

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

Washington, D. C.

May 18, 1976

I am very pleased to be with you today to talk about meeting human needs. Your organization has a long and proud history of helping others help themselves. In the past 30 years, the solid relationships that you have built through community agencies -- public, private and voluntary -- have contributed immeasurably to fulfilling the human contract we have with each other.

The people of this country are our greatest natural resource. Their general welfare -- guaranteed by our Constitution -- is the key to this resource. But in spite of our technology, the well-being of our people is not something that can be manufactured by a fancy machine.

It is not something that can be mined from beneath the ground.

It is not something that can be put together with steel and cement.

Rather, it is something that must be nurtured. And like all worthwhile goals, it requires understanding, hard work, and the dedication of many people from all walks of life.

And it's a big job. We are a country of 215 million people.

And we have pressing human needs which must be met.

More than 40 years since the Great Depression brought this country to its knees, we still have not found a way to ensure our prosperity or provide every American with a productive place in our future.

Over 7 million persons are officially unemployed.

One in every five families -- over 13 million in all -- are inadequately housed.

Over 40 million American adults -- one in five -- lack the basic know-how to function effectively in a complex society.

We have the highest crime rate in our history.

Your family has a one in six chance of being victimized by a burglary or theft this year.

You know as well as I do that work and productivity are better than idleness and waste. And it is the physical and emotional well-being of every citizen which bears a direct relationship to his or her productivity.

I've always believed that government can make a positive contribution toward helping each person live a reasonably secure, happy and satisfying life. In fact, our government's responsibility in meeting human needs was expressed by the people who founded it when they wrote the preamble of our Constitution: "We the People...in order to promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish..."

Yet there are those who tell us today that this government, now two hundred years old, has become onerous and intolerable.

It is time to get the issue of "big government" back in perspective.

To do so, we must understand clearly why it has been possible in this election year to make government itself a headline issue.

In less than a decade, a series of precedent-shattering events drove a wedge between our people and the national government.

The assassination of a President and other respected political and national leaders . . . violent disruption in our urban centers . . . a tragic war in Southeast Asia that inevitably lost the people's support . . . gross mismanagement of our national economy . . . deception and corruption that reached into the Oval Office itself and eventually drove an elected Vice President and President from office . . . the abandonment or mismanagement of social programs that initially were presented to the people as solutions to many of America's most troubling and deeply-rooted domestic problems . . . all of these events came together in the 1960's and 1970's.

These events seemed to violate our deeply-rooted faith in the national government's commitment to protect and promote the general welfare.

Against this background, is it any wonder that it became attractive to attack the institutions identified with this time of trouble?

But the critics tend to overlook the many examples of the system's continuing ability to correct and to change what had gone wrong. More importantly, they tend to neglect the striking record of achievement that occurred in the midst of our recent political upheavals:

-- more than 20 million Americans receive quality medical attention today because Medicaid and Medicare were established;

-- millions of students who only were able to attend college because of Federal aid somewhere along the line;

-- tens of millions of older Americans are being protected from destitution and misery by Social Security.

There is no doubt that government has grown over the years. But let us recognize immediately that growth in government has taken place almost entirely at the State and local levels.

In fact, the number of persons employed by the Federal Government today is barely more than the number employed in the late 1940's.

Even the much maligned federal budget is about the same percentage of our gross national product today as it was in the early 1950's. The same is true of the Federal deficit.

So let us not raise "straw men" on this issue. Let's cut through the rhetoric and recognize certain inescapable facts:

-- It is a fact that no governor alone, no State legislature -- no matter how knowledgeable -- can plan an economic recovery or provide a national food policy or a system of national health care.

-- It is a fact that only the Federal government can establish a program of Social Security, Medicare, Veteran's Benefits, and the like.

-- It is a fact that only the Federal government can protect bank deposits, regulate a stock market to prevent fraud and deception, help assure consumers that products they buy meet standards of safety and good health, and administer an equitable tax structure.

-- It is a fact that only a strong and efficiently administered national government can protect and conserve our forests, public lands and waters and wilderness areas.

-- It is a fact that only the Federal Government has the authority and ability to make civil rights a reality for every man, woman and child in every State and in every township across this great land.

So, the fundamental issue is not the "bigness" or power of government today. Rather, it is whether our institutions of government will be used in behalf of all the people, whether it is a responsive government -- a government that works.

We all know that no program -- be it government, private or voluntary -- can be any more effective than the dedication and commitment of those in charge. Institutions do not function as they should if the people running them are indifferent to their success or not committed to their goals.

Your achievements were not accomplished overnight. They are the product of 30 years of hard work of tens of thousands of volunteers, dedicated to the promotion of the general welfare. Neither your victories nor those of government are to be thrown away lightly.

I don't know anyone who denies that mistakes have been made or that expectations sometimes outdistance the results. Improvements can be made.

But these improvements can't be made by slashing budgets or impounding funds. They can't be made when incompetent political appointees are installed to dismantle congressionally-mandated programs, when cries of help from State and local officials are ignored.

These tragic and unhappy years of the Nixon-Ford administration provide no basis whatever on which to judge the impact of a national administration staffed by competent and caring people and supported by a President determined to use the government's power in behalf of all Americans.

I've never been one to spend much time bemoaning mistakes of the past. Our job now is to begin devising a national government that works -- one that acknowledges that there is a positive role it can play in helping us solve our human problems. One that delivers results and keeps its word.

How can we get that kind of government?

First, we need leadership to rally the Congress, the Executive Branch, State and local governments and, most of all, the people.

Secondly, we need imagination to devise new relationships among our public, private and voluntary institutions to take full account of the American people's common sense, ingenuity and basic sense of fairness. The success of your program over the years is evidence that this can be done.

We all have a stake in this effort and we have it in our power to accomplish this goal. There is no greater obstacle before us than the thought that things can't be changed.

That kind of thinking is not only wrong -- it is a slander on the American spirit. It ignores every great achievement of this nation. It ignores the achievements of your Community Services program in meeting the personal and family needs of people by encouraging interested men and women to actively participate as citizens and community leaders.

We have it in our power to stand committed to human dignity and to the right of every citizen to contribute to our progress.

But we need a government that cares about people:

-- a government that offers a full employment policy that assures decent jobs and decent wages for all Americans;

-- a program of long overdue reform to clean up the welfare mess so that help goes only to families who actually need it;

-- a national health care system that provides quality health services for all at the lowest possible cost;

-- a housing program with sound, low-cost, high quality housing, and interest rates that make home ownership a reality for working people once again;

-- a tax program that eliminates the glaring tax loopholes that make it possible for the super-rich and the giant corporations to pay little or nothing while the middle-income taxpayer bears the major burden of government expenditures;

-- and national leadership with compassion and understanding that is clearly "of, by and for the people."

Thomas Wolfe once said:

"To every man his chance, to every man regardless of his birth, his shining golden opportunity; to every man, the right to live, to work, to be himself and to become whatever thing his manhood and his wisdom can combine to make him -- this...is the promise of America.

Government cannot do it all. Neither can voluntary agencies, private industry or unions do all the work alone. What we need to strive for is a new partnership, a new leadership and a new commitment to get the job done.

We are a compassionate, generous people. We are strong.

This nation was founded on a promise -- a promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We can keep that promise. And we will not rest until we have become the very best it is in us to be.

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Bea Kersten
virgil moline

- ✓ Paul Hall - Pres Seafarers union
- ✓ Leo Perlis
- ✓ Geo. Atkinson

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

(Gov Romney Nat. Center for
Voluntary Action

CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

✓ Last yr. - Murray-Green award

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Conference on Community Services

✓ this yr. Halda Meir to Receive Award

MAY 18, 1976

I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE WITH YOU TODAY TO TALK ABOUT
MEETING HUMAN NEEDS. YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS A LONG AND
PROUD HISTORY OF HELPING OTHERS HELP THEMSELVES. IN THE
PAST 30 YEARS, THE SOLID RELATIONSHIPS THAT YOU HAVE BUILT
THROUGH COMMUNITY AGENCIES -- PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY --
HAVE CONTRIBUTED IMMEASURABLY TO FULFILLING THE HUMAN

CONTRACT WE HAVE WITH EACH OTHER.

*Leo Ruler articulation
the United Rubber
worker*

↳ THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY ARE OUR GREATEST NATURAL
RESOURCE. ↳ THEIR GENERAL WELFARE -- GUARANTEED BY OUR

(Peter Bonauto)

CONSTITUTION -- IS THE KEY TO THIS RESOURCE ↳ BUT IN SPITE

OF OUR TECHNOLOGY, THE WELL-BEING OF OUR PEOPLE IS NOT

SOMETHING THAT CAN BE MANUFACTURED BY A FANCY MACHINE,

↳ IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE MINED FROM BENEATH THE
GROUND.

IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE PUT TOGETHER WITH STEEL
AND CEMENT.

RATHER, IT IS SOMETHING THAT MUST BE NURTURED. AND LIKE
ALL WORTHWHILE GOALS, IT REQUIRES UNDERSTANDING, HARD WORK,
AND THE DEDICATION OF MANY PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

AND IT'S A BIG JOB. WE ARE A COUNTRY OF 215 MILLION PEOPLE.

AND WE HAVE PRESSING HUMAN NEEDS WHICH MUST BE MET.

MORE THAN 40 YEARS SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION BROUGHT

~~there~~ THIS COUNTRY TO ITS KNEES, WE STILL HAVE NOT FOUND A WAY TO

ENSURE OUR PROSPERITY OR PROVIDE EVERY AMERICAN WITH A
PRODUCTIVE PLACE IN OUR FUTURE.

OVER 7 MILLION PERSONS ARE OFFICIALLY UNEMPLOYED.

ONE IN EVERY FIVE FAMILIES -- OVER 13 MILLION IN ALL --
ARE INADEQUATELY HOUSED.

L OVER 40 MILLION AMERICAN ADULTS -- ONE IN FIVE -- LACK
THE BASIC KNOW-HOW TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN A COMPLEX
SOCIETY.

L WE HAVE THE HIGHEST CRIME RATE IN OUR HISTORY.

L YOUR FAMILY HAS A ONE IN SIX CHANCE OF BEING VICTIMIZED
BY A BURGLARY OR THEFT THIS YEAR.

L YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT WORK AND PRODUCTIVITY ARE
BETTER THAN IDLENESS AND WASTE. AND IT IS THE PHYSICAL AND
EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF EVERY CITIZEN WHICH BEARS A DIRECT
RELATIONSHIP TO HIS OR HER PRODUCTIVITY.

Rule of Govt

L I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT GOVERNMENT CAN MAKE A POSITIVE
CONTRIBUTION TOWARD HELPING EACH PERSON LIVE A REASONABLY
SECURE, HAPPY AND SATISFYING LIFE.

*Govt - Voluntary
state, local*

Preamble-Action

L IN FACT, OUR GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY IN MEETING HUMAN NEEDS

WAS EXPRESSED BY THE PEOPLE WHO FOUNDED IT WHEN THEY WROTE THE

PREAMBLE OF OUR CONSTITUTION: "WE THE PEOPLE...IN ORDER TO

PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE, AND SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY

TO OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY, DO ORDAIN AND ESTABLISH..."

L YET THERE ARE THOSE WHO TELL US TODAY THAT THIS GOVERNMENT,
NOW TWO HUNDRED YEARS OLD, HAS BECOME ONEROUS AND INTOLERABLE.

L IT IS TIME TO GET THE ISSUE OF "BIG GOVERNMENT" BACK IN
PERSPECTIVE.

L TO DO SO, WE MUST UNDERSTAND CLEARLY WHY IT HAS BEEN
POSSIBLE IN THIS ELECTION YEAR TO MAKE GOVERNMENT ITSELF A
HEADLINE ISSUE.

IN LESS THAN A DECADE, A SERIES OF PRECEDENT-SHATTERING EVENTS
DROVE A WEDGE BETWEEN OUR PEOPLE AND THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT.

THE ASSASSINATION OF A PRESIDENT AND OTHER RESPECTED
POLITICAL AND NATIONAL LEADERS . . . VIOLENT DISRUPTION IN
OUR URBAN CENTERS . . . A TRAGIC WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA THAT
INEVITABLY LOST THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT . . . GROSS MISMANAGEMENT
OF OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY . . . DECEPTION AND CORRUPTION THAT
REACHED INTO THE ^{Presidential} ~~Oval~~ OFFICE ITSELF AND EVENTUALLY DROVE AN
ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT FROM OFFICE . . . THE
ABANDONMENT OR MISMANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS THAT INITIALLY
WERE PRESENTED TO THE PEOPLE AS SOLUTIONS TO MANY OF AMERICA'S
MOST TROUBLING AND DEEPLY-ROOTED DOMESTIC PROBLEMS . . . ALL
OF THESE EVENTS CAME TOGETHER IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S.

THESE EVENTS SEEMED TO VIOLATE OUR DEEPLY-ROOTED FAITH IN
THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE
THE GENERAL WELFARE.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IS IT ANY WONDER THAT IT BECAME
ATTRACTIVE TO ATTACK THE INSTITUTIONS IDENTIFIED WITH THIS
TIME OF TROUBLE?

BUT THE CRITICS TEND TO OVERLOOK THE MANY EXAMPLES OF
THE SYSTEM'S CONTINUING ABILITY TO CORRECT AND TO CHANGE
WHAT HAD GONE WRONG. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY TEND TO NEGLECT
THE STRIKING RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT THAT OCCURED IN THE MIDST
OF OUR RECENT POLITICAL UPHEAVALS:

-- MORE THAN 20 MILLION AMERICANS RECEIVE QUALITY MEDICAL
ATTENTION TODAY BECAUSE MEDICAID AND MEDICARE WERE ESTABLISHED;

Millions of children helped by aid to Elementary
+ Secondary educ. ⁻⁷⁻ School Lunches, Head Start

L-- MILLIONS OF STUDENTS WHO ONLY WERE ABLE TO ATTEND

Work-Study

COLLEGE BECAUSE OF FEDERAL AID SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE;

L-- TENS OF MILLIONS OF OLDER AMERICANS ARE BEING PROTECTED
FROM DESTITUTION AND MISERY BY SOCIAL SECURITY.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT GOVERNMENT HAS GROWN OVER THE YEARS.

BUT LET US RECOGNIZE IMMEDIATELY THAT GROWTH IN GOVERNMENT HAS
TAKEN PLACE ALMOST ENTIRELY AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS.

h IN FACT, THE NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED BY THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT TODAY IS BARELY MORE THAN THE NUMBER EMPLOYED IN
THE LATE 1940's.

L-- EVEN THE MUCH MALIGNED FEDERAL BUDGET IS ABOUT THE SAME
PERCENTAGE OF OUR GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT TODAY AS IT WAS IN
THE EARLY 1950's. ~~THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE FEDERAL DEFICIT.~~

SO LET US NOT RAISE "STRAW MEN" ON THIS ISSUE, LET'S CUT
THROUGH THE RHETORIC AND RECOGNIZE CERTAIN INESCAPABLE FACTS:

L-- IT IS A FACT THAT NO GOVERNOR ALONE, NO STATE LEGISLATURE --
NO MATTER HOW KNOWLEDGEABLE -- CAN PLAN AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY OR
PROVIDE A NATIONAL FOOD POLICY OR A SYSTEM OF NATIONAL HEALTH CARE,

L-- IT IS A FACT THAT ONLY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN
ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OF SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, VETERAN'S
BENEFITS, AND THE LIKE.

L-- IT IS A FACT THAT ONLY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN PROTECT
BANK DEPOSITS, REGULATE A STOCK MARKET TO PREVENT FRAUD AND
DECEPTION, HELP ASSURE CONSUMERS THAT PRODUCTS THEY BUY MEET
STANDARDS OF SAFETY AND GOOD HEALTH, AND ADMINISTER AN EQUITABLE
TAX STRUCTURE.

-- IT IS A FACT THAT ONLY A STRONG AN EFFICIENTLY ADMINISTERED
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CAN PROTECT AND CONSERVE OUR FORESTS, PUBLIC
LANDS AND WATERS AND WILDERNESS AREAS.

It IS A FACT THAT ONLY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS THE
AUTHORITY AND ABILITY TO MAKE CIVIL RIGHTS A REALITY FOR EVERY
MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN EVERY STATE AND IN EVERY TOWNSHIP

ACROSS THIS GREAT LAND.

The issue

So, THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE IS NOT THE "BIGNESS" OR POWER OF
GOVERNMENT TODAY. RATHER, IT IS WHETHER OUR INSTITUTIONS OF
GOVERNMENT WILL BE USED IN BEHALF OF ALL THE PEOPLE, WHETHER IT
IS A RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT -- A GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS.

WE ALL KNOW THAT NO PROGRAM -- BE IT GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE OR
VOLUNTARY -- CAN BE ANY MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THE DEDICATION AND
COMMITMENT OF THOSE IN CHARGE.

INSTITUTIONS DO NOT FUNCTION AS THEY SHOULD IF THE PEOPLE RUNNING
THEM ARE INDIFFERENT TO THEIR SUCCESS OR NOT COMMITTED TO THEIR
GOALS.

*(This is what has happened
with impoundment etc)*

↳ YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS WERE NOT ACCOMPLISHED OVERNIGHT. ↳ THEY

ARE THE PRODUCT OF 30 YEARS OF HARD WORK OF TENS OF THOUSANDS

OF VOLUNTEERS, DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF THE GENERAL

OF THE WORKING PEOPLE.

WELFARE. ↳ NEITHER YOUR VICTORIES NOR THOSE OF GOVERNMENT ARE TO

BE THROWN AWAY LIGHTLY.

↳ I DON'T KNOW ANYONE WHO DENIES THAT MISTAKES HAVE BEEN

MADE OR THAT EXPECTATIONS SOMETIMES OUTDISTANCE THE RESULTS. *And,*

↳ IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE MADE.

BUT THESE IMPROVEMENTS CAN'T BE MADE BY SLASHING BUDGETS

OR IMPOUNDING FUNDS.

THEY CAN'T BE MADE WHEN INCOMPETENT POLITICAL APPOINTEES ARE

INSTALLED TO DISMANTLE CONGRESSIONALLY-MANDATED PROGRAMS, WHEN

CRIES OF HELP FROM STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE IGNORED,

THESE TRAGIC AND UNHAPPY YEARS OF THE NIXON-FORD ADMINISTRATION

PROVIDE NO BASIS WHATEVER ON WHICH TO JUDGE THE IMPACT OF A

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION STAFFED BY COMPETENT AND CARING PEOPLE AND

SUPPORTED BY A PRESIDENT DETERMINED TO USE THE GOVERNMENT'S POWER

IN BEHALF OF ALL AMERICANS.

I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO SPEND MUCH TIME BEMOANING MISTAKES

OF THE PAST. OUR JOB NOW IS TO BEGIN DEVISING A NATIONAL

GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS -- ONE THAT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THERE

IS A POSITIVE ROLE IT CAN PLAY IN HELPING US SOLVE OUR HUMAN

PROBLEMS. ONE THAT DELIVERS RESULTS AND KEEPS ITS WORD.

HOW CAN WE GET THAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT?

✓ FIRST, WE NEED LEADERSHIP TO RALLY THE CONGRESS, THE
EXECUTIVE BRANCH, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND, MOST OF
ALL, THE PEOPLE,

✓ SECONDLY, WE NEED IMAGINATION TO DEVISE NEW RELATIONSHIPS
AMONG OUR PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY INSTITUTIONS TO
TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'S COMMON SENSE,
INGENUITY AND BASIC SENSE OF FAIRNESS. ✓ THE SUCCESS OF YOUR
PROGRAM OVER THE YEARS IS EVIDENCE THAT THIS CAN BE DONE.

✓ WE ALL HAVE A STAKE IN THIS EFFORT AND WE HAVE IT IN OUR
POWER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL. ✓ THERE IS NO GREATER OBSTACLE
BEFORE US THAN THE THOUGHT THAT THINGS CAN'T BE CHANGED.

✓ THAT KIND OF THINKING IS NOT ONLY WRONG -- IT IS A SLANDER
ON THE AMERICAN SPIRIT.

IT IGNORES EVERY GREAT ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS NATION. IT IGNORES THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF YOUR COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAM IN MEETING THE PERSONAL AND FAMILY NEEDS OF PEOPLE BY ENCOURAGING INTERESTED MEN AND WOMEN TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE AS CITIZENS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

WE HAVE IT IN OUR POWER TO STAND COMMITTED TO HUMAN DIGNITY AND TO THE RIGHT OF EVERY CITIZEN TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR PROGRESS.

L BUT WE NEED A GOVERNMENT THAT CARES ABOUT PEOPLE;

L -- A GOVERNMENT THAT OFFERS A FULL EMPLOYMENT POLICY THAT ASSURES DECENT JOBS AND DECENT WAGES FOR ALL AMERICANS;

L -- A PROGRAM OF LONG OVERDUE REFORM TO CLEAN UP THE WELFARE MESS SO THAT HELP GOES ONLY TO FAMILIES WHO ACTUALLY NEED IT;

L -- A NATIONAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES QUALITY
HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE COST;

L -- A HOUSING PROGRAM WITH SOUND, LOW-COST, HIGH QUALITY
HOUSING, AND INTEREST RATES THAT MAKE HOME OWNERSHIP A REALITY
FOR WORKING PEOPLE ONCE AGAIN;

L -- A TAX PROGRAM THAT ELIMINATES THE GLARING TAX
LOOPHOLES THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE SUPER-RICH AND
THE GIANT CORPORATIONS TO PAY LITTLE OR NOTHING WHILE THE
MIDDLE-INCOME TAXPAYER BEARS THE MAJOR BURDEN OF GOVERNMENT
EXPENDITURES;

-- AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH COMPASSION AND
UNDERSTANDING THAT IS CLEARLY "OF, BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE."

THOMAS WOLFE ONCE SAID:

"TO EVERY MAN HIS CHANCE, TO EVERY MAN REGARDLESS OF HIS
BIRTH, HIS SHINING GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY; TO EVERY MAN, THE
RIGHT TO LIVE, TO WORK, TO BE HIMSELF AND TO BECOME WHATEVER
THING HIS MANHOOD AND HIS WISDOM CAN COMBINE TO MAKE HIM --
THIS...IS THE PROMISE OF AMERICA."

h GOVERNMENT CANNOT DO IT ALL. NEITHER CAN VOLUNTARY AGENCIES,
PRIVATE INDUSTRY OR UNIONS DO ALL THE WORK ALONE. h WHAT WE NEED
TO STRIVE FOR IS A NEW PARTNERSHIP, A NEW LEADERSHIP AND A NEW
COMMITMENT TO GET THE JOB DONE,

h WE ARE A COMPASSIONATE, GENEROUS PEOPLE. WE ARE STRONG.

THIS NATION WAS FOUNDED ON A PROMISE -- A PROMISE OF LIFE,
LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. WE CAN KEEP THAT PROMISE.
AND WE WILL NOT REST UNTIL WE HAVE BECOME THE VERY BEST IT IS
IN US TO BE.

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 18, 1976

Today I am going to forego many of the formalities and some of the niceties that I would like to express to an audience such as I see here today. I only want to convey to you my everlasting thanks for giving me the high honor of the Murray-Green Award last year. That is something I cherish, and it is one of the finest awards and citations in all of my public life. I am truly very grateful.

I know that on Thursday of this week you present that same award to one of the outstanding personalities of the 20th century: Golda Meir. And I must say that she is being honored by a very distinguished group. But the fact that she accepts your award is also a great honor to you. I am looking forward to seeing my friend, Golda, and having a talk with her.

My purpose this morning is to try to put into focus the role of government in the area of social services -- that is, government's relationship to people and the development of human resources.

I think this is something we need to think about at this particular time, because the political rhetoric of 1976 is anti-government. That is understandable. But despite the current rhetoric -- which comes and goes like the tides -- there are some facts and some characteristics of government and its relationship to the public which we need to understand.

I happen to believe that government can make a positive contribution toward helping each person live a reasonably secure, happy and satisfactory life. Let me start off on the Bicentennial spirit and give you a little history.

You are going to hear portions of the Declaration of Independence repeated many times this year. But I just want us to remember what it actually says, because sometimes so many things are said that we fail to listen and comprehend what we hear.

Our Declaration of Independence represents our coming to life as a nation and an independent, free people. It brings together political rights and human rights. And it brings together the role of government and the protection of those rights.

The first right spoken of in the Declaration is the right to life. That is, the right not merely to survive, but to live a really full life, is a right that comes from divine providence. It is called an

(more)

"inalienable" right, a natural right, born in each person and part of his spirit and soul. It is a gift of the Almighty.

Second, the Declaration says that those rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are to be secured by government. That is, we have inalienable, God-given rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and governments are established among men in order to secure those rights.

Now, what do we mean by "secure?" We mean, simply, to make them real. So from the day of birth of this republic, there has been a positive role for government in its relationship to people: namely, to secure, protect, defend and make alive and meaningful those rights. Let me pause to say a word about those three rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Many other countries have spoken of the rights of life, liberty and property. But there is only one political document that ever used the phrase "pursuit of happiness." It is found in no other literature, and its use in the Declaration has a unique meaning. It was brought to light by people who believed that the purpose of life was enrichment and happiness, who believed that life has meaning when you are free to pursue in your own way what makes you feel good, or makes you feel happy.

So the American society has never been a negative society -- it has never been a society which was supposed to be plagued by despair, suspicion and doubt. It started from the very beginning with a positive purpose and a positive thrust: the pursuit of happiness and the enrichment of the human spirit and body.

Now let's move along to the Constitution. I am an old teacher of government, and yet sometimes I think that you only need to know one thing about the government of the United States. If you were my students, I would ask you to remember just one paragraph, and then I would see to it that you had, for all practical purposes, completed the course.

The paragraph is in the Preamble to the Constitution. Listen to its words, because often we pay little or no attention to things which we simply recite: "We, the People." The very first three words are tied to the Declaration of Independence and its belief in government by consent of the governed.

Remember that those words of the Preamble were first spoken at a time when the prevailing political theory was the divine right of

(more)

kings, when governments were typically autocracies, dictatorships or empires whose kings and rulers had absolute authority. They were spoken when the people on the eastern seaboard had just declared their independence, had just won their war for independence and then almost lost it in the jealousy and bitterness which were growing among the 13 states.

So the men who gathered at Philadelphia to write the Constitution embraced the concept of popular sovereignty. They said, "We, the People" -- which means that the whole purpose of America is for people.

I was addressing a group the other day, and a student asked me, "How do you define America, Mr. Humphrey?" Well, I said that I certainly wouldn't define it as a piece of geography, because that is only incidental. America is dedication to human dignity; America is people, with rights and privileges. And if we understand that, then we begin to understand the purpose and thrust of government in this country.

Now let me return again to the words of the Preamble: "We, the People, in order to form a more perfect union." (Might I say to my union friends, you got your name in early!) The Founders knew that there was trouble and turmoil and dissention. They knew that their government was being established by people, and that people are fallible, imperfect, and have limitations. They knew that there was no hope of perfection -- but that we could always strive to do better.

That is why the Preamble reads: "to form a more perfect union," that is, to create a better situation than they found.

The very next section of the Preamble describes the first purpose of government -- to establish justice. They had their priorities properly worked out in those days: to establish justice. And then to assure domestic tranquility -- not apathy, not indifference, but a harmony like the great Hebrew word "shalom", which means more than peace, but a harmony among all things.

The next purpose is to "provide for the common defense," and it is followed by those great words which this organization must embrace: "to promote the general welfare and to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, we do hereby establish and ordain this Constitution,"

Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you listen to those words carefully,

(more)

you will understand two things:

--that the whole purpose of government is for "we, the people," following from the natural rights doctrine to the Declaration of Independence; and

--the Preamble to the Constitution presupposes a government of action, not a government of indifference.

The second point is easy to see in the wording of the statements. Listen to the words: "to form a more perfect union." When you form something, you have to work at it. "To establish justice" -- not just a passing thought about justice, but genuinely to establish it. "To assure domestic tranquility." "To provide for the common defense."

Even the simple words, "we do," in the Preamble are action words, and they make ours a living constitution, as pertinent and up-to-date as if it were written this morning, not back in Philadelphia in 1789.

So I want to say to you that our government, from the beginning, has had a positive role in relationship to the people. Abraham Lincoln put it so well -- a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." A government is to be on the people's side.

Now, when we hear all of the anti-government talk this year, all of this political propaganda that somehow government is not supposed to be an important part of our lives and not supposed to be working with us and for us, we have to remember something. We have to remember that those anti-government slogans are as foreign to the American experience as if they came from another planet.

The whole purpose of government is to enhance the living conditions of people's lives, and to protect those lives. Jefferson and the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence said that governments are established among men to secure the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And the Constitution states the ways and the priorities with which that goal is to be carried out.

If you can understand that, then you can get things in perspective. It doesn't mean that government alone does everything. As a matter of fact, there is a sort of social contract in this country between government and the people. The voluntary agencies are unique in American society -- very few other countries have them or have our shared responsibility. I think that the voluntary agencies bring a sense of humanity into governmental activities -- a sense of spirit.

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That volunteerism is so vital because it makes these programs and policies which we try to establish have something that makes them close to people -- it makes them have heart and spirit.

Frankly, if I didn't believe what I have just told you, I would get out of government -- because I look upon government as something more than a policeman. Liberty, after all, is not merely the absence of restraint. Liberty is a positive feeling of fulfillment. In other words, we are granted the rights to life and liberty for a purpose: the pursuit of happiness.

There are many people today who believe that you are only free when you are being left entirely alone. But it is not as simple as that. For example, an ignorant person is not free. Thomas Jefferson said that you cannot be both free and ignorant. That is why we have an educational system which is a public responsibility, and even admittedly an interference in one's life. We have compulsory education, just as we have compulsory quarantining of sick persons when they have a contagious disease, because they might interfere with someone else's rights to do as they please.

As with ignorance, illness and sickness mean that you are not free. Instead, you are enslaved and oppressed. That is why health is an important part of our freedom, and why Congress has begun to think of decent health care as a right.

We are beginning to change our thinking about our rights and the role of government in them. We learned a great deal about the role of government during the Great Depression. Our economic and social systems required collective action in that period -- governmental action. And, believe me, I make no apologies for what was attempted during those days and the great humanitarian goals which inspired the attempt.

Of course, I am not so foolish as to believe that what government does is always good. Sometimes good intentions go astray, and frequently programs which are designed to be helpful miss their targets. Our job is constantly to re-assess what we try to do.

We do the same things in our families. Most of us are family people, and we haven't always succeeded in the things we have tried with our families. But we are hopeful, and we try to learn from experience, and from new methods which may make our lives and the lives of our loved ones better.

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Now, government tries to do the same kinds of things with the human family of our society. And yet it is understandable that many people today respond to the new anti-Washington attitude. Although those candidates who spend their time criticizing Washington ought to remember that, if elected, they will have to live there.

And it is worth examining why people become disenchanted with Washington and with government in general, although I sometimes think that there is more talk about it than actual reality. Of course, I may not be reading the mood of the nation correctly. But I'll tell you this -- I get around a lot more than some of the columnists who sit there by their typewriters day in and day out. In fact, last night I was up until 2:30 in the morning going over my schedule.

In my office, we average 100 invitations a day for appearances, and we get them from everywhere. I go out as much as my strength and time will permit me -- and not simply to political meetings. I go out to every kind of meeting, from the handicapped to senior citizens, in high schools and colleges, for all kinds of meetings across the country.

And as I travel, I just don't see the kind of cynicism and suspicion of government that people write about all the time. You know, it sometimes happens that the press live off each other -- somebody writes a column, and somebody else doesn't have the time to be original, so he just revises the other person's column a little. So ideas spread and take on a life of their own -- often whether they have much factual basis or not.

Still, there is no question that our citizens are deeply concerned about the state of our society and our government, and it is no secret why that is so. In less than a decade, a series of precedent-shattering events have driven a wedge between our people and their government. The assassination of a President and of many other great and respected leaders, both political and spiritual. A violent disruption across our land in the urban center. A tragic war in Southeast Asia which inevitably lost the people's support. The gross mismanagement of our economy according to old-fashioned economics in which intentional unemployment, designed to reduce the fever of inflation, was inflicted upon this nation of ours. Deception and corruption that reached into the Oval office itself, and eventually drove an elected President and Vice President from office in disgrace.

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MEMORANDUM

Add to those troubles the abandonment or mismanagement of social programs which were originally presented to the public as solutions to many of America's more troubling and deeply rooted problems, all the events that have come into being in the past 10 to 12 years, and it is simply more than people can take.

It is like a constant series of earthquakes shaking people's lives and their hopes, a series of events which seem to violate our deep faith in government and its commitment to protect and promote the general welfare.

So I ask you, is it any wonder that it became politically attractive to attack the institutions which are identified with this time of trouble? But I also ask you to put things in perspective. Because in this climate of criticism, many critics overlook the many examples of our system's continuing ability to correct and to change what has gone wrong.

It is important to remember that the greatness of our system lies not only in the fact that you have the right to point out its weaknesses and where we have gone wrong -- it also lies in your right and your capacity to improve what has gone wrong.

And, believe me, in the course of doing so we have learned many important lessons. To this day, I have the living memory of the poor-house on the hill in Redfield, South Dakota. I remember the people there, who were sick and old and had no one to care for them. And yet, today, more than 20 million people receive quality medical attention because of Medicare and Medicaid -- programs which were unthinkable in my boyhood.

Or, to take another example, millions of our children today are helped by federal aid to education. It wasn't always so. I know, because I fought for it all my life. The very first bill that I voted on when I came to the Senate in 1949 was federal aid to education. And it was killed -- either by the so-called doctrine of states' rights or religion. One or the other.

Yet, finally someone thought about our children. President Kennedy and President Johnson both thought about them, and we started pumping resources into our public school systems. Of course, resources alone can never be enough, because nothing can take the place of the family. After all, school teachers are not mothers and fathers -- they

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are only teachers, important as that job is.

Still, we can be very thankful for what we have been able to accomplish in education. Headstart gave little children in poverty-stricken areas their first ray of hope. Our school lunches may be the only good meal that many children ever get. And we have done a great deal in the field of higher education.

For example, I am the author of the student fellowship program and student loan program and I'm proud of it. Millions of young people have gone to college and have become better people because of it. The same is true of our work-study programs

And government participates in many other ways, too. Tens of millions of older Americans are being protected from destitution and misery by Social Security and other aid and support programs.

And when you think about these functions of government, I want you to ask yourselves this: what do you think would have happened in this nation during 1974 and 1975 without Social Security? Without unemployment compensation? Without food stamps? Without the social welfare programs which we have?

I'll tell you what would have happened. People who today are busily criticising our national government would have been driven from their homes, because there would have been a terrible wave of violence in America. As it is, that didn't happen -- and we owe it to those leaders of the past who had some sense of vision, some notion of what might come to pass.

Indeed, the American economy has been kept alive because of what we call transfer payments. If you don't believe it, ask the critics of the food stamp programs how they think some of our grocery stores and supermarkets manage to make money in some towns without the program. And what, may I ask, is wrong with trying to feed people when the rest of the country is wallowing in abundance? I know that there are some cheaters in the program -- but can you name me any group that doesn't have them?

I know that government has the responsibility to administer these programs effectively. And we try. We try to design laws which will be effective. And in doing so, there isn't any doubt that government, its size and its functions have grown over the years. And yet the main growth has been in state and local government. The federal government

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has about the same number of people now as it did in 1950. That's not bad -- in fact, that's remarkably good, because state and local government is closest to the people.

Public health laws, traffic laws, police and fire protection, zoning laws -- these are the things which are closest to people's lives, and it is understandable that there has been a great growth in these services, along with our teachers and many other kinds of people who serve others.

The critics of Washington and government in general are also quick to malign the federal budget. Let me tell you something: that budget, as a percentage of the Gross National Product, is only about one percent higher than it was 20 years ago. But unless you put it in that perspective, you will be taken in the arguments of those who want you to believe that government is grossly over-spending itself.

The biggest problem we have today is getting things in perspective. Let me give you an example. This year we have one trillion, 400 billion dollar Gross National Product -- in one year alone. But if I were to stand in front of this audience and say that in order to rehabilitate our cities, we are going to need to spend 500 billion dollars over the next ten years, and that we ought to be prepared to spend it -- if I were to say that, you would see headlines tomorrow morning which read, "Humphrey Proposes Massive Spending Program."

And yet, my friends, that large-sounding sum of money would be only one-third of one year's productivity in this nation. One third of one year. And I am here to tell you that you can't do anything significant without that kind of commitment.

We have to get things in the proper perspective, and we have to treat all of our programs the same way. Let me give you another example. When the Pentagon comes to Congress to ask for appropriations, they are constantly reminding us that the federal budget for defense is a smaller percentage of the GNP now than it was 15 years ago -- and they are right. That is how they sell the Pentagon budget to the American people -- as a percentage of GNP.

But when it comes to helping people, when it comes to legislation designed to make people's lives better, critics don't look at the percentage of the GNP -- they look at the flat dollar cost. They look at a program which cost 10 billion dollars some years ago, and which

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costs 11 billion this year, despite the ravages of inflation, and the critics say, "Look at the Congress, spending us into bankruptcy!"

So we have a double standard in the way we look at government spending, and confusion in the way that we look at government programs.

The fact is that big government is not the issue. Nobody wants big government. The real issue is effective government, government which really works for people.

Now, there are those who say that state and local government should do most of the job. And there is some truth in that kind of thinking, because -- as I said -- state and local government is close to the people.

But to repudiate a strong national government is to ignore some inescapable facts. It is a fact that no governor, no state legislature, no matter how good or knowledgeable they are, can plan a national economic recovery, or provide a national food policy or a national energy policy or a national health care policy. That simply can't be done by state and local government, although they can and must help the federal government in a working partnership.

It is a fact that only the federal government can establish and maintain Social Security, veterans' benefits, Medicare and Medicaid. It is a fact that only the federal government can effectively protect bank deposits, or regulate the stock market to prevent fraud and deception. Only the federal government can help assure consumers that products meet certain standards of safety and health, or develop and administer an equitable tax structure.

And it is a fact that only a strong and efficient national government can protect and conserve our forests, our public lands, our waters and our wilderness areas. Only the federal government has the authority and the ability to make civil rights a reality for every man, woman and child in every state and locality across this great land.

So when the critics, who must realize these simple facts, continue to condemn the workings of government, what are they actually saying?

I believe that they are saying two things. First, they are telling us that they do not want some people to pay their fair share of taxes -- because no state legislature can tax a multi-national corporation.

And second, they seem to be saying that some people shouldn't have

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their rights protected -- because no single state government alone can protect the civil rights of all the people who move in and out of that state in the enormous mobility we have in this society.

Do not be duped by these critics. Many of them are just the same old reactionary voices we have heard throughout the years -- but dressed up in modern jargon.

The fundamental issue is not the relative size of government. It is whether or not our institutions of government will be used on behalf of all the people, whether or not they will be responsive and really work for our citizens.

And an important related issue is the leadership we get in our institutions. We all know that no program, public or private or voluntary, can be any more effective than the dedication of those who operate it. Institutions simply do not function as they should if the people running them are indifferent to their success and are not committed to their goals.

Yet you and I know that there have been many people in recent years who are not committed to the goals of the programs they have been running -- and we can see the results in poor performance, broken promises and public disillusionment with the agencies of government.

Of course, the federal government is never going to be perfect. Your achievements as a labor organization were not accomplished over night, and the achievements of government are no different. I don't know anyone, in or out of government, who denies that mistakes have been made and that expectations have sometimes outdistanced results.

But I submit to you that improvements are not going to be made by extremism, by slashing budgets or by engaging in a constant propaganda program. Nor will anything be improved by spending all our time bemoaning all the mistakes of the past.

I think that our job now is to begin devising a national government that works, one that acknowledges a positive role in solving human problems.

How do we get that kind of government? First, we need leadership. And leadership means persuasion, not command. It means the kind of spirit and attitude that will rally the Congress, the Executive branch, state and local government and -- most of all -- the people.

Second, we need imagination to design new relationships among our public, private and voluntary institutions which take account of the American people's common sense, ingenuity and basic sense of fairness.

We all have a stake in that effort. And we have it in our power to accomplish that goal. There is no greater obstacle before us than the feeling that things can't be done. And yet we are being told that every day by the cynics and critics of government.

But, my friends, this country simply was not made for people who tell us what can't be done. We would never have emerged as a nation if that were so. We would still be 13 divided and confused colonies if we had listened to the voices who said that we could never achieve freedom. After all, at the time of the Revolution, fully one-third of the colonists were on the side of George III, and another third was waiting to see which side was going to win. That is the history of our revolution.

In the same way, there are voices today raised across this country saying, "Don't do this, and don't do that," "leave it alone, and it will work itself out."

But those voices do not really speak for the American people. Our people are just and compassionate. They have a sense of fair play, and they want to see something constructive accomplished.

They believe, for example, that if a person is able and willing to work, then the government of this country ought to have a policy to assure full employment for productive work. They know that you can talk all you want to about the work ethic -- but that the talk has to be translated into some kind of action.

They know and have seen the incredible waste of our current policies -- waste of money, and a much more serious waste of human resources. That waste is a terrible shame to the nation, and until we come to grips with it -- and especially with the difficult problem of youth unemployment, particularly among minority youth -- and find ways to involve America's young people in our economy, we are going to pay a terrible price.

We are going to see a tidal wave of crime and corruption, and we will be afflicted with alcoholism and drug abuse until it is epidemic in proportions. All for want of a workable answer to the employment problem.

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And yet, at present there is no effort being made -- none whatsoever -- to deal with this problem. In a similar fashion, we have let our cities rot from within, while our people flee to the suburbs, as if that were the answer. In fact, one of the worst shames of America is what we call suburban sprawl -- and it is only made worse by the corrosion and corruption of our center cities.

We ought to be doing something about this immediately. That is what a campaign ought to be about: the most difficult problems facing the nation. And yet we hear very little about it, except the tired old voices which say, "Don't rock the boat. Everything is fine. Let the market forces work their will, and everything will work itself out."

Well, I believe in market forces -- up to a point. But I also believe that the purpose of government is to establish justice -- not to wait around until market forces have allowed the strong to devour the weak.

You know, there are market forces in disease, too. And yet we never say, "Don't rock the boat, the disease will work itself out sooner or later." If you believe in nothing more than market forces, then you do not believe in helping those who have less immunity to the disease than others. You do not believe in trying to build strength in someone who might not make it. You let children die prematurely, and you let the old and the lame and the crippled die early -- all because the disease is working itself out, and will take care of everything sooner or later.

But you and I don't believe that -- and neither do the American people. I wouldn't be here this morning if I believed that. You and I believe that we have serious work to do in this country -- work that is needed on our deepest problems and our most profound troubles. And we both know that work is not getting done. Not at all.

We have an enormous job to do. And if all we can do is talk about the Panama Canal, then we're in a hell of a fix, believe me. We have to start talking **about** taking care of the needy and cleaning up the welfare mess -- how to get a system in which those most in need can live with dignity and in which those who do not need help will not get it.

We have to get to work on our health problems in this country, where health care costs are skyrocketing and 40 million Americans have no health care coverage at all. What happens to our lives, liberty and

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the pursuit of happiness in that situation? How can you pursue happiness when you can't protect yourself from the threat of disease?

We can have that freedom, and we can design a health care system in our own, unique American way. We don't have to rely on the example of England, or anyone else. But we need leadership to accomplish that. And we do not have that leadership yet.

We have to find a way to provide decent and adequate housing in America. I read a headline this morning from the Boston Globe, which said that only one out of every ten families in Boston can afford to build a home today. That is an intolerable situation, and we have to find a way to allow people to afford financing for home construction in this country. And we can find a way to do it -- with the right kind of leadership.

Finding a way to do something is at the core of our American heritage. Thomas Wolfe said it best: "To every man his chance; to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity; to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself and to become whatever thing his manhood and his wisdom can combine to make him."

That is the promise of America. You and I know that government can't do it alone -- and neither can the voluntary agencies or private business or labor. But together we can do a great deal.

What we need to do is to build a new partnership, with new leaders and a new commitment to get things done, to get America moving, to rise above negative attitudes.

We are a generous and a compassionate people -- it is in our nature. We are strong of spirit and body. And we are young. I know that there are people who talk as if we were already too old, as if our best days as a nation were over -- but they are wrong. This is a young, strong and vital country.

It is a country which was founded on a promise. And there are people, too, who tell us every day not to promise too much, and in fact, not to promise anything.

But, ladies and gentlemen, without the promise, there is no reality. Without the vision, there is no achievement. A promise is the only way in which we can measure our accomplishments and our performance.

I have been criticized many times by people who say, "You promise

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too much!" Well, let me tell you something, my friends -- the Constitution itself is a promise yet to be fulfilled. So is the Pledge of Allegiance -- it is the promise of "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." That is still very much a promise, very far from a reality.

Yet there are voices raised which tell us that we should make no promises, that there is very little we can do, that things are best left as they are. But you and I know how barren a philosophy that is. We know that people live by hope, that they are inspired by hope, that they are motivated by promises and by visions of something better.

That is the only way that human beings can make progress -- with a little hope. To have no hope, no promises, no way to measure how far we have come or how short we have fallen -- that is the sure way to defeat.

We have to come to the time in which we have to turn around and face our problems squarely, without false confidence, but with the sure understanding that we have faced even more difficult times than these. And we have come through them strengthened and bettered for putting ourselves to the test.

We have come to the time in which we must quit indulging in self-pity, and quit saying that nothing can really be done. We have come to the time in which we must get on with the job of trying to form a more perfect union -- not final, not finished, not perfect -- but simply better.

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