
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 1218

1939 April 23

**Address to the Conference on Children in a
Democracy**

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN IN A DEMOCRACY
EAST ROOM, WHITE HOUSE,
APRIL 26, 1939

MADAM SECRETARY AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE:

It is, perhaps, because I happened to be born with what may be called a "relative mind" and because I have sought to cultivate that kind of thinking for nearly half a century that I think of this Conference in the first instance in terms of the past.

Child welfare -- to use a much misused term -- did not enter into the public conscience of any nation until about one hundred years ago. And we know from reading Dickens and the literature of his period that the well-being of children in those early days was principally considered from the viewpoint of schooling and of crime prevention and the ending of physical cruelty -- all interwoven with the sentimentality of the good, the ultra-good, Victorians.

As time went on some interest came to be taken in every nation, but still the activities of those who sought the bettering of the younger generation of the moment viewed the problem before them as a problem somewhat apart from the relationship of the younger generation to the broader public weal.

Even at the time of the first Children's Conference to assemble in the White House under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, the conditions that surrounded child life were discussed more in terms of child life than in terms of the national community.

This was true to a very great extent in the two succeeding White House Conferences, and it occurs to me that this, the fourth Conference, marks a new and somewhat changed era.

It is still our task to bring to bear upon the major problems of child life all the wisdom and understanding that can be distilled from compilations of facts, from the intuitions of common sense, and from professional skill. This Conference

like the others, is composed of men and women having a broad range of experience and interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of children. It is our purpose to review the objectives and methods affecting the safety, well-being and happiness of the younger generation and their preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

But we have gone one step further. Definitely we are here with a principal objective of considering the relationship between a successful democracy and the children who form an integral part of that democracy. We no longer set them apart from democracy as if they were a segregated group. They are at one with democracy because they are dependent upon a democracy and democracy is dependent on them.

Our work will not be concluded at the end of the day -- it will only have begun. During the greater part of the coming year the members of this Conference, representing every State in the Union and many fields of endeavor, will be at work.

We shall be testing our institutions, and our own convictions and attitudes of mind as they affect our actions as parents and as citizens, in terms of their significance to the childhood of our Nation.

In an address on Pan American Day, two weeks ago, I said "men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds. They have within themselves the power to become free at any moment." On April fifteenth, in addressing the heads of two great States, I stated that I refused to believe that the world is, of necessity, a prisoner of destiny. "On the contrary", I said, "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their people from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended."

In providing for the health and education of children, for the formation of their minds and characters in ways which are in harmony with the institutions of a free society, democracy is training its future leaders. The safety of democracy therefore depends upon the widespread diffusion of opportunities for developing those qualities of mind and character which are essential to leadership in our modern age. Further, democracy is concerned not only with preparation for leadership, but also with preparation for the discharge of the duties of citizenship in the determination of general policies and the selection of those persons who are to be entrusted with special duties. Beyond this, democracy must inculcate in its children capacities for living and assure opportunities for the fulfillment of those capacities. The success of democratic institutions is measured, not by extent of territory, financial power, machines or armaments, but by the desires, the hopes, and the deep-lying satisfactions of the individual men, women and children who make up its citizenship.

We shall be concerned with ways in which the broad chasm between knowing and doing may be bridged over. We shall be reminding ourselves that all the lectures on nutrition will avail nothing unless there is food for a child to eat; that a law for compulsory school attendance is one thing and a chance to go to school is another. Prenatal instruction cannot assure healthy babies unless the mother has access to good medical and nursing care when the time for the baby's arrival is at hand. We know how to budget a family's expenditures, we have undertaken to preserve home life for fatherless or motherless children through the joint effort of the Federal Government and the States. We have made great progress in the application of money and service to the promotion of maternal and child health; the restoration of crippled children to normal physical condition; the protection of neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent, especially in rural areas; and the elimination of child labor from industries shipping goods in interstate commerce.

Yet, after all has been said, only a beginning has been made in affording security to children. In many parts of the country we have not provided enough to meet the minimum needs of dependent children for food, shelter and clothing, and the Federal Government's contribution toward their care is less generous than its contribution to the care of the aged.

It is not enough, however, to consider what a democratic society must provide. We must look at our civilization through the eyes of children. If we can state in simple language some of the basic necessities of childhood, we shall see more clearly the issues which challenge our intelligence.

We make the assumption that a happy child should live in a home where he will find warmth and food and affection; that his parents will take care of him should he fall ill; that at school he will find the teachers and tools needed for an education; that when he grows up there will be a job for him and that he will some day establish his own home.

As we consider these essentials of a happy childhood our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that there are many children who cannot make these assumptions.

We are concerned about the children of the unemployed.

We are concerned about other children who are without adequate shelter or food or clothing because of the poverty of their parents.

We are concerned about the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode or normal community relationships.

We are concerned about the children of minority groups in our population who, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, must find it difficult to believe in the just ordering of life or the ability of the adults in their world to deal with life's problems.

We are concerned about the children living beyond the reach of medical service or lacking medical service because their parents cannot pay for it.

We are concerned about the children who are not in school or who attend schools poorly equipped to meet their needs.

We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the fatherhood of God.

We are concerned about the future of our democracy when children cannot make the assumptions that mean security and happiness.

This Conference and the activities which it initiates furnish an opportunity for us to test ourselves and our institutions by the extent to which they serve our children. I look to you for comprehensive review of the problems before us, and suggestions as to practical ways in which we may advance toward our goal.

Many branches of the Federal Government are engaged in the promotion of the health, education, and well-being of the Nation's children. You will be asked to consider the points at which these undertakings may be strengthened, and the needs for service which cannot be supplied with the resources at hand.

But the attention of this Conference must not be directed to Federal activities alone, or even to joint Federal and State undertakings. It is the local community which is the focal point for all these programs. Children receive benefits not in Washington but in the places where they live.

The men and women within the sound of my voice, as well as you who are assembled at the White House, are in the larger sense members of this Conference. Recommendations will be brought to us in a final session next year. It then will be for all of us to determine the extent to which they will be translated into action. I bid you, the members of the Conference, Godspeed in your high endeavor.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Reading copy

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
Delivered before
The White House Conference on Children in a Democracy
East Room of the White House
April 23, 1939, 10.00 A. M.

MADAM SECRETARY AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE:

It is, perhaps, because I happened to be born with what (may) might be called a "relative mind" and because I have sought to cultivate that kind of thinking for nearly half a century that I think of this Conference in the first instance in terms of the past.

Child welfare (-- to use a much misused term --) in the old days did not enter into the public conscience of any nation in a big way until about (one) a hundred years ago. And we know from reading Dickens and the literature of (his) that period that the well-being of children in those early (days) years was principally considered from the viewpoint of schooling, (and) of crime prevention and the ending of physical cruelty to the children -- all of them, of course, interwoven with the well-known sentimentality of the good, the ultra-good, Victorians.

As time went on some interest seemed to come, some interest came to be taken in every nation, but still the activities of those who sought the bettering of the younger generation of the moment viewed the problem before them as a problem somewhat apart from the relationship of the younger generation to the broader public national weal.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words prepared extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

RENT TO SENATE
HONORABLE
SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TO HONORABLE SENATOR JAMES MCGOWAN
GO FRESHEN GHA YATTAHONG MACAM
reading copy text.

RENT TO SENATE
HONORABLE
SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TO HONORABLE SENATOR JAMES MCGOWAN
GO FRESHEN GHA YATTAHONG MACAM
reading copy text.

I announced this "hail to our country" a billion and thirty (yes) days
ago not realizing it had just survived one of the most
difficult off the committee right to speak I think you know a little
long ago to answer the question
(-- what became now a law of --) situation before
conscience calling out that when the bill stood there was no
money available & (etc) twelve hours you put a lot of effort into it
to understand and the majority opinion would be that --
except of course to paid-off fees and that being said (sim)
we're out now before this afternoon now about (say) fifteen
minutes and this will never come to (but) sufficient to take
action to meet to life -- about fifteen minutes including the
boycott to about fifteen minutes about fifteen minutes including the
anniversary, about fifteen minutes
when when the House passed the bill and now we're
out there and action views of what is or is not about fifteen
minutes out to about fifteen minutes out to about fifteen minutes
as well as the about fifteen minutes out to about fifteen minutes
out to about fifteen minutes out to about fifteen minutes out to about fifteen minutes
about fifteen minutes out to about fifteen minutes out to about fifteen minutes

And, not so long ago, even at the time of the first Children's Conference to assemble in the White House under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, the conditions that surrounded child life were discussed more in terms of child life by itself than in terms of the national community.

This was true to a very great extent in the two succeeding White House Conferences, and it occurs to me that this, the fourth Conference, marks a new and a somewhat changed era.

It is still our task to bring to bear (upon) on the major problems of child life all the wisdom (and) the understanding that can be distilled from the compilation(s) of facts, from the intuitions of common sense, and from professional skill. This Conference, like the others, is composed of men and women having a broad range of experience and interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of children. It is our purpose to review the objectives and methods affecting the safety and the well-being and the happiness of the younger generation and their preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

But we have gone one step further. Definitely we are here with a principal objective of considering the relationship between a successful democracy and the children who form an integral part of that democracy. We no longer set them apart from democracy as if they were a segregated group.

They are at one with democracy because of two facts, they, the children are dependent upon (a) democracy and, secondly, democracy is dependent on them.

Our work will not be concluded at the end of (the) one day or two days -- it will only have begun. During the greater part of the coming year the members of this Conference representing every State in the Union and many fields of endeavor, will be at work. In thousands of places, we shall be testing our institutions, and our own convictions and attitudes of mind as they affect our actions as parents and as citizens, we shall be testing them in terms of their significance to the childhood of (our) the Nation and, therefore, the Nation itself.

In an address on Pan American Day, two weeks ago, I said "men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds. They have within themselves the power to become free at any moment." And a few days later, on April fifteenth, in addressing the heads of two great foreign States, I stated that I refused to believe that the world is, of necessity, a prisoner of destiny. "On the contrary", I said, "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their people from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended."

In providing for the health and education of children

for the formation of their minds and characters in ways which are in harmony with the institutions of a free society, democracy is training its future leaders. The safety of democracy therefore depends upon the widespread diffusion of opportunities for developing those qualities of mind and character (which) that are essential to leadership in our modern age. Further, democracy is concerned not only with preparation for leadership, but also with preparation for the discharge of the duties of citizenship in the determination of general policies and the selection of those persons who are to be entrusted with special duties. Beyond this, democracy must inculcate in its children capacities for living and assure opportunities for the fulfillment of those capacities. The success of democratic institutions is measured, not by extent of territory, financial power, machines or armaments, but by the desires, the hopes and the deep-lying satisfactions of the individual men, women and children who make up its citizenship.

Of course, we shall be concerned with ways in which the broad chasm between knowing and doing may be bridged over. We shall be reminding ourselves that all the lectures on nutrition will avail nothing unless there is food for a child to eat; that a law for compulsory school attendance is one thing and a chance to go to school is another. Prenatal instruction cannot assure healthy babies unless the mother has access to good medical and nursing

care when the time for the baby's arrival is at hand. We know how to budget a family's expenditures, we have undertaken to preserve home life for fatherless or motherless children through the joint effort of the Federal Government and the States. We have made great progress in the application of money and service to the promotion of maternal and child health; the restoration of crippled children to normal physical condition; the protection of neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent, especially in rural areas; and the elimination of child labor from industries shipping goods in interstate commerce.

Yet, after all has been said, only a beginning has been made in affording security to children. In many parts of the country we have not provided enough to meet the minimum needs of dependent children for food, and shelter and clothing, and the Federal Government's contribution toward their care is even less generous than its contribution to the care of the aged.

It is not enough, however, to consider what a democratic society must provide. We (must) have to look at our civilization through the eyes of children. If we can state in simple language some of the basic necessities of childhood, we shall see more clearly the issues (which) that challenge our intelligence today.

We make the assumption that a happy child should live in a home where he will find warmth and food and affec-

tion; that his parents will take care of him should he fall ill; that at school he will find the teachers and tools needed for an education; that when he grows up there will be a job for him and that he will some day be able to establish his own home.

As we consider these essentials of a happy childhood our hearts are necessarily heavy with the knowledge that there are many children who cannot make these assumptions.

We are concerned about the children of the unemployed.

We are concerned about other children who are without adequate shelter or food or clothing because of the poverty of their parents.

We are concerned about the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode or normal community relationships.

We are concerned about the children of minority groups in (our) the population who, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, must find it difficult to believe in the just ordering of life or the ability of the adults in their world to deal with life's problems.

We are concerned about the children living beyond the reach of medical service or lacking medical service because their parents cannot afford to pay for it.

We are concerned about the children who are not in

school or who attend schools poorly equipped to meet their needs.

We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the fatherhood of God.

We are concerned about the future of our democracy when children cannot make the assumptions that mean security and happiness.

And so this Conference and the activities which it initiates furnish an opportunity for us to test ourselves and our institutions by the extent to which they serve our children. I look to you for comprehensive review of the problems (before us,) and suggestions as to practical ways in which we may advance toward our goal.

Many branches of the Federal Government are engaged in the promotion of the health and education and well-being of the Nation's children. You will be asked to consider the points at which these undertakings may be strengthened, and the needs for service which cannot be supplied with the resources that we have at hand. But the attention of this Conference must not be directed to Federal activities alone, or even to joint Federal and State undertakings. It is the local community which is the focal point (for) of all of these programs, after all. Children receive benefits not in Washington but in the

places and the homes where they live.

The men and women within the sound of my voice,
as well as you who are assembled at the White House today,
are in the larger sense members of this Conference.
Recommendations will be brought to us in a final session
next year. (It then) That is over a year, over a year's
time, to find out what we want to do next. When that time
comes I think it will be for all of us to determine the
extent to which they will be translated into action. But
action we must have. And so, I bid you, the members of
the Conference, Godspeed in, this, your high endeavor.

Miss L. Head

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

April 26, 1939

CAUTION: This address of the President, to be broadcast from the White House in connection with the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NO EARLIER THAN 10:00 A. M., E.S.T., April 26, 1939.

Care must be exercised to prevent premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

- - - - -
MADAM SECRETARY AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE:

It is, perhaps, because I happened to be born with what may be called a "relative mind" and because I have sought to cultivate that kind of thinking for nearly half a century that I think of this Conference in the first instance in terms of the past.

Child welfare -- to use a much misused term -- did not enter into the public conscience of any nation until about one hundred years ago. And we know from reading Dickens and the literature of his period that the well-being of children in those early days was principally considered from the viewpoint of schooling and of crime prevention and the ending of physical cruelty -- all interwoven with the sentimentality of the good, the ultra-good, Victorians.

As time went on some interest came to be taken in every nation, but still the activities of those who sought the bettering of the younger generation of the moment viewed the problem before them as a problem somewhat apart from the relationship of the younger generation to the broader public weal.

Even at the time of the first Children's Conference to assemble in the White House under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, the conditions that surrounded child life were discussed more in terms of child life than in terms of the national community.

This was true to a very great extent in the two succeeding White House Conferences, and it occurs to me that this, the fourth Conference, marks a new and somewhat changed era.

It is still our task to bring to bear upon the major problems of child life all the wisdom and understanding that can be distilled from compilations of facts, from the intuitions of common sense, and from professional skill. This Conference, like the others, is composed of men and women having a broad range of experience and interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of children. It is our purpose to review the objectives and methods affecting the safety, well-being and happiness of the younger generation and their preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

But we have gone one step further. Definitely we are here with a principal objective of considering the relationship between a successful democracy and the children who form an integral part of that democracy. We no longer set them apart from democracy as if they were a segregated group. They are at one with democracy because they are dependent upon a democracy and democracy is dependent on them.

Our work will not be completed at the end of the day -- it will only have begun. During the greater part of the coming year the members of this Conference, representing every State in the Union and many fields of endeavor, will be at work. We shall be testing our institutions, and our own convictions and attitudes of mind, as very effect our actions as friends and as citizens, in terms of their significance to the childhood of our Nation.

In an address on Fun American Day, two weeks ago, I said "Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds. They have within themselves the power to become free at any moment." On April fifteenth, in addressing the heads of two great States, I stated that I refused to believe that the world is, of necessity, a prisoner of destiny. "On the contrary," I said, "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their people from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fates be ended."

In providing for the health and education of children, for the formation of their minds and characters in ways which are in harmony with the institutions of a free society, democracy depends upon the widest and distribution of opportunities for developing those qualities of mind and character which are essential to leadership in our modern age. Further, democracy is concerned not only with preparation for leadership, but also with preparation for the discharge of the duties of citizenship in the determination of general policies and the selection of those persons who are to be entrusted with special duties. Beyond this, democracy must include in its children capacities for living and assure opportunities for the fulfillment of those capacities. The success of democratic institutions is measured, not by extent of territory, financial power, machines or armaments, but by the depths, the hopes, and the deep-living satisfactions of the individual man, woman and children who make up its citizenship.

We shall be concerned with ways in which the broad obligation between knowing and doing may be bridged over. We shall be reminding ourselves that all the lectures on nutrition will avail nothing unless there is food for a child to eat; that a law for compulsory school attendance is one thing and a chance to go to school is another. Parental instruction cannot assure healthy birth as unless the mother has access to good medical and nursing care when the baby's arrival is at hand. We know how to budget a family's expenditures, we have undertaken to preserve home life for fathers and mothersless children through the joint effort of the Federal Government and the States. We have made great progress in the application of money and service to the promotion of maternal and child health; the restoration of crippled children to normal physical condition; the protection of neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent, especially in rural areas; and the elimination of child labor from industries shipping goods in interstate commerce.

Yet, after all has been said, only a beginning has been made in affording security to children. In many parts of the country we have not provided enough to meet the minimum needs of dependent children for food, shelter and clothing, and the Federal Government's contribution toward their care is less generous than its contribution to the care of the aged.

We make the assumption that a happy child should live in a home where he will find warmth and food and affection; that his parents will take care of him should he fall ill; that at school he will find the teachers and tools needed for an education; that when he grows up there will be a job for him and that he will some day establish his own home.

As we consider these essentials of a happy childhood our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that there are many children who cannot make these assumptions.

We are concerned about the children of the unemployed.

We are concerned about other children who are without adequate shelter or food or clothing because of the poverty of their parents.

We are concerned about the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode or normal community relationships.

We are concerned about the children of minority groups in our population who, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, must find it difficult to believe in the just ordering of life or the ability of the adults in their world to deal with life's problems.

We are concerned about the children living beyond the reach of medical service or lacking medical service because their parents cannot pay for it.

We are concerned about the children who are not in school or who attend schools poorly equipped to meet their needs.

We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the fatherhood of God.

We are concerned about the future of our democracy when children cannot make the assumptions that mean security and happiness.

This Conference and the activities which it initiates furnish an opportunity for us to test ourselves and our institutions by the extent to which they serve our children. I look to you for comprehensive review of the problems before us, and suggestions as to practical ways in which we may advance toward our goal.

Many branches of the Federal Government are engaged in the promotion of the health, education, and well-being of the Nation's children. You will be asked to consider the points at which these undertakings may be strengthened, and the needs for service which cannot be supplied with the resources at hand. But the attention of this Conference must not be directed to Federal activities alone, or even to joint Federal and State undertakings. It is the local community which is the focal point for all these programs. Children receive benefits not in Washington but in the places where they live.

The men and women within the sound of my voice, as well as you who are assembled at the White House, are in the larger sense members of this Conference. Recommendations will be brought to us in a final session next year. It then will be for all of us to determine the extent to which they will be translated into action. I bid you, the members of the Conference, Godspeed in your high endeavor.

- - - - -

~~From the Secretary of Labor; Material for the
President's consideration in preparation of speech for
conference on Children in a Democracy - Wednesday
April 26 - East Room 10 a.m.~~

We meet today to consider the relation between Democracy and #1218

~~children. It is our purpose to review the objectives and the methods
of a democratic society as they affect and are dependent upon the safety,
well-being and happiness of the younger generation and their preparation
for the responsibilities of citizenship. Our work will not be concluded
at the end of the day - it will only have begun. During the greater part
of the coming year the members of this conference, representing every
State in the Union and many fields of endeavor, will be at work. We
shall be testing our institutions, and our own convictions and attitudes
of mind as they affect our actions as parents and as citizens, in terms of
their significance to the childhood of our Nation.~~

A

I asked the Secretary of Labor to call this conference and to serve
as its chairman, because I believe that a democratic society finds both
its aim and its security in the happiness and well-being of its people,
and especially its children. In an address on Pan American Day, two weeks
ago, I said "men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their
own minds. They have within themselves the power to become free at any
moment." On April 15, in addressing the heads of two great States, I
stated that I refused to believe that the world is, of necessity, a prisoner
of destiny. "On the contrary", I said, "it is clear that the leaders of
great nations have it in their power to liberate their people from the
disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in
their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended."

In providing for the health and education of children, for the formation
of their minds and characters in ways which are in harmony with the
institutions of a free society, democracy is training its future leaders.
~~It does not select in advance a few children who are to receive special~~

training, for leadership springs from the people and cannot be predicated.

The safety of democracy therefore depends upon the widespread diffusion of opportunities for developing those qualities of mind and character which are essential to leadership in our modern age. Further, democracy is concerned not only with preparation for leadership, but also with preparation for the discharge of the duties of citizenship in the determination of general policies and the selection of those persons who are to be entrusted with special duties. Beyond this, democracy must inculcate in its children capacities for living and assure opportunities for the fulfillment of those capacities. The success of democratic institutions is measured, not by extent of territory, financial power, machines or armaments, but by the desires, the hopes, and the deep-lying satisfactions of the individual men, women and children who make up its citizenship.

This conference is composed of men and women having a broad range of experience and interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of children. There is available to it more complete and accurate information concerning the care of children and the conditions that surround child life than was at the disposal of any one of the three previous conferences that have been held at ten-year intervals since 1909, when Theodore Roosevelt called the first children's conference to assemble in the White House. It will be our task to bring to bear upon the major problems of child life all the wisdom and understanding that can be distilled from compilations of facts, from the intuitions of common sense, and from professional skill.

We shall be concerned with ways in which the broad chasm between knowing and doing may be bridged over. We shall be reminding ourselves that all the lectures on nutrition will avail nothing unless there is food for a child to eat; that a law for compulsory school attendance is one thing and a chance to

go to school is another. Prenatal instruction cannot assure healthy babies unless the mother has access to good medical and nursing care when the time for the baby's arrival is at hand. We know how to budget a family's expenditures, we have undertaken to preserve home life for fatherless or motherless children through the joint effort of the Federal Government and the States. We have made great progress in the application of money and service to the promotion of maternal and child health; the restoration of crippled children to normal physical condition; the protection of neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent, especially in rural areas; and the elimination of child labor from industries shipping goods in interstate commerce. Yet, after all has been said, only a beginning has been made in affording security to children. In many parts of the country we have not provided enough to meet the minimum needs of dependent children for food, shelter and clothing, and the Federal Government's contribution toward their care is less generous than its contribution to the care of the aged.

b7d
11/20/41
Recommendations of official agencies concerning ways in which some of the gaps in our services for children in the fields of health, education, and social security may be closed are now before the Congress.

It is not enough, however, to consider what a democratic society must provide for children and youth if it is to survive. We must endeavor to look at our civilization through the eyes of children, to understand what they feel that it offers to them, even though these feelings may be hardly within the realm of conscious desire. If we can state in simple language some of the basic necessities of childhood, it may perhaps help us to see more clearly the issues which challenge our intelligence and our devotion to the purposes of democratic government.

One of the most profound, though unexpressed, assumptions of a happy child is that he will return in the evening to the home which he leaves in the morning when he starts for school, and that in that home he will find warmth, food, and affection.

A second assumption of a happy child is that if he should fall sick his parents will take care of him, and that if necessary they will call a doctor who will be able to make him well.

A third assumption is that when he goes to school he will find a teacher who knows how to help him master the things which he is supposed to learn, and the tools and materials needed for an education.

A fourth assumption is that when he grows up there will be a job for him, and that he will some day establish a home.

A fifth assumption is belief in a just ordering of life - the faith that his needs will somehow be met, or that if denied, it is not in blind caprice or lack of concern for his interests.

As we consider these essentials of a happy childhood our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that there are many children who cannot make these assumptions.

We are concerned about the children of the unemployed.

We are concerned about other children who are without adequate shelter or food or clothing because of the poverty of their parents.

We are concerned about the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode or normal community relationships.

We are concerned about the children of minority groups in our population who, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, must find it difficult to believe in the just ordering of life or the ability of the adults in their world to deal with life's problems.

B

We are concerned about the children living beyond the reach of medical service or lacking medical service because their parents cannot pay for it.

We are concerned about the children who are not in school or who attend schools poorly equipped to meet their needs.

We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the fatherhood of God.

We are concerned about the future of our democracy when children cannot make the assumptions that mean security and happiness.

This conference and the activities which it initiates furnish an opportunity for us to test ourselves and our institutions by the extent to which they serve our children. I look to you for comprehensive review of the problems before us, and suggestions as to practical ways in which we may advance toward our goal.

We need communities as well as homes where the interests of children are given primary consideration. As citizens we must demand that the services which our taxes support shall be well-administered, as a sacred trust.

Many branches of the Federal Government are engaged in the promotion of the health, education, and well-being of the Nation's children. You will be asked to consider the points at which these undertakings may be strengthened, and the needs for service which cannot be supplied with the resources at hand. But the attention of this Conference must not be directed to Federal activities alone, or even to joint Federal and State undertakings. It is the local community which is the focal point for all these programs. Children receive benefits not in Washington but in the places where they live.

It is my thought that this conference, like its predecessors, should consider the ways in which the States, local communities, privately supported organizations, and individual citizens may be helped to apply more fully the principles upon which the well-being of the citizens of tomorrow depends.

The men and women within the sound of my voice, as well as you who are assembled at the White House, are in the larger sense members of this conference. Recommendations will be brought to us in a final session next year. It then will be for all of us to determine the extent to which they will be translated into action. I bid you, the members of the Conference. Godspeed in your high endeavor.

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

April 26, 1929

CAUTION: This address of the President, to be broadcast from the White House in connection with the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 10:00 a. m., E.S.T., April 26, 1929.

Care must be exercised to prevent premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

- - - - -

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN IN A DEMOCRACY
EAST ROOM, WHITE HOUSE,
APRIL 26, 1939

MADAM SECRETARY AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE:

It is, perhaps, because I happened to be born with what may be called a "relative mind" and because I have sought to cultivate that kind of thinking for nearly half a century that I think of this Conference in the first instance in terms of the past.

Child welfare — to use a much misused term — did not enter into the public conscience of any nation until about one hundred years ago. And we know from reading Dickens and the literature of his period that the well-being of children in those early days was principally considered from the viewpoint of schooling and of crime prevention and the ending of physical cruelty — all interwoven with the sentimentality of the good, the ultra-good, Victorians.

As time went on some interest came to be taken in every nation, but still the activities of those who sought the bettering of the younger generation of the moment viewed the problem before them as a problem somewhat apart from the relationship of the younger generation to the broader public weal.

Even at the time of the first Children's Conference to assemble in the White House under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, the conditions that surrounded child life were discussed more in terms of child life than in terms of the national community.

This was true to a very great extent in the two succeeding White House Conferences, and it occurs to me that this, the fourth Conference, marks a new and somewhat changed era.

It is still our task to bring to bear upon the major problems of child life all the wisdom and understanding that can be distilled from compilations of facts, from the intuitions of common sense, and from professional skill. This Conference,

like the others, is composed of men and women having a broad range of experience and interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of children. It is our purpose to review the objectives and methods affecting the safety, well-being and happiness of the younger generation and their preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

But we have gone one step further. Definitely we are here with a principal objective of considering the relationship between a successful democracy and the children who form an integral part of that democracy. We no longer set them apart from democracy as if they were a segregated group. They are at one with democracy because they are dependent upon a democracy and democracy is dependent on them.

Our work will not be concluded at the end of the day -- it will only have begun. During the greater part of the coming year the members of this Conference, representing every State in the Union and many fields of endeavor, will be at work.

We shall be testing our institutions, and our own convictions and attitudes of mind as they affect our actions as parents and as citizens, in terms of their significance to the childhood of our Nation.

In an address on Pan American Day, two weeks ago, I said "men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds. They have within themselves the power to become free at any moment." On April fifteenth, in addressing the heads of two great States, I stated that I refused to believe that the world is, of necessity, a prisoner of destiny. "On the contrary", I said, "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their people from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended."

In providing for the health and education of children, for the formation of their minds and characters in ways which are in harmony with the institutions of a free society, democracy is training its future leaders. The safety of democracy therefore depends upon the widespread diffusion of opportunities for developing those qualities of mind and character which are essential to leadership in our modern age. Further, democracy is concerned not only with preparation for leadership, but also with preparation for the discharge of the duties of citizenship in the determination of general policies and the selection of those persons who are to be entrusted with special duties. Beyond this, democracy must inculcate in its children capacities for living and assure opportunities for the fulfillment of those capacities. The success of democratic institutions is measured, not by extent of territory, financial power, machines or armaments, but by the desires, the hopes, and the deep-lying satisfactions of the individual men, women and children who make up its citizenship.

We shall be concerned with ways in which the broad chasm between knowing and doing may be bridged over. We shall be reminding ourselves that all the lectures on nutrition will avail nothing unless there is food for a child to eat; that a law for compulsory school attendance is one thing and a chance to go to school is another. Prenatal instruction cannot assure healthy babies unless the mother has access to good medical and nursing care when the time for the baby's arrival is at hand. We know how to budget a family's expenditures, we have undertaken to preserve home life for fatherless or motherless children through the joint effort of the Federal Government and the States. We have made great progress in the application of money and service to the promotion of maternal and child health; the restoration of crippled children to normal physical condition; the protection of neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent, especially in rural areas; and the elimination of child labor from industries shipping goods in interstate commerce.

Yet, after all has been said, only a beginning has been made in affording security to children. In many parts of the country we have not provided enough to meet the minimum needs of dependent children for food, shelter and clothing, and the Federal Government's contribution toward their care is less generous than its contribution to the care of the aged.

It is not enough, however, to consider what a democratic society must provide. We must look at our civilization through the eyes of children. If we can state in simple language some of the basic necessities of childhood, we shall see more clearly the issues which challenge our intelligence.

We make the assumption that a happy child should live in a home where he will find warmth and food and affection; that his parents will take care of him should he fall ill; that at school he will find the teachers and tools needed for an education; that when he grows up there will be a job for him and that he will some day establish his own home.

As we consider these essentials of a happy childhood our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that there are many children who cannot make these assumptions.

We are concerned about the children of the unemployed.

We are concerned about other children who are without adequate shelter or food or clothing because of the poverty of their parents.

We are concerned about the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode or normal community relationships.

We are concerned about the children of minority groups in our population who, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, must find it difficult to believe in the just ordering of life or the ability of the adults in their world to deal with life's problems.

We are concerned about the children living beyond the reach of medical service or lacking medical service because their parents cannot pay for it.

We are concerned about the children who are not in school or who attend schools poorly equipped to meet their needs.

We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the fatherhood of God.

We are concerned about the future of our democracy when children cannot make the assumptions that mean security and happiness.

This Conference and the activities which it initiates furnish an opportunity for us to test ourselves and our institutions by the extent to which they serve our children. I look to you for comprehensive review of the problems before us, and suggestions as to practical ways in which we may advance toward our goal.

Many branches of the Federal Government are engaged in the promotion of the health, education, and well-being of the Nation's children. You will be asked to consider the points at which these undertakings may be strengthened, and the needs for service which cannot be supplied with the resources at hand.

But the attention of this Conference must not be directed to Federal activities alone, or even to joint Federal and State undertakings. It is the local community which is the focal point for all these programs. Children receive benefits not in Washington but in the places where they live.

The men and women within the sound of my voice, as well as you who are assembled at the White House, are in the larger sense members of this Conference. Recommendations will be brought to us in a final session next year. It then will be for all of us to determine the extent to which they will be translated into action. I bid you, the members of the Conference, Godspeed in your high endeavor.

24 Address of the President
Delivered before the White House Conference on Children in a
Democracy
24 East Room of the White House
27 April 23, 1939, 10.00 A. M.

A. . That is over a year, over a year's time, to find out
what we want to do next. When that time comes I
think it

STATEMENTS FILE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

April 26, 1939

CAUTION: This address of the President, to be broadcast from the White House in connection with the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 10:00 A. M., E.S.T., April 26, 1939.

Care must be exercised to prevent premature publication. (P+)

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

MADAM SECRETARY AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE:

It is, perhaps, because I happened to be born with what may be called a "relative mind" and because I have sought to cultivate that kind of thinking for nearly half a century that I think of this Conference in the first instance in terms of the past.

Child welfare — to use a much misused term — did not enter into the public conscience of any nation until about (one) hundred years ago. And we know from reading Dickens and the literature of his period that the well-being of children in those early days was principally considered from the viewpoint of schooling and of crime prevention and the ending of physical cruelty — all interwoven with the sentimentality of the good, the ultra-good, Victorians.

As time went on some interest came to be taken in every nation, but still the activities of those who sought the bettering of the younger generation of the moment viewed the problem before them as a problem somewhat apart from the relationship of the younger generation to the broader public weal.

Even at the time of the first Children's Conference to assemble in the White House under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, the conditions that surrounded child life were discussed more in terms of child life than in terms of the national community.

This was true to a very great extent in the two succeeding White House Conferences, and it occurs to me that this, the fourth Conference, marks a new and somewhat changed era.

It is still our task to bring to bear (upon) the major problems of child life all the wisdom (and) understanding that can be distilled from compilation(s) of facts, from the intuitions of common sense, and from professional skill. This Conference, like the others, is composed of men and women having a broad range of experience and interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of children. It is our purpose to review the objectives and methods affecting the safety, well-being and happiness of the younger generation and their preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

But we have gone one step further. Definitely we are here with a principal objective of considering the relationship between a successful democracy and the children who form an integral part of that democracy. We no longer set them apart from democracy as if they were a segregated group. They are at one with democracy because they are dependent upon it; democracy and democracy is dependent on them.

Our work will not be concluded at the end of the day -- it will only have begun. During the greater part of the coming year the members of this Conference, representing every State in the Union and many fields of endeavor, will be at work. We shall be testing our institutions, and our own convictions and attitudes of mind as they affect our actions as parents and as citizens, in terms of their significance to the childhood of our Nation.

In an address on Pan American Day, two weeks ago, I said "men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds. They have within themselves the power to become free at any moment." On April fifteenth, in addressing the heads of two great States, I stated that I refused to believe that the world is, of necessity, a prisoner of destiny. "On the contrary", I said, "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their people from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended."

In providing for the health and education of children, for the formation of their minds and characters in ways which are in harmony with the institutions of a free society, democracy is training its future leaders. The safety of democracy therefore depends upon the widespread diffusion of opportunities for developing those qualities of mind and character which are essential to leadership in our modern age. Further, democracy is concerned not only with preparation for leadership, but also with preparation for the discharge of the duties of citizenship in the determination of general policies and the selection of those persons who are to be entrusted with special duties. Beyond this, democracy must inculcate in its children capacities for living and assure opportunities for the fulfillment of those capacities. The success of democratic institutions is measured, not by extent of territory, financial power, machines or armaments, but by the desires, the hopes, and the deep-lying satisfactions of the individual men, women and children who make up its citizenship.

We shall be concerned with ways in which the broad chasm between knowing and doing may be bridged over. We shall be reminding ourselves that all the lectures on nutrition will avail nothing unless there is food for a child to eat; that a law for compulsory school attendance is one thing and a chance to go to school is another. Prenatal instruction cannot assure healthy babies unless the mother has access to good medical and nursing care when the time for the baby's arrival is at hand. We know how to budget a family's expenditures, we have undertaken to preserve home life for fatherless or motherless children through the joint effort of the Federal Government and the States. We have made great progress in the application of money and service to the promotion of maternal and child health; the restoration of crippled children to normal physical condition; the protection of neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent, especially in rural areas; and the elimination of child labor from industries shipping goods in interstate commerce.

Yet, after all has been said, only a beginning has been made in affording security to children. In many parts of the country we have not provided enough to meet the minimum needs of dependent children for food, shelter and clothing, and the Federal Government's contribution toward their care is less generous than its contribution to the care of the aged.

It is not enough, however, to consider what a democratic society must provide. We must look at our civilization through the eyes of children. If we can state in simple language some of the basic necessities of childhood, we shall see more clearly the issues which challenge our intelligence.

We make the assumption that a happy child should live in a home where he will find warmth and food and affection; that his parents will take care of him should he fall ill; that at school he will find the teachers and tools needed for an education; that when he grows up there will be a job for him and that he will some day establish his own home.

Underlined
As we consider these essentials of a happy childhood our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that there are many children who cannot make these assumptions.

We are concerned about the children of the unemployed.

We are concerned about other children who are without adequate shelter or food or clothing because of the poverty of their parents.

We are concerned about the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode or normal community relationships.

Underlined
We are concerned about the children of minority groups in our population who, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, must find it difficult to believe in the just ordering of life or the ability of the adults in their world to deal with life's problems.

Underlined
We are concerned about the children living beyond the reach of medical service or lacking medical service because their parents cannot pay for it.

Underlined
We are concerned about the children who are not in school or who attend schools poorly equipped to meet their needs.

We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the fatherhood of God.

We are concerned about the future of our democracy when children cannot make the assumptions that mean security and happiness.

Underlined
This Conference and the activities which it initiates furnish an opportunity for us to test ourselves and our institutions by the extent to which they serve our children. I look to you for comprehensive review of the problems ~~before~~ and suggestions as to practical ways in which we may advance toward our goal.

Many branches of the Federal Government are engaged in the promotion of the health, education, and well-being of the Nation's children. You will be asked to consider the points at which these undertakings may be strengthened, and the needs for service which cannot be supplied with the resources at hand. But the attention of this Conference must not be directed to Federal activities alone, or even to joint Federal and State undertakings. It is the local community which is the focal point ~~for all~~ of these programs. Children receive benefits not in Washington but in the places where they live.

The men and women within the sound of my voice, as well as you who are assembled at the White House, are in the larger sense members of this Conference. Recommendations will be brought to us in a final session next year. It then will be for all of us to determine the extent to which they will be translated into action. I bid you, the members of the Conference, Godspeed in your high endeavor.

Underlined
In this

④ 607 476-477

5-2-34

Underlined
But actions must have, and so,