

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY  
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REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
UNITED CHURCH WOMEN LUNCHEON

Friends -- and, I know if the President were here, he would add --  
Allies in the War on Poverty:

Thank you for your kind invitation to lunch today. I'm glad to have this opportunity to meet and talk to you.

These past few weeks I have had the opportunity of hearing first-hand reports from the men and women who are responsible for developing what Sargent Shriver calls the "nine new weapons" in the war on poverty.

I have been working particularly on Project Head Start which we hope will be an important breakthrough in education. You, who are experts in the field of family and social welfare problems, know better than anyone, the great value of reaching out to children from limited backgrounds before they become lost in the incomprehensible world of the first grade.

My mail from women throughout this country -- just ordinary citizens as well as settlement house workers and child care experts -- is evidence that there is a great desire of so many people to do something about it.

One of these letters says so well what a lifeline of hope the War on Poverty has brought. It is from a settlement house worker in a border town: "Day after day, I work among these people, most of whom live in unbelievable surroundings, and the great majority of whom have never glimpsed the interior of what we consider an ordinary home .... the water source is too often one spigot for twenty families. Unless help comes to the young people at a very early age, soon and consistently, how can we hope to stem school drop-outs? It is encouraging for us who experience the daily reek of poverty with its bad odors, tumbled clothing, ill-fitting, unkempt appearance, ever-hungry mouth and unlettered mind to realize that in government, there are those who care enough to be interested in these problems."

Her letter concludes with this: "The Lord's Prayer is no idle plea, for indeed, it is 'Give us this day our daily bread' for uncounted thousands."

Already 4,300 communities have written to Operation Head Start for applications for a project. The goals originally set for this summer -- 100,000 five year-olds -- have tripled to 300,000.

And on all fronts, women's organizations are eager to give volunteer time in the 1,000 communities where programs will get underway on July 1.

This response is a great joy to all of us. The President has asked me to thank all of you for the significant leadership you have always provided in making life better for the underprivileged.

I want to add my appreciation, too. Truly you are the embodiment of all that St. James envisioned when he advised: "Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only."

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