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**Memoirs of Katherine Lenroot: Remarks at a Luncheon with UNICEF Friends on the Occasion of her 80th Birthday: Helenka Pantaleoni; US Committee for UNICEF;**

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REMARKS BY MISS KATHERINE LENROOT, MARCH 8, 1971, AT A LUNCHEON WITH UNICEF FRIENDS ON THE OCCASION OF HER 80TH BIRTHDAY.

My dear Helenka, I cannot possibly tell you and the dear friends assembled here in remembrance of my 80th birthday what this occasion means to me. There could be no group of friends with whom I have closer associations and with whom it would give me greater happiness to have the opportunity of this lovely luncheon on my birthday.

First of all, dear Helenka, I would like to read a letter, which I have dated today, to you with regard to a request you made of me back in 1966 which I never fully met. The letter is as follows: "On January 4, 1966, you wrote me requesting certain information concerning the origin and early history of the U.S. Committee for UNICEF. Because of the urgency of getting material to you promptly, I gave you such information as I could over the telephone. I also promised to deposit with the Committee certain files which I had brought with me from Washington at the time of my retirement as chief of the Children's Bureau nearly 20 years ago. This I have neglected to do. I am now presenting to the Committee three folders of material which I have just left with Lloyd Bailey. This covers the period 1947-1951, during which I served as the United States representative on the executive board of UNICEF. After the creation of UNICEF there was a rather prolonged struggle to obtain a Congressional appropriation for a United States contribution to its budget. At this time I was a member of the first group comprising the National Commission for UNESCO and was convinced of the importance of a citizens' group to promote public understanding of and interest in the work of UNICEF and encourage support of its work from both public and voluntary sources. The idea was welcomed by the Department of State. (And I may say, Helenka, the ideas which I presented were not always welcomed by the department. But this one was, and the department worked closely with me and other interested persons in developing plans and taking the steps necessary to the achievement of this objective.) At this stage we had the invaluable leadership of Mrs. Oswald B. Lord, first chairman of the committee. (And I am so happy, Mary, that you can be with us today.) And I also had the very effective help and assistance of Martha Branscombe, then assistant to the chief of the Children's Bureau. How fortunate

it was, dear Helenka, that in 1953, when the evolution of UNICEF, itself, necessitated some changes in the organization and functions of the Committee, you--who have been with us from the beginning--became the President of the Committee and have continued to give such inspired, inspiring and effective leadership. With my great admiration and affection as always, Katherine."

Now I would like to take this opportunity since you have given me the floor, and at my age one always likes to reminisce... Going back a little bit, quite a little bit, before the creation of UNICEF or of the Committee, to talk about the international interest of the Children's Bureau of the United States Government, from the time it was created in 1912, when Julia C. Lathrop was appointed the first chief, and continuing through the administration of Grace Abbott, and I, as third chief, continued to have a very great interest in international affairs. I might say that the first person on the staff of the Children's Bureau was employed by Miss Lathrop during the first world war. She was a refugee from Poland, and she had a command of practically all the European languages. Miss Lathrop had her summarize for the use of the staff and publication, as appropriate, the material that she read in the European languages, giving developments in the field of child welfare in the European countries to whose material she had access. Mrs. Anna Kalet Smith continued, until her retirement, to perform this and many other valuable functions for the Children's Bureau. By the time I, who had joined the staff in 1915, became assistant chief of the Children's Bureau under Grace Abbott in 1922, the inter-American interest of the Children's Bureau had been fully established by Miss Lathrop and the wider European interest by her and by Grace Abbott.

Grace Abbott had a very important part in the organizing meeting which lead to the establishment of the International Labor Office after the first world war. On her retirement as chief of the Children's Bureau, Julia Lathrop was appointed advisor to the League of Nations commission on traffic in women and children and protection of children and young persons and used to go to Geneva annually to the meetings. She also made a special trip to Brazil and other countries in South America just after her retirement because of her very great interest in work in that part of the Americas.

Mrs. Enochs, Elizabeth Shirley Enochs, who is sitting at my right hand today and whom I'm so glad to see here, gave great leadership to the inter-American program for many years from about 1940 or 41 to the present time. Although she is now retired, she is still the representative of the United States on the council of the Inter-American Institute for Child Welfare, I believe it's called now, and is the honorary president of that inter-American organization which cooperates closely with UNICEF.

In 1924 Grace Abbott, chief of the Children's Bureau, asked me to go to Chile as a member of the United States delegation to the 4th Pan-American Child Congress and then across the Andes to Buenos Aires as a member of the delegation to the first Inter-American Congress on Social Economy. It took us 20 days to get down to Chile. The final action leading to the establishment of the Inter-American Children's Institute was taken at that 4th Pan-American Child Congress. When I got across to Buenos Aires and the Congress on Social Economy, I was assigned to the statistics section. One of the Argentinian delegates said to me, "I can understand a woman being interested in children, but I cannot understand a woman being interested in statistics."

From that time on I became greatly interested in the Latin American countries and was able very soon to enlist the interest of Elizabeth Shirley, as she then was. She was on the staff of the Children's Bureau doing very effective publicity work. She had been brought up in Europe and had a command of practically all of the European languages. She spoke Spanish almost better than the Spanish people themselves. Secretary Davis, the head of the Loyal Order of the Moose, was then Secretary of Labor. One day in the mid-20's, I think it was, he sent for me. (I was acting chief in the absence of Miss Abbott.) He told me that Mrs. Henry Parkinson Keyes, wife of the then Senator Keyes, who was writing for Good Housekeeping Magazine, was going to cover for the magazine an international exposition in Sevilla, Spain, and wanted someone who knew Spanish and had a good background to go with her at the expense of the magazine. Secretary Davis asked me if there was anyone on the staff of the Children's Bureau who was prepared to accept this assignment on leave from the Children's Bureau. I immediately thought of Elizabeth Shirley and told him that I would see whether she would be willing to go with Mrs. Keyes. I went back to the

office and sent for Elizabeth and said to her, "Do you believe in a fairy godmother?" She didn't know what I meant, and I said, "Well, Mrs. Henry Parkinson Keyes would like you to go with her for several months to Sevilla, Spain to cover the exposition there." As it turned out later, she wanted Elizabeth to go to Brazil and other South American countries with her to help her in her articles and contacts there. So Elizabeth was on leave for a good many weeks from the Children's Bureau, and it was at that point that I began to recognize the great asset the Children's Bureau had in having you, Elizabeth, on our staff.

When the second world war came along and Nelson Rockefeller was the director of the Office of Inter-American Affairs--promoting good relationships with American countries and cooperation in various ways in the war effort and in their own interest. Just shortly before that I had sent Mrs. Enochs, Elizabeth Shirley Enochs as she then was, around South America to find out where there were schools of social work. There was no list of schools of social work. We had no idea of how many countries had them. We knew that through the influence of Rene Sand of Belgium schools had been established in Chile and a few other countries. To my surprise, Mrs. Enochs found there were 14 or 15 countries that had schools of social work but that they didn't know each other, and one or two of them were under German direction and were being oriented very much toward the German system of social work. So Mrs. Enochs and I went to Mr. Rockefeller and told him that we thought that the United States ought to encourage relationships with these schools of social work. This was about 1940 or 41. We suggested that his office might like to help us by making available money by which we could bring up the heads of all the schools for a tour of some of the United States schools of social work and attendance at the National Conference of Social Work, which was meeting at Atlantic City. Mr. Rockefeller approved of the plan and made the funds available, and 14 or 15 representatives of the schools of social work were brought up and visited a number of places under Mrs. Enochs' effective leadership.

Then I was appointed, I think a little before that time, very early in our participation in the second world war, a member of an inter-departmental

committee which had the objective of reviewing plans for inter-American progress in all fields, economic and social. One of the things that we were most concerned about was the stimulation of the growing of rubber in Brazil to take the place of oriental rubber whose source of supplies were cut off because we were engaged in war with Japan. I suggested that we ought to have a little money for cooperation in child welfare. The institute in Montevideo was then a going concern, and I was a member of the council and asked for \$5,000 to begin a program which we thought might begin with a translation of the Children's Bureau publications for mothers on prenatal, infant and child care into Spanish and Portuguese. The committee approved this idea, and I had to go up to the Congress to support it before a congressional committee.

At that time representatives of all the United States agencies, if you can believe it, with interest in this field had to wait in an anteroom of the Senate appropriations committee for their turn to testify in behalf of their request for funds for cooperation with Latin America. Finally my turn came just before the bell rang for roll call. They said they would have to adjourn without hearing our testimony, but one of the senators said, "Just a minute. I have a question to ask of Miss Lenroot." So they gave him the floor, and he said, "I see you are wearing a very interesting silver ornament in your hat. Could you tell me where you got it? It looks South American." And it did come from Bolivia; so that was the only testimony I gave. But we got the \$5,000. And following that, small amounts were made available for a very modest inter-American cooperative program in behalf of children.

Alice Shaffer, who has been such an effective member of the UNICEF staff for so many years, particularly in Central America and Brazil, was one of the first two people that I recruited from the University of Chicago School of Social Work to be on an inter-American staff. And then, as soon as I could, I transferred Elizabeth Enochs from the publicity work to be the director of our inter-American unit, and we had four or five people for quite a few years giving technical advice and service to countries in South America who wanted such service in the development of social welfare and child welfare programs.

Well, then...to go back chronologically, Miss Abbott had served in the 30's until her retirement from the Children's Bureau in 34, as a member of the League of Nations advisory commission on traffic in women and children and protection of children and young people, which became the advisory committee on child welfare. When she retired, I succeeded her as a member of these committees and went to Geneva twice and sent substitutes to other meetings in the 30's. It was interesting to recall that the only instructions the State Department gave me in sending me as an advisory member, because we were not a member of the League, was that I should follow the lead of the British delegation. When in the course of the second world war the Department of State and the President and others in the government were working on plans for the United Nations, I was interested in what might be done in relation to social welfare. The Food and Agriculture Organization had already been set up, and steps had been taken to set up WHO, the World Health Organization. And we were considering whether there should be a specialized agency in the social welfare field. I remember Dean Acheson, I think he was then Undersecretary of State, came to my office at the suggestion of Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, and we talked about what ought to be done in the social welfare field. The State Department was reluctant to have another specialized agency formed, and it was particularly difficult because the definition for social welfare varied so much in the different countries and often included health. So it was decided not to push for a separate organization.

But the Economic and Social Council, newly formed, in 1946 I think it was, set up a temporary social commission to review the work of the League of Nations in the social field and to make recommendations about what ought to be done by the United Nations. I was asked to be secretary of that commission. Alice Shaffer, who by that time had left the Children's Bureau and was the first social worker on the staff of the Department of State, and I and my secretary, Mrs. Canine, went up to Hunter College, where the UN was meeting. We shared one room with the representative working on the human rights commission with Mrs. Roosevelt. We had no money for supplies and no supplies of any kind, so we had to go to the ten cent store and buy with our own money paper and pens and pencils and all the necessary supplies for the meeting of the temporary social

commission, whose report recommended the establishment of a permanent social commission and outlined the functions which it felt should be performed by the permanent social commission.

It was about that time, as I recall, when we were still in New York, that Dr. Rajchman of Poland, who had been interested in the health work of the League of Nations, suggested that a children's fund ought to be formed under the United Nations auspices to pick up the work that had been done by UNRRA, which was the emergency relief organization doing relief work in Europe and which was being liquidated. So a number of us from the United States met with Dr. Rajchman, who outlined his ideas of an international children's fund under the UN. He became the first chairman of the executive board. As I indicated in the letter to you, Helenka, which I have read, we had quite a problem in getting Congressional action for the establishment of UNICEF. There were residual funds from UNRRA made available to start a very small office in Washington, and Maurice Pate was appointed the director, and Jack Charnow joined his staff almost immediately. He had been working with Alice Shaffer in the social unit of the Department of State. But Maurice and I were talking about what might be done to powdered milk and whether there ought to be efforts to improve its palatability, because it was going to be one of the chief reliances to supplement the diet of the children in the war-torn countries of Europe. So Maurice came up to my apartment one evening, and he thought maybe cocoa would add to the palatability of the powdered milk. So we cooked a mess of powdered milk and cocoa in my kitchen and tested it out.

Well, about that time, as I have said in my letter to you, Helenka, I became interested in a citizens' committee for UNICEF, which was organized with the very efficient help of Mary Lord, who joined with me in making plans for the committee and its membership, and Martha Branscombe, who was then on the staff of the Children's Bureau. The committee was organized and was given such a splendid start by you, Mary. I have been so impressed by reviewing (for I get publications of UNICEF and the Committee's material) the tremendous accomplishments of UNICEF and of the U.S. Committee, which far exceed what we thought in those days were possible.

I remember how baffled we were as to where we could begin--when the first emergency in getting food and clothing and diapers for the children of the European countries was passed--how we could begin in tackling the overwhelming problems of the children of Asia. Martha Eliot, who by that time was for two years in charge of the maternal and child health work of WHO in Geneva and then later came back and succeeded me as the chief of the Children's Bureau, was giving us advice about the problem. And Dr. Parran, surgeon general of the Public Health Service of the United States, was sent by UNICEF to Asia to make a brief review of what ought to be done. But allocations were made really before we had an idea of where to begin. The Latin American countries were also greatly interested in getting help from UNICEF, and they were represented on the board, as were some of the Asiatic countries.

Frances Kernohan by that time had come into the picture and was my advisor. I was the United States representative, and she was the advisor, and we used to travel back and forth by train. By that time the United Nations Economic and Social Council and Commission were meeting at Lake Success. We would drive out in the morning in a car to Lake Success to the meeting, sometimes sharing a car with Mrs. Roosevelt, who was going out, and taking the opportunity of consulting among the four or five passengers in the car, representing the United States representatives, as to what should be done at the meetings that we were going to attend.

One Saturday the UNICEF board was meeting and considering allocations to Asia and Latin America, and some of those interested in Asia had to get the allocation that they had suggested for Asia increased. But still we didn't know where to begin, and Latin American countries wanted the allocation that had been made to them confirmed. It was Saturday morning when we tried to get the State Department on the phone to get advice as to how to vote and were unable to get advice in time to get it to me before I was to speak. So it was decided that I should use my own judgment. I made what I thought was a good speech in behalf of a certain position, when Frances Kernohan sent a note up to me that I had been instructed to vote the other way, which placed me in somewhat of an embarrassing position. However, we succeeded in getting the meeting adjourned and worked out a compromise over the noon hour so that I did not

have to cast a vote in opposition to the speech I had made. But without Frances Kernohan I could never have carried on the task of representing the United States at the UNICEF board meetings.

And I might recite one other story of that period. This is not in relation to UNICEF. I also was asked by Mr. Altmeyer to be the secretary of a temporary social welfare committee set up by the new Social Commission to make recommendations about what should be done, and there were only about six countries represented on the committee, of which Russia was one. The Russian representative appeared to speak very little English and took very little part in the meetings, but one of the Secretary General's deputies--Trygve Lie was then Secretary General--gave a luncheon for the members of this commission. I was detained by an urgent call from Washington that an appropriation to the Children's Bureau was then before the Senate appropriations committee and was in great danger, so I was about 20 minutes late at the luncheon. As I sat down near Mr. Laugier, who was giving this luncheon representing the Secretary General, I sat down right across from the Russian delegate, and I apologized to Mr. Laugier for being late and said it was because of our Children's Bureau appropriation which was in danger. On the way out of the luncheon the Russian delegate spoke to one of the other members of the committee in English and said, "I hear Mrs. Lenroot is having great trouble getting through her Children's Bureau appropriation. What could we do to help her get it?"--which was quite amusing.

Now to turn to the present time. As I look back on the past--I have now been retired nearly 20 years as the chief of the Children's Bureau--I recognize that many of the things that we did and the measures that we promoted in those days have turned out, as in the case of all human events, to have both adverse and favorable consequences, because human frailties are such that we can never anticipate fully what is going to be the result of certain courses of action. Certainly we could never have in our wildest dreams envisioned a time when the federal government would have so many grant-in-aid programs, because the Children's Bureau grant-in-aid program for maternal and child health was only one of half a dozen programs and the first one in the field of health and welfare. We could never have dreamed that there would have been such a proliferation of programs that the state and cities could hardly keep track

of their number and of what program could be drawn upon for what service. And so we could never have anticipated some of the adverse results of programs as well as some of the great gains that have been brought to many of the programs. I can only say that we must not be discouraged by this. Times change. The pendulum swings back and forth from one conviction about what might be done to serve children to another emphasis, perhaps in the opposite direction. But we have to do the best we can and recognize that these efforts will bear fruit. We must be flexible and adapt ideas about relationship between the federal, state and local governmental services and about measures required by these changing conditions.

And today as the UNICEF Board meets in Geneva and you, Helenka, go to join in their deliberations, entirely new challenges are being met, some of them perhaps contributed to in part by the very successes that have been achieved in saving children's lives--resulting in increasing rates of population growth which are now confronting the world with tremendous problems. Our very technology creates problems of pollution which we are now beginning to recognize. We're beginning to see more and more the inter-relationship of human society to its earthly environment and even the environment in space, and the inter-relationship of all these programs. So what may be done in the next ten or twenty years and what may be done in the countries which we used to call underdeveloped--into which we are now looking often for examples as to what might be done in this country which is suffering almost from the King Midas touch of overdevelopment in some respects--is receiving and needs to receive the most careful consideration.

I had a letter recently from a former member of the staff of the Children's Bureau who was in touch with the U.S. Committee and with Mr. Charnow's office, saying that a trip to Latin America and another trip to Asia that he and his wife took made him feel that one UNICEF dollar could accomplish as much as five United States HEW dollars for children in this country. He said that we had so much to learn from the experience of UNICEF and the experience of other countries in community development and in many other ways that would help us to solve our problems. In the early days when we began international cooperation, I'm afraid that many times the delegates from the United States would go to South America

and feel that they didn't have anything to learn that would help them in this country, but they'd have a great deal to give. I think in the next decade or two our positions almost reversed--because the countries that are just beginning their technological development may be able to exercise more foresight on the basis of what mistakes we have made. They may be able to help the countries that we might now almost consider overdeveloped in certain respects in meeting the problems which the future will bring. So thank you all so much for this wonderful occasion.

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