

# WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

1930

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ADDRESSES AND ABSTRACTS  
OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

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WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE  
ON CHILD HEALTH AND  
PROTECTION

*called by*  
PRESIDENT HOOVER



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## FOREWORD

The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, called by President Hoover, assembled in Washington, November 19-22, 1930, with 3,000 men and women, leaders in the medical, educational, and social fields as they touch the life of the child, in attendance.

The call for the Conference went out in July, 1929, as one of the early acts of President Hoover, who announced that it was: "To study the present status of the health and well-being of the children of the United States and its possessions; to report what is being done; to recommend what ought to be done and how to do it."

The Conference was called twenty years after the first White House Conference on children and ten years after the second.

The first conference, called by President Roosevelt, was concerned with the dependent child. Two hundred delegates assembled in Washington. It resulted in fifteen definite recommendations, among which were: that children should not be removed from their own homes by reasons of poverty; that the causes of dependency should be studied and, so far as possible, ameliorated or removed; that for children who must be removed from their own homes, foster homes in families are, as a rule, desirable; that in-

stitutions for children should preferably be on the cottage plan; that child-caring agencies should be incorporated, with state approval, and the state should inspect their work; and that a Federal Children's Bureau should be created "to investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children."

It was due to the stimulus of this conference that in 1912 the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor was organized.

The second White House Conference was called in 1919 at the request of President Wilson, as the closing activity of Children's Year, under the auspices of the Children's Bureau. There were two hundred delegates at this second conference, the attendance purposely being limited because of post-war housing conditions which prevailed in Washington. The conference was followed by eight important regional conferences.

The radius of the second conference was enlarged to include, under five sections: Economic and social basis for child welfare standards; child labor; health of children and mothers; children in need of special care; and standardization of child welfare laws.

The results of both of these earlier conferences have been broad and far-reaching, and their recommendations are still influencing social and legislative protection of children.

This third Conference included the subjects in the two former conferences, but the range was enlarged to take in not only the dependent child or the child in special need of protection, but all children, in their

total aspects, including those social and environmental factors which are influencing modern childhood.

To find facts, to define standards, to recommend changes were the aims of the Conference.

There are 45,000,000 growing children in this country. They represent more different racial strains than make up the body of any other nation. They have widely differing backgrounds. To get a composite picture of this complex American child, to find out how he rates physically, mentally, morally, what our rapidly changing civilization is doing to make or mar him, to determine where our social, educational, and governmental machinery is at fault in training him to his utmost capacities, and where it may be strengthened, was a challenging task.

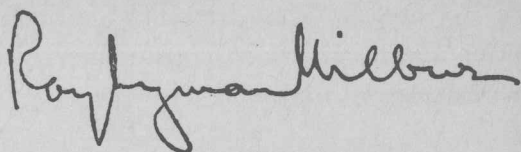
As a preliminary to the Conference sixteen months were devoted to preparatory study, research, and assembling of facts on the part of 1,200 experts working on nearly 150 different committees, assembled under seventeen main committees, divided into four sections:

Medical Service  
Public Health and Administration  
Education and Training  
The Handicapped

These experts in the various fields of child life gave a service, largely voluntary, the results of which are immeasurable. It represents a conscientious effort on the part of a people to weigh their progress in terms of that most sensitive index—their children.

When the findings brought together in the various reports are widely disseminated through the published proceedings, through interpretive books and magazine articles, and have been acted upon by official and non-official groups in local communities all over the country, we should be more familiar with the problems of childhood and far better equipped to deal with them than ever before.

The results of this Conference should be long-continuing, as have been those of the two earlier conferences, molding public opinion and social action, reaching out until they touch and better the life of every child in the country. This preliminary volume presents the addresses delivered at the Conference and a digest of the summary reports of the seventeen main committees composing the four different sections. More complete volumes will appear as rapidly as they can be assembled and published.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rayburn Hilborn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

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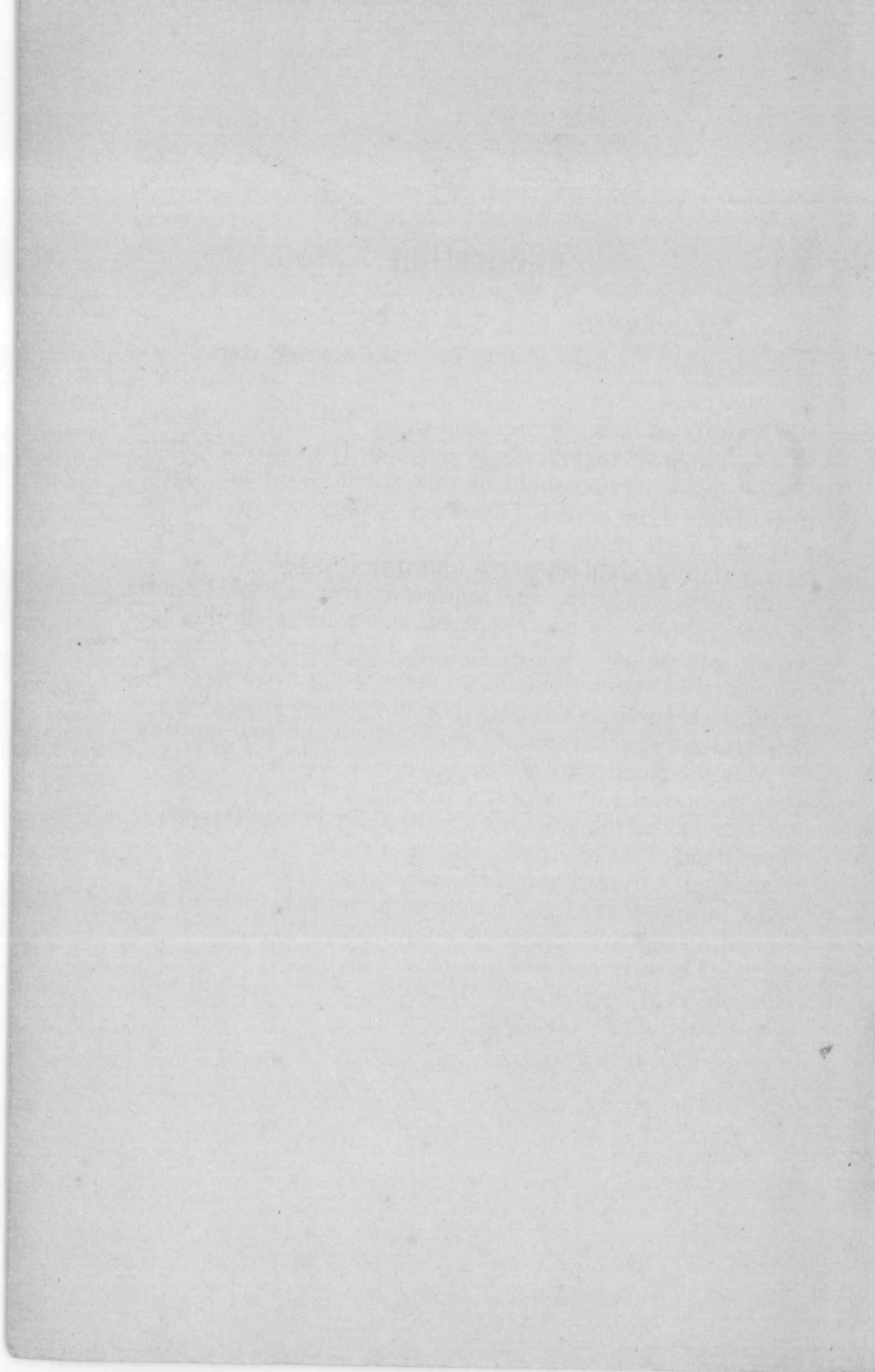
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## CONFERENCE ADDRESSES





## Invocation

REVEREND A. J. McCARTNEY, D.D.

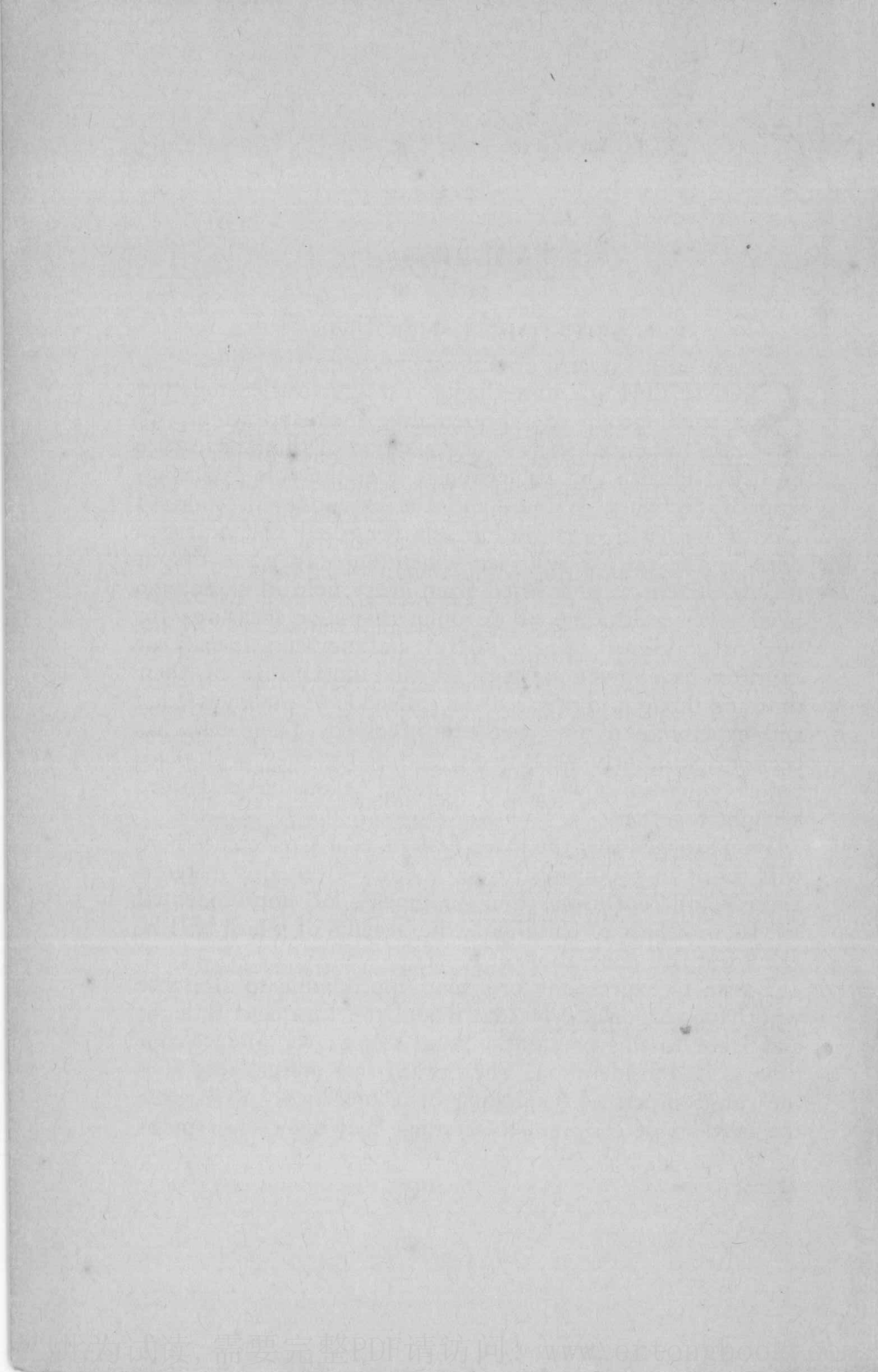
CHURCH OF THE COVENANT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

**G**OD of our children, in whose behalf we are assembled together, we invoke Thy divine favor upon the household of this nation. We thank Thee that Thou didst reveal Thyself in the home and in the life of a little child, and in this confidence we bring ourselves and our children to the altar of Thy love.

We bless Thee for the sentiments that stir us to this worthy concern for the happiness and welfare of the up-rising generation—forgive the sins of maturity that we continually commit against the innocence and helplessness of childhood. Teach us how vain it is to build up strong bodies and reasonable minds and to neglect their spiritual natures.

May the message of this conference be seasoned with wisdom, tempered with justice, and winged with earnestness—to the end that we may lift the level of human happiness throughout the nation.

Bless all little children everywhere, give them health of body, purity of mind and joy in work and play—bless their friend, the President of the United States. May he ever be had in Thy safe and holy keeping—all this we ask in the name of That Great Friend of children Who said, “Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.”



ADDRESS  
OF  
PRESIDENT HOOVER

SOMETHING more than a year ago I called together a small group of representative men and women to take the initial steps in organization of this Conference on Child Health and Protection. Under the able chairmanship of Secretary Wilbur, and the executive direction of Doctor Barnard, organization was perfected and enlarged until by the fall of last year something over 1,200 of our fellow citizens were enlisted from every field of those who have given a lifetime of devotion to public measures for care of childhood. These skilful and devoted friends of children have given unsparingly and unselfishly of their time and thought in research and collection of the knowledge and experience in the problems involved. Their task has been magnificently performed, and today they will place before you such a wealth of material as was never before brought together.

I am satisfied that the three days of your Conference here will result in producing to our country from this material a series of conclusions and judgments of unprecedented service in behalf of childhood, the benefits of which will be felt for a full generation.

I wish to express my profound appreciation to all those who have so generously contributed the time and thought and labor to this preparation, and to you for giving your time to its consideration. The reward that accrues to you is the consciousness of something done unselfishly to lighten the burdens of children, to set their feet upon surer paths

to health and well-being and happiness. For many years I have hoped for such a national consideration as this. You comprise the delegates appointed by our federal departments and by the governors of our states, the mayors of our cities, and the representatives of our great national associations, our medical and public health professions. In your hands rest the knowledge and authority outside of the home itself.

In addressing you whom I see before me here in this auditorium, I am mindful also of the unseen millions listening in their homes, who likewise are truly members of this Conference, for these problems are theirs—it is their children whose welfare is involved, its helpful services are for them, and their cooperation is essential in carrying out a united and nation-wide effort in behalf of the children.

We approach all problems of childhood with affection. Theirs is the province of joy and good humor. They are the most wholesome part of the race, the sweetest, for they are fresher from the hands of God. Whimsical, ingenious, mischievous, we live a life of apprehension as to what their opinion may be of us; a life of defense against their terrifying energy; we put them to bed with a sense of relief and a lingering of devotion. We envy them the freshness of adventure and discovery of life; we mourn over the disappointments they will meet.

The fundamental purpose of this Conference is to set forth an understanding of those safeguards which will assure to them health in mind and body. There are safeguards and services to childhood which can be provided by the community, the State, or the Nation—all of which are beyond the reach of the individual parent. We approach these problems in no spirit of diminishing the responsibilities and values or invading the sanctities of those primary safeguards to child life—their homes and their mothers. After we have determined every scientific fact, after we have erected every public safeguard, after we have constructed every edifice for education or training or hospitalization or play, yet all these

things are but a tithe of the physical, moral, and spiritual gifts which motherhood gives and home confers. None of these things carries that affection, that devotion of soul, which is the great endowment from mothers. Our purpose here today is to consider and give our mite of help to strengthen her hand that her boy and girl may have a fair chance.

Our country has a vast majority of competent mothers. I am not so sure of the majority of competent fathers. But what we are concerned with here are things that are beyond her power. That is what Susie and John take on when out from under her watchful eye. She cannot count the bacteria in the milk; she cannot detect the typhoid which comes through the faucet, or the mumps that pass round the playground. She cannot individually control the instruction of our schools or the setting up of community-wide remedy for the deficient and handicapped child. But she can insist upon officials who hold up standards of protection and service to her children—and one of your jobs is to define these standards and tell her what they are. She can be trusted to put public officials to the acid test of the infant mortality and service to children in the town—when you set some standard for her to go by.

These questions of child health and protection are a complicated problem requiring much learning and much action. And we need have great concern over this matter. Let no one believe that these are questions which should not stir a nation; that they are below the dignity of statesmen or governments. If we could have but one generation of properly born, trained, educated, and healthy children, a thousand other problems of government would vanish. We would assure ourselves of healthier minds in more vigorous bodies, to direct the energies of our Nation to yet greater heights of achievement. Moreover, one good community nurse will save a dozen future policemen.

Our problem falls into three groups: first, the protection



and stimulation of the normal child; second, aid to the physically defective and handicapped child; third, the problems of the delinquent child.

Statistics can well be used to give emphasis to our problem. One of your committees reports that out of 45,000,000 children—

35,000,000 are reasonably normal  
6,000,000 are improperly nourished  
1,000,000 have defective speech  
1,000,000 have weak or damaged hearts  
675,000 present behavior problems  
450,000 are mentally retarded  
382,000 are tubercular  
342,000 have impaired hearing \*  
18,000 are totally deaf  
300,000 are crippled  
50,000 are partially blind  
14,000 are wholly blind  
200,000 are delinquent  
500,000 are dependent

And so on, to a total of at least ten millions of deficient, more than 80 per cent of whom are not receiving the necessary attention, though our knowledge and experience show that these deficiencies can be prevented and remedied to a high degree. The reports you have before you are not only replete with information upon each of these groups, they are also vivid with recommendation for remedy. And if we do not perform our duty to the children, we leave them dependent, or we provide from them the major recruiting ground for the army of ne'er-do-wells and criminals.

But that we be not discouraged let us bear in mind that there are 35,000,000 reasonably normal, cheerful human electrons radiating joy and mischief and hope and faith.

\* This figure in President Hoover's speech, due to later findings of the Committee, was increased to 3,000,000.



Their faces are turned toward the light—theirs is the life of great adventure. These are the vivid, romping, everyday children, our own and our neighbors' with all their strongly marked differences—and the more differences the better. The more they charge us with their separate problems the more we know they are vitally and humanly alive.

From what we know of foreign countries, I am convinced that we have a right to assume that we have a larger proportion of happy, normal children than any other country in the world. And also, on the bright side, your reports show that we have 1,500,000 specially gifted children. There lies the future leadership of the Nation if we devote ourselves to their guidance.

In the field of deficient and handicapped children, advancing knowledge and care can transfer them more and more to the happy lot of normal children. And these children, less fortunate as they are, have a passion for their full rights which appeals to the heart of every man and woman. We must get to the cause of their handicaps from the beginnings of their lives. We must extend the functions of our schools and institutions to help them as they grow. We must enlarge the services of medical inspection and clinics, expand the ministrations of the family doctor in their behalf, and very greatly increase the hospital facilities for them. We must not leave one of them uncared for.

There are also the complex problems of the delinquent child. We need to turn the methods of inquiry from the punishment of delinquency to the causes of delinquency. It is not the delinquent child that is at the bar of judgment, but society itself.

Again, there are the problems of the orphaned children. Fortunately we are making progress in this field in some of the states through the preservation for them of the home by support of their mothers or by placing them in homes and thus reducing the institutional services.

There are vast problems of education in relation to physi-

cal and mental health. With so many of the early responsibilities of the home drained away by the rapid changes in our modern life, perhaps one of the most important problems we shall need to meet in the next few years is how to return to our children, through our schools and extra-scholastic channels, that training for parenthood which once was the natural teaching of the home. With the advance of science and advancement of knowledge we have learned a thousand things that the individual, both parent and child, must know in his own self-protection. And at once the relation of our educational system to the problem envisages itself, and it goes further. The ill-nourished child is in our country not the product of poverty; it is largely the product of ill-instructed children and ignorant parents. Our children all differ in character, in capacity, in inclination. If we would give them their full chance they must have that service in education which develops their special qualities. They must have vocational guidance.

Again, there are the problems of child labor. Industry must not rob our children of their rightful heritage. Any labor which stunts growth, either physical or mental, that limits education, that deprives children of the right of comradeship, of joy and play, is sapping the next generation.

In the last half a century we have herded 50,000,000 more human beings into towns and cities where the whole setting is new to the race. We have created highly congested areas with a thousand changes resulting in the swift transition from a rural and agrarian people to an urban, industrial nation. Perhaps the widest range of difficulties with which we are dealing in the betterment of children grows out of this crowding into cities. Problems of sanitation and public health loom in every direction. Delinquency increases with congestion. Overcrowding produces disease and contagion. The child's natural play place is taken from him. His mind is stunted by the lack of imaginative surroundings and lack of contact with the fields, streams, trees, and birds. Home