

REMARKS OF SENATOR ROBERT DOLE

BEFORE THE WOMEN'S EQUITY ACTION LEAGUE: ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

"PROGRESS AND POVERTY AMONG AMERICAN WOMEN"

OUR PURPOSE THIS EVENING IS TO PAY TRIBUTE TO EIGHT WOMEN OF DEMONSTRATED LEADERSHIP AND CAPABILITY, WHOSE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR SYMBOLIZE THE VAST RESOURCE OF HUMAN TALENT WHICH AMERICAN WOMEN REPRESENT.

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SUMMIT INVOLVING THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS, SO THAT A DEFICIT-REDUCING COMPROMISE CAN BE WORKED OUT. I URGE THIS ORGANIZATION, CONCERNED AS IT IS WITH BASIC ISSUES OF FAIRNESS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE, TO JOIN ME IN THAT CALL. AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF WOMEN -- ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING POVERTY GROUPS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY -- YOU HAVE A VITAL INTEREST IN CUTTING THE DEFICITS WHICH IMPERIL OUR CONTINUED PROGRESS TOWARD ECONOMIC HEALTH. FOR IT HAS BEEN SADLY DEMONSTRATED THAT WHEN THE ECONOMY FALTERS, IT IS THOSE ON THE BOTTOM RUNGS OF THE ECONOMIC LADDER WHO SUFFER THE MOST.

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1) PENSION REFORM

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OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, I HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE, THE PENSION INDUSTRY, AND INTERESTED WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING W.E.A.L., DEVELOPING A CONSENSUS PROPOSAL, WHICH I INTRODUCED YESTERDAY. TO ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS



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A SECOND AREA OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE IS THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OUR CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM. PERHAPS THE MOST SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEM FACING FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS IS LACK OF ADEQUATE CHILD SUPPORT. MORE THAN 8.4 MILLION WOMEN ARE RAISING CHILDREN WHOSE FATHERS ARE ABSENT.



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THE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1975 TO PROVIDE A FEDERAL-STATE PROGRAM OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT FOR BOTH WELFARE AND NON-WELFARE RECIPIENTS. BUT CURRENTLY, THERE ARE WIDE VARIATIONS IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE PROGRAMS AND HEAVY ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS THAT ARE PRIMARILY BORNE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND MANY IN CONGRESS, INCLUDING MYSELF, BELIEVE THAT THE PROGRAM CAN AND SHOULD DO A BETTER JOB. ACCORDINGLY, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS DEVELOPED A BILL, COSPONSORED BY ALL THE REPUBLICAN MEMBERS OF THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE, WHICH I BELIEVE LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR REAL PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT. HEARINGS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY AND I HOPE FINAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION CAN BE TAKEN BY CONGRESS BEFORE THE END OF THIS SESSION.



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## 2) SOCIAL SECURITY

ANOTHER ISSUE OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF OLDER WOMEN CONCERNS THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN UNDER SOCIAL SECURITY.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM WAS ESTABLISHED WHEN MARRIAGES LASTED A LIFETIME, WOMEN WERE MOTHERS AND HOMEMAKERS, AND MEN WERE THE SOURCE OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT.



BUT TODAY WOMEN ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE PAID WORKFORCE AND AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THUS, THERE IS BROAD SUPPORT FOR CRITICALLY REEXAMINING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL SECURITY ON WOMEN.

SOME LEGISLATIVE HEADWAY, ALBEIT LIMITED, WAS MADE IN THE RECENTLY ENACTED SOCIAL SECURITY FINANCING BILL WHERE BENEFITS WERE IMPROVED FOR WIDOWS, DIVORCED WIVES, AND DISABLED WOMEN. IN ADDITION, THE BILL CALLS FOR A GOVERNMENT STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING PROPOSALS FOR EARNINGS SHARING, WHEREBY MARRIAGE WOULD BE VIEWED AS AN ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP. I HOPE THAT THIS STUDY WILL SERVE AS A BASIS FOR COMPREHENSIVE HEARINGS IN THE FINANCE COMMITTEE NEXT SUMMER.

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