

SPEECH TEXT

CONFERENCE: NASUA/N4A JOINT ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SPONSOR: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UNITS ON AGING
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING
DATE: AUGUST 5, 1981
TOPIC: LINKING AGING INTERESTS: PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE

I AM PLEASED TO BE WITH YOU TODAY AS YOU BEGIN THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE. THE THEME YOU HAVE CHOSEN, "LINKING AGING INTERESTS: PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE", IS ESPECIALLY APPROPRIATE AS WE EMBARK ON A NEW DECADE. IT RECOGNIZES THAT THE 1980'S WILL BE DIFFERENT THAN THE 1960'S WHEN SO MANY NEW PROGRAMS WERE DEVELOPED FOR OLDER AMERICANS.

IN ADDRESSING NEW "LINKAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS" YOU HAVE STAKED OUT A FAR-REACHING AGENDA FOR BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES WHICH EFFECT THE ELDERLY.

WHEN WE CONSIDER THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF TODAY THE THEME OF THIS CONFERENCE TAKES ON EXTRAORDINARY IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCY. OUR NEED TO GO BEYOND THE INTERNAL "AGING NETWORK" AND DEVELOP NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE VOLUNTARY, PRIVATE AND CORPORATE SECTOR IS A CONCEPT I HAVE LONG ADVOCATED. THIS IS A MAJOR REASON WHY I HAVE CALLED FOR A GREATER COMMITMENT TO

(SUPPORT PRIVATE SECTOR ...)

SUPPORT PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT UNDER THE SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICES EMPLOYMENT PROJECT OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY, AS INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED WITH THE FUTURE OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY TO SEEK OUT AND FOSTER THESE TYPES OF LINKAGES. THE 1973 AMENDMENTS TO THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT, WHICH CREATED THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING SYSTEM, RECOGNIZED THIS NEED BY REQUIRING THE COORDINATION OF UNTAPPED RESOURCES WITHIN PLANNING AND SERVICE AREAS. THE 1978 AMENDMENTS TO THE OAA STRENGTHENED THAT RESPONSIBILITY. THAT CONCEPT HAS BECOME STILL MORE IMPORTANT TODAY, AND I BELIEVE THAT OUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN DEVELOPING SUCH RELATIONSHIPS WILL DETERMINE THE FUTURE EXISTENCE OF OUR CURRENT SYSTEM OF SERVICES.

AS EVIDENCED BY THE RECENT 96-0 SENSE OF THE SENATE VOTE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT'S ORIGINAL PROPOSAL TO RESTRUCTURE SOCIAL SECURITY AND DRAMATICALLY REDUCE EARLY RETIREMENT BENEFITS, I BELIEVE WE HAVE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT THE SENATE WILL NOT BE STAMPEDED INTO MAKING UNNECESSARY CUTS IN THE BUDGET WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE ELDERLY. HOWEVER, I ALSO BELIEVE WE CAN NO

(LONGER TAKE FOR ...)

LONGER TAKE FOR GRANTED THAT EVERY PROGRAM THAT HELPS THE ELDERLY WILL BE FULLY PROTECTED AGAINST INFLATION, LET ALONE FULLY FUNDED TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF AN INCREASING SENIOR POPULATION.

FOR THIS -- AND OTHER REASONS, THE CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT US IN THE DECADE AHEAD DIFFER FROM THOSE OF THE PAST.

WE MUST LOOK AT INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE WAYS TO DEAL WITH CHANGING RESOURCE PATTERNS. AS A NATION, OUR PRINCIPAL FOCUS IN THE PAST HAS BEEN ON THE NEEDS OF OUR SENIOR CITIZENS -- NOT ON THEIR ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR SOCIETY.

TO MEET THOSE NEEDS, WE PUT IN PLACE MEDICARE, MEDICAID, TITLE XX, SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME AND THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT PROGRAMS.

I THINK IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS WE HAVE COME CLOSER TO BUILDING A SOCIETY THAT DOES JUSTICE TO ITS ELDERLY CITIZENS.

BUT WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO.

THE GREAT ANTHROPOLOGIST MARGARET MEAD, WHO MADE NEARLY UNRIVALLED CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY THROUGHOUT HER LONG LIFE,

(ONCE OBSERVED THAT ...)

ONCE OBSERVED THAT PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES TREAT THEIR AGED WITH MORE RESPECT AND REVERENCE THAN THE SO-CALLED CIVILIZED SOCIETIES.

IN OUR EAGERNESS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OLDER AMERICANS, WE MUST BE SENSITIVE TO THE DANGER THAT AMERICANS WILL COME TO VIEW OUR OLDER POPULATION AS A BURDEN, RATHER THAN A NATIONAL RESOURCE. TODAY, AS I SOUND A KEYNOTE FOR THIS CONFERENCE, I WANT TO WARN AGAINST THAT "BURDEN MENTALITY."

THE TIME HAS COME TO RECOGNIZE OUR OLDER PEOPLE AS OUR GREATEST NATIONAL RESOURCE. AND IT IS ESPECIALLY PRECIOUS BECAUSE IT IS A HUMAN RESOURCE -- AND ITS POTENTIAL A GROWING ONE.

IN SETTING FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR AGING PROGRAMS, WE MUST CREATE A CLIMATE IN WHICH OLDER PERSONS ARE NOT FORCED INTO DEPENDENCY, BUT RATHER ARE ASSISTED TO LIVE AS INDEPENDENTLY AS THEIR POTENTIAL PERMITS.

GOVERNMENT ALONE CANNOT ACCOMPLISH THAT GOAL. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY -- AND THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR -- MUST ALSO BE EQUAL CORNERSTONES IN THE BUILDING OF SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT. AS

(CHAIRMAN OF THE ...)

CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING, I CAN REPORT THAT OUR COMMITTEE HAS BEGUN A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF WORK IN THIS AREA, AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE ISSUES WHICH MUST BE ADDRESSED.

A MAJOR CONCERN OF ALL OLDER PEOPLE IS ECONOMIC SECURITY. ONE WAY IN WHICH THAT CAN BE ASSURED IS THROUGH CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT. WE KNOW THAT HALF OF ALL RETIRED PEOPLE SAY THEY WOULD PREFER TO WORK IN SOME MANNER, YET THEY ARE BEING DENIED THAT OPPORTUNITY. WHILE SOME EMPLOYERS ARE INITIATING HIRING, RETRAINING, SECOND CAREER AND JOB RETENTION PROGRAMS FOR OLDER WORKERS, MANY OTHERS DO NOT PERCEIVE THEM IN SUCH A POSITIVE LIGHT AND OFTEN PRACTICE, CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY, AGE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SENIORS.

TO HIGHLIGHT THEIR SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT NEEDS DURING "OLDER AMERICANS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY WEEK", THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE WILL BE HOLDING THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF HEARINGS DURING THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 6 TO EXPLORE WAYS IN WHICH GREATER OPPORTUNITIES CAN

BE MADE AVAILABLE TO OLDER PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WORK EITHER ON A FULL OR PART-TIME BASIS.

BASED ON THOSE HEARINGS, IT IS OUR INTENTION TO TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT VARIOUS DISINCENTIVES IN PUBLIC POLICY WHICH DISCOURAGE OLDER PERSONS FROM WORKING, AS WELL AS INCENTIVES WHICH MIGHT ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS TO RETAIN THEIR OLDER WORKERS. WHERE FEASIBLE, WE WILL BE SUGGESTING AREAS OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGE OR NEW INITIATIVES. THE EARNINGS LIMITATION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFICIARIES IS BUT ONE AND IN THIS CASE, FAMILIAR EXAMPLE.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK IN OUR LIVES CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. BUCKMINSTER FULLER, WHO JUST TURNED 86, WAS RECENTLY ASKED HOW HE COULD CONTINUE TO BE SO INVENTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE. HIS ANSWER WAS "BECAUSE I HAVE A JOB." WHILE NOT EVERY OLDER PERSON WILL WANT TO, OR CAN CONTINUE TO WORK, THE CHOICE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE.

TURNING TO AN ISSUE AREA WHICH CONCERNS YOU DIRECTLY -- THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT WHICH WILL BE REAUTHORIZED THIS YEAR. OUR COMMITTEE ON AGING HAS BEEN VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH THE

(DIRECTION OF THE ...)

DIRECTION OF THE NEW AMENDMENTS. TO ASSIST THE REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS, WE HELD AN OVERSIGHT HEARING IN APRIL OF THIS YEAR.

IT IS MY CONSIDERED OPINION THAT THIS YEAR IS NOT THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR ANY EXTENSIVE REVISION OF THE ACT. WE SHOULD NOT LOSE, HOWEVER, THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES WHICH WOULD 1) STREAMLINE AND IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF ITS PROGRAMS, 2) INCREASE LOCAL FLEXIBILITY TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS, AND 3) INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE OPERATION OF PROGRAMS INTENDED TO SERVE THEM.

BASED ON THE RESULTS OF OUR HEARING AND MY OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE ISSUES, I HAVE MADE A NUMBER OF STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS TO SENATOR DENTON'S SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGING, FAMILY AND HUMAN SERVICES. I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE SEVERAL OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH YOU TODAY.

FIRST, THOSE WHO OPERATE PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY TO SET SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR THE ELDERLY IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. IT IS INAPPROPRIATE AND UNNECESSARILY RESTRICTIVE TO SET AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL SPECIFIC BINDING SERVICE GOALS FOR

(LOCAL COMMUNITIES. ...)

LOCAL COMMUNITIES. FURTHERMORE, I BELIEVE THAT REQUIRING CERTAIN SPECIFIC SERVICES IN THE LAW IS A CONTRADICTION OF THE ROLE OF STATES AND AREA AGENCIES ON AGING IN PLANNING, NEEDS ASSESSMENT, AND SETTING PRIORITIES FOR SERVICES. MY RECOMMENDATION THEREFORE REQUESTED THE REMOVAL OF THE SO-CALLED PRIORITY SERVICES MANDATE.

SECOND, ALONG THE LINES OF INCREASED FLEXIBILITY, I HAVE ADVOCATED A TOTAL CONSOLIDATION OF THE SEPARATE AUTHORIZATIONS UNDER THE TITLE III PROGRAMS. A THOROUGH CONSOLIDATION COULD IMPROVE COORDINATION IN A SUBSTANTIAL WAY, AND INSURE ACCESS, TO A MUCH WIDER RANGE OF SERVICES TO OLDER PERSONS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT WOULD PLACE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DETERMINING THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY TO SERVE THE ELDERLY WITH STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAM MANAGERS -- WHERE IT BELONGS.

THIRD, I HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF AGING WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND ABOUT THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSIONER ON AGING TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT. A RECENT GAO REPORT SUBMITTED TO OUR

(COMMITTEE, REVEALED ...)

COMMITTEE, REVEALED THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HHS VIOLATED THE ACT BY PERMITTING GRANT AND CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS TO BE PERFORMED BY THE OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES. I HAVE RECOMMENDED TO THE ADMINISTRATION, AND TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES, THAT EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO ASSURE THAT THE GOALS, INTENT AND LEGAL MANDATES OF THE ACT ARE CARRIED OUT BY THE DEPARTMENT.

FOURTH, I HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES BE ESTABLISHED FOR THE ELDERLY UNDER TITLES III AND V. BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR MUST PROVIDE INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS WHO ARE WILLING AND ABLE TO REMAIN IN THE LABOR FORCE. THIS CAN BE DONE THROUGH JOB COUNSELING, REFERRAL AND PLACEMENT, RETRAINING, JOB DEVELOPMENT, AND JOB RESTRUCTURING. I BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE TITLE V PROGRAM IF WE ARE TO CHANGE THE HIRING PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES OF PRIVATE EMPLOYERS.

(FINALLY, WE KNOW ...)

FINALLY, WE KNOW THAT THE PROPORTIONS OF OLDER PERSONS WHO ARE ACTUALLY EMPLOYED IN OAA PROGRAMS IS VERY LOW, PARTICULARLY IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS. THEREFORE, I HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT THE ACT INCLUDE LANGUAGE THAT ENCOURAGES A MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE POSTURE BY STATES AND AREA AGENCIES TO FILL STAFF POSITIONS WITH OLDER WORKERS.

THE LAST MAJOR ISSUE I WOULD LIKE TO TOUCH ON IS HEALTH CARE. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT, BY THE YEAR 2025, THE COST OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID FOR TREATING THE ELDERLY WILL INCREASE TENFOLD -- TWO TIMES AS FAST AS THE RAPID INCREASE WE ARE SEEING IN SOCIAL SECURITY. EVEN SO, LET ME NOTE, IT IS EVIDENT THAT FUNDING ALONE HAS NOT ELIMINATED THE WORRY AND CONCERN ABOUT THE COST AND AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE THAT ACCOMPANIES AGING. ALTHOUGH MILLIONS OF OLDER PERSONS HAVE GAINED ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE THROUGH THESE PROGRAMS, THERE ARE TODAY STILL MANY UNMET NEEDS.

I BELIEVE THE GREATEST SHORTFALL OF OUR HEALTH CARE PROGRAM IS ITS FAILURE TO PROVIDE THE ELDERLY WITH ADEQUATE PROTECTION AGAINST THE CATASTROPHIC COSTS OF NURSING-HOME AND ESSENTIAL

(LONG-TERM CARE SERVICES. ...)

LONG-TERM CARE SERVICES. MEDICARE'S FAILURE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF LONG-TERM CARE ULTIMATELY FORCES TOO MANY ELDERLY INTO INAPPROPRIATE LEVELS OF CARE OR LEAVES THEM STRANDED WITH NO SERVICES AT ALL. I BELIEVE AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN ADDRESSING THE HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF OLDER PERSONS IS LEGISLATION, SUCH AS I RECENTLY INTRODUCED, 1) TO ENCOURAGE COMPETITION AMONG HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND INSURERS, AND 2) TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CARE FOR CONSUMERS. BY INTRODUCING GREATER COMPETITION AMONG HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, WE WILL BEGIN TO HELP CONTAIN HEALTH CARE COSTS AND, AT THE SAME TIME, THE ELDERLY WILL HAVE A MUCH GREATER FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN SELECTING A PLAN TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

EVEN SO, MONEY IS GOING TO REMAIN A PROBLEM FOR MEDICARE, WHICH LEADS ME TO A SECOND IDEA WORTH CONSIDERING REGARDING THE FINANCING OF THE MEDICARE FUND. LET ME BE MORE SPECIFIC.

OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL-AND A BROAD RANGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH GROUPS-HAVE TRIED TO CONVINCING CIGARETTE SMOKERS THAT THEIR HABIT IS UNHEALTHY. LAST YEAR ALONE OVER \$3 BILLION IN MEDICARE AND MEDICAID BILLS RESULTED FROM

(TOBACCO RELATED ILLNESSES, ...)

TOBACCO RELATED ILLNESSES, SUCH AS LUNG CANCER, HEART DISEASE,
AND RESPIRATORY AILMENTS.

THE QUESTION THEN IS SIMPLY PUT:

WHY SHOULDN'T PEOPLE WHO INSIST ON SMOKING AND WHO FREELY
ACCEPT THE HIGH HEALTH RISKS PAY A GREATER SHARE OF THE COST
SOCIETY INCURS? ONE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WOULD BE TO INCREASE
THE FEDERAL EXCISE TAX ON CIGARETTES.

AN INCREASE IN THE EXCISE TAX ON CIGARETTES BY 10 CENTS A
PACK WOULD GENERATE APPROXIMATELY \$3 BILLION IN ADDITIONAL
REVENUE-OR ENOUGH TO OFFSET THE DRAIN TO MEDICARE AND MEDICAID OF
DISEASES ATTRIBUTED TO SMOKING. I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHETHER
ANYONE BELIEVES IT IS UNWISE OR UNFAIR TO REQUIRE SMOKERS TO PAY
A GREATER SHARE OF SOCIETY'S COST OF INSURING THEM AGAINST THEIR
HIGHER RATE OF ILLNESS. I WOULD ALSO OBSERVE THAT THREE BILLION
DOLLARS CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD STRENGTHENING THE ABILITY OF THE
MEDICARE TRUST FUND TO PAY FOR NECESSARY HEALTH SERVICES TO OLDER
PERSONS. THE ONLY OTHER KNOWN ALTERNATIVES ARE BENEFIT
REDUCTIONS OR OTHER INCREASED TAXES.

(LET ME RETURN TO THE ...)

LET ME RETURN TO THE THEME OF THIS CONFERENCE. IN DISCUSSING LINKING AGING INTERESTS, ALL OF YOU ARE ONCE AGAIN HELPING TO PROVIDE THE LEADERSHIP THAT IS NECESSARY IF WE ARE TO STOP LOOKING AT NEEDS AND PROBLEMS IN A PIECEMEAL WAY, AND DEVELOP A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH. TREATING ONE ASPECT OF A PERSON, NO MATTER WHAT AGE, DOES NOT ALLOW THAT PERSON TO BE VIEWED AS A WHOLE, UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL. BY PROVIDING GREATER CHOICE FOR THE ELDERLY THEMSELVES IN MEDICAL CARE, IN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND IN THE DETERMINATION OF AND ACCESS TO SERVICES, WE CAN MOVE BEYOND THIS FRAGMENTED VIEW.

IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE MUST SEEK A COORDINATED APPROACH, WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FAMILY, THE PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

MANY OF YOU WHO ARE HERE TODAY WERE IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE BATTLES WAGED -- AND WON -- TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC SECURITY, IMPROVED HEALTH CARE, AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY. YOU ARE THE PEOPLE WHO DEVELOPED MANY OF OUR EXISTING PROGRAMS AND WHO HAVE GIVEN TIRELESSLY OF YOURSELVES IN THAT EFFORT. YOU HAVE

(FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE IN ...)

FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH OLDER PEOPLE IN OUR
COMMUNITIES -- EXPERIENCE WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO ALL OF US WHO ARE
CONCERNED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY AFFECTING OLDER
AMERICANS. AND WE LOOK TO YOU FOR CONTINUED LEADERSHIP AS WE
ENTER A NEW ERA.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, A TIME OF CHALLENGE IS ALSO A TIME OF
OPPORTUNITY -- I BELIEVE WE CAN AND WILL RISE TO THE CHALLENGE
AND FIND NEW AND MORE EFFECTIVE WAYS OF BOTH MEETING THE NEEDS
AND CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER AMERICANS. I LOOK
FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU TOWARD THAT GOAL.