

Security and a meaningful life are our goals. In the last decade the Federal government has made great strides in assuring security. Social Security payments have been increased; the Medicare program has relieved anxiety over costly illness; Federal aid has expanded housing construction for the elderly. At the State level last year's tax reform program brought a special 50 percent property tax credit for the elderly with limited incomes. This provision was designed to protect the elderly homeowner living on a fixed income from losing his home due to rising costs and rising property taxes.

However, as a nation and a State we are far from perfect. Some existing programs need revision, others expansion, and many areas still await action.

The achievement of a meaningful life presents our most formidable challenge. To date our scientific and governmental achievements have far out-paced our human advances on the problems of aging. In a work-oriented society our citizens too often do not know what to do with leisure time. As a youth-oriented society we have failed to provide a satisfying role for the senior citizen. And society is the loser for we are not yet so affluent in human resources that we can afford to dismiss the time or discard the talents of our elderly citizens.

Here is where local Commissions on the Aging become most important. Here is where you can be most effective. Isolation is the most malignant misery of old age. Isolation and unnecessary institutionalization are as debilitating as any single physical disease. Interest and involvement are the answers to isolation. Only community organizations can provide the necessary personnel and personal approach to reach the elderly. Only community organizations can provide the proper planning of programs and services. And, I believe, these programs and services can flow in two directions: one from the community to help the elderly, one from the elderly to help the community.

This assignment is tremendous but so is the opportunity. Our nation, our states and our communities must come to grips with this problem. Old age is here to stay; it is very much a part of the human condition. We cannot sweep the problems of aging away or ignore our senior citizens. The problems are too real, the people too many. We must respond to these problems with positive solutions which will contribute to the life of the individual and the life of the community. This is our optimum goal and we should not settle for less.