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## Social Security and Social Change

ON AUGUST 14, 1968, we celebrate the 33rd anniversary of the Social Security Act. We pause in the midst of very busy days to reflect on a third of a century of tremendous progress. It is a time for remembering and predicting, a time for counting accomplishments while seeking improvements. I am proud to have been a member of the staff of the Committee on Economic Security when the Act was signed in 1935 and to be the Secretary in charge of administering the law 33 years later.

We are reminded of the contribution that social security has made to the well-being of millions of the American people. During these past 33 years, a brief span in a nation's history, social security has meant progress and promise. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act, he and Miss Frances Perkins, Edwin E. Witte, and Arthur J. Altmeyer knew that the Nation was laying the cornerstone of an inspired, dynamic institution. As the basic institution for providing economic security, the social security program touches on the life of every American. The program has approached near universal coverage, providing broad retirement, disability, and survivors' protection and health insurance protection for the aged.

The growth of social security has been paralleled by private efforts, thus creating a framework for preventing economic insecurity. The fears of many when the law was enacted that private initiative would be stifled were not realized. Instead, the law's many accomplishments are properly a source of pride. But now is a time for looking ahead, not merely congratulating ourselves but measuring the distance yet to go. Within the framework that has been established certain weaknesses still remain. After a third of a century we know the job is not done. Social security must continue to grow and change with the times.

In the next decade, social security can and must play an important role in the elimination of poverty. Benefits

must be substantially increased. Health insurance must be broadened and expanded under a combination of public and private efforts. New measures of financing will have to be considered. And our welfare programs must be radically reshaped to meet new needs.

But in the spirit of those who created the basic law and in the light of social security's proven ability to grow and develop to meet new conditions, we can face the complex challenges of today and tomorrow with confidence. I am sure that the program gaps and inadequacies we now see will be remedied as our productive capacity continues to expand at the rate that our present level of scientific achievement makes possible. To strive, to seek, to maintain for all the people a social security status commensurate with our growing national income and potential will not be a simple task. In the future as in the past the premium will be on imagination, on inventiveness, on the willingness to experiment with new types of relationships among public and private organizations and among levels of government. Above all, there must be clear awareness of the need for choice and decisions as to social priorities if we are to continue to move towards a social security status for all Americans worthy of this Nation's expectations.

During the next 33 years there will be even greater opportunities than ever before to expand and adapt our social security programs to the changing needs of a dynamic society.



*Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare*