

STATEMENT BY  
VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
YOUTH OPPORTUNITY CONFERENCE  
MARCH 3, 1966

As Chairman of the President's Youth Opportunity Task Force, it is a pleasure to be with you this morning at this Youth Opportunity Conference.

I frequently have been asked to define the meaning of the Great Society. One of the key elements in this definition is the word "opportunity." President Johnson has stressed this theme again and again. It is expressed with striking eloquence in these lines by the great American author, Thomas Wolfe:

"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."

↳ This is the promise we are seeking to fulfill in the President's programs on education, the war on poverty, health care and hospital facilities, civil rights, housing, job training and many related programs.

↳ This objective of "equal opportunity" has special relevance for the young people of America. ↳ Each child presents an opportunity to break the old pattern and make it new--to transform our oft-repeated promises of a secure, prosperous and happy life into reality. This is what the Great Society is all about--this is why we have asked you to meet with us this morning.

↳ Secretary Wirtz, Secretary Gardner, Mr. Shriver and Chairman Macy will describe for each of you the various programs in their agencies relating to equal

opportunity. They will set forth specific procedures by which your agencies can participate in these programs, and assist the vitally important task of fulfilling the promise of America for our young people.

↳ You will hear about the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, the work study and work experience programs, MDTA programs, vocational education and the Youth Opportunity Campaign.

↳ In some instances, your agencies can participate directly in these programs. For instance, there are now opportunities for federal agencies to provide work opportunities through the Neighborhood Youth Corps.

↳ In other cases, they will set forth ways to assist graduates of these programs, such as the employment of qualified Job Corpsmen.

As Chairman of the President's Youth Opportunity Task Force, my principal point this morning is this:

Each agency should designate without further delay  
at least one top level person to coordinate all  
matters relating to youth opportunity. He must have  
the job of knowing what is going on in all federal  
agencies that relates to youth opportunity and developing  
ways and means for his agency to participate and assist  
in these activities.

As Chairman Macy will explain to you, the  
Civil Service Commission now has designated Mr.  
James R. Poole to coordinate youth opportunity activities  
of the Commission. His office can provide federal  
agencies with advice, information and assistance in  
maintaining vigorous youth opportunity programs.

We must be sufficiently realistic to recognize  
that we are principally talking about disadvantaged

young people of both races. And while the total number of poor white people in America far surpasses poor non-whites, we also must realize that the percentage of poor non-whites is far higher. We must exercise special imagination and insight in creating the kind of work experience and training opportunities that will be relevant and effective in this situation.

I have often said that persons should exercise the same diligence and creativity in promoting equal employment opportunity today as they used to deny it in the past.

Last year, one of the more successful efforts of the Youth Opportunity Task Force was the Youth Opportunity Campaign designed to find summer work for young people.

Knowledgeable people in Washington -- particularly Department of Labor economists and statisticians -- had

long warned that severe unemployment among young people would occur when the "post-war baby crop" of the late 1940s began looking for jobs. It was estimated that approximately 2,200,000 young Americans in the 16-21 age group would be entering the labor force between May and June of 1965. (This estimate-- while huge by all previous years--turned out to be low. Over 2,600,000 young people entered the labor force between May and June 1965.)

The President set a goal of one million <sup>Sub, 100,000 then</sup> extra job opportunities--over and above the normal increase-- as being necessary to meet this situation. He called upon American management and labor, private organizations, and federal, state and local government agencies, to develop as many additional, meaningful summer jobs as they could.

Personal letters were sent to employers across  
the country.

Similar requests were made to local, state and  
federal government agencies.

National and local task forces on youth employment  
were formed to publicize and coordinate our efforts.

The result is easily summarized.

More than one million young people received jobs  
last summer and over 850,000 more people in the  
16-21 age group were employed in July 1965 than had been  
in July 1964.

This is an all-time record and more than any  
increase that could have been anticipated from normal  
forces of the economy. #

The second phase of the Youth Opportunity Campaign  
was aimed at the school dropout. Dropouts!

At a time when the forces of automation and cybernation are decreeing that over four times the number of new jobs are being created in education rather than manufacturing, when there is a greater demand for teachers than mill hands, 33 1/3 percent of all children will drop out of school before high school graduation.

In the past ten years, jobs filled by high school graduates have risen 30 percent while jobs for those with no secondary school education have decreased 25 percent.

If school dropouts continue at the present pace, we will have 32 million adult, non-high school graduates in the labor force in 1975--at a time when jobs for the uneducated and untrained will be far fewer than today.

↳ To meet this threat we launched a broad-scale program that included saturation campaigns through the various media, meetings with Mayors, Governors and local community leaders, and the creation of special Youth Opportunity Task Forces in many of our major cities.

↳ At this time we intend to sponsor another Youth Opportunity Campaign this summer. Forecasts of young people entering the labor market parallel quite closely the figures of last year. ↳ We are, however, watching carefully the unemployment figures so that we will know precisely the nature of our challenge this summer. We will be in touch with each agency as detailed plans are developed.

I believe most agencies had a remarkably good experience with their Youth Opportunity Campaign workers last summer. We have on file many letters of commendation and praise for the jobs performed by these young people and, in most instances, they far exceeded the expectations of their employers.

This record of performance is clear evidence that young people will respond when they have an opportunity to show what they can do.

I believe our younger generation possesses great reservoirs of initiative, creativity, diligence and common sense. Everywhere I go I encounter young people who realize the value of hard work and only want the chance to work hard.

Our task is to help provide them with the education and training necessary to hold the kind of jobs found

in today's economy--and then to see that such jobs are actually available.

This Youth Opportunity Conference will provide every federal agency with the basic information needed to become full participants in the vital task of fulfilling the promise of America for our young people.

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March 7, 1966

Memo to Ted Van Dyk

From John Stewart

A verbatim transcript of the Vice President's remarks at the Youth Opportunity Conference on Thursday is attached. The version released by the Commission has been edited quite thoroughly by me and the remarks by the Post Office, etc. have been deleted. The Vice President's remarks will be carried as excerpts by the Commission.

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STATEMENT BY  
Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey  
Youth Opportunity Conference  
March 3, 1966

Thank you Chairman Macy and members of the Civil Service Commission, my esteemed associates in the Executive Branch of the Government, all of you who have their many responsibilities in the respective departments. I gathered that what John Macy wants me to be sure to do is sound a sure and certain trumpet, no uncertainty this morning.

He has indicated that we worked together last year and as you may recall each and every one of you, we did have a meeting somewhat similar to this and one through the use of closed circuit television. We were able to discuss the Youth Opportunity Campaign throughout the Federal agencies in most of the major cities in the United States. We are here this morning in a work session, a seminar, designed to discuss youth opportunities and, in fact, to lend ourselves to programming on the basis of a youth opportunity conference.

I have been frequently asked to define the meaning of the Great Society as I have traveled across our country, and one of the key elements in this definition is the word opportunity. President John<sup>son</sup> has stressed this theme and this word time and time again. It is expressed, however, with striking eloquence in these lines by the great American author, Thomas Wolfe, which our President likes to quote also. Thomas Wolfe said this:

"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."

I know of no more eloquent statement of the purpose of American life than those words of Thomas Wolfe. I wish that we could type them out and put them on a card and stick them in our pocket or in your purse and each day take a look at these words of commitment and of hope and promise. In this manner we would be reminded of our duties and our privilege. Now the words of Thomas Wolfe cite the promise that we are seeking to fulfill in the President's programs on education, the war on poverty, health care and hospital facilities, civil rights, housing, job training and many related programs.

I do hope that we have not lost our sense of enthusiasm over the amazing achievements of last year's congressional action in fulfilling the dream of the Great Society. One of the real problems in American life is that we seem to have to have a new drama, a new case of excitement every day and every month. I would suggest that the frame work of the house of opportunity was established last year. There will be additions and modifications and improvements this year. But the spirit of life that must fill that house is the continuing responsibility of each and every one of us.

Now this objective of equal opportunity has a special relevance to the young people of America. I have always felt that each child presents an opportunity to break the old pattern and make it new, to transform our oft repeated promises of a secure and prosperous and happy life into a reality. This to me is what the Great Society is all about, and this is why we have asked all of you to meet with us this morning. Taking these repeated promises of a secure and prosperous and happy life and by our endeavors working with others, by our leadership, working with others to make these promises a reality.

My mind and heart in recent days has been filled with the observations that I made on a tour to the Far East and the Pacific, and I come back not only filled with admiration and respect, and indeed great pride for our soldiers our fighting men because they are doing an amazing job, but I came back also filled with the determination to try to help the peoples of these far away lands realize their Great Society, to have their opportunity. This is what President Johnson talked about when he said there was another war. Just as we have known in America some of us that have enjoyed such affluence and such privilege, such opportunity that we've known that there was another America where people did not enjoy all those opportunities and privileges, and we're seeking to do something about that other America. We're seeking to make this one nation, indivisible, one nation united, one nation with equal rights and equal opportunities. So in other parts of the world, we are now engaged in a gigantic effort to try to help people make the promises that have been repeated to them so often, make those promises a reality. I think this is the greatest challenge that we have, and how I wish that sometimes our media and we who fill the media with the so called news clips, how I wish that we would emphasize the importance of that struggle, because this is the struggle that most Americans want to join and the one that they know they can win.

Well to get back to this meeting here this morning. You see I happen to be one of those who thinks that everything is interdependent. I do not see any parochialism left in this world at all. Whatever we do here affects somebody else somewhere else, and what ever somebody else does or does not do some place else affects us. We waited a long time to discover that it was one world and that it was smaller each day, and I must say that the example that we set as American's at home and the manner in which we fulfill our commitments at home will have a great to do about shaping the world about us.

Secretary Wirtz and Secretary Gardner and Mr. Shriver and Chairman Macy will describe for each of you today the various programs in their agencies relating to equal opportunity, to the better life for American people. They will set forth the specific procedures by which your agencies can participate

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in these programs and assist the vitally important task of fulfilling the promise of America for our young people. I use the words your agencies, but I want to make it quite clear I'm talking to you. I do not believe in these impersonal references, I often times heard when I was in the Senate. Someone would talk about the White House. I would say the White House; the White House is a building. I want to know about the people in it. What's important is the President that lives there, his associates. And when we speak about the agencies, it means nothing. What we need is a commitment from every individual in those agencies. The agencies represent nothing but a cloak that covers the body, and the heart, and the soul, and the spirit of the people in those agencies; and unless American governmental officials get a dose of enthusiasm and determination, agencies are duller than last year's calendar. There are more apt descriptions. I thought you each would have your own interpretation.

Now you are going to hear this morning about the Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, the work study and work experience programs, the MDTA programs, the vocational education/youth opportunity campaign. I have been out seeing these programs at work and so have you. You helped make them work, and I get excited when I see them. I guess this is one of the qualities that I may have. I notice that whenever I come back from a journey or something, some journalist will say I was exuberant, as if this was a sin. Well, I leave dyspepsia, and discouragement, and distress to others. I am an optimist; and I do believe in a degree of exuberance. I feel that it is difficult enough to do any task and you ought not to burden yourself down by self-pity. Just another way of saying get at it.

My father used to tell me, don't tell me your troubles son, go see a doctor; I want to hear about what you intend to do. And I was brought up on the positive philosophy. I was also brought up that procrastination is the vain of all evils that there was one word in our family that lived every day. Activity - get going - work if you're not very bright and work harder than other people and you may be average. So with those very parental admonitions that I've never forgotten, I've worked a good 16 hour day in a hope that I may catch up with the brighter ones that work an eight hour day, and presume that that may be your case too. I gathered we all got that too.

Now in many instances, your agency and you can participate directly in these programs that I have mentioned. For instance, there are new opportunities for Federal agencies to provide work opportunities through the Neighborhood Youth Corps. In other cases, they will set forth ways to assist graduates of these programs such as the employment of a qualified Job Corpsman, and it would be a terrible tragedy for a young man or woman that comes out of a Neighborhood Youth Corps or a Job Corps operation not to find a job or not to have a position if qualified to fulfill one.

As Chairman of the President's Youth Opportunity Task Force, my principle point this morning is this -- that each agency should designate without further delay at least one top level person to coordinate all matters relating to youth opportunity, and I want you to get somebody that is filled up with active glands, and someone that is really on the ball, that really wants to work because if you are going to work with young people, you better be willing to really be alive. Without trying to get into the commercials on the TV, there is such a thing, as you know, the Pepsi generation, and I am talking about just being peppy about it.

Now this person must have the job of knowing what is going on in all the Federal agencies that relates to youth opportunity and developing ways and means for his agency to participate and assist in these activities. As Chairman Macy will explain to you or as I should say, the Civil Service Commission now has designated Mr. James R. Poole to coordinate youth opportunities activities of the Commission, and his office can provide Federal agencies with advise, information, and assistance in maintaining vigorous youth opportunities programs. But since I do believe in reciprocity, I think you ought to provide Mr. Poole with some ideas too. We ought to have a good contest here - to see who can have the better ideas as to how we can have a real youth opportunity program under way.

Now we must be sufficiently realistic to recognize that we're principally talking about disadvantaged young people of both races, or should I say all races. And while the total number of ~~both~~ white people in America far surpasses the poor nonwhites, we also must realize that the percentage of poor nonwhites is far higher. We must exercise, therefore, special imagination and insight in creating the kind of work experience and training opportunities that will be relevant and effective in this situation. I have often said that persons should now exercise the same diligence and creativity in promoting equal employment opportunity today, as they used to have in denying it in the past. Why, they could figure up more reasons why a person should not have a job unless he looked just right. Now I ask you to show how a whole new generation in government can be creative and imaginative about finding opportunities for people who have been long denied.

Last year one of the most successful efforts of the youth opportunity task force was the Youth Opportunity Campaign designed to find summer work for young people. Knowledgeable people in Washington, particularly Department of Labor economists and statisticians, had long warned that severe unemployment of young people would occur when the post-war baby crop of the late 40's begin looking for jobs. It was estimated that approximately 2,200,000 young American's in the 16 to 21 age group would be entering the

labor force between May and June of 1965. This estimate while huge by all previous years' averages turned out to be rather low. Over 2,600,000 young people entered the labor force between May and June of 1965.

Now a moment ago, I mentioned to you that there was quite a campaign under way here in Washington, to get young people jobs. I'm going to have a little more to say about that, and I think you may have noticed that there was a comment or two in the press about some of these matters. Particularly as to the fine work of the Post Office Department. Well, I want to make it quite clear that the Post Office Department did a good job, and I would like to also make it quite clear what I said once before, that while the emphasis should be upon the poor and disadvantaged, some of the people that need a job just for their own work experience, for their own mental health, for their own good, for the good of their country are some of the young people in this country that come from well to do families, moderately well to do families, that have never had a job and don't know what it means to take on responsibilities. So lets get the record clear, as long as I have the platform, we are not running WPA. We are running a youth opportunity program. The emphasis should be upon those who are in need, and that word need encompasses, in the main, who are those that are poor not that come from the poor families, the disadvantaged.

But some people are in need who are not poor in money. They're poor in experience, poor in love, and poor in just spirit, and if they can have a little opportunity in a job that will just sort of shape them up, why it will be a contribution to the American society. I don't know whether I'll be fired for saying that or not, but I believe it and I determined a long time ago that the strain of life does run out and you just will get most of these things off your chest while your still breathing because seldom do people listen to you after that, and as I have said many times, I'm not running for anything anyhow.

I'm I'm very happy with what I am doing and sometimes I even try to make others happy with it. Now the president set a goal of, I think Willard it was about 500,000 first -- 500,000 and then after he met with us a couple of times, and decided that was too easy, looked at the Secretary of Labor and looked at Sarge Shriver and looked at a few of our other cabinet officers and decided he ought to make it a million. So he set the goal of a million extra job opportunities. This was over and above the normal increase as to be necessary to meet this youth unemployment situation. He called upon American management and labor; private organizations; Federal, state, and local government agencies to develop as many meaningful summer jobs as they could. And the agencies went to work. Personal letters were sent to employers across the country. Similar requests were made to local, state, and federal government agencies; national and local task forces on youth employment were

formed to publicize and coordinate our efforts. We had tremendous cooperation from radio, television, and the press, from every form of media in the country and the result is easily summarized. More than one million young people received jobs last summer, and over 850,000 more people in the 16 to 21 age group were employed by July of 1965 than had been in July of 1964. Now this is an all time record and more than any increase that could have been anticipated from the normal forces of the economy.

Now I want to repeat again, I know there was some criticism. The one thing I found out about the critics, not a one of them got anybody a job. They spent their time criticising the work that other people were doing. I made it my personal research project to find out whether any of the critics had taken any time out of their great expertise of being critics. Whether they had taken any time to find anybody a job, and they really hadn't any time to help any young people. So don't you be worried about those critics, turn them on me, I enjoy them. You go ahead and get the job done. But I want to repeat for the record, the critics didn't produce one job. You did, and you be grateful you had that chance and then just look with a kind of spiritual forgiveness upon those who knew not what they were doing. Now the second phase of the youth opportunity campaign was aimed at the school dropout. And you can expect that you will get heat on this one too. At a time when the force of automation and cybernation are decreeing that over four times the number of new jobs are being created in education rather than manufacturing, when there is a greater demand for teachers than mill hands, 33 1/3 percent of all the children will drop out of school before high school graduation. That's the projection in America for the next ten years unless we can do something about it.

Now in the past ten years, jobs filled by high school graduates have risen 30 percent while jobs for those with no secondary school education have dropped 25 percent. Now if school dropouts continue at the present pace, according to the information that these good men back here have supplied me, we will have 32,000,000 adult non-high school graduates in the labor force in 1957, at a time when jobs for the uneducated and the untrained will be far fewer than today. In other words, the number of non-high school graduates goes up, rapidly, as the number of jobs for non-high school graduates goes down. Now these are the kinds of practical problems that we face. Now to meet this threat, therefore, the President asks that we launch a broad scale program that included saturation campaigns to the various media, meeting with the mayors, the governors, and the local community leaders, and the creation of special youth opportunity task forces in many of our major cities. Only recently I was in Detroit spending a full day there working on the school dropout program and the training programs. Prior to that, we had been in St. Louis, carrying on a similar endeavor and we have other meetings scheduled.

At this time, we intend to sponsor another youth opportunity campaign this summer. Forecasts of young people entering the labor market parallel

quite closely the figures of last year. So <sup>our</sup> ~~out~~ task is about identical. We are, however, watching carefully the unemployment figures so that we will know precisely the nature of our challenge this summer. There is pressure on the labor market. There ought to be many <sup>more</sup> ~~more~~ job opportunities for young people. But we must not make our plans on that basis. Our plans should be on the basis that we're going to have another two million plus young people come into the labor market these summer months and that they're going to need employment opportunity. Now we'll be in touch with each agency as the detail plans are developed. I believe that most agencies had a remarkably good experience with their youth opportunity campaign workers last summer.

We have on file many letters of commendation and praise for the job performed by these young people and in most instances that far exceeded the expectation of their employers. It wasn't just the work that these young people did, it wasn't just the fact that they gained some income. I hope that we all realize what it meant to those young people to be wanted, what it meant to them to be an active participant in the life of this nation. I hope that we can sense what it means to a young man or young woman who has maybe come from a very poor home, possibly a broken home, possibly no home. What it meant to that young man or young woman to have somebody that would be willing to reach out and give them the opportunity to do something with their lives. Oh -- this to me is the most gratifying experience of all and I have read hundreds of letters from young people and from employers that make you know that whatever we did was compensated for a thousand times in the spirit of gratitude and appreciation that has been exemplified in these letters.

This record of performance is clear evidence that young people will respond when they have an opportunity to show what they can do. I believe our younger generation possesses great reservoirs of initiative, creativity, diligence, and common sense. And I'll tell you if I ever had any doubt about, all I had needed was to visit the servicemen~~t~~ that I saw in Vietnam. I want to say right now once again that the greatest testimonial to the qualities of American life are to be found in the work, in the bravery, in the courage, in the compassion, and in the humanitarianism, and in the understanding of the better than 200,000 young Americans that serve this nation right now in Vietnam. They're the finest young men and women~~t~~ that America has ever had and they do such a job for us that they are the wonder and the pride, may I say, of the world. We ought to be very grateful.

Everywhere I go, I encounter young people who realize the value of hard work, and they only want a chance to work and to work hard. Our task then is an easy one, it is to provide them with the education and training necessary to hold a kind of jobs that are to be found in today's economy, and then to see that such jobs are actually available. This Youth Opportunity

Conference, sponsored by the Commission will provide every Federal agency with the information needed to make full participants in the vital task of fulfilling the promise of America for our young people.

I want to charge you then this morning with undertaking this responsibility. I admonish you not to be at all worried about the darts and the arrows that may come because you may have made an error in judgment here or there. What's important is the final result. What's really important is what do you do for people. That's what a Government of the people and by the people and for the people is all about. This Government is not here to please you or to please me, and it is not here to please an editorial, it's here to serve the needs of the American people, and if in your daily work in your agency you feel that you have helped one young person find his way, one young person with training of education, if you help one young person gain some confidence and some self-respect, you can say that you have done a whole lot more than the wise men in quotes that stand on the lines and evaluate your work. You just feel that your task is to clasp hands so to speak with somebody who needs your help, and let's make this Government of ours not only an efficient Government, let's make it not only an honest Government, which it is, let's make it not only a Government that knows how to get things done, but let's have what our President has talked about many times, a Government with a heart.



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