



U.S. Department of
Transportation

News:

Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE NATIONAL EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS COUNCIL
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
AUGUST 6, 1984

What a joy it is to be here with the dedicated members of the National Extension Homemakers Council. You are performing a tremendous public service -- in advancing your traditional commitment to the value of the American home, and in promoting programs in citizenship, community outreach, health, energy and especially in safety.

This organization recognized early the changing nature of modern home life. The fact that one-third of your membership works outside the home closely mirrors our society as a whole. For today, 66 percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 work. This is not just a cold statistic, but signifies a trend with enormous implications for every home in America. Your astute recognition of the diversity of the American home is reflected in your membership -- which includes men as well as many single homemakers.

But domestic cooperation is not a foreign concept to this group. You draw your strength from the homes of America -- forming a dynamic organization over 600,000 strong. Your Council's success is like the wise old trainer, who when asked for his advice on winning races said, "Well, the thing to do is get out in front at the start and improve your position from there."

I am impressed by your goal -- to reach the one million membership mark by your 50th Anniversary two years from now. I don't doubt for a moment that you'll realize that goal -- and, I wish you every success in surpassing it.

For half a century in America, government has tried to work another kind of miracle. When dire hardship forced millions of us to turn to our government for food and shelter, that government responded. It fed the hungry, housed the homeless, sustained the jobless, and corrected past abuses. Over time, it came to believe that it might one day mandate an end to poverty itself. Yet it simultaneously acted as if the creation of new wealth -- the lifeblood of expanded prosperity -- were somehow an affront to those most in need.

Promising much, it performed erratically. Reserving the riches of the nation for its own coffers, it dulled the cutting edge of American ingenuity, that remarkable machinery which has given more people a higher standard of living than any other system in the long chronicle of mankind. Yes: somewhere along the way, without intending it, government slipped away from the governed.

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Caught up in a cynical society, we began to wonder if individuals counted any longer. In the most painful irony of all, a government that regarded itself as the social conscience of our nation helped create the "me generation."

Thankfully, that has changed. The "me generation" has again become the "we generation," as Americans across the country regain confidence in the spirit of public service and the helping hand of friendship that built our great nation in the first place.

Think for a moment about who we are, and where we came from. Before there was an American government, there were Americans drawn together in voluntary associations. From our earliest days, we have been prone to organize for the betterment of the community. Prior to independence, there were sons of liberty and committees of correspondence to raise the flag of a new nation. Government arose to defend our territory, promote our enterprise, and embody the charitable attitudes of the people themselves. Over the years, the volunteer tradition continued: on Western prairies and in urban slums, at church suppers and community chests.

For much of our history, Americans relied on the voluntary efforts of business, churches, foundations and other civic organizations to provide jobs, income, health care, food and housing to those most in need. When disaster struck, the Red Cross arrived before federal loans. Forty some years ago, when American servicemen lacked recreational facilities, the U.S.O. stepped in to fill the void.

We drew much of our strength as a nation from our moral commitment to one another. When some problems grew too large for the private sector to address, government inevitably succeeded to the challenge. But government, it has been conclusively demonstrated, cannot by itself provide the full range of social services to all who are in need. Equally important, government can rarely summon the enthusiasm or the imagination that aroused private citizens can bring to bear on a stubborn problem. In other words, public intentions can rarely equal private solutions.

When we think about it, the dominance of government in our lives arose in relatively recent times. Historically, we Americans have never needed government to instill in us compassion for our neighbors. In no other land does philanthropy rest on as broad a base as here. A Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, found it flourishing 150 years ago, while visiting the shores of our infant republic. The great French writer discerned something uniquely American. "If I were asked...to what the prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed," he wrote, "I should reply: to the superiority of its women... and the voluntary association -- that unique American institution whereby people associate to strengthen their cause as well as their voice."

In truth, we are still what we were then -- a philanthropic family: one million voluntary organizations rolling up their sleeves instead of twiddling their thumbs; millions of individuals who gave billions of dollars in charitable donations last year alone; thousands of corporations and foundations, who chipped in billions more on top of that amount. And in America, generosity is not measured by economic attainments; much of the giving in this country comes from families with moderate incomes.

The National Extension Homemakers Council, as a network of public-spirited citizens, exemplifies the strength of the volunteer spirit. What we in the federal government must do is make those reforms that will even further enhance dedication to the volunteer spirit. Together we can add a new edition to an old tradition.

Lately we have seen what voluntary public service can do in the campaign against drunk driving. Those who spoke out first against drunk drivers were volunteers, such as Candy Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers.

This is a campaign that started at the grassroots. Then it became a groundswell of dedicated volunteers: Students Against Drunk Drivers (SADD), Dealers Against Drunk Drivers (DADD), Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID), and -- you can be proud -- the National Extension Homemakers Council. Together, you took the lead. As a result of protests by concerned citizens, community action groups and the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving, many state legislatures have enacted tougher laws against drunk driving. Judges, juries and the public alike are today much less tolerant, and the drunk driver -- particularly the repeat offender -- increasingly faces criminal prosecution.

Three weeks ago, President Reagan signed into law a bill providing federal incentives for states dealing sternly with those convicted of drunk driving -- and encouraging states to set 21 as their legal minimum drinking age. About half the states already have such a law. A uniform drinking age, as the President said, will do away with today's "crazy quilt" of different state drinking laws, resulting in what have been called "blood borders" -- where teenagers cross state lines to take advantage of lower drinking laws. We normally defer to state governments on traffic law issues, but this was one instance where the President and I believed that federal action was justified. We know there are a lot of responsible young people, but statistics show that drivers between the ages of 18 and 20 are more than twice as likely as older drivers to get involved in alcohol-related accidents. In every state where the drinking age has been raised, teenage driving fatalities have declined. When New Jersey raised its drinking age to 21, there was a 26 percent reduction in nighttime fatalities among 19-to-20-year-olds. Our goal is to save young lives nationwide, and spare many families the heartache and financial tragedy of loved ones lost or seriously injured.

We will not rest until every last drunk driver is off the roads and highways of this country. And in this effort we return where the crusade started -- to the grassroots. The government can pass laws; it can lock up drunk drivers; it can deter law-breaking. But ultimately nothing can so much assure compliance with laws as an aroused, caring citizenry. We must wage the battle as civic groups and as individuals. Service groups must get out the message of just how gruesome the statistics are. Individual citizens must urge friends not to take that last drink for the road. It will take all of us together to win this battle. And in this effort, something especially gives me hope: homemakers will no longer tolerate the homewreckers.

We have both been active in another cause to make our highways safer: the use of seat belts. Traffic fatalities resulting from underuse of seat belts and overuse of alcohol are especially tragic because we have made considerable progress in highway safety. The 1983 highway death toll of 42,500 -- although much too high -- was still the lowest in 20 years; and the death rate per million vehicle miles traveled was the lowest ever recorded.

But we can do better. In the effort to gain greater use of seat belts, government, volunteer groups, and individuals can work in partnership. We can profit from the example of your award-winning "Get It Together" and "Make It Click" programs, invaluable in communicating the importance of using seat belts every single time we get in the car. Because of your proven track record, we recently negotiated a new

contract enabling you to expand your excellent work in safety belt education. The contract will allow you to publish a "BELTS" newsletter -- for Belts Ensure Lifetime Safety -- to inform your members of ongoing activities and new resources. And the contract will also provide funds for you to offer your state councils -- maybe as many as 20 -- mini-grants of \$300 to help get them started in setting up their own "BELTS" project. We have to remind people time and again that more than 80 percent of all accidents occur at less than 40 miles per hour; that three out of four fatal accidents occur within 25 miles of home; that car accidents are the leading cause of death for children.

During this campaign, it has been my privilege to work with organizations of concerned women volunteers. It is fascinating how women in the 1980s are such a diverse group with varied interests. Some seek their own careers in business. Some run for political office. Others focus on the home and family. No role is superior to another. What's important is that every woman has the right and the opportunity to choose the role she wishes. And whether the choice be career, homemaking, or both -- this Administration is trying to help in many different ways.

That's why we've struck hard at the so-called "marriage tax" which unfairly penalized working women. Business owners who are married women can reap even greater benefits from this change. Since most of their businesses pay personal rather than corporate taxes, they have more money to invest or save.

We have been outspoken in seeking pension reforms to treat women more fairly. We went to the Supreme Court to argue against pension benefit schedules that treat men and women differently. Among the legislative reforms we have endorsed is a provision acknowledging that women's employment careers are often interrupted for family reasons, which makes it more difficult to accumulate enough years' credit to qualify for pensions. So our pension reform would enable those now entering the work force to begin pension participation at age 21 instead of 25 to give women more opportunity to build up pension rights.

Millions of women stand to gain from the virtual elimination of the estate tax, which we convinced Congress to do in 1981. This permits a surviving spouse to keep a small business or family farm instead of selling it to pay the taxes. Also, women, especially those in low- or middle-income families, benefit greatly from substantial increases in tax credits for child care expenses. Not only was the child care tax credit increased, but this year -- for the first time -- the short tax form, the 1040A form, contains a line for this credit so that low-income families who do not usually itemize can take advantage of this deduction.

Every homemaker is by necessity also an economist. And perhaps the best evidence of fairness I know -- the kind you can put in your pocketbook -- is the progress we have made in our economy. The Administration has succeeded in banishing double-digit inflation from the grocery store and the gas pump -- and it was done in less than two years rather than the decade or more the experts said it would take.

We have made progress in fostering an atmosphere in which everyone realizes that progress for any group means enhancing freedom of individual choice, not reinforcing the idea that there is a single standard of achievement. While we recognize the contributions of women in the workplace, we must also recognize the irreplaceable role of women who make their contributions at home and in their communities.

As homemakers you are united in those concerns that affect your families. But you are something more; you are united in a common bond of dedication to voluntary community service. The breadth and energy of your programs and activities touch so many people. You demonstrate the difference a person can make in our society. I frequently think of a woman who knew great adversity, one whose spirit and example inspired millions. Her name was Helen Keller -- and she summed up her philosophy in a single sentence. "One can never consent to creep," she wrote, "when one feels an impulse to soar." Your commitment makes our spirits soar and we all prosper from the work of the National Extension Homemakers Council. As a public servant, I salute you. As a woman, I admire you. As a fellow American, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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