

## Walk Down Liberty Street

RFK, Dawahare, Gorman, Edelman

September 9, 2004

Peter Edelman: ..covering about two hundred miles, but at the same time, we found people all along the way, wonderful voices who are able express their own needs. And we think it's really important for us to change policies based on the opinions of the people themselves.

Gorman: Mr. Edelman, thank you. We're gonna try to catch up with Senator Kennedy. Yes, sir, I'd love to come with you.

RFK: Let's walk up here. Uh, Mayor, tell me what this is.

Dawahare: OK. Senator, as you can see, this is the problem: housing. And it's deplorable. So, we've tried and tried and exhausted just about every step.

RFK: Has H.U.D. been of any assistance to you?

D: H.U.D. has been here. They've worked very slowly. Now, Urban Renewal has been a great help to us. They've really helped. But H.U.D. has dragged its feet and when you get back to Washingto you might mention that.

RFK: That's one of the reasons we're here – to find out what the problems are, and how we might be able to solve them. What are you r plans for here?

D: Well, we hope, and we've had some problems with, like I said, H.U.D. They underestimated the cost and this held us up for a long time. But –

RFK: Let's walk down here and show me some more. Now, I noticed today, someone told me that down the other end you've already demolished some of the other housing.

D: That's true, we have. It wasn't much of a demolition, it just fell down. So, it's that bad. I mean, we need help.

RFK: What's happened to the people who were lived, who lived there? Were they displaced? Where are they now?

D: Well, the city of Hazard has helped them relocate, and they're living in a private developments. And it has been up to the city, mostly, to find them housing. Some of it's not too good, some of it's pretty good, but that's where we're at right now. Those people are better, right now, as bad as it may be, than they were here.

G: Mayor, I was wondering, maybe if you could elaborate on some of the problems they've been having with the housing through here.

D: Well, you could imagine, let's start with the rats. I mean, this place was infested. And in wintertime, it's cold. Suymmertime, it's hot. These are some of the things and we need to get on this.

RFK: Well, one of the things I notice is there's a creek here and where is the road?

D: That IS the road. The creek is the road. That's another one of ythe problems. We need to remove and maybe put it onto the street. But, the creek is the road.

RFK: Now, children here...can school busses make it up here to pick up the children?

D: No, there's no way. The children don't even...well, after they get to Main Street, of course...but, as far as the children on this street, no. They don't have a school bus.

RFK: Well, let's walk down a little but further. I want to see some of the things that you've at least tried to do. What other things are they doing here in Hazard?

D: In Hazard? Or here?

RFK: Besides Liberty Street, here in Hazard.

D: Well, we've began some urban renewal on Main Street and it's coming along very well. And then, we uh, well, mostly Main Street right now. And there's a lot of buildings that need to be torn down and replaced and we've started on that and it's going along very well.

RFK: Urban Renewal – are they people that've been helping you most?

D: Urban Renewal has done a great job. They really do a good job, I have to say that. Now, having H.U.D., their too slow. There's too much beaurocracy in that. And it seems to me, Senator, that what they want is to take credit for everything. And they drag their feet to get the credit, and that's not what we're here for.

RFK: Well, besides the money from H.U.D., what other message would you like for me to take back to Washington?

D: Well, I would like for you to just tell them of the situation here. And it's deplorable. So, when you go back, you need to tell 'em about H.U.D., since it's a government agency, and they need to do a better job. And that's what we feel.

G: Senator, do you have anything that you'd like to add at the moment.

RFK: Well, one of the things that the Mayor has mentioned is the deplorable housing conditions here and what needs to be done. So far today we've been in a one-room school, we've been through hollows that have no roads, and here even in the city we see sections with no roads. We came here to deal with issues of poverty, but they are all

subordinated to the fact that when people live in poverty, and there's no assistance, whether it be private industry, whether it be from government. If they live without hope, then they have no incentive to do any better. Now, as the mayor has already pointed out, there are funds available. There funds in Washington for housing. The problem is getting the funds from Washington to the people who really need it. It's unacceptable that we have money allocated for housing, even for Hazard, Kentucky, and it sits in Washington.

D: You know Senator, you're absolutely right. And it is a deplorable situation. But I think your coming to Hazard, Kentucky will bring attention, and at least, Washington will know that we're here. That is a message for you to take back also. We are HERE. And we love it here. But we don't like the conditions.

G: Uh, Senator? Mayor Gorman again, local news, you've spent your first, well, half-day really, in the mountains and I was wondering what kind of impressions you've formed about the area and its people.

RFK: This morning we had a hearing over in Vortex. WE spoke about the plans that we have for our hearings. We had some witnesses. Some people who are active in the community. Many of the problems that they have, basically, boil down to what Mayor Dawahare has already said: governmental red tape. We have a food stamp program. It is unacceptable that people have to stand in line, and pay out of their meager allotment of welfare for food stamps. I think there's other ways to do it. We have to make sure that the children not only have a good education, but when they arrive at school they have been fed, will be fed at school, so that they can go home. And when they arrive home, they don't go, as Mayor Dawahare has already explained, they don't have to come home to a rat-infested house. What incentive do they have to better themselves when they see if they see a society that looks the other way when these needs are so apparent?

G: Mayor, on that same note, what do you think that this area and these people have to offer, you know, to the rest of the world?

D: What have we got to offer? We have the best work force, as far as the Mayor of Hazard is concerned, in the whole world. We've got a lot to offer. But – we do need to – you spoke of hope Senator? You are our hope. And this is what you need to tell 'em in Washington. Because we can be a part of this great nation, but we need some help. And food stamps is not the answer, I agree with you. We need to go on beyond, and jobs. Our people will work.

RFK: Let me just add one thing to what the Mayor said when he talked about the people of Hazard and the people of eastern Kentucky. As you know, my brother, President Kennedy, was extremely interested in the problems of eastern Kentucky, and in fact, in December of 1963, had already been planning to visit here. And one of the reasons he was attracted to eastern Kentucky is because the people of eastern Kentucky are the most able and courageous people in the country. They have contributed so much to the United States. And especially in times of crisis. In times of crisis, it's the people of eastern

Kentucky who've contributed their blood, their effort, and their courage, to ensure that the country is protected. And I think now, the country needs to give back to the people of eastern Kentucky and repay them for all the contributions they've made.

G: Mayor, anything to add to that?

D: Well, I appreciate what the Senator said, and I do feel like that we've earned – we're not asking for something that we don't deserve – we're asking for things that we've earned. And we – you don't have to run us down to get us in the military. You don't have to run us down to get us into the jobs. We just need jobs. And we need to be recognized as part of this country.

RFK: Mayor, we've been up and down this street a little bit. We've seen some of the things. What I'd like to do is speak with a family. I want to know exactly what kind of conditions exist, and just, their view point on things. Who's that that lives over there? That's the Ollingers. I'm sure that you will know the conditions when you talk to those fine folks. The Ollingers live over here, so let's go see 'em.