

REMARKS
THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
MINNEAPOLIS JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
NOVEMBER 20, 1969

This is a good time to be in business in America; a time of corporate social action when we can see the American business community beginning to exploit its vast resources, technology and talent for the benefit of its true stockholders -- the citizens of this nation.

The thousand corporate leaders who last year responded to President Johnson's appeal to establish the National Alliance of Businessmen in order to attack an urgent national problem -- finding jobs for the chronically unemployed -- have graphically demonstrated that the days when the "business of business is business" are long past. Today, in the words of Alcoa President and Chief Executive Officer John Harper, we can re-write that slogan to read "The business of business is to make a profit by answering human wants and human needs."

Examples of such humane corporate leadership abound. In Detroit, their city ravaged by riot, businessmen formed the New Detroit Committee to re-build the inner city. The Urban Coalition, under my old friend John Gardner, has prompted a national dialogue among leaders from business, the community, labor and minority groups. In city after city, the Coalition has won support and admiration from all segments of the community as it tackles urgent urban dilemmas.

Such formerly all-business organizations as your parent organization, the Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers today focus their programs and publications on the responsibility of the business community toward the wider community. Such corporations as Aerojet, with its plant in Watts, and the Hotel Corporation of America, with a new motel going up in Harlem, are trying to revitalize the inner city economically, to provide the jobs and facilities that make urban living bearable.

The best of governments -- local, state or federal -- cannot by itself solve the tough, societal problems facing us today, problems we have in part inherited, and in part created. Business, along with all other elements of our society, must share the blame and bear the burden of restructuring our imperfect society.

It would be easy if we could start this effort with a clean slate, but we have to deal with the accumulated liabilities of yesterday, with those who grew among us ill-housed, poorly fed and semi-literate.

In an earlier America a strong back and a willing heart could get anyone past the hiring gate. But in our increasingly technological society, more than half a million willing adults are simply not equipped to hold a job. Another half million or more are barred at the employment door because of obsolete and racially restrictive hiring practices.

Correcting such conditions should be a matter of conscience, but conscience or no conscience, the hard economic data is punishing: these million or more people are a consistent and persistent tax drain and they hold back an otherwise expanding economy. And this is by no means the total unemployed population. These million people are the active job seekers, those who meet frustration every day they search for work. Correcting such circumstances are matters of compassion, concern -- and vital self-interest.

The unemployed and their families are the primary victims, but we all suffer some of the consequences of their deprivation.

The dominant image of America is the economic well-being of the majority of its citizens. Inflation or no, national income is at an all time high. The gross national product continues its record breaking ascendance. The evidence of abundance is everywhere. Prosperity stretches from Wall Street to Gopher Gulch.

But the dollar growth of the economy only serves to highlight the chronic failure of many to keep up. One out of five Americans still lives in an area where economic opportunity is severely limited; one out of four of our counties is having serious financial problems. The impact of this economic imbalance is pervasive. There are fewer customers for the products of the economically healthy regions. The prosperous regions must be taxed more heavily to compensate for the minimal revenues from the distressed regions. And the unemployed in both areas are tax-users, not taxpayers.

There is only one answer to unemployment. Jobs. And no White House adviser playing Monopoly games with the economy has the right to toy with the lives of millions of our citizens and accept rising unemployment as a tradeoff for price stability.

In the past ten months inflation has run wild; it is clearly one of the most dangerous developments on the national horizon. But unemployment is not and never will be an acceptable consequence of its control. We can never afford to forget people because our money is threatened.

How much unemployment is the Nixon Administration willing to accept? Four and a half percent? Five percent? Five and a half percent?

These are small numbers and they may not sound frightening, but remember that every half of a percentage point represents over one million people -- and every single one of these is a person in the midst of trouble.

What do I mean by trouble? A recent national nutrition survey examining physical conditions among thousands of families turned up this appalling information:

- . . . 34 percent of the pre-school children had anemia.

- . . . 33 percent had Vitamin A deficiency -- a condition that does not exist when a child has enough milk to drink

- . . . a majority had serious dental problems; large numbers had rickets or scurvy or beriberi or other diseases normally associated with famine conditions.

This is trouble.

Last year, tests in the New York City public schools showed that 85 percent of all children were retarded in reading by the end of the sixth grade; in the disadvantaged neighborhoods of the Bronx, 51 percent of 8th graders are three or more years behind. Of 1135 Puerto Rican youngsters who should have graduated from high school last year, only 34 received a diploma.

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Although a research project just released by the U. S. Bureau of the Census shows that the number of substandard housing units in the nation dropped from 18 percent to 9 percent in the eight Kennedy-Johnson years, over six million households in this country are still rated substandard by the most minimum measurements. This, notes Art Young, chief of the Census Bureau's Housing Division, means that 6 million housing units are delapidated, seriously overcrowded, lack indoor plumbing -- or all three.

Though no accurate count is available, six million such households very likely hold between 20 and 30 million Americans who are living in squalor amidst the general plenty.

And this data does not begin to tell the whole story: an adequate physical structure is no guarantee of an adequate environment, of green space or playgrounds for growing children, of transportation to jobs or to health facilities, of clean air or rodent and vermin-free residential neighborhoods.

As the Douglas Commission report on Urban Problems noted, housing expectations, like other expectations, have risen. What was acceptable in the 1940's (when housing standards were developed) is no longer acceptable to a very substantial portion of the population today.

This is trouble.

Substandard housing, like hunger, poor health and illiteracy, is a consequence of chronic poverty and like all other situations in which goods and services are exchanged for money, the solution lies in expanding job markets and job opportunities. This is too big a job for government to tackle alone -- even a government committed to these goals -- and the Nixon Administration clearly is not so committed.

Six out of seven jobs in this country are in private industry and it is industry that must, with whatever help, if any, is required from the Federal government, make whatever investment is necessary to start these by-passed Americans on the long climb to productivity and prosperity.

There is no milenium; we are not going to wake up some Monday morning and find everything rosy. No present program -- public or private -- seriously threatens the conditions of life in the urban ghetto or the rural slum. Each of us must develop a personal program, must take our own first step.

The young men and women in the business world today must support bold policies and place themselves in the forefront of the brave ventures.

Business must offer its young executives the opportunity to make a contribution to their world at the same time they are making a contribution to their employer. The corporate captains who offer that kind of leadership and that kind of opportunity will attract the best of employees. Many recognize this; many are already doing so.

Last year over five thousand young executives -- many of them from the ranks of your Junior Chambers -- had the opportunity to serve in local and regional offices of the National Alliance of Businessmen, on loan from their companies at full salary. They worked from one to twelve months seeking jobs for disadvantaged youth and the hard-core unemployed.

Uncounted thousands more worked in storefront recruiting operations deep in the ghettos of our largest cities. Other business volunteers helped after hours in such vocational counseling programs as the Volunteer Advisor Corps in Indianapolis.

Many more served in in-plant buddy and guidance programs, or helped develop sensitivity training programs to assist foreman and supervisors in understanding the problems of newly hired disadvantaged workers.

Business leaders across the nation supported training facilities like the Opportunities Industrialization Centers, and voluntary employment integration efforts like Plans for Progress.

These are good developments, and they deserve a hearty well done -- for effort.

But not yet for achievement.

For the serious problems remain.

Despite the exemplary job drive by the National Alliance of Businessmen under the exhortative leadership of Henry Ford and Leo Beebe in its first year, this year -- its second -- unemployment in the nation is again on the rise.

Despite a technological proficiency that offers us new wonders almost everytime we open a newspaper, our scientific and technical leaders have yet to successfully scout the sea for new sources of food, have yet to devise cheap, comfortable structures to house the poor, have yet to apply new learning techniques to make the nation fully literate.

Industry and government working together can go to the moon and to Mars, can develop information devices that make the world a global village -- but we are still waiting for the task forces systems engineers to come to grips with the human problems that beset us: hunger and housing, health and literacy, environmental pollution and traffic congestion.

This is the challenge American business has to offer you highly motivated young executives. This is where we should put your youthful impatience to work.

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REMARKS

BY

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

MINNEAPOLIS JR. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

NOVEMBER 20, 1969

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*Business
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*Life Insurance Institute
21 Billion*

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The young men and women in the business world today must support bold policies and place themselves in the forefront of the brave ventures. And they must be tough enough to face failure and come back and try again. You know, if you throw a lot of mud at a wall, when the sun comes out some of it is bound to fall off. But you can't be discouraged; you have to go back and throw some more mud.

poor analogy

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