

Suggested remarks for Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson at
Dedication of new Science Center at Wilkes College,
Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Saturday, January 11, 1964.

I have just had a whirlwind tour of some Area
Redevelopment Administration and Accelerated Public Works
projects in this economically hard-hit area of Pennsylvania,
and I must tell you how deeply impressed I am with the
efforts being made here on the local level to try to pull
this once prosperous anthracite region back on its
economic feet.

It's heart-warming, indeed, to see such examples of
government and private investors teaming up to create new
industries and new jobs.

As you doubtlessly know from current news reports,
there is a new movement against poverty in the United States
starting to take shape in Washington.

And I can think of no better spot to point up the need
for such a concentrated effort than here in the Wilkes-
Barre - Scranton area -- at the very hape~~x~~ of the
Appalachian area which is to be one of the focal points
of this drive against poverty in our nation.

The leaders and investors in this immediate area, I
have learned, have done an outstanding job in putting the

tools of ARA and APW to work for them. Three areas in this immediate vicinity -- the Pottsville-Schuylkill area, Wilkes-Barre--Luzerne area and Sunbury-Shamokin area -- have done a better job of reducing unemployment than the nation as a whole, according to a recent survey comparing 1961 and 1962 unemployment statistics.

But their unemployment rates still hover in the 8.2 per cent to 11.9 per cent range -- far above the national average of 5.6 per cent. And that national average of 5.6 per cent is far too high in itself, I think we can all agree.

It seems somewhat incongruous to be stressing the word poverty in this day when our gross national product is soaring to new highs and most of our people are enjoying unprecedented prosperity.

But too many of our people are not enjoying that prosperity. Some 18 per cent -- or 8.6 million of 46.3 million families in the United States -- are classified as "poor" by our economists and sociologists.

That means they are trying to get along on less than \$3,000 a year.

It's shocking to think of 18 per cent of our people described as "poor" in this day and age, but it's even more shocking when you consider that 22 per cent of our children are in these "poor" families.

This great nation simply cannot allow such conditions to continue. It's not only morally wrong, it's an economic waste that America can not tolerate in the current world competition of today.

Poverty in our country has become a geographical problem. You find these pockets in areas that are mined out or worked out, for the most part. Or in areas where one-industry towns are shrivelling because progress has passed them by.

It is estimated that if unemployment and underemployment in the ARA designated areas were reduced to more normal rates, the annual addition to our gross national product would be about \$7 billion. Over a 15-year period, that's around \$100 billion.

This nation simply can not afford that.

When you sit down with the experts to discuss how to meet this gigantic problem, the first and foremost answer always is: Education.

We need more scientists, more specially-trained post graduates, more highly-educated and highly-skilled workers.

And that is what pleases me most about our experience here today.

We are gathered here to dedicate a new Science Center for Wilkes College. And this center, I'm told, was put here partly to aid in industrial development.

To aid in the operation and expansion of electrical, electronic and chemical industries and to attract new and expanding industries of this type.

This is a splendid goal, for communities like Wilkes-Barre and Scranton need to -- simply must -- diversify their economic lifelines.

It's a pleasure for me to be here, for I feel I'm in on the beginning of something big and worthwhile, and I wish you good luck and God speed in the months and years ahead.