

Address by JEF at the Conference of the American
Public Welfare Association Sheraton-Baltimore Hotel
Providence, Wednesday, Sept 17, 1958

It gives me particular pleasure to have this opportunity to talk with members of the American Public Welfare Association in this region. This Association is unique in that it represents the administrators of welfare programs; Federal, state, and local. More than any other organization it brings together those people who are charged with the responsibility for carrying out public programs for individuals in our country who are, for one reason or another, disadvantaged. I know from personal experience as chairman of a sub-committee dealing with appropriations for some of these programs, that your Association is effective in presenting the needs of people and of programs designed for them. Mrs. Lane, your Washington representative, is one of our Committee's best customers. I can only urge that you work ever more diligently to improve the effectiveness of your representations. It is important that not only committees but individual members of Congress, members of state legislatures, members of county and city governing bodies be fully acquainted with the problems and needs of the people in the areas for which they carry responsibility.

I should like to take just a few minutes to look at

Remarks by Congressman Fogarty before American Public Welfare Association, Providence, Rhode Island

some of the facets of our present-day society and of our economy that have a major bearing on the needs of people. As a whole, the last decade has been a prosperous one and yet we know that all people have not shared equally, or even reasonably nearly so, in the prosperity that so many have enjoyed. It has, in general, been a period of rising wages and of rising prices. When the Congress recently increased old-age and survivors insurance benefits, it was noted that, in the four years since 1954, when the last general increase was provided, wages had increased 12% and prices had increased 8%. As you well know, not all wage earners have shared the same rate of increase and some people have had no wages to increase. For these the increase in prices has meant a steady squeeze--a decline of their standard of living.

We also know that not all states and communities have shared equally. Some, because of the kinds of industries they have, have had very substantial unemployment. My own State of Rhode Island had a substantial number of unemployed even during the years that were generally regarded as most prosperous.

During the past year we have seen the most severe recession since World War II. While we hope and believe that an upturn in economic activity is now underway, we must

also recognize that many of the people who lost employment in the past year were at a stage in their lives that they will never return to jobs comparable to those that they formerly held, if indeed they return to any jobs at all. An upturn in employment generally does not necessarily mean an upturn for each individual.

During the recession months, legislation was passed that provided arrangements under which states could extend the period for which unemployment insurance benefits were available and it is gratifying that extended periods of unemployment compensation are available to a substantial majority of the industrial workers of the country. I did not believe, when this bill was passed, that it was as strong a bill as was needed but I must acknowledge that, at least for a great many people, it has apparently had beneficial results in extending protection against income loss.

The economic trends of the last decade are superimposed on much longer-term trends in our society. As you know, as well as I, during this century the number of persons 65 or over have more than quadrupled, an increase twice as great as that in our population as a whole. Not only the number beyond 65 but the number over 60, 55, 50, and 45 has also been increasing at a rapid rate. The aging of our population,

with all of its implications, for income needs, housing, medical care, hospitalization, recreation, job opportunities, and many others is, in my mind, one of the big areas that must be dealt with by all persons interested in welfare. While we have made advances on the economic front for the aged through the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program, I think we must be more conscious of the total situation and problems of the older person than has been the case up to this time. Moreover, we must find effective answers for dealing with many of these problems. I sponsored a bill in the last Congress to provide for a White House Conference on Aging. I am glad that in the last days of the Congress provision was made for such conference, with preparatory work to be done in advance in the states and that we have at least the prospect of taking a broader look than we have up to this time at the unmet needs of this large group in our population. Certainly, one of the problems of the older person is that of meeting hospitalization and medical costs. These costs, as you are well aware, have increased at a substantially more rapid rate than prices in general. There were strongly supported proposals in the last Congress for provisions to help meet these costs through the old-age and survivors insurance program. No legislation resulted but the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was asked to undertake a study of the

hospitalization and nursing home care needs of old-age and survivors insurance beneficiaries and to report its findings to the 86th Congress by February 1, 1959.

I think I am correct in my recollection that the legislative program of your organization calls for action in this field. If you pursue your end with your customary vigor and seek the cooperation of like-minded organizations, I think, in time, you will be successful.

Coupled with the aging problem, and probably accentuating it, has been the increasing trend for people to crowd up in cities and suburban areas. Urban living and the relatively rapid migration in recent years to urban areas has brought with it many economic and social problems, none of which is more pressing nor more difficult to solve than that which we see reflected in family breakdown, desertion, juvenile delinquency, and other family ills. The size of the aid to dependent children program and its continuing growth, in my judgment, reflects not only the increasing child population but to an even greater degree the social breakdown that has occurred. While some very good projects are going on in the field of juvenile delinquency in certain states and localities, we have done little as a Nation, or in most states, to meet the challenge of damaged and lost lives of young people which must inevitably come

from progressive increases in juvenile delinquency as reflected not only by increased numbers but by increased proportions of our youths who are apprehended by the police or who come before our juvenile courts. It is frequently stated, and I think with some merit, that the problem is one of delinquent parents rather than delinquent children. However, we cannot expect parents to be self-sufficient and skillful if they cannot obtain training, advice, and help for their problems when they need it. I am convinced that much greater effort is needed in the strengthening of family life. It seems to me that the most elusive aspect of juvenile delinquency is its cause or causes. Most of our efforts are devoted to the delinquent child after he has become entangled with the police or the courts. We know little about prevention because we know little about cause. I am a great believer in research and I think delinquency is a field crying for attention.

Many of you may know that one of my personal interests has been in mentally retarded children. I like to think of them as exceptional children. Mental retardation is a problem as old as history. It was probably never so severe for the individual as in the kind of a keenly competitive urban nation in which we live today. Here again we need to bring together the available skills and find new ones to deal with this tragic loss in the most constructive ways we

can devise. I have found great satisfaction in my own efforts to help with this problem through the appropriations process. I feel that the funds that have been designated for this purpose have made a contribution. At least there are now over two million Federal dollars being judiciously spent and I hope this sum will turn out to be "seed money" that will call into action much more help for these unfortunate youngsters. I am also glad that there has just become law a bill passed by the last Congress that provides authorization for the training of teachers for the mentally retarded child.

All of you, I am sure, have been vitally concerned with the Social Security Amendments of 1958, and those amendments, in my judgment, have very substantial merit. The 7% increase in old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits for the majority of our aged persons, the most of the children of the country who have lost their fathers, and for some of the more severely disabled persons between the ages of 50 and 65, should help to meet the 8% increase in prices that has occurred since benefits were last increased in 1954. As with many other aspects of the bill, I do not believe that enough has been done. Surely an increase of 10% or more could well have been justified. How would you like to live on the 70 odd dollars a month which the average

person receives? The increase in the amount of earnings that are taxed and upon which benefit payments are based is wholly in accord with the principle of wage related benefits. This increase reflects the changes in wages that have occurred in recent years and will serve to strengthen the system financially. This, in my judgment, is a wholly responsible and desirable approach to the economic security that the program is intended to provide.

The provision that the amendments make for the dependents of disabled workers and the changes in requirements for disability insurance benefits that are of advantage to the worker whose disability has been progressive in character will fill ~~needed~~ gaps, although they probably do not go far enough. Why these benefits are provided only for those 50 years of age or over is something I cannot understand.

Some improvements have been made in public assistance programs. A different formula has been adopted which should place more emphasis on individual needs and give the states and localities greater flexibility in planning adequate programs for meeting medical care costs for public assistance recipients.

The increased amounts authorized for maternal and child health, for crippled children's services, and for child welfare services, together with other changes in the child welfare services program, should certainly help in bringing these programs up-to-date.

This is not the occasion for me to comment on all of the amendments, but I do wish to express my gratification over what has happened and over the fact that again our national Government has demonstrated its determination that our social security laws must continue to reflect the current needs of our economy and our society.

As I indicated at the beginning of these remarks, individuals, families, and localities do not fare equally well in economic changes that occur. We are in an era in which demands on the budgets of localities, states and the Federal Government are extremely great. Our needs for highways, for schools, for defense, for research in relation to outer space, for satellites, and for many other worthy things, must compete with the welfare needs of the people. Our Federal budget is expected to have an unprecedented deficit for peacetime of \$12 billion this fiscal year. If the needy people of this country and other people for whom satisfactory living depends upon welfare services are not

to suffer disproportionately in the period immediately ahead of us, it will be because of the redoubled efforts of individuals like yourselves and groups like this association who are dedicated not only to working with peoples' needs but to identifying and dramatizing those needs to the bodies that legislate and appropriate. In public welfare agencies, and particularly in the local ones, a great deal can be done in informing the public through the effective use of volunteer boards. These boards, or commissions, or committees, whatever you may choose to call them, have the respect of the influential members of the community, and they can do much to see that legislative and budgetary decisions are made by individuals who are fully apprised of the facts. My advice is to get people informed--get them exposed to the seamy side of life. There is nothing like personal contact with the problems of the unfortunate to bring out the warm humanity and understanding that exists in all of us.

As good and as skillful as you may be in doing your jobs, you cannot go it alone. Congressmen, like myself, who have some knowledge of the social problems of the country cannot do the job either. All of us who are concerned with these problems must work together to assure that the gains that have been made for the less fortunate citizens of the country are maintained and that further progress is made.

Thank you.