

TOWARDS A BETTER EXTENDED LIFE EXPECTANCY

IT IS INDEED A PLEASURE TO WELCOME SO MANY KANSANS TO WASHINGTON ON THIS FINE OCCASION OF THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING.

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME AT SUCH AN EARLY HOUR THIS MORNING. YOUR AGENDA HAS INDEED BEEN A BUSY ONE AND I KNOW THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP UP THIS STIFF YET EXCITING PACE.

IT IS AN HONOR FOR ME TO ALSO WELCOME OUR FINE CONGRESSMEN AND SENATOR PEARSON WHO HAVE TAKEN TIME OUT OF THEIR EXTREMELY BUSY SCHEDULES TO JOIN US.

A GREAT DEAL OF PREPARATION HAS GONE INTO PLANNING THIS WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE CALLED BY PRESIDENT NIXON AND I AM PLEASED TO HEAR YOUR ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE TO THE CONFERENCE PROGRAM. I WANT TO COMMEND THE EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP OF JOHN B. MARTIN, COMMISSIONER ON AGING AND CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN ARTHUR FLEMMING, FORMER HEW SECRETARY, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR CARRYING OUT PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S DIRECTIVE TO ORGANIZE AND DIRECT THE FIRST DECENNIAL WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING IN JANUARY 1961.

BOTH MEN HAVE LENT UNTIRING LEADERSHIP IN HELPING TO MAKE THIS A MEANINGFUL CONFERENCE. YET I THINK WE WOULD ALL AGREE THAT TO REMEDY THE PLIGHT OF OLDER AMERICANS, THE FASTEST GROWING SEGMENT OF OUR POPULATION, WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER CONTINUOUSLY AFTER THE CONFERENCE. IN THE POST-CONFERENCE YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS, LEGISLATION WILL BE PREPARED FOR SUBMITTAL AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

ALTHOUGH THIS MIGHT BE THE MOST VISIBLE ASPECT OF THE CONFERENCE, WITH YOUR FURTHER DEDICATED ASSISTANCE THERE WILL BE OTHER CHANGES THAN THOSE BROUGHT ABOUT BY LAW.

DELEGATES SUCH AS YOURSELVES AND THE HUNDREDS WHO HAVE WORKED WITH THE CONFERENCE HAVE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF MILLIONS THE MANIFOLD NEEDS OF OUR ELDERLY. MANY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WILL COME OUT OF THE CONFERENCE NEED NOT WAIT FOR NEW LEGISLATION TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT, BUT WILL NECESSITATE THE CONCERN OF YOURSELVES IN BRINGING THEM TO LIFE. YOUR CONTINUED EXPERTISE AND DEDICATED INTEREST WILL CONTINUE TO ALTER ATTITUDES AND ENHANCE THE STATUS OF OLDER AMERICANS, WHO NOW NUMBER IN THE 20 MILLIONS.

SINCE OUR STATE OF KANSAS WAS LISTED SEVENTH IN 1970 IN THE RANKING OF STATES BY PERCENT OF POPULATION AGED 65 AND OLDER, I THINK ALL OF US HERE HAVE A VERY SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE WELL BEING OF OUR SENIOR CITIZENS.

I HOPE THAT TOGETHER WE CAN CLOSE A GENERATION GAP THAT UNTIL RECENTLY WAS UNHERALDED. I AM REFERRING TO THE GAP BETWEEN OUR OLDER AMERICANS AND THE REST OF SOCIETY, A GAP WHICH PROMULGATES ANXIETIES OF POVERTY, USELESSNESS, AND LONELINESS.

BY WORKING TOGETHER TODAY AND TOMORROW I KNOW THAT WE CAN MAKE THE EXTENDED LIFE EXPECTANCY OF THE AMERICAN MAN AND WOMAN A MEANINGFUL CULMINATION TO A FULL LIFE IN THIS GREAT COUNTRY.