

NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION WINTER MEETING

NATIONAL GOVERNOR'S ASSOCIATION

(INFANT MORTALITY)

"CARE FOR OUR CHILDREN,

CARE FOR OUR FUTURE

REMARKS BY

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## NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION WINTER MEETING

A YEAR AGO, I WAS SOMEWHAT APPREHENSIVE ABOUT ACCEPTING AN INVITATION TO TALK WITH YOUR COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES,

I HAD LITTLE DIRECT EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA OF INFANT MORTALITY AND CHILD HEALTH, THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF YOUR EFFORTS. MY WORK WAS RELATED TO PUBLIC EDUCATION, HUNGER, THE ECONOMY AND THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE,

I SOON REALIZED MY APPREHENSION WAS MISPLACED,

WE MAY HAVE STARTED OUT FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, BUT OUR GOAL WAS THE SAME,

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WE SHARED A COMMON CONCERN ABOUT THE HEALTH,  
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN, WE BOTH WANTED  
TO BUILD BROADER COALITIONS IN SUPPORT OF CHILD-CENTERED  
ISSUES, AND WE BOTH WANTED TO INVOLVE THE PRIVATE  
SECTOR IN THOSE EFFORTS,

TODAY, ALMOST A YEAR LATER TO THE DAY, THIS  
BROAD-BASED CONCERN ABOUT CHILDREN CONTINUES TO GROW,  
DUE IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE  
NATION'S GOVERNORS.

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LAST FALL, FOR EXAMPLE, WE WENT THROUGH A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN THAT, WHATEVER ITS SHORTCOMINGS, WAS THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN MY MEMORY IN WHICH THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN WERE VIGOROUSLY DISCUSSED BY BOTH CANDIDATES.

WE ALSO ARE ARRIVING AT A MORE REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS FACED BY LARGE NUMBERS OF CHILDREN, WE ARE PUTTING ASIDE THE TRADITIONAL COMPARTMENTALIZED VIEW THAT LOOKS AT EDUCATION AS ONE PROBLEM, HEALTH AS ANOTHER, FAMILY INCOME AS A THIRD.

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IN ITS PLACE, WE ARE ADOPTING A MORE COMPREHENSIVE VIEW THAT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE WAYS EDUCATION, HEALTH, NUTRITION, HOUSING, FAMILY INCOME, SOCIAL SUPPORTS AND EVEN POLITICAL DECISIONS ALL INTERACT TO FORM THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE AND THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM,

AS A MATTER OF FACT, A GROUP WITH WHICH I AM ASSOCIATED, THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AND A GROUP WITH WHICH YOU ARE ASSOCIATED, THE NATIONAL COMMISSION TO PREVENT INFANT

MORTALITY, ARE AMONG THE LEADERS IN THIS AREA, THESE TWO ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES THAT WILL INTEGRATE THE HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS,

THESE ARE IMPORTANT SIGNS OF PROGRESS,

BUT IF OUR OUTLOOK HAS CHANGED, THE OBSTACLES  
BEFORE US HAVE NOT CHANGED,

ONE OF THEM IS OUR OWN HISTORY,

WHEN IT COMES TO DEVELOPING RHETORIC ABOUT  
CHILDREN, I DOUBT WE HAVE AN EQUAL IN THE WORLD, BUT  
EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF PERIOD IN THE SIXTIES WHEN WE  
DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED A RANGE OF PROGRAMS AIMED  
AT PROVIDING ALL CHILDREN WITH A RELATIVELY EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY IN LIFE, OUR RECENT PERFORMANCE HAS NOT  
COME CLOSE TO OUR RHETORIC,

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TAKE INFANT MORTALITY AND CHILD HEALTH.

EVERYONE AGREES THAT CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE EARLY HEALTH CARE FARE BETTER IN LIFE THAN CHILDREN WHO DO NOT, THAT QUALITY PRENATAL CARE CAN REDUCE INFANT MORTALITY AND ELIMINATE MANY OF THE PROBLEMS THAT LEAD TO HIGH RISK BIRTHS AND SUBSEQUENT POOR HEALTH AMONG INFANTS, AS WELL AS PROBLEMS IN LATER LIFE THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH POOR CHILD HEALTH.

YET THE UNITED STATES CURRENTLY RANKS 19TH AMONG INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS IN INFANT MORTALITY, AND 15 MILLION WOMEN OF CHILDBEARING AGE HAVE NO PRIVATE OR GOVERNMENT HEALTH INSURANCE THAT COVERS MATERNITY CARE.

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IN ADDITION, WE MAKE THE HEAD START PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO LESS THAN 20 PERCENT OF THE CHILDREN WHO NEED IT, PLACE SHARP RESTRICTIONS ON THE NUMBER OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS OF FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS AND DRAMATICALLY LIMIT THE CHAPTER I ASSISTANCE WE PROVIDE OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS,

IF THESE AND OTHER TRENDS CONTINUE, THEN BY THE YEAR 2000, WHICH NOW IS JUST 11 YEARS AWAY, ONE OF EVERY FOUR YOUNGSTERS IN THIS COUNTRY WILL BE POOR, ONE IN FIVE WILL BE AT RISK OF BECOMING A TEENAGE PARENT, AND ONE IN SEVEN WILL BECOME A HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT, MOSTLY LIKELY BEFORE THEIR JUNIOR YEAR.



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THAT'S THE HISTORY WE HAVE TO OVERCOME,

THE NATURE OF THE POVERTY IN WHICH SO MANY  
CHILDREN NOW LIVE IS THE SECOND MAJOR OBSTACLE IN OUR  
PATH,

IT IS A POVERTY UNLIKE ANY WE BECOME FAMILIAR  
WITH IN THE PAST, IT IS NOT A POVERTY THAT HAS A  
TEMPORARY HOLD OVER ITS VICTIMS, IT IS A POVERTY  
THAT IS BOTH EXTENSIVE AND DEEPLY INGRAINED, IT IS  
FAR MORE SEVERE AND OPPRESSIVE THAN MOST OF US  
IMAGINE, AND IT OFTEN DEFEATS THE BEST EFFORTS OF  
DEDICATED AND HARD-WORKING PARENTS.

## NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION WINTER MEETING

ALTHOUGH THE NATIONAL POVERTY RATE HAS BEEN HELD  
STEADY AT 14 PERCENT, CONSIDER THESE FACTS:

0 THE "POVERTY GAP," THE AMOUNT BY WHICH THE  
INCOME OF THE POOR FALLS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, IS  
LARGER THAN AT ANY TIME IN 27 YEARS, EXCEPT FOR THE  
HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT YEAR OF 1983,

0 THE PROPORTION OF POOR WHO FALL INTO THE  
CATEGORY OF THE POOREST OF THE POOR IS AT THE HIGHEST  
LEVEL IN MORE THAN A DECADE,

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0 THE POVERTY RATE AMONG YOUNG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN DOUBLED BETWEEN 1974 AND 1983, BY 1985, HALF OF ALL YOUNG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WERE LIVING IN POVERTY,

THIS ISN'T JUST POVERTY, THIS IS A POVERTY IN WHICH CHILDREN FREQUENTLY END UP WORSE THAN THEIR PARENTS,

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY, AND THUS THE AMERICAN SOCIETY, HAS BEEN BUILT AROUND THE IDEA THAT TOMORROW'S GENERATION WILL DO BETTER THAN TODAY'S. THE POOR BELIEVED THAT, TOO, BUT IF THOSE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ECONOMIC LADDER STOP BELIEVING THE CHILD'S FUTURE HOLDS MORE PROMISE THAN THE PARENT'S PAST, WE WILL BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE,

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WE CANNOT ALLOW THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT  
RECOGNIZED AS EQUAL PARTICIPANTS IN OUR SOCIETY,  
EITHER BY THEMSELVES OR OTHERS, TO GROW LARGER,

NOBODY IS SUGGESTING WE START FROM SCRATCH AND  
BUILD A NEW SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE, BUT WE  
CAN IDENTIFY THOSE AREAS WHERE WE CAN MAKE A SUBSTANTIAL  
DIFFERENCE AND BEGIN TO BUILD ON THOSE SUCCESSES,

## NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION WINTER MEETING

AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE MOMENT SEEMS RIGHT FOR SOME INTENSIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE EARLY LIVES OF CHILDREN; TO PUT INTO PLACE, ON A MORE EXTENSIVE SCALE THAN CURRENTLY EXISTS, PROGRAMS THAT WILL IMPROVE THE ODDS THAT CHILDREN WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED TODAY WILL HAVE A BETTER FUTURE TOMORROW,

THE YEARS BETWEEN BIRTH AND THE AGE OF SIX ARE THE YEARS WHEN THE BASIC FOUNDATION IS DEVELOPED FOR ALL THE PHYSICAL, INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH THAT IS SUPPOSED TO OCCUR IN LATER YEARS, YET ONE OF EVERY FOUR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF SIX IS GROWING UP DEPRIVED DURING THIS CRITICAL DEVELOPMENTAL PERIOD.

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IF A CHILD DOES NOT GROW AS TALL AS HE OR SHE  
MIGHT HAVE GROWN UNDER BETTER CONDITIONS, WE CANNOT  
GIVE BACK TO THAT CHILD THE HEIGHT THAT WAS LOST,

IF A CHILD'S ABILITY TO LEARN IS IMPAIRED  
BECAUSE OF POOR NUTRITION, WE CANNOT PROVIDE THAT  
CHILD WITH THE BRAIN CELLS THAT FAILED TO DEVELOP,

IF A CHILD ENTERS SCHOOL WITH A LOW SENSE OF SELF-  
ESTEEM AND PERSONAL WORTH BECAUSE OF THE CONDITIONS IN  
WHICH HE OR SHE GREW UP OR BECAUSE THAT CHILD WAS  
DENIED EMOTIONAL SUSTENANCE, WE CANNOT REVERSE TIME  
AND START OVER,

THESE YEARS AND THIS DEVELOPMENT ARE IRREPLACEABLE,  
WHAT IS LOST DURING THIS TIME IS LOST FOREVER,

PAUSE — VOICE SHIFT

IN YOUR LETTER OF INVITATION, YOU ASKED ME TO  
TELL YOU WHICH PRIVATE SECTOR PROGRAMS ARE WORKING  
WELL AND TO SUGGEST SOME CONCRETE IDEAS FOR MOVING  
FORWARD,

THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE PRIVATE  
SECTOR WHO COULD CITE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP  
PROGRAMS THEY BELIEVE WORK WELL OR PROGRAMS IN OTHER  
AREAS THAT COULD BE ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN,



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THERE ALSO SEEMS TO BE SOME NEW FOUND SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SECTOR PROGRAMS WITHIN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS WELL,

SOME MONTHS AGO, PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES CONDUCTED A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS EXECUTIVES UNDER THE AGE OF 40, MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED YUPPIE GENERATION, HIS TWO PRINCIPAL FINDINGS WERE THAT:

0 YOUNG EXECUTIVES ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT POVERTY HAS ON CHILDREN AND THE NATION; AND

0 THEY WOULD SUPPORT PROGRAMS TO ASSIST  
CHILDREN AS LONG AS THEY WERE EFFECTIVELY DESIGNED  
AND MANAGED,

THAT IS GOOD TO KNOW,

BUT THE FINAL DECISION ON WHAT WORKS WELL, WHAT  
WORKS IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCE, AND HOW PROGRAMS SHOULD  
BE ORGANIZED AND MANAGED ARE PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS,  
AND PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE MADE BY  
CORPORATE EXECUTIVES; THEY SHOULD BE MADE BY ELECTED  
OFFICIALS,

LET'S HAVE THE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVED, LET'S HAVE THEIR SUPPORT, BUT GOVERNORS AND OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS WERE CHOSEN TO MAKE THESE DECISIONS, AND I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU SHOULD DELEGATE YOUR DECISION-MAKING FUNCTION TO THOSE OF US WHO LACK YOUR EXPERIENCE AND FOR WHOM PUBLIC POLICY IS ONLY A PART-TIME FUNCTION,

NONE THELESS, IF PRESSED, THIS MEMBER OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR WOULD RECOMMEND SOME MAJOR CHILD-CENTERED INITIATIVES AT THE STATE LEVEL.

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THOSE INITIATIVES SHOULD (AS ALREADY NOTED,) FOCUS ON THE EARLY LIVES OF CHILDREN AND INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- I ACCESS TO PRENATAL CARE FOR ALL PREGNANT WOMEN,
- 2, FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE WIC PROGRAM AND SIMILAR STATE PROGRAMS,
- 3, ENDING CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN AMERICA,
- 4, IMMUNIZING EVERY CHILD AGAINST INFECTIOUS DISEASES,
- 5, MAKING QUALITY DAY CARE ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN OF PARENTS WHO MUST WORK,
- 6, EXPANDING HEAD START AND CHAPTER ONE TO ALL ELIGIBLE CHILDREN,
- 7, EFFECTIVE TEENAGE PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS.

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SOME OF THE BEST IDEAS I HAVE HEARD RECENTLY  
HAVE COME FROM STATE GOVERNMENT AND FROM MEMBERS OF  
THIS ORGANIZATION, MOREOVER, I BELIEVE STATES MAY BE  
IN A UNIQUE POSITION TO PLAY THE LEADERSHIP ROLE THAT  
SO FAR HAS ELUDED OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT,

PEOPLE REGARD STATES AS MANAGEABLE LEVELS OF  
GOVERNMENT, THEY HAVE CONFIDENCE IN STATE GOVERNMENT,  
THEY FEEL CONNECTED TO THEIR STATE OFFICIALS, STATE  
GOVERNMENT ALSO IS LARGE ENOUGH TO DEVELOP A  
COMPREHENSIVE POINT OF VIEW, YET SENSITIVE ENOUGH TO  
RESPOND TO LOCAL NEEDS AND DIVERSITIES,

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WHEN I WAS A CEO, I ALWAYS LOOKED FOR AN OPPORTUNITY THAT OTHERS DID NOT RECOGNIZE THAT ALLOWED ME TO UTILIZE RESOURCES NOT BEING USED TO THEIR FULL CAPACITY AND POTENTIAL,

A SIMILAR OPPORTUNITY MAY BE LYING RIGHT AT YOUR OWN DOORSTEPS,

FOR ALL OUR SAKES, I HOPE IT IS:

1. KEEP TELLING YOUR STORY,
  2. ESTABLISH CORPORATE COUNCILS ON CHILDREN IN STATES AND CHAIR PERSONALLY,
  3. MAJOR INITIATIVE ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN AT NATIONAL LEVEL,
- C.E.D. TESTIMONY,

THANK YOU.

