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. 1268

1940 January 19

Radio Message to the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy
The Senate and the Nation are sadly bereft by the passing of Senator Borah. We shall miss him, and mourn him, and long remember the superb courage which was his. He dared often to stand alone and, even at times, to subordinate party personally interest when he saw a divergence of party interest and the national interest.

Fair minded, firm in principle and shrewd in judgment, he sometimes gave and often received hard blows; but he had great personal charm and a courteous manner which had its source in a kind heart. He had thought deeply and studied with patience all of the great social, political and economic questions which had so vitally concerned his countrymen during the long period of his public service.

His utterances commanded the close attention of the Senate and of a far flung audience whenever he spoke. A unique figure, his passing leaves a void in American public life.
Last April when this Conference first met at the White House I asked you to consider two things: First, how a democracy can best serve its children; and, second, how children can best be helped to grow into the kind of citizens who will know how to preserve and perfect our democracy.

Since then a succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part they must play in the Nation's future. Adequate national defense calls for adequate munitions and implements of war and, at the same time, for educated, healthy and happy citizens. Neither requisite taken alone and without the other will give us national security.
And now it is my pleasure to receive from you the General Conference Report with its program of action. You have adopted this report after two days of careful deliberation, preceded by nearly a year of study and discussion.

Almost every one within reach of my voice thinks of children in terms of two or three subjects in which he has special experience, such as education or recreation or health. Or, he may have great enthusiasm for one particular kind of child-welfare service. I myself am tremendously interested, for example, in crippled children. This Conference report, however, rightly call on us to think of the child as a whole, as he is related to the life of his family, his community, and the entire Nation.

I can illustrate best the extent to which the interests of children are interwoven with the interests of families and communities by giving you the main topics of the Conference report.
The first part reminds us sharply that by every step we take to protect the families of America we are protecting the children also. Here the recommendations in general constitute an argument for buttressing and strengthening the institution of the family as it relates to the health, training, and opportunities of children in a democracy. This part of the discussion includes families and their incomes; families in need of assistance; families and their dwellings; the family as the threshold of democracy.

Following these topics, the report discusses religion in the lives of children; schools; leisure-time activities; libraries; protection against child labor; youth and their needs; conserving child health; social services for children; children in minority groups; and public financing and administration.

After reviewing the record of the past ten years, your Conference finds that we have definitely improved our social institutions and public services. You conclude, and rightly, that to have made progress in a period of
hardship and strain proves that America has both strength and courage. But we have still much to do. Too many children are still living under conditions that must be corrected if our democracy is to develop to its highest capacity.

You tell us that more than half the children of America live in families that do not have enough money to provide fully adequate shelter, food, clothing, medical care and educational opportunity.

You are rightly concerned that provision be made for those who are unemployed, whether for economic or personal reasons. To keep families from starving while fathers walk the streets in vain search of jobs will not give children the best start in life.

Social insurance to provide against total loss of income, and appropriate work projects adjusted to fluctuations in private employment and to both urban and rural needs, constitute the first lines of defense against family disaster.

You tell me in effect what I have been talking about for many years -- that we are moving forward toward an objective of raising the incomes and living conditions of the poorest third of our population, that we have made some dent on the
problem, and that most decidedly we cannot stop and rest on our somewhat meager laurels.

I agree with you that public assistance of many kinds is necessary but I suggest to you that mere grants in aid constitute no permanent solution but that we should address ourselves to two policies: First, to increase the average of incomes in the poorer communities and areas, and, second, to an insistence that every community and area pay taxes in accordance with its ability to pay.

The Conference report has called attention also to the need for continuing and expanding public and private housing programs if families in the lowest income groups are to live in dwellings suitable for the rearing of children.

Last April I referred to our concern for the children of migratory families who have no settled place of abode. The situation of these children who have no homes, and can put down no roots in school or community, calls for special consideration. This means in its simplest terms a program for the permanent resettlement of at least one million people—and money spent on it, after careful planning, will be returned to the Nation many times over in a relatively short time.
Your report has devoted many pages to family economics. We all recognize that the spirit within the home is the most important of all influences in the growth of the child. In family life the child should first learn confidence in his own powers, respect for the feelings and rights of others, the security of mutual good will, faith in God. Here he should find a common bond between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group. Mothers and fathers, by the kind of life they build within the four walls of home, are largely responsible for the future public and social life of our country.

Just as we cannot take care of the child apart from his family, so his welfare is bound up with other institutions that influence his development -- the school, the church, and the agencies which offer useful and happy activities and interests for leisure time. The work of all these institutions needs to be harmonized so as to give our children rounded growth with the least possible conflict and loss. The money and hard work that go into these public and private enterprises are repaid many times over.
Religion, especially, helps children to appreciate life in its wholeness and to develop a deep sense of the sacredness of human personality. In view of the estimate that perhaps one-half the children in this country are having no regular religious instruction, it is important to consider how provision can best be made for religious training. In this we must keep in mind both the wisdom of maintaining the separation of Church and State and the great importance of religion in personal and social living.

I share with you the belief that fair opportunity for schooling should be available to every child in our country. I agree with you that no American child, merely because he happens to be born where property values are low and local taxes do not support good schools, should be placed at a disadvantage in his preparation for citizenship.

Certainly our future is endangered when nearly a million children of elementary school age are not in school;
when thousands of school districts and even some entire States do not pay for good schools. This situation has been reported by many agencies, private and public, and needs to be still more widely understood. But I suggest again that the permanent answer is not mere handouts from the Federal Treasury but has to be solved by improving the economics of the poorer sections of the country and an insistence on adequate taxation in accordance with ability to pay.

We must plan also on a larger scale to give American children a chance for healthful play and worth-while use of leisure. I agree with you that a democratic government has vital interest in these matters. I am glad that you have suggested a national commission, under private auspices, to study leisure-time needs and recreational resources.

More than in any previous decade, we know how to safeguard the health of parents and children. Because of the advance of medical knowledge and the growth of public health work, we have it in our power to conquer many diseases and to promote good health.
New opportunities mean new duties. It was one thing to let people sicken and die when we were helpless to protect them. It is now quite another thing to leave a large portion of our population without care. It is my definite hope that within the next ten years every part of the country will have complete service for all women during maternity and for all new born infants.

So, too, good nutrition is the basis of child health. I am in sympathy with your suggestion that I appoint a National Nutrition Committee to review our present knowledge and coordinate our efforts, looking toward the development of nutrition policies based on the newest and best knowledge.

You have charted a course for ten years or more ahead. Nevertheless, the steps we take today will determine how far we can go tomorrow, and in what direction.
I believe with you that if anywhere in the country any child lacks opportunity for home life, health protection, education, or moral and spiritual development, the strength of the Nation and its ability to cherish and advance the principles of democracy are thereby weakened.

I ask all our fellow citizens who are within the sound of my voice to consider themselves identified with the work of this Conference. I ask you all to study and to discuss with friends and neighbors the program it has outlined, and how its objectives can be realized. May the security and happiness of every boy and girl in our land be our concern, our personal concern, from now on.

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[Signature]

[Handwritten note:] Dear reading copy - but a great deal of interpolation as critical
NOTE: Following is address as actually delivered.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
broadcast from the White House
in connection with the
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN IN A DEMOCRACY
January 19, 1940, 10:40 P.M., E.S.T.

MISS PERKINS, MEMBERS OF THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN IN A DEMOCRACY:

I come here tonight with a very heavy heart because shortly ago I received word of the passing of a very old friend of mine, a very great American, Senator Borah. I had known him for a great many years and I had realized, although perhaps on this or that or the other political problem we may have differing from time to time, yet his purpose and my purpose and the ultimate objective of, I think, everybody in this room interested in the future of America, were identical -- and the Nation has lost one of its great leaders in his passing.

I am glad to come here in the thought that Senator Borah or Idaho would want us to go on with the work of building a better citizenship in the days to come in the United States.

You know, I go back, not as far as he did, but I go back a great many years. I go back to my days in college when I worked for an organization called "The Social Service Committee"-- after that, my wife and I came into the picture and, when we were engaged, I discovered that she was teaching classes of children on the East Side in New York.

And then, very soon after I was admitted to the Bar, I got to know another very great America, an old friend of yours and mine, Hon. Fedd. And probably Hon. Fedd does not remember it himself but in New York in those days we were just beginning to take up the problem of providing milk for babies, for mothers, in all parts of that big city. And I was willing to do something in addition to trying to learn a little law, went in with an organization which has long since ceased to exist because it was absorbed by greater organizations, the New York Milk Committee, and I worked for two or three years in trying to place milk stations for babies on the East Side and West Side and up in the Bronx in New York City.

Hon. Fedd was one of the principal moving agencies in setting that up and it is rather an interesting thing that the woman who was most greatly responsible for helping to provide milk for dependent poor children in the great city of New York was Mrs. Borden Harrison. I sent Mrs. Harrison as United States Minister to Norway two years ago.

Last April when this Conference first met in this room I asked you to consider two things: first, how a democracy can best serve its children; and, the corollary, how children can best be helped to grow into the kind of citizens who will know how to preserve and perfect our democracy.

Since that time -- since last April -- a succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the fact that they are going to play in the future of our American Nation. And on that question, people have come to me and they have said, "What about defense?" "Well," I have said, "internal defense and external defense are one and the same thing. You cannot have one unless you can have both."

Adaptable national defense, in the broadest term, calls for adequate -- you, on the one side -- munitions and implements of war and, at the same time, it calls for educated, healthy and happy citizens. And neither requisite, taken alone, taken all by itself without the other, will give us, will defend the national security.
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 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.
And so today, in January, 1940, it is my pleasure to 
receive from you the General Conference Report with its program 
of action. You have adopted this report after days of careful 
deliberation, preceded by nearly a year of study and discussion.

And, by way of illustration, I am having a problem with 
the Congress of the United States as to whether the problems of 
the United States are going to be decided after a couple of days 
of careful deliberation in each House or whether I am going to get 
a couple of million dollars for undertaking studies that would 
correspond to this year of study, this year of discussion, that 
you good people have been putting into the problem of children in 
a democracy. And I think I am going to win out.

When I started to jot down some notes about what I was 
going to say tonight — and so far I have been speaking, as you 
have observed, practically extemporaneously — I said to myself, 
"This is going to be the most dreadful speech I have ever deliv-
ered," because, when I come to write down notes and dictate a 
speech, I say to myself, "What is it in this particular subject 
that I am going to talk about that hits me between the eyes?" 
And, on the particular subject of children in a democracy, the 
thing that hit me between the eyes was what I got about a week 
ago, a list, a tabulation, a catalog of what you have been 
studying.

And so I felt that the Nation as a whole ought to rea-
ize that the subject of children covers several pages of a 
catalog. There are so many interests involved, so many problems 
involved. Almost everybody who is hearing me tonight I suppose 
every state of the Union thinks of children in terms of two 
out of these subjects on the average, two or three subjects 
in which he or she have special experience or special interest, 
such as education of children or the recreation of children or 
the health of children. Or he or she may have some great en-
thusiasm for one particular kind of child welfare service. For 
instance, I myself am tremendously interested in crippled 
children.

But this Conference report rightly calls on us to think 
of children as a whole, as each child is related, not to one life, 
not only to his own life but to the lives of his brothers and 
sisters, the life of his family and then, inevitably, to the life 
of his community, the life of his county, the life of his State 
and the life of his Nation.

And that is why if people in this country are going to 
think of this problem as it really is, they have got to listen to 
a catalogue for the next ten minutes.

I can illustrate best the extent to which the interests 
of children are interwoven with the interests of families and com-
munity by giving you these main topics of the conference and I 
do not think there is any one of these topics of which we can say, 
"Well, that is awfully nice, but what relation has it to the prob-
lem of my child?" Well, of course it has, every subject here has.

And the first part of the Conference report reminds us 
sharply that by every step we take to protect the families of 
America, we are protecting the children also. Well, put that in 
another way: it means that what Federal Government and state 
government, county government, town government, village government, 
everything else, what they are doing to coordinate the economy and 
the social problems of their own communities in relation to the 
whole population necessarily has an effect on every child in that 
community. Here we find in this report recommendations in general 
which constitute an argument for buttressing and strengthening, in 
the first instance, the institution of the family, the family as 
it relates again to a whole, and of other things — health, train-
ing and opportunities of children in what we are pleased to call a 
democracy and, thank God, it still is.
This part of the discussion includes families and their incomes, families in need of assistance, families and their dwellings and the family as a threshold to the future democracy of this country.

And then, following that group of topics, the report discusses a lot of other things that either enter or ought to enter into the life of every American child in every part of the country, schools, religion, leisure time activities -- mind you, there are all separate topics that we are trying to coordinate into one national picture -- libraries, protection against child labor, youth and the needs of youth, the conserving of child health, the social services for children, children in minority groups and, something that a lot of people forget, as I have good reason to know as the Chief Executive, the subject of public financing and administration.

But what I am specially pleased about is this; that this Conference, made up of men and women that belong to every political party in every part of the country, has found that we have definitely improved our social institutions and our public services during these past ten years. And the only thing that good old Honest Abe said that I do not agree with -- he called them "those terrible ten years", and I do not. I think they have been the most interesting ten years since -- what? Well, at least since the Civil War and maybe since the Revolution. And we are all glad we have had a part in them because I believe that though we have had lots of trouble, lots of difficulties, that these past ten years have been ten useful and, on the whole, ten years of definite progress in a democracy.

The Conference concludes, and rightly, that to have made progress in a period of hardship and strain proves that America has both strength and courage.

But, again, I agree with the Conference that we still have got a long way to go. Too many children, and you can find them in every State in the Union, are living under conditions that must be corrected if our democracy is to develop to its highest capacity. The Conference tells me that more than half of the children of America are living in families that do not have enough money to provide fully adequate shelter, adequate food, adequate clothing and adequate medical care and adequate educational opportunities.

I have been called to task, as you all know, because I have reiterated, reiterated many times, something about one-third of America, -- the ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-fed -- criticized on the ground that I was saying something derogatory. I have been telling the truth and you good people have sustained me by that statement that more than half the children of America are living in families that do not have enough money to provide fully adequate shelter, food, clothing, medical care and educational opportunity. Why should we not admit it? By admitting it we are saying we are going to improve things.

Yes, and you are rightly concerned that provision be made for those who are unemployed, whether for economic or personal reasons. To keep families from starving while the fathers walk the streets in vain in search for jobs will not give children the best start in life.

Social insurance to provide against total loss of income, and appropriate work projects adjusted to fluctuations in private employment and both urban and rural needs, constitute the first lines of defense against family disaster.
And so it was that in our conversation that began in our common effort to understand the nature of our work, our goal and purpose, we were able to find common ground and to explore the possibilities of our existence. By using the language of our conversation, we were able to address the complexities of our thoughts, to express our ideas and to communicate our understanding.

For the first time, we were able to speak in a way that made sense to other people. And in doing so, we were able to see the power of the spoken word and the value of the written page.

In the course of our conversation, we found that we could not help but wonder what the future held for us. And in our conversations, we were able to imagine what might be possible, to see the potential for what could be.

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Some text that needs to be analyzed and transformed.
Certainly our future is endangered when nearly a
million children of elementary school age are not in school;
when thousands of school districts and even some entire
States do not pay for good schools. This situation has been
reported by many agencies, private and public, and, the way
I have put it down here in my manuscript, needs to be more
widely understood. That does not mean anything. What I
really wanted to say is this: I would like to put on the
front page of every newspaper in the United States, a list
of the most backward school districts, the most backward
school states in the United States.

That is rough treatment but if every person in the
United States could know where the conditions are worst,
-- education and health -- those areas would get the sympathy,
the understanding and the help for improving those worst of
conditions. And again, I have to suggest that the permanent
answer is not mere handouts from the Federal Treasury but
that the problem has to be solved by improving the economies
in these poorer sections and an insistence, hand in hand with it,
that there be adequate taxation in accordance with
ability to pay.

We must plan also, on a larger scale, to give American
children a chance for healthful play and worthwhile use of
leisure. I agree with you that a democratic government has
a vital interest in those matters. And I am glad that you
have suggested a national commission, under private auspices,
to study leisure-time needs and recreational resources.

More than in any previous decade we know how to
safeguard the health of parents and children. Because of
the advance of medical knowledge and the growth of public
health work, we have it in our power to conquer diseases
that we could not conquer ten years ago, and the ability to
promote general good health.

New opportunities to use mean new duties. It was
one thing to let people sicken and die when we were helpless
to protect them. And it is quite another thing to
leave a large portion of our population without care at all.
It is my definite hope that within the next ten years every
part of the country -- just to use an example -- and I believe
that hope can be fulfilled -- every part of the United States
will have complete and adequate service for all women during
maternity and for all new-born infants. That we can do.

So, too, good nutrition is the basis of child health.
And I am equally in sympathy with your suggestion that I
appoint a National Nutrition Committee to review our present
knowledge and to coordinate our efforts, looking toward the
development of nutrition policies based on the newest and
best methods, and we are making new discoveries every day.

You, all the members of the Conference, have charted
a course, a course for ten years to come. Nevertheless,
the steps that we take now, in this year of 1940, are going to
determine how far we can go tomorrow, and in what direction.

I believe with you that if anywhere in the country any
child lacks opportunity for home life, for health protection,
for education, for moral or spiritual development, the
strength of the Nation and its ability to cherish and advance
the principles of democracy are thereby weakened.

I ask all our fellow citizens who are within the
sound of my voice to consider themselves identified with the
work of this Conference. I ask you all to study and discuss
with friends and neighbors the program that it has outlined,
to study how its objectives can be realized. May the security
and the happiness of every boy and girl in our land be our
concern, our personal concern, from now on.

You, the members of this Conference, this Conference
on Children in a Democracy, you are leaders of a new American
Army of Peace.
Last April when this Conference first met at the White House I asked you to consider two things: First, how a democracy can best serve its children; and, second, how children can best be helped to grow into the kind of citizens who will know how to preserve and perfect our democracy.

Since then a succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part they must play in the Nation's future. Adequate national defense calls for adequate munitions and implements of war and, at the same time, for educated, healthy and happy citizens. Neither requisite taken alone and without the other will give us national security.

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Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

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Our company has been providing quality products and services for many years. As you can see in the attached image, we are committed to delivering excellence in every aspect of our business. The team of experts at our company is dedicated to meeting the needs of our customers, and we are always looking for ways to improve and innovate.

In the past year, our company has experienced significant growth, and we are proud to say that we have achieved our goals. We are continually investing in new technologies and tools to ensure that we remain at the forefront of our industry.

We are confident that our continued success will be due in large part to the dedication and hard work of our team. We are committed to providing our employees with the resources they need to succeed and are always looking for ways to support their personal and professional growth.

Thank you for choosing our company. We look forward to serving you for years to come.
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Religion, especially, helps children to appreciate life in its wholeness and to develop a deep sense of the sacredness of human personality. In view of the estimate that perhaps one-half the children in this country are having no regular religious instruction, it is important to consider how provision can best be made for religious training. In this we must keep in mind both the wisdom of maintaining the separation of Church and State and the great importance of religion in personal and social living.

I share with you the belief that fair opportunity for schooling should be available to every child in our country. I agree with you that no American child, merely because he happens to be born where property values are low and local taxes do not support good schools, should be placed at a disadvantage in his preparation for citizenship.

Certainly our future is endangered when nearly a million children of elementary school age are not in school; when thousands of school districts and even some entire States do not pay for good schools. This situation has been reported by many agencies, public and private, and needs to be still more widely understood. But I suggest again that the permanent answer is not more handouts from the Federal Treasury but has to be solved by improving the economies of the poorer sections of the country and an insistence on adequate taxation in accordance with ability to pay.

We must plan also on a larger scale to give American children a chance for healthful play and worth-while use of leisure. I agree with you that a democratic government has vital interests in these matters. I am glad that you have suggested a national commission, under private auspices, to study leisure-time needs and recreational resources.

More than in any previous decade, we know how to safeguard the health of parents and children. Because of the advance of medical knowledge and the growth of public health work, we have it in our power to conquer many diseases and to promote good health.

New opportunities mean new duties. It was one thing to let people sicken and die when we were helpless to protect them. It is now quite another thing to lose a large portion of our population without care. It is my definite hope that within the next ten years every part of the country will have complete service for all women during maternity and for all new born infants.

So, too, good nutrition is the basis of child health. I am in sympathy with your suggestion that I appoint a National Nutrition Committee to review our present knowledge and coordinate our efforts, looking toward the development of nutrition policies based on the newest and best knowledge.
You have charted a course for ten years or more ahead. Nevertheless, the steps we take today will determine how far we can go tomorrow, and in what direction.

I believe with you that if anywhere in the country any child lacks opportunity for home life, health protection, education, or moral and spiritual development, the strength of the Nation and its ability to cherish and advance the principles of democracy are thereby weakened.

I ask all our fellow citizens who are within the sound of my voice to consider themselves identified with the work of this Conference. I ask you all to study and to discuss with friends and neighbors the program it has outlined, and how its objectives can be realized. May the security and happiness of every boy and girl in our land be our concern, our personal concern, from now on.
Madam Chairman,

Last April when this Conference first met at the White House I asked you to consider two things: First, how a democracy can best serve its children; and, Second, how children can best be helped to grow into the kind of citizens who will preserve and perfect our democracy.

Since then a succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. Every step we take to give all children a fair chance reaffirms our faith in the future of America and the future of democracy. I am confident that All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part they must play in the Nation's future. (A)

And now it is my pleasure to receive from you the General Conference Report with its program of action. You have adopted this report after two days of careful deliberation, preceded by nearly a year of study and discussion.

Almost every one within reach of my voice thinks of children in terms of two or three subjects in which he has special experience, such as education, recreation, or health. Or, he may have great enthusiasm for one particular kind of child-welfare service. I myself am tremendously interested, of course, in crippled children. This Conference report, however, compels us to think of the child
as a whole, as he is related to the life of his family, his community, and the entire Nation.

I can illustrate best the extent to which the interests of children are interwoven with the interests of families and communities by giving you the main topics of the Conference report. The first part reminds us sharply that by every step we take to protect the families of America we are protecting the children also. Here the recommendations in general constitute an argument for buttressing and strengthening the institution of the family as it relates to the health, training, and opportunities of children in a democracy. This part of the discussion includes families and their incomes; families in need of assistance; families and their dwellings; the family as the threshold of democracy. Following these topics, the report discusses religion in the lives of children; schools; leisure-time activities; libraries; protection against child labor; youth and their needs; conserving child health; social services for children; children in minority groups; and public financing and administration.

After reviewing the record of the past ten years, your Conference finds that we have not only maintained but improved our social institutions and public services. You conclude, and rightly, that to have made progress in a period of hardship and strain proves that America has both strength and courage. Such knowledge gives us the strongest assurance for the future, and enables us to say frankly that we have still much to do. Because we have done much and purpose to do more, we can face the fact that too many children are still living under conditions that must be corrected if our democracy is
to develop to its highest capacity.

This Conference is concerned chiefly with the ability of the family to protect and nurture its children. Children cannot be safe when their families are in jeopardy. The resources and the stability of family life are matters of importance to the whole Nation.

You tell us that more than half the children of America live in families that do not have enough money to provide fully adequate shelter, food, clothing, medical care and educational opportunity. A conference on children cannot fail to give attention to unemployment, illness, low wages, poor housing. Our goal should be so to develop our economic life as to assure as soon as possible full employment in both agriculture and industry, with earnings sufficient to meet family needs.

You are rightly concerned that provision be made for those who are unemployed, whether for economic or personal reasons. To keep families from starving while fathers walk the streets in vain search of jobs will not give children the best start in life. Work for the father means more to the child than any other form of service.

Social insurance to provide against total loss of income, and appropriate work projects adjusted to fluctuations in private employment and to both urban and rural needs, constitute the first lines of defense against family disaster.

Public assistance in the form of aid to dependent children, and general relief supplementary to other forms of aid, are further lines of defense. I note your recommendation that public assistance and general relief policies should be developed in accordance with the
needs of the people and the capacities of the various units of
government, local, State and Federal. It is of great importance that
these forms of aid be sufficient in each case to safeguard family
health and security, and especially the growth and welfare of children.

The Conference report has called attention also to the need for
continuing and expanding housing programs if families in the
lowest income groups are to live in dwellings suitable for the
rearing of children.

Last April I referred to our concern for the children of migratory
families who have no settled place of abode. The situation of these
children who have no homes, and can put down no roots in school or
community, calls for special consideration. For many of them the
Federal Government is the only available source of help, since they
have no permanent State or local residence.

All methods of meeting unemployment and poverty need to be carefully
and frequently reviewed, with our goal by the next ten-year period a
reasonable measure of economic security for every family.

Your report has devoted many pages to family economics. Never
pages have been given to the personal side of family life. This is
because economic security calls for many kinds of public action that
are beyond the power of any individual. Nevertheless, we all recognize
that the spirit within the home is the most important of all influences
in the growth of the child. In family life the child should first
learn confidence in his own powers, respect for the feelings and rights
of others, the security of mutual good will, faith in God. Here he
should find a common bond between the interests of the individual and
the interests of the group. Mothers and fathers, by the kind of life they build within the four walls of home, largely affect the future public and social life of our country.

Just as we cannot take care of the child apart from his family, so his welfare is bound up with other institutions that influence his development,—the school, the Church, and the agencies which offer useful and happy activities and interests for leisure time. The work of all these institutions needs to be encouraged and harmonized so as to give our children rounded growth with the least possible conflict and loss. The money and hard work that go into these public and private enterprises are repaid many times over in the soundness and health of the whole community.

Religion, especially, helps children to appreciate life in its wholeness and to develop a deep sense of the sacredness of human personality. In view of the estimate that perhaps one-half the children in this country are having no regular religious instruction, it is important to consider how provision can best be made for religious training. In this we must keep in mind both the wisdom of maintaining the separation of Church and State and the great importance of religion in personal and social living.

I share with you the belief that fair opportunity for schooling should be available to every child in our country. I agree with you that no American child, merely because he happens to be born where property values are low and local taxes cannot support good schools, should be placed at a disadvantage in his preparation for citizenship.
Certainly our future is endangered when nearly a million children of elementary school age are not in school; when thousands of school districts and even some entire States have not the means to pay for good schools. This situation has been reported by many agencies, private and public, and needs to be still more widely understood. Your report again puts clearly before us the need for enlarging units of school administration, for substantial State aid in every State, and for Federal assistance in reducing inequalities in educational opportunity among the States.

We must plan also on a larger scale to give American children a chance for healthful play and worthwhile use of leisure. I agree with you that a democratic government has vital interest in these matters. I am glad that you have suggested a national commission, under private auspices, to study leisure-time needs and recreational resources.

More than in any previous decade, we know how to safeguard the health of parents and children. Because of the advance of medical knowledge and the growth of public health work, we have it in our power to conquer many diseases and to promote good health.

New opportunities mean new duties. It was one thing to let people sicken and die when we were helpless to protect them. It is now quite another thing to leave a large portion of our population without care. Long before the end of another decade complete service for all women during maternity and for all newborn infants should be available either through private resources or public funds. Within that time all children should be under effective health supervision and have access to competent medical care. In this way we can look
forward to a future America with glowing health a natural asset of its citizens.

Good nutrition is the basis of child health. I am in sympathy with your suggestion that I appoint a National Nutrition Committee to review our present knowledge and coordinate our efforts, looking toward the development of nutrition policies based on the newest and best knowledge.

Other aspects of child welfare that your report brings forcibly to our attention include consolidation and extension of the gains made in abolishing child labor; provision of either schooling or employment opportunity for all young people; social services for children with special handicaps; and efforts to assure good health and educational opportunity to children of all races and national origins. Underlying all these services, there should be public understanding of their necessity, and development of sound principles of administration.

I am glad to note that although you recognize the need for doing everything possible to strengthen the health and well-being of children this year, you have not limited your recommendations to what can be done at once. You have charted a course for 10 years or more ahead. Nevertheless, the steps we take today will determine how far we can go tomorrow, and in what direction.

The question is not alone, what can a democracy do for its children and youth? It is even more, how can children and youth be prepared to give what may be required in service and in cooperation in a society dedicated to the principles of freedom and the worth of human personality?
Last April when this Conference first met at the White House I asked you to consider two things: First, how a democracy can best serve its children; and, second, how children can best be helped to grow into the kind of citizens who will know how to preserve and perfect our democracy.

Since then a succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part they must play in the Nation’s future. Adequate national defense calls for adequate munitions and implements of war and, at the same time, for educated, healthy and happy citizens. Neither requisite taken alone and without the other will give us national security.
And now it is my pleasure to receive from you the General Conference Report with its program of action. You have adopted this report after two days of careful deliberation, preceded by nearly a year of study and discussion.

Almost every one within reach of my voice thinks of children in terms of two or three subjects in which he has special experience, such as education or recreation or health. Or, he may have great enthusiasm for one particular kind of child-welfare service. I myself am tremendously interested, for example, in crippled children. This Conference report, however, rightly calls upon us to think of the child as a whole, as he is related to the life of his family, his community, and the entire Nation.

I can illustrate best the extent to which the interests of children are interwoven with the interests of families and communities by giving you the main topics of the Conference report.
The first part reminds me sharply that by every step we take to protect the families of America we are protecting the children also. Here the recommendations in general constitute an argument for buttressing and strengthening the institution of the family as it relates to the health, training, and opportunities of children in a democracy. This part of the discussion includes families and their incomes; families in need of assistance; families and their dwellings; the family as the threshold of democracy.

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hardship and strain proves that America has both strength and
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still living under conditions that must be corrected if our
democracy is to develop to its highest capacity.

You tell us that more than half the children of America
live in families that do not have enough money to provide fully
adequate shelter, food, clothing, medical care and educational
opportunity.

You are rightly concerned that provision be made for
those who are unemployed, whether for economic or personal reasons.
To keep families from starving while fathers walk the streets in
vain search of jobs will not give children the best start in life.

Social insurance to provide against total loss of income,
and appropriate work projects adjusted to fluctuations in private
employment and to both urban and rural needs, constitute the
first lines of defense against family disaster.

You tell me in effect what I have been talking about
for many years -- that we are moving forward toward an objective
of raising the incomes and living conditions of the poorest
third of our population, that we have made some dent on the
problem, and that most decidedly we cannot stop and rest on 
our somewhat meager laurels.

I agree with you that public assistance of many kinds 
is necessary but I suggest to you that mere grants in aid 
constitute no permanent solution but that we should address 
ourselves to two policies: First, to increase the average 
of incomes in the poorer communities and areas, and, second, 
to an insistence that every community and area pay taxes in 
accordance with its ability to pay.

The Conference report has called attention also to the 
need for continuing and expanding public and private housing 
programs if families in the lowest income groups are to live 
in dwellings suitable for the rearing of children.

Last April I referred to our concern for the children 
of migratory families who have no settled place of abode.
The situation of these children who have no homes, and can 
put down no roots in school or community, calls for special 
consideration. This means in its simplest terms a program 
for the permanent resettlement of at least one million people —
and money spent on it, after careful planning, will be 
returned to the Nation many times over in a relatively short 
time.
Your report has devoted many pages to family economies. We all recognize that the spirit within the home is the most important of all influences in the growth of the child. In family life the child should first learn confidence in his own powers, respect for the feelings and rights of others, the security of mutual good will, faith in God. Here he should find a common bond between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group. Mothers and fathers, by the kind of life they build within the four walls of home, are largely responsible for the future public and social life of our country.

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health work, we have it in our power to conquer many diseases
and to promote good health.
New opportunities mean new duties. It was one thing to let people sicken and die when we were helpless to protect them. It is now quite another thing to leave a large portion of our population without care. It is my definite hope that within the next ten years every part of the country will have complete service for all women during maternity and for all new born infants.

So, too, good nutrition is the basis of child health. I am in sympathy with your suggestion that I appoint a National Nutrition Committee to review our present knowledge and coordinate our efforts, looking toward the development of nutrition policies based on the newest and best knowledge.

You have charted a course for ten years or more ahead. Nevertheless, the steps we take today will determine how far we can go tomorrow, and in what direction.
I believe with you that if anywhere in the country any child lacks opportunity for home life, health protection, education, or moral and spiritual development, the strength of the Nation and its ability to cherish and advance the principles of democracy are thereby weakened.

I ask all our fellow citizens who are within the sound of my voice to consider themselves identified with the work of this Conference. I ask you all to study and to discuss with friends and neighbors the program it has outlined, and how its objectives can be realized. May the security and happiness of every boy and girl in our land be our concern, our personal concern, from now on.
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 10:30 A.M., E.S.T., Jan. 19, 1940.

Care must be exercised to prevent premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President
MISS PERKINS, MEMBERS OF THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN IN A
DEMOCRACY:

I come here tonight with a very heavy heart because shortly
ago I received word of the passing of a very old friend of mine, a
very good American, Senator Borah. I had known him for a great many
years and I had realized, although perhaps on this or that or the
other political problem we may have differed from time to time, yet
his purpose and my purpose and the ultimate objective of, I think,
everybody in this room interested in the future of America
were identical—and the Nation has lost one of its great
leaders in his passing.

I am glad to come here in the thought that Senator Borah
of Idaho would want us to go on with the work of building a better
citizenship in the days to come in the United States.

You know, I go back, not as far as he did, but I go back
a great many years. I go back to my days in college when I worked
for an organization called the Social Service Committee. As after
that my wife came into the picture and, when we were engaged, I dis-
covered that she was teaching classes of children on the East Side
in New York.

And then, very soon after I was admitted to the Bar, I
got to know another very great American, an old friend of yours and
mine, Homer Folks. And probably Homer does not remember it himself but in New York in those days we were just beginning to take up the problem of providing milk for babies, for mothers, in all parts of that big city. And I, wanting to do something in addition to trying to learn a little law, went in with an organization which has long since ceased to exist because it was absorbed by greater organizations, the New York Milk Committee, and I worked for two or three years in trying to help in placing milk stations for babies on the East Side and West Side and up in the Bronx in New York City. Homer Folks was one of the principal moving agencies in setting that up and it is rather interesting thing that the woman who was most greatly responsible for helping to provide milk for dependent, poor children in the great city of New York, Mrs. Borden Harriman, I sent Mrs. Harriman as United States Minister to Norway two years ago.

Last April when this Conference first met in this room I asked you to consider two things: first, how a democracy can best serve its children; and, the corollary, how children can best be shaped to grow into the kind of citizens who will know how to preserve and perfect our democracy.

Since that time -- since last April -- a succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part that they are going to play in the future of our American Nation. And on that question, people have come
to me and they have said, "What about defense?" "Well," I have said, "internal defense and external defense are one and the same thing. You cannot have one unless you can have both." Adequate national defense, in the broadest term, calls for adequate -- yes, on the one side -- munitions and implements of war and, at the same time, it calls for educated, healthy and happy citizens. And neither requisite, taken alone, taken all by itself (without the other, will give us) [handwritten, illegible] national security.

And so today, in January, 1940, (And now) it is my pleasure to receive from you the General Conference Report with its program of action. You have adopted this report after [handwritten, illegible] days of careful delibera- tion, preceded by nearly a year of study and discussion.

And, by way of illustration, I am having a problem with the Congress of the United States as to whether the problems of the United States are going to be decided after a couple of days of careful delibera- tion in each House or whether I am going to get a couple of million dollars that would correspond to this year of study, this year of dis- cussion, that you good people have been putting into the problem of Children in a Democracy. And I think I am going to win out.

When I started to jot down some notes about what I was going to say tonight -- and so far I have been speaking, as you have observed, practically extemporaneously -- I said to myself, "This is going to be the most [handwritten, illegible] speech I have ever delivered," because, when I come to write down notes and dictate a speech, I say to myself, "What is it in this particular subject that I am going to talk about that hits me
between the eyes?" And, on this particular subject of children in a
democracy, the thing that hit me between the eyes was what I got about
a week ago, a list, a tabulation, a catalog of what you have been
studying.

And so I felt that the Nation as a whole ought to realize
that the subject of children covers several pages of a catalog. There
are so many interests involved, so many problems involved. Almost
everybody who is hearing me tonight. I suppose in every state of
the Union (almost everyone within reach of my voice) thinks of children
in terms of two or three of these subjects on the average, two or
three subjects in which he or she have (in which he has) special experi-
ence or special interest, such as education of children or the recrea-
tion of children or the health of children. Or he may have some great
enthusiasm for one particular kind of child welfare service. For in-
stance, I myself am tremendously interested in (for example) crippled
children. But this Conference report (however) rightly calls on
us to think of (the child) children as a whole, as (he) each child
to
is related, not to one life, not to his own life, not only his own
lives
life but to the life of his brothers and sisters, the life of his
family and then, inevitably, to the life of his community, the life
of his county, the life of his State and the life of (and the entire)
his Nation.
And that is why people in this country are going to think of this problem as it really is, they have got to listen to a catalogue for the next ten minutes.

I can illustrate best the extent to which the interests of children are interwoven with the interests of families and communities by giving you these main topics of the conference and I do not think there is any one of these topics that we can say, "Well, that is awfully nice, but what relation has it to the problem of my child?" Well, of course it has, every subject here has.

And the first part of the Conference report reminds us sharply that by every step we take to protect the families of America, we are protecting the children also. Well, put that in another way: it means that what Federal Government and State Government, County Government, Town Government, Village Government, everything else, what they are doing to coordinate the economy/the social problems of their communities in relation to the whole population necessarily has an effect on every child in that community. Here we find in this report the recommendations in general which constitute an buttressing and argument for strengthening, in the first instance, the institution of the family, the family as it relates again to a whole, and of other things — health, training and opportunities of children in what we are pleased to call a democracy and, thank God, it still is.
This part of the discussion includes families and their incomes, families in need of assistance, families and their dwellings and the family as a threshold to the future democracy of this country.

And then, following that group of topics, the report discusses a lot of other things that either enter or ought to enter into the life of every American child in every part of the country, schools, religion, leisure time activities -- mind you, these are all separate topics that we are trying to coordinate into one national picture -- libraries, protection against child labor, youth and the needs of youth, the conserving of child health, the social services for children, children in minority groups and, something that a lot of people forget, as I have good reason to know as the Chief Executive, the subject of public financing and administration.

But what I am specially pleased about is this: that this Conference, made up of men and women that belong to every political party in every part of the country, has found that we have definitely improved our social institutions and our public services during these past ten years. And the only thing that good old Homer Folks said that I do not agree with -- he called them "these terrible ten years," and I do not. I think they have been the most interesting ten years since -- what? Well, at least since the Civil War and maybe since the Revolution. And we are all glad we have had a part in them lots because I believe that though we have had a great deal of trouble, lots of difficulties, that these past ten years have been ten useful and, on
the whole, ten years of definite progress in a democracy.

The Conference concludes, and rightly, that to have made progress in a period of hardship and strain proves that America has both strength and courage. But, again, I agree with the Conference that we still have got a long way to go.

Too many children, and you can find them in every State in the Union, are living under conditions that must be corrected if our democracy is to develop to its highest capacity.

The Conference tells me that more than half of the children of America are living in families that do not have enough money to provide fully adequate shelter, adequate food, adequate clothing and adequate medical care and adequate educational opportunities.

I have been called to task, as you all know, because I have reiterated, reiterated many times, something about one-third of America, the ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-fed -- criticized on the ground that I was saying something derogatory. I have been telling the truth and you good people have sustained me by that statement that more than half the children of America are living in families that do not have enough money to provide fully adequate shelter, food, clothing, medical care and educational opportunity. Why should not we admit it? By admitting it we are saying we are going to improve things.

Yes, and you are rightly concerned that provision be made for those who are unemployed, whether for economic or personal reasons. To keep families from starving while the fathers walk the streets in vain in search for jobs will not give children the best start in life.
Social insurance to provide against total loss of income, and appropriate work projects adjusted to fluctuations in private employment and both urban and rural needs, constitute the first lines of defense against family disaster.

And I am glad of what has been said tonight about problems. I think my very good old friend, the Mayor of New York, would not mind my telling a story of what happened up at Hyde Park last autumn. He was up there, lunching with us! We had a big lunch, eighteen or twenty people, and we were talking about the problem of distribution of population in the United States. Well, that is an old thing that I have been sort of hobbying about for a great many years, twenty or thirty years. And I talked about the problem of overcrowding in cities. I talked about whether it was a good thing, with a big question mark, about cities getting too big, the bigger cities getting still bigger, and whether we could not work on some plan for a greater decentralization.
of the population, the building up of the smaller communities. And then, as a sort of jest, I said, "You know, Fiorello, I am going to say something awful that you won't agree with. I think your problem in New York City, with seven million men, women and children in it is a bad one! I think that the problem of civilized life in a community of that size is almost too big a problem and I think that New York would be better off if it had six million people instead of seven."
And the Mayor of New York looked at me and he said, "Mr. President, I cannot agree." He said, "Mr. President, you are wrong." He said, "New York would be better off if it had 5 million people in it instead of 7!"

And, by way of following up the same subject --this is just purely from memory--we were talking of before the World War, somewhere around 1913 or 1914 when I was over here in the Navy Department, I read an extraordinarily interesting pamphlet which carried out the thought that you have heard tonight about rural populations. It was by a great French doctor who had made all kinds of examinations of records, vital statistics in half a dozen of the great cities of Europe, and he had come to the conclusion and had attempted to prove it by family statistics that any family that had been city bred for three or four generations died out and that the only families in cities that survived were the families that had an influx of country blood every generation or two.

Now, I do not know whether our modern medical friends will support that but at least it is something well worth our thinking about in terms of the America of the future.

You tell me, in effect, in this report what I have been talking about for many years, that we have been moving forward toward the objective of raising the incomes and the living conditions of the poorest portion of our population, that we have made some dent on the problem and that
most definitely, we cannot stop and rest on our rather meagre laurels.

Yes, I agree with you that public assistance of many kinds is necessary. But I suggest to you that the Federal treasury has bottom to it, and that mere grants in aid constitute no permanent solution of the problem of our health, our education, or our children, but that we should address ourselves to two definite policies: First, to increase the average of incomes in the poorer communities and, in the poorer groups, in the poorer areas of the nation and, secondly, that we should address ourselves to an insistence that in every community, in every state and the District of Columbia, they should pay taxes in accordance with ability to pay.

The Conference report, going on with this — what shall I call it? — Sears Roebuck catalogue and it is very educational to read a catalogue — has called attention also to the need for continuing and expanding public and private housing programs if the families in the lowest income groups are to live in dwellings suitable for the raising of children.

Last April, to take another item, I referred to our concern for the children of the migratory families who have no settled place of abode. I spoke casually to the Press today about a study I am making. Up in the State of Washington we are spending a great many millions to harness the Columbia River, to put a great dam up there which will pump the water up onto a
I have read a book; it is called "Grapes of Wrath" and there are 500,000 Americans that live in the covers of that book. I would like to see the Columbia Basin devoted to the care of 500,000 Americans as "Grapes of Wrath."

Migratory families, the situation of their children, children who have no homes, families who can put down no roots, cannot live in a community -- that calls for special consideration. But I am trying being practical. I am trying to find a place for them to go. This means, in its simplest terms, a program for the permanent resettlement of at least one million people in the Columbia Basin and a lot of other places. And remember that the money spent on it after careful planning is going to be returned to the United States Government many times over in a relatively short time.
huge area of land capable of providing a living for 500 thousand people, irrigated land, today a desert, which can be made a garden with the process of modern science. Who ought to go there? Are we going to treat that, two years from now, just as we treat the average irrigation project? Will it be a contract with the Government to pay out the loan over a period of years -- first come, first served?

(Take in Insert A.)

To go on, your report has devoted many pages to family economics. I know very little about that -- my wife does. We all recognize that the spirit within the home is the most important influence in the growth of the child. In family life the child should first learn confidence in his own powers, respect for the feelings and the rights of others, the feeling of security and mutual good will and faith in God. Here he should find a common bond between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group. Mothers and fathers, by the kind of life they build within the four walls of the home, are largely responsible for the future social and public life of the country.

And, just as we cannot take care of the child apart from the family, so his welfare is bound up with a lot of other institutions that influence his development, -- the school, the church, the agencies that offer useful and happy activities and interests for leisure time. The work of all these institutions needs to be harmonized so as to give our children rounded growth with the least possible conflict and loss of effort. And the money
hard work that go into these public and private enterprises are, again, repaid many times.

And I think that religion, religion especially, helps children to appreciate life in its wholeness, to develop a deep sense of the sacredness of the human personality. In view of the estimate that perhaps one-half of the children of America are having no regular religious instruction, it seems to me important to consider how provision can best be made for some kind of religious training. We can do it because in this way we are capable of keeping in mind both the wisdom of maintaining the separation of Church and State and, at the same time, giving weight to the great importance of religion in personal and social living.

And I share with you the belief that fair opportunity for schooling ought to be available to every child in this country. I agree with you that no American child, merely because he happens to be born where property values are low and local taxes do not, even though they should, support the schools, that that child should be placed at a disad- advantage in the preparation for citizenship.

Certainly our future is endangered when nearly a million children of elementary school age are not in school; when thousands of school districts and even some entire States do not pay for good schools. This situation has been reported by many agencies, private and public, and, the way I have got it down here in my manuscript, needs to be more widely understood. That does not mean anything. What I really wanted to say is this; I would like to put on the front page of every newspaper in the United States,
a list of the most backward school districts, the most
backward school states in the United States. That is
rough treatment but if every person in the United States
could know where the conditions are worst,-- education
and health -- those areas would get the sympathy, the
understanding and the help for improving those worst of
conditions. And again, I have to suggest that the permanent
answer is not mere handouts from the Federal Treasury but
that the problem has to be solved by improving the economics
in these poorer sections and an insistence, hand in hand
with it, that there be adequate taxation in accordance with
ability to pay.

We must plan also, on a larger scale, to give American
children a chance for healthful play and worthwhile use of
leisure. I agree with you that a democratic government has
a vital interest in those matters. And I am glad that you
have suggested a national commission, under private auspices,
to study leisure-time needs and recreational resources.

More than in any previous decade we know how to
safeguard the health of parents and children. Because of
the advance of medical knowledge and the growth of public
health work, we have it in our power to conquer disease
that we could not conquer ten years ago, and the ability to
general promote good health.

New opportunities mean to us mean new duties. It was
one thing to let people suffer and die when we were helpless
to protect them. And it is quite another thing to
leave a large portion of our population without care at all.
It is my definite hope that within the next ten years every
part of the country, just to use an example-- and I believe
that hope can be fulfilled -- every part of the United States will have complete and adequate service for all women during maternity and all new born infants. That we can do.

So, too, good nutrition is the basis of child health. And I am equally in sympathy with your suggestion that I appoint a National Nutrition Committee to review our present knowledge and to coordinate our efforts, looking toward the development of nutrition policies based on the newest and best methods, for we are making new discoveries every day.

You, all the members of the Conference, have charted a course, a course for ten years to come. Nevertheless, the steps that we take now, this year of 1940, are going to determine how far we can go tomorrow, and in what direction.

I believe with you that if anywhere in the country any child lacks opportunity for home life, for health protection, for education, for moral or spiritual development, the strength of the Nation and its ability to cherish and advance the principles of democracy are thereby weakened.

I ask all our fellow citizens who are within the sound of my voice to consider themselves identified with the work of this Conference. I ask you all to study and discuss with friends and neighbors the program that it has outlined, to study how its objectives can be realized. May the security and happiness of every boy and girl in our land be our concern, our personal concern, from now on.

You, the members of this Conference, this Conference on Children in a Democracy, you are leaders of a new American Army of peace.