

specific measures. One thing I must say to you and to all my fellow New Yorkers—

and today I direct these words to the members of this committee and the Congress—

We dare not indulge ourselves in the useless luxury of wishing that we did not have these problems or of hoping that if we just sit still, they will go away. They will not.

Last December while I was in Puerto Rico attending a conference on unemployment and automation, I said in a speech that heroic and unusual measures were required to meet the problem not just of unemployment—but of the special kind of unemployment that we have today, including the unemployment of a substantial number of people who cannot readily be trained or retrained to fill the highly skilled jobs for which there are openings today, nor for those jobs which would be created by a conventional-type public works program.

So I said in Puerto Rico that what we needed was a major public works program of two kinds—a conventional public works program to take up the slack in the skilled work force, and a special works program consisting of useful projects in which a majority of those employed could be relatively unskilled and at the same time be given some training.

I proposed this early last December. Hence, I am very pleased to note that the Equal Opportunity Act now pending before this committee makes provision in two separate titles, or at least authorizes the kind of undertaking I referred to as special public works in both titles 1 and 2.

Many of us saw that the cost of poverty was mounting steadily and dramatically, both as a direct and an indirect charge upon the rest of us. We saw also that despite all the efforts being made to meet the impact of poverty, we weren't really making much headway—certainly not enough. In fact, I came to the conclusion that the problem was making headway against us, as a result of automation, among other factors.

What we needed, I decided, was to take a fresh look at each of our antipoverty efforts and programs and to try to use each one to reinforce the other, focusing all of them on the goal of rescuing as many people as possible from the quicksands of poverty, in order to convert them from social liabilities into social assets.

It occurred to me that this had to be done on a social rather than an individual basis—and by a concerted, coordinated, and stepped-up effort. It had to be an effort that would enlist and enroll the maximum participation by all the elements of the community in which these people live and by the community at large, citywide, statewide, and nationwide.

Finally, I saw that we had to concentrate more effort on the roots of the problem of poverty—on the varied causes of individual and social disorganization and impoverishment.

It was, of course, clear that this effort could best be made on a nationwide basis, with nationwide leadership and mobilization. But again I emphasize my feeling that local initiative and participation, including neighborhood leadership and participation, are essential to success.