

ADDRESS BY SARGENT SHRIVER  
JOB CORPS CONTRACTOR'S CONFERENCE  
DRISKILL HOTEL, AUSTIN, TEXAS

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Three weeks ago James Reston, the "New York Times" Columnist, wrote these words:

"(Johnson) is trying to take poverty out of the people rather than following the old New Deal technique of merely taking the people out of poverty by giving them handouts. He is not offering a dole to the poor, as in Roosevelt's time, but an opportunity through education for the poor to save themselves.

"He is not using federal funds to keep them where they are or to impose federal control over the states and cities, but to finance the passage of the poor into useful, effective jobs, and create new partnerships between Washington and the state capitals and the cities."

Reston was right. He described accurately what the President means by the phrase "creative federalism." But Reston could have gone farther. He could have looked at the Job Corps -- he could have looked over this gathering here this evening -- and he could have written words such as these:

"In the modern history of the American Republic there has never been a meeting like the one held in Austin, Texas, on the night of February 6th. For the first time, the Federal government joined with state governments and with American private business, private philanthropy, private universities, private foundations, and private volunteer organizations to attack the public problem created by one and one-half million teenagers -- out of school, out of work, out of home, and out of hope -- the unemployed and the unemployable -- the youngsters described as "social dynamite" by Harvard University President, James Bryant Conant.

"While others talk and preach about the need for involving private business in the 'war against poverty', last night in Austin, the actual job was being done by business -- men who are already veterans in this home front war against unemployment, against ignorance, poverty and disease." ...

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Let me dwell on this fact for just a moment.

We have met here in Austin --

- not to dedicate a monument
- not merely to talk about a vague national problem
- not to listen to a lot of speeches, but to improve and perfect a new method of doing something for poor boys and girls.

And to do it together.

I just don't believe this has ever happened before. And I hope this meeting will be the prototype for many more gatherings of this kind. Because the domestic problems of America -- its cities...its poor... its children...its aged...its rivers and its air...its transportation and its health... These problems are too big for solution by any one group, or any one vested interest.

I think it is highly significant.

It is highly significant that this historic event is taking place in Texas. This is not Washington imposing its will and its programs on anyone. It is a cooperative sharing of resources, talents and ideas with everyone who has something to contribute.

It is significant that we are meeting not many miles from where President Johnson was born. Tomorrow, we will visit Camp Gary in San Marcos, where the President was educated. And we will recognize that many of the boys and girls in Job Corps come from the Mexican-American community. Just like the boys and girls the President taught as a young man in Cotulla, Texas.

The President understands the problems of young people. He knows the vital significance of education. And so does the Governor of Texas, John Connally. It is no accident that it was under his aegis that the Texas Education Foundation was formed, which itself is an example of the creative combination of the State's financial, educational, business and administrative resources.

But it is not alone our being here that makes this occasion historic. It is what we are going to do here. It is not the fact that we have created such a union, that is so important...but what this union can accomplish, and whether it will long endure.

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We have been partners in this Job Corps enterprise for two years. Now is the time to talk about what we have done, and how we can do it better. I am not going to try to do justice to either topic tonight. We've brought down a Job Corps team to do the first, and we hope that you are going to tell us how to do the second.

I would like to touch on a few of the highlights that make the Job Corps and, as a matter of fact, the other programs of the War on Poverty worthy of your attention.

First, even though these new opportunity programs were brought into being by a Democratic administration, their character is far from the traditional Democratic approach. The Office of Economic Opportunity marks a significant watershed in American social action. Instead of these new opportunity programs being designed in Washington, funded in Washington and operated by Federal bureaucrats--they are designed with local initiative, the funds are granted to local community agencies, both public and private, and they are run by local men and women.

Not long ago, the Republican Mayor of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who at one time had been suspicious of our programs made it a point to find out about Community Action. Then he said to our Regional Director... "Why, these are Republican programs if you only had the sense to know it."

Well, we do have the sense to know it. In fact, to repeat a famous phrase "we planned it this way."

Instead of looking to Washington for all the answers, the people of America's communities are looking to themselves. And we are urging them to do so. And they are working with Washington, and with the states, and with local government and with business and labor and all the collective resources available to mount an effective home town attack on home town poverty.

That's how Head Start became so successful. The communities took it over. And the American Bar Association has worked with community representatives on the design of Legal Services. College presidents as well as poor fathers and mothers developed the outlines of Upward Bound.

Every Community Action Agency in the country, and there are 1050 of them, mirrors the uniqueness of this gathering. On the governing body of every CAP sits the local mayor or his representatives, the local representative of business, the local head of the YWCA, the local dean of the college, the local head of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the local labor and religious leaders. And they administer the programs which they have decided they want. And on every one of those boards sit representatives of the poor themselves.

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Those Community Action meetings are much like ours tonight. And they are beginning to get results just like ours in the Job Corps.

Of the 33,800 young men and women who have completed various achievement levels and programs in Job Corps, 25,700 are in jobs earning an average of \$1.71 per hour. 4,600 are in school. They have either returned to complete their education, or they have been motivated to attend for the first time in many years. 3,458 have entered the armed forces. Most of these same young men and women attempted to enlist before entering Job Corps but were rejected because they failed to meet either medical or educational standards. Last week the first two Job Corps graduates were killed in action in Viet Nam.

Three former Job Corps volunteers are now working overseas with the Peace Corps. 18 are serving with VISTA, our program of volunteers who live and work with the poor. 190 are now employed as resident workers and counsellors in Job Corps centers. 106 were selected for "Upward Bound", further evidence of the desire and ability which Job Corps helped them to develop.

Every Job Corps enrollee is entitled to send home a portion of his living allowance up to \$25 per month. The government matches this figure. Right now, Job Corps boys and girls are sending home money at the rate of \$1 million per month. 72 percent of all enrollees are making allotments to needy dependents and 96.5% of these are sending home the maximum.

This money is going where it is needed most. In a little less than two years, Job Corps Volunteers have sent \$1,264,880 home to Texas-- the largest amount going to any single state. \$442,000 went to Mississippi, our poorest state. \$551,000 to Alabama. And more than a million and a half dollars has gone to the states comprising Appalachia.

Since the beginning of the Conservation Center program, the appraised value of the beautification and conservation work done by Job Corps in our national parks, beaches, wild life preserves, fisheries, forests, roads and highways amounts to \$43,000,000.

These are just a few of the results which your Job Corps has produced. The kind of results which demonstrate the scope, the variety and the promise of the program.

But if we had realized all our objectives, if we felt assured that we had accomplished everything possible in the best way possible, there would have been no need for this meeting.

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Instead we recognize how far we still have to go. How much we have to learn as we attempt a job of human reclamation on a scale never before tried.

Three questions are now uppermost in our minds. We want to share these problems with you. I will not attempt to answer them. We do not know all the answers.

First: How can we cut our costs and still provide a program of value to the poorest of our youth?

Second: How can we reduce the rate of drop-outs? Most important how can we reduce drop-out among those who stay less than 30 days? If half of the young men and women in this category could be retained, we could save \$2.25 million in less than a year.

Third: Recognizing that we are dealing with the deprived and socially alienated of our youth, how can we create an environment of learning in which conflicts and tensions and the incidents produced by them are kept at a minimum?

In the course of this meeting we will return to these questions again and again. They are basic to our success: to the approval of Congress, the good will of the public, the acceptance by the youth themselves.

Your help in finding the answers to these questions will go far beyond Job Corps. I am confident that what we accomplish here will make a profound contribution to all our youth...and therefore to the future of all America.

I began these few remarks with a quotation from James Reston of the "New York Times." I'd like to close with a quotation from Walter Gray, editor and columnist of "The Laredo (Texas) Times." Writing on January 26th, Walter Gray said:

"If we aren't interested in fighting poverty in the United States, then why are we fighting Communist encroachment in Vietnam?

We say our system is superior to the Communist system, and it is.

But when it comes to the existence of poverty within our system, we like to shift the discussion to other topics-- such as freedom of the ballot, freedom of religion, freedom of the press and our administration of justice.

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"Well and good. The only trouble is that freedom of the ballot doesn't mean as much to a hungry man as it does to a well-fed man.

What the empty stomachs around the world want to hear about is food. And when they're fed, they want to hear about shelter; when they're housed they want to hear about sewage; when they're adequately fed and sheltered and clothed they want to hear about disease control, and then they want to hear about cars, telephones and television sets.

It's the "revolution of rising expectations," and it's as much a reality of the 20th Century as space flights.

If we weren't sold on our way of life as the best, then we could let the Russians and Communists of whatever country have the global field--let them encompass the newly emerging and underdeveloped nations.

But we're in the struggle.

We must, or feel we must, show the world that we can lift the overall standard of living in our nation and at the same time preserve the profit motive.

The Russians claim they have created full employment and can raise the quality of life for all their citizens.

We can say "Oops," or get busy.

Fight the War on Poverty, or quit the War in Vietnam.

If we have nothing better to offer them, why should we tear up their country to protect them from communism?

Can we lift 33 million Americans out of poverty, without pulling down, at the same time, the over-all standard of living?

Karl Marx couldn't see how capitalism could survive because he couldn't see how profits (the kinds of profits he never dreamed of) could be made without the exploitation of labor.

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"Marx couldn't foresee the rapid strides of technology that would revolutionize the mass production system and create a society in which the emphasis is on consuming.

And so, wages, sales and profits rose together.

Our 33 million under-consuming Americans who live in poverty are just 33 million prospective customers -- a potential boost to the economy.

Lifting people out of poverty would also help strengthen the fabric of our nation."

Tonight I can add that Karl Marx could never have foreseen the Job Corps or this meeting of government and business, of volunteers and educators -- working together on a social problem of national importance.

We all know that Marxist economic theories are out-of-date. Job Corps can help to prove that Marxist social theories are equally passe. Job Corps, Head Start, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, our new cooperative programs of help to Indians and migrants -- VISTA, all these new opportunity programs -- can help to hasten the end of Communist theories at home and abroad.

Krushchev said that he would bury us. Well -- Krushchev isn't dead physically yet -- but he's dead every other way. And with a successful "war against poverty" here at home, his successors will feel sicker than ever. For as the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, wrote to me not long ago --

"Every advance in social justice here at home -- like those being achieved in your program of legal services for the poor -- helps me to explain better the true purposes and success of our American system 'of government'."