

Community Chest - 1960

Albany 10/4/60

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I.

One of the things that my mother used to talk about very frequently was what she would do with a million dollars. In those days a million dollars was a lot of money. Come to think about it - it is a lot of money today, as far as I am concerned. My mother and father never had a chance to have a million dollars. They were factory workers who were able to establish a comfortable home and in some way managed to send their son to college. But mother taught me one thing long before I went to college. Although she never had a million dollars to spend she did two things. First, when she dreamed about spending it she was always giving it away. Now she needed a lot of things, but she never spent one cent of that million on herself. "If I had a million dollars," she would say, "I would see that this or that institution in our community had enough to do what needs to be done, or I would see that this boy or girl was taken care of." She would hear about some need in the community and immediately she would start to spend her million. As a matter-of-fact I am afraid on several occasions she overdrew her account! But as far back as I can remember I was made conscious of the needs of my community, of my church, of people. This was so impressed on me that it is very hard for me to understand those who live just for themselves.

B.

But my mother did more than just spend this million in her dreams. she gave what she could. She believed that she should tithe her income. When she received her pay envelope at the end of a week she took ten percent of it for her church and for her charities. As I look back I am impressed by this - not having the million did not stop her from giving what she could. I am very sure that many times my mother went without something which she wanted and perhaps needed because she gave that money away. She gave it not to receive any

and her standard of what she could do was based on a religious motive

credit for it, she gave it not to get credit on her income tax (she never heard of that), she gave it not because any pressure was put on her, she gave it because, in a way she would have found difficult to explain, she felt that she ought to help.

II.

A. All of this came back to me as I noticed that our goal for the Community Chest this year is just a little over one million dollars. You see my mother infected me with the same virus and I like to tell what I would do if I had a million dollars. As I looked over this years budget it came to me how I could get a million dollars to help the agencies in Albany that I want to help. I realized that although I could not get this alone I could get it by combining what I can do along with what all the other people in Albany can do. We do not expect any one person to meet these needs alone.

B.

Just as the needs of the agencies themselves were not determined by one person but by one hundred fifty of our fellow-citizens, so the response to these needs will be made by many times one. Compassion knows no race, it knows no party, it recognizes no class. In the best tradition of our country we join together to meet our need. Which gift is the most important gift this year?

C.

Is it the largest gift? I do not think so. Is it the first gift, the first dollar that is pledged? Well, we have to start somewhere, but I do not think that is most important. Is it the last gift - the one that gives us victory? I do not think so. I have no doubt but that if someone came to you and said, "We need one, five, ten dollars to reach our goal" that you would make that last gift. In a very real sense each one of us gives that last gift! There is no most important gift. In the last few weeks I have been watching the construction going on near my office. A foundation is being prepared for a building. Great supports have been driven deep into the ground and now tremendous piers are being built on these supports. Which one is most important. Each is important if the building stands. So each gift is important if our effort stands. Somewhere

along the line we need to learn this sense of community solidarity. If we have this we need not fear the results of our campaign. If we do not have it we shall fail.

///. On behalf of those Protestant Churches affiliated with the Capital Area Council of Churches I speak. We join with our brethren in the other religious groups in the city to make a common cause with the members of the professions, with merchants, with manufacturers, with management, with labor, with the people of Albany to meet the needs of our city the "fair share way." As Americans we believe that together we shall not only stand but that together we shall go forward. I like the illustration which we have seen on the campaign letterhead - a group of all sorts of people walking along together. I notice in that group there is a nurse carrying a baby. Perhaps this is a very good symbolism - we shall need to carry some who cannot go along by ~~himself~~^{themselves}, but those who can will do that and through our common gifts we shall, with the help of our God, make a common cause to make this city a better city through the Red Feather Services.