

Press Release

Opening remarks on Theme of Conference,
"A Federal Department of Welfare - Hope or
hazard for the Family," by
Fred K. Hoehler, Chairman of the Day

May I take this opportunity to greet you all and express my appreciation at being asked to serve as Chairman of the day.

There are many reasons why I shouldn't have taken this responsibility. First of all is the fact that while I was unemployed part of January and early February, I was doing a lot of volunteer work which kept me too busy to be of much assistance to Mrs. Hiltner, the very able Chairman of this Conference Committee. Since that time I have been vacationing, and one on a vacation is not in the mood to work, even for such a vital conference as this one.

Certainly nothing can be more essential to the security of our way of life than sound family relations. This conference will provide opportunities to discuss education, family security, child welfare, health, housing and recreation. I hope all of these will be related to the family and the concern which the family must have for these vital and important community services.

The theme of this conference is important to each of us, and to individuals and families throughout the United States. The title - "A Federal Department of Welfare - Hope or Hazard for the Family" - is an intriguing one, and as a partisan who is convinced it is filled mostly with hope for the family, I beg your indulgence if I show my prejudice.

In the first place, we must consider the question of why a department of welfare is desirable in the federal government. One answer

to that question may be found in the reports of two studies of federal services which were made since 1935. The President's Commission on Administrative Management, which consisted of Mr. Louis Brownlow, the late Dr. Charles E. Merriam, and Dr. Luther Gulick, was the earlier of the two study groups. The second was the Hoover Commission, which reported in 1950. Both authorities pointed out that the broad public welfare services of this country have grown in importance and to large proportions since 1931. These involved services which affected most of the population of the country and cost \$1,740,958,000 each year. It was felt by these two groups that by the very reason of size and importance, this group of services deserved a cabinet status. The study of the President's Commission on Administrative Management, among other things, recommended the creation of a Federal Security Agency. This Agency now includes all of those services which were under the previous Social Security Board, and also the Children's Bureau, the Office of Education, and the United States Public Health Service, with several smaller units.

Mr. Hoover's Committee recommended cabinet status for this group. Discussion as to whether this should be called the Department of Social Welfare or the Department of Health and Welfare went on for months, but no action was taken.

To take a look at what public welfare services are costing, we might go back to the early thirties. In 1930 and the subsequent years of the depression, the attention of the entire nation was called to the need for the basic requirements of unemployed men and women who were without funds, sick, hungry, and without families

or friends who could care for them.

The first World War had earlier pointed up the need for better medical care, nutrition, and education. Thousands of young men were rejected for military service for causes that might have been prevented. The second World War found a great many rejected for mental and physical disabilities.

Over the period of this half century, considerable progress has been made in improvement of public health and in increasing the age span of men and women throughout the world and particularly in this country. But to date not too much progress has been made in the field of human relations.

Today the federal government is spending 1 billion 92 million dollars for public assistance and other welfare services. At one time during the depression, nearly 25 per cent of the families in this country were receiving some kind of governmental aid; last month there were still 5,279,000 cases on public assistance, at an annual cost to federal and state governments of approximately \$2,276,876,000. This expenditure for federal and state assistance can be blamed on our earlier failure to conserve our human resources and the greater failure on the part of families and communities to provide care for those who are now dependent on government.

To this we should add the cost for federal public health services which approximate 352 million dollars. In the mental health field alone the states expend 600 million dollars a year. The federal government provides in addition to mental health care for veterans, some assistance to states for special services in the field of mental health education.

Those who argue against the creation of a federal department of welfare assume that such an omnibus department would be too broad, and cover services to too many people for proper administration. Others contend that there should be special consideration for the health services under the Department of Health. Many claim that health and educational services are not normally considered as social welfare activities.

There are those who fear that a large department of welfare would have such importance in the national budget that it would be constantly under attack because of the size of the appropriation required. Others have expressed the fear that such a federal department would destroy the independence of families and family life through a vast so-called welfare state. This same group argues that the voluntary means of helping one another through private social services would be completely eliminated from the American scene which, of course, would be unfortunate.

For those who are especially interested in family relations, such a combined department should have special appeal, because it provides services or advice in every area in which a family would be interested.

The family is the threshold of democratic living, and as the child grows and develops, every child requires good physical health, a healthy personality, and a sound mind. All of these are best ~~achieved~~ achieved

in a normal family circle -- a good home, security, and affection are essential to the development of the child. There are still too many children who are compelled to live in homes which are far from adequate, either in parental care or economic provision. Religious life has gone out of too many homes, and even where it may exist in form only it has no value in moral and ethical training.

The importance of the family as a basic unit of society is well recognized. It is within the family circle that the child is given his first opportunity to develop his personality. A good home with both security and love is essential to the wholesome growth of the young. In order to make a good home for children, parents must have enough financial security to provide at least the minimum essentials of life -- sufficient food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Adequate income is only one of the essentials for family life that enables the child to grow into a happy, well-adjusted adult. Parents who understand the child's emotional needs and who are able to meet them are even more important.

Schools, too, have a major responsibility. Here we have one of the most important social agencies in community life. Schools have become increasingly aware of the role they play in the unfolding personality of the child and are expanding their concepts of the training and services they should offer.

A child's relationships within the school exert a stronger influence on his development than any other relationships except those within the home. It is not only the intellectual drill and discipline

traditionally associated with schools which influence the child; perhaps even more important are his feelings toward his teachers, classmates, counselors, and administrative and maintenance staff, as well as the general atmosphere of the building. It is important for schools to be aware of and to make wise use of all these contacts. How young people feel about their classroom experience is often of more importance than the skills and knowledge they acquire.

Personally, I do not believe that a department of public welfare can ^P destroy the essential voluntary services which are so important to every community. One of the real factors which we should fear with regard to social welfare, public and private, is the manner in which too many people glibly denounce the welfare state. Back in the early thirties many ~~pezzie~~ of those who now denounce the federal programs of the state, or even local services, were pleading for help in order to save our economic system. They did this out of fear and with great sincerity. I am convinced that should we destroy our present program of provision for security we would have similar reasons to fear for the safety of our economic system.

One of the programs which should be emphasized in any department of public welfare, whether it is federal, state, or local, is education for prevention of our social ills. Such education will certainly point out the sore spots in slums and bad health which create illness and delinquency, all of which cost in actual dollars more than the money which we spend on a social welfare program today. Emphasis on prevention will require the use of voluntary services and every other community resource. These services, in addition to those of a department of welfare, would provide us with security and hope.

President Eisenhower, in his recent State of the Union message, made the following statement related to the program now incorporated in the Federal Security Agency:

"In the light of this responsibility, certain general purposes and certain concrete measures are plainly indicated now.

There is urgent need for greater effectiveness in our programs, both public and private, offering safeguards against the privations that too often come with unemployment, old age, illness, and accident.

The provisions of the old age and survivors insurance law should promptly be extended to cover millions of citizens who have been left out of the social security system. No less important is the encouragement of privately sponsored pension plans. Most important of all, of course, is renewed effort to check the inflation which destroys so much of the value of all social security payments.

Our school system demands some prompt, effective help. During each of the last two years, more than 1½ million children have swelled the elementary and secondary school population of the country.

Generally, the school population is proportionately higher in states with low per capita income. This whole situation calls for careful congressional study and action. I am sure that you share my conviction that the firm conditions of federal aid must be proved need and proved lack of local income.

One phase of the school problem demands special action. The school population of many districts has been greatly increased by the swift

growth of defense activities. These activities have added little or nothing to the tax resources of the communities affected.

Legislation aiding construction of schools in these districts expires on June 30. This law should be renewed; and, likewise, the partial payments for current operating expenses for these particular school districts should be made, including the deficiency requirement of the current fiscal year."