

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

SPECIAL CONCERNS SESSION ON RURAL ELDERLY

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

ON AGING

Washington, D. C.

December 1, 1971

My good friends, Chancellor Bishop, Governor Moore, Senator Pearson, Congressman Quie, Commissioner Smoot, Dr. Kreps, Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the outset, I want to take this opportunity to recall the outstanding work that our Chairman, Dr. Bishop, accomplished as Executive Director of the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty. The Commission produced a landmark study in 1967, entitled "The People Left Behind." And some eight months later the staff published the extensive reports on rural poverty in the United States, that had been heavily utilized by the Commission.

Of all the rural Americans left behind, it is probably the older people who have been most forgotten. One out of every three of them lives in poverty. They occupy one-fourth of the substandard housing in rural America -- which, in turn, accounts for two out of every three deteriorated housing units, with broken-down or non-existent facilities, in America. They are isolated from stores and towns, and transportation facilities are generally nowhere to be found. So they usually cannot get to a doctor when they need essential health care. And too often they are fortunate to obtain any medical treatment, because in many rural counties there are no doctors at all. But we know that rural people aged 65 and older have more chronic conditions and more limitations on their activities than the urban aged.

How many times must we repeat such astounding facts that should sear the conscience of America, before we get action?

That is what is demanded at the national level in the decade of the 70's. We have put older Americans under the microscope long enough -- the analysis has been done; the diagnosis has been made. So we dare not allow this Conference on Aging to result only in the publication of yet another study report to be catalogued and conveniently filed.

Let us resolve that this Conference shall result in the hammering out of firm national policies on older Americans, backed up by bold and comprehensive national programs.

Let us commit ourselves to the establishment of one goal: That a man in his old age should be treated like a man.

Over the past several months I have outlined what the response of the federal government must be to meet the needs and establish the rights of the one-tenth of our population that has been too long ignored -- our older citizens.

First, there must be established now a cabinet-level Office on Aging. The problems of older Americans must be addressed at the highest level of authority, which has an adequately funded and on-going staff operation, reporting directly to the President, with sufficient power and independence to tell this governmental bureaucracy what must be done, and then to get it done.

We have had enough of rhetoric and promises. What we need now are results. During the previous Administration a number of excellent programs on behalf of older Americans were enacted by Congress. But they remain seriously underfunded and only half-heartedly administered. A cabinet-level Office on Aging is needed -- not just another advisory committee holding periodic

meetings -- to pull these federal programs together, to set schedules for meeting specific goals, to fix the clear responsibility of governmental officials, and to move out in new directions.

And to assure that this office functions with the benefit of the best advice and experience available, we should establish a permanent National Advisory Council on Older Americans. It should be composed not only of appropriate federal officials to assure the effective coordination of their agency programs, but also of representatives of the general public whose competence and dedication assures that they will be strong spokesmen for the needs and rights of all older Americans.

It is abundantly clear that the first item on the agenda of the Office on Aging and the National Advisory Council on Older Americans must be the priority concern of our elderly citizens: The right to a liveable income.

There are immediate actions that should be taken in response to this critical and over-arching need. I have introduced legislation to bring minimum Social Security payments up to a more realistic level and to increase benefits by 10 percent and to lift the earned income exemption ceiling to \$3,000. Under this bill, federal general revenues would be applied to one-third of the costs and additional financing obtained through an increase in the wage tax base.

I have called for extensive reforms in corporate pension plans, to help protect other forms of retirement income. And I have introduced further legislation to permit over 2.08 million recipients of old-age assistance to, in fact, benefit from any increase in Social Security benefits -- rather than face a dollar-for-dollar cutback in public assistance.

But I believe we must go further in also protecting elderly citizens from being, in effect, denied or declared ineligible for other program benefits -- such as Medicaid and food stamps -- either through recent regulation changes by the Administration, or as a result of an increase in Social Security benefits. Such totally insensitive and economically illogical regulations must be withdrawn or revised without delay.

Health care and adequate nutrition are two critical needs confronted by the elderly. There can be no question that this Congress must enact an effective, comprehensive program of national health insurance. And I have pledged to make every possible effort to see that this is accomplished, along with the establishment of quality health care resources that are immediately accessible to all our people.

But it is essential that we also act now to meet the immediate health care and cost problems confronted by older Americans. That is why I have introduced two bills to amend the present Medicare program. One bill would fill a major gap in Medicare: the coverage of prescription drugs. Prescription drugs represent the largest single personal health expenditure that the elderly must meet almost entirely from their own resources. Not only must this serious need be met without delay, but the costly practice of requiring hospitalization for the reimbursement of prescription drug expenses under Medicare must be ended.

The second bill focuses on the costs of ill health resulting from inadequate nutrition, with which hundreds of thousands of older citizens are afflicted. It would provide for reimbursement under Medicare for home nutrition educational services, supervised by a registered dietician. I see this as a vital companion measure to the Nutrition Program for the Elderly Act, of which I am an original sponsor, and which was passed yesterday by the Senate by a vote of 88-0.

But in discussing the income protection needs of older Americans, we must remember that for hundreds of thousands of people, this is basically a problem of getting or holding a job. We have all heard the maxim that too often rings true today: "Too young to retire, but too old to hire."

I find it morally unscionable and economically foolish to deny our older citizens the right to gainful employment. It is an affront to their dignity. It is an act of ignorance in failing to recognize the solid contribution they can make to our economy and the extensive services they can perform in our communities.

And yet there is clear evidence that the federal government is not very concerned about forced early retirement, about providing extensive job and community service opportunities for older Americans, or about enforcing the law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age. It has been estimated, for example, that two-thirds of the Department of Labor's job training programs are operated for persons under 45, and that only 4 percent reach those 55 and over.

I am deeply disturbed that the priorities and biases of the Department of Labor can be a major factor in preventing the development and expansion of vital programs for the older worker. Green Thumb, Green Light, Senior Aides, and Rural Manpower Services have given great demonstrations of what can be done.

I thought we had moved from the nation of what we are going to do for those old folks, to a clear recognition that the skills and talents of older people can and must be utilized to help solve community problems, including the problems confronting older people themselves, and to meet the continuing need for skilled and productive employment across America.

But I am forced to conclude that the present Administration has not gotten this message. Congress passed a major public service employment program this year, but I doubt if more than a handful of the people obtaining jobs under this program have been older rural people in poverty.

Similarly, the Office of Economic Opportunity has downgraded both the rural and aging programs, disregarding the Congressional mandate for assistant directors for both these program areas.

It remains, then, for this Congress to establish the priorities and enact the programs to enable older Americans to make their own decisions about their lives, to continue to be involved in the mainstream of life, and to be treated with dignity.

We must establish federally assisted programs across the nation to provide older workers with opportunities for job retraining and employment in new careers. And we must provide for multi-purpose centers in our communities with extensive professional social services for and by our older citizens, in addition to greatly expanding existing programs to involve these people in vitally needed community service.

There must also be a major national effort to help older people to escape from the isolation in which they live. Too often, we are in effect locking up older people at night and over the weekends. This is inhumane. And the problem is compounded for the elderly in rural America. I believe this isolation has a lot to do with the overcrowding of our hospitals, nursing homes, and mental health care facilities.

We need imagination and creativity in designing transportation services and adaptations specifically for the elderly and handicapped. No longer dare we deny them the right to obtain essential services, to reach jobs, or to pursue community-service or personal interests. Nor should they be prohibited from travelling by the cost of airline or interstate transportation fares, and I have introduced legislation to meet this need by authorizing reductions in these fares.

Finally, in recognition of the high proportion of the income of older Americans that is paid for housing that is often substandard and in unsafe neighborhoods, there must be a total redirection in national housing programs to end discrimination based on age and

to assure that a fair share of federal housing assistance is at last allocated to rural America. It is unconscionable that while an estimated 24 percent of the nation's population lives in non-metropolitan counties without a town exceeding 25,000 in population, less than 11 percent of the housing units financed or insured by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the last three years were located in those same counties.

But the inadequacy of housing that includes the opportunity for enriching community life for older Americans, is a fact of life across America. To meet this critical need, we should at least undertake the immediate construction of a minimum of 125,000 units of low-cost housing for the elderly each year. And we must provide effective and reasonable assistance to older people who want to remain in the homes for which they have worked and cared over the years.

It remains for us all to address the fundamental need to revitalize rural America. We have yet to establish the programs to carry out a comprehensive national growth policy of balanced rural and urban development. We have yet to recognize the direct connection between advancing rural poverty and the congestion and fiscal crisis confronting our cities.

The development of rural American, as many of you know, has been a top-priority concern in my legislative work agenda over the past months. I firmly believe we have the resources and the tools to do this job. What we need is the will, carried through by strong national leadership. I have introduced a major legislative program to strengthen our agricultural economy and to promote public and economic development in our rural areas -- a legislative program that has strong bipartisan backing; and a legislative program that must be enacted.

With your support, this can be accomplished. And with your involvement, it will be done. There is a tremendous resource among rural older Americans of talent and ability and commitment to carry through extensive programs of rural improvement and development. I have seen in Minnesota how older people can get into the efforts to improve our rural communities. In Otter Tail, Wadena, and Todd Counties, the Green Thumb and Green Light workers have literally been the manpower force that has enabled many of our rural development plans to come into being. It is the kind of dedication and hard work that must be duplicated through the rural counties of America.

I want to conclude now by expressing a deep, personal concern that this Conference shall produce resultss. I am looking to you in this session and in this Conference to help us in Congress to decide the priorities -- which programs should be moved onto a full-scale basis; and what new directions must be taken.

Let us resolve to get on with the job of creating a new era for and by older people which will bring their talents and abilities to bear, and which will assure them a lifetime of dignity, security, and opportunity.

#

000507

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

SPECIAL CONCERNS SESSION ON RURAL ELDERLY
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE
ON AGING

WASHINGTON, D. C.

DECEMBER 1, 1971

000508

MY GOOD FRIENDS, CHANCELLOR BISHOP, GOVERNOR MOORE, SENATOR
AND MAHOY,
PEARSON, CONGRESSMAN QUIE, COMMISSIONER SMOOT, DR. KREPS, LADIES
AND GENTLEMEN:

AT THE OUTSET, I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RECALL
THE OUTSTANDING WORK THAT OUR CHAIRMAN, DR. BISHOP, ACCOMPLISHED
AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL ADVISORY
COMMISSION ON RURAL POVERTY. THE COMMISSION PRODUCED A LANDMARK
STUDY IN 1967, ENTITLED "THE PEOPLE LEFT BEHIND." AND SOME EIGHT
MONTHS LATER THE STAFF PUBLISHED THE EXTENSIVE REPORTS ON RURAL
POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES, THAT HAD BEEN HEAVILY UTILIZED BY
THE COMMISSION.

-2-

OF ALL THE RURAL AMERICANS LEFT BEHIND, IT IS PROBABLY THE OLDER PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN MOST FORGOTTEN. ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE OF THEM LIVES IN POVERTY. THEY OCCUPY ONE-FOURTH OF THE SUBSTANDARD HOUSING IN RURAL AMERICA -- WHICH, IN TURN, ACCOUNTS FOR TWO OUT OF EVERY THREE DETERIORATED HOUSING UNITS, WITH BROKEN-DOWN OR NON-EXISTENT FACILITIES, IN AMERICA. THEY ARE ISOLATED FROM STORES AND TOWNS; AND TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES ARE GENERALLY NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. SO, THEY USUALLY CANNOT GET TO A DOCTOR WHEN THEY NEED ESSENTIAL HEALTH CARE. AND, TOO OFTEN THEY ARE FORTUNATE TO OBTAIN ANY MEDICAL TREATMENT, BECAUSE IN MANY RURAL COUNTIES THERE ARE NO DOCTORS AT ALL. BUT WE KNOW THAT RURAL PEOPLE AGED 65 AND OLDER HAVE MORE CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND MORE LIMITATIONS ON THEIR ACTIVITIES THAN THE URBAN AGED.

HOW MANY TIMES MUST WE REPEAT SUCH ASTOUNDING FACTS THAT
SHOULD SEAR THE CONSCIENCE OF AMERICA, BEFORE WE GET ACTION?
and Action
~~THAT~~ IS WHAT IS DEMANDED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN THE DECADE

OF THE 70'S. WE HAVE PUT OLDER AMERICANS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

LONG ENOUGH -- THE ANALYSIS HAS BEEN DONE; THE DIAGNOSIS HAS

BEEN MADE. ~~SO~~ *must* WE ~~DO NOT~~ ALLOW THIS CONFERENCE ON AGING TO RESULT

one again only
~~ONLY~~ IN THE PUBLICATION OF YET ANOTHER STUDY REPORT TO BE

CATALOGUED AND CONVENIENTLY FILED.

~~LET US RESOLVE THAT~~ *must* THIS CONFERENCE ~~SHALL~~ RESULT IN THE

HAMMERING OUT OF FIRM NATIONAL POLICIES ON OLDER AMERICANS,

BACKED UP BY BOLD AND COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL PROGRAMS.

LET US COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ONE GOAL:

THAT A MAN IN HIS OLD AGE SHOULD BE TREATED LIKE A MAN.

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS I HAVE OUTLINED WHAT THE
RESPONSE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST BE TO MEET THE NEEDS

AND ESTABLISH THE RIGHTS OF THE ONE-TENTH OF OUR POPULATION

THAT HAS BEEN TOO LONG IGNORED -- OUR OLDER CITIZENS.

1 FIRST, THERE MUST BE ESTABLISHED NOW A CABINET-LEVEL
OFFICE ON AGING. THE PROBLEMS OF OLDER AMERICANS MUST BE ADDRESSED
AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF AUTHORITY, WHICH HAS AN ADEQUATELY
FUNDED AND ON-GOING STAFF OPERATION, REPORTING DIRECTLY TO THE
PRESIDENT, WITH SUFFICIENT POWER AND INDEPENDENCE TO TELL THIS
GOVERNMENTAL BUREAUCRACY WHAT MUST BE DONE, AND THEN TO GET IT
DONE.

WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF RHETORIC AND PROMISES. WHAT WE NEED NOW ARE RESULTS. DURING THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION A NUMBER OF EXCELLENT PROGRAMS ON BEHALF OF OLDER AMERICANS WERE ENACTED BY CONGRESS. BUT THEY REMAIN SERIOUSLY UNDERFUNDED AND ONLY HALF-HEARTEDLY ADMINISTERED. A CABINET-LEVEL OFFICE ON AGING IS NEEDED -- NOT JUST ANOTHER ADVISORY COMMITTEE HOLDING PERIODIC MEETINGS -- TO PULL THESE FEDERAL PROGRAMS TOGETHER, TO SET SCHEDULES FOR MEETING SPECIFIC GOALS, TO FIX THE CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS, AND TO MOVE OUT IN NEW DIRECTIONS.

(2) AND TO ASSURE THAT THIS OFFICE FUNCTIONS WITH THE BENEFIT OF THE BEST ADVICE AND EXPERIENCE AVAILABLE, WE SHOULD ESTABLISH
A PERMANENT NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON OLDER AMERICANS.

000513

-6-

IT SHOULD BE COMPOSED NOT ONLY OF APPROPRIATE FEDERAL OFFICIALS TO ASSURE THE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION OF THEIR AGENCY PROGRAMS, BUT ALSO OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC WHOSE COMPETENCE AND DEDICATION ASSURES THAT THEY WILL BE STRONG SPOKESMEN FOR THE NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF ALL OLDER AMERICANS.

IT IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE OFFICE ON AGING AND THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON

(3) OLDER AMERICANS MUST BE THE PRIORITY CONCERN OF OUR ELDERLY

CITIZENS: THE RIGHT TO A LIVEABLE INCOME.

Livable income

THERE ARE IMMEDIATE ACTIONS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THIS CRITICAL AND OVER-ARCHING NEED.

I HAVE INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO BRING MINIMUM SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS UP TO A MORE REALISTIC LEVEL AND TO INCREASE BENEFITS BY 10 PERCENT, AND TO LIFT THE EARNED INCOME EXEMPTION CEILING TO \$3,000. UNDER THIS BILL, FEDERAL GENERAL REVENUES WOULD BE APPLIED TO ONE-THIRD OF THE COSTS AND ADDITIONAL FINANCING OBTAINED THROUGH AN INCREASE IN THE WAGE TAX BASE.

Key I HAVE CALLED FOR EXTENSIVE REFORMS IN CORPORATE PENSION PLANS, TO HELP PROTECT OTHER FORMS OF RETIREMENT INCOME. AND I HAVE INTRODUCED FURTHER LEGISLATION TO PERMIT OVER 2.08 MILLION RECIPIENTS OF OLD-AGE ASSISTANCE TO, IN FACT, BENEFIT FROM ANY INCREASE IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS -- RATHER THAN FACE A DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR CUTBACK IN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

(4) BUT I BELIEVE WE MUST GO FURTHER IN ALSO PROTECTING

ELDERLY CITIZENS FROM BEING, IN EFFECT, DENIED OR DECLARED

INELIGIBLE FOR OTHER PROGRAM BENEFITS -- SUCH AS MEDICAID AND

FOOD STAMPS -- EITHER THROUGH RECENT REGULATION CHANGES BY THE

ADMINISTRATION, OR AS A RESULT OF AN INCREASE IN SOCIAL SECURITY

BENEFITS. SUCH TOTALLY INSENSITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY ILLOGICAL

REGULATIONS MUST BE WITHDRAWN OR REVISED WITHOUT DELAY.

(5) HEALTH CARE AND ADEQUATE NUTRITION ARE TWO CRITICAL NEEDS

CONFRONTED BY THE ELDERLY. THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION THAT THIS

CONGRESS MUST ENACT AN EFFECTIVE, COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE. AND I HAVE PLEDGED TO MAKE EVERY

POSSIBLE EFFORT TO SEE THAT THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED, ALONG WITH THE

ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALITY HEALTH CARE RESOURCES THAT ARE IMMEDIATELY

ACCESSIBLE TO ALL OUR PEOPLE.

(b) BUT IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE ALSO ACT NOW TO MEET THE IMMEDIATE HEALTH CARE AND COST PROBLEMS CONFRONTED BY OLDER AMERICANS. THAT

IS WHY I HAVE INTRODUCED TWO BILLS TO AMEND THE PRESENT MEDICARE

PROGRAM. ONE BILL WOULD FILL A MAJOR GAP IN MEDICARE: THE COVERAGE

Rx Drugs
OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS. } PRESCRIPTION DRUGS REPRESENT THE LARGEST

SINGLE PERSONAL HEALTH EXPENDITURE THAT THE ELDERLY MUST MEET

ALMOST ENTIRELY FROM THEIR OWN RESOURCES. NOT ONLY MUST THIS

SERIOUS NEED BE MET WITHOUT DELAY, BUT THE COSTLY PRACTICE OF

REQUIRING HOSPITALIZATION FOR THE REIMBURSEMENT OF PRESCRIPTION

DRUG EXPENSES UNDER MEDICARE MUST BE ENDED.

THE SECOND BILL FOCUSES ON THE COSTS OF ILL HEALTH
RESULTING FROM INADEQUATE NUTRITION, WITH WHICH HUNDREDS OF
THOUSANDS OF OLDER CITIZENS ARE AFFLICTED. IT WOULD PROVIDE FOR
REIMBURSEMENT UNDER MEDICARE FOR HOME NUTRITION EDUCATIONAL
SERVICES, SUPERVISED BY A REGISTERED DIETICIAN. I SEE THIS AS
A VITAL COMPANION MEASURE TO THE NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY
ACT, OF WHICH I AM AN ORIGINAL SPONSOR, AND WHICH WAS PASSED
YESTERDAY BY THE SENATE BY A VOTE OF 88-0.

Job
BUT IN DISCUSSING THE INCOME PROTECTION NEEDS OF OLDER
AMERICANS, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF
PEOPLE, THIS IS BASICALLY A PROBLEM OF GETTING OR HOLDING A JOB,

WE HAVE ALL HEARD THE MAXIM THAT TOO OFTEN RINGS TRUE TODAY:

"TOO YOUNG TO RETIRE, BUT TOO OLD TO HIRE."

I FIND IT MORALLY ^{CON}UNSCIONABLE AND ECONOMICALLY FOOLISH

TO DENY OUR OLDER CITIZENS THE RIGHT TO GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT.

IT IS AN AFFRONT TO THEIR DIGNITY. IT IS AN ACT OF IGNORANCE

IN FAILING TO RECOGNIZE THE SOLID CONTRIBUTION THEY CAN MAKE

TO OUR ECONOMY AND THE EXTENSIVE SERVICES THEY CAN PERFORM IN

OUR COMMUNITIES.

AND YET THERE IS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

IS NOT VERY CONCERNED ABOUT FORCED EARLY RETIREMENT, ABOUT

PROVIDING EXTENSIVE JOB AND COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

FOR OLDER AMERICANS, OR ABOUT ENFORCING THE LAW PROHIBITING

DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF AGE.

Job Training (9)

IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT TWO-THIRDS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS ARE OPERATED FOR
PERSONS UNDER 45, AND THAT ONLY 4 PERCENT REACH THOSE 55 AND
OVER.

To page 14

I AM DEEPLY DISTURBED THAT THE PRIORITIES AND BIASES OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR CAN BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN PREVENTING THE
DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION OF VITAL PROGRAMS FOR THE OLDER
WORKER. GREEN THUMB, GREEN LIGHT, SENIOR AIDES, AND RURAL
MANPOWER SERVICES HAVE GIVEN GREAT DEMONSTRATIONS OF WHAT CAN
BE DONE.

To page (14)

I THOUGHT WE HAD MOVED FROM THE NOTION OF WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO FOR THOSE OLD FOLKS, TO A CLEAR RECOGNITION THAT THE SKILLS AND TALENTS OF OLDER PEOPLE CAN AND MUST BE UTILIZED TO HELP SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING OLDER PEOPLE THEMSELVES, AND TO MEET THE CONTINUING NEED FOR SKILLED AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT ACROSS AMERICA.

BUT I AM FORCED TO CONCLUDE THAT THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT GOTTEN THIS MESSAGE. CONGRESS PASSED A MAJOR PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM THIS YEAR, BUT I DOUBT IF MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF THE PEOPLE OBTAINING JOBS UNDER THIS PROGRAM HAVE BEEN OLDER RURAL PEOPLE IN POVERTY.

000521

-14-

SIMILARLY, THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY HAS DOWNGRADED BOTH THE RURAL AND AGING PROGRAMS, DISREGARDING THE CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR BOTH THESE PROGRAM AREAS.

IT REMAINS, THEN, FOR THIS CONGRESS TO ESTABLISH THE PRIORITIES AND ENACT THE PROGRAMS TO ENABLE OLDER AMERICANS TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR LIVES, TO CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE MAINSTREAM OF LIFE, AND TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY.

WE MUST ESTABLISH FEDERALLY ASSISTED PROGRAMS ACROSS THE NATION TO PROVIDE OLDER WORKERS WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOB RETRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN NEW CAREERS. AND WE MUST PROVIDE FOR MULTI-PURPOSE CENTERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES WITH EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES FOR AND BY OUR OLDER CITIZENS, IN ADDITION TO GREATLY EXPANDING EXISTING PROGRAMS TO INVOLVE THESE PEOPLE IN VITALLY NEEDED COMMUNITY SERVICE,

-15-

THERE MUST ALSO BE A MAJOR NATIONAL EFFORT TO HELP OLDER PEOPLE TO ESCAPE FROM THE ISOLATION IN WHICH THEY LIVE. TOO OFTEN, WE ARE IN EFFECT LOCKING UP OLDER PEOPLE AT NIGHT AND OVER THE WEEKENDS. THIS IS INHUMANE. AND THE PROBLEM IS COMPOUNDED FOR THE ELDERLY IN RURAL AMERICA. I BELIEVE THIS ISOLATION HAS A LOT TO DO WITH THE OVERCROWDING OF OUR HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES, AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.

Transportation
WE NEED IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY IN DESIGNING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND ADAPTATIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED. NO LONGER DARE WE DENY THEM THE RIGHT TO OBTAIN ESSENTIAL SERVICES, TO REACH JOBS, OR TO PURSUE COMMUNITY-SERVICE OR PERSONAL INTERESTS.

To page 17

-16-

NOR SHOULD THEY BE PROHIBITED FROM TRAVELLING BY THE COST OF

AIRLINE OR INTERSTATE TRANSPORTATION FARES, AND I HAVE INTRODUCED

LEGISLATION TO MEET THIS NEED BY AUTHORIZING REDUCTIONS IN THESE

FARES.

10 *Amstrong*

FINALLY, IN RECOGNITION OF THE HIGH PROPORTION OF THE INCOME
OF OLDER AMERICANS THAT IS PAID FOR HOUSING THAT IS OFTEN SUBSTANDARD
AND IN UNSAFE NEIGHBORHOODS, THERE MUST BE A TOTAL REDIRECTION IN
NATIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS TO END DISCRIMINATION BASED ON AGE AND
TO ASSURE THAT A FAIR SHARE OF FEDERAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE IS AT
LAST ALLOCATED TO RURAL AMERICA.

-17-

IT IS UNCONSCIONABLE THAT WHILE AN ESTIMATED 24 PERCENT OF
THE NATION'S POPULATION LIVES IN NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTIES WITHOUT
A TOWN EXCEEDING 25,000 IN POPULATION, LESS THAN 11 PERCENT OF
THE HOUSING UNITS FINANCED OR INSURED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAST THREE YEARS WERE
LOCATED IN THOSE SAME COUNTIES.

BUT THE INADEQUACY OF HOUSING THAT INCLUDES THE OPPORTUNITY
FOR ENRICHING COMMUNITY LIFE FOR OLDER AMERICANS, IS A FACT OF
LIFE ACROSS AMERICA. TO MEET THIS CRITICAL NEED, WE SHOULD AT
LEAST UNDERTAKE THE IMMEDIATE CONSTRUCTION OF A MINIMUM OF 125,000
UNITS OF LOW-COST HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY EACH YEAR.

AND WE MUST PROVIDE EFFECTIVE AND REASONABLE ASSISTANCE TO
OLDER PEOPLE WHO WANT TO REMAIN IN THE HOMES FOR WHICH THEY HAVE
WORKED AND CARED OVER THE YEARS.

To page (20)

IT REMAINS FOR US ALL TO ADDRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL NEED TO
REVITALIZE RURAL AMERICA. WE HAVE YET TO ESTABLISH THE PROGRAMS
TO CARRY OUT A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL GROWTH POLICY OF BALANCED
RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT. WE HAVE YET TO RECOGNIZE THE DIRECT
CONNECTION BETWEEN ADVANCING RURAL POVERTY AND THE CONGESTION AND
FISCAL CRISIS CONFRONTING OUR CITIES.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AMERICAN, AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, HAS
BEEN A TOP-PRIORITY CONCERN IN MY LEGISLATIVE WORK AGENDA OVER
THE PAST MONTHS.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE WE HAVE THE RESOURCES AND THE
TOOLS TO DO THIS JOB. WHAT WE NEED IS THE WILL, CARRIED THROUGH BY
STRONG NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. I HAVE INTRODUCED A MAJOR LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN OUR AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY AND TO PROMOTE
PUBLIC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN OUR RURAL AREAS -- A LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAM THAT HAS STRONG BIPARTISAN BACKING; AND A LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAM THAT MUST BE ENACTED.

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED. AND WITH YOUR
INVOLVEMENT, IT WILL BE DONE. THERE IS A TREMENDOUS RESOURCE
AMONG RURAL OLDER AMERICANS OF TALENT AND ABILITY AND COMMITMENT
TO CARRY THROUGH EXTENSIVE PROGRAMS OF RURAL IMPROVEMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT.

000527

-20-

I HAVE SEEN IN MINNESOTA HOW OLDER PEOPLE CAN GET INTO THE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES. IN OTTER TAIL, WADENA, AND TODD COUNTIES, THE GREEN THUMB AND GREEN LIGHT WORKERS HAVE LITERALLY BEEN THE MANPOWER FORCE THAT HAS ENABLED MANY OF OUR RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS TO COME INTO BEING. IT IS THE KIND OF DEDICATION AND HARD WORK THAT MUST BE DUPLICATED THROUGH THE RURAL COUNTIES OF AMERICA.

I WANT TO CONCLUDE NOW BY EXPRESSING A DEEP, PERSONAL CONCERN THAT THIS CONFERENCE SHALL PRODUCE RESULTS. I AM LOOKING TO YOU IN THIS SESSION AND IN THIS CONFERENCE TO HELP US IN CONGRESS TO DECIDE THE PRIORITIES -- WHICH PROGRAMS SHOULD BE MOVED ONTO A FULL-SCALE BASIS; AND WHAT NEW DIRECTIONS MUST BE TAKEN.

-21-

LET US RESOLVE TO GET ON WITH THE JOB OF CREATING A NEW
ERA FOR AND BY OLDER PEOPLE WHICH WILL BRING THEIR TALENTS AND
ABILITIES TO BEAR, AND WHICH WILL ASSURE THEM A LIFETIME OF
DIGNITY, SECURITY, AND OPPORTUNITY.

#



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org