

OPENING STATEMENT

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

ASSOCIATED PRESS POVERTY CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

NOVEMBER 8, 1965

Last December the President informed the Cabinet-level Economic Opportunity Council, at its first meeting, that he had asked me "to take a leading role in the War on Poverty -- to be sure that this is a well-coordinated, concentrated attack on poverty throughout the country." The President also asked me to serve as Honorary Chairman of the Advisory Council established by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

∟ In the past year, I have worked with Sargent Shriver and his effective staff in the Office of Economic Opportunity. I have traveled throughout America carrying the message that this Administration intends to win the War on Poverty.

∟ I also have been doing some looking and listening regarding public reaction to the poverty program in its first year.

∟ I think I can sum up public reaction by saying that the War on Poverty has broad general support, but that there is also some misunderstanding about how it works, what it seeks to do, and how it ties into other public and private programs.

∟ This is to be expected. Poverty has a wide range of causes and creates a wide range of problems. There is no single remedy for it.

No single program will meet all needs. There are at least three levels of actions required, and we have been moving on all three.

① First, there is the need for stepped-up economic activity.

We are now in our 56th consecutive month of economic expansion -- an expansion created by a positive partnership for prosperity between the public and private sectors.

∠ GNP, wages and profits are up. Unemployment is down. Prices are relatively stable.

∠ We in government have made our contribution to this expansion through careful use of fiscal and tax policy. We have pursued policies designed to avoid inflation. And we have, through economic development programs, sought to bring the benefits of economic expansion to all areas of the country.

- Job Corps
- Neighborhood Youth Corp
- VISTA
- Community Action Programs
- Work Study
- work experience
- Rural rehab
- SBA Development

(2) Second, there is the need for programs for the aged, for widows and orphans, for the sick, and *the hard core*

7 unemployed -- for those who need society's immediate

help. *These are the people who are the last to be touched by economic expansion.*

↳ In this past session of Congress we passed new and improved legislation for medical care, social security, housing and social services.

(3) Finally, there is the need for development of our human resources.

↳ This is where the Economic Opportunity Act, with its nine new programs, comes in. ↳ But we must not overlook also our national investments in vocational education and manpower training, in the new education laws, the Older Americans Act, in health research -- all aimed at providing opportunity for Americans to lift themselves to fuller, more productive lives.

Elementary
Higher

∟ I think it is important to understand that the War on Poverty is much more than the Economic Opportunity Act. ∟ It is being waged on many fronts.

∟ The OEO programs alone -- in less than a year -- have already reached into over a thousand communities, and have directly involved millions of people.

∟ In this first year there have been some mistakes.

We can expect that mistakes will occur in a program this big. The question is, of course: Will we learn from our mistakes?

We experiment - We try

We must drop or change programs that do not work.

Under the direction of Dr. Joseph Kershaw, we are now giving every federal poverty program, new as well as old, searching evaluation. If any program isn't helping to get people out of poverty, we must know. We cannot stay with it one day longer than necessary.

*after all -
the poverty that
we seek to
destroy has
up to now
resisted all
efforts to
eradicate it.*

↳ The War on Poverty requires inter-agency cooperation, and we have been getting it.

Last March, I was widely quoted in the press after I had told a group that the poverty effort would require "inter-agency cooperation, the likes of which this city hasn't seen."

And I added "I hope it can be done peacefully but if it can't, it will be done."

↳ Well, cooperation has proceeded peacefully. Federal agencies are pulling together, in the Job Corps program, in Project Head Start, and in many others. During the course of these sessions, you will see much evidence of this.

The new programs have caused some friction in our cities.

One of my principal assignments is that of liaison with the nation's mayors.

I know that the new Community Action programs have created some problems in the cities. Some of these have been difficult -- but I am confident that they are all possible of solution.

In the great majority of cases, it has been possible to work out the kind of program that reflects both of these objectives: full utilization of the local government machinery and maximum feasible participation on the part of the poor themselves. I do not think that these are incompatible. Hundreds of communities have already proved this.

The poverty program is not a civil rights program. But it is part of the answer to the civil rights problem.

Three out of every four poor Americans are white.

But for the American Negro, poverty is a special problem.

(but 1/2 of total negro pop is in poverty group)

missouri
Pitts, Detroit,
new houses
600 communities
have going
programs

this is in
the law!

no change of
policy

+ private
agencies

Project
Head
Start!

Call on Mayor + Governors
to do this

↳ In his historic address at Howard University, President Johnson told us that it isn't enough to open up doors of opportunity, that it must be possible for each person to walk through those doors. - *Training* -

↳ The economic opportunity program can provide the important next step for millions of Americans previously denied opportunity.

↳ The War on Poverty has mobilized not only the federal government, but every segment of our national life.

↳ Fourteen distinguished Americans from every walk of life have been serving on our National Advisory Council.

Industry leaders serve on the OEO Business Advisory Council.

Labor leaders serve on the Labor Advisory Council.

Every religious denomination in the country has joined in the effort, participating in official programs and increasing its private efforts.

The American Legion, ^{*The VFW - The other Veterans organizations*} the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, the major women's organizations and human rights groups and civic clubs have all asked "What can we do to help?"

∟ For every federal dollar and every official man-hour of effort in the War on Poverty, there are several local or private dollars and man-hours. Our citizens are committed to winning this war.

∟ A generation ago the American author Thomas Wolfe expressed the goal we work for:

"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 vision can combine to make him -- this . . .
is the promise of America."

Today, the wealthiest and most powerful nation
on earth, we can make that promise come true.

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Finally, there is the need for development of our human resources.

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