

Transcript of Remarks by Truman and Johnson on Medicare

Following is the transcript of former President Harry S. Truman's introductory remarks and President Johnson's address yesterday at the signing of the medicare-Social Security bill at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Library, Independence, Mo., as recorded by The New York Times:

Truman's Remarks

I'm glad you like the President. I like him, too.

Mr. President, Mrs. Johnson, distinguished guests.

You have done me a great honor in coming here today and have made me a very, very happy man.

This is an important hour for the nation. For those of our citizens who have completed their tour of duty and have moved to the sidelines, these are the days that we are trying to celebrate for them. These people are our prideful responsibility and they are entitled, among other benefits, to the best medical protection available.

Not one of our citizens should ever be abandoned or sent for the dignity of charity. Charity is dignity when you have to have it. But we don't want these people to have anything to do with charity and we don't want them to have an idea of hopeless despair.

Mr. President, I'm glad to have lived this long and to witness today the signing of the medicare bill, which puts this nation right where it needs to be to be right.

Your inspired leadership and responsiveness and the responsive, forward-looking Congress have made it historically possible for this day to come about.

I thank all of you most highly for coming here. It's an honor I haven't had done to me for—well, quite a while, I'll say that to you.

So here he is, ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

Johnson's Address

President and Mrs. Truman, Secretary Celebrezze, Senator Mansfield, Senator Symington, Senator Long, Governor Hearnes, Senator Anderson, Congressman King of the Anderson-King team, Congressman Mills, Senator Long of the Mills-Long team, our beloved Vice President, who worked in the vineyard many years to see this day come to pass, and all of my dear friends in the Congress, both Democrats and Republicans.

The people of the United States love and voted for Harry Truman, not because he gave them hell but because he gave them hope. And I believe today that all America shares my joy that he is present now when the hope that he offered becomes a reality for millions of our fellow citizens.

I'm so proud that this has come to pass in the Johnson Administration. But it was really Harry Truman of Missouri who planted the seeds of compassion and duty which have today flowered into care for the sick and serenity for the fearful.

Many men can make many proposals. Many men can draft many laws, but few have the piercing and human eye which can see beyond the words to the people that they touch.

Few can see past the speeches and the political battles to the doctor over there that's tending the infirm and to the hospital that is receiving those in anguish or feel in their hearts painful wrath at the injustice which denies the miracle of healing to the old and to the poor.

And fewer still have the courage to stake reputation and position and the effort of a lifetime upon such a cause when there are so few that share it.

But it's just such men who illuminate the life and the history of a nation, and so, President Harry Truman, it is in tribute not to you but to the America that you represent that we have come here to pay our love and our respects to you today.

Cites Truman Statement

For a country can be known by the quality of the men it honors. By praising you and by carrying forward your dreams, we really reaffirm the greatness of America. It was a generation ago that Harry Truman said, and I quote him:

"Millions of our citizens do not now have a full measure of opportunity to achieve and to enjoy good health. Millions do not now have protection or security against the economic effects of sickness. And the time has now arrived for action to help them attain



United Press International Telephoto

JOHNSON HONORS TRUMAN: President Johnson greeting former President Harry S. Truman yesterday before signing the medicare bill in Independence, Mo. Mr. Truman was first President to propose medicare. At rear is Gov. Warren E. Hearnes of Missouri.

that opportunity and to help them get that protection." Unquote.

Well, today, Mr. President and my fellow Americans, we are taking such action 20 years later. And we're doing that under the great leadership of men like John McCormack, our Speaker; Carl Albert, our majority leader; our very able and beloved majority leader of the Senate, Mike Mansfield, and distinguished members of the Ways and Means and Finance Committees of the House and Senate of both parties, Democratic and Republican, because the need for this action is plain and it's so clear, indeed, that we marvel not simply at the passage of this bill but what we marvel at is that it took so many years to pass it.

And I'm so glad that Aime Forand is here to see it finally passed and signed.

There are more than 18 million Americans over the age of 65. Most of them have low incomes. Most of them are threatened by illness and medical expenses that they cannot afford.

And through this new law, Mr. President, every citizen will be able in his productive years, when he's earning, to insure himself against the ravages of illness in his old age. This insurance will help pay for care in hospitals, in skilled nursing homes or in the home. And under a separate plan it will help meet the fees of the doctors. Now here's how the plan will affect you:

During your working years, people of America, you will contribute through the Social Security program a small amount each payday for hospital insurance protection. For example, the average worker in 1966 will contribute about \$1.50 per month. The employer will contribute about a similar amount and this will provide the funds to pay up to 90 days of hospital care for each illness plus diagnostic care and up to 100 home health visits after you're 65. And beginning in 1967 you will also be covered for up to 100 days of care in a skilled nursing home after a period of hospital care.

And under a separate plan, when you're 65—that the Congress originated itself in its own good judgment—you may be covered for medical and surgical fees whether you're in or out of a hospital. You will pay \$3 per month after you are 65 and your Government will contribute an equal amount. And the benefits under the law are as varied and broad as the marvels of modern medicine itself.

Hopes to Remedy Defects

And if it has a few defects, such as the method of payment of certain specialists, then I am confident those can be quickly remedied, and I hope they will be.

No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years.

No longer will young families see their own incomes and their own hopes eaten

away simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations to their parents and to their uncles and their aunts. And no longer will this nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and wisdom and labor to the progress of this progressive country.

And this bill, Mr. President, is even broader than that. It will increase Social Security benefits for all of our older Americans. It will improve a wide range of health and medical services for Americans of all ages.

In 1935, when the man that both of us loved so much, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, signed the Social Security Act, he said, and I quote him:

"A cornerstone in the structure which is being built but it is by no means complete."

But perhaps no single act in the entire Administration of the beloved Franklin D. Roosevelt really did more to win him the illustrious place in history that he has as did the laying of that cornerstone.

I'm so happy that his oldest son, Jimmy, could be here to share with us the job that is ours today.

And those who share this day will also be remembered for making the most important addition to that structure—and you're making it in this bill—the most important addition that's been made in three decades.

Because history shapes men, but it is a necessary faith of leadership that men can help shape history. There are many who led us to this historic day not out of courtesy or deference but from gratitude and remembrance which is our country's debt, and if I may be pardoned for taking a moment I want to call part of the honor roll.

The able leadership in both Houses of the Congress. Congressman Celler, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, introduced the hospital insurance in 1952. Aime Forand from Rhode Island, then Congressman, introduced it in the House.

Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico helped medicare through the years in the Senate. Congressman Cecil King of California carried on the battle in the House. The legislative genius of the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Wilbur Mills, and the effective and able work of Senator Russell Long together transformed this desire into victory.

And those devoted public servants—former Secretary—Senator Ribicoff; present Secretary Tony Celebrezze; Under Secretary Wilbur Cohen; the Democratic whip of the House, Hale Boggs, on the Ways and Means Committee, and really the White House's best legislator, Larry O'Brien, gave not just endless days and months and, yes, years of patience, but they gave their hearts to passing this bill.

Kennedy Is Recalled

So, let us all remember those who sadly cannot share this time for triumph, for it

is their triumph, too. It is the victory of great members of Congress that are not with us, like John Dingell Sr. and Robert Wagner, late a member of the Senate, and James Murray of Montana.

And there is also John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who fought in the Senate and took his case to the people and never yielded in pursuit but was not spared to see the final concourse of the forces that he had helped to loose.

But it all started really with the man from Independence, and so as it is fitting that we should—we've come back here to his home to complete what he began.

President Harry Truman, as any President must, made many decisions of great moment, although he always made them frankly and with a courage and a clarity that few men have ever shared.

The immense and the intricate questions of freedom and survival were caught up many times in the web of Harry Truman's judgment. And this is in the tradition of leadership.

But there's another tradition that we share today. It calls upon us never to be indifferent toward despair. It commands us never to turn away from helplessness. It directs us never to ignore or to spurn those who suffer untended in a land that's bursting with abundance.

I said to Senator Smathers coming out today—the whip of the Democrats in the Senate and who worked with us on the Finance Committee—this legislation—I said the highest traditions of the medical profession are really directed to the ends that we are trying to serve.

And it was only yesterday, at the request of some of my friends, I met with the leaders of the American Medical Association to seek their assistance in advancing the cause of one of the greatest professions of all, the medical profession, in helping us to maintain and to improve the health of all Americans.

Notes Years of Struggle

And this is not just our tradition or the tradition of the Democratic party, or even the tradition of the nation. It is as old as the day it was first commanded, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, to thy needy in the land."

And just think, Mr. President, because of this document and the long years of struggle which so many have put into creating it, in this town and a thousand other towns like it, there are men and women in pain who will now find ease. There are those alone in suffering who will now hear the sound of some approaching footsteps coming to help. There are those fearing the terrible darkness of despairing poverty, despite their long years of labor and expectations, who will now look up to see the light of hope and realization.

There just can be no satisfaction nor any act of leadership that gives greater satisfaction than this. And perhaps you alone, President Truman, perhaps you alone, can fully know just how grateful I am for this day.