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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT WOMEN DOERS
LUNCHEON ON "WHAT CITIZENS CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE
HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN CHILD" - THE WHITE HOUSE

Friends:

How nice to have all of you here! This is a group I have been wanting to gather together for some time, and I so hope that you have had the opportunity of visiting over the luncheon table.

Since last Sunday night, some of you may have been wondering whether we would be holding this luncheon. Let me say it clear and strong: we're going to be working until the day we leave this house on the programs we believe in. Actually, in the words of the young, "I'm hooked," for the rest of my life.

One of my greatest happinesses over the pulsating last four years has been watching some twenty-four major bills in health -- brought into being by my husband, the Congress, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

They are real landmarks in the health of our nation familiar to all of you: especially Medicare for older people, Medicaid for poor citizens, and the Child Health Act of 1967, perhaps closest to my husband's heart.

His philosophy has always been that "man can" ... that man can take and mold and change the ills that beset his society -- and especially the problems of children whose lives are malleable and have so much promise for the future.

There are those who suffer from malnutrition -- (I saw them in Appalachia), from infections that could be prevented, from crippling conditions that could be repaired. They suffer from the host of ills that eat at people in the city ghetto, in the landlocked hills of rural America, in the migrant camps.

During the past four years, we have not solved all these problems -- but we have dared to begin, and I believe these health measures will become a part of the future of American life.

The most sensitive index we have -- infant mortality -- has declined more in the past four years than in the preceding ten -- to a low of 22 deaths for every 1,000 babies born. Still too many!

Since 1965, through Head Start, many thousands of children are receiving the help and the challenge they need to enable them to enter school with hope.

From the research laboratories, new vaccines have been created to prevent measles and German measles.

But I think it is important to emphasize that the full value of these and other developments cannot be accurately measured today. We cannot put a yardstick to the research which began a year or two or three ago, and which will come to practical fruition only five or ten or twenty years from now.

And we cannot measure, except in cold numbers, the children who have been helped. Who knows that among those children, there may be an Edison, an Emily Dickinson, or a future President?

I think we can safely predict that all these young Americans will grow up, not fated to have stunted and unfulfilled lives, but to become full participants and, indeed, true leaders of an even greater America.

Perhaps it is because women create life that they have always been on the frontier of the professions which seek to improve it. It is interesting to me that some twenty wives of members of Congress have been nurses -- among them, Mrs. George Bush, and Mrs. Cohelen who are here today.

We are going to see the whole scope of child health through the eyes of three panelists today -- and then I hope some of you will have some comments.

Our first speaker is a distinguished pediatrician. Dr. Esther Clark, who was the guiding spirit and professional hand that helped transform the health of children of a whole mid-Peninsula area of Palo Alto, California.

How she did it is her story. Dr. Clark, we are honored to have you with us.

The role of the volunteer is never underestimated by the professional who sees its results. Their loving care and supplementary, enlightened attention is vital to the progress of a patient.

There are many groups which give their time and devotion to this service. One is the Jaycees Auxiliary. Seventy-eight percent of their auxiliary chapters are working for the mentally ill and mentally retarded, particularly in short-staffed State institutions.

The young woman who keeps track of this endeavor -- as well as being a volunteer herself -- is Mrs. Charles Welch of Burlington, Massachusetts, National Liaison Officer of the Jaycees Auxiliary. She tells me she runs it from her kitchen.

Mrs. Welch.

It is impossible for me to introduce the next speaker without personal words of affection. We have walked many a mile together, watched many a session of Congress, and shared so many peaks and valleys which come to people in the involved political life of our country.

There are many reasons why I admire Muriel Humphrey, but particularly because of what she has done in the field of mental retardation since the birth of her oldest granddaughter, Vicky. She took one of life's cruelest blows and transformed it into understanding and acceptance of a problem widely dispersed among our people. She has given comfort to families and hope for the future of retarded children.

Muriel is a member of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation and a member of the Advisory Board of the National Association of Retarded Children.

Muriel Humphrey.

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