

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is improving the education of more than 7 million poor children.

Our higher education programs support more than 1 million students in college—students who might otherwise not have been able to go.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps, the Job Corps, and an expanded manpower development and training program are bringing skills to almost 1 million young Americans who only a few years ago would have been condemned to the ranks of the unemployed.

The "medicaid" program is now extending better medical service to millions of poor children.

In fiscal 1960, the Federal Government invested about \$3.5 billion in America's children and youth. In fiscal 1965 that investment rose to \$7.3 billion. In fiscal 1968 it will increase to over \$11.5 billion—more than three times the amount the Government was spending 8 years ago.

We are a young nation. Nearly half our people are 25 or under—and much of the courage and vitality that bless this land are the gift of young citizens.

The Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia, the Teacher Corps volunteer in a Chicago slum, the young Marine offering up his courage—and his life—in Vietnam: these are the Boy Scouts, the 4-H Club members, the high school athletes of only a few years ago. What they are able to offer the world as citizens depends on what their Nation offered them as youngsters.

Knowing this, we seek to strengthen American families. We also seek to strengthen our alliance with State and local governments. The future of many of our children depends on the work of local public health services, school boards, the local child welfare agencies, and local community action agencies.

Recent studies confirm what we have long suspected. In education, in health, in all of human development, the early years are the critical years. Ignorance, ill health, personality disorder—these are disabilities often contracted in childhood: afflictions which linger to cripple the man and damage the next generation.

Our Nation must rid itself of this bitter inheritance. Our goal must be clear—to give every child the chance to fulfill his promise.

Much remains to be done to move toward this goal. Today, no less than in the early years of this century, America has an urgent job to do for its young.

Even during these years of unparalleled prosperity:

5.5 million children under 6, and 9 million more under 17, live in families too poor to feed and house them adequately.

This year 1 million babies, 1 in every 4, will be born to mothers who receive little or no obstetric care.

More than 4 million children will suffer physical handicaps and another 2 million will fall victim to preventable accidents or disease.

One million young Americans, most of them from poor families, will drop out of school this year—many to join the unhappy legion of the unemployed.

One in every six young men under 18 will be taken to juvenile court for at least one offense this year.