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REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON TUESDAY, MAY 27, 1958, REGARDING HIS BILL, H.R. 9822 CALLING FOR A WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING.

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Action for Our Older People

Mr. Fogarty.

Mr. Speaker:

I should like to have the privilege of addressing a few remarks to you and to my colleagues on behalf of our 15 million older citizens and on behalf of the additional 15 million who will become senior citizens during the next 10 years. These 30 million people 55 years of age and over represent almost one-fifth of our total population. In a quite real sense, they represent a new generation of Americans. Most of them are alive today because of the remarkable increase in our life expectancy during the first half of the century; because of more and better food and nutrition; because of better living conditions; and because of the control of infectious diseases through the discovery of antibiotics and improved public health practices.

In 1900, there were fewer than 8 million of these people in our population. Today there are 30 million. In 1970, there will be 40 million and we shall be among them. By the year 2000, there will be 60 million and they are alive today. They will include our children and grandchildren the youngest of whom are already 13 years of age. It is for our older people today, for our own generation tomorrow, and for our children only a relatively few years from now that I am concerned.

Longer life for millions of our citizens, for nearly all of us, is a great achievement. It means that we are receiving the dividends from the investments we have made in scientific agriculture; in better housing; in improved working conditions; in sanitary methods of handling food, water, and wastes; and in medical research. Yet, you know and I know that hundreds of thousands of our older citizens are wondering whether adding 20 years or more to their lives has been a good thing. These are the older people today, - your constituents and mine, who are trying to exist on incomes below the level of decency; who are struggling against the handicaps of long-term, chronic disease; who are living in slums; and who are wasting away their years in boredom, inactivity, and isolation. This is the future which those in middle



age, which many of us, and which our children must anticipate unless we are willing to create conditions which will make the added years of life healthy, comfortable, useful, and satisfying. We, here, have a responsibility not only to provide for those who are old now but also to leave a heritage of decency and self-respect to the generations which are following closely behind us. I am sure we all want them to feel that we have been farsighted and wise.

Mr. Speaker, during the first week of this session, I introduced a bill, H.R. 9822, designed to get action on behalf of our older people. It provides that the President shall call a White House Conference on Aging not later than 1960 to be preceded by conferences in every one of the 54 States and territories. If we act favorably upon this bill, every State will be stimulated to take cognizance of the needs of its older citizens, to develop specific blueprints for programs, and to get things moving. When I introduced H.R. 9822, I said there has been a great deal of talk about aging and that what we need now is action. I am convinced that this is an effective way to get it. When blueprints and recommendations have been forged out in the communities and States, they can be brought together in a White House Conference and shaped into a comprehensive program for the guidance of the whole nation.

The response to this bill has given clear evidence of the readiness for action. I have received over 100 letters from my own constituents and from 26 other States from coast to coast urging that we recognize the plight of our older citizens and that we do something about it. Many of these letters have come from State officials and from professional and informed lay people who see the need and who are impatient for progressive leadership. Many have come from older people themselves who are desperately struggling to make ends meet, to find decent places to live, to obtain medical care, and to find some sort of meaningful activity out of their meager resources. In view of all of the favorable response, - and I may add that I have had no unfavorable response from the country, I am confident that if we provide the proper stimulus now we shall earn the gratitude of millions of our older citizens and of their children, too, and that we shall feel greatly rewarded.



at the time I introduced H.R. 9822, Mr. Speaker, I spoke rather extendedly about the sorry circumstances under which many of our older people are trying to get along. I shall not ask your indulgence to permit me to repeat. We all read our mail and we know what the circumstances are. We know, too, that the Congress has supported the development of a number of programs aimed at helping older people enjoy fuller and better lives. We have provided the programs in Social Security, in medical research and in provision of medical facilities, in rehabilitation, for the care of older veterans, for helping older workers find employment, and at long last, we are beginning to do something about decent housing for older people. That these efforts are still insufficient is evidenced by the fact that there are more than 600 bills dealing with some aspect of aging before the Congress right now. Each year we are making some advances, though I must say that most of them are made over the protest of the present Administration.

We must give careful consideration to all of these proposals but we must also give attention to encouraging and helping the States and their communities to move forward, too, for it is they who have direct responsibility in these matters. The programs in welfare, in health, rehabilitation, employment, and housing are carried on, of course, by the States and counties and cities with the aid of funds provided by the Congress and with guidance from the Federal agencies.

Many of the States are trying to go beyond the basic requirements of these programs and to develop better and more comprehensive services for their older people. I am told that 31 or 32 of the States have created official councils or commissions on aging and have instructed them to come up with tangible proposals for action. As Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee which is concerned with employment, health, rehabilitation, hospital construction, and other matters pertaining to older people, I have been able to observe the whole thing quite closely. I am forced to report, with a good deal of regret, that not more than a handful, - perhaps 4 or 5 of the States, are making significant progress on anything like the scale required by the rate at which the older population is increasing. And I must also add that a full one-third of the States have taken almost no action at all.



My conclusion is, Mr. Speaker, that a majority of the States do recognize the need for action but that somehow they lack the stimulus and the know-how to proceed. The Administration is failing badly, as I shall indicate. It has been trying to get by on smooth and soothing language without taking any significant action at all. Hence, I believe it is we here, in the Congress of the United States, who must provide the example and the encouragement and who must make it possible for all of the States to obtain the guidance and the assistance they need.

It is for this reason and after careful study that I introduced my bill, H.R. 9822. The purpose of this bill is to stimulate and assist the States to make precise inventories of the needs of their older citizens, to develop detailed plans for the programs they believe to be required, and to move into action. Specifically, H.R. 9822 calls for making grants to the States which they would use for conducting necessary studies and surveys, for holding meetings and conferences to develop action blueprints, for encouraging development of programs, and for sending representatives to a national White House Conference.

Mr. Speaker, grants-in-aid to the States to encourage and assist them represent a proven method of getting wide-spread benefits to the people. For more than a century we have supported State programs in agricultural research and education, and for many years we have provided funds to support programs in public health, vocational education, rehabilitation, employment, welfare, construction of hospitals, housing for low-income people, public roads, and in other areas. I am sure you and our colleagues will agree with me when I say that in virtually every case the results have been highly successful and generally satisfactory to all concerned. The established pattern of Federal-State partnership in promoting the general welfare of our people has clearly demonstrated its worth.

Moreover, this pattern has received the support of many students and others whom we might have expected to be its severest critics. Shortly after he came into office, the President appointed a Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (Kestenbaum Commission) and directed it to make an evaluation of these programs. The Commission



came readily to the conclusion that grants-in-aid to the States are one of the most effective devices we have discovered for extending services and facilities, for raising standards of performance, and for adding to the general wellbeing of all the people. It is precisely these things that we are now trying to accomplish for our older citizens.

Approximately a month ago, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund published a report entitled The Challenge to America: Its Economic and Social Aspects. Signed by more than 40 of the country's top business and industrial leaders, this report recommended that present programs for social insurance, welfare, health and hospital construction, education, and for similar purposes should be increased by at least 50 percent by the year 1967. The group specifically recommended continuation and improvement of current programs for older people.

We have also had opportunity to observe the effects of another program similar to the one I am proposing. I refer to the White House Conference on Education held in 1955 which was preceded by conferences in the several States. I believe everyone is agreed that these conferences awakened millions of people to the needs of their schools and that they resulted in the development of sound conclusions concerning such things as the need for classrooms and equipment, improvement of teacher preparation and salaries, and selection of students for advanced training. I believe that we were beginning to see progress in attacking these problems when Sputnik I was launched and made a still greater impact. Perhaps Sputnik III will jolt us into realizing that we must learn to take advantage of the experience and wisdom of the many of our older people who retain the capacities for leadership and technical contributions.

I believe that holding a White House Conference on Aging would give us large returns for a small expenditure. The first National Conference on Aging, held in 1950, made most of the country aware of the problems of our growing numbers of older people and stimulated a good many people and organizations to action. Another national conference coming after the States have completed their studies and plans would have even more marked effect in moving the whole field forward. This has certainly been true of the White House Conferences on Children and Youth which have been conducted by the Children's Bureau every 10



years since 1909.

Mr. Speaker, I should also like to see more action on the part of the Federal Government and particularly on the part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The separate programs in Social Security, health, etc., are fine and I believe the Department wisely recognized the need for an overall coordinating unit in aging when it set up the Special Staff on Aging to study the development of the field, to make program suggestions, to coordinate the work of the Department with that of other national organizations, to assist States and communities in making studies and planning programs, and to provide a national clearinghouse of information. This unit is much smaller than I have felt it should be but its work has been of great value. I have urged in the appropriation hearings that the staff be increased but the Department has shown a singular obtuseness toward my suggestion.

Two or three weeks ago, Congressman Wier held a series of hearings on 17 or 18 bills, mine included, all designed to get more for our older people. Knowing of my interest, Mr. Wier kindly invited me to participate in these hearings.

I must say that the approach of the Executive agencies has been consistently negative to all proposals. The Assistant Secretary of Labor testified on behalf of his Department and on behalf of the Federal Council on Aging. An Assistant to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, appeared for his Department. Both were in full agreement with the need for more coordination of Federal programs. Both agreed that a proper role of the Federal agencies is to encourage, assist, and provide consultation services to the States. Both agreed that they should be doing more of all of these things. During the questioning, it was stated that the Special Staff on Aging cannot begin to meet all of the requests for help that come to it. Yet, Mr. Speaker, in spite of all this, the representatives from the Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare insisted that they do not need additional staff to perform these functions.

The Assistant to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare also expressed the fear that if the Special Staff on Aging were enlarged it would develop programs of its own in competition with those of the constituent agencies within the Department. Mr. Speaker,



I think this is absurd. I think they have delayed long enough. I believe the Special Staff on Aging should not only have been permitted to develop a program several years ago; I believe it should have been required to do so. I should like to see the Special Staff on Aging develop adequate facilities for providing consultation to the States, assisting them in surveys and planning, developing program aids, stimulating research, and keeping systematic track of the progress we are making in this field.

We have had this kind of service in Rhode Island from the Special Staff on Aging and it has been useful. Governor Roberts and the legislature have already acted upon some of the recommendations that were made and so have several other agencies and organizations. There are other States that want similar services and cannot get them because this staff is too small. Most of the older people alive today will be dead long before the service is provided at the rate the present Administration is moving.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to see the Special Staff on Aging in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, become the primary source of information for all of the States, communities, and organizations which need and want help. I know that it has the know-how to do it. I should like to see it given responsibility for organizing the White House Conference on Aging which I have proposed. The predecessor to the Special Staff organized the first National Conference on Aging and did a good job. It brought the other Federal Departments and Agencies into the planning; it brought 800 people to Washington for the Conference; and it produced a report, Man and His Years, which served as a guide to the whole country until it became outdated. My bill provides for administration of the provisions of H.R. 9822 by the Special Staff on Aging within the Office of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare because I believe that staff can do it.

Representatives of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare have said that the Special Staff on Aging can be augmented by borrowing personnel from the constituent agencies of the Department and from other Federal agencies when it needs help. Mr. Speaker, we



went into a similar matter when we were considering the budget of the Children's Bureau this year. The Children's Bureau is making plans for the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth and has requested considerably more money than it spent on the 1950 Conference. When we inquired about this, we were told that in 1950 the Children's Bureau did borrow personnel from other agencies but that it did not work. The Commissioner of Social Security Administration explained very carefully that the other agencies have their own programs, that they have no more staff than they need, that they are unwilling to loan personnel, and that the 1950 White House Conference would have to have a staff of its own. This seemed to be a reasonable position and we approved the request. Presumably the request had the prior approval of the Office of the Secretary and of the Bureau of the Budget before it reached us. Therefore, I cannot understand the position of the Assistant to the Secretary. I cannot see why personnel should be any more available to assist the Special Staff on Aging on a continuing or periodic basis when they are not available to aid the Children's Bureau in conducting, one, single project.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I believe we should have obtained at least a little action from the Department on this matter but for the Bureau of the Budget. I know that, at times, the Department has requested small increases for the Special Staff on Aging, and that, in most instances, these have been turned down by the Bureau of the Budget. During our Appropriation Hearings in February, I repeatedly asked Secretary Folsom why he had not requested increases for the Food and Drug program, Vocational Rehabilitation, Medical Research, for aging and for other useful programs. In almost every instance, the Secretary admitted that the Department was not a free agent, that it was working under orders from the Administration and the Budget Bureau.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to discuss the Federal Council on Aging for a few moments. This is the interdepartmental group which the President set up 2 or 3 years ago in a brief flurry of interest in older people. I have been interested in this Council. I have read its reports. I have heard about its activities at the Hearings. I believe it may well prove useful some day in coordinating the programs



in aging among the several Federal agencies involved. I am sure they could use coordination. I believe it should produce some ideas for improving our programs for the aging, and I told them so at the Hearings. However, so far, I have seen almost nothing of any tangible quality which has come from the Council during the years it has been in existence.

Again I come to the conclusion that responsibility for specific programs and services clearly belongs within an established and continuing agency. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare already has several major programs directed toward older people. This is where what little activity there is on a broad basis is now located and where it needs to be more adequately nourished. When they are willing to give the Special Staff on Aging the personnel it needs, it can also provide even more effective services to the Federal Council.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I would like to say that since I introduced my bill, H.R. 9822, on January 8, there has been a net increase of 131,000 people in our population 65 years of age and over. Every day that passes more than 3,420 people have the experience of joining the ranks of those for whom we propose action but to whom it must now seem a series of empty promises.

I am convinced that your constituents and mine are sincere in their demands and that the Departments responsible for leadership have either failed to recognize their role or have been unable to get budget approval for programs adequate to meet the needs. I am therefore urging that we, the Congress, substitute deeds for words and give favorable consideration to H.R. 9822 which will become a blueprint for action-----now. Thank you.