

# 58 Radio Address About the State of the Union Message on Human Resources. *February 24, 1973*

*Good afternoon:*

At the beginning of each new year, as we reflect on the state of our American Union, we seek again a definition of what America means. Carl Sandburg came close to capturing its real meaning in three simple words that became the title for one of his greatest poems: "The People, Yes."

America has risen to greatness because again and again when the chips were down, the American people have said yes—yes to the challenge of freedom, yes to the dare of progress, and yes to the hope of peace—even when defending the peace has meant paying the price of war.

America's greatness will endure in the future only if our institutions continually

rededicate themselves to saying yes to the people—yes to human needs and aspirations, yes to democracy and the consent of the governed, yes to equal opportunity and unlimited horizons of achievement for every American.

It is in this spirit of rededication that I will send to the Congress in the next few days the fourth section of my 1973 State of the Union report—a message on the progress we have made, the steps we now must take, in helping people to help themselves through our Federal programs for human resources.

Nineteen hundred seventy-three is a year full of opportunity for great advances on this front. After more than 10 years of

war, we have successfully completed one of the most unselfish missions ever undertaken by one nation in the defense of another, and now the coming of peace permits us to turn our attention more fully to the works of compassion, concern, and social progress at home.

The seriousness of your Government's commitment to make the most of this opportunity is evidenced by the record level of funding for human resources programs proposed in our new budget—\$125 billion—nearly twice the amount that was being spent on such programs when I took office in 1969.

Let us look behind this impersonal label, "human resources," let us see some examples of the way these programs are helping to provide a better life for the American people.

Social security cash benefits for the elderly and the disabled in fiscal year 1974 will be twice what they were 4 years ago.

Next year, 5 million additional poor, aged, and disabled persons will receive increased health benefits.

Hundreds of counties which previously had no food programs to assure nutrition for the needy have them now—hunger is being eliminated from American life.

Hundreds of school districts which were giving black or brown children inferior educations in separate school systems at the time we took office now give all their children an equal chance to learn together in the same schools.

A new student assistance system is being established to bring higher education within reach of every qualified student in America.

We have launched a national drive for the conquest of cancer. We have advanced a workable proposal to provide compre-

hensive health insurance for every American family.

Health and education benefits for our veterans have been substantially increased. High-priority job programs have decreased the unemployment rate among Vietnam-era veterans by almost one-third during the past year alone.

Sweeping reforms have been set in motion to assure our senior citizens of quality nursing home care and of a better chance to live with dignity in homes of their own.

Legislative proposals to increase self-determination and economic opportunity for the American Indian have been laid before the Congress. They will be resubmitted to the Congress this year.

Outlays for civil rights activities in 1974 will be more than \$3 billion—that's  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times what they were at the beginning of this Administration. With this support, we are closer today than ever before to the realization of a truly just society, where all men—and all women—are equal in the eyes of the law.

These achievements, and others that I will outline in my message to the Congress, constitute a record to be proud of, a good beginning to build on.

But there are certain other aspects of the state of our Union's human resources which urgently need reform.

During the 1960's, the Federal Government undertook ambitious, sometimes almost utopian, commitments in one area of social policy after another, elbowing aside the State and local governments and the private sector and establishing literally hundreds of new programs based on the assumption that any human problem could be solved simply by throwing enough Federal dollars at it.

The intention of this effort was laudable, but the results in case after case amounted to dismal failure. The money which left Washington in a seemingly inexhaustible flood was reduced to a mere trickle by the time it had filtered through all the layers of bureaucrats, consultants, and social workers, and finally reached those whom it was supposed to help. Too much money has been going to those who were supposed to help the needy and too little to the needy themselves. Those who make a profession out of poverty got fat, the taxpayer got stuck with the bill, and the disadvantaged themselves got little but broken promises.

We must do better than this. The American people deserve compassion that works—not simply compassion that means well. They deserve programs that say yes to human needs by saying no to paternalism, social exploitation, and waste.

In order to bring our programs up to this standard, we have carefully reviewed each of them with three questions in mind:

How can we reform the decisionmaking process to bring it closer to the people whom these decisions will affect?

How can we get more value and productivity out of every tax dollar devoted to human resources?

How can we reform our approach to the delivery of services so as to give people the assistance they need without taking away their freedom or decreasing their self-reliance and their self-respect?

Here are some of the reforms we propose:

To give the people served a better and greater voice in education and manpower training programs, we propose to convert them from narrow, fragmented, categori-

cal programs—closely controlled from Washington—into new special revenue sharing programs which will provide Federal funds to be used within broad areas as each State and community judges best to meet its own special needs.

To make the Federal health care dollar go further, we propose to eliminate programs whose job is done—such as hospital construction subsidies which if continued would only worsen the national oversupply of hospital beds and further inflate medical costs. The savings achieved would help to make possible increases in other areas—such as over \$100 million more next year in cancer and heart disease research.

To make the economic opportunity dollar go further, we propose to transfer most of the antipoverty programs now conducted by the Office of Economic Opportunity into the appropriate Cabinet departments, thereby making them more efficient by linking them with other related Federal activities.

To ensure that all of our people are provided with a decent income under circumstances that will increase human dignity rather than eroding such basic values as the family structure and the dignity of work, we will work with the Congress to improve the welfare system. A system which penalizes a person for going to work and rewards a person for going on welfare is totally alien to the American tradition of self-reliance and self-respect. That is why reforming the present welfare system has been, and will continue to be, one of our major goals.

The overall effect of these reforms will be the elimination of programs that are wasteful so that we can concentrate on programs that work. They will make pos-

sible the continued growth of Federal deficits to meet human needs—while at the same time helping to prevent a ballooning budget deficit that could lead to higher taxes, higher prices, higher interest rates for all Americans.

Despite what some people say, fiscal responsibility is not just a rich man's concern. If we were to spend our economy into a tailspin in the name of social welfare, we would only be punishing those we sought to help. Over the course of our history, the free American economy has done more to combat poverty and to raise our standard of living than any government program imaginable. The stable, healthy growth of our economy must remain the cornerstone of all of our human resources policies in the 1970's.

To our great credit we Americans are a restless and impatient people—we are a nation of idealists. We dream of eradicating poverty and hunger, discrimination, ignorance, disease, and fear, and we would like to do it all today. But in order to reach these goals, we need to connect this warmhearted impatience of ours with another equally American trait—and that is levelheaded common sense.

We need to forge a new approach to human services in this country—an approach which will treat people as more than just statistics—an approach which recognizes that problems like poverty and unemployment, health care and the costs of education are more than cold abstractions in a government file drawer.

I know how tough these problems are, because I grew up with them. But I also know that with the right kind of help and the right kind of spirit they can be overcome.

I believe that no American family

should be denied good health care because of inability to pay. But I also believe that no family should be deprived of the freedom to make its own health care arrangements without bureaucratic meddling.

I believe that no boy or girl should be denied a quality education. But I also believe that no child should have to ride a bus miles away from his neighborhood school in order to achieve an arbitrary racial balance.

I believe that no American family should have to suffer for lack of income or to break up because the welfare regulations encourage it. But I also believe that we should never make it more comfortable or more profitable to live on a welfare check than on a paycheck.

I believe that government must be generous and humane. But I also believe that government must be economically responsible. We must reform or end programs that do not work. We must discontinue those programs that have served their purpose, so that our limited resources can be applied to programs that produce 100 cents worth of human benefits for every tax dollar spent.

Working together to meet human needs and unlock human potential is the greatest adventure upon which any people can embark. I pledge continued, strong Federal leadership in this work. But we have learned the hard way that Washington cannot do the whole job by itself. State and local governments, private institutions, and each individual American must do their part as well.

Let us give all our citizens the help they need. But let us also remember that each of us bears a basic obligation to help ourselves and to help our fellow man, and no

one else can assume that obligation for us—least of all the Federal Government.

If we shirk our individual responsibility, the American dream will never be more than a dream. But if the people say yes to this challenge, and if government says

yes to the people, we can make that dream come true in the lives of all Americans.

Thank you and good afternoon.

NOTE: The President's address was recorded for broadcast at 1:06 p.m. on nationwide radio.