

Tuesday, Oct. 18, 1960
7:30 P.M.
SO. KINGSTON COMMITTEE ON AGING

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LADIES & GENTLEMEN:

I have been looking forward for some weeks to this opportunity for addressing your Committee on Aging and meeting once again with so many good and dear friends. Since 1953, when the President of the South Kingston Town Council organized this group, placing it under the able chairmanship of Mr. Mark Noble, I have watched with interest the progress of your committee work. Today, the South Kingston Committee on Aging is recognized throughout this state and beyond the bounds of Rhode Island as a well-organized purposeful body which accomplishes what it sets out to do. For this you are to be warmly congratulated. I would be remiss in my recognition of your committee and its work if I failed to give due recognition to the contribution made to the group by the participation of Sigma Kappa Sorority here at the University of Rhode Island. The continuing interest demonstrated by these young ladies in the sociological problems of Aging must be given due recognition and encouragement.

The problems of our Senior Citizens constitute one of the most crucial and complicated domestic problems confronting the government of the United States. It is one that shows no sign of abating as the months and years go by. The manner in which our nation and our states face up to this Aging problem will be the measure of our greatness in the eyes of all the world.

What is being done to date in relation to this problem in Washington, here in Rhode Island, and throughout the nation? I am pleased to tell you that some very substantial progress is being made. Nationally, the study and research concentration on Aging problems is more intensive than ever before. I am proud to have been responsible for giving considerable impetus to such progress as has been made. In the Congress of the United States, I have had the responsibility, for a number of years, of presiding as Chairman over the Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In that capacity, I have had the opportunity to listen while physicians, educators, sociologists, industrialists and others have presented the

many different needs of our Senior Citizens. Year after year, I have succeeded in meeting some of those needs by obtaining appropriations from the Congress to conduct research and dynamic programs in every area of Aging needs. The successful use and application of such Federal assistance in the solution of many of the pressing problems confronting our elderly people has been very gratifying to me. However, I have realized that much more national attention and concentration on the Aging problems would have to be brought to bear if we, as a nation, were to discharge our responsibility to our Senior Citizens. It occurred to me that perhaps the time was appropriate for the calling of a White House Conference on Aging. To that end, I introduced the necessary legislation into the Congress.

On September 2, 1958, by Act of the 85th Congress of the United States, the White House Conference on Aging was provided for and scheduled to be held in January, 1961, in Washington. As the architect of the legislation which has made this White House Conference on Aging a reality, I

am particularly pleased to see the tremendous concentration of interest here in Rhode Island and in every state as our nation moves ahead in the planning and preparation for this landmark Conference in Washington. It is my earnest desire, as I am sure it is yours, that the great national effort, undertaken by thousands of Committees much the same as your own and culminating in the White House Conference on Aging next January, will go a long way towards identifying and isolating the problem areas in Aging and provide us with a roadmap to guide us in the direction of successful solutions.

Medical Care for the Aged is one of the great issues in our domestic economy that has sharply divided our national leaders in government, in the health sciences, and in industry. We in Rhode Island can take considerable pride in the fact that our own Congressman Aime J. Forand has spent so considerably of his time and energy in support of the legislation in this field that bears his name. The victory claimed by those who have supported the Medical Care Bill for the Aged which was signed into law during the final hours of the recent Congress may be a very shallow one. You will be

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interested to know that 34 States in our United States have served notice on the Administration that these states do not possess the enabling legislation necessary to make the present program operative. Further, they have indicated that they will not, or cannot, introduce remedial legislation in the near future. The present medical-care-for-the-aged law may well have a short and sad existence.

I intend to continue my whole-hearted support for the position that the only economically-sound and safe way to provide a maximum amount of medical and health care for the maximum number of our Senior Citizens is by use of the social security mechanism. The consensus of intelligent thinking, in my opinion, strongly favors the position to which I have pledged my support. Indeed, at the mid-summer Governors Conference just a few months ago, the Democratic Governors were joined by Governors Rockefeller and DeSesto in support of this principle of Medical Care for the Aged via the Social Security Plan.

This problem of adequate health care for our elderly people is just one of twenty subject areas that have been so identified by the National Advisory Committee for the White House Conference on Aging as matters of special concern and attention. While you are directing your attention to this Medical Care problem, I trust that you are also giving considerable attention to matters of income maintenance, housing, education and other specific categories. The work that your Committee is doing here in South Kingston is important, and I strongly encourage you to continue with your vigorous program of activities. Remember that the whole is no stronger than its parts--the collective national effort towards the solution of Aging problems will be no more successful than your own efforts on the regional committee level in this state and in every other state.

In the Congressional year ahead, I plan to exert every effort to carry out a legislative program in the Congress designed to enact into law measures which you tell me are necessary to carry out our national responsibility in the care of our Senior Citizens. As always, I sincerely invite

your continued cooperation. You can assist me immeasurably by your advice and information relating to every facet of the Aging problem. Working together, we can accomplish great things in behalf of our elderly people in Rhode Island and of Senior Citizens everywhere.

-- THANK YOU