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ADDRESS BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL NICHOLAS deB. KATZENBACH

Before The

POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE

85th Anniversary Dinner

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President Rozmarek, Governor Kerner, Mayor Daley, ladies and gentlemen:

It is always a pleasure for me to come to Chicago for any reason. As you may know, I taught here for four years before going to Washington and returning here is very much like coming home.

But it is a particular pleasure to come to Chicago to address such a distinguished and resourceful organization. I say resourceful because who else but a Polish group could bring together in such good spirit Governor Kerner, a Bohemian; Mayor Daley, a Hibernian; and myself, a Bavarian.

Our attention has been drawn in recent weeks by the end of a remarkable baseball season. The win streaks, the clutch pitching, and the close finishes in both the regular season and in the World Series have heightened our taste for statistics, records, and box scores.

While not much of this appetite could relate to the Washington Senators, it does, however, most certainly apply to the Congressmen and Senators still at work in Washington--and to President Johnson, who has in the past year put himself in the record book as the man with the highest batting average in the history of legislation.

At least that is the way President Johnson's accomplishments are often presented--on what the columnists call his box score of major legislation. One count of legislation shows that he has secured 38 priority

items on his legislative agenda. Another count, of general legislation urged by the Administration, shows that the President's record in the win column is 101 new laws.

Such a statistical approach to the legislative program is certainly justified. These victories include old measures, which had been sought repeatedly and unsuccessfully, and include creative, even startling new measures.

They include bills on which he mustered overwhelming majorities; they also include very close votes on which he has shown the fruit of legislative skills honed for 30 years. In the baseball metaphor, he has thus broken records both for home runs and for clutch hitting.

Nevertheless, without any disrespect for the sport, this isn't baseball. The significance of President Johnson's performance is not so much that it demonstrates his mastery of the art of government. The significance, rather, is the content of all those bills--content that will mark the first session of the 89th Congress as the most important legislative session in our history.

I would be happy to have that taken as a plug for three distinguished Democratic Congressmen--John Kluczynski, Dan Rostenkowski, and Roman Pucinski.

What the legislation of the 89th Congress will mean to the lives and future of American citizens will be remembered long after the scorecard is gone. It is on such ground, of substance rather than technique, that the President and our generation will be gauged by history.

Think of medicare, a measure that will often mean the difference between fear and assurance--indeed, the difference between life and death to 19 million Americans, a tenth of our population, not to mention the millions more young people relieved by medicare of unpredictable burdens they could not bear.

Perhaps no measure could have more sweeping impact on our personal security, yet perhaps no measure has been more effectively obscured by the language of legislative gamesmanship. Too often our attention has been diverted by strategy rather than substance.

Similarly, are we thinking too little of the impact of other major bills. This year's housing act is another example. Federally supported public housing projects need no longer look or feel like fortresses. The public housing of the future, under legislation the President signed in August, will be scattered in smaller, less visible units.

Through the innovation of direct rent supplements, public housing will not need to herd its tenants, like victims, into ghettos of despair, but will offer a more flexible support, sufficient to bring our needy back into society.

A triumph in legislation: yes; but much more important, for you and me, a bold step toward restoring the vital social and economic diversity of our city neighborhoods.

On the subject of the President's highway beautification bill, what we still hear most about is the bout with the lobbyists and the President's pre-dawn victory. In future years, however, we will discover its real meaning when we notice that the commercials will be taken out of driving.

In the same way, the headlines concerning the National Arts Foundation so far have focused on the absence of celebrated figures from a White House ceremony. But it is not that minor tempest which is important. The significance of the creation of this foundation will be better documented when a talented boy receives a grant to develop his musical gift; when we recognize this as the historic moment when, for the first time, the United States committed public support to the creative quality of our society.

Within my own area of responsibility, also, Congress has enacted legislation of far-reaching importance. I am particularly proud of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which honors a principle that was first established in this country--even before the landing of the Pilgrims--by Poles.

The "gentlemen adventurers" and fortune seekers who had come with Captain John Smith from England to Jamestown, Virginia, were no match for the rugged job of clearing the land and building a colony out of the wilderness. The reinforcements that Smith desperately sought from his backers in England--the handful to whom Smith later gave credit for saving the colony--were not Englishmen at all. Their names were Lowicki, Stefanski, Mata, Bogdan, Zrenica and Sadowski.

A few years after their arrival when Virginia's governor authorized the election of the first legislative body in America, he declared that only natives of England would vote. The same handful of Polish artisans dropped their tools and declared indignantly, "No vote, no work."

The first strike in the new world successfully established the principle of full suffrage. The records of the Virginia colony note that "upon some dispute of the Polonians, it was agreed that they shall be enfranchised and made as free as any inhabitant whatsoever." As far as I know, no Polish American's right to vote was ever challenged on the grounds of nationality after the year 1619.

Some 251 years later and some 95 years ago, the 15th Amendment to the Constitution established that America's Negroes should not be denied this same right to vote. Yet even after the 15th Amendment, and after the Civil Rights legislation of 1957, 1960 and 1964, two-thirds--or 2.2 million--of the Negroes of voting age in the South were not registered.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 makes into law our promise that they can register and vote freely.

Under the Act we have sued to abolish all poll taxes--an irrelevant and discriminatory requirement that one buy an American birthright. More important, the Voting Rights Act has suspended literacy and character tests where they were used as devices of discrimination, and we have sent federal examiners so far to 20 counties where officials have not obeyed the law.

In the future, as in the past, where local authorities refuse to meet their responsibilities under the Act, we shall meet ours.

The Voting Rights Act is one of many new expressions by the 89th Congress of our belief that the test of a democratic society's vitality is not the prosperity it offers to most of its citizens, but the promise it offers to all.

Also within my area of responsibility, we have begun to develop effective and creative weapons against crime. In addition to the commission now at work evaluating the workings of our entire administration of criminal justice, Congress has enacted several warmly promising anti-crime programs.

Just three weeks ago, President Johnson signed into law the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, which opens a new avenue of federal leadership and assistance to embattled local police, courts and correctional officials.

And the new Prisoner Rehabilitation Act, designed to help make productive citizens rather than repeaters out of federal inmates, goes into effect tomorrow when the first prisoner will be released from full-time custody in order to work at an outside job--thus gaining work skills, self-respect, and social confidence.

As the President observed recently:

"We labor for that day when every man can satisfy his basic needs and those of his family; when every child has a chance to develop his mind and enlarge his spirit to the limits of his being; when the slow killers--want, ignorance, and prejudice--are finally contained. But if we reach that day and still walk in terror through the public streets, our labors will have been futile...The control of crime is a major target of this Administration."

Whatever the importance of all these measures, however, none is more fundamental and none is more significant than those President Johnson and this Congress have made in the direction of improving the level of education in America.

Your own dedication to the goals of education--expressed in your generous support of Alliance College and in your guardianship of a proud cultural tradition--set an example for the nation. Yet clearly the energy of private institutions like Alliance College and hundreds of our older universities, and even the resources of our locally supported schools, have not been enough.

Education until very recently has been a step-child of the richest nation in the world. Booming American communities have blithely ignored the irony, as President Kennedy defined it, of "paying those to whom they entrust the minds of their children a smaller wage than is paid to those to whom they entrust their plumbing."

A principal factor in all our domestic problems, whether unemployment or racial unrest or crime or poverty, is the deficiency of our educational system. None of our problems can be separated from education; indeed, perhaps all of them can be solved, in part at least, through education.

Last week, Gardner Ackley, the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, reported on economic studies which show that the largest single factor in our past growth in labor productivity was not the increase in invested capital per worker; it was not improved technology. It was the improved educational level of our labor force. At the same time, the penalty for lack of education becomes steadily more severe.

Our present unemployment figure is low, yet there are still some 4,000,000 Americans seeking employment and unable to find it. As our society becomes more complex, their search becomes harder--unless we act militantly and promptly to improve the level of education - offered in our cities and towns.

A recent business survey disclosed that many companies now will not hire persons even for assembly line jobs unless they have high school diplomas. The companies are willing to pay more, but they want better workers.

The rate of unemployment among those who have graduated from college is 1.4 percent. The unemployment rate among those who did not finish high school is six times higher--8.1 percent.

At present, automation is eliminating more than 4,000 jobs a day--precisely the kind of jobs which unskilled or semi-skilled people can fill. Approximately ten percent of the work force today is employed in unskilled jobs. By 1970, the figure will be down to five percent.

In short, a more direct relationship between education and unemployment exists in modern America than ever before. A very real cycle of ignorance and poverty is at work throughout our country.

The education acts which the 89th Congress is enacting can help break this cycle. The use in poorer districts of supplementary Federal funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the availability of "banks" of new teaching tools, and the enthusiasm of roving National Teacher Corpsmen through the Higher Education Act can help us to make all our schools superior.

There is one further legislative accomplishment I would like to talk about tonight--one which has particular relevance to this organization--the Administration's Immigration Reform Act.

The bill President Johnson signed two weeks ago in the wind and sunshine at the foot of the Statue of Liberty is not the most radical legislation this Congress has passed. It will not greatly increase the number of immigrants to America. But it will affirm in law what we believe in spirit:

--that this country judges men individually on their merits, not on their religion, color, or national origin;

--that this country was built by men and women from all the nations of the world and that we still value that truth for the future;

--that we are interested in the spirit in which men and women come here, not in the identity of the country they come from.

For forty years, we knew that the national origins system was cruel in practice and wrong in spirit. Now at last, we have abolished its unworthy proclamation--that individual worth could somehow be established by quotas; that the contribution Polish immigrants could make to this country could somehow be specified mechanically at 6,488 persons each year.

To the members of the Polish National Alliance, we all owe a debt of gratitude, not only for the very practical support that you rallied on behalf of the Immigration Act in Congress this year, but even more for your faith, through many reversals, that America would finally repudiate a policy that denied our history and our ideals.

You have confronted and prevailed over the prejudice that brands and deprives a man on the basis of his name, or his origin, or his color. At the same time, this organization evidences the richness of diversity in our population.

You have shown that this society can be tolerant and open without being homogenized. You have shown that this country's valid differences of culture and identity need not be nursed by hate or walled around by artificial barriers.

The same hostility to such artificial barriers that inspired the Immigration Act also impelled passage of the Voting Rights Act and is at work in every part of President Johnson's program.

You have won a place of leadership in the fight against those barriers, and I know that you will not relinquish that place as long as the fight goes on.