

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, REPRESENTATIVE, SECOND  
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*Speech  
prepared  
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I welcome the opportunity to share in this lecture series on The Changing Image of Aging to present the role of Government and The Older Person.

The Chautauqua Institution is performing an outstanding service to its members, guests and indirectly to the nation by making it possible for major social issues to be presented in the educational setting that has characterized the 89 years of its history.

In many ways the Chautauqua Institution has set the example for the changing image. Through its religious, cultural, educational and social programs it has shown that there are no age barriers to the enjoyment or participation in any other activities. The proof of its success has been its ability to span the generations and continue to attract the children, grandchildren and I would suspect great grandchildren. Perhaps the most impressive picture to a visitor is the presence of all ages at its functions and activities.

Most of the dramatic changes in the field of aging have occurred during the years that encompass Chautauqua's background.

Since the turn of the century the number of people over 65 years of age has grown from 3 million to 17 million. The proportion of the total population has changed from 1 out of 25 to 1 out of 11.

Life expectancy at birth has increased 20 years since 1900 and we can look forward to outliving the Biblical "Three Score and Ten."

The U. S. Public Health Service reported last week that the average life expectancy for babies born in 1961 rose to 70.2 years. This is the first time the over-all figure has exceeded the 70 year span mentioned in the Bible.

Actually life expectancy of most Americans is even greater.

The lengthening life span also means that individuals who retire at 65 can expect to spend more than 14½ years in retirement.

The studies reveal also the challenge that is yet to be solved in the field of health to overcome the three major threats to those in the later years. These are heart disease, cancer and stroke.

I have highlighted these statistics because they have significance not only to the individual of the community and state, but equally to the Federal government.

There are conflicting opinions on how far the Government should go in developing programs for its older citizens. I would assume there is no disagreement that a democracy must be concerned for the welfare of all of its people. It has been said that "A nation's social maturity is measured by its attitude and treatment of its elderly."

No matter how you measure the Government's help, whether it be by statistics, social welfare or by new dimensions of dignity, the result is an amazing phenomenon of recent years.

Time will not permit a lengthy recounting of the extent to which Government is already involved in programs directly connected with the nation's elderly. Let me cite a few interesting facts based on the 1961 figures:

- The Government spent or administered 15 billion dollars for the economic welfare of persons 65 and over.
- Special exemptions in the Federal Income Tax law accounted for 742 million dollars in tax saving.
- The Public Health Service in its scientific research of what happens to people as they grow old and on the diseases that are associated with age, has earmarked 33½ million dollars for this purpose. Just ten years ago, only \$100,000 had been allocated.
- Housing for the elderly will have more than 130 million dollars to expand and improve living accommodations for older persons.

There are many other Government activities that benefit older persons, but they have not been specifically identified as projects for the aging.

So far it might appear that the Federal Government is doing all that could be expected in this field. As impressive as the figures sound, we are actually falling short of having a program on aging at the Federal level that gives the kind of leadership necessary to achieve the goals and maintain the standards that older persons have a right to expect in America.

In 1958 I introduced a bill to convene a White House Conference on Aging. The purpose of such a meeting was to bring together the leaders of the nation to consider the broad problems of aging and to make recommendations that could be converted into action at every political level, by national organizations and by older persons themselves.

Approximately 200 meetings were held across the nation at the state and local levels preceding the Conference held in January 1961. Many thousands of persons participated in making grass roots suggestions.

At the Conference itself, over 600 recommendations were made by the 2500 delegates who assembled from every State and Territory, as well as representatives from all of the major national organizations with program interest in aging.

As White House Conferences go, this was rated one of the best. However, the test of the success of any conference must be measured in terms of its achievements.

Trying to be objective I must admit that there was tremendous interest at the local level. People everywhere became interested and involved who might otherwise never have been exposed or alerted to the over-all field of aging.

It was the hope of the conference planners that the grants of \$15,000 to the States from the Federal government to conduct studies and hold conferences would lead to permanent commissions or councils on aging with realistic budgets to carry out an action program. This has not happened. Less than half of the states have permanent type councils with funds to carry on a realistic program. The findings of the White House Conference on Aging are rapidly becoming part of the dust catching collection of reports on aging.

Attempts to create a workable organization at the Federal level to carry out a constructive program and to provide a focus for action have continued to be resisted.

For the last 15 years I have been urging the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to strengthen and expand its staff on aging. At the same time I have been critical of the Federal Council on Aging for its failure to initiate any significant activity in aging and for its total lack of program.

My concern and impatience stems from 14 years of experience as the Chairman of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Appropriations. The budgets for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Department of Labor are brought before my Committee.

The supporting evidence for budget requests has documented the growing need to coordinate the vast programs affecting the aging within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and have clearly indicated the unmet responsibility to establish a more effective organization to administer such a program.

I believe it is fair to say that I have never reduced an amount requested for aging. In fact I have expressed my disappointment in the amount budgeted for this purpose and have suggested and assisted in obtaining supplementary appropriations.

It must be obvious that my support of action programs in aging transcends any personal or political interest. I have insisted on legislation that would be bipartisan and be accepted because it was right and good for the aging and the nation.

I believe very strongly that action taken at the Federal level must not violate state rights but expand and strengthen them, that programs for the elderly must encourage and assist them in maintaining their independence and dignity and that state and local governments have the principal responsibility for creating a climate conducive to positive healthful living in the later years.

The Federal government must of necessity involve itself in action that can only be initiated and administered more effectively at the Federal level.

It was with this in mind that I first introduced a bill to create a Federal Commission on Aging and later co-sponsored a bill to establish a U. S. Commission on Aging with Senator Pat McNamara.

We were well aware that the trend is toward decreasing the number of independent commissions or councils, but we felt so deeply that other structures and organizational

patterns had failed that we continued to support an individual commission. We believe that such a commission should be given the opportunity to demonstrate its worth, even if the legislation limits its endurance to not more than 5 years. After this time its continuance could be determined on its accomplishments.

The U. S. Commission on Aging would establish full time responsibility for aging and would be responsible to the President and the Congress. It would have a representative advisory council of outstanding leaders as well as qualified private citizens. It would also have a high-level interdepartmental committee and would have funds for planning grants to states, project grants for research and training and special projects.

Membership on the Commission would involve representatives from all of the major departments and agencies having programs in aging, but would not be controlled or dominated by any one of them.

The testimony given at the hearings that were held on the bill were almost unanimously in favor of it. The witnesses included a broad range of interests from church,



state divisions on aging, national voluntary organizations, labor and associations of older persons. All went on record strongly in favor of an independent commission. The tone of the testimony was not vindictive or disparaging to those presently responsible for the program. The testimony instead was based on sound experience and sincere conviction that the time was long overdue for a national program that reflected the interest and concern democracy must have for its older members.

Why then is not the approval of legislation creating a Commission a foregone conclusion, with full support of those who are genuinely anxious to stop studying and talking and start planning and doing?

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare did not have a bill at the time the hearings were originally scheduled, but later introduced a "Senior Citizens Act of 1962" that was a lame substitute for action and provided a limited amount of money for project grants - but ignored the need for planning grants to the states and rejected the possibility of an organization outside of HEW to serve as the impartial administrator of the total Federal program in aging.

At the same time the Senior Citizens Act was introduced, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare announced the reconstitution of the Federal Council on Aging as the President's Council on Aging. This gesture was calculated to make the public think a new major development in aging had taken place. Actually it is a change in name only. The membership and the responsibilities remain the same. No one seriously believes that officials of Cabinet level and status can or will be meeting often to discuss the many issues in aging. It is interesting to note that the first item that was to be considered by the Council was the establishment of a Senior Service Corps. This proposal has merit but does not constitute a major program that would require Presidential authority. It is my understanding that this proposal has now been tabled because of its possible conflict with paid employment opportunities.

This pattern of operation does not surprise anyone who has known of the problems and frustrations of the old Federal Council on Aging.

The Council by any other name will still be an inefficient body because it violates the basic rules of authority and administrators responsibility.

There have been a series of meetings between staff representatives of the House Subcommittee on Education and officials of H.E.W. It is generally understood that no legislation in aging would be preferred to any measure that would deny the Department the total responsibility for Federal programs in aging.

The seriousness of these maneuvers is in the delay and confusion that such activities create. We are approaching the close of this session of Congress and time for action is running out. Except for those who watch legislation closely and understand the motive behind the scene, these manipulations can only distort the true picture and result in confusing conscientious individuals.

As Congressmen we are deeply concerned about the views of our conscientious constituents. Not only because of the political importance of their support but from the standpoint of sincere desire to reflect grass roots thinking in our decisions.

We welcome the individual letter that tells us of the personal effect of proposed legislation or suggests areas that need to be considered. It is often apparent that the

writer is not aware of the content or purpose of a bill under consideration and has been instructed to "write to his Congressman."

Some of you may have read the story, a true one, that has been making the rounds - about the individual who did write to his Congressman. He said, "I was told to write to you, but I have lost the letter and can't remember what the bill was all about - but you will know and I am against it." This is not the type of letter that I mean.

I have great faith in the voice of the people. My hope is that it can become a more informed voice. Every citizen has an obligation not only to himself but to the accumulative effect that legislation has on our total economy.

Government cannot remain a distant impersonal thing. In our country a government is people that must exercise their right and keep this sacred trust. I have never fully understood or appreciated the suspicion many people voice against Government. Congress is composed of the chosen representatives of the people. If individuals exercise their prerogative as a citizen to elect only those who deserve support, it should follow that the legislation enacted be regarded as in the best interest of the public.

As part of the changing image of aging, I would hope that older persons would take a more active part in political activity on an informed individual basis. There will be great pressures to obtain the political support of the elderly, but I believe it would be against their own best interests and that of the nation if the aging ever allow themselves to become a pressure group interested only in promoting selfish interests. There is instead a great opportunity for the aged to become informed on major social issues through a program such as this lecture series and in their own communities through organizations that are truly interested in promoting positive programs for the elderly.

It must be obvious that Government has a major role or function in the changing image of aging. It must also be clear that for Government to carry out its role properly the citizen must live up to his responsibility to elect and support leaders and their programs on an informed, intelligent and independent basis.

There is no social issue in America today more important than that of aging. There can be no greater reward than that to add meaning and purpose to lives that are being extended.

I shall not be satisfied with the image of aging until we have found cures for cancer, heart disease and arthritis and stroke, have provided suitable housing at prices they can afford, have removed age as a barrier to employment or as a criteria for retirement, and we have come to accept age as an achievement and retirement an opportunity.

We in Government stand ready to do our part.