

EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
AFL-CIO COMMUNITY SERVICE DEPT.
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I speak to you this afternoon with two objectives in mind. First, I bring to you a brief progress report on the Youth Employment Bill and an agenda of what remains to be done if this proposal is to become law.

Second, I would like to discuss a particular problem that exists in this Washington community, but a problem that has national impact as it relates to youth unemployment, dependent child care, and our responsibilities as Americans to children less privileged than ours. This is the problem of the District of Columbia's home for dependent and destitute children, Junior Village. This morning, I

I have just completed a tour of Junior Village. I must relate to you what I found there and set forth what you and I must do to correct this almost unbelievable situation.

First, I bring you relatively hopeful news about the outlook for the Youth Employment bill. As you know, this proposal to establish a Youth Conservation Corps and a state and community employment program, the so-called Hometown Youth Corps, passed the Senate by the substantial margin of 50-34. This 16 vote margin actually should be increased by about 6 additional votes to reflect the "yea" votes that were voluntarily withheld on the final roll call. In short, the Youth Employment Act passed the Senate on April 10 by a 22 vote margin. This compares most favorably with the 2 vote margin achieved in 1959.

I believe every supporter of this long overdue legislation should be greatly heartened by these developments.

But, as every person here knows, the more difficult hurdles still lie ahead in the House Committee on Rules and on the House Floor. You ask the question: Will the bill get through the Rules Committee and to the Floor for a vote? While the outcome is far from certain, I am hopeful that eight votes will be cast in favor of reporting the bill to the full House. The vote on the House Floor will be extremely close. The Republican leadership's so-called economy drive featuring blind opposition to most of the President's legislative proposals will be reasserted against this legislation. But we counted seven Republican votes on final passage in the Senate and I am confident that a good-sized

handful of clear-thinking Republicans will join with a substantial majority of Democrats to bring us victory.

The Senate passed an excellent Youth bill. We did not suffer any defeats on the numerous floor amendments that were offered. In fact, the amendments that were adopted materially improved the legislation in many important aspects. In short, the Senate will bring an excellent bill to conference, and I predict a highly acceptable version will be sent to the President for his signature.

But this will not be accomplished without the most dedicated and determined effort throughout the country. I sincerely hope you will work closely with your AFL-CIO legislative leaders in supporting this bill. We need your visits, letters, and phone

calls. Let us work as diligently in bringing this urgently needed legislation through the House as we did through the Senate. I know we can count on each of you.

As I indicated in my opening remarks, I spent this morning visiting Junior Village, the home for dependent, destitute, and orphaned children in the District of Columbia. I saw many of the reasons why our nation has such problems of youth unemployment, dependent children, migrant labor, and juvenile delinquency that you must journey here from all parts of the country. ~~We have these problems because we frankly ignore our less fortunate neighbors most of the time and pretend that, in the long run, this doesn't really matter. We are too ready~~

MENTION ROBT. BYRD AND LEADERSHIP FOR NEW COTTAGES,

to push the unpleasant aspects of life out of sight. We hope that by forgetting about them, by pretending they are not there, by ignoring them, that they will disappear.

A visit to Junior Village corrects these assumptions in a hurry. Junior Village has not disappeared. Far from it! Junior Village was dirty. It was crowded. It was depressing and stagnant. It was stagnant because there was no stirring to indicate that better days were ahead. No reason to believe that anything except status quo could be expected of the citizens of Washington and the Congress of the United States.

Recently the deplorable state of affairs at Junior Village has received substantial publicity

in the local newspapers. There have been calls for action, pleas for reform, promises of improvements, but little has actually been accomplished. In fact, I believe that today many concerned persons believe that the problems of Junior Village have been alleviated due to this wide public attention.

But it takes more than newspaper stories to provide each child with his own bed, instead of having to share a bed with another, or with a hot shower every day, or with a school capable of providing adequate instruction in basic elementary school skills.

Thank to Senator Robert Byrd -

Those who live with these and many other problems every day---the helpless children who reside there and the harried adults who are tied there by duty and affection---are certainly aware

that our attention and devotion is woefully short of their needs. They know that Junior Village is becoming more crowded every day, that tomorrow will bring new children but no adequate living space, attention, and supervision. They also know that people are beginning to forget Junior Village once again.

There have been enough official and unofficial visits to Junior Village. There has ~~has~~ ^{ve} been enough publicity, indignation and anger expressed over the appalling and degrading conditions there.

The time has come for action on both the immediate and long-range needs of dependent child care in the Nation's capitol.

The facts demonstrate that this policy of

doing only the minimum necessary to keep the public satisfied, the children under a roof and the costs down is actually adding to the total costs of dependency, here and throughout the country.

Junior Village is a disgrace, both for the District of Columbia and for a Nation which should pride itself on its capitol city. And unless we move wisely now, conditions at Junior Village will grow worse.

Last year, the District Appropriations Subcommittee received evidence that the population of Junior Village will grow by about 200 children each year.

But current plans and requests by the Welfare Department here call for construction of facilities to handle only 300 additional children by fiscal year 1968.

Space is only one of many problems, now and in the future.

The staff situation at Junior Village is tragic. The adults there are so over-worked and so depressed by the pitiful conditions under which the children have to live that I am surprised they stay. But in every instance when I spoke to them, I learned they are responsive to the needs of the children, and dedicated to helping them.

The Junior Village staff had new hope several months ago with the prospect of a new building intended to reduce over-crowding. They assumed, of course, that new staff and equipment would come with the new building.

The new building was constructed, but today it stands empty. There is not enough staff to man it.

There is not enough equipment to supply it.

The pressing, immediate, deplorable needs of Junior Village can no longer be ignored. The following steps must be taken now---not next year or in some far-off fiscal year.

First, more staff must be provided this year.

For this purpose, I will ask for an additional welfare Appropriation of ~~\$778,500~~ to provide the staff positions needed during the coming twelve month period

(in addition to the requested staff increase in the '64 budget.)

I am sick and tired of knowing that nurses are so over-worked they must feed 12 babies from the same spoon, and that children must be denied the privilege of going to the bathroom in the morning because there are not enough hands to help them.

Second, fire escapes must be constructed up to the top third stories of the Junior Village buildings.

The time for this step is not next month, or when the appropriations subcommittees hold hearings, or after a fire has killed some children. The need is now.

Third, there must be adequate numbers of beds and lockers put into the Junior Village rooms. I saw beds there with springs made of wire coathangers. It is a disgrace that children there must sleep on filthy mattresses in dilapidated beds. If they slept by themselves, it would be bad enough. But many of these children have to share a single bed with another child.

To help meet this immediate need, I have arranged for the transfer of 325 beds and mattresses in good condition to Junior Village, and hope to have an equal number of wall lockers for Junior Village by

July. These are surplus items---in good condition--- owned by the government.

Fourth, there must be an immediate appropriation to begin construction of water mains to carry sufficient hot water to Junior Village to allow each child to take a hot bath or hot shower every day.

The brutal and depressing fact of this situation is that a majority of the children at Junior Village go to bed dirty every night because there is not enough hot water. The District of Columbia Commissioners are requesting \$642,000 for a new heating plant. I want to be sure that enough lines are run off it to provide hot water to each of the Junior Village cottages when it is needed.

 Action on the long-range needs of dependent child care in the District of Columbia is just as essential.

This week I wrote to District Commissioner Walter Tobriner to ask for some accurate predictions relating to staff and construction needs. Before we can completely solve the short-range or the long-range problems, we must have the facts and figures that we can plan on, and ^a Welfare Department position to support. Sometimes the Department has been hesitant to request all the funds they needed because they were sure that they would be ridiculed as "spend-thrifts." But now the time has come to take a stand on what must be done.

On the serious problem of more long-range solutions the President's committee on Washington, D. C. affairs has taken a far-sighted position on the problem of dependent children. They feel that modifications of various strict welfare statutes will make the

finding of foster homes easier. They are also attempting to modify some of the more odious aspects of some laws which are intended to eliminate "cheating" on Welfare rolls, but which, in reality, invade the privacy and integrity of homes and cause the unjust removal of children. These are meritorious actions and goals and the elimination of institutions in favor of adequate foster homes certainly meets with my wholehearted support. In the interim, we have a very real and present problem. For that reason I will introduce legislation to provide for a National Child Care Center which will be modern and exemplary in every way. It will provide care for those children who are interned wards and those that can be expected to remain at public expense for long periods of time. The center I propose

will be expressly devoted to the care of those children that are "permanent" or repetitive cases of dependency; those cases presently make up approximately half of the Junior Village population today. In this area, where we have an abundance of intellectual and medical talent, I am sure that cooperation will be forthcoming which will turn this National Child Care Center into a model where the best thinking of the Nation's best medical, social and welfare personnel can be brought to bear.

What I am talking about is a truly modern dependent child care facility in which the District and the nation can take pride. What better place to have a study center than here, where these problems have been so neglected and where one of the worst situations in the country exists? What

better way to demonstrate that the needs of these children will not be overlooked and that we have enough faith in their future and in the future of our nation to plan in such a way that dependency may some day be limited. I am convinced that only by meeting the problem of dependency squarely and in a rehabilitive fashion may we hope to curtail it in the years to come. We must give back to Welfare recipients that pride which has been so uncharitably taken from them. We must act and plan creatively to put hope and potential back into their lives.

The old Junior Village can serve a very real need. It should be maintained as the strictly short-term center, for with the load reduced there is no reason that, with some remodeling, it could not be

made usable. There the children that have a reasonable chance of soon leaving institutionalized care could be comfortably housed. There also the majority of infants can be very adequately taken care of in the only good accommodations on the entire reservation. The three new cottages which were opened in December are exemplary and were designed for infants. Some modifications should be made though to place there also those new-born infants which are left presently at D. C. General Hospital in rooms with sick children, simply because they are unwanted and there is no place for them to go until they are six months old. That situation must be eliminated and with a reduced number of children and additional staff, Junior Village could do the job.

The National Child Care Center which I will propose in legislation will take in children from the District of Columbia and will provide a big step toward the solution of dependent child care in the Nation's capitol.

But this Center will also be a center for research in dependent child care problems and challenges. The lessons which can be learned through such research can be of tremendous benefit to cities throughout the United States.

For once, let us move to make the District of Columbia first---instead of last---in its approach to a pressing social and human need.

END



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