I want to express my deep personal appreciation, and the appreciation of all the officers and members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, for the great support that you in 1199 have given us in the past. I don’t consider myself a stranger. I have been with the 1199 so often in the past, that I consider myself a fellow 1199-er.

There are times that I am often disenchanted with some segments of the power structure of the labor movement. But in those moments of disenchantment, I begin to think of unions like Local 1199, and it gives me the new courage and vigor to carry on, and the feeling that there are some unions left, that will always maintain the radiant and vibrant idealism that brought the labor movement into being.

I would suggest that if all of labor would emulate what you have been doing over the years, our nation would be closer to victory in the fight to eliminate poverty and injustice. I also believe that if all of labor were to follow your example of mobilizing and involving working people in the campaign to end the war in Vietnam, our nation would be much closer to a swift settlement of that immoral, unjust and ill-considered war.

There are literally two Americas. In the sense one America is beautiful for situation. That America is flowing with the milk of prosperity and the honey of equality. I am sure that each of us is painfully aware of the fact that there is another America. To live in inadequate, substandard and often dilapidated housing conditions. And year after year, in this other America, thousands, even millions of young people are forced to attend inadequate, substandard, inferior, quality-less schools.

Probably the most critical problem in the Other America, is the economic problem. By the millions, people in the Other America, find themselves perishing on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of prosperity.
But the problem is not only unemployment, but it's UNDER employment or SUB employment. People who work full time jobs for part-time wages.

Most of the poor people in our country are working every day. You know where they are working. So often they are working in our hospitals, and all over this country. I thank God for what your union has done, and what you continue to do.

I can remember just a few years ago, right here in this city, that hospital workers made wages so inadequately, that it was a shame to say to anybody that these people were being paid.

And I have been over the country, and I know about it, I have been on the picket lines. Hospital workers, whether it is at St. Luke’s in Cleveland or somewhere else in Chicago, I think of the fact that in most instances or too many instances, hospital workers are not yet organized.

The fact is that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor.

What I’m simply saying is that we are going to demand what is ours. And my friends, the resources are here in America. The question is whether the will is here. There is something wrong with the policies, the priorities, and the purposes of our nation now. And we’ve got to say it in no uncertain terms.

And I simply say to you that I am afraid, that our government is more concerned about winning an unjust war in Vietnam, than about winning the war against poverty, right here at home.

And I say if we will stand and work together, we will bring into being that day, when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. We will bring into being that day, when America will no longer be two nations, but will be one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Thank you.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: Answer the questions below on a separate sheet of lined paper. You may refer to the reading passage with your annotations to help you answer these questions.

1. What is the purpose of this speech? Provide evidence.

2. “By the millions, people in the Other America, find themselves perishing on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of prosperity.” What does the citation mean? What does it reveal about Dr. MLK’s position on poverty?

3. “And I say if we will stand and work together, we will bring into being that day, when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Why does MLK use this language?

4. “But the problem is not only unemployment, but it’s UNDER employment or SUB employment. People who work full time jobs for part-time wages.” What does this quote mean? How is this idea developed throughout the speech?