

Letcher County Courthouse

Whitesburg, Kentucky

September 10, 2004

RFK: They've assured me that this microphone works, so I'm quite sure that you can hear me. Yesterday in Vortex I spoke with a woman and after we talked for a few minutes she sort of curled her nose up a little bit and said, "I can't understand a word you're sayin'. You must not be from around here."

I would like to thank the Mayor and the County Judge and the Sheriff for allowing us to visit the good people here in Letcher County, and I would also like to say thank you, if I can find him, to Congressman Perkins. Congressman Perkins assured me that when he introduced me to the people here in Letcher County that I would be meeting the most wonderful people on earth and I have not seen anything that would indicate to me that that's any different. So, I appreciate you being here.

We spent a very long day yesterday, conducting hearings, and I spoke with many people. And a recurring theme was: what can eastern Kentuckians do to rid the area of poverty? What can be done to bring jobs into this area? And I've noticed that the school was nice enough to allow the students to come down here, so my remarks are directed more to them. I agree, welfare is not the answer. The answer to ridding poverty in this area is jobs. How can that be brought about?

There are two things that the youth herein this area can do. Number one: stay in school. Get you education. That education will provide the basis for industry to grow. If you do not have an educated work force, then no one is willing to come in here and set up a factory. That's the first thing that you have to do. Your education will provide a better life for you, but it will also allow you to better the society in which you live. The second thing is commitment. A commitment to stay here. A commitment to fight for the area in which you live. Your education will give you the tools to embark on whatever career you choose, but it will also give you the confidence to stand up, take a stand for the area in which you live, to make a difference in the world. And you have to look no further than Congressman Perkins. Here is one man who has done so much for so many, not just here in eastern Kentucky, but also throughout this country. He is a shining example of the difference that one person can make.

So, we're off to Neon. And I understand there's a high school there, Fleming-Neon, that you might be familiar with. I understand that they're one of your rival. So, I'm not sure if the principal at Whitesburg High School will allow you to follow us down, but I was told that if you do, you might want to take off your orange shirt.

But, let me close by saying, especially to the students that are here. I've been told that Kentucky has lowered the voting age to eighteen. Stay in school, commit to where you live, but vote. And I hope that when you do go to vote, that you remember, back in February of 1968, it was Senator Kennedy who got you out of school and think about that before you vote. So, I appreciate your enthusiasm. I hope the enthusiasm from the students wasn't just because they got out of class. But, I appreciate everyone who was here. We're going to conduct a hearing Neon. We'll be there shortly. Anyone here who wishes to go down there, let us know what your concerns are, how we might better approach these problems here. We would welcome any comments that you have, so that when we go back to Washington we will be able to tell everyone in Washington what you

think is important and how the programs could be made more effective than they are today. Thank you very much.