

ADDRESS OF
VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
VISTA MEETING
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MAY 24, 1965

Thank you very much Dr. Wilson and President Bachman and Miss Holm, Mr. Ferguson, and my fellow students of the University of Minnesota, and any faculty members that may have inadvertently walked in here. I am very very pleased to once again have a chance to be at my favorite location, favorite environment, over here at this great University.

I could reminisce far too long and I'm sure it would be far too boring so I shall try to restrain myself. I was around here when this building was being constructed. I was around here when we were arguing whether we even needed this building and there were those old conservatives that thought it was far too big and there were some of us far-out folks that thought it was far too small and then there were a few who thought it was just right. I think that those of us that were a little far out were right. That's the first time that being left was right.

Pres. Wilson, while you were introducing me, I was not being quite as polite and attentive as I should have been. Miss Holm was telling me that she had just written me a letter and I was trying to find out, my goodness, what she had said, because if I have a choice between introduction by the President of the University and a letter from Miss Holm, why I'm afraid it's going to be a difficult one for me to resolve publicly.

I come here today to talk to students and to community leaders about a very important program of which you have been informed and in which I hope you will participate. One of the jobs that the President assigned to me as Vice President was to act as a coordinator for the War on Poverty.

I should spend just a moment now to tell you that about the only real jobs that a Vice President has, that is the jobs that are listed in the books that you read, are first of all to be the presiding officer of the Senate. That could be a full time job but I doubt that it would be sufficiently challenging and entertaining to keep one on the job. Secondly by statute I'm chairman of the Space Council, and thirdly a member of the National Security Council. And then by the wish of the President a member of the Cabinet. And that about ends it. Except when you have a busy President who descides that one of the best ways to keep a Vice President out of mischief is to keep him busy. And this President, having been in the Senate for 12 years while I was a member of the Senate, and both of us having had the opportunity of working side by side, decided that mabe the best way to deal with a Vice President was to give him enough jobs so that he wouldn't have time to get in trouble. And one of my jobs is the one that I address myself to now.

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Other little assignments include such things as coordinating the Civil Rights Program, directing the President's Cabinet Committee on Youth Employment Opportunities, carrying on the program for "See the USA" and then being the liaison with all the mayors of local government officials between the President of the United States, the White House and those local government officials.

But I can think of no assignment that means more to me than to be a part of this War on Poverty - to be included in this tremendous effort of the American people to upgrade their society.

Just about a half-hour ago or an hour ago, I was participant on an international broadcast and telecast. The Early Bird Communication satellite was carrying the telecast from WCCO TV here in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to many countries around this world. The reporters or the interregators were in India, S. Africa and Great Britain. We were discussing among other topics the meaning of the Great Society. What does it mean? What is its particular practical application to this generation and to the hopes of America?

Now every administration always has some sort of political phrase that characterizes it. There was the "Square Deal" of Theodore Roosevelt, there was the "New Freedom" of Woodrow Wilson, there was "Back to Normalcy" for Warren G. Harding, there was the "New Deal" of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, there was the "Fair Deal" of Harry Truman, and the "New Frontier" of John F. Kennedy and President Johnson, speaks of his administration as one dedicated to the "Great Society".

What does it mean? Well it surely means more than increasing the quantity of our goods. It ought to mean more than just expanded bank accounts and increased production. It surely should mean more than just more leisure time and luxury. And it ought not to be equated with gross national product.

Now this is not to say that all of these are unimportant, because, I'm sure it goes without saying that gross national product, working conditions, leisure time, prosperity, bank accounts and all are very very important to each and every one of us. And these are indeed related to what we would call the "Great Society."

But the Great Society is primarily concerned with the quality of our lives and not the quantity of our goods. It is also concerned about broadening the base of participation on the part of the citizenry of this country in this great experiment of democracy. It is related directly to opening up opportunity to more and more people of every walk of life from every area in our nation, regardless of race or color or creed.

The Great Society, in other words, means enlightenment, enlightened participation, emancipation, it means permitting people to develop their lives as best they can, and it means also a commitment on the part of the society to help people to overcome their own limitations. To help them to build their own lives. It is truly the fulfillment of the earliest pronouncements of this country. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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Now in our development of the Great Society, one of the areas that we are deeply concerned about are these areas of Poverty. I think it stands to the credit of the United States that at a time that our prosperity is unequaled; at a time that we've had 51 consecutive months of broadened economic growth and expansion; at a time when dividends are at their highest and profits at the highest, wages at the highest levels, that there still is the feeling on the part of the American people that we can do better.

Somebody put the question this way not long ago. Can a prosperous society still have a conscience? And I think the answer has been given. By the commitment of this country recognizing that at least four-fifths of our people live better than ever before, that one-fifth still live below the levels of what we would call a decent standard of living, and therefore, by public policy and personal identification and personal commitment, we have said privately and publicly that we will wage war upon what we term as poverty.

What kind of Poverty? Well, the poverty of the purse, the poverty of economics, we have it in areas like Appalachia, we have it in some of the slum areas of our cities, we have little pockets here and there throughout America. We have approximately 35 million people in this country, many of them elderly, some of them families that have been in a cycle of poverty for better than three generations, 35 million people out of 195 million that have not been able to properly and equitably share in the benefits of our modern technology and our economic system. So it's to these 35 million that we direct some of our national attention and some of our national resources.

And I come to you to speak to you today about how we can do something about it. Now in some areas, and there are some very beautiful and marvelous human interest stories, in some areas we are seeing young people that were school dropouts come into Job Corps camps and do amazing things. In other areas it's a Neighborhood Youth Corps, in some place it's a program of Work Study, in other areas it's a Community Action program.

Within the last week we have announced the project Head Start which will ultimately include over 350 thousand youngsters, pre-school age, from deprived families, and these youngsters will have the coordination and the cooperation and the direction of over ten thousand volunteers, working with them to help them be prepared more fully for an educational experience.

We recently passed an Education Bill, an Aid to Education Bill, a billion, three-hundred million dollars included in that bill, elementary and secondary. The fact is that one billion of that total amount of one-billion, three-hundred million, goes to the children of families that have had less than a fair share of opportunity and the benefits of this society. One billion dollars pumped into the education structure for the deprived, for those who have been the victims, all too often, of separate and equal, mabe separate but never equal, education. Or to put it another way, a billion dollars, most of which will go to help children of minority groups, the Negro and the Puerto Rican. The Mexican-American that has all too often been bypassed, so we are trying to do something.

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I would like this audience to know that this, within itself, signifies good things for this nation if we can maintain this sense of social commitment. No other nation that I've ever heard of, bearing the responsibilities of this one, sharing in such unbelievable and unprecedented prosperity, has openly confessed to itself and to the world that we have inadequacies, that we have severe limitations, that there are spots of weakness and then had the courage to proceed to do something about it. The fact that we can admit our limitations and weaknesses is a sign of our strength - and strength there is.

Some figures that I came across the other day will tell you a little bit about the nature of our problem. I saw where it was reported that we spend about \$500 per year per school child in education. That's the average expenditure in the United States in public education, for elementary and secondary schools, \$500 per year. Eighteen-hundred dollars if you're a school dropout though, three and a half times more; twenty-five-hundred dollars if you're a family on relief; and thirty-five-hundred dollars public expenditure on every inmate in a state penitentiary. This is social values upside down. Thirty-five-hundred a year for an inmate in a penitentiary, five-hundred dollars, and that's stretching it, per year for a child in school.

We're going to try to re-dress that balance, not to deny those that need rehabilitation, at the penal level, not to deny the amount of assistance that may be needed for a family that is in need on relief, but to help people lift themselves, at the bottom of that ladder through education, through training, through manpower training and development, through vocational education, through a host of activities. And what are the results?

Not long ago I was talking to the mayor Pittsburgh, Penn. Just to give you one little example, 2,300 men that were hard-core relief cases, now what do we mean by hard-core relief cases? It means that that family has been on relief for three or more years with no employment. In Pittsburgh, Penn. 2,000 of them taken into the manpower training and development program and after their period of training 75 percent were hired in three months after they concluded their training, became self-sustaining citizens. We're beginning to find out that it is much better to get at the root causes to find why people do not have these opportunities than merely to try to go around and apply economic "band-aids" to the wounds of poverty.

We also find out that people become habitual relief clients unless you break that vicious cycle and circle of assistance and of relief need, so we're getting now programs to work with the children of the family, this is a part of the reason for Head Start.

This is what we mean by the Job Corps. I talked to a young man not long ago at Camp Kilmer, N.J., a Job Corps Center. A boy 17 years of age, and when I asked him, "Why did you come here? It's a volunteer operation, nobody forced you into it, why did you come?" And this young man with tears in his eyes looked at me and he said, "Because it was my last chance." Seventeen years old - his last chance. And yet these young men today, even three months after they have been in the camp begin to show signs of new life and new skills.

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Our job is to make sure that once the training period is completed that they can move out into the productive enterprise structure of this country. That's why your President announced yesterday, and I'm proud to say that he permitted me to head it, a tremendous program of what we call Youth Opportunities. We're going to try to employ, this summer, over and above what we presently employ, from three-fourths of a million to a million young people between the ages of 16 and 20. We're going to ask - we are now asking industry and universities and state governments and local governments and the federal government - we're asking them to put on a person, one more, to give them training, not merely a job, to help these young people make something out of their lives.

There are 600,000 high school graduates with a high school diploma without a job in your America today. Out of 4,800,000 unemployed, 2,200,000 of them are teenagers over 16. We have to get at that problem, and the way to get at it is through a concentrated mobilized effort on the part of every resource in this nation. Recognizing that a man is not employable because he's warm, or because he walks and talks, he is employable when he is skilled, when he has something to offer.

We find the tragic circumstances, my young friends, where a man can't even have a job in a laundry or work in the most simple common labor, at a filling station. Why? Because he can neither read nor write, he can neither add or identify figures and how in the name of common sense can you change a tire if you can't even read the size of it?

Simple things such as this we are seeking to remedy. And that's what the War on Poverty is all about. Not merely the poverty of money; the easiest thing for this rich country to do is to dole out the cash. We've been doing a lot of it at home and abroad. What is more difficult is to be able to extend a hand of fellowship, the hand of assistance, the hand of education, the hand of training, to help people slowly but surely lift themselves.

That's what I'm here to ask you to do today, because, as I said to a graduating group at Macalester College this morning, every person in this university, no matter where you come from, what your circumstances, you are indebted the rest of your life to the state and to the nation and to the community. You didn't pay for your education.

I'm a graduate of this University, and I pride myself, and I go around the country occasionally telling people, I worked my way through school. That's not true. I didn't pay for my education.

I paid for what they charged me, yes, I used to work in a drug store over here at Delaware & Washington. I got 20¢ an hour whether I needed it or not. Finally I worked my way up. I got 25. I can remember walking from 945 14th Ave SE to Washington & Delaware to save seven cents. Ten cents for a streetcar token, it meant something. I worked in the Minnesota union cleaning up the dirt, emptying the garbage.

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But I didn't earn my way through the University. Who could pay for the books in the library? That's the heritage, that's the wealth of generations of a thousand, yea five-ten thousand years. How can you as a student pay for a teacher; the inspiration that you may get from a teacher; the insight that you may get? How can you pay for these fabulous facilities that are here?

The truth is you don't pay one-tenth of your educational bill, and if you're a professional student, you don't pay five-percent of it. So you owe something to somebody and you'll never get through paying it so you ought to start early. We all owe something, everyone of us that is privileged to have an education, we owe something to the society that made it possible for us to have the education.

Education is a key to service. Education unlocks the door for service. Education is the key to opportunity for yourself and for others. And I come out today to appeal to you to do what others before you have done - to volunteer.

I think this is the volunteer generation. I think we're proving it. People are volunteering, there were 200,000, more than that, 250,000 applicants for the Job Corps a month ago. There were 3,000 applicants for VISTA, this program I am talking about, the first 24 hours after it was announced. There are hundreds of thousands of volunteers for the Neighborhood Youth Corps.

Don't tell me that young people don't want to make something out of their lives, of course they do, but those are the people that never had a break, they're the ones that didn't get that education, they're the ones that the state legislature and the people of Minnesota didn't subsidize, and you are subsidized, so was I, I know, so are my children, and not a one of us, even if you go to the best private university in America, if you're a graduate of Harvard or of the University of So. California, or Stanford, of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, you have been given a gift that you'll never be able to repay so you ought to try to at least keep up with the interest. Make a little down payment once in a while.

I feel, in other words, that I ought to be up here with a drummer boy standing beside me. Because I've come here to tell you about a program, about a nation's war, a war on poverty, and this is one you can accelerate; you don't have to worry about this one. (And may I suggest that if you're a little short on having demonstrations have one for this. This is a good one.)

I urge every able spirited, and I underscore the word every able spirited, man and woman among you to step up and volunteer for the war that you ought to be willing to fight and fight it happily. I ask you to give a year of your life to the service of America, to service to Americans who live in circumstances that are unworthy of an American. To help clean up our own backyard. And this ought to be particularly appealing to some people that are worried about what we are doing elsewhere. Join the battle.

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I'm asking you to move into the enemy camp, I'm an old hand at college campuses. I've been a teacher and I'm sort of a refugee from the classroom and I've started more troubles on campuses than many of you ever did. I want you to know that I don't come here as a neophyte. I've been one of those that helped put down the troubles and help start them. I've been a teacher and a student, and I can only say this; that I've witnessed all too many people standing on the sidelines looking around saying "Now that's what they ought to do," "I wish they'd have done it that way." "May I suggest that you ought to do it that way?" Now listen, if you get in the fight you won't have time for so many curb-stone ideas. You'll be in there battling, using your good ideas.

I want you to move into the enemy camp, to help overpower prejudice, fear and distrust, that separate the poor from the life and promise and plenty that most of us lead. And I'm asking you to reach out, to help some people who have been out of reach of the great forces of social progress that have to help to mold your America.

Now you may say that I'm asking a lot, but I'm not. I really believe that I'm offering you quite an opportunity. It's an opportunity to serve and one of the most exciting adventures of our times, in VISTA. Volunteers in Service to America. This is the new corps of volunteers, it's the new army that can fight right here at home. It's being sent out to bring help to the poor and to bring the poor into the councils and the affairs of the nation.

VISTA is one of the programs created by the Economic Opportunity Act. The great law that encompasses the War on Poverty. And I was the floor leader in the Senate of the United States when we passed this program called the War on Poverty. So I was in there when we planned it, and I'm in here now when we wage it. And we need some volunteers, we're long on advice, we need some front line fighters, and I'm here on a recruitment drive.

The first volunteers completed their training, that is the VISTA Volunteers, and were sent to their assignments in February of this year, one of them was 82 years old, and what a girl. I'll tell you, she had more pep than some 21 year olds I've seen and she is at work right now. Working in the back country down in the southeast United States helping people who need to learn how to read and write to adjust to a modern industrialized society. Today there are 133 volunteers at work and next month there'll be a thousand more who will enter training for assignment wherever people who live in poverty have asked for their help.

This is more or less like the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was our answer to human need abroad, and if I might add, of all the many privileges that have been mine, the one that meant more to me than anything was to be the author of that act. I can remember when we proposed it in 1960 as an idea. Many people said, "Oh that's another one of those far out idealistic ideas-it won't work." "A way to let young people just have a ball, to escape reality." The Peace Corps is the finest example of American initiative, of American life, of American technical and social know-how that we have. All over the world Peace Corps has made a tremendous imprint, in fact it has been contagious other countries now have their own Peace Corps.

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VISTA, like Peace Corps, is open to Americans of all ages. All you need to be is young of heart and willing to go to work and have a little ability. It is available to people from all sorts of backgrounds, but there is a special role for the college student of today in VISTA and I'm speaking to the ones that I think can do the job. I've called this generation, the Volunteer Generation. For it was you who surprised the world, as I've indicated, by stepping forward by the thousands, the hundreds of thousands, to volunteer for the Peace Corps and it was you, it was you in the tutoring program, in the freedom schools, in the summer work projects, who showed the nation how vital the element of committed personal participation is in the efforts to help other people.

I have been reading about the ferment on the college campus, well, take your yeast out to the people; ferment with them. Help them lift their lives a little, it's a lot more difficult but it's more challenging.

Happily VISTA is modeled after what proved productive in many of the pioneer volunteer programs of your generation. VISTA Volunteers are not ordered to carry out orders from Washington. They are assigned to local agencies, to private and public groups, and their major responsibility is to the people they serve.

In Denver, for example, the volunteers were requested by the juvenile court to assist with repeating juvenile offenders, in danger of becoming life-long rejects of society. But the VISTA Volunteers will not represent the court or any other institution of law and order, the volunteers will represent only themselves -- interested people who have come to help the families of the young offenders; to help them straighten out their troubled affairs and make a home where a child can feel some security and acceptance.

Here in Minnesota seven VISTA Volunteers have just been sent out to work in four small Chippewa villages. And if you feel any burning social consciousness my dear fellow Minnesotans, you've got plenty of work to do right here on our Indian reservations. Oh believe me, the sadness of their plight is enough to break the heart of anyone.

Living alone or in pairs in the villages, these volunteers will assist their new neighbors in planning and carrying out projects ranging from pre-school training for children to community wide health and sanitation projects. But the most important thing they will do is to help the Chippewas determine how they, the Chippewas, want their lives improved and to show them how to go about achieving the things that they, the Chippewa Indian, want.

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Now I know that a thousand volunteers are not going to change overnight, the statistics of poverty in this big country, where more than, better than 30 million people are estimated to be living in a economic condition which gives them all too little hope or even small expectations. Nor will even 5,000 or 10,000 volunteers change the statistics fundamentally or basically through their own efforts. What is expected to happen, and is already beginning to happen, is that the conditions of poverty will be changed by the poor themselves, as the poor are given leadership to lift themselves, to get a good new look upon the life that they wish to live. It would be ridiculous to talk about the elimination of poverty, if we imagine the poor to be passive recipients of the benefits. For poverty will only be eliminated when the poor say "My children will not be poor" and take steps to assure that it is so. The ultimate effort of this War on Poverty is to help that child to find a whole new life and to help that parent that has been afflicted and in a sense addicted, afflicted by and addicted to, poverty. To help that person who is socially sick to take a new look upon the life that he or she is living and to try to find a better way.

Now I say that this is already beginning to happen, let me give you an example: and I'm not sure of how you pronounce this city's name, it's a little community in California, Southern California, Parlier, I think it is, Parlier. I heard about this on a trip that I made to Tucson and I want to relate it to you. It's a small community of Mexican-Americans, seasonal farm workers. Life is going to be quite different for 60 or 70 youngsters of that community now enrolled in a community pre-school. They never had any school, they never had any pre-school. They will enter school with a knowledge of English, they will be able to communicate and understand what's going on around them, a chance to keep up with their schoolmates. And for the high school girls that are conducting the pre-school program, life is already different. They have been asked for the first time to do something to benefit the community. These are graduates of the local high school. They had nothing to do, wondered what their life was all about and they have found 60 or 70 little ones to lead and to direct and to counsel and to guide. And there are 40 or so high school boys in the same town who are doing clean-up jobs all over town and putting money into the kitty to buy band instruments for the group. I'd like to say that, and I believe I can say that, life in Parlier, California will never be the same again. Over 120 of the youth, youth out of sheer desire of community action, saw the need of little ones and took it on themselves to do something about it by working with this program, the War on Poverty. Now there's only one VISTA Volunteer in Parlier. Just one, but she's been responsible for everything I've been talking about, for the high school girls and boys, for the youngsters that are in pre-school, and she's a 22-year-old college graduate in English. She just thought she could help and she just up and volunteered. And she's moving a whole community single-handedly.

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Now in a small town in Eastern Kentucky, a group of housewives meet once a week to learn how to refinish the furniture. They need to. These are poor people. This is a common concern of the housewives there and elsewhere. What is interesting however, is that this may be the first time in that area that white and Negro housewives have done anything about a common concern together in this town.

Many people like to indulge in academic arguments on civil rights, and I have done my fair share of it, but let me tell you what's happening in the field of civil rights in 10,000 small communities south of the Mason Dixon Line. People, white and colored, are sitting around a table in community action groups and city councils, in educational groups, and for the first time they are working together in the interest of the child, in the interest of the city, in the interest of the elderly, in the interest of the sick. And they are not using words like "civil rights" - they are talking about people; they are talking about citizenship. They're just Americans and nobody took time out to find out just what color they were. What they are interested in is what is their spirit, what can they do, what will they do?

More is happening in your America today in terms of citizenship responsibility and initiative without regard to race, color or creed. More is happening in this past year than happened in the previous 50 years and why? Because we found a mechanism, we found a common concern, people today are concerned about what's going on, at home and abroad, and they want to be a part of their America.

Yes, this program in Kentucky is the product of one volunteer, one person. I submit that the VISTA Volunteers have done much to open up the dialogue between people, to break down false barriers, to get people to talk about human concerns, rather than these false standards of race, or color, or geography or social origins.

A lady in a small Tennessee town, as quoted in the Nashville Tennesseean, one of our great newspapers, as saying the following: She said, "a strange thing, maybe, and maybe it's the good thing about the VISTA visitors, is that they shut up and ask you to talk. If you try to wait them out they wait you out, and you find yourself doing the talking". Now let me hasten to point out that the enthusiasm for verbal expression, in no way disqualifies you for VISTA or any other governmental service, may I say. I don't wish to put this as a standard, but I guess what the Nashville Tennesseean story was telling us is this: the VISTA Volunteer isn't somebody that tells people what to do, that comes out with a prescribed formula. The VISTA Volunteer comes with love, yes, concern, experience, but above all, dedication, wanting to help, trying to find ways to communicate.

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I've mentioned the effect that VISTA is having on the lives of the poor but I believe that the biggest effect will be on the lives of those who are volunteers. Now you've spent your time here at this great university perfecting certain skills and absorbing the philosophy of our culture, it's a great experience and one that you richly deserve and I hope fully enjoy. This is certainly one of the greatest benefits our country can bestow and I'm happy that every year there are more and more people who are privileged to be in higher education and our goal is to see that more and more are the beneficiaries of higher education.

Now you have the opportunity offered you to test these skills and principles, in the service of your fellowman under conditions which will give full scope to your abilities and imagination.

I know that some of you must think it's a little more dramatic and exciting to be called upon in the Peace Corps to go to Kenya or to Nigeria or Tunisia or the Phillippines or to Malaysia or wherever it may be in the far away places and I'm sure exciting and challenging, but let me give you a little figure: Less than 50 percent of the American people have been 200 miles away from home. That's right, half of the population of this country have not been any further away from home than from here to Duluth.

I suggest that we get acquainted with America too. Get acquainted with the other parts of this land then we'll be a little more considerate of each other and a little more understanding; northerner with southerner, and southerner with northerner and easterner with westerner, and start talking, not as regional representatives but as Americans. Getting some appreciation, if you live in a rural community, of the problems of the city, and if you live in a city, a little more appreciation of what goes on on a farm or, in a rural community. Our problem in America is, there is so much news that nobody knows what they're talking about. Too little communication, communication of headlines, communication that you read about what the other fellow has done.

I often wish, Dr. Wilson, that I could come back to the University and the schools that I have taught in and teach Government once again, because I owe all of my students an apology. It wasn't at all like I taught it. There's a great deal of difference once that you get into government, once that you have the experience. I think that we need people today that have experience or that have experienced what other people do in their country. And it doesn't mean that you're saddled only to the problem people, it doesn't mean that you're saddled only with the burdens of the poor, it's a privilege to get an education in depth by traveling broadly and seeing America through new eyes.

Whatever course you take on leaving college I think that each day will be enriched by the inner knowledge that you have given support and strength to others if you join. So let me just say that there will be a team of VISTA recruiters on this campus and these recruiters are here to ask you to volunteer. Uncle Sam isn't saying this time "I want you". You ought to be standing up and saying "I want to help". You remember what John F. Kennedy said "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country".

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This is still good doctrine and it is particularly good at a time in our lives when the United States of America has 50 percent of the total gross national product of this whole world, 50 percent of the wealth of this world is here, of the produced wealth, the other three billion people get the balance. A nation that has been so blessed owes a great deal to its own people that have been less blessed, and I happen to be one that believes that it owes a great deal to the rest of the world. One of the reasons that I have strongly supported our efforts in the United Nations, one of the reasons that I have strongly supported foreign aid, as they call it, technical assistance, one of the reasons that I strongly believe in a program such as the Peace Corps, Food for Peace, Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank and the whole system of activities to which we belong is that never did so few have so much as we, and never did so few have so much that they could lose, as we.

We have a responsibility, my fellow Americans, responsibility does not give you privilege, it saddles you with duty. Leadership is no joy. It is a responsibility and a burden. If you want the title of leader, in college or in the city, or state or nation or world, expect to be watched and judged, sometimes even unfairly, expect that people will expect more from you if you wish to, as they say "just goof off" if you wish just to "have a ball" then don't try to make much out of your lives. But this great America that we love, you like to read about it, as a world leader, is not going to be given the privilege of several chapters in the history of this century, as leader, unless we are worthy of it. And to be worthy of the mantle of leadership means that you're strong enough in character and resources to bear the burden. We have the responsibility and the burden today to lead at home and abroad.

I'm talking to the people that can get the job done, I think you're living in the greatest time in human history. I love it. As a matter of fact, I wish to goodness that they could assure me that there would be another century of this excitement that I could participate in, and I'd volunteer for it right now. I hear many people complaining these days, about the terrible things that are happening. Well, I want to say that as a, sort of a student of history, terrible things have been happening a long time. I hear many people tell me about the "good old days". I lived through some of them and I'm here to tell you that, if no one else has, they weren't so good. And I'm living through these days and I think these are more challenging and exciting, much more rewarding days in which you will conquer new worlds, days in which we can put a man on the moon and also put man on his feet, right here on this earth. Days in which we can explore outer space and develop inner man, days of unbelievable progress if we but will it. For the first time man can banish famine from the face of the earth. For the first time we can conquer poverty, we have the tools to do the job. For the first time we can teach everyone that wishes to learn, and for the first time we can heal the sick that wish to be healed. We have more opportunities than many people have ever known, and I think the main thing for us to do is for us to have an attitude of confidence, confidence and an attitude of commitment, a willingness to say that we can do the impossible, and then set out to get the job done. Thank you.

My Job - War on Poverty

REMARKS BY

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VISTA

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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I feel I ought to have a drummer boy standing here beside me. I've come here to tell you about our nation's War on Poverty and to urge every able spirited man and woman among you to step up and volunteer.

Yes, I am asking you - all of you who can - to give a year of your lives in service to Americans who live in poverty. in need of help.

I am asking you to go into the enemy camp; to overpower the prejudice, fear and distrust that separate

the poor from the life ^H promise and plenty that most
of us lead.

∟ And I am asking you to reach out to the
~~spread a revolution among~~
people who have been out of reach of the great social
program ^{force of} ~~that~~ ^{has} molded America.

∟ You may say this is quite a bit to ask, but I
believe it is quite a bit to offer.

∟ It is the opportunity to serve in one of the most
exciting adventures of our times, in VISTA, Volunteers
in Service to America, ^{It is the} the new corps of volunteers ^{-the new}
Army - that is being sent out to bring help to the poor and to
bring the poor into the councils and affairs of this
nation.

∟ VISTA is one of the programs created by the

Economic Opportunity Act, the great law that encompasses the War on Poverty. The first VISTA Volunteers completed training and were sent to their assignments in February of this year. Today there are 133 Volunteers at work and next month 1000 more will enter training for assignments wherever people who live in poverty have asked for help.

VISTA is open to Americans of all ages from all kinds of backgrounds, but there is a special role for the college student of today in VISTA.

I have called this generation the "Volunteer Generation" for it was you who surprised the world by stepping forward by the thousands to make the Peace Corps a great international movement.

↳ And it was you in tutoring programs, freedom schools and summer work projects who showed the nation how vital the element of committed personal participation is in efforts to help other people.

↳ Happily, VISTA is modelled after what proved productive in many of the pioneering volunteer programs of your generation. ↳ VISTA Volunteers are not ~~sent out~~ ^{ordered} to carry out orders from Washington.

↳ They are assigned to local agencies and their major responsibility is to the people they serve.

↳ In Denver, for instance, Volunteers were requested by the juvenile court to assist with repeating juvenile offenders in danger of becoming lifelong rejects of society. But the Volunteers will not represent the

court or the other institutions of law and order. The
Volunteers will represent only themselves, interested
people who have come to help the families of the young
offenders straighten out their troubled affairs and
make a home where a child can feel some security and
acceptance.

Here in Minnesota seven Volunteers have just
been sent out to work in four small Chippewa Villages.
They are the first of thirty scheduled to be assigned
to the Chippewa reservations this year. Living alone
or in pairs in the villages, the Volunteers will assist
their new neighbors in planning and carrying out projects
ranging from pre-school training for children to community-
wide health and sanitation projects. But the most

important thing they will do is to help the Chippewas

the chippewas
determine how they want their lives improved and to

show them how to go about achieving the things they

want.

I know that A thousand volunteers are not going to *change society*

the statistics of poverty in this country where more than

30 million people are estimated to be living in an

economic condition which gives them *little* ~~no~~ cause for hope

or even small expectations. Nor will 5000 or 10,000

Volunteers change the statistics through their own

efforts.

L What is expected to happen, *and* is already beginning to

happen, is that the conditions of poverty will be changed

by the poor themselves. Indeed it would be ridiculous

to talk about the elimination of poverty if we
imagined the poor to be the passive recipients of
benefits. For poverty will only be eliminated when
the poor say "my children will not be poor" and take
steps to assure that it is so.

I say it is already beginning to happen. In
Parlier, California, a small community of Mexican-
American seasonal farm workers, life is going to be
quite different for 60 or 70 youngsters now enrolled in
a community pre-school. They will enter school with a
knowledge of English and an understanding of what is
going on around them - a chance to keep up with their
schoolmates. And for the high school girls that are
conducting the pre-school ^{Program}, life is already different.

They have been asked for the first time to do something of benefit to the community. There are 40 or so high school age boys in the town who are doing cleanup jobs all over town and putting money into a kitty to buy instruments for a "group." I would say life in Parlier will never be the same.

There is only one VISTA Volunteer in Parlier, a 22-year-old girl, ~~she had~~ ^{she had} studied English in college ~~and~~

thought she could help.

In a small town in Eastern Kentucky a group of housewives meets once a week to learn how to refinish furniture, a common concern of housewives everywhere.

What is interesting is that this may be the first time white and Negro housewives have done anything about a

common concern together in this town.

L They are learning how to fix up their homes from a woman who was a college instructor for over 40 years and came out of retirement to serve in VISTA at the age of 73.

L Such stories are multiplying as Volunteers go to work in communities throughout the country and the lives that are being affected are multiplying. The new spirit of achievement that is being generated will not be crushed if we keep open the two-way channels of communication that are just now beginning to be opened between the America of opportunity and the America of poverty. VISTA Volunteers have done much to open the dialogue.

↳ A lady in a small Tennessee town is quoted in the Nashville Tennessean: "The strange thing - maybe it's the good thing - about the VISTA visitors is that they shut up and ask you to talk. If you try to wait them out, they wait you out, and you find yourself talking." (let me hasten to point out that an enthusiasm for verbal expression in no way disqualifies you for VISTA or other beneficial government service.)

I have mentioned the effects VISTA is having on the lives of the poor, but I believe one of its greatest effects will be on the lives of those who serve.

↳ You have spent your time here at the university perfecting certain practical skills and absorbing the philosophy of our culture. This is certainly one of the

greatest benefits our country can bestow, and I am happy to say that it is an opportunity open to a great many in this country.

Now you have an opportunity to test those skills and principles in the service of your fellow man under conditions which give full scope to your abilities and your imagination. You cannot emerge from such an experience without a better, surer knowledge of yourself and a deeper understanding of the nature of man and society. Whatever course you take on leaving college, each day will be enriched by the inner knowledge that you have given support and strength to others.

There will be a team of VISTA recruiters on campus all week. They can tell you where you can serve and what you might do. Once more I urge you - **step up** and volunteer.



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