

Notes for Address to Bell Telephone
Conference, 1972 November 27

NOTES FOR ADDRESS TO BELL TELEPHONE CONFERENCE
November 27, 1972, TREADWAY INN, WILKES-BARRE

A. INTRODUCTION (Chavez story)

B. What is important is that the great flood of 1972 is not a catastrophe which marks the decline and disintegration of an old, established and dynamic community. Instead, our experience can be and it must be the springboard from which a stronger, more vital and more beautiful community will grow. Like the legendary phoenix, the Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley of today has an enormous opportunity for rebirth, redesign and new vitality.

C. I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about the unsung heroes of this terrible disaster without whose effective, fruitful and often heroic assistance, this recovery could not have been possible. They responded promptly even though they were among the hardest hit victims. They disregarded their own destruction to help others. They sought neither help nor sympathy. They offered no apologies or explanations. They called for men, materials and money and they moved speedily. I refer, gentlemen to our public utilities, the light companies, the gas and water company, and last, but not least, the telephone companies. Their record of achievement in the post-flood period is a magnificent tribute to the ingenuity, resourcefulness and capabilities of our regulated industries. Bell Telephone's role and accomplishments were especially significant. Bell was not

only called upon to restore telephone service immediately, though it was under water in this area and in its key city of Harrisburg, but also to extend its services within the matter of minutes and hours to supply telephone communication to the emergency forces -- the Office of Emergency Preparedness, Army Engineers, emergency field hospitals and other emergency installations, HUD and the Office of Presidential representatives. As Chairman of the Flood Recovery Task Force of the Valley and for myself personally, I want to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of a grateful community to the Bell Telephone Company for its state and local leadership, its management and to the men and women for a job superbly done. They worked unceasingly day in and day out, and often around the clock, to restore communications to this devastated area. It would have been much simpler and easier to have constructed a new telephone system. They rebuilt and reconstructed an old system in an inconceivably short time and really wrought a miracle.

D. My function heretoday, however, is^{not} to talk about the utilities but to tell you what we are doing in the recovery:

1. Our industries will remain and rebuild. There is only one major loss in the area -- Interstate Bakery.

2. Our people ~~are~~ rebuilding and will rebuild their homes...

- (a) SBA loans (See recap attached)
- (b) Interim assistance
- (c) Redevelopment.

3. Pierce Street Bridge
4. North Cross-Valley Expressway
5. Transportation Authority
6. The Colleges
7. Important new construction:
 - (a) Grit - new 14 story building
 - (b) First Valley Bank - 16 story combination office and apartment building.
 - (c) United Penn Bank - 9 story bank and office building
 - (d) New Federal Building - 60 thousand square feet
 - (e) First National Bank - new computer center
 - (f) New Vocational Rehabilitation facility
 - (g) New addition to Wilkes College (part of Stark Science Hall - Learning & Resource Center)
 - (h) General redevelopment of Wilkes-Barre City (approximately 100 million investment of federal and state funds over next three to five year period...)
8. Restructure of local government'
9. Future flood control -- the dikes and dams
10. The new citizen role in local government and planning.

"Man is no mere automaton in his routine, but that in the dust of which he is made there is also fire, lighted now and then by great winds from the sky." Walter Lippman

100-5012
100-235-5550
100-235-5550
100-235-5550
100-235-5550
100-235-5550