

REMARKS

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

ANNUAL WASHINGTON CONFERENCE OF THE VFW

WASHINGTON, D. C.

MARCH 11, 1968

*Commander Joseph Scherra
Semi-Vic-Commander Richard Homan
Cooper Hatt - Spec Director*

*J.F.H.
Freedom and Peace are not cheap. We or most of us, shall live out our lives in a period of peril, challenge & change*

A new generation of fighting men is returning to America.

They return from what is surely one of the most difficult conflicts this nation has ever known... a distant war... a war in which our restraint and our judgement are being tested as much as our power.

It is a war, nevertheless, to defend those enduring ideals for which Americans have always been willing to sacrifice -- national independence, self determination human freedom, and stable & lasting peace.

- It is war in which our national security is involved
- ✓ It is a war, the outcome of which is vital to the future of free ASIA.

National Security - The essentials
National Development / Freedom
and Independence
One & inseparable -

over all ~~the~~ of wounded
returned to duty
91.2%
91.2%

~~Wounded~~

This conflict is not so much a test of our strength as of our will. The outcome will be decided not only by what happens in Vietnam, but by what happens in the U.S. -

Let me say on behalf of all Americans to those who have fought so well in Vietnam: We know what you have done. Your nation is proud of you. We are deeply grateful.

True, you do not return to the parades and brass bands that have greeted many veterans in the past.

Indeed, the loudest sounds you may hear are those of our democracy debating its course at home and abroad.

But do not mistake the sounds of democracy in action as thanklessness. Take them as proof that the United States is still a free country... a place where people have the right to speak up -- even if we totally disagree with them... a nation worthy of our sacrifice.!

No repayment is truly enough for the price America's veterans have paid in Vietnam and elsewhere. But we are doing our best to provide for those who have fought for us... for their wives and children... for their widows and orphans.

1/2 of casualties - out Patient
of those hospitalized - 91.2%

↳ A new G. I. Bill of Rights is today helping 400 thousand ex-servicemen and women continue their educations!

↳ ^{200,000} Two hundred thousand Vietnam ~~era~~ veterans have already purchased homes under Veterans Administration-insured mortgages.

↳ In January, President Johnson asked Congress to increase G. I. home loans from seven thousand five hundred dollars to ten thousand dollars. ↳ The President has also called for expanded health and vocational rehabilitation services for veterans.

↳ Those are practical, basic benefits -- familiar in one way or another to most veterans of World War II and Korea.

↳ But now, for the first time, we have begun to recognize an entirely new dimension in our public obligation to America's veterans -- an obligation to assure every veteran full and equal opportunity in the society he has helped to defend.

↳ Full freedom to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit
of happiness has always been an American dream, ~~it~~
has become a reality for a vast majority of our citizens.

↳ But as we are all painfully aware, some have been
left out. They have been disabled by poverty... by rural
backwardness and urban blight... by discrimination...
by inadequate education... yes, sometimes by public neglect.

↳ The "left-out people" of America rightly want to be "let
in." And this nation is moving as never before to see that
they are.

↳ There are American veterans who bear the wounds
of poverty and blighted opportunity -- wounds more painful
and debilitating than many received in battle. We are
determined that those wounds shall be healed.

How?

↳ The first step is to give disadvantaged young Americans a better chance to enter the service. Roughly 1.8 million young men reach military age each year in the United States. As many as 600 thousand of them -- fully a third -- are unable to qualify for induction. In some areas the failure rate for draftees ran as high as 60 per cent.

↳ One answer is Project One Hundred Thousand, designed to provide special preparation before basic training to draftees and volunteers otherwise unable to pass their induction tests.

↳ Project One Hundred Thousand works! Ninety-six per cent of the first 50 thousand participants graduated from basic training -- almost the same rate as for all trainees. Some went on to non-commissioned officer schools. In this, its second year, and in each year from now on, a hundred thousand men will be enrolled.

↳ Those men are learning skills that will mean successful military service. ↳ They are earning too -- dignity and opportunity.

↳ But there is something else I consider important.

They are getting their first chance to serve their country.

↳ You may remember John Stuart Mill's observation:

" Let a man have nothing to do for his country and he will have no love for it.'

↳ *and for the* men who are about to re-enter civilian life without adequate civilian job skills, there is training under Project Transition in the last six months of service.

↳ In classrooms and at work benches, through counseling and job placement services, they are prepared for new civilian jobs -- ~~and for lives that would have previously been~~ denied them.

Counseling 57 Regional Offices
-7- / 166 U.S. Hospitals

↳ In addition, the Veterans Administration has vastly expanded its counseling service -- not in hard-to-find government offices, but right in the battlefield and in the hospitals.

2 in last
5 more
opening!

10 new
10 before
and
growth

20 centers - Veteran Assistance
center -

↳ The Department of Labor has established a nationwide, personalized employment service to help every returning veteran find work that means something to him.

↳ All of this adds up to more than a fresh start for the returning veteran. It means new resources of leadership and talent for communities across America.

↳ To make the best use of those resources, President Johnson has now proposed the Veterans in the Public Service Act of 1968. This act would provide incentives to encourage men who have already demonstrated their devotion to their nation to serve further -- in the schoolroom or the hospital ward, in police and fire departments, in the rural hollows and urban slums -- wherever Americans need help.

* * *

↳ A week ago we read these bleak lines in our morning papers: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal." Perhaps,

But not in the armed forces.

↳ Not in veterans hospitals, which you helped integrate back in 1953.

↳ Not in the VFW.

↳ And not in the hearts of men of all colors and creeds who have fought and bled for their country under just one name -- American. - *one flag, the American flag.*

↳ Ever since President Truman's courageous 1948 order integrating the armed forces, American armed forces have been out front in real integration -- integration not just in law or in words, but in practice.

↳ In the last two decades ^{millions} ~~a lot~~ of young Americans have lived together, trained together, fought together and come to know each other as they never would have in their home towns.

↳ "Heart is heart, blood is blood -- what difference does race make?" Same Mud - Same Blood ABC

↳ Those are the words I heard from our men in Vietnam.

↳ There are two simple but important lessons for our times in that experience:

↳ First, integration works.

It improves morale and increases fighting strength by giving every soldier a feeling that he has a stake worth defending in America.

↳ And I don't need to give this audience the statistics to prove that courage... willingness to volunteer for hazardous duty... bravery in the face of the enemy... are qualities that seem to emanate from the heart, not from the skin. !

2 The second lesson is this: Those supposedly deep-rooted, life-long, built-in/^{human} prejudices do not take generations to disappear. Where there is an important job to be done -- and where there is equal opportunity and equal dignity for all -- prejudice seems to evaporate fairly quickly.

↳ We can ask a young man to put on a uniform and send him to a combat zone.

↳ But far too often we do not permit him to live and work on equal terms at home.

↳ He can become an officer and have ultimate responsibility for the very lives of American ~~men~~^{men} on the battlefield.

↳ But it's far more difficult for him to become the officer of a corporation here at home.

↳ We trust him with the most complex and sophisticated weapons ever devised when the safety of this nation is at stake.

↳ But we too often don't trust him with responsibility for an assembly line when the very ideal of democracy is being tested here at home.

↳ We offer him an integrated bunker but not an integrated neighborhood. !

↳ This country cannot afford to let its first-class soldiers return to second-class citizenship -- and that is just what is happening to far too many Vietnam veterans today.

↳ We have made enormous progress toward equal opportunity in these past few years -- especially in building a solid framework of laws and programs for the future.

↳ But no law or program will produce results quickly enough to make sure that every serviceman returning from Vietnam carries the equal opportunity of the service with him into his community.

↳ Nothing a grateful President can say will equal the impact of a community which says, "Thank you, Mr. Serviceman. We're proud and happy to have you back among us."

↳ So I call on you as veterans... as men who are now employers and mayors and city councilmen and community leaders... to make sure your whole community does reach out to these men.

↳ Visit them in their homes as soon as they return.

↳ Find out what kind of work they are interested in.

↳ Call their special abilities to the attention of your public officials.

∟ Tell them about the new opportunities for public service jobs with decent salaries that have opened up since they have been away.

∟ See that they get hired... that their wives and families are welcomed... that the real America they return to looks as much as possible like the ideal they have been fighting to defend.

∟ And help America mobilize this new generation of veterans, Keep them together, not only as a force for a better America, but as living proof that America can and will make full citizenship a reality for all.

∟ Why not, for instance, new VFW posts in neighborhoods and even on college campuses where there are increasing numbers of veterans today?

∟ Why not a special "buddy system" where each of your members will take on responsibility for helping a returning veteran find work, housing, education if he needs it?

∟ Now, more than ever, our country needs citizens such as yourselves, willing to help provide jobs, schooling, decent housing, recreational facilities where they live,

∟ For, if we fail, it will not be so much because any specific government failed. It will be because our free society failed.

... because taxpayers waited for someone else to pay for community services;

... because Chamber of Commerce and union members in a thousand American cities did not throw open the doors of job opportunity;

... because government officials were more concerned with their precious jurisdictions than with the people living within them;

- ... because school boards and PTA's forgot the cost of ignorance in a free society;
- ... because builders, land developers, and real estate people failed to meet a national housing crisis;
- ... because a complacent or fearful majority ignored the long-deferred rights and aspirations of an increasingly impatient minority.

Youth Program — * * *

We have problems. But as President Johnson observed in his State of the Union Message:

"If ever there were a Nation capable of solving its problems, it is this Nation.

"If ever there were a time to know the pride and excitement and hope of being an American, it is this time."

And if ever there were a time when our society needed the competent and courageous leadership of men willing to stand up for their country -- America's veterans -- it is now.

REMARKS
VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 11, 1968

I come here today to visit with you as a fellow American. I come today to reason with you about the problems of our nation. I do not come here in the spirit of partisanship, region or any form of prejudice.

Our country faces very difficult days. We have a hard struggle on our hands in Southeast Asia. We are called upon to man the ramparts of freedom in many other parts of the world. We face difficulties here at home in our cities and rural areas. And yet, here we are, the richest nation on the face of this earth, endowed with great resources of skill and technology, of wealth and abundance. Still, with all of this, we have the poor, the needy, the unhappy and the bitter.

We have the problems in our cities, the problems with our young and the needs for our elderly On the international scene there are difficulties the likes of which this country has not faced for many a year.

But I tell you this only to remind you that we have the capacity, we have the means, we have the wherewithal to meet every one of these problems at home and abroad.

Do We Have the Will?

The only question before this nation is: Do we have the will?

And I am here to talk to you about that. That is why you are here in Washington. And your presence in this city is so welcomed and so needed; we really need to hear the voice of the people, and we need to hear from you.

America needs to be told once again that it is a great land, a great people, a great nation. The strong, confident voice of fellow Americans must be heard throughout this land -- not the voices of doubt or cynicism, not the voices of weakness or despair, but the voices of confidence, the voices of strength, the voices of justice and determination.

I don't know any organization in the United States that more typifies that voice of confidence and of strength . . . that voice of justice and determination . . . than the voice of the VFW.

The late President Kennedy said to this nation five years ago:

"Freedom and peace are not cheap; we, or most of us, shall live out our lives in a period of peril, challenge, and danger."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is a concise description of the last half of the 20th Century.

There isn't any doubt that we live in a period of peril and of danger and of challenge. And knowing that this is the kind of a period in which we live, then we must gird ourselves for the battle. We cannot shrink away from duty. We cannot withdraw into our shells. We cannot leave the world as if it were of no concern of ours. We have no choice -- that is if we want to be a great people, worthy of our heritage -- except to take our stand and to remember that this world of ours shrinks in size every day, even as it intensifies in danger.

If there is any one concern I have as an American today, it is this growing development in our land that somehow or another the problems of the world are too big for us; that we need to withdraw; that we need to come home; that we need to get away from it all.

My fellow Americans, if that should become the policy of this land, then the best days of this nation have already been lived.

We cannot retreat from any place . . . and I can tell you that we don't intend to retreat from any place!

I do not come here today to discuss with you the intimate details of military strategy or policy. I am not the Commander-in-Chief. But I am his loyal Vice President, and I am proud of it.

I am not coming here today to discuss with you the most recent developments at the front in Vietnam, or the many fronts; you know them. You will be hearing from people in your deliberations who will be able to give you a great deal of detailed, pertinent information.

I want to talk to you a little about our purpose, why we are doing what we are doing, and why we need your help.

And . . . before I forget it . . . to express thanks and appreciation for your help. What a tower of strength you have been.

Now, a new generation of fighting men is returning to America, and, I believe I am correct, over 45,000 of these men have already become members of this great organization. Many more will become members, and it will be a wise decision on their part.

They return from what surely is one of the most difficult conflicts that this nation has ever known. They return from a distant war -- regrettably not very well understood by their civilian counterparts. They return from a war in which our restraint and our judgment are being tested as much as our power.

The Lonely Struggle

It is a war, nevertheless, my fellow Americans, to defend those enduring ideals for which Americans have always been willing

to stand and sacrifice: national independence, self-determination, human freedom and, above all -- a stable and lasting peace.

Remember, the battle for peace is a lonely struggle. Only the courageous dare make it. Peace does not come with appeasement, if we have learned anything in the last fifty years, nor does it come with reckless use of unlimited power. It comes with prudent judgment. It comes with determination. It comes with a willingness to see things through.

Now, this war, or this struggle, is one in which our national security is involved. Make no mistake about it! The loss of Southeast Asia as a part of the free world would upset the very delicate balance of power in this world today in a very dangerous manner.

The attack is on at several fronts. Not only in Vietnam -- but in Laos, in Thailand, in Burma. The Communists are playing for keeps. This is no small-time struggle. It is of significant proportions.

This is a war, the outcome of which is vital to the future of Free Asia. And, therefore, it is vital to the future of the United States of America.

There are those who say: "Why stand here? Why not wait and see what happens and stand some place else?"

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that this generation of Americans -- your generation of Americans -- has learned the danger

of delay, of appeasement, of waiting. We do not want Armageddon on the installment plan. We think it is better to take our stand before it is too late.

This conflict is not so much a test of our strength as of our will. The outcome will be decided not only by what happens in Vietnam but what happens in the United States of America. And that is why you are here!

Remember that Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, the strategists of the Communists of North Vietnam, have said that this struggle would be won in Washington and America, just as they said they won their last one -- in Paris.

All the more reason, therefore, that the citizenry of this country understand the stakes, the meaning of the struggle . . . and all the more important that you carry that message to the people.

Great Decisions

I often say to myself, and I say it to you, what kind of a world do you think this would be today, after your sacrifices in World War II, if Mr. Truman, then President of the United States, had backed off when Josef Stalin said, "We are going to have Iran." (And he said so, only a year after the end of hostilities.) But President Truman said: "You are not going to have it. You are going to get out, and, if you don't, we are coming to see that you do get out."

What kind of a world do you think this would be had Mr. Truman not had the courage in his time as Command-in-Chief to say that Greece and Turkey should not become a part of the Communist empire?

And, he enunciated the Truman Doctrine, which was not a popular doctrine in its time.

What kind of a world do you think this would be had we not met the threat of the Berlin Crisis in 1948? Our answer was the Berlin Airlift, when ceiling was zero and a million people had to be fed and clothed, and given fuel.

What kind of a world would it be today had someone not had the courage to face Communist invasion in Korea? When it appeared, if you please, that we were almost defeated, barely hanging on -- only to come back. And today, there is an independent South Korea, even though it lives under constant threat.

What kind of a world would it have been had we not faced up to Mr. Khrushchev at Cuba . . . in the missile crisis?

Ladies and gentlemen, every one of these decisions was a tough one, every one of them fraught with danger. At least one of them -- Korea -- involved thousands of dead and hundreds of thousands of casualties. Yet I think the thoughtful people in this world know that every one of those decisions was vital . . . not just to the United States . . . but vital to a peace because there is no peace where the

law of the jungle prevails. There is no peace where aggression is condoned. There is no peace where subversion and intimidation are the pattern of human and political conduct.

The battle for peace is a lonely battle. It is not for the weak or the timid or the cowardly. It is for the strong.

What Do We Seek?

And to those who today accuse our nation of not wanting peace, let me say that this nation has sacrificed thousands of its sons in the cause of peace since World War II. We have done as much or more than any combination of nations. The fact that there is a world today in which there is a hope for peace is in no small measure due to the gallantry of these men who have fought for it, and to the decisions of this Republic, since World War II -- the decisions to take our stand rather than to let the power of Communist tyranny, of imperialism, of aggression, run wild.

Aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.

And, mark my words, every signatory to the Charter of the United Nations has a solemn obligation under the terms of that Charter to resist aggression -- those are the words -- and to promote self-determination.

I will simplify my statement by saying this . . . that the highest call of statesmanship is the search for a just and enduring peace. That

has been the quest of this nation. We have never sought anyone's territory. We have never sought to dominate any people. We have never sought dominion or domain. And those who are our critics know it.

The threat to peace is not from America, and the roadblock to peace in this struggle in Vietnam is not in Washington. It is elsewhere. It is in Hanoi, and it is in the minds of the Communists.

I want you to carry this message of our relentless pursuit for a just and honorable peace -- one that is worthy of free men.

We seek to destroy no one. We seek to conquer no one. But we do seek to help people in that great process that we call nation-building. We do seek to help to promote national security for ourselves and for others. We do seek to promote national development, for ourselves and for others.

We know that freedom and independence are meaningless without security and without development. We know there is no development without security; and there is no security without development.

We Americans know these things, and the sooner we make this message clear to the whole world, the sooner these tragic struggles will be brought to a conclusion.

Oh, how America today needs a clear, unequivocal voice of conviction and determination. Not to be belligerent, not to be bellicose, not with the voice of a conqueror, but with the voice of a protector, the voice of a nation that has committed its resources and its people to the greatest commitment of all: a real, meaningful, just and enduring peace. That is what this country is all about.

That is what Abraham Lincoln said. That is what he meant when he said: "This is the last, best hope of earth." And we are.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we falter in our responsibility, what hope is there?

If we, with our strength and our wealth and our ability, are incapable of meeting the thrust of the aggressor, the tactics of the guerrilla, the intimidation and the subversion of the Communist, then who is capable of it? What hope is there in this world?

Regrettably, the mantle of leadership brings no privileges. The mantle of leadership gives you no benefits, no luxury. Leadership today imposes a terrible duty and burden upon one -- individually or as a nation.

And, whether we like it or not, my fellow Americans, we are leaders.

Now, we can abandon it, but if we do we will pay the horrible price -- if not now, later on.

I don't think we are going to abandon it.

So let me say, on behalf of all Americans, especially to those who have fought so well in Vietnam: We know what you have done. Your nation is proud of you. We are humbly and deeply grateful.

Speak Up for Freedom

True, you do not return to the parades and the brass bands that have greeted many veterans in the past. Indeed, the loudest sounds that the veteran of Vietnam may hear is that of our democracy debating its course at home and abroad. But do not mistake the sounds of democracy in action as thanklessness. Take them as proof that the United States is still a free country, a place where people have the right to speak up, even if we totally disagree with them . . . a nation worthy of our sacrifice.

My fellow Americans, I do not believe in hushing people's voices, but I ask you to speak up. Speak up for what you believe in, speak up for your convictions, just as others speak up for theirs.

Now, no repayment is truly enough for the price that America's veterans have paid in Vietnam and elsewhere. I want to talk to you a little bit about the future.

I haven't any doubt as to the ultimate outcome of this struggle in Vietnam. I have no doubt that the American people will see it through; but I do want to make sure that the enemy understands it. I want our

enemy to know that we are not sunshine patriots. I want him to know that if it is good or if it is bad, we can take it. I want that enemy to know that his cause is hopeless, and that inevitably his purpose will be defeated. And the sooner that the enemy knows that, as a message from America and the free world, the sooner there will be peace . . . peace in Vietnam and peace throughout this world.

Make no mistake about it -- your government will fulfill its duty. Whatever may be your views as to whether we do the best or not, there is one thing I would think all Americans would agree on: We have over a half a million men in the field in Vietnam. I think they are worthy of our support.

They are also worthy of great care when they return. We are doing our best to provide for those who have fought for us, their wives and their children, their widows and their orphans.

It is true, my fellow Americans, that the people that are making the sacrifice in this struggle are the men that are there, and their loves ones back here.

Paying the Bills

Quite frankly, the rest of us are not doing much sacrificing. And it is interesting to note that those who complain the loudest are not the ones who are sacrificing the most.

I hope that in your deliberations you will consider all of these matters. Might I even say, paying the bill for this struggle.

I don't think Americans feel very clean at heart when they know that they have not even committed time nor effort to this cause, when so many of their neighbors have had a boy who has been wounded, a son who has been killed. The least that we can do is to want to share in some of the cost. I know it is not easy to ask people to pay taxes.

But, my fellow Americans, we are not only in trouble in Vietnam . . . we have to protect the value of the dollar . . . we have to make sure that this economy remains strong so that when that veteran returns, he comes home to an economy that offers him a job and a decent place to live. And I know of no better way to do it than to live up to our responsibilities . . . to at least pay the bill as we go on in this struggle.

It is always good to put things in perspective. Just before I left, I was presiding over the Senate -- we always have a few debates up there on these matters, as you know. I want and called the Defense Department to give me a figure, which I want to give you here today. One of the great miracles of this war is the fine hospital care, the medical care that's been given our men. The helicopter has given us mobility. Those brave men that go in the midst of battle and lift out the wounded. I have seen them do it. I have been there.

Some of the bravest men in the world, in this war, do not even carry a gun. They go right in, these corpsmen. Some of them who have religious scruples about combat have gone in bravely to rescue people. And our quality of care is something that every mother and father can be proud of.

91/2 per cent of the wounded in this war return to duty. And the number who are picked up from the battlefield is far beyond anything that we have ever known before . . . quick hospitalization, prompt medical care. Within 25 to 30 minutes, a wounded man is back to a base hospital, receiving the best that his nation and this world can provide.

I am mighty proud of that. We do everything we can to even make it better.

Obligations to the Returning Veteran

But when that veteran returns, that is where we come into some other matters that need to be discussed.

Now, we have been doing something about this in your Congress, and in the Administration. A new GI Bill of Rights is today helping 400,000 ex-servicemen and women continue their educations. Already 200,000 Vietnam veterans have purchased homes under Veterans Administration insured mortgages.

In January of this year, President Johnson asked Congress to increase GI Home Loans from \$7,500 to \$10,000. He also asked for expanded health and vocational rehabilitation services for veterans. Those are practical, basic benefits, the ones I have mentioned; they are familiar to you because they came to most of the veterans of World War II and Korea.

But now, for the first time, we have begun to recognize an entirely new dimension in our public obligation to America's veterans.-- an obligation to assure every veteran full and equal opportunity in the society he has helped to defend; full freedom to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This is the American dream and the American promise. It has become a reality for most of us, at least for a vast majority of our citizens.

But, as we all are painfully aware, some of our fellow Americans have been left out. They have been disabled by poverty . . . by rural backwardness and urban blight . . . by discrimination . . . by inadequate education . . . yes, sometimes by just sheer public neglect.

The left-out people of America rightly want to be let in. And this nation is moving as never before to see that they are.

Healing the Wounds

This is going to be one of the dividends of this time and period of trial. There are American veterans who bear the wounds of poverty and blighted opportunity -- wounds more painful and debilitating than many received in battle. The wounds of battle, thank goodness, many times are healed. The question is, will the wounds of poverty and blighted opportunity be healed?

We are determined that these wounds shall be healed. The question is: How?

The first step is to give disadvantaged young Americans a better chance to enter the service. Roughly 1,800,000 young men reach military age each year in our country, and as many as 600,000 of them -- fully a third -- are unable to qualify for induction. This is frequently due to deficiency in education, or some minor deficiency in health that is correctable.

In some areas the failure rate for draftees runs as high as 60 per cent. And I think it ought to be known that where there is a high rate of failure in induction in one area, it means that another area must pick it up. So everybody has a stake in this.

One answer that we have proposed is Project 100,000 -- designed to provide special preparation before basic training to draftees and volunteers otherwise unable to pass their induction tests.

Project 100,000 -- it tells the number -- works. Ninety-six per cent of the first 50,000 participants graduates from basic training, almost the same rate as for all trainees.

Some went on to noncommissioned officer schools. In this, its second year, and in each year from now on, 100,000 more men will be enrolled. These men are learning skills. They are getting an education. Their health is being improved. And these skills will mean successful military service, and, after military service, a better life.

Above all, they are earning dignity and opportunity, and that is what this country should and must stand for. But there is something else that I consider important. They are getting their first chance to serve their country. And remember the words of a great British philosopher, John Stuart Mill, who said: "Let a man have nothing to do for his country, and he will have no love for it."

Ladies and gentlemen, when you are left out, as the kids say, you just bug out. You don't care.

"Let a man have nothing to do for his country, and he will have no love for it."

To put it in the affirmative: "Let a man have something to do for his country, let him be a part of it, involved in it, and he will love it."

What Are We Doing?

For those men who are about to re-enter civilian life, without adequate civilian job skills, there is now training under Project Transition in the last six months of service. Many of you men never knew these things in your service. In classrooms and at work benches, through counseling and job placement services, they are prepared for new civilian jobs.

In addition, the Veterans Administration has vastly expanded its counseling service -- not in those hard-to-find government offices, but right on the battlefield and in the hospitals. Two of these service stations are now in Vietnam. Five more are opening. There are 20 centers in the in the 20 major cities of the United States -- ten already established, ten more by the end of this month, with many more to come. There are 57 regional offices and 166 veterans hospitals, with improved counseling service for the returned veteran.

The Department of Labor has established a nationwide personalized employment service to help every returning veteran find work that means something to him.

Now, all of this adds up to something that I would like to call just a fresh start to the returning veteran. It means new resources of leadership and talent for communities across America.

To make the best use of these resources, President Johnson has now proposed the Veterans in the Public Service Act of 1968. This Act would provide incentives, to encourage men who have already demonstrated their devotion to their nation to serve further -- in the schoolroom, in the hospital, in police and fire departments, in municipal and state service, in the rural hollows and the urban slums -- wherever Americans need help.

A week ago we read these bleak lines in our morning papers: "Our nation is moving towards two societies, one white, one black -- separate and unequal."

Perhaps -- if we let it happen; but it need not happen.

Freedom in Uniform

Thank goodness, it has not done so in the armed forces of the United States. There, believe it or not, in a military organization, the essentials and the ideals of democracy are at work. Because a man is treated on the basis of his ability. He is treated as a man. And thank goodness that this separate but unequal treatment is not true in veterans hospitals, which you helped integrate back in 1953. And it is not true in the VFW. Look across this room.

And it's not in the hearts of the men of all colors and creeds who have fought and bled for their country just under one name -- American; and under one flag -- American. Same blood, same mud, same people -- Americans.

And that's the way they ought to be treated when they come home; not merely when we send them abroad.

Ever since President Truman's 1948 order, and a courageous one, integrating the armed forces, American armed forces have been out in the front lines in real integration -- not just in law and words, but in practice.

In the last two decades millions of young Americans, millions and millions of them, have lived together, trained together, fought together, some of them died together, and they have come to know each other as they never would have in their home towns.

Heart is heart, blood is blood -- what difference does race make? Those are the words I heard from our men in Vietnam.

The NBC Television put it the other way: same mud, same blood.

There are two simple but important lessons for our times in this experience.

First, integration works.

It improves morale. It increases fighting strength by giving every soldier a feeling that he has a stake worth defending in America. And I don't need to give this audience the statistics to prove that courage, willingness to volunteer for hazardous duty -- bravely in the face of the enemy -- are qualities that seem to emanate from the

heart, not from the skin.

I think General Westmoreland took care of that beautifully when he was back talking to his fellow Americans.

The second lesson is this: Those supposedly deep-rooted, life-long, built-in human prejudices that we all seem to have do not take generations to disappear. Where there is an important job to be done -- a job of life or death -- and where there is equal opportunity and equal dignity for all -- prejudice seems to evaporate rather quickly.

Integrated Foxhole -- Segregated Neighborhood

Now, we can ask a young man to put on a uniform and send him into a combat zone, and we do; but far too often we do not permit him to live and work on equal terms at home.

He can become an officer and have ultimate responsibility for the very lives of American men on the battlefield, and I have seen them.

But it's far more difficult for him to become an officer of a corporation, or even a small company, when he returns home. And there are very few companies or corporations that have to take on the duties that a division commander or a regimental commander or a brigade officer has to take on.

We trust this man, this veteran, this soldier, with the most complex and sophisticated weapons ever devised, when the safety of his nation is at stake; but we too often don't trust him with the responsibility for even an assembly line back home, when the very ideal of democracy is being tested here at home.

We offer him an integrated bunker at Khe Sanh, but all too often refuse him an integrated neighborhood right back home.

Now, this government and this country cannot afford to let its first-class soldiers return to second-class citizenship. And that is just what is happening to far too many of our Vietnam veterans today. The time to call a halt to it is now. Now! So that every young man that is called up for the service of his country knows that . . . knows that which he is called upon to fight for and die for -- 8,000 miles away from home -- he can have when he returns: a free country.

I know we have made great progress -- especially in building solid frameworks of laws and programs for the future.

But, my fellow Americans, no law or program will produce results quickly enough to make sure that every serviceman returning from Vietnam carries the equal opportunity of the service with him into his community.

Nothing a grateful President can say will equal the impact of a community which says: "Thank you, Mr. Serviceman. We are proud and happy to have you back among us."

What Can We Do?

So I call on you as veterans, veterans of foreign service, as men who are now employers and mayors and city councilmen and community leaders and religious leaders and labor leaders . . . to make sure your whole community does reach out to these men.

They get an awful lot of criticism while they are gone; and, as I said, they get few parades when they come back. Their effort is constantly debated here on the home front. I sometimes wonder if they don't become terribly discouraged.

The least that we can do is when they come back say that we are appreciative, we are grateful, and we are going to do the best that we can to offer them what every man is entitled to: a chance, an equal chance, with no barriers; a chance to be a first-class American in a first-class country.

There is only one kind of citizenship in this country, that is first-class citizenship; and there isn't a higher title that you can give any person on the face of this earth than to be known as Citizen of the United States of America.

Now, my friends, these are simple things to do, but let's not forget them. Visit these men in their homes as soon as they return. I know you do. But I want this message to get to others besides in just the VFW. You can't do it alone.

Find out what kind of work they are interested in.

Call their special abilities to the attention of your public officials. See that in your city, your county, that the United States Employment Service is doing its job, that the mayor is doing his job, that the governor is doing his job. See to it that every returned serviceman has a chance for a good job. He doesn't want a handout; he isn't looking for a welfare check. He's entitled to every benefit that this nation can bestow upon him, and the greatest benefit is an opportunity; an opportunity to make something out of himself right back home.

Tell these men about the new opportunities for public service jobs, with decent salaries, that have been opened up since they have been away. We need these men desperately in our municipal services.

See that they get hired, that their wives and families are welcomed, that the real America they return to looks as much as possible like the ideal that they have been fighting to defend.

And help America mobilize this new generation of veterans. Mobilize them, keep them together, not only as a force for a better America but as living proof that America can and will make full citizenship a reality for all.

Why not, for instance, have new VFW Posts in neighborhoods and on college campuses where there are increasing numbers of veterans today? Who better can tell the story of what it is all about than the man who has been there?

Why not a special "Buddy System" where each of your members will take on a responsibility for helping a returning veteran find work, housing, education if he needs it?

Now, more than ever, our country needs citizens such as yourselves, willing to help provide jobs, schooling, decent housing, recreational facilities where they live.

For if we fail, it will not be so much because any specific government failed. It will be because we all failed. It will be because taxpayers waited for someone else to pay the bill for the community services . . .

- because the chambers of commerce and union members in a thousand American cities did not throw open their doors for job opportunities . . .

- because government officials were more concerned with their precious departments and jurisdictions than with the people living within the cities . . .

- because school boards and PTA's forgot the cost of ignorance in a free society . . .

- because builders and land developers and real estate people failed to meet a national housing crisis . . .

- or because a complacent and fearful majority ignored the long-deferred rights and aspirations of an increasing, impatient minority.

Doing the Imppssible

I know we have problems. We always have.

You know what's made this country great? Doing the impossible. Ordinary people can do what's possible. Any country can do just all that needs to be done. But what has made America what it is today is that it has accomplished what other people said could not be done.

We were the first with government by the consent of the governed. We were the first to hold a great nation together after a bloody war amongst our peoples. We were the first to abolish slavery.

We have been the first to span a great continent and to develop a great economy of this size. We have done the impossible, and that's what made us what we are.

So, my fellow Americans, if there ever were a time when our society needed the competent and courageous leadership of men willing to stand up for this country, and I am talking about America's veterans, it is now.

I want to thank you for listening to me. I didn't come here to tell you how to fight a war. I think we have men who know how to do that. I came to tell you, my friends, what your government is determined to do its duty, to see this thing through, to gain a just and an enduring peace.

But I also came to tell you that after the shooting is over -- and it will be -- and when men return to their communities, we want them to return to a better America. We want them to come home to know that what they fought for and what we told them that they were fighting for was real. We cannot afford a hoax. We cannot afford deceit. What we must give them is promise and fulfillment.

And I call upon you to be in the vanguard of equal opportunity for every American, to make American citizenship the high honor that it ought to be, the high honor that you have made it in your own ranks. So let's get on with the job.

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

SPEECH

BY

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY,
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Washington, D.C.

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THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY,

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- - -

Washington, D.C.

EC COMMANDER JOSEPH SCERRA: My comrades, since assuming the high office of Commander-in-chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I have had many great honors, but I know that today will live forever and remain one of the highlights of my term of office, for I have the opportunity of presenting to you a truly great and patriotic American.

 He is a man that this organization has honored on many occasions; he is a man who, over the years and despite his busy schedule, has always found time for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. He is a man of courage and conviction to match. And, I might add, he is our kind of guy.

 Today, as the second highest public official in our Nation, he continues to speak our type of language. There is no question in his mind about the rightness of our cause. There is no question in his mind, or ours, about whether or not freedom is worth fighting for. He is not one of those who would succumb to the siren call of appeasement.

 He knows, as we know, that Communist aggression cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. He understands perfectly that since its inception the citizens of our

great Nation have always risen to the challenge of those who would take our freedom and the freedom of the oppressed everywhere.

At this time I want you to assure him that he has the enthusiastic support of the 1,400,000 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in his endeavors to inform this Nation of our struggle against Communism.

Further, I want him to know of our great admiration for him and the manner in which he has supported his Commander-in-chief.

(Applause.)

My comrades, it is with pride and humility that I present to you a great patriot, an outstanding American, one of our Nation's most eloquent spokesman, the Vice President of the United States, Hubert H. Humphrey.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very much.

(Continued applause.)

Thank you. Thank you.

Commander-in-chief Joseph Scerra, Senior Vice Commander-in-chief Richard Homan, and our good friend, your Executive Director Cooper Holt, and all of your State

Commanders of the VFW, and the other Delegates and Officers that are here, and the ladies of the Auxiliary, that I think I see way up there in the gallery.

(Applause.)

Commander, you have honored me by your generous, kind introduction. I am, to say the least, very moved by what you have had to say; and I hope that I can be worthy of the tribute that you have paid to me.

I come here today to visit with you as a fellow American, I come today to reason with you about the problems of our Nation. I don't come here in the spirit of partisanship, region, or any form of prejudice.

Our country faces very difficult days. We have a hard struggle on our hands in Southeast Asia, we are called upon to man the ramparts of freedom in many other parts of the world; we face difficulties here at home in our cities and rural areas; and yet, here we are, the richest nation on the face of this earth, endowed with great resources of skill and technology, of wealth and abundance. And yet with all of this we have the poor amongst us, the needy, the unhappy, the bitter, problems in our cities and problems with our young and needs for our elderly.

On the international scene there are difficulties,

the likes of which this country hasn't faced for many a year. But I tell you this only to remind you that we have the capacity, we have the means, we have the wherewithal to meet every one of these problems at home and abroad.

The only question before this Nation is: Do we have the will?

And I am here to talk to you about that. That's why you are here in Washington. And your presence in this city is so welcomed and so needed; we really need to hear the voice of the people, and we need to hear from you. America needs to be told once again that it is a great land, a great people, a great Nation. And the strong, confident voice of fellow Americans must be heard throughout this land -- not the voices of doubt or cynicism, not the voices of weakness or despair, but the voices of confidence, the voices of strength, the voices of justice and determination.

I don't know any organization in the United States that more typifies that voice of confidence and of strength, that voice of justice and determination, than the voice of the VFW.

(Applause.)

The late President Kennedy said to this Nation five years ago that "freedom and peace are not cheap; we, or

most of us, shall live out our lives in a period of peril, challenge, and danger."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is a concise description of the last half of the Twentieth Century.

There isn't any doubt that we live in a period of peril and of danger and of challenge. And knowing that that's the kind of a period in which we live, then we must gird ourselves for the battle. We cannot shrink away from duty, we cannot withdraw into our shells, we cannot leave the world as if it were of no concern of ours; we have no choice -- that is if we want to be a great people, worthy of our heritage -- except to take our stand and to remember that this world of ours shrinks in size every day, even as it intensifies in danger.

If there is any one concern I have as an American today, it is this growing development in our land that somehow or another the problems of the world are too big for us to have anything to do with, that we need to withdraw, that we need to come home, that we need to get away from it all.

My fellow Americans, if that should become the policy of this land, then the best days of this Nation have already been lived.

We cannot retreat from any place. And I can tell you that we don't intend to retreat from any place.

(Applause.)

I do not come here today to discuss with you the intimate details of military strategy or policy. I am not the Commander-in-chief. But I am his loyal Vice President, and proud of it.

I am not coming here today to discuss with you the most recent developments in the front in Vietnam, or the many fronts; you know them. And you will be hearing from people in your deliberations that will be able to give you a great deal of detailed, pertinent information.

I want to talk to you a little about our purpose, why we are doing what we are doing, and why we need your help.

And, before I forget it, to express thanks and appreciation for your help. What a tower of strength you have been.

Now, a new generation of fighting men is returning to America, and, I believe I am correct, that over 45,000 of these men have already become members of this great organization; and many more will become members. And it will be a wise decision on their part.

They return from what surely is one of the most difficult conflicts that this Nation has ever known. They return from a distant war -- regrettably not very well understood by their civilian counterparts. They return from a war in which our restraint and our judgment are being tested as much as our power.

It is a war, nevertheless, my fellow Americans, to defend those enduring ideals for which Americans have always been willing to stand and sacrifice: national independence, self-determination, human freedom and, above all, a stable and lasting peace.

Remember, the battle for peace is a lonely struggle. And only the courageous dare make it. Peace does not come with appeasement, if we have learned anything in the last fifty years, nor does it come with reckless use of unlimited power. It comes with prudent judgment, it comes with determination, and it comes with a willingness to see things through.

Now, this struggle in which our -- this war or this struggle is one in which our national security is involved. And make no mistake about it. The loss of Southeast Asia as a part of the Free World would upset the very delicate balance of power in this world today in a very dangerous,

very dangerous manner.

The attack is on in several fronts. Not only in Vietnam, but in Laos, in Thailand, in Burma. The Communists are playing for keeps. This is no small-time struggle; it is of significant proportions.

This is a war, the outcome of which is vital to the future of Free Asia. And therefore it is vital to the future of the United States of America.

There are those who say: "Why stand here? Why not wait and see what happens, and stand some place else?"

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that this generation of Americans, your generation of Americans, has learned the danger of delay of appeasement, of waiting. We do not want Armageddon on the instalment plan. We think it is better to take your stand before it is too late.

This conflict is not so much a test of our strength as our will. The outcome will be decided not only by what happens in Vietnam but what happens in the United States of America; and that's why you are here.

(Applause.)

Remember that Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, the strategists of the Communists of North Vietnam, have said that this struggle would be won in Washington and America,

just as they won their last one, they said, in Paris.

All the more reason, therefore, that the citizenry of this country understand the stakes, the meaning of the struggle; and all the more important that you carry that message to the people.

I often say to myself, and I say it to you, what kind of a world do you think this would be today, after your sacrifices in World War II, if Mr. Truman, then President of the United States, had backed up when Josef Stalin said, "We are going to have Iran". And he said so, only a year after the end of hostilities. And President Truman said, "You are not going to have it. You are going to get out, and, if you don't, we are coming to see that you do get out."

What kind of a world do you think this would be, my fellow Americans, had Mr. Truman not had the courage in his time as Commander-in-chief to say that Greece and Turkey shall not become a part of the Communist empire? And he enunciated the Truman Doctrine, which was not a popular doctrine in its time.

What kind of a world do you think this would be had we not met the threat of the Berlin Crisis in 1948? The Berlin Airlift. When ceiling was zero, and a million people had to be fed and clothed, and given fuel.

What kind of a world would it be today had someone not had the courage to face Communist invasion in Korea? When it appeared, if you please, that we were almost defeated, barely hanging on; only to come back. And today there is an independent South Korea, even though it lives under constant threat.

What kind of a world would it have been had we not faced up to Mr. Khrushchev at Cuba? In the missile crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen, every one of these decisions was a tough one, every one of them fraught with danger. At least one of them with death and travail and privation; with thousands of dead and hundreds of thousands of casualties in Korea. Yet I think the world now knows, at least the thoughtful people in this world, that every one of those decisions was vital not just to the United States but vital to a peace -- peace -- because there is no peace where the law of the jungle prevails. There is no peace where aggression is condoned. There is no peace where subversion and intimidation are the pattern of human and political conduct.

The battle for peace is a lonely battle. And it is not for the weak or the timid or the cowardly. It is for the strong.

And to those who today accuse our Nation not of wanting peace, let me say this Nation has sacrificed thousands of its sons in the cause of peace since World War II. We have done as much or more than any combination of nations. And the fact that there is a world today in which there is a hope for peace is in no small measure due to the gallantry of the men who have fought for it, and to the decisions of this Republic, since World War II; the decisions to take our stand rather than to let the power of Communist tyranny, of Imperialism, of aggression, run wild.

Aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.

And, mark my words, every signatory to the Charter of the United Nations has a solemn obligation under the terms of that Charter to resist aggression -- those are the words -- and to promote self-determination.

I will simplify my statement by saying this: That the highest call of statesmanship is the search for a just and enduring peace. That has been the quest of this Nation. We have never sought anyone's territory. We have never sought to dominate any people. We have never sought dominion or domain. And those who are our critics know it.

The threat to peace is not from America. And the roadblock to peace in this struggle in Vietnam is not in

Washington. It is elsewhere, It is not in Washington, D.C., it is in Hanoi, and it is in the minds of the Communists.

(Applause.)

I want you to carry this message of the relentless pursuit for a just and honorable peace, one that is worthy of free men.

We seek to destroy no one. We seek to conquer no one. But we seek to help people in that great process that we call nation building. We seek to help to promote national security for ourselves and for others. We seek to promote national development, at home here, for ourselves and for others.

Because we know that freedom and independence are meaningless without security and without development. And we know there is no development without security; and there is no security without development.

We Americans know these things. And the sooner we make this message clear to the whole world, the sooner these tragic struggles will be brought to a conclusion.

Oh, how America today needs a clear, unequivocal voice of conviction and determination; not to be belligerent, not to be bellicose, not the voice of a conqueror, but the voice of a protector, the voice of a nation that has committed

its resources and its people to the greatest commitment of all: a real, meaningful, just and enduring peace. That's what this country is all about.

That's what Abraham Lincoln said. That's what he meant when he said: This is the last, best hope of earth. And we are.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we falter in our responsibility, what hope is there?

If we, with our strength and our wealth and our ability, are incapable of meeting the thrust of the aggressor, the tactics of the guerrilla, the intimidation and the subversion of the Communist, then who is capable of it? What hope is there in this world?

Regrettably, the mantle of leadership brings no privileges; the mantle of leadership gives you no benefits, no luxury. Leadership today imposes a terrible duty and burden upon one, individually or as a nation.

And, whether we like it or not, my fellow Americans, we are leaders.

Now, we can abandon it, but if we do we will pay the horrible price -- if not now, later on.

I don't think we are going to abandon it.

So let me say, on behalf of all Americans, to those

who have fought so well in Vietnam: We know what you have done. Your Nation is proud of you. We are humbly and deeply grateful.

True, you do not return to the parades and the brass bands that have greeted many veterans in the past. Indeed, the loudest sounds that the veteran of Vietnam may hear are those of our democracy debating its course at home and abroad. But do not mistake the sounds of democracy in action as thanklessness, take them as proof that the United States is still a free country, a place where people have the right to speak up, even if we totally disagree with them, a nation worthy of our sacrifice.

My fellow Americans, I do not believe in hushing people's voices, but I ask you to speak up, speak up for what you believe in, speak up for your convictions, just as others speak up for theirs.

Now, no repayment is truly enough for the price that America's veterans have paid in Vietnam and elsewhere. And I want to talk to you a little bit about the future.

I haven't any doubt as to the ultimate outcome of this struggle in Vietnam. And I have no doubt that the American people will see it through; but I do want to make sure that the enemy understands it. I want our enemy to

know that we are not sunshine patriots. I want him to know that if the good or the bad, we can take it. And I want that enemy to know that his cause is hopeless, and that inevitably his purpose will be defeated. And the sooner that the enemy knows that, as a message from America and the Free World, the sooner there will be peace, peace in Vietnam and peace throughout this world.

(Applause.)

And make no mistake about it, your Government will fulfill its duty. Whatever may be your views as to whether we do the best or not, there is one thing I would think all Americans could agree on: We have over a half a million men in the field in Vietnam; I think they are worthy of our support. I think they are worthy of it.

(Applause.)

And they are also worthy of great care when they return. We are doing our best to provide for those who have fought for us, their wives and their children, their widows and their orphans.

It is true, my fellow Americans, that the people that are making the sacrifice in this struggle are the men that are there, and their loved ones back here.

Quite frankly, the rest of us are not doing much

sacrificing. And it is interesting to note that those who complain the loudest are not the ones who are sacrificing the most.

(Applause.)

And I hope that in your deliberations that you will consider all of these matters. Might I even say paying the bill for this struggle.

I don't think Americans feel very clean at heart when they know that they have not even committed time or effort to this cause, when so many of their neighbors have had a boy that's been wounded, a son that has been killed. The least that we can do is to at least want to share in some of the cost. I know it's not easy to ask people to pay taxes, but, my fellow Americans, we are not only in trouble in Vietnam, we have to protect the value of the dollar, we have to make sure that this economy remains strong so that when that veteran returns he comes home to an economy that offers him a job and a decent place to live. And I know of no better way to do it than to live up to our responsibilities, to at least pay the bill as we go on in this struggle.

(Applause.)

It's always good to put things in perspective. Just before I left, I was presiding over the Senate -- we

always have a few debates up there on these matters, as you know. I went and called the Defense Department to give me a figure which I want to give you here today, which you know of. One of the great miracles of this war is the fine hospital care, the medical care that's been given our men; the helicopter that has given us this mobility. Those brave men that go in, in the midst of battle, and lift out the wounded. I have seen them do it; I have been there.

Some of the bravest men in the world, in this war, do not even carry a gun; they go right in, these corpsmen. Some of them who have religious scruples about combat have gone in bravely to rescue people. And our quality of care is something that every mother and father can be proud of.

91.2 percent of the wounded in this war return to duty. And the number who are picked up from the battlefield is far beyond anything that we have ever known before. Quick hospitalization, prompt medical care. Within 25 to 30 minutes a wounded man is back to a base hospital, receiving the best that this Nation and this world can provide.

I am mighty proud of that. We do everything we can to even make it better.

But when that veteran returns, that's where we come into some other matters that need to be discussed,

Now, we have been doing something about this in your Congress, and in the Administration. A new GI Bill of Rights is today helping 400,000 ex-servicemen and women continue their education. 200,000 Vietnam veterans have already purchased homes under the Veterans Administration insured mortgages.

In January of this year President Johnson asked Congress to increase the GI Home Loans from \$7,500 to \$10,000. He also asked for expanded help in vocational rehabilitation services for veterans.

Now, those are practical, basic benefits that you fought for, that this great organization has lobbied for, that you have been down to Congress to talk about.

When I served in Congress, I used to see you regularly, and always tried to respond to your requests. I have yet to know of a VFW request for the care of a veteran that wasn't a reasonable, honorable request. And I compliment you for it.

(Applause.)

Those are practical, basic benefits, the ones I have mentioned; they are familiar to you because they came to most of the veterans of World War II and Korea. But now, for the first time, we have begun to recognize an entirely

new dimension in our public obligation to America's veterans. An obligation to assure every veteran, every veteran, full and equal opportunity in the society that he has helped defend; full freedom to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This is the American dream, and the American promise. It has become a reality for most of us, at least for a vast majority of our citizens.

But, as we all are painfully aware, some of our fellow Americans have been left out. They have either been disabled by poverty, by rural backwardness and urban blight, or by discrimination, or by inadequate education. Yes, sometimes by just sheer public neglect. The left-out people of America rightly want to be let in. And this Nation is moving as never before to see that they are.

This is going to be one of the dividends of this time and period of trial. There are American veterans who bear the wounds of poverty and blighted opportunity, wounds that are more painful and debilitating than many that they receive in battle. The wounds of battle, thank goodness, many times are healed. The question is, will the wounds of poverty and blighted opportunity be healed?

We are determined that these wounds shall be healed.

And the question is, How?

The first step is to give disadvantaged young Americans a better chance to enter the Service. Roughly 1,800,000 young men reach military age each year in our country, and as many as 600,000 of them, fully a third, are unable to qualify for induction. Frequently due to deficiency in education, or some minor deficiency in health that is correctable.

In some areas the failure rate for draftees runs as high as 60 percent. And I think it ought to be known that where there is a high rate of failure in induction in one area, it means that another area must pick it up. So everybody has a stake in this.

One answer that we have proposed is Project 100,000. Designed to provide special preparation before basic training to draftees and volunteers otherwise unable to pass their induction test.

Project 100,000, it tells the number, works. 96 percent of the first 50,000 participants graduated from basic training. Almost the same rate as all trainees.

Some went on to non-commissioned officer schools. In this year, its second year, and in each year from now on, 100,000 more men will be enrolled. Those men are learning

skills, they are getting an education, their health is being improved. And these skills will mean successful military service and, after military service, a better life.

Above all, they are earning dignity and opportunity, and that's what this country should and must stand for. But there is something else that I consider important: they are getting their first chance to serve their country. And remember the words of a great British philosopher, John Stuart Mill, who said: "Let a man have nothing to do for his country and he will have no love for it."

Ladies and gentlemen, when you are left out, as the kids say, you just bug out. You don't care.

"Let a man have nothing to do for his country and he will have no love for it."

To put it in the affirmative: "Let a man have something to do for his country, let him be a part of it, involved in it, and he will love it."

And for those men who are about to re-enter civilian life, without adequate civilian job skills, there is now training under Project Transition in the last six months of service. Many of you men never knew these things in your service. In classrooms and at work benches, through counseling and job placement services, they are prepared for

new civilian jobs.

In addition, the Veterans Administration has vastly expanded its counseling service; not in those hard-to-find government offices, but right on the battlefield and in the hospitals. Two of these service stations are now in Vietnam; one in Cam Ranh Bay. Five more are opening. There are twenty centers; ten centers already established, ten more by the end of this month, for veterans assistance in the twenty major cities of the United States, with many more to come. 57 regional offices, 166 veterans hospitals, with improved counseling service for the returned veteran.

The Department of Labor has established a nationwide personalized employment service to help every returning veteran find work that means something to him.

Now, all of this adds up to something that I'd like to call just a fresh start to the returning veteran. It means new resources of leadership and talent for communities across America. And to make the best uses of these resources, President Johnson has now proposed the Veterans and Public Service Act of 1968, and that Act would provide incentives, to encourage men who have already demonstrated their devotion to their Nation to serve further: in the schoolroom, in the hospital, in police and fire departments, in municipal

and State service, in the rural hollows and the urban slums, wherever Americans need help.

A week ago we read these bleak lines in our morning papers, and I call them to your attention: Our Nation is moving towards two societies, one white, one black, separate and unequal.

Perhaps, if we let it happen; but it need not happen.

Thank goodness, it has not done so in the Armed Forces of the United States. There, believe it or not, in a military organization, the essentials and the ideals of democracy are at work. Because a man is treated on the basis of his ability, he is treated as a man. And thank goodness that this separate but unequal is not true in veterans hospitals, which you helped integrate back in 1953. And it is not true in the VFW. Look across this room --

(Applause.)

And it's not in the hearts of the men of all colors and creeds and races and religions who have fought and bled for their country just under one name, American, and under one flag, American; same blood, same mud, same people, Americans.

And that's the way they ought to be treated when they come home; not merely when we send them abroad.

(Applause.)

Ever since President Truman's 1948 order, and a courageous one, integrating the Armed Forces, American Armed Forces have been out in the front lines, on real integration; not just in law and words, but in practice.

In the last two decades millions of young Americans, millions and millions of them, have lived together, trained together, fought together, some of them died together, and they have come to know each other as they never would have in their hometowns.

Heart is heart, blood is blood. What difference does race make? Those are the words I heard from our men in Vietnam.

The NBC Television put it the other way: same mud, same blood.

There are two simple but important lessons for our times in this experience: First, integration works. It improves morale, it increases fighting strength by giving every soldier a feeling that he has a stake worth defending in America. And I don't need to give this audience the statistics to prove that courage, willingness to volunteer for hazardous duty, bravely in the face of the enemy, are qualities that seem to emanate from the heart not from

the skin.

I think General Westmoreland took care of that beautifully, when he was back talking to his fellow Americans.

The second lesson is this: Those supposedly deep-rooted, lifelong, built-in human prejudices that we all seem to have do not take generations to disappear; where there is an important job to be done, a job of life or death, and where there is equal opportunity and equal dignity for all, prejudice seems to evaporate rather quickly.

Now, we can ask a young man to put on a uniform and send him into a combat zone, and we do; but far too often we do not permit him to live and work on equal terms at home. He can become an officer and have ultimate responsibility for the very lives of American men on the battlefield, and I have seen them; but it's far more difficult for him to become an officer of a corporation, or even a small company, when he returns home. And there are very few companies or corporations that have to take on the duties that a division commander or a regiment commander or a brigade officer has to take on.

We trust this man, this veteran, this soldier, with the most complex and sophisticated weapons ever devised, when the safety of his Nation is at stake; but we too often don't

trust him with the responsibility for even an assembly line back home, when the very ideal of democracy is being tested here at home,

We offer him an integrated bunker at Khe Sanh, but all too often refuse him an integrated neighborhood right back home.

Now, this government and this country cannot afford to let its first-class soldiers return to second-class citizenship. And that is just what is happening to far too many of our Vietnam veterans today. And the time to call a halt to it is now. Now. So that every young man that is called up for the service of his country knows that that which he is called upon to fight for and die for, 8,000 miles away from home, he can have when he returns home: a free country.

(Applause.)

I know we have made great progress, and I am very grateful, especially in building solid frameworks of laws and programs for the future. But, my fellow Americans, no law or program will produce results quickly enough to make sure that every serviceman returning from Vietnam carries the equal opportunity of service with him into his community.

Nothing a grateful President can say will equal the

impact of a community which says, "Thank you, Mr. Serviceman, we are proud and happy to have you back among us."

So I call on you as veterans, veterans of foreign service, as men who are now employers and mayors and city councilmen and community leaders and religious leaders and labor leaders, to make sure your whole community does reach out to these men.

They get an awful lot of criticism while they are gone; and, as I said, they get few parades when they come back. Their effort is constantly debated here on the home front. I sometimes wonder if they don't become terribly discouraged.

The least that we can do is when they come back, is to say that we are appreciative, we are grateful, and we are going to do the best that we can to offer them what every man is entitled to: a chance, an equal chance, with no barriers; a chance to be a first-class American in a first-class country.

There is only one kind of citizenship in this country, that's first-class citizenship; and there isn't a higher title that you can give any person on the face of this earth than to be known as Citizen of the United States of America.

(Applause.)

Now, my friends, these are simple things to do, but let's not forget them. Visit these men in their homes as soon as they return. I know you do. But I want this message to get to others besides in just the VFW; you can't do it alone. Find out what kind of work they are interested in, call their special abilities to the attention of your public officials, see that in your city, your county, that the United States Employment Service is doing its job, that the mayor is doing his job, that the Governor is doing his job. See to it that every returned serviceman has a chance for a good job. He doesn't want a handout; he isn't looking for a welfare check. He's entitled to every benefit that this Nation can bestow upon him, and the greatest benefit is an opportunity; an opportunity to make something out of himself right back home.

Tell these men about the new opportunities for public service jobs, with decent salaries, that have been opened up since they have been away. We need these men desperately in our municipal services. See that they get hired, that their wives and families are welcomed, that the real America they return to looks as much as possible like the ideal that they have been fighting to defend; and help

America mobilize this new generation of veterans, mobilize them, keep them together, not only as a force for a better America but as living proof that America can and will make full citizenship a reality for all.

Why not, for instance, new VFW Posts in neighborhoods and on college campuses, where there are increasing numbers of veterans today? Who better can tell the story of what it is all about than the man that's been there?

Why not a special Buddy System, where each of your members will take on a responsibility for helping a returned veteran find work, housing, education if he needs it?

Now, more than ever, our country needs citizens such as yourselves, willing to help provide jobs, schooling, decent housing, recreational facilities where they live. For if we fail, it will not be so much because any specific government failed, it will be because we all failed; taxpayers waited for someone else to pay the bill for the community services, the chambers of commerce and union members in a thousand American cities did not throw open their doors for job opportunities, because government officials were more concerned with their precious departments and jurisdictions than with the people living within the cities, because school boards and PTA's forgot the cost of

ignorance in a free society, or because builders and land developers and real estate people failed to meet a national housing crisis, or because a complacent and fearful majority ignored the long deferred rights and aspirations of an increasing, impatient minority.

I know we have problems. We always have.

You know what's made this country great? Doing the impossible. Ordinary people can do what's possible. Any country can do just all that needs to be done. But what has made America what it is today is that it has accomplished what other people said couldn't be done. We were the first with government by the consent of the governed. We were the first to hold a great nation together after a bloody war amongst our peoples. We were the first to abolish slavery.

We have been the first to span a great continent and to develop a great economy of this size. We have done the impossible, and that's what made us what we are.

So, my fellow Americans, if there ever were a time when our society needed the competent and courageous leadership of men willing to stand up for this country, and I am talking about America's veterans, it's now.

I want to thank you for listening to me. I didn't

come here to tell you how to fight a war. I think we have men who know how to do that. I came to tell you, my friends, that your government is determined to do its duty, to see this thing through, to gain a just and an enduring peace.

But I also came to tell you that after the shooting is over -- and it will be -- and when men return to their communities, that we want them to return to a better America, we want them to return to help build a better America, we want them to come home to know that what they fought for and what we told them that they were fighting for was real, we cannot afford a hoax, we cannot afford deceit; what we must give them is promise and fulfillment.

And I call upon the VFW to be in the vanguard of equal opportunity for every American, to make American citizenship the high honor that it ought to be, the high honor that you have made it in your own ranks. So let's get on with the job.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)



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