared war on poverty. Through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 we made known our determination to help each American citizen -- and each American community -- become full and productive partners in our American prosperity.

↳ Through these past months we have made a great deal of progress toward that goal. Literally hundreds of

thousands of Americans have volunteered their services to help defeat poverty. And hundreds of thousands of others have, for the first time, gained hope and help for the future. Our country has been mobilized. Our work has begun.

But before success is reached in this long, hard effort -- and it will take many months and years, let me assure you -- we will especially need two things.

First, we will need the continuing concern of our nation, in its wealth and economic well-being, for those among us who are on the "outside" -- whose daily concerns are not a second-car or two-week vacation, but shelter, clothing and food.

Second, we will need the energy and resourcefulness of the American businessman.

Poverty is not merely economic -- it is an acute spiritual and psychological problem.

Poverty's most ominous result -- and its strongest ally -- is hopelessness. Hopelessness kills a man's spirit. It perpetuates itself. It passes on from one generation to the next. Thus it is that the heart of the anti-poverty effort is the raising of the level of man's expectations.

By now it is trite to say that poverty has created another America, but it is true. Economically deprived, cut off from the main stream of American life and sharing few social or cultural experiences with the rest of us, many of these other Americans do not know what opportunity is. They simply have no stake in our society, in our communities.

Not the only unhappy situation, but a uniquely distressing plight, is that of the American Negro. There are today a growing number of Negroes who have made successful careers in business or the professions. But, the fact is that the American Negro historically has been told, ^{and} has been conditioned to the idea, that there is not enough room for him to make a decent living . . . to win recognition for himself . . . to hope for something better for his children.

Today our nation must be committed to reversing this state of affairs.

You are here today to discuss the specific problem of inequality of business opportunity and to see what you, as concerned businessmen, can do about it in your own cities and communities.

You are being asked to help with a specific
federal program, the Small Business Administration's
Economic Opportunity Loan program under Title IV of
the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

The idea is a good one: Federal loans, under
relatively liberal credit standards, made through Small
Business Development Centers, operated locally.

↳ This is no give-away program. It is a loan program.

↳ We are making loans to people, not because we
like them, not because we feel sorry for them, but
because we think they can put the money to good use
to increase their own incomes, to employ others, and
that they will be able to pay back the loans with interest.

↳ We expect the Small Business Development Centers
to deliver effective management counseling to their
clients.

To provide this counseling, on an individual basis, the Small Business Development Centers must draw upon the businessmen of their own communities as volunteer counselors.

↳ This is where you are needed.

↳ You can take your own ability and experience and apply them directly to the business problems of a man who wants a chance to follow the same road you have followed.

↳ Here is a government program that is devoted to fostering individual enterprise.

↳ Why should you be asked to do this, and why should you do it? ?

↳ We are asking you to do this because we believe it has to be done and you are the only people who can do it.

and L This is not an easy task. It will be demanding in terms of time, of energy, of patience. I know that it will often be frustrating. There will be disappointments, setbacks and failures.

Z But, just as surely, this program is in the interest of all of us.

L Why, then, should you do it? It is in your self-interest, collectively and as individuals, that the job be done, and done well.

L Anything that promotes individual enterprise, creates jobs, and adds to social stability is in your interest just as much as it is in the interest of those who need your help.

Z Anything that does these things is good economics. And, I might add, it is good citizenship as well.

John F. Kennedy said -- and we all remember what he said -- "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

↳ Today you have the opportunity to do something for your country and for your community. You have the chance to help others stand on their own feet, just as you have done, and become productive, enterprising businessmen in their own right.

↳ And, in giving of yourself, I think you will find you have gained something too.

We ask your help.

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