

CAUTION

FOR USE AT 6:30 p.m. EDT ----- Thursday, MAY 21, 1964

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
KENTUCKY FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS ANNUAL
CONVENTION IN LEXINGTON, KY.
Thursday, May 21, 1964

I am delighted to share a day with you in the month that I am told is the loveliest of all months in Kentucky.

A Kentuckian in Washington has told me that May in Kentucky is like June in Heaven -- then, come your perfect days.

There are so many things that have drawn me to the bluegrass besides your gracious invitation. One is, of course, the opportunity to share Kentucky's famed hospitality, apparent from Lick Branch to Lexington.

For me, there is a nostalgia about Kentucky. Our lives have been made richer by the Kentuckians we have known -- the beloved "Veep", the Fred Vinsons, Senator and Mrs. Earl Clements, and on my own staff, that most indispensable Kentucky charmer, Bess Clements Abell.

This is my second trip to Kentucky in a month. On our last trip, we visited with the Tom Fletchers in Inez, Kentucky. Just the other day, we received at the White House a letter from them about "that wonderful day".

Few letters have ever touched me so much. I was glad they felt close enough to us to write.

I came back to take a longer look -- a woman's look -- at the problem of attacking poverty still existing in affluent America. This keeps my husband up late at night and consumes much of his day.

It has brought to our door some of the best minds in the country to discuss what constructive action can be taken. Many times Lynda, Luci, and I have sat in the same room where John Adams sat with his wife to listen in. Because of these sessions, I believe your children and mine will grow up in a happier country -- although you can understand why sometimes it is hard for me to tell the girls they have to go to school. They say they could learn more just being drop-outs around the house.

What Lyndon is trying to accomplish in these sessions and what he wants for America is what all of us really want -- for ourselves, for our children, and for our children's children.

He wants every child in this land to have an equal chance for the good things of life. He wants no child to go unfed and no youngster to go unschooled.

There are those of you here today who remember Franklin Roosevelt's sad recounting of the one-third of our nation who were ill-clad, ill-housed, and ill-fed. Today, we are still shamed by the one-fifth of our citizens who live on the outskirts of hope because they are too poor. That's why Lyndon's war on poverty bill, now in the Congress, is so important to the conscience and the future of this country.

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There is no magic formula, no handy ready-mix! But by training the untrained, by giving skills to the unskilled, by preparing the jobless to hold jobs, we can offer hope to the hopeless.

For it is true that if this nation is wise enough to pursue peace in the world, we must be strong enough to fight poverty here at home. This is what Lyndon hopes for, and prays for, and works for.

I know that you believe this because you are already doing something about it right in your hometowns, with your programs for doctors clinics, and for joining in the "Operation Alphabet" program to attack that statistic, 407,000 adult illiterates in Kentucky.

But what you are trying to do here to fight poverty we must do across the nation for poverty blankets too much of this nation.

I saw the problem first-hand in Eastern Kentucky today. I have seen it before, alone and with Lyndon, in Texas, in Pennsylvania, in Indiana, in Maryland, in West Virginia, and in Alabama.

One of the very reasons I feel so strongly about poverty is because of my personal knowledge of the declining agricultural economy I have seen within my own experience.

Some people are suddenly very worried about the tenant families who live on my farm in Alabama. I'm glad they are concerned. I've been worried about these families a long time.

And if there had been a poverty bill 30 years ago, those former cotton farmers would have been retrained to a new skill, rather than remaining on in an economy that time has passed by.

The lasting answer to wiping out poverty in this country is not just charity, but a full-scale program to provide job opportunity for all underprivileged families and educational opportunity for their children.

This morning, we visited the Arthur Robertson family at Warshoal Branch. They live "up the hollow" and earn \$300 a year from their 3/10th an acre of tobacco. The Robertsons have seven children, one of whom has a rheumatic heart.

Mr. Robertson is doing his best to help his family help themselves. He is keeping his children in school because he knows that the longer they stay in school, the better their chances will be to improve their lot in life.

He secured a \$700 grant from the Government to winterize his tiny home -- to keep out the biting winds of winter. He also built a tobacco barn, and a well -- to save his overworked wife from having to carry water from the creek 400 yards away.

He got himself a job on March 16 under the Aid to Families of Dependent Children--Unemployed Fathers (AFDC-UF) and can earn up to \$160 a month. He is assigned to the Breathitt County Forestry Division -- setting out trees on old lands destroyed by mining and cutting trails for forest fire prevention and is on call in case of forest fires.

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We moved from the Robertson farm to the one room schoolhouse in Lick Branch. There, I saw the fresh, young hope for Eastern Kentucky -- the bright, eager faces of its children. They are anxious to learn -- and they brought back warm memories of the six years that I spent in a one room school in Harrison County, Texas.

These children get a hot lunch every day under a new Federal program. For many of them, it represents the only meal of the day. There is a 10¢ charge for the lunch, and the ones that can't pay are provided for.

There used to be no electricity in Lick Branch School. When the weather was dark, the study ended. I had the privilege of throwing a switch this morning that lit up the school for the first time, thanks to the local power company.

So, if Lyndon is turning out the lights at the White House, you can be sure we are turning them on in places like Lick Branch.

From there I went to Jackson, where I dedicated the new high school gymnasium. This replaces the one dedicated by Eleanor Roosevelt and built under the old WPA.

The new gym, and the new courthouse across the street are progress, but a very vital progress is down the road at Quicksand. There, I saw the Wood Utilization Center, built by the University of Kentucky with assistance from the Area Redevelopment Administration. This center is the foundation upon which new industries will build, for these men are learning, many of them for the first time, to make productive use of the great natural timber resources.

It is a chance for economic development that will really start Appalachia moving ahead.

Appalachia is only one of the fronts on the battlefield of poverty. There are pockets of despair all over this land which cry out for attention.

Lyndon's Administration is determined to attack this with all its strength -- and he needs your continued help and the help of all Americans if he is going to succeed.

I think the great tragedy that took place last November gave all America a new sense of commitment, a new sense of purpose and determination.

We cannot rest until we have conquered these enemies: hunger, disease, poverty, and ignorance. This is no soft-headed approach. Compassion, yes -- but also hard common sense, for it turns tax eaters into tax payers.

If Lyndon were here I know he would insist that the women of the nation are his front-line troops in this war on mankind's ancient enemies.

The enlightened woman of today bears love not only for her one man, but for mankind, not only for her own children, but for all children.

It is the enlightened woman Lyndon is enlisting in government responsibilities.

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There are no cabinet officers or agency administrators who don't understand that my husband has a respect and affection for the abilities of women.

Next to cutting out waste in government, finding jobs for competent women is Lyndon's daily delight.

Since he took office, 241 women have been appointed to top jobs within the government and 642 women have been promoted to jobs of \$10,000 a year and above.

You are sorely needed. Your voice, your vision, and your fervor are sorely needed to help make this a better land.

Someone asked Lyndon what were the objectives of his administration. He replied, first, to keep this country militarily strong -- so strong and so secure that no rational enemy would dare attack us.

Second, he said, he wanted to keep this country fiscally sound. He wanted to cut out waste and inefficiency and unnecessary expenses. He strives for thrift and frugality and insists that the government get a dollar value for every dollar spent.

And finally, he said, he wanted this government to be compassionate. He believes that only a government with heart and understanding is truly an enduring one. So, his aim is to take money saved from the elimination of waste and inefficiency and put that money into people. His war on poverty will be financed by the savings made through reduced expenditures in other segments of the government.

This is what he believes.

And this is what I believe.

May I hope that you will join your President in his fight against injustice and inequality throughout this land. May it be said that the passions of the people were truly aroused in this year -- and that everywhere in this liberty-loving and beautiful land, women of every rank and station and political belief joined hands to make America's tomorrow a bright and gleaming legacy from today.

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