

REMARKS OF SENATOR JOHN HEINZ
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1979
BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON AGING

GOOD MORNING.

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE WITH YOU THIS MORNING ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON AGING CONFERENCE. IT IS GOOD TO SEE MY FRIENDS GORHAM BLACK AND GENE ERWAY AGAIN.

FRANKLY, I AM THRILLED TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY, PARTICULARLY WHEN I CONSIDER THE COMPETITION I FACE HERE IN PHILADELPHIA. FOR WHILE I BRING YOU A FAIRLY IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM WASHINGTON, D.C., OVER AT THE CIVIC CENTER, POPE JOHN PAUL IS DELIVERING A MESSAGE FROM A MUCH, MUCH, MUCH HIGHER PLACE. SO I DO THANK YOU FOR COMING.

I WANT TO SPEAK BRIEFLY THIS MORNING ABOUT THE NEED TO BE VIGILANT, TO REMAIN STRONG, TO SUSTAIN THE EFFECTIVE USE OF SENIOR POWER THAT HAS WON FOR YOU SO MANY GAINS IN THE PAST FOUR DECADES SO ESSENTIAL TO DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS HERE IN THIS COUNTRY.

(FOR THOSE GAINS,)

FOR THOSE GAINS, IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM, THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT, MEDICARE, AND TITLE XX SOCIAL SERVICES ARE ALL VULNERABLE TODAY AS THE PRESSURE TO CURB INFLATION IS LEAVING BRUISED AND BATTERED THE VERY SOCIAL PROGRAMS YOU WORKED SO HARD AND SO LONG TO ACHIEVE. AND IT IS ONLY THROUGH A STRONG, UNITED, DETERMINED EFFORT THAT YOU AND WE WILL BE ABLE TO SAVE THEM FROM THE BUDGETARY ON-SLAUGHT.

THERE ARE 23 MILLION SENIOR CITIZENS IN THIS COUNTRY. I BELIEVE THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THIS NATION OWE THEIR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS FAR MORE THAN THE SINCERE RECOGNITION, RESPECT AND DEEP-FELT APPRECIATION I SHARE WITH YOU TODAY. AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME IN OUR HISTORY WHEN THE TWIN PROBLEMS OF INFLATION AND ENERGY ARE POSING A SERIOUS AND LASTING THREAT TO THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ALL OUR CITIZENS, WE MUST RE-AFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR ELDERLY AMERICANS. IT IS MORE THAN A SENTIMENTAL COMMITMENT. IT IS A MORAL COMMITMENT FIRST AND NOW - AS STATED IN THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT - A SOLEMN COMMITMENT IN OUR LAWS AS WELL.

BUT TOO OFTEN AS WE LOOK TODAY, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT WE ARE NOT LIVING UP TO THIS COMMITMENT TO ENSURE THAT OLDER AMERICANS ARE ABLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, SECURE AND FREE FROM FEAR:

(TAKE THE EXAMPLE.....)

--TAKE THE EXAMPLE OF CRIME. I RECENTLY SENT A QUESTIONNAIRE TO MORE THAN 2 MILLION PENNSYLVANIANS, AND THE MAJORITY OF THE RESPONSES INDICATED THAT THEY WERE MOST CONCERNED BY THE THREAT OF CRIME IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. YET THE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE SECURITY MEASURES FOR FEDERALLY FINANCED HOUSING - ONE WHICH I OFFERED AND WHICH WAS ACCEPTED IN MY SENATE BANKING COMMITTEE - WAS ULTIMATELY DELETED FROM THE HOUSING BILL DUE TO SHORT-SIGHTED BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS.

--TAKE, AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE, DISPLACEMENT. THE URBAN ELDERLY, WHO ARE BEING DISPLACED, HAVE BECOME THE UNINTENDED VICTIMS OF URBAN REVITALIZATION. OUR POLICY IN DEALING WITH THE CRUELTY OF DISPLACEMENT AMOUNTS TO ONE WORD: LIPSERVICE.

IT IS SAD, BUT IT IS TRUE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACHIEVING A BALANCED BUDGET DEPENDED IN LARGE MEASURE ON MAKING MAJOR ASSAULTS ON THE VERY SOCIAL SERVICES AND SENIOR CENTER PROGRAMS THAT THE ELDERLY RELY ON THE MOST. WE HAD A TREMENDOUS FIGHT IN CONGRESS TO RESTORE FUNDS TO THOSE PROGRAMS SO THAT DECREASES IN TRANSPORTATION, COUNSELING AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES WOULD NOT OCCUR THIS YEAR.

--THE FOOD STAMP "CAP" WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT THIS YEAR

(TEAMED UP WITH SO-CALLED.....)

TEAMED UP WITH SO-CALLED "REFORMS" IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM ACTUALLY REDUCED OR ELIMINATED BENEFITS TO THOUSANDS OF OUR NEEDEST ELDERLY. FORTUNATELY THAT HAS BEEN CORRECTED AND, HAPPILY, THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM CUTBACKS PROPOSED BY THE PRESIDENT HAVE SO FAR BEEN IGNORED.

SO WE HAVE FENDED OFF THE WORST...SO FAR. BUT AS THIS WINTER APPROACHES, I SEE TOO MANY ELDERLY PEOPLE FEARFUL OF WHAT A HARSH AND BITTER COLD SEASON WILL MEAN FOR THEM.

WILL THERE BE FUEL THIS WINTER?

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

HOW CAN PEOPLE ON FIXED INCOMES MANAGE TO MEET THE CERTAIN INCREASES IN THE COST OF FUEL?

WILL THE HOBSON'S CHOICE OF "HEATING OR EATING" BE THE ONLY ONE AVAILABLE?

AND WILL GOVERNMENT, INDEED CAN GOVERNMENT, ACT IN TIME TO PROVIDE ANY HELP AT ALL?

(THE RECORD OF.....)

THE RECORD OF SKYROCKETING FUEL COSTS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS ISN'T VERY REASSURING. SINCE 1974, THE COST OF ELECTRICITY HAS RISEN 73.4 PERCENT. ALMOST A BARGAIN WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT IN THE SAME PERIOD THE COST OF NATURAL GAS HAS CLIMBED 126.7 PERCENT. AND NOT TO BE OUTDONE, THE COST OF FUEL OIL HAS SOARED BY 136.3 PERCENT.

BEFORE WE PUT ALL THE BLAME ON OPEC, LET US RECOGNIZE THAT AMERICANS TOO MUST SHARE THAT BLAME. OUR UNCONTROLLABLE APPETITE FOR ENERGY HAS CAUSED US TO RELY INCREASINGLY ON IMPORTING FOREIGN OIL, OIL FROM VENZUELA, IRAN, KUWAIT, NIGERIA -- COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT SHARE OUR SYSTEM OF VALUES; WHICH LACK INTERNAL STABILITY; WHICH OWE US NOTHING AND ON WHICH AMERICA CANNOT DEPEND.

THE INCREASE OF 136.3 PERCENT IN THE COST OF FUEL OIL TAKES ON EVEN MORE DRAMATIC SIGNIFICANCE WHEN WE LOOK AT ITS EFFECT ON ELDERLY PEOPLE LIVING ON FIXED INCOMES. BY COMPARISON, SINCE 1974, SSA BENEFITS HAVE INCREASED ONLY 42.7 PERCENT; AND SSI BENEFITS BY A MERE 24 PERCENT. IN OTHER WORDS, THE COSTS OF NATURAL GAS AND HOME HEATING OIL HAVE RISEN OVER FIVE TIMES THE COMPARABLE INCREASE IN SSI BENEFITS!

I BELIEVE THAT IN THE FACE OF THIS DISTURBING SITUATION

(THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.....)

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO ACT -- AND TO ACT NOW.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE INTRODUCED THE FUEL COST ASSISTANCE FOR ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED BILL. MY BILL WILL REDUCE BY 25 PERCENT OR MORE THE COST OF FUEL TO ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED PERSONS BY PROVIDING A TAX CREDIT TO UTILITIES AND SELLERS OF OIL, COAL, AND WOOD FOR HOME HEATING WHO AGREE TO PROVIDE FUEL AT REDUCED RATES TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS. ELIGIBILITY IS LIMITED TO THOSE 60 YEARS OLD OR OLDER OR THE DISABLED, WHO ARE WITHIN THE FOOD STAMP OR SSI INCOME LIMITS.

THIS BILL WILL PROVIDE SOME 5 MILLION SENIOR CITIZENS IN APPROXIMATELY 3.5 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS WITH HELP BEFORE BILLS GO UNPAID AND BEFORE CUT-OFF NOTICES ARE SENT. AVERAGE BENEFITS WOULD RANGE BETWEEN \$184 TO \$273 PER HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR. THAT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.

SINCE UTILITY COMPANIES WOULD RECEIVE THEIR PAYMENTS THROUGH A TAX CREDIT FOR THE AMOUNT BY WHICH THEY REDUCE THE COST OF FUEL, THE PROPOSAL CAN BE EASILY ADMINISTERED WITHOUT THE NEED FOR SETTING UP A WHOLE NEW BUREAUCRACY TO SLOW IT

(DOWN -- OR MORE PROBABLY.....)

DOWN -- OR MORE PROBABLY -- TO SCREW IT UP.

THIS BILL IS A SIMPLE, DIRECT, PREVENTIVE, TARGETTED APPROACH TO PROVIDING FUEL ASSISTANCE TO THE ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED THIS WINTER. IT IS AN EFFECTIVE PROPOSAL, DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST TWENTY MONTHS. IT MAKES SENSE.

AND IT PROBABLY WON'T BE ENACTED.

A WISE MAN ONCE SAID: "NATURE GAVE MAN TWO ENDS -- ONE TO SIT ON AND ONE TO THINK WITH. EVER SINCE THEN MAN'S SUCCESS OR FAILURE HAS BEEN DEPENDENT ON THE ONE HE USED MOST." WELL, PRESIDENT CARTER HAS SENT CONGRESS A FUEL ASSISTANCE PLAN WHICH LEAVES NO DOUBT ABOUT WHICH END HE IS RELYING ON.

AFTER CONSULTING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, WITH HEW, WITH THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, THE PRESIDENT REVEALED HIS PLAN: HE WANTS TO CONTINUE THE SAME OLD INADEQUATE ENERGY CRISIS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. IN ADDITION, IF CONGRESS APPROVES A WINDFALL PROFITS TAX, THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES TO SEND CASH PAYMENTS TO LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS: \$100 TO INDIVIDUALS AND ABOUT \$200 TO MULTI-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS.

(NOW THE PROBLEM.....)

NOW THE PROBLEM I HAVE WITH THE APPROACH IS THAT IT TOOK SO LITTLE IMAGINATION TO DREAM IT UP. IT ISN'T EVEN RELATED TO THE COST OF FUEL! FOR EXAMPLE, IF MRS. JONES LIVES IN A ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT AND MR. AND MRS. SMITH LIVE UPSTAIRS IN AN IDENTICAL ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT, THEY WILL PROBABLY USE THE SAME AMOUNT OF FUEL PER MONTH. YET MRS. JONES WILL RECEIVE ONLY \$100 BECAUSE SHE IS ON HER OWN AND MR. AND MRS. SMITH WILL RECEIVE \$200. IT SIMPLY MAKES NO SENSE. AND SINCE CONGRESS HASN'T YET PASSED THE LEGISLATION THERE IS NO WAY ON EARTH THAT IT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED TO HELP THIS YEAR. THE SAME WASHINGTON BUREAUCRATS WHO CLAIM IT CAN ARE THE SAME WHO TOLD US IN 1974 THAT IT WOULD TAKE SIX MONTHS TO GET OUT BIGGER SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS.

AS FOR THE CSA ENERGY CRISIS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, I HOPE NEVER TO SEE ANOTHER YEAR IN WHICH PEOPLE MUST BE THREATENED WITH BAD CREDIT RATINGS AND HAVING THEIR GAS OR ELECTRICITY SHUT OFF BEFORE THEY QUALIFY FOR HELP. I KNOW HOW PROUD SENIOR CITIZENS ARE. YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO STARVE OR FREEZE. BUT NEITHER SHOULD YOU EVER HAVE TO APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE CRAWLING ON YOUR KNEES!

THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE, OF WHICH I AM A MEMBER, IS

(NOW LOOKING AT.....)

NOW LOOKING AT NO LESS THAN 12 FUEL ASSISTANCE PROPOSALS AS WELL AS THE WINDFALL PROFITS TAX. I PROMISE TO ALL I POSSIBLY CAN TO SEE THAT RESPONSIBLE FAST-ACTING ASSISTANCE, TARGETTED TO LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, IS REPORTED FROM THE COMMITTEE AND PASSED BY THE SENATE. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO GET YOU HELP SWIFTLY AND EQUITABLY IN TIME TO ASSIST YOU THIS YEAR. WITHOUT THE KIND OF AID WE NEED THERE WILL BE A CRASH OF '79... AS OUR ELDERLY ARE BROUGHT TO THEIR KNEES...AND THIS IS AN INDIGNITY WE MUST HALT.

I DON'T HAPPEN TO BELIEVE THAT YOUR ONLY INVOLVEMENT WITH ENERGY SHOULD BE LIMITED TO CONSERVING IT OR USING IT. I ALSO BELIEVE YOU HAVE THE WISDOM, THE SENSITIVITY AND THE JUDGEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FUNDAMENTAL RATE-SETTING DECISIONS MADE REGULARLY BY PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSIONS. THAT IS WHY I INTRODUCED SENATE RESOLUTION 219, A SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION CALLING ON ALL STATES TO INCLUDE LOW-INCOME ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED PEOPLE AS MEMBERS OF, OR AS ADVISORS TO, THEIR UTILITY COMMISSIONS.

UNTIL ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED AMERICANS PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE ENERGY DECISIONS OF THIS NATION, YOU WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE GROUP HARDEST HIT BY RATE INCREASES AND LEAST ABLE TO

(AFFORD THEM. WE SHOULD.....)

AFFORD THEM. WE SHOULD NOT, WE CANNOT, WE WILL NOT ALLOW OUR OLDER AMERICANS TO BE SACRIFICED ON THE ALTER TO INFLATION.

AMERICA HAS ALWAYS DEPENDED ON THE WISDOM AND DETERMINATION AND VITALITY OF ITS SENIOR CITIZENS. FROM THE TIME THAT BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, AT THE AGE OF 70, SERVED ON THE COMMITTEE TO DRAFT THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, OLDER AMERICANS HAVE CONSISTENTLY AND SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO OUR COUNTRY'S PROGRESS AND SUCCESS.

WE HAVE ALL ENJOYED THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABORS. WE HAVE ALL LEARNED FROM THE EXAMPLES OF YOUR TEACHINGS. AND, ALL TOO OFTEN, HAVE WE FAILED TO SAY "THANK YOU." TODAY, I WANT TO MAKE SURE WE DO NOT RELIVE THE MISTAKES OF HISTORY.

TODAY, ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME OVER THE YEARS. AND, YES, ON A PUBLIC LEVEL I SAY THANK YOU FOR THE "HELL" YOU HAVE RAISED WHEN YOU FELT THAT MORE NEEDED TO BE DONE. THANK YOU FOR CLIMBING ON BUSES WHEN YOU DIDN'T FEEL WELL AND COMING TO WASHINGTON TO STAND IN THE SHADOW OF THE CAPITOL TO LET YOUR VOICES BE HEARD. YOUR VOICES ARE VALUED,

(YOUR ADVICE WANTED,.....)

YOUR ADVICE WANTED, YOUR VISION AND DETERMINATION WILL, I PREDICT, CONTINUE TO CARRY US THROUGH GOOD TIMES AND BAD.

YOUR WORK IS NOT OVER. SUCCESS IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION. YOU MUST CONTINUE TO BE DETERMINED, ACTIVE, AND EVEN AGGRESSIVE, TO STAVE OFF THOSE WHO WOULD CHIP AWAY AT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN ONCE WROTE:

"DESTINY IS NOT A MATTER OF CHANCE, IT IS A MATTER OF CHOICE; IT IS NOT A THING TO BE WAITED FOR, IT IS A THING TO BE ACHIEVED."

TOGETHER LET US CONTINUE TO ACHIEVE A DESTINY MARKED BY DIGNITY AND GREATNESS.