

5/14/73

Dick
Bert ✓

Attached is my effort to outline the direction and themes I think this book should cover.

I hope you have a chance to look at it fairly closely so we can reach a firm agreement about the scope of this effort before much serious drafting begins.

I would be very interested in your reactions, suggestions and other comments.

Sid

PROPOSED OUTLINE FOR

"CHILD CARE IN AMERICA: THE POLITICS OF CHILDREN"
(Tentative Title)

Section I. Review of Children's Rights (Sid)

This section should summarize the injustices that many American children experience, touching on many of the themes in your Justice for Children speech.

Its style should be as personal as possible with vignettes of individual children you have seen in Migrant camps, emergency rooms in hospitals, Alaskan or Indian reservations, institutions for the handicapped, etc. These vignettes should be followed by the usual statistical information indicating the magnitude of these problems. But primary emphasis should be on making these problems -- these children -- come alive to the reader. This personal style should also reveal as much as possible about you and your feelings about these injustices.

In short, these problems should be presented in a way that gives readers a real feeling for the tragedies many children experience and a sense of your personal concern about them. The tone and style must differ substantially from that of a detached analysis by a social scientist.

While we need to touch at least slightly on all the major areas of injustice to children, we should focus on problems like the following because of your personal involvement with them and/or because they touch people at all income levels.

- Child abuse;
- Handicapped children, emphasising the ways this could be prevented;
- The migrant child, extending that to include, if possible, a brief discussion of the issue of mobility and its effect on middle-income children as well (for example, pointing out that you stopped moving your family between Minneapolis and Washington every year because of what it was doing to your children in school.)
- The disadvantaged child who needs a Head Start or preschool experience.
- The Indian child, leading into a more general discussion of bilingual and bicultural needs.

Most of the above and perhaps others can and should be presented in vignettes of young, preschool children for whom more sympathy exists than for older kids whose equally severe problems are being expressed through delinquency or drug abuse.

Other problems areas we should touch on more lightly include: education (problems of educating disadvantaged children, problems of school finance; and school discrimination); health care (early screening, etc.); children's tv; poverty and hunger; juvenile delinquents and alienation (drugs, etc.); youth unemployment.

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Section II. What Needs to be Done (Bert)

This section should describe the kinds of things we ought to be doing in response to these problems. Because there is enough in this section to make a book in itself, we need to be selective and illustrative. We should draw heavily on the Select Committee's recommendations here, as well as Health and Hunger recommendations, but we should do so in a way that does a semi-thorough job on 3 or 4 topics and a shorter, once-over-lightly job on the other subjects. This section runs perhaps the greatest risk of being pie-in-the-skyish and boring.

Examples of issues to be treated in more depth should include:

--Education and school finance;

--Child abuse;

--Public Service Employment for the young;

--Bilingual, bicultural;

--(Child Development will be treated in Section III).

Areas which should be touched on lightly include: delinquency, child health, income maintenance and welfare reform, children's television, and school desegregation.

This section should also include two other themes.

First, in the discussion of education solutions, it should respond to the "nothing works" arguments from the Administration and some of the academics. This section should include a review of the accomplishments of the Great Society, (15 million lifted out of poverty, etc.), as well as a number of examples where individual reading programs or health care demonstration projects have delivered undisputable and impressive gains.

Second, throughout this section it should be emphasized that you don't think every categorical program is sacred, or that reform of our domestic programs is unnecessary. This should include candid admissions of the over-promising that accompanied the beginning of the War on Poverty, as well as the well-meaning but mistaken assumptions that prompted public housing programs and the anti-work incentives in the present welfare system. It should also suggest changes in impact aid (like those in your National School Boards Association speech) and in the Hill-Burton Construction Program (toward hospital modernization, greater urban emphasis, etc.)

In short, this section should convey your support of your goals of equal opportunity, your confidence in our ability to approach that goal and your willingness, indeed desire, to reshape and reform outmoded programs -- but in ways that continue or expand our commitment to social and economic justice rather than reduce it.

Section III. Child Development: The Legislative Effort and its Lessons. (Sid)

This section should:

- (1) make the case for early enrichment by reviewing the needs and success stories through the use of our hearings and personal experiences such as your visit to Earl Schaefer's program in D.C.
- (2) show that you not only talk about doing something about children's needs but also did something about it -- by summarizing the legislative effort from the early talks with Zigler, Bronfenbrenner, etc., through the Veto and Senate passage the following year of the modified bill; and
- (3) as candidly as possible, point out what appears in retrospect to be some of the mistakes we made and the lessons we learned.

This should be a sharply condensed and more readable version of the draft chapter prepared last fall. Less time should be spent in chronological details and more time devoted to general explanations of strategy and an insight into the gambles we took and the mistakes we made. The legislative story should be told, but its focus should be on what the child development legislation tells us about the political process and the politics of children.

The "lessons-mistakes" area could be one of the best parts of the book. It is a chance to offer some real insights that people outside the legislative-political arena are not aware of but should be. And it is an area that noticeably is missing from the "this is what I believe" or "pie in the sky" books often written by Senators. This part, as well as the

final section on the politics of children generally, could contribute a new dimension to the understanding of why so many unmet needs remain. And it could reinforce your reputation as a candid and courageous Senator who is willing to admit a mistake if he has made one.

For all of these reasons, this is an area which will need maximum attention from you, including some interviews about it on tape. Some of the lessons-mistakes we should mention include:

- 1) The difficulty we had attracting press and public attention to this issue until it was vetoed. This stemmed from a combination of factors.

First, it seems clear in retrospect that we made a mistake by not pursuing the press harder on this issue. We probably should have held field hearings. That is our best vehicle for gaining public attention and we did not use it. In fact, at points we felt there were some advantages in having Congress pass this bill without major public attention because we thought a lot of press might simply activate opposition from the Administration and others. That was a gamble that probably helped us get the bill through the Congress. But this lack of public understanding of what the bill was designed to do simply made a veto easier.

Second, part of the lack of press and public attention can and should be attributed to the way the news media cover public affairs. When we did try to gain attention, we often failed. Among other things, that illustrated the difficulty of getting press and public attention to focus on non-Administration proposals. The Executive Branch -- no matter what party controls it -- has much too

great an ability to "define News." A massive initiative of this kind -- which clearly had a good chance of passing Congress -- should have been reported by the press whether or not field hearings or liberal road shows were conducted. We should urge the Congress and the press to explore ways to better determine which bills of significance have a good chance of passage and therefore should be explained to the public whether or not the Administration sponsors them, opposes them, or remains neutral. (Attached is a suggestion of how this factor might be presented.)

2) The weakness of Cabinet officers in this Administration and the way this hampered negotiations and compromises with the Administration. The whole story should be told about the negotiations with Secretary Richardson that began in Senator Javits' office. It should point out that we held up the Conference until we had Richardson's final approval of the compromise fee schedule and his word that he would fight to get this bill signed. We should print the letter he sent one week later backing down from his agreement after he had talked to people in the White House who really counted. This episode illustrates well our willingness to compromise when necessary . . . and the frustrations Congress has experienced in dealing with a highly centralized White House operation.

3) Our mistakes in trying to convince the public of the need for a solution before they recognized the existence of a problem -- or at least the magnitude and implication of the problem. This theme should receive major treatment in the final section in which we talk about the myths of the American family and the fact that many of us don't recognize how much stress the family is under. But it might be touched on here as well.

precluded

In retrospect, it seems clear that the sort of family hearings we are talking about now should have ~~precluded~~ any effort to pass abill as ambitious as this one. Had they been held and well reported, I think the public would have more readily accepted our contention that this bill was designed to strengthen families that are being weakened by a lot of other factors in society -- mobility and the virtual disappearance of the extended family; the increase in the number of women working; single parents; etc. -- rather than accept the right wing argument that it was this bill that would rip families apart.

4) Our earliest rhetoric about the tremendous IQ gains that children could gain at good day care and child development programs was another mistake. Without intending it, there is no question that this emphasis on how experts could enhance a child's development implied or at least was successfully said to imply that mothers were inadequate.

5) Another mistake was made -- which is all too common in Congressional hearings -- was to limit our witnesses primarily to those who agreed with us. This has the advantage of getting a bill through Committee and through the Senate and House. But it artificially protected us from having to deal with many of the criticisms which ultimately arose. Whether those criticisms are legitimate or illegitimate, the wiser policy is to surface them and deal with them early, rather than when they appear in a Presidential veto message.

6) Our bill contained too many scare words. "Universal", "matter of right", and "child advocacy" were all used quite successfully to convince people that this was some plot to take children from their homes, interfere with the rights of parents. Those arguments would have come any way, but we should not have left words in the bill which our opposition could use as ammunition or proof.

7) The advantages and disadvantages of dealing with a coalition-drafted bill. In what was a unique or highly unusual move, a coalition of outside groups met, decided what principles they believed in and drafted their own bill. I think that single fact gave a lot of the lobbyists a pride of authorship they never had before and explained why they spent so much time and energy lobbying it. It helps explain the success the bill had in Congress in the face of White House opposition.

But we also paid a price for this process. It gave the coalition and the lobbies a great deal of veto power over any compromises considered in Conference. We may well have made the right choice in this case, or maybe we did not even have a choice. Clearly, a bill can never be vetoed if it doesn't get through Congress. But whatever conclusion we draw, this fact that the coalition drafted this bill explains a good deal about the victories and defeats it experienced --and should be discussed in this section.

Section IV. The Politics of Children (Sid)

This section will try to explain why so many children's needs remain unmet. It will try to explain why the political and governmental process has been relatively insensitive to the problems and injustices faced by many children. No claim will be made that we have the final answer to this question. The whole tone instead should be one of offering suggestions or at least raising questions in an area which has received very little thoughtful examination.

There are at least three levels at which this issue should be explored. What follows is some tentative thinking about each level. This section is ~~the~~ one most likely to be expanded and revised since it will be the major focus of yet uncondacted interviews with lobbyists and children's experts.

The first level would consist of simple observations about political realities. These include the obvious fact that children don't vote. It will also include the fact that those who do vote have already survived childhood. Not only aren't they children, they will never be children again. Thus, they don't have any where near the self-interest in programs for children as they have in programs for the aged -- a category that if they are not in already, they certainly expect to be in some day.

This discussion should also include a frank review of political interests and abilities of many of the groups and organizations who represent children. This will point out how there is no effective leadership among children's groups . . . no effective children's lobby. It will also point out that many of the professionals and others involved in services for children -- social workers, educators and academics particularly -- are not interested in the political process. It is clearly not part of their value system. Indeed involvement in the political process is often considered unprofessional or worse.

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This should point out how efforts for better children's programs have often been hampered by the lack of any consensus among the advocates about what is needed. There seems to be a constant search for the perfect solution . . . reflected on the part of some children's advocates in a "I'm purer than you" attitude. In this area, particularly, the best often is an enemy of the good.

Although most experts can agree about what is bad for children and ought to be stopped immediately, many of them tend to spend that time arguing over what is absolutely the best for children with the result that nothing or very little gets accomplished.

These are some unpleasant facts that have interfered with better programs for children. Fortunately, they appear to be changing. Written too forcefully, this part could be very insulting and counter-productive. But written sensitively by one who has been a leader in the field, and has the respect of most children's advocates, it could provide some much-needed encouragement for more positive efforts on behalf of children.

The discussion at this first level would also include examples from lobbyists and others involved in the legislative process of situations where proposals for children have been dropped in Conference, etc.

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The second level should be a brief discussion questioning -- at an almost philosophical level -- the attitudes many adults have toward children in this country. As a yet to be transcribed interview with Keniston suggests, we at least ought to raise questions about

prevailing attitudes of the older generation toward the younger. For instance, do we believe that children, if left alone, will grow up to be creative, thoughtful and reasonable human beings? Or do we feel that without a lot of rigid discipline and denial they will become corrupted, unmanageable, lazy individuals? And doesn't our general popular opinion on this issue underlie our views about whether the government should provide services and benefits to young children or whether that will corrupt them? This is a sensitive area and one that is difficult to summarize. But the New Haven interview with Keniston really suggests it is worth reflecting on in the book -- at least in the form of questions -- and it ought to be kept alive until we have received the transcript of that discussion.

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The third level of discussion in this chapter involves what we have discussed in connection with hearings on the American Family. This would be the major part of the chapter and lead directly into the conclusion.

It would point out that what might be called our myth of the American family stands in the way of solving many of the problems children experience -- ~~it~~^{and} also contributes to the creation of many of these problems.

This discussion would include the following elements:

--The observation that in dealing with children's problems we often act as if we forget children are part of families. This means that we often overlook a fundamental cause of problems children are experiencing -- i.e., strains on families -- and we often overlook the role that efforts to strengthen the family could play in solving the problems.

--As a result many of our children's programs have been designed and run separately from the family, rather than through them or in cooperation with them (schools, health care, foster care for abused children, rather than strengthening the family, etc.).

In many cases, this strategy has been ineffective and disappointing. Moreover, it has helped undermine the functions and responsibilities and respect for families. And by removing responsibilities from the family and placing them elsewhere, it has probably increased the fears about governmental intervention into the family.

The fear of government control or government interference with the legitimate concerns of the family is a major deterrent to efforts designed to support children, as the right wing attack and the veto message successfully demonstrated. We should suggest that our non-family solutions to children's problems have perhaps helped heighten that fear.

--These fears that the family is somehow under attack by government programs are increased by the myth that no other forces or institutions are threatening the American family. We are one of the few Western democracies without an articulated family policy. And because we don't have one, we like to believe there is none. But there is no such thing as a non-policy. Just because we choose not to look at the impact of non-identified government and other policies on families doesn't mean that these policies are not having an effect. And until we start looking at the impact that some existing

and proposed policies are having on families and children, we will never understand the problems they face or the solutions that are required. The discussion of this point should include the following examples of policies and trends that are impacting families:

- --Increased mobility and the decline of extended families, including the way families are moved around in the armed forces or by large corporations that rotate their young executives every two or three years.
- The impact of forced work requirements in welfare laws.
- Consideration of what a 4 day-40 hour week might mean to children.
- The age ghettos that are best represented by college dorms, nursing homes, or suburbs populated almost exclusively by young married couples with young children.
- The impact that highways, and the lack of sidewalks, have on neighborhoods.
- The increase in single parent families.
- The increase in the proportion of mothers who are working.
- The way the family is portrayed in the mass media.
- The impact of child labor laws.

This list can and should be expanded and discussed. It should lead to the conclusion that perhaps the biggest barrier -- both substantively and politically -- to effective programs to help children is the inability or reluctance of Americans to admit that the American family structure is under attack, and needs some new support systems.



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