

TRIBUTE TO DR. LEON SULLIVAN

Mr. Humphrey:

Mr. President, today I would like to pay special tribute to a man who is a good friend and a gifted leader. I speak of Reverend Leon H. Sullivan who as founder and chairman of the board of the Opportunities Industrialization Centers has been a dynamic force in giving thousands of needy Americans hope, purpose and dignity. He is a man of God committed to working for spiritual and economic salvation of those in need.

Dr. Sullivan began the first OIC in an abandoned Philadelphia jailhouse in 1964. It was a courageous first step in what were to become more than 100 OIC centers all across America.

Since its inception, the Opportunities Industrialization Centers have trained and placed in jobs 125,000 men and women who now earn approximately \$400 million a year. Dr. Sullivan has told me that their present 10-year goal is to train and place in jobs 1 million Americans in urban and rural America.

When I was Vice President, I took a special interest in Dr. Sullivan's work because I saw the great potential it held for giving communities all over the nation a viable method for community economic self-development. I aided the OIC's in obtaining much needed Federal assistance from the Department

of Labor, and H.E.W. so that they could carry out their innovative work. I am also proud of my efforts to interest the private business community in Dr. Sullivan's work.

Eight years ago when Dr. Sullivan began OIC he adopted the slogan "We help ourselves." Self-improvement was the motivating force behind the OIC's as it is today.

The first OIC in Philadelphia recruited men and women from every stratum of life--the average age was 27 and the average level of educational attainment was the 10th grade. Dr. Sullivan said that one third of his initial group in the OIC were on relief and 80 percent were below the poverty line.

In Dr. Sullivan's words, OIC "began to turn that hopelessness into hope. OIC began to teach that genius was color blind; and OIC began to teach that it was not important where a man came from, but where he was going that counted; OIC taught that man was like a balloon, it is not his color that makes him rise, but what he has inside of him."

Dr. Sullivan realized the shortcomings of government job training programs when he launched the OIC. He saw that too often the governments manpower training programs consisted of training and more training leading to dead ends and stop gap jobs. He wanted to put an end to this practice and bring to his people the dignity and self-respect that are part of a good

job. The manpower programs he initiated have enabled two-thirds of OIC trainees to keep the jobs they were originally trained for and to increase their earnings by considerable amounts. It is no understatement to say that OIC is now a way out of poverty and off the welfare rolls for thousands of blacks, Mexican-Americans, Indians, and Appalachian whites.

Today, there are over 5 million Americans without jobs. Unemployment has hit the poor, the aged and the young, very hard. Self-help economic development programs are certainly one of the many solutions to this serious economic problem. Federal, state, and local governments should carefully scrutinize the work of the OIC's and aid them where they exist and help to establish them in areas where they have not been established.

There are lessons for us in the work of Dr. Leon Sullivan. He has shown that people can help themselves. He has demonstrated that Americans do not have to settle for the unending cycle of poverty, welfare and dead end jobs. And he has proven that people with few job skills can be trained to hold skilled jobs. And most important of all, by giving men and women hope when all hope for them had seemed to vanish, he rekindled something which seems so difficult to find in today's work: man's basic confidence in his fellow man. If nothing else, Dr. Leon Sullivan has told hundreds of thousands of down-trodden Americans

of all races: I believe in you. I want to help you by allowing you to help yourselves.

So today, I pay personal tribute to one of the most unusual men I have met in my public career. This nation is indebted to Dr. Leon Sullivan for what he has done and for his future goals.

Dr. Leon Sullivan seeks economic emancipation not only for black Americans--but, for people of all races. He realizes that the provision of economic and social justice is just as important today as the struggle for civil rights was in the 1960's. I endorse Dr. Sullivan's goals, I join in his struggle. I believe in his basic goal as he so eloquently stated: "For my people I want ham and eggs on earth instead of milk and honey in heaven."



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