

HUNGER IN AMERICA

PRESENTED TO THE
HARVARD HEALTH POLICY FORUM
HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REMARKS BY
WILLIAM S. WOODSIDE
CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
AMERICAN CAN COMPANY

HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
NOVEMBER 12, 1985

a

I HAVE LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS OCCASION FOR
SOME TIME, BECAUSE IT AFFORDS ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO PAY
TRIBUTE TO DR, LARRY BROWN AND HIS COLLEAGUES, AS MUCH AS
ANYONE IN THIS COUNTRY, THEY HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR
PUTTING HUNGER ON THE NATIONAL AGENDA, WE ARE NOT WHERE
WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ON THIS ISSUE, BUT WITHOUT THEIR WORK
WE WOULD BE FURTHER BEHIND, THEIR • ABILITY TO BLEND
SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY WITH HUMAN COMPASSION AND COMMITMENT IS A
COMBINATION

ALL TOO FREQUENTLY LACKING TODAY, THAT WE HAVE SO FEW
LIKE THEM, IN MY JUDGEMENT, IS A PRINCIPAL REASON WHY
PROBLEMS LIKE HUNGER STILL EXIST.

THE SHAME/ OF COURSE, IS THAT HUNGER IS ON THE NATIONAL
AGENDA IN THE FIRST PLACE,

a

SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO, THE FIRST PHYSICIAN
TASK FORCE SHOCKED AMERICANS BY POINTING OUT
THAT HUNGER NOT ONLY EXISTED IN THIS COUNTRY,
BUT EXISTED IN SUCH AN EXTREME STATE THAT MANY
CHILDREN SUFFERED HUNGER-RELATED DISEASES THAT
MEDICAL TEXTS SAID COULD NO LONGER BE FOUND IN
THE UNITED STATES, SUCH AS KWASHIORKOR,
NEARLY A DECADE LATER, A SECOND PHYSICIAN
:TASK FORCE FOUND THE SITUATION HAD IMPROVED,
Now, AGAIN IN 1985, WE FIND THAT OVER THE PAST
EIGHT YEARS CONDITIONS HAVE NOT IMPROVED OR
EVEN STAYED THE SAME, THEY HAVE BECOME WORSE,

PRECISE NUMBERS ARE AND WILL BE HARD TO COME
BY PARTLY BECAUSE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DEFEATED A BILL TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL NUTRITION
MONITORING SYSTEM AFTER THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION
SAID IT WAS UNNECESSARY, NEVERTHELESS, EVERY
ORGANIZATION THAT HAS STUDIED HUNGER IN RECENT
YEARS CONCLUDED-THE
PROBLEM WAS MOPE EXTENSIVE THAN THEY ANTICIPATED AND
THAT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED WAS GROWING.

a

THIS SPRING, FOR EXAMPLE, THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS, IN ITS ANNUAL SURVEY OF FOOD PANTRIES AND SOUP KITCHENS, REPORTED CASELOADS HAD INCREASED 100 TO 400 PERCENT OVER A THREE-YEAR PERIOD. THE MAYORS FOUND THAT 71 PERCENT OF THE FACILITIES THEY SURVEYED COULD NOT MEET THE DEMAND FOR EMERGENCY FOOD,

O

THE FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER REPORTED THAT THE NUMBER OF HUNGRY HOUSEHOLDS HAD INCREASED IN 200 OF THE 300 EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS THEY SURVEYED, MORE THAN HALF THE HUNGRY PEOPLE THESE PROGRAMS WERE SERVING WERE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN,

O

C

O

3

0

(3

SECOND HARVEST, AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION FOR
SOME 70 FOOD BANKS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, REPORTED THAT
STATE FOOD BANKS WERE DISTRIBUTING SOME
70 MILLION POUNDS OF FOOD TO LOCAL PROGRAMS,
COMPARED WITH LESS THAN 10 MILLION POUNDS SIX
YEARS AGO, THOSE FIGURES, SECOND HARVEST SAID,
DID NOT REFLECT THE TRUE EXTENT OF HUNGER; THEY
ONLY REFLECTED THE AVAILABILITY OF FOOD,

LOOK BEHIND THESE NUMBERS AND YOU FIND A WOMAN WHOSE
DIET CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF COFFEE AND CRACKERS
TWICE A DAY SO HER CHILDREN CAN HAVE THE SMALL
AMOUNT OF NOURISHING FOOD THAT IS AVAILABLE TO
THE FAMILY,

You FIND A FAMILY THAT TRIES NOT TO SPEND ANY MONEY
ON FOOD ONE WEEK A MONTH SO THE CHILDREN CAN HAVE
SHOES AND CLOTHING AND THE FAMILY CAN STAY OUT OF
DEBT.

You FIND AN ELDERLY WOMAN WHO EATS A CUP OF BEANS
AND A SMALL SQUARE OF FRIED BREAD EACH DAY -- AND
NOTHING ELSE -- BECAUSE SHE IS TOO EMBARRASSED TO
ASK FOR HELP,

You FIND A ONE YEAR OLD BABY WHO WEIGHS ONLY 15
POUNDS AND CAN BARELY SIT UP,

You FIND PEOPLE WHO, DESPITE THEIR DEPRIVATION AND
CONSTANT STRUGGLE, PROUDLY INSIST THEY ARE NOT
SUFFERING FROM HUNGER,

(3

0

(3

•(3

THESE PEOPLE ARE YOUNG, MIDDLE-AGED AND
ELDERLY, THEY ARE WHITE, BLACK, HISPANIC,
ASIAN AND AMERICAN INDIAN, THEY LIVE IN
CITIES, SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS, THEY
ARE FOUND IN EVERY SECTION OF THIS NATION,
THEY INCLUDE THE CHRONICALLY POOR AND THE
WORKING POOR, FOR SOME, THE STRUGGLE FOR FOOD
IS A FAMILIAR STORY, FOR OTHERS, IT IS A NEW
EXPERIENCE,

BUT THOUGH THEIR SITUATIONS AND
CIRCUMSTANCES ARE DIFFERENT, THEY ALL SHARE
A COMMON BOND: THEY ARE HUNGRY OR
MALNOURISHED.

I MENTION ALL THIS BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE
THE HUNGER ISSUE IS OVERSTATED OR OVER DRAMATIZED,
THE SKEPTICS SAY THE FAMILY THAT MISSES FOUR
MEALS A MONTH HAS A DIFFERENT LEVEL OF NEED
THAN THE FAMILY THAT MISSES TEN MEALS A MONTH,
THEY SAY ONE SHOULD NOT COMPARE THE FAMILY
THAT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO PROVIDE ENOUGH FOOD
FOR THEIR CHILDREN FOR A YEAR WITH THE FAMILY THAT
HAS ONLY BEEN IN THAT SITUATION FOR A FEW WEEKS,
THEY SAY DO NOT PLACE THE PERSON WHO DOES NOT
REGARD HIMSELF OR HERSELF AS A VICTIM
OF HUNGER IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS A PERSON WHO
DOES,

C

• O

C

C

C

IN A NARROW SENSE, THESE CRITICS ARE RIGHT.

THE MILLIONS OF HUNGRY OR MALNOURISHED AMERICANS ARE
NOT ALL IN THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES. THEIR LEVELS
OF NEED DO VARY, THEIR VIEWS OF THEMSELVES
VARY, THEIR HOPES, EXPECTATIONS

AND EXPERIENCES VARY, SO DO. THE BUREAUCRATIC
OBSTACLES THEY MUST OVERCOME IN ORDER TO OBTAIN
FOOD FROM GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS,

BUT HUNGER IS NOT A COMPETITION TO DETERMINE WHO
IS THE MOST HUNGRY, THE MOST NEEDY, THE MOST
DESERVING. IT IS NOT A CONTEST IN WHICH THE GOAL
IS TO DEVISE A SCALE OF NEED AND THEN

RIGOROUSLY DOLE OUT OUR COMPASSION AND ASSISTANCE TO
THOSE WHO MEET THE APPROPRIATE CRITERIA,

0

10

:3

DO WE WANT A STANDARD OF 'NEED THAT SAYS ONLY THE
DESPERATE SHOULD APPLY? DO WE HONESTLY BELIEVE
THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE MAINTAINED THEIR PRIDE AND
DIGNITY DO NOT FEEL THE PANGS OF
HUNGER OR THE PAIN OF BEING UNABLE TO ADEQUATELY CARE
FOR THEIR FAMILIES? OF COURSE NOT.

THE ISSUES WE NEED TO ADDRESS ARE NOT WHETHER
FAMILY A IS HUNGRIER THAN FAMILY B; MR, X MORE
CAPABLE OF PROVIDING FOR HIS CHILDREN THAN MR, Z;
OR THE RATIO BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE
CHRONICALLY HUNGRY AND THE NUMBER WHO ARE
EPISODICALLY HUNGRY. THAT DEBATE HELPS NOBODY,
THE ISSUES WE NEED TO ADDRESS ARE:

(3

FIRST, OUR INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO THE HUNGER THAT
EXISTS IN THIS COUNTRY TODAY,•

β SECOND, THE POVERTY THAT IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE
OF HUNGER,

THIRD, THE VERY REAL POSSIBILITY THAT WE ARE
BECOMING A TWO-TIERED SOCIETY - A SOCIETY DIVIDED
BY 'INCOME, LIVING STANDARD, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND
OPPORTUNITY; A SOCIETY THAT IS PERHAPS TOO
COMPLACENT ABOUT POVERTY AND HUNGER,

3

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS
HAVE BEEN AMPLY DOCUMENTED BY MANY DIFFERENT
SOURCES, SOME \$12 BILLION HAS BEEN CUT FROM
THESE PROGRAMS IN THE PAST THREE YEARS --

\$7 BILLION FROM THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND
\$5 BILLION FROM THE SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS, THE WIC
PROGRAM WHICH IS A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING
PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN IS ONE OF
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S MOST SUCCESSFUL
EFFORTS, BUT IT ONLY HAS ENOUGH FUNDS TO SERVE
ONE OF EVERY THREE PEOPLE

WHO ARE ELIGIBLE,

AND LOOK AT FEDERAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM, IT
DOESN'T EVEN DO THE JOB FOR MANY PEOPLE WHO
RECEIVE ITS BENEFITS,

Q

HOW COULD IT? FOOD STAMP BENEFITS AVERAGE 49
CENTS PER PERSON PER MEAL, YOU CAN BUY RICE OR
BEANS WITH THAT AMOUNT OF MONEY BUT NOT MUCH
MEAT, FRESH FRUIT OR VEGETABLES.

IS IT ANY WONDER FAMILIES THAT RECEIVE FOOD
STAMPS OFTEN RUN OUT OF FOOD BEFORE THE END OF THE
MONTH, OR THAT MOTHERS CURB THE HUNGER IN THEIR
CHILDREN WITH THE FILLING, BUT NOT
PARTICULARLY NUTRITIOUS, COMBINATION OF POPCORN
AND WATER,

THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM NO
LONGER IS A PROGRAM BASED ON HOW MUCH IT
ACTUALLY COSTS PEOPLE TO EAT, ITS A PROGRAM
DESIGNED TO KEEP FEDERAL SPENDING TO A MINIMUM,
THE "THRIFTY FOOD PLAN" ON WHICH THE PROGRAM
IS BASED IS THE CHEAPEST FOOD PLAN EVER •
DEvised BY THE U.S, DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE, AS THE PHYSICIAN TASK FORCE
NOTED: "THE THRIFTY FOOD PLAN IS AN EXAMPLE
OF BUREAUCRACY GONE AWRY, A FEDERAL
EXPENDITURE LEVEL WAS SET, AND A COMPUTER
WAS PROGRAMMED TO DESIGN A FOOD PLAN EQUAL TO
THAT LEVEL -- IRRESPECTIVE OF HUMAN NEEDS."

O

C

C

C

C

21,2475.2
PG:AMS

- 14 -

11/04/85

Q

WHEN THE THRIFTY FOOD PLAN WAS DEvised, SOME OF THE USDA'S OWN NUTRITIONISTS SAID IT WAS NOT NUTRITIONALLY ADEQUATE OVER LONG PERIODS OF TIME AND SHOULD BE USED ONLY IN EMERGENCIES,

LESS THAN A MONTH AGO, THE FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER PUBLISHED A STUDY THAT DOCUMENTED JUST HOW INADEQUATE THE THRIFTY FOOD PLAN WAS IN TERMS OF BUYING POWER, FRAC SURVEYED FOOD PRICES IN EIGHT MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS AND FOUND THAT A FAMILY OF FOUR NEEDED BETWEEN

\$338 AND \$412 A MONTH TO PURCHASE THE ITEMS CONTAINED ON THE THRIFTY FOOD PLAN, 'THE MAXIMUM FOOD STAMP BENEFIT FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR, HOWEVER, IS ONLY \$268 A MONTH,

THE SECOND ISSUE WE HAVE TO ADDRESS IS WHY
PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY OR MALNOURISHED: MANY
REASONS CAN BE CITED: UNEMPLOYMENT, REDUCED
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, BUDGET CUTS IN FEDERAL AND
STATE "SAFETY NET" PROGRAMS, THE INCREASED
TAX BURDEN PLACED ON THE WORKING POOR, INCREASED
LIVING COSTS WHILE INCOME REMAINS STABLE OR
DECLINES, AND INADEQUATE NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION,
THE BASIC REASON MOST PEOPLE GO HUNGRY,
HOWEVER, IS POVERTY, THEY JUST DON'T HAVE
ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY THE FOOD THEY AND THEIR
FAMILIES NEED,

POVERTY WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AN ISSUE OF THE SIXTIES, THAT'S WHEN THIS NATION BEGAN TO FOCUS ON POVERTY AS A MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEM, WHEN WE PUT INTO PLACE STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO COMBAT AND REDUCE POVERTY,

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, POVERTY RATES DECLINED, BUT IN THE LATE 1970'S, THEY STARTED UP AGAIN,

BY 1983, ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, ONE OF EVERY SEVEN AMERICANS WAS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, THAT'S 15 PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION -- AND IT INCLUDED ONE OF EVERY

FOUR CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF SIX, IN JUST FOUR YEARS, BETWEEN 1979 AND 1983, WE SAW A 35 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY, POVERTY BECAME AN ISSUE OF THE EIGHTIES,

LAST FALL, YOU MAY REMEMBER, THE CENSUS BUREAU REPORTED THAT POVERTY HAD DECLINED' FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL YEARS, DROPPING FROM THE 15.2 PERCENT FIGURE OF 1983 TO 14.4 PERCENT IN 1984 -- ONE OF THE MOST SUBSTANTIAL DECLINES IN THE PAST 17 YEARS. SINCE THE POVERTY RATE TRADITIONALLY MOVES IN CLOSE TANDEM WITH THE ECONOMY, THIS DATA PROVIDED GROUNDS FOR SOME OPTIMISM.

EXCEPT THAT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT NEW DATA TO EMERGE FROM THE NEW CENSUS REPORT WERE NOT THE NUMBERS SHOWING A DECLINE IN POVERTY BETWEEN THIS YEAR AND LAST YEAR. THEY WERE THE NUMBERS SHOWING HIGH RATES OF POVERTY CONTINUING TO PERSIST OVER TIME IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT UNEMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN STEADILY DECLINING.

0

THE IMPLICATIONS ARE STUNNING, BECAUSE THE
DATA SUGGESTS THAT DESPITE YEAR-TO-YEAR SHIFTS IN
POVERTY RATES, A DRAMATIC INCREASE HAS OCCURRED
IN THE BASIC BEDROCK OF POVERTY. IN OTHER WORDS,
A SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER GROUP OF

C)

PEOPLE IS RELATIVELY UNAFFECTED BY IMPROVEMENTS IN
OVERALL ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, WE HAVE, IT SEEMS,
REACHED A NEW PLATEAU OF POVERTY, AND IT'S A
HIGHER PLATEAU, NOT A LOWER ONE,

THIS BRINGS ME TO MY THIRD POINT.

13

(3

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, WE HAVE WITNESSED
THE FULL DEBILITATING EFFECT OF POVERTY

O

F

HOMELESSNESS, HUNGER, UNEMPLOYMENT,
ILLITERACY,

ISOLATION,- LACK OF OPPORTUNITY; NOT NECESSARILY

0

ALL AT ONCE, BUT FREQUENTLY ENOUGH AND IN

COMBINATIONS THAT MAKE IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE

0

FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TO ESCAPE

FROM THIS TRAP INTO WHICH THEY HAVE

FALLEN,

C

Now, HOWEVER, I FEAR WE MAY BE

WITNESSING SOMETHING ELSE: A NATION

ON THE WAY TO

BECOMING A TWO-TIERED SOCIETY: ONE

AFFLUENT, WELL-HOUSED, WELL-EDUCATED,

WELL-FED, IN GOOD

C

HEALTH AND FULLY EMPLOYED; THE OTHER

POOR, INADEQUATELY HOUSED, INADEQUATELY

FED,

UNEMPLOYED OR UNDEREMPLOYED, AND IN POOR

O

HEALTH,

21.2475.2
PG:Ams

11/04/85

D

THE INCREASE IN THE HARD-CORE POOR OVER THE YEARS

IS ONE INDICATION WE ARE BECOMING A TWO TIERED

SOCIETY, THE MOST RECENT CENSUS DATA

ON INCOME DISTRIBUTION ARE ANOTHER, THEY SHOW THAT

THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR IS

NOW WIDER THAN AT ANYTIME IN THE PAST 40 YEARS, THE

HIGHEST TWO-FIFTHS OF THE POPULATION RECEIVES 67.3

PERCENT OF ALL INCOME; THE

LOWEST TWO-FIFTHS RECEIVES 15,7 PERCENT, IT

SHOWS, TOO, THAT THE MIDDLE CLASS IS LOSING

GROUND, ITS INCOME PERCENTAGE ALSO IS THE

(3) SMALLEST IN THE 30 YEARS THIS DATA HAS BEEN

COLLECTED,

ADMITTEDLY, THESE ARE NOT TERRIBLY PRECISE
NUMBERS, SOME WIDE VARIATIONS EXIST WITHIN
THESE CATEGORIES. AND SINCE THE REASONS
BEHIND THESE DATA ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR,
DIFFERENT ANALYSTS REACH DIFFERENT CONCLUSIONS ABOUT
WHAT THE DATA ACTUALLY MEAN. IN MY OPINION,
THOUGH, THE TRENDS ARE OMINOUS,
BECAUSE IF THEY CONTINUE WE WILL INDEED BECOME A
SOCIETY WITH A PERMANENT UNDERCLASS, A SOCIETY IN
WHICH LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE HAVE NO ROLE AND
WITH WHICH THEY HAVE NO IDENTITY OR CONNECTION, WE
RUN THE RISK OF BECOMING A
SOCIETY WHERE IT WILL BE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES TO SURVIVE,

0

CI

C

C

THE NEW YORK TIMES TOOK NOTE OF THESE TRENDS IN A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE ON POVERTY AND YOUTH ON OCTOBER 20, "COMPLEX SOCIAL, 'ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS ARE CREATING A VAST NEW CLASS OF POOR AMERICANS WHO ARE MUCH YOUNGER, LESS EDUCATED AND LIKELY TO GIVE BIRTH SOONER THAN RECENT GENERATIONS OF THE POOR", THE TIMES NOTED,

THE ARTICLE POINTED OUT THAT 32 PERCENT OF ALL CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY WERE BLACK EVEN THOUGH BLACKS COMPRISED ONLY 15 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION; MORE THAN HALF OF ALL POOR CHILDREN LIVED WITH THEIR MOTHERS IN A SINGLE-PARENT HOME; AND THAT POVERTY RATES NOW WERE INCREASING AMONG TWO-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS AS WELL,

AGAIN, ALL REASONS FOR AND IMPLICATIONS ABOUT THE
DATA WERE NOT FULLY CLEAR, BUT THE TRENDS WERE
FRIGHTENING ENOUGH TO DRAW THE FOLLOWING COMMENT
FROM SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN:

"THE U,S. TODAY MAY BE THE FIRST SOCIETY IN
HISTORY WHERE CHILDREN ARE MUCH WORSE OFF THAN
ADULTS, IT IS TIME WE REALIZED WE HAVE A
PROBLEM OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL CHANGE UNLIKE
ANYTHING WE HAVE EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST,
AND WE ARE COMPLETELY IGNORING IT."

SO HOW DO WE AVOID THIS CHAIN OF EVENTS. '

WE START WITH A CHANGE OF ATTITUDES,

U

C

C)

AMERICA IN 1985 IS A COUNTRY THAT, ON THE WHOLE, IS
PRETTY SATISFIED WITH ITSELF, MOST

OF US ARE IN GOOD FINANCIAL SHAPE, WE CERTAINLY HAVE
MORE LUXURIES AND LEISURE TIME THAN WE

EVER EXPECTED TO HAVE, AND WE WANT TO PROTECT AND
MAINTAIN ALL THAT WE HAVE ACCUMULATED,

C)

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. BUT I WONDER IF TOO MANY OF US ARE STARTING TO FEEL THAT THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP WHAT WE HAVE IS TO MAKE SURE NOBODY ELSE GETS ANY. I WONDER IF THE EMOTIONAL GENEROSITY THAT ONCE WAS THE HALLMARK OF THIS COUNTRY IS BEGINNING TO GIVE WAY TO A MEAN-SPIRITEDNESS;

A SENSE OF "I'VE-GOT-MINE-AND-THAT'S-ALL-THAT-COUNTS"; A FEELING THAT IF YOU'RE POOR, IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT; IF YOU'RE HANDICAPPED, IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE WILL TO CHANGE. WE USE WORDS LIKE "FAMILY", "COMMUNITY", "SHARING", AND "UNDERSTANDING", BUT THOSE WORDS WILL HAVE LITTLE MEANING IF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR INSTITUTIONS BECOME INCREASINGLY DISCONNECTED AND ISOLATED FROM EACH OTHER, ALL OF US WANT TO TELL OURSELVES WE ARE DOING MORE FOR OTHERS, BUT WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL THAT WHEN WE TALK THE LANGUAGE OF SACRIFICE, WE DO NOT PRACTICE THE POLITICS OF SELFISHNESS.

PERHAPS OUR AWARENESS THAT THE ECONOMIC PIE, ONCE
CONSIDERED INFINITE, ACTUALLY HAS SOME LIMITS IS
THE REASON FOR THIS APPARENT SHIFT IN NATIONAL
ATTITUDES, WHATEVER THE REASON, THE TASK BEFORE
US REMAINS THE SAME, THIS NATION NEEDS TO
REDISCOVER THE SOCIAL VISION IT HAS. HAD IN YEARS
PAST: A SOCIAL VISION BASED ON SOMETHING MORE
MEANINGFUL AND MORE ENDURING THAN A DESIRE TO
PROTECT THE PERSONAL POSSESSIONS WE HAVE ACCUMULATED
AND THE STATUS

WE HAVE ATTAINED IN OUR PRIVATE LIVES, WE NEED TO
DEVELOP A CONSENSUS BASED ON COMPASSION FOR OTHERS,
THAT LOOKS AT HUNGER, POVERTY AND LACK OF
OPPORTUNITY NOT AS ECONOMIC ▶ MEDICAL OR EVEN
POLITICAL ISSUES; BUT AS HUMAN ISSUES,

I BELIEVE WE CAN REAWAKEN THAT SENSE OF
CARING AND COMPASSION,

MANY PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN ADVANCED THAT WOULD
ALLOW THIS NATION TO COMBAT HUNGER, REDUCE
POVERTY AND STOP OUR APPARENT DRIFT TOWARD A
TWO-TIERED SOCIETY, A FEW THAT MERIT SPECIAL
ATTENTION INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

FIRST, WE MUST HAVE AN UNEQUIVOCAL PUBLIC COMMITMENT
TO PROVIDE PEOPLE IN NEED WITH

ACCESS TO A DIET THAT IS BOTH NUTRITIOUS AND
AFFORDABLE. ALL OUR FOOD PROGRAMS COMBINED ACCOUNT
FOR ONLY 2,2 PERCENT OF FEDERAL SPENDING, SO, FOOD
STAMPS, WIC AND SCHOOL

MEALS PROGRAMS THAT MEET ALL OF THE NEED -WHICH ALSO
MEANS PROGRAMS THAT DO NOT STRIP PEOPLE OF THEIR
DIGNITY -- NEED NOT'DRAMATICALLY INCREASE THE OVERALL
FEDERAL BUDGET,

C)

O

3

SECOND, WE NEED JOB CREATION STRATEGIES THAT
ENABLE LOW-INCOME PERSONS TO COMPETE MORE
EFFECTIVELY IN THE JOB MARKET, A MAJOR FLAW

(2f

IN THE "WORKFARE" AND WORK-OR-ELSE PROGRAMS SO
POPULAR TODAY IS THAT THEY OFTEN FORCE PEOPLE TO
TAKE DEAD-END JOBS AT BELOW POVERTY WAGES. PEOPLE
TRYING TO WORK THEIR WAY OUT OF POVERTY MUST HAVE
ACCESS TO JOBS WITH PAY SCALES THAT ALLOW THEM TO
BELIEVE IN THE FUTURE AND IN THEMSELVES,

0

13

THIRD, WE NEED TO USE OUR TAX SYSTEM AS A
MEANS OF KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY, OUR

PRESENT TAX LAWS READ AS IF THEY WERE DESIGNED
TO MAKE SURE THE WORKING POOR STAYED POOR,
WHEN A POOR PERSON'S INCOME RISES ABOVE A

CERTAIN LEVEL, THAT PERSON NOT ONLY PAYS MORE
TAXES; HE OR SHE ALSO BEGINS LOSING BENEFITS
THEY MAY HAVE HAD SUCH AS FOOD STAMPS OR
MEDICAL CARE, WE NEED TO RETHINK THE

INTERACTION BETWEEN INCOME, TAXES AND BENEFITS
FOR POOR AND LOW INCOME PEOPLE, WE NEED TO
ADJUST THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR LOW-
INCOME FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN SO THE

BASIC BENEFIT IS LARGER AND THEN IS ADJUSTED
UPWARDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH FAMILY SIZE,

C

O

O

FOURTH, WE NEED NATIONAL MINIMUM BENEFIT LEVELS
TIED TO INFLATION FOR THOSE WHO WILL CONTINUE TO
NEED PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SUCH AS AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN. WE
ALREADY DO THIS FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE

SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM, WHY NOT FOR MOTHERS AND
CHILDREN? AS ROBERT GREENSTEIN, DIRECTOR OF THE
CENTER FOR BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES, HAS POINTED
OUT:

"IF WE ALLOW AFDC BENEFITS TO FALL ANOTHER 37
PERCENT IN THE NEXT 15 YEARS, WE CAN BE CERTAIN
THAT THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN CHILDREN LIVING IN
DESTITUTION WILL REACH LEVELS NOT SEEN IN THIS
NATION FOR DECADES,"

a

c)

WHEN THE CHAIRMAN OF A MAJOR AMERICAN
CORPORATION PROPOSES INCREASED FEDERAL
SPENDING FOR PROGRAMS DEALING WITH HUNGER AND
POVERTY, SOMEONE IS BOUND TO ASK - WHAT ABOUT
THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR? CLEARLY, THERE IS
A ROLE FOR VOLUNTARISM AND PRIVATE SECTOR
PROGRAMS AIMED AT COMBATING HUNGER AND POVERTY,
PRIVATE OR VOLUNTARY EFFORTS FREQUENTLY ARE MORE
RESPONSIVE TO INDIVIDUALS THAN LARGE
BUREAUCRACIES, AND THERE ARE ASPECTS OF THESE
PROBLEMS THAT DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES TO
POLITICAL OR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS.

0

BASICALLY, THOUGH, THE TASKS BEFORE US ARE ONES IN WHICH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE THE MAJOR LEADERSHIP ROLE, THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN HELP, BUT THE BASIC LEADERSHIP, COMMITMENT AND FUNDING MUST COME FROM GOVERNMENT, THERE SIMPLY IS NO OTHER WAY,

(3

LET ME SAY A WORD TO THOSE WHO SAY THE FEDERAL DEFICIT IS OUR FIRST PRIORITY,

I AM A BUSINESSMAN WHO WAS TRAINED AS AN ECONOMIST, I KNOW THE DANGERS OF DEFICIT SPENDING, AND I STRONGLY FAVOR A PROGRAM THAT REDUCES THE DEFICIT, I KNOW WE NEED TO SUSTAIN LONG-TERM, NON-INFLATIONARY ECONOMIC GROWTH, I KNOW WE NEED TO REDRESS OUR

STAGGERING TRADE IMBALANCE,

Ci

BUT I AM UNWILLING TO PUT OFF RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT
TO THE POOR AND THE HUNGRY UNTIL WE PUT OUR
MACROECONOMIC HOUSE IN ORDER, I AM UNWILLING BECAUSE
WE ARE SEEING MORE AND MORE EVIDENCE THAT THE GAP
BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR CAN WIDEN EVEN WHEN
THERE IS ECONOMIC GROWTH, I AM UNWILLING BECAUSE

THINK PROGRAMS TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY AND HUNGER SHOULD BE
DETERMINED BY NATIONAL NEED, NOT THE OFTEN ABSTRACT AND
UNATTAINABLE CONCEPT OF

"DOLLAR AVAILABILITY", I AM UNWILLING BECAUSE THE POOR
AND THE HUNGRY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO SHOULDER TOO MANY
BUDGET CUTS ALREADY,

CUTS IN SOCIAL PROGRAMS DEALING WITH POVERTY AND HUNGER ONLY INCREASE SUFFERING WHILE MAKING A TOKEN IMPACT ON THE DEFICIT, IF WE REALLY WANT TO MAKE A DENT IN THE DEFICIT, THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH FAT IN THE DEFENSE BUDGET TO SUPPORT DEFICIT REDUCTION AND INCREASED SPENDING FOR THE HUNGER AND POVERTY PROGRAMS I HAVE DESCRIBED, WE ARE CONTINUALLY TOLD WE MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN GUNS AND BUTTER. BUT THIS COUNTRY DOESN'T NEED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GUNS AND BUTTER, THIS COUNTRY NEEDS TO STOP USING THE BUTTER MONEY TO BUY GUNS.

(3

3

FINALLY, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE NOT JUST A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY; WE ARE ALSO AN INTERDEPENDENT SOCIETY, AND NO SOCIETY, NO MATTER HOW STRONG OR SECURE IT FEELS AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT, CAN SURVIVE IF ITS PEOPLE LOSE SIGHT OF EACH OTHER, IF THEY EXIST APART FROM EACH OTHER AND FAIL TO RESPOND TO EACH OTHER,

THAT IS THE DANGER BEFORE US AND WHY, IN MY JUDGEMENT, WE SHOULD PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO WHAT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT TOLD US MORE THAN 50 YEARS AGO, THE TEST OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, ROOSEVELT SAID, IS NOT HOW WELL WE TAKE CARE OF OUR AFFLUENT, IT IS HOW WELL WE TAKE CARE OF OUR POOR,

THANK YOU

21.2475,2
PG:Ams

- 36 -

11/04185