

NEIGHBORS FOR STASSEN, 500 National Building, Minneapolis 2, Minn.

ADDRESS OF HAROLD E. STASSEN OF MINNESOTA TO THE HIGHLAND PARK MEN'S REPUBLICAN CLUB
HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS AT 8:00 P. M., NOVEMBER 21, 1947

Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We meet at a time when the minds of men around the world are doing more searching thinking about political, social and economic systems than at any other time in the history of the world. It is very clear that there is a basic conflict and clash in ways of life. As we begin a frank discussion of this situation it is entirely appropriate that we pause to take an inventory of America.

On a basis of fact, and with due humility, it is appropriate to note that our United States of America has provided a more fair distribution of more products to all the people than any other system in the history of the world.

There are many reasons for this, but among the outstanding are these: Our forefathers established a political, social and economic system based upon the concept that man as an individual was meant to be free.

Second, under that system of freedom we have never been smug or complacent about our progress.

Third, our Constitution provided for free and open movement of goods, of peoples, of ideas between all the States of the Union.

It is my view that if we recognize the strength of these principles there is ground for sober optimism that we will win through in this present world clash, and win without the tragedy of a third World War.

But this specifically requires that we must not be self-satisfied with the progress we have made and the strength we have attained.

There are still dark spots in our social, economic, and political situation in America. We have a superb system but it is not perfect. And it will continue to excell only so long as we vigorously seek to improve on its weaknesses.

One of the specific shortcomings that I would like to talk to you about tonight is that of our health program in America, our medical and hospital care.

I want to see our Republican Party, in keeping with its magnificent early humanitarian principle, give effective leadership in this field.

At the present time a conscientious American workman, practicing reasonable thrift, carefully rearing a splendid family, can suddenly have his entire foundation kicked out from under him through no fault of his own by the occurrence of major, serious illness or accident to a member of his family or to himself.

When that happens, as it does each year to a few hundred thousand of our fellow citizens, the family finds itself unable to meet its current expenses for food and clothing, burdened by debt, harassed by creditors, and frequently denied needed additional medical care. In those circumstances a Fourth of July oration about the splendors of America would sound a bit hollow to the members of the stricken family.

Certainly this country has the productivity, the skill, the ingenuity, the determination to meet this weakness in an effective and efficient manner.

I propose specifically that our Republican Party adopt as its program that it will inaugurate a system of medical and health insurance to cover the major cases, and only the major cases. This could be done with reasonable administrative simplicity by basing it first of all upon the coverage of those on social security for medical and hospital expense in excess of \$250 in a single calendar year. By an effective administrative establishment, requiring the verification of claims, the reasonableness of charges, and a spot-check for improper bills, the entire system could be efficiently and effectively administered on a federal-state basis.

I specifically propose that we do not make it a complete insurance for all medical and health expense. If we do that it means that all doctors and hospitals look for their entire revenue to a government insurance organization. This cannot help but make them subordinate in government. This I oppose. I specifically urge that we do not adopt the Wagner-Murray-Dingle Bill, or any other complete, compulsory health insurance coverage. The normal health and medical expense incurred by millions of our citizens can be met in the manner in which it is now met, by the individual choice of physician and hospital, by either saving in

advance to pay the bills, or by paying them in installments afterwards, or by taking out personal private insurance, or joining the Blue Cross Plan. But when it comes to the major unexpected expense we do need an insurance principle of coverage. I see no manner of effectively providing this protection except through action by government.

Provision should also be made for voluntary joining in the insurance by those not on social security, through the payment of a premium to be established by actuarial experience as the plan progresses.

Such a plan will promptly lift one of the most disastrous phases of our health and medical problems from the American people. It will reflect itself indirectly in the expansion and improvement of hospital and medical expenses. From the best available data it will involve the insurance payment of bills for not more than one million American families per year in the average amount of \$500 each or a total cost of one half billion to meet effectively one of our most serious humanitarian deficiencies.

But this alone is not a complete answer to the problems of American health. There are now more than a thousand of the three thousand counties in America without any recognized hospital facilities. There are thousands of small communities without any medical service. We do need national leadership in a systematic and sound expansion of hospital services, with health centers in smaller areas related to the parent hospital, and with mobile ambulances and health clinics moving out as spokes on a wheel of mercy.

The management of this expanded hospital service should not be governmental. It should be of the self-perpetuating, semi-public corporation type which has demonstrated its greatest effectiveness in various charitable and educational units. In other words, the management should be established by the original appointment of a body of outstanding men in the hospital area as the public stockholders, the election by them of a board of directors or trustees, and the filling by them of vacancies in their own number so as to keep the corporation alive indefinitely and responsive, not to political pressures, but only to the broad constructive public opinion of the community. Developing under such an approach of improved programs of preventive medicine, of safeguards against epidemics and diseases, of checkups of school children for medical and mental infirmities, we can make a very significant advance in America entirely consistent with the great fundamental principles of freedom and of service of our form of government.

The opposition party has been insisting on a degree of regimentation and compulsion and impossible administrative procedure which would tend only to centralize great power over the individual citizen and over the medical profession and hospital by government. This we must oppose. But let not our opposition be negative. Let it be a constructive proposal of the right way to meet a problem. It is through steps such as this that our Republican Party can be of great service to the people, and as it responds to the needs of service it will find the support of votes from the men and women of America.



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