

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
1938 MOBILIZATION FOR HUMAN NEEDS

THE WHITE HOUSE

OCTOBER 14, 1938

In troubled days when the nerves of men and women have been strained almost to the breaking point we have been in danger of losing sight of one very important fact -- the all-pervading human kindness of men and women. This human kindness cannot be created artificially out of speeches and appeals -- it is part of life itself.

In accordance with this thought, I am not this year making a speech or an appeal in behalf of the 1938 Mobilization for Human Needs, but I am calling your attention to the past and present generosity of the people of America. That generosity never has failed and please God it never will fail. In full faith and confidence, therefore, I present to you the news that local Community Chest drives will shortly be undertaken in all parts of the country.

There are some persons who say that the need for voluntary private agencies has decreased. They say that the government -- Federal, state and local -- has moved in and taken over part of the jurisdiction of the private agencies. Such persons talk as if the scope of voluntary action and of mutual aid had been limited, or even eliminated.

Private community effort is not contradictory in principle to government effort, whether local, state or national. All of these are needed to make up the partnership upon which our Nation is founded. The scope of voluntary action cannot be limited, because the very desire to help the less fortunate is a basic and spontaneous human urge that knows no boundary lines. It is an urge that advances civilization. I like to think it is a national characteristic.

Let me give you an example of successful working-together. One section of our country, New England, has recently been devastated by hurricane and tidal wave.

Hundreds of lives were lost and millions of dollars worth of property were destroyed. This was indeed a tragedy. But there was one consolation in this New England tragedy. Hardly had the hurricane subsided when all the forces of government, assisting and cooperating with private agencies, were rushed to the aid of the injured, the sick and the homeless. How many lives were saved because of these efforts no one can say. The extent to which human suffering was alleviated is beyond all estimate. And we can say that no effort was spared to aid the victims of this disaster.

The rehabilitation work is still going on. The Red Cross, the WPA, the CCC, the NYA, the Army Engineers and other Federal agencies are working with the local agencies, both private and public, to rehabilitate those stricken areas and to assist those who are in need. Certainly, there has been no conflict between government and private agencies -- there has been more than enough work for both. *A* And there is more than enough work for both in our national effort to lift up the lower one-third of our Nation to a standard of living which will conform with decency and comfort and self-respect.

It is true that our Government has assumed increased responsibilities for social welfare. We are giving work to more than three million men and women, unemployed through no fault of their own, on our WPA program. Through our Social Security program we are aiding the states in caring for the aged, for widows and children and for the blind. We are providing new opportunities for more than a half million boys and girls through our CCC and NYA programs; and in many other ways the Federal Government, in cooperation with the state and local governments, is aiding our under-privileged citizens.

But you may well ask if the need for community action is as great as before, now that your Government has provided a national program of social security. I would answer that the need is just as great as before, because Government help was intended and is intended to improve the old conditions and if local help and private help decrease today, we will nullify the improvement and return to just where we were before. Very definitely we need the effort

of the pioneer agencies, the local voluntary agencies, because it is expended on concrete problems which must be met if our whole program is to go forward with the coordination that is its basic aim.

Community leaders have met the challenge of changing conditions. They are not looking backward with resentment against the Government. They have welcomed the acts of their Government as a liberation of their efforts, as an opportunity to move forward on the front of social progress.

It is these men and women whom I salute. They are the shock troops of the social conscience. I call upon the American people to fall in behind such leadership and to widen the social horizon. I am thoroughly convinced that no matter how much the Government does, the private agencies of America still have much to do before any of us can rest on our oars or on our laurels. I am thoroughly convinced that the American people want to participate on a voluntary and individual basis in the endeavor to make this country

the best possible place in which to live. I feel confident that this year's Community Chest drive will be successful, as it has been successful in the past and as it will continue to be successful for long years to come.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

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