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Release On Delivery
9:00 A.M.
Monday

Excerpts of Address
Prepared for Delivery By:
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.)
Before California Association
for Health and Welfare
Sheraton-Palace Hotel
San Francisco, California
February 24, 1964

SENATOR HUMPHREY OFFERS
"10 POINT ARSENAL IN
WAR FOR THE POOR,"
APPEALS TO KEEP POLITICS
OUT OF ANTI-POVERTY FIGHT

The year 1964 is less than 2 months old. Yet, in this brief period, the Nation has been inspired by one of the greatest calls ever to come from an American President.

It was the summons from President Lyndon B. Johnson to our country to launch a mighty effort against poverty.

It was a call in behalf of those who cannot appeal for themselves - for the indigent, the handicapped, the orphaned, the jobless, the homeless, the friendless, the uneducated, the forgotten.

This call came as no surprise to the members of this outstanding Association, nor to your professional colleagues throughout this Nation.

The battle against destitution is not "news" to you. You are veterans of the "front lines," so to speak; this is your profession, your mission.

But President Johnson aroused and electrified all the rest of our people who see far less of this problem.

He brought a largely hidden issue to the surface. He projected before all of us a vivid picture of the "Invisible Poor."

With his characteristic frankness and vision, he asked for bold action - now - and in the years ahead.

What then, happened?

Most of this audience will, I believe, agree that rarely within our memory has a Nation responded so quickly, so eagerly to a Presidential appeal.

The reason is clear. This Nation carries within its conscious and subconscious the memories of similar great appeals - which have never been really forgotten.

Echoes reverberated of Franklin D. Roosevelt - who saw "one third of a nation ill-clad, ill-housed, ill-fed."

Pictures came back to our minds' eye - of the Dust Bowl of the 1930's.

The memories of our martyred President, John F. Kennedy, speaking of a New Frontier for all our citizens were revived.

Of course, 1964 is not 1963, nor is it 1933. Times have, indeed, changed.

Today, we are in a new America, an affluent America. But vast "pockets of poverty" persist. And we, the people, have been stirred to roll up our sleeves and eliminate them.

A War Against Poverty is the type of war in which all Americans can enlist.

It is a war which "destroys" nothing but pain and humiliation, despair and misery.

It is a "civilian" war - to re-build, to re-create, to rehabilitate human beings, neighborhoods, regions.

Where do we start? We start by "mapping" the geography of poverty.

Where are the poor? Who are the poor? Why are they poor?

Of our 47 million families, 9.3 million earn less than \$3,000 annually. They include 30 million Americans. More than half subsist on less than \$2,000 a year. 5 million people live alone on under \$30.00 a week.

Most poor families are headed by a man or woman with no better than an 8th grade education.

The poor are not just in Appalachia - the 160,000-square-mile area which stretches from Pittsburgh south to Birmingham. The poor exist in virtually every State.

30% of the poor have no wage-earners in the family at all. A quarter of all poor families are headed by women, a third by men and women over 65. In the South, half of all Negro families cling to survival on less than \$20.00 a week.

Poverty grips some employables, but it clutches still more tightly the unemployables.

Poverty traps the worker who is displaced by automation. It ensnares the bread-winner in the one-industry town which is slipping "downhill." It is the lot of the migrant who must keep on the move to try to earn tomorrow's bread.

Hundreds of thousands of poor Americans have emigrated from the South. They have not come - as did the foreign emigrants of yesterday - with "stars in their eyes." They come with feeble hope from rural slums to city slums. They are met, not with open arms, but often with sullenness and suspicion. Is it any wonder

that parental authority breaks down? Is it any wonder that broken spirits lead to broken homes?

Not to you - you who live with this type of problem; but to many others who hardly perceive it.

You know that poverty is a particular quicksand for the "too old," the "too sick," the "too incompetent."

"Nobody" knows the trouble I've seen," goes the old song.

What really do the poor "know?"

The answer is: Trouble and tenement and torment.

What really do the poor expect? The rent collector, the bill collector, but, often, not the garbage collector.

The poor, like their refuse, have been left to rot. The poor are gnawed by frustration, as their children are often gnawed by rats.

"By and by, hard times come a' knockin' at the door." For the poor, the best of times are still "hard times."

They are isolated from a Cadillac Society.

There is not even one "chicken in their pot." There is only starch - gruel - no protein. And all this in a land of undreamed of abundance!

What a challenge to all that we profess!
What an opportunity for a Nation founded on opportunity!

But now, where do we go from here?

We can take our cue from other battles which this Nation has waged.

When you are in a war, you need six things.
Let me enumerate them:

1. A goal - victory. "In war," a great hero, Douglas MacArthur, has said, "there is no substitute for victory."

2. Strategy - a long-range plan, based on a careful system of priorities. We know we cannot do everything at once - to conquer all types of poverty everywhere. We must put "first things first." That means, for example, concentrating on the young, for they hold tomorrow in their hands.

3. Tactics - a flexible set of projects, rather than a rigid policy. Thus, we will experiment here; we will demonstrate a new

program there. We may achieve a "break-through" somewhere, perhaps, for example, through a new community-type approach - instead of just by ad hoc efforts with individuals. If we do, we will exploit the break-through. Always we will pick our targets. Always we will keep moving ahead. We must not lose our momentum.

4. Physical resources - that means money, supplies, equipment, materiel. The logistics of this war start in the mark-up sessions of the Authorizing and the Appropriations Committees of the Congress, as well as in City Halls and State Capitals.

5. Skilled manpower - it takes people to help people, skilled people, warm people, dedicated people. That means you. We need more of you - more social workers, more psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, public health nurses, etc. It means still better under-graduate and post-graduate education for the professionals on the social welfare team.

6. And sixth - we, this Nation, need the will to win. That means motivation, zeal, stamina.

Let us take each of these elements in turn.

What will be the "Battle Plan?"

President Lyndon B. Johnson will offer it in his forthcoming Message to the Congress on the War Against Poverty.

This Message will, I am sure, offer a truly historic blueprint.

Action on this Message will prove that a democratic society can plan through a voluntary consensus and can fulfill the plan. (Incidentally, that "democratic" is a small "d" - unless you want to make an issue of it.)

On this point, some will ask: "Will the anti-poverty fight become embroiled in politics?"

I sincerely hope not.

The voter expects both Parties to be reasonable and to cooperate. The voter would see through any sham - any make-believe efforts which might be coupled by behind-the-scenes foot-dragging. The voter is wary of gimmicks - whether they be token legislation or sly crippling amendments.

Lyndon Johnson offers this program - sincerely.

Let the legislative "package" be considered, debated, amended, if need be, but acted upon -

in good faith. Politics is supposed to stop at "the water's edge." I appeal that it stop at the edge of this issue. Poverty transcends Party.

Partisanship has little to gain and much to lose from any slick tricks with the fate of the innocent poor.

Not tricks but solid programs, - that's what our people have a right to expect.

I will not presume to predict the outline of the President's future plan.

This can be said, however.

This vast effort will be waged - not as a palliative, not as a means of removing a few ugly "sores" from society's body for the sake of mere appearance. It will be waged by rooting out the underlying causes of poverty.

It will be waged by breaking the poverty cycle."

You and I know that one generation - eking out an existence in squalor and privation - brings to life another generation similarly afflicted.

The child who will be under-educated, under-skilled, under-employed tomorrow is the

son or daughter of the uneducated, the unskilled, the unemployed of today. -

We must break the vicious cycle at its most vulnerable point - with the youth - for he or she is malleable. He or she has the best fighting chance. He or she has a whole life ahead. But all the while, we must serve the elderly; we must help them transform their "twilight" years from a barren wasteland to the harvest they deserve. We must help them help themselves. We must give them not so-called "relief" - not alms - not grudging charity - but a sense of worth - of dignity, of self-realization.

To those of you who may not have read the recent 89-page report by the President's Council on Aging, I earnestly recommend it. It provides an excellent guide to a brighter tomorrow for our Senior Citizens.

Translating such concepts into reality is never an easy task.

Fortunately, we have a "can-do" man in charge. He is Sargent Shriver, the able administrator who turned what the cynics called a "dream" - the Peace Corps - into successful reality.

What will be his tools - our tools?

Here is one list. You might call it a "9 point Arsenal for the war for the poor."

- 1) accelerated and expanded slum clearance, urban redevelopment and public housing;
- 2) massive aid to run-down schools, including better trained teachers, better paid teachers;
- 3) widened vocational counselling and manpower retraining;
- 4) still more effective U. S. Employment Service efforts on a better coordinated, nationwide basis to channel the job-seeker to the job, no matter where it exists;
- 5) more aid for clinics, nursing homes and other medical facilities;
- 6) a National Service Corps, to work with needy families;
- 7) A Youth Corps to give youngsters the opportunity to work and rebuild America's great national resources.
- 8) Expansion of the Head Start Plan;
- 9) Expansion of the Area Redevelopment program.

10. Centralized Information Service - offering "one-step" guidance. The poor must not be forced to wander from office to office, service to service.

Too often, we mistakenly assume that they know what social services exist in their behalf, or where or how to apply. Too often, we assume that they know their way through the "forest" of - let's face it - bureaucracy - at city, state and national levels. Government is inevitably big, inevitably complex. We must try to simplify it, personalize it - in terms of its accessibility to the poor, the uneducated.

Can all this be done?

Why not?

Who will pay the bill? The same people who are now paying a worse bill for the lack of such a program - you, I, all of us - Federal, state and local Government, industry, labor, agriculture, the service trades.

In war, there is only one thing which is costlier than victory; and that is defeat. We dare not stint in this war.

Opponents of this war will try to scare us by tabulating its direct costs. They will, as usual, ignore the infinitely higher direct and indirect costs of social and human decay.

So, we need the will to pay the price which will win the war. In every conflict, there are, in Tom Paine's immortal words, "summer soldiers" and "sunshine patriots."

There will be disappointments, set-backs. We will experiment; we must experiment; we must try not just traditional approaches, but bold, high risk, innovative pilot projects. ^{Some will fail.} The failures will arouse the doubters and the scoffers. Let the cynics sneer. We must never lose heart. We are not a Nation of quitters.

We have the good fortune of having a "tall" and remarkable Texan in the White House. He is saying,

in effect, to his fellow-Countrymen who are poor,

"We want you, too, to 'stand tall.'

You are Americans. You ~~are~~ - deep down -

are as good or better than the rest of us.

Your day is coming - now. Your hour for

rehabilitation is now.

"Negro or white, 5th generation son of

pioneers, or Mexican - American or Puerto

Rican American, you 'belong! You have a

place - with us, a place in prosperity,

a place in the sun."

But let's not delude ourselves into thinking that

poverty will be erased in a year or 5 years. Prosperity

is not coffee; it is not brewed in an "Instant."

Poverty has been long in the making; it will

be long in the undoing.

Some may ask: "Why really bother this much?"

You know the answer. It is two-fold:

1) One, we wage this war because it is a just war. It is the "right war at the right time for the right reason."

It is a war which fulfills what you and I profess in our Church or Temple. It is a war to bring alive the clause in the constitution which speaks of "promoting the general welfare."

2) But second, we wage this war because it is in our enlightened self-interest. Poverty endangers not only the poor, but the middle-income and the well-to-do.

Poverty is infectious; it passes from generation to generation and from neighborhood to neighborhood, community to community, State to State, region to region.

Decay breeds decay.

The pressures of misery build up. The pressures can explode in ugliness, in violence, in cruelty, in self-injury and social injury.

Poverty is waste. The poor are neither customers for the businessman, nor consumers for the laboring man's products nor for the craftsman's services. The poor drag the economy down; their poverty is a weight on themselves and a burden on society.

I need not remind you that poverty can be a particular burden on a state so great, so pre-eminent as California.

For reasons well familiar to you, poor citizens from other States have, for decades, migrated to California. This great State cannot fulfill its obligations to the newcomer and to native-born, unless there is simultaneously a 50-State effort to meet this problem on a National basis.

California can be and will be in the vanguard. California is a pioneer State. It can pioneer, in new experimenting for the downtrodden. These experiments can open a "Golden Gate" which other States can

similarly unlock.

The War Against Poverty is neither a city nor a rural war alone. The War Against Poverty is not the "other States'" war nor the "other fellow's" war; It is your war and mine.

Some of you may remember the famous World War I recruiting poster, showing the grim figure of Uncle Sam, pointing a finger at the onlooker. The inscription read: "Uncle Sam Wants YOU!"

This Country wants YOU. It wants your ideas and your energies and your skills.

This Country wants - it does not reject - the poor. It wants the sick, the homeless, the heretofore oppressed racial minority. It wants them, as equals under the law and under God.

This Country gives you - the members of the welfare and allied professions - this set of "Marching Orders": - Help us to advance against the

rotten ramparts of misery. Help us to tear down the wretched slums and replace them with decent homes at fair prices.

Help us to trample out the "grapes of wrath."

Bring the light of learning and of hope to those who cringe in the shadows of "Darkness at Noon."

This Country has many times sung, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Today, Johnny is, by and large, "home." But the war is here - on our home front. It is a war for civilian fighters, for Johnny and his dad and his mother, for sister and brother to win together.

This land can be a Garden of Eden for all. This land offers an abundance no land has ever before held possible.

This land is rich beyond the fabled of antiquity.

We can make of this land a "Paradise." And there need be no "Strangers in Paradise" - none who need feel

like an alien in their native or adopted land,

none who are cast aside, unwanted, helpless, suffering.

"War?" Yes!

Victory? Yes!

Here! - Now! - Tomorrow! And in the still

brighter years to come!

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K. Johnson
Miss. Dept.



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