

REMARKS OF
CONGRESSMAN BOB DOLE
DEDICATION OF THE NURSING ADDITION
GOOD SAMARITAN CENTER
ELLSWORTH, KANSAS
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1968

AMERICA IS A YOUNG NATION.

BUT EACH YEAR A LARGER PROPORTION OF OUR POPULATION
JOINS THE RANKS OF SENIOR CITIZENS.

BY NOVEMBER WHEN THE NATION CASTS ITS VOTES DETERMINING
THE COURSE OUR COUNTRY WILL TAKE IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, THERE
WILL BE NEARLY 20 MILLION OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS OVER AGE 65.
ONE OUT OF EVERY 10 CITIZENS IS IN THIS AGE GROUP -- MORE
THAN TWICE AS MANY AS A HALF CENTURY AGO.

IN OUR STATE, THE NUMBERS ARE EQUALLY STARTLING. FROM
1960 TO 1966, THE TOTAL KANSAS POPULATION GREW 3.2 PERCENT,
WHILE THE NUMBER OF SENIOR CITIZENS GREW TO 7.1 PERCENT --
MORE THAN DOUBLE.

FUTURE PREDICTIONS ARE EQUALLY DRAMATIC. THE ADMINISTRATION ON AGING SAYS 1985 WILL SEE 25 MILLION SENIOR CITIZENS. AND IN THE YEAR 2000 -- JUST 22 YEARS FROM NOW -- THERE WILL BE MORE THAN 28 MILLION.

-TRIUMPH AND CHALLENGE-

THESE FIGURES REPRESENT A NATIONAL TRIUMPH. THE AMERICAN BORN IN 1900 COULD EXPECT TO REACH HIS 47TH BIRTHDAY. THE AMERICAN BORN TODAY HAS A LIFE EXPECTANCY OF 70 YEARS. TOMORROW, MAN'S KNOWLEDGE WILL STRETCH THE LIFE SPAN EVEN FARTHER.

BUT THESE FIGURES ALSO REPRESENT A NATIONAL CHALLENGE: NOT JUST TO PROLONG LIVES, BUT TO ALSO HELP ENRICH THEM.

-GOOD SAMARITAN CENTERS-

CERTAINLY ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST SPOTS IN THE CONCERN AND CARE FOR THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF SENIOR CITIZENS ARE RETIREMENT HOMES LIKE THE GOOD SAMARITAN CENTERS, WHICH TODAY STRETCH ACROSS 16 STATES, PROVIDING HOMES AND CARE FOR OVER 10,000 PERSONS.

IN KANSAS, WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE 16 GOOD SAMARITAN CENTERS, 11 OF WHICH ARE IN OUR CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT INCLUDING THIS ONE IN ELLSWORTH.

WITH THE ADDITION OF THE NEW 68-BED NURSING UNIT BEING DEDICATED TODAY, THE TOTAL CAPACITY AT THIS CENTER IS INCREASED TO 217 BEDS, MAKING IT ONE OF THE SIX LARGEST RETIREMENT HOMES IN THE STATE.

SINCE THE GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY BEGAN IN 1922, IT HAS MUSHROOMED, FOUNDED AND STILL GROWING ON THE SIMPLE PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY AND DEDICATED TO THE SERVICE OF THE AGED AND THE ILL.

-PLIGHT OF ELDERLY-

FOR MANY OF AMERICA'S AGED, THE PICTURE IS NOT AS BRIGHT. TOO MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND BY THE PROGRESS THEY WORKED MOST OF THEIR LIVES TO CREATE.

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MANY EXIST ON FIXED INCOMES BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL.
TOO OFTEN, THEIR WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE IS LOST OR WORSE,
IGNORED. MANY WHO ARE ABLE AND WILLING TO WORK, EVEN PART-TIME,
SUFFER THE BITTER REBUFF OF UNJUST JOB DISCRIMINATION.

COUNTLESS NUMBERS DWELL IN RURAL AND CITY SLUMS, LONELY
AND ISOLATED. THEY SUFFER FROM A DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN OF
BAD HOUSING, POOR HEALTH FACILITIES, INFERIOR RECREATION AND
REHABILITATION CENTERS.

HISTORICALLY, OUR NATION WAS RATHER UNPREPARED AT FIRST
TO DEAL MEANINGFULLY WITH THESE PROBLEMS. THERE HAD ALWAYS
BEEN SENIOR CITIZENS, BUT NOT IN SUCH LARGE NUMBERS. MORE THAN
ANYTHING, IT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE NUMBERS WHICH AWAKENED THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE, AND MORE PARTICULARLY, THOSE IN GOVERNMENT.

-SOCIAL SECURITY & IKE-

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, THE CONGRESS HAS ENACTED A GREAT DEAL OF LEGISLATION WHICH DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY BENEFITS THE OLDER CITIZENS OF THIS STATE, SUCH AS THE BASIC SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM.

A KANSAN, AND FORMER PRESIDENT, DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER ESTABLISHED AN ALMOST UNSURPASSED RECORD IN THE 1950'S FOR EXPANDING AND IMPROVING SOCIAL SECURITY.

THE 1954 ACT, ENACTED SHORTLY AFTER THE EISENHOWER-NIXON ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE, BROADLY IMPROVED AND EXPANDED THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM, INCLUDING EXTENSION OF COVERAGE TO 10 MILLION MORE PERSONS INCLUDING FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS, MOST GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND OTHERS WHO HAD NO COVERAGE DURING THE FIRST 19 YEARS SOCIAL SECURITY WAS IN EXISTENCE.

IN 1956, THE ACT LOWERED FROM 65 TO 50 THE AGE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR THE TOTALLY AND PERMANENTLY DISABLED AND REDUCED FROM 65 TO 62 THE AGE WOMEN COULD QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS.

IN 1958, BENEFITS WERE INCREASED SEVEN PERCENT.

TWO YEARS LATER IN 1960, THE AMOUNT A BENEFICIARY COULD EARN A YEAR WITHOUT LOSS OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WAS FURTHER LIBERLIZED.

-LEGISLATION SINCE 1960-

FROM 1960 WHEN I WAS FIRST ELECTED TO CONGRESS UNTIL THE PRESENT, THERE HAVE BEEN A MULTITUDE OF BILLS ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF THE AGING.

WE HAVE SEEN ENACTED, AND I HAVE SUPPORTED...THE SENIOR CITIZENS HOUSING ACT...SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENTS...VETERANS PENSION ACT...OLDER AMERICANS ACT...INCREASES UNDER THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT ACT AND PROVISIONS TO HELP STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS UPGRADE THEIR PLANNING FOR HEALTH NEEDS OF SENIOR CITIZENS.

-THE FEDERAL ROLE IN THE FUTURE-

THOSE OF US IN CONGRESS CONCERNED WITH PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE KNOW THAT THE LEGISLATION WE CONSIDER MUST ASSURE THE ELDERLY RECEIVE THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE NATION'S PRIORITY STRUCTURE. SURELY WE OWE SUPPORT TO THE GENERATION WHICH HELP BUILD THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE AND PROSPER.

EQUALLY, WE KNOW THE NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS CONSIDERED MUST TRULY HELP OUR OLDER AMERICANS PRESERVE THEIR DIGNITY, THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR SECURITY, NOT TO RENDER THEM PERPETUAL RECIPIENTS OF CHARITY.

-GOALS: INDEPENDENCE, DIGNITY, SECURITY-

TO PRESERVE DIGNITY OF THE OLDER PERSON, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT RETIREMENT FROM EMPLOYMENT DOES NOT MEAN RETIREMENT FROM LIFE, AND THAT THERE MUST EXIST THEREFORE, OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE TO CONTINUE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS.

TO PRESERVE INDEPENDENCE DOES NOT MEAN THAT EACH OLDER PERSON MUST BE EXPECTED TO FEND FOR HIMSELF AT ALL TIMES. BUT IT DOES MEAN THERE MUST EXIST VARYING PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE AND REAL ALTERNATIVES SO THE OLDER PERSON MAY CHOOSE HIS OWN COURSE OF ACTION. IF WE TAKE AWAY SELF-RELIANCE, WE DESTROY PERSONAL DIGNITY, AND LOSS OF DIGNITY IS NO LESS IMPORTANT TO THE ELDERLY THAN IT IS TO THE YOUNG.

TO PRESERVE SECURITY, WE MUST ELIMINATE THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS WHICH SERVE ONLY TO HIGHLIGHT THE PROBLEMS OF OLDER PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHICH NECESSARILY INVOLVED DEPENDENCY.

REGARDLESS OF THE INITIAL PLAUSIBILITY OF ANY GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OR PROJECT, IF IT SERVES TO HUMILIATE, TO RESTRICT, TO CAUSE APPREHENSION, IT IS BETTER FORGOTTEN.

DIGNITY, INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY -- THESE THEN ARE OUR GOALS.

-IMPROVING SOCIAL SECURITY-

IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT I SUPPORT STRENGTHENING OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM. AUTOMATIC COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS UNDER SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT ACT SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO OFFSET INFLATION, THAT DEBILITATING DISEASE WHICH, IN THE LAST 8 YEARS, HAS ROBBED OLDER AMERICANS WITH MORE SAVAGERY THAN ANY OTHER SOCIAL GROUP.

THE FACT THAT THE MEDIAN INCOME OF OLDER FAMILIES IS LESS THAN HALF THAT OF YOUNGER FAMILIES AND THE FACT THAT MANY OLDER AMERICANS ARE COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON FIXED PENSIONS OR ANNUITIES MAKE THEM HELPLESS, FRONT-LINE VICTIMS OF INFLATION.

IT IS TRUE THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE AVERAGE EARNINGS OF FIXED-INCOME RECIPIENTS IN THE LAST 8 YEARS, BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT OVER 50 PERCENT OF THAT INCREASE WAS VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT BY INFLATION.

BECAUSE OF THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF SENIOR CITIZENS,
IT IS FURTHER ESSENTIAL THAT THE AGE FOR UNIVERSAL SOCIAL
SECURITY COVERAGE BE GRADUALLY REDUCED FROM 72 TO 65.

AND I SUPPORT RESTORATION OF A 100 PERCENT INCOME TAX
DEDUCTION FOR RISING DRUG AND MEDICAL EXPENSES OF PEOPLE
OVER 65.

-CHANGE OF ATTITUDE-

IF I WERE TO CHOOSE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE
ATTITUDE OF ALL AMERICANS TOWARD GROWING OLDER, IT WOULD BE THAT
WE HAVE RECOGNIZED THERE IS NO SINGLE "BEST" SOLUTION TO ALL
THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF THE ELDERLY.

THE MOST PRESSING NEED IS TO SEEK OUT NEW ALTERNATIVES
AS ANSWERS TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE ELDERLY -- ALTERNATIVES
WHICH WILL HELP US REACH A NEW APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING
OF THE RATHER IMPORTANT ROLE AND DISTINCTION OF BEING A
"SENIOR CITIZEN".

A PRIORITY ITEM HERE IS TO DEFINE THE ROLE THE ELDERLY CAN PLAY IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND NATION AS A WHOLE. TO HELP IN THIS DEFINITION, WE IN THE CONGRESS MUST TURN TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS THEMSELVES, SINCE BETTER THAN ANYONE, THEY KNOW WHAT IS NEEDED AND THE BEST MANNER IN WHICH WE CAN MEET THOSE NEEDS.

A BURDEN, THEREFORE, RESTS UPON THE SENIOR CITIZENS THEMSELVES TO DEMONSTRATE TO THEIR COMMUNITIES AND STATE THAT THEY ARE NO LONGER SATISFIED TO REMAIN OUTSIDE OF THE MAINSTREAM OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, THAT THEY HAVE A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WHICH CAN BE OF VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY, AND THAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE THE CONTRIBUTIONS THEY HAVE MADE IN THE PAST TO BUILD A STRONG AND VIGOROUS AMERICA.