

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

COLLEGE OF ST. THOMAS

St. Paul, Minnesota

February 23, 1976

If there is one thing that can be said about the society in which you are taking your places as young adults and as citizens, it is that it is changing very rapidly.

In the last decade or so, new roles have been opening up for young people, for women, and for minorities. New ideas are shattering the old myths and stereotypes that held people back or kept them down. New talents have been liberated to enrich our national life.

This great movement of change has had a profound impact on our system of politics and government.

It has brought about reform in our political parties, reforms in the Congress, and limits on the powers of the President.

It has inspired millions of citizens to involve themselves in the great social issues of our time -- civil rights, poverty, hunger, the environment, and the energy crisis.

Politicians have changed. Washington has changed too.

Yet I still can remember my first visions of Washington -- the buildings, the people and the debates. And needless to say, I was quite taken with the workings of the federal government, particularly the Congress.

Since that time, tons of paper and millions of words -- too many of them mine, some might say -- have added to the complexity of this government. I am sure that you can appreciate the competing and conflicting pressures and interests which are the substance of American politics.

Few Americans have had the opportunity to reach out and touch the very structure of their government. Washington is a mystical city which enthralls most of its visitors. The bright and bristling buildings which house our government have become the very symbols of this Republic.

And one of the principal tasks of any student is to separate the form from the substance, to learn how to differentiate appearance from reality. That's something no one can fully accomplish in one week, or in one lifetime. But it is an effort that must be undertaken by every citizen.

It can be said that Washington is a city of some 750,000 people, bounded on four sides by reality. I am here to tell you, my friends, that you comprise our reality -- you are the future leaders of our Nation.

So I hope that each of you has been testing your assumptions about the federal government, and that each of you has evaluated your impressions of history against the realities of the present and your hopes for the future.

I hope that your minds are open to the new information you have gained at St. Thomas. I hope your thoughts are being challenged, worked over, and measured against what civics books say government in our democracy should be.

Fortunately, no other government on this earth operates in such an open manner. This is, and must be, a government with its processes and decisions open for public inspection.

But an open government without an informed citizenry simply is not accountable. We ask you then, not simply to trust government, but to be informed about its work and the problems with which it is grappling, and then make your own judgment.

The perspective and appreciation you have for the immensity of this government should serve you well throughout your lifetime. Time and again, this country will be faced with divisive, controversial issues. With problems that have no simple answers.

We find this day after day in the Congress. Issues of international affairs -- arms control, the Middle East, detente -- each presents complex problems to policy makers. As a result, honest divisions exist between men and women of good will as to what actions will resolve the conflicts and secure domestic and international justice.

Further complicating this situation is the fact that we have no perfect people -- no saints -- to make and administer the decisions adopted by a majority. I understand that there was a Saint Hubert. But I'm here to tell you that he is not standing before you today.

We elected officials are simply human beings, with ample faults and strengths.

This, of course, is why the ultimate decisions must rest with all the people. We have no single sovereign in America, no one source of power, no final single arbiter. Every citizen must be that final judge and, in a sense, a politician.

We must face the fact that the 24 years remaining in this century -- the years in which your generation will play the leading role -- may be decisive in the future of this Nation. Sometime in the next quarter-century we probably will learn whether we will survive as a strong, free Nation, and as a people.

And yet, at a time when citizen involvement in politics and government is needed more than ever before, there has been a dangerous decline of public confidence in government and the political process. This decline in confidence is reflected very clearly in recent voting trends.

In the 1972 elections, when both presidential candidates were saying the election presented the clearest ideological choice between candidates in history, only 55 percent of America's eligible voters went to the polls -- the lowest percentage in a quarter of a century. Sixty-eight million eligible citizens did not vote.

In the 1974 congressional elections, a survey by the Census Bureau found that only 45 percent of the voting age population actually voted. That was 10 percent below the turnout in the 1966 and 1970 congressional elections.

Saddest of all for those of us who had hoped for maximum involvement of young people when the voting age was lowered to 18 are the statistics on registration and voting by young people 18 to 20 years old. 63.6 percent of 18 to 20 year olds did not bother to register at all in 1974. Of those who did register, almost half did not vote in the election. Only 20.8 percent of eligible 18 to 20 year olds voted in 1974 -- just slightly more than one out of five.

The figures are not much better for young people 21 to 24 years old. Only 26.4 percent -- about one quarter -- of the eligible young people in this age group registered and voted.

The Census Bureau survey also asked people why they had not registered to vote. Their responses are quite shocking.

By far the greatest number -- a full 12 percent -- said they were not interested, just didn't get around to it. No other reason, such as not being a citizen, not knowing where or how to register, or not having transportation was cited by more than four percent of those who answered the question.

But politics is the life-blood of our representative democracy.

It is the vehicle of change, bringing forth new ideas, new concepts of government, and new leaders.

It is the means by which conflicts and competing interests of different races, religions, regions, generations, and cultural life-styles can be resolved peacefully.

It enables us to choose for our leaders individuals who will represent and protect our rights and interests, and to remove them when they fail to do so.

Every citizen can participate. Every citizen must participate in order for self-government to work properly.

It is that sense of individual responsibility and citizenship that allows us to celebrate this Nation's Bicentennial.

The 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence on that hot, humid July day in Philadelphia were effectively putting their names to their own death warrants.

During the War of Independence, nine of those men died of wounds or hardships, five were captured as traitors, twelve had their homes ransacked or burned, and the sons of many others were killed, wounded or captured.

But the job they did was worth the price they paid, for they had set in motion the most powerful force for human freedom since the dawn of time. They had lighted for the world a beacon of hope that still shines today.

I continue to be impressed over how relatively young these men were. Nineteen of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were in their 40's. Sixteen were in their 30's. Two were only 27.

In 1776, Thomas Jefferson was 33, James Madison was 25, Alexander Hamilton was 21.

George Washington held the position of public surveyor of Fairfax County, Virginia, at age 17. When he was only 20, he was sole manager of a 4,000 acre tobacco plantation, while simultaneously holding a commission as a Major of adjutant of one of the four military districts of Virginia.

At 21, he was entrusted with a critical diplomatic military expedition to the French positions in the Ohio Valley. The report which he wrote was published in Virginia and England and helped alert the British government to the encroachment of the French into the Western areas of the colonies.

At 22, Washington was a Lieutenant Colonel, and a year later he was made Commander-in-Chief of all Virginia militia.

When Alexander Hamilton was 20, he was an impassioned and effective pamphleteer in defense of colonial policies. A year later he was a Lieutenant Colonel on George Washington's personal staff.

Two hundred years ago we the people came together to form a more perfect union. We took a risk that never had been taken before in the history of mankind.

It was not the risk of rebellion, for many rebellions had been tried and failed. Rather, it was the risk of a grand experiment in democracy -- of forming a government under which all the people were sovereign as well as subject, rulers as well as ruled.

The risk was that of union, a union of persons who -- whatever their station in life, their level of income, their education, or their background -- were to be regarded as equal in creation and in their protection under the laws.

The document which those 56 men took a risk in signing -- the Declaration of Independence -- affirmed that there are certain God-given, inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And, to secure these rights, a government was instituted, deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed.

But it was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who effectively translated for our time the demand for a new pioneering leadership to make the promise of the Declaration of Independence a reality.

"I do not believe that the era of the pioneer is at an end," he said. "I only believe that the area for pioneering has changed." He then went on to say that "our country needs bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something!"

Those who are young ought to have a great sense of purpose and idealism as they step forward to explore the future. And traditionally it has been part of the American character to be optimistic -- to have faith and confidence in the future.

That is why I am deeply concerned when I see some of our young people reflecting a more pessimistic, negative mood -- when they seem unwilling to take a risk on the future.

Our whole history is filled with adventure and pioneering. Americans through the years have opened up a continent -- developed a new nation. We have showed the world new technologies in agriculture, medicine, education, transportation -- yes, in every aspect of life.

You are in the very spring of life. Today, you are better equipped to challenge old assumptions and the traditional way of doing things than any generation in human history. Now is the time to question and to probe -- to gain new understandings and to live each day to its fullest.

I sense a new spirit dawning in America. I find it no matter where I travel. A long nightmare of confusion and dashed hopes for all too many Americans is going to end, because at the root of the American experience is a determination not to lower expectations, but to engage in bold experiments.

We are not a Nation that seeks the certainty of sure stability. No, we are a people who thrive on exercising free choice.

So, test your knowledge and your ability to the utmost. Continue your education and your political involvement throughout your lifetime. Trust in your own judgment and remain open to new ideas. You can make a difference if you take the risk of becoming informed and involved.

In closing, I want to remind you of what that great philosopher, Victor Hugo, said:

"The future has several names. For the weak, it is impossible. For the faint-hearted, it is the unknown. For the thoughtful and valiant, it is ideal. The challenge is urgent. The task is large. The time is now."

# # # # #

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE ON  
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Washington, D. C.

April 8, 1976

It is a privilege to participate in your conference on "Decent Neighborhoods and Communities: A Challenge For the Church."

I will focus my remarks today on one of the great struggles for human dignity and social justice of this century -- the struggle to provide decent homes in good neighborhoods to every American.

But before beginning my remarks on this important subject, I want to thank Bishop Rausch and the other Catholic leaders here today for your commitment, support and leadership in the effort to provide decent jobs to all Americans able and willing to work.

Your support for the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1976 -- commonly known as the Humphrey-Hawkins bill -- is essential to its enactment and to the economic welfare of our people. It is vital that our nation's religious institutions provide the moral and social direction that is essential if we are to build a more just and compassionate society in America.

Your support in the battle for full employment and your conference here today are reassuring indications that the Church is stirring -- that the Church will rise to the challenge.

You and I know that personal dignity and self-respect require a solid roof overhead and pleasant neighborhood surroundings. You and I know that crime prevention depends on stable neighborhoods that give people a stake in America and a future that contains hope. You and I know that decent homes and neighborhoods are the building blocks of tomorrow's society.

And you and I know that these crucial goals have been neglected and ignored during the last eight years.

The last two years, in particular, have been an absolute disaster for those who share our commitment to decent housing for all our citizens.

Housing starts slid straight downhill from the banner years of the late '60's and early '70's.

Home mortgage interest rates skyrocketed to levels last reached during the Civil War.

Government-assisted housing starts slowed to a trickle.

And millions of American families have been deprived of their right to a decent home in a viable neighborhood.

Some of this collapse no doubt can be attributed to the decline in the national economy. But no one can deny that government non-policies and policy failures have played a major role in depriving our citizens of their rights.

This Administration has failed to assure a level of housing production sufficient to meet the Nation's needs. Its policy has been simple and precise: "Let the market forces operate while the bottom falls out of the market."

Now we are told that housing is recovering -- that things are looking up.

That should come as no surprise. Things always look up when you're flat on your back. Sure, housing starts will increase this year -- and I am glad of it. But, they had no place to go but up.

I am not going to dwell on the past, particularly one as glum as the depression from which housing is just now emerging. I'm an optimist. I'd rather talk about the future and the opportunities it presents. I'd rather talk about the nation's capacity to meet our housing needs. I'd rather talk about the public and private sector initiatives that can make our national housing goals a reality.

I'd rather talk about the contribution that a new housing policy can make to the dignity and vitality of this Nation. And, I'd rather talk about your role in developing this policy and mobilizing support for it.

We have a national housing goal in this country that you and I consider to be very important, but that others have chosen to ignore. That goal contains two separate but closely related objectives.

The first portion of the goal commits the government to provide "a decent home for every American family." That means a sound structure, with suitable plumbing and heating facilities. It means a decent home for rich and poor, black, brown and white, urban and rural -- not just for the favored few.

The second part of our national housing goal commits the government to provide "a suitable living environment" for the family that occupies the home. This recognizes that a sound building is not enough. It must be located in a healthy neighborhood with good schools, safe and clean streets, reasonable transportation, active churches, opportunities for recreation, and maybe even a little greenery.

A decent home in a suitable living environment for every American family was a wise goal in 1949 when we conceived it. It was sound in 1968 when it was repeated, and it remains a worthy goal today.

In 1968, we placed a numerical value on our national housing goals. We agreed -- and I emphasize "we" because both the Executive and the Congress participated in the decision -- that 2.6 million new housing starts a year were necessary to meet our national housing goals.

Unfortunately, once we agreed on the goal at first not much was done to meet it.

Later on in the five years under our goal, we did pretty well. New housing starts from 1969 through 1973 averaged 1.9 million units a year.

But since then, we have had nothing short of a disaster. Housing starts in the three-year period from 1974 to 1976, despite the recovery, will average approximately 1.3 million units a year, exactly half the production necessary to meet our goals.

But what do these sterile production statistics mean to the average American family?

They mean higher housing costs. As housing becomes more scarce, families are forced to bid more for existing housing, driving the price out of reach of many families. This means that there is less left in the pay envelope to feed, clothe and maintain the family.

They mean overcrowding and substandard units. Families are forced to double-up, and substandard units that are ready for replacement remain in use. Under these conditions, just being at home is painful, another threat to family stability and cohesion.

Finally, it means that little housing is available for low and moderate income families. These families depend on a large supply so that they constantly can upgrade the quality of their own housing by trading up.

We cannot afford these costs any longer. We must return to the path that our national housing goals have charted.

There are several steps that must be taken to restore housing production to levels that are sufficient to meet America's need for decent homes.

First and foremost, we need economic policies designed to put America back to work. At present we are wasting our economic resources day after day.

People need jobs to pay for housing.

An economy with more than seven million people out of work, with 30 percent of its industrial equipment idle, with over \$200 billion in income being lost this year alone due to excessive unemployment, and with the clear prospect of losing over \$1 trillion due to this recession by 1980, just can't afford much new housing.

So we need full employment and rising personal incomes to make decent housing a reality for our people.

Second, we need a steady and expansive monetary policy. Every time the Federal Reserve tightens the monetary screws, the housing market is seriously disrupted.

Monetary policy must be sufficiently expansive to take housing off the economic roller-coaster by assuring an adequate supply of credit at reasonable interest rates. It makes no more sense to use the supply and price of homes as our economic "shock absorber" than it would to use food in this way. These items are too important to play around with.

Third, we need policies designed to make home ownership available to more American families. That means we have got to reduce mortgage interest rates.

This is the heart of any national housing policy.

I have introduced a bill to establish a Federal Housing Bank to buy up low rate mortgages and assure a steady supply of mortgage money at a fair rate of interest -- six percent to a maximum of seven percent -- for persons who want to own their own homes. The amount of the mortgage should be that amount necessary to finance a modest but adequate dwelling. It is a bold idea, but the time is clearly past for tinkering.

Fourth, we need programs that will allow young families to enter the housing market. At present, housing policies are upside down. Families can afford a large house when the children are mature and they don't need a big home. But when they first start a family, they can't afford anything.

Fifth, we need a vigorous and realistic program for the production of housing units for low and very low income families.

Our housing goals do not apply to half the American population, or three quarters, or even ninety percent. These goals apply to each and every American family -- 100 percent.

We have tried many approaches.

The rent supplement program has been too small and not geared to produce new housing units.

The traditional public housing did produce housing but high operating costs kept rents too high for low income families.

What we need is a public housing program coupled with an adequate program of operating subsidies. This would produce new housing, and at prices that are affordable. But this approach has not been tried, nor has Congress mandated the integration of these two programs to produce much needed housing.



We need a program to meet this very basic need. Any such program must be based on a recognition that for many reasons, housing for very low income families will be more expensive than housing for middle income families.

Without such an approach we are doomed to continue to house very low income people in slums. And this is economically, socially and morally intolerable.

Finally, and perhaps most important, we need to revive government assisted housing construction programs for low and moderate income families. In 1968, we made a commitment to build 600 thousand government assisted housing units a year. The present Administration has welched on that commitment.

Government assisted housing starts in 1974 were about 60 thousand units, one-tenth of our national goal. In 1975, they still were below 100 thousand units.

This is a national tragedy and a disgrace. Low-income families are living in housing that would be considered substandard in any other industrialized country in the world.

Yet, this situation is tolerated in the world's richest Nation.

But, the steps we must take to address these problems still will only take care of half of our goal -- "the decent home."

The other half of the goal -- "a suitable living environment" -- is just as important and certainly more often ignored.

This Administration has turned its back on the urban and rural communities of our Nation.

It has encouraged the flight of jobs and income from our decaying cities and declining rural areas.

It has denied aid to both in their moments of greatest need.

It has vetoed every effort to provide desperately needed emergency financial relief to our cities, and deprived our rural areas of essential housing and community development funds.

You and I know that any program that provides a decent home without a decent neighborhood is doomed to fail.

Good schools are necessary to help break the cycle of poverty.

Parks are needed to provide physical and emotional relief.

An efficient transportation network makes the survival of rural communities possible.

Safe and clean streets are a must if a neighborhood is to remain liveable and its people to have pride.

Social and religious institutions are needed to provide the moral basis for the American society.

Without these crucial elements in our social infrastructure, a decent house will not remain decent.

Unfortunately, the last two Administrations have given low priority to programs designed to revitalize our neighborhoods. They have cut and cut and cut. Sure, we have a Community Development Program. This is a good program and it should be continued. But it is not enough.

We need economic development to reinforce community development.

We need housing rehabilitation money, as well as new construction assistance.

We need grants to repair existing infrastructure as well as programs to build new facilities.

We need funds for neighborhood development as well as for city development.

We need a National Domestic Development Bank to provide long term financing for public facilities . This new method of financing is absolutely essential.

Capital investment by local governments has slowed because interest rates have shot through the roof. This means that sewers, roads, schools, courthouses, recreational facilities and health facilities are not being constructed.

In short, we must halt present policies which encourage the throw-away city and a disposable society, and embark on a new conservation approach. Conservation of housing, conservation of neighborhoods, conservation of infrastructure and conservation of cities must be a top priority. But most of all, we must make a firm commitment to conserving hope and dignity in the lives of our people.

I have tried to speak briefly about the opportunities that exist, about the need to reverse present policy trends, and about the importance of reaffirming our goals for decent homes and neighborhoods. The opportunity exists, the goals are there.

I understand that the theme of the Catholic Bicentennial Program is "Liberty and Justice for All." The five year plan of action for the Catholic Church to help move America toward these goals is of the greatest importance.

We are all engaged in the struggle for liberty, for justice, for jobs, for decent homes, and for a moral tone in America in which we can all take pride.

The Church must continue to speak out for those who are not heard. It must fight for those too weak to do battle alone against injustice. It must lay its prestige and power on the line for the good of all Americans.

This is the challenge to which we all are called. This is the challenge of moral leadership in our nation. This is the challenge to which your Bicentennial Program of "Liberty and Justice for All" must respond.

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REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH

New York, New York

May 6, 1976

I am honored to be here this evening to help my friends in the Anti-Defamation League pay tribute to a man who has dedicated so much of his life to building a better America. As corporate executive and community leader, Matthew Rosenhaus is a symbol of the incredible potential and spirit of the American people.

He has given of himself in a host of efforts and organizations dedicated to healing the sick, furthering education in America, promoting the goals of Jewish education and battling for human rights.

It is appropriate that you honor him this evening. He stands for what you stand for. He has fought for the things that matter to the ADL and to the Jewish community at large. In other words, he stands for a humane and compassionate America. He stands for an America dedicated to eliminating every vestige of prejudice and bigotry from national life.

We are brought together this evening to honor this fine man and to indicate our support for the ADL. I also want to pay a personal tribute to your great organization.

The B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League has been in the forefront of the struggles we have waged over the years for the causes of progressive democracy in America.

I know of few organizations which have so consistently represented the values which make this country great: A free, vibrant, open society in which all men and women are free to make the most of their God-given potential.

Whether in the fields of civil rights or human rights, whether battling for social justice or waging war to eradicate poverty, the ADL and the American Jewish community have always been in the forefront of progressive causes leading our nation to a better day.

As we celebrate our bicentennial -- our past two hundred years -- we must look ahead as well. And we must ask ourselves this fundamental question: How will progressive Americans insure that the freedoms of our first two centuries are preserved for America's third and fourth centuries?

We live in a world of rapid change. What took decades to accomplish in the past, now takes weeks.

Years are compressed into milliseconds and whole generations pass through eras and epochs at mind-boggling speed.

In an age when the world and time are shrinking the dimensions of our lives, at a moment when the power of private and public institutions is growing rapidly, the challenge of preserving democracy as we know it becomes formidable.

How do we go about this awesome task?

How do we adapt the precepts of Jefferson, Franklin and Madison to the 21st century and beyond?

There are no easy answers to this challenge and no one should ever tell you that there are.

But I want to discuss with you ways in which Americans can begin to meet this challenge and work together to insure that we remain a free people in a free land.

This evening I would like to discuss four principles for our government and ourselves which I believe are fundamental to the preservation of American democracy. We need to reaffirm these and other principles as we celebrate our bicentennial.

The first principle is perhaps the most important:

Government by consent of the governed -- a fundamental precept of democracy -- cannot long endure if government does not respect the law.

The brilliant jurist, Mr. Justice Brandeis, said it best in one of his famous dissenting opinions:

"Decency, security and liberty alike demand that government officials shall be subjected to the same rules of conduct that are commands to the citizen. In a government of laws, existence of the government will be imperiled if it fails to observe the law scrupulously."

We have just passed through a tragic period in our history. Men and the very institutions they led took the law unto themselves.

They eroded a people's trust and confidence in their government at all levels.

They damaged a people's belief in the viability of their political institutions.

We must never again let this happen.

Yes, it will take vigilance by the press, the Congress and the Courts.

But, even more, it will take greater respect for the law by all Americans.

There is no easy solution to the problem of growing and pervasive violent and white collar crime in America. But as Brandeis so eloquently stated:

"Our government is the potent, omnipresent teacher. For good or for evil it teaches the whole people by its example."

The government must set high standards for its own conduct. Unless it does, our democracy will be endangered.

Let me turn to another important principle.

We cannot seek democracy and social justice at home and abandon these principles abroad.

The time has come for the United States of America to put a premium on the support of democratic governments as a central tenet of American foreign policy.

I have seen Presidents embrace dictators and cozy up to juntas in the name of security and expediency. But we must learn that there can be little security in the world if democratic government becomes an endangered species.

The United States must aid and support those people and nations who choose to form governments guided by democratic principles, whether they be in Israel, in Greece, in Portugal or in southern Africa.

We can look to the very recent past for a good example of how one of our great leaders cherished democracy beyond our shores.

The great American President who first recognized the state of Israel, Harry Truman, knew that Israel's rebirth was the creation of a democracy at a time when democracy was threatened.

I must say that today, as in 1948, America's support of a democratic Israel is vital to the security of that nation and the maintenance of peace in that troubled part of the world.

Our democratic heritage is shared by Israel. America's love for freedom is a cornerstone of Israel's independence. Whether here in America or in Israel, we must stand for the preservation and protection of democratic values.

The only effective way to combat the tyranny of Communism and the totalitarianism of the right is to battle for human rights and democratic values abroad.

Our moral values must play a greater role in our foreign policy. Until they do, we will not gain the support of peoples around the world who are struggling for their freedom.

There is a third principle which I believe to be of critical importance to progressive Americans:

There can be no meaningful freedom in America without freedom from poverty and hunger.

You and I have played a role in the unprecedented struggle of the past two decades to secure equal rights for all Americans. We have made gains in such areas as equal access to public accommodations, equal job opportunity, non-discriminatory use of federal funds and protection of the right to vote.

Despite hard-won gains in Congress and the Courts, the struggle for eradication of prejudice and bigotry in America is not yet over.

As I have said in the past: It is not enough to allow a man or woman the right to sit at a lunch counter if they don't have the money in their pockets to pay for a meal.

The right to full participation in the economic life of our nation is the birthright of every American.

Until we guarantee this freedom of all Americans, we cannot call ourselves truly free.

I am disturbed that too many Americans are willing to accept growing poverty amidst affluence. We seem to be ready to accept large numbers of unemployed persons as a permanent part of the economic scene. Urban decay increases as cities face rising costs and declining revenue sources. Welfare rolls and food stamps become a way of life for ever-growing numbers of our fellow citizens.

An America divided between rich and poor and white and black is in trouble. Freedom for the comfortable cannot endure alongside of misery for over one quarter of the American population.

If there has ever been a time to mobilize the forces in America in and out of government who care about and understand this problem, it is now. Time is running out.

Let me turn to another and final principle:

A free people who refuse to participate in their own political processes and government do so at their peril.

Democratic self-government will be threatened in the long run unless Americans take the time and effort to choose their leaders and work to make government a better protector of their rights and interests.

Just look at the alarming statistics of voter participation in our recent elections:

-- In 1972, with a clear ideological choice, only 55 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. This meant that sixty-eight million Americans eligible to vote did not do so.

-- In the Congressional elections of 1974, only 45 percent of the voting population bothered to go to the polls.

-- And, in 1974, among the critical group of young voters with still many elections ahead of them, 63.6 percent of 18 to 20-year-olds did not even bother to register.

If Americans think that they can fail to vote in such large numbers and still insure themselves of able and dedicated public servants they are dead wrong.

But this trend of non-participation extends all across the face of America -- from the PTA and the town council to service on the Federal bench and in the Executive branch.

It is time for Americans to change their attitude about their government and their role in it. Government is not some monster apart from and detached from our lives. It is us -- our values, our strengths and our weaknesses.

As a nation we are a community of people. Americans must participate in this community to achieve common goals.

It is our duty and responsibility as citizens. If we as Americans do not care about our collective political destiny, we must accept the consequences of our own irresponsibility.

I sincerely believe that democracy is severely weakened if the many are governed by the few.

But I am confident that the task of preserving America's democracy can be accomplished with the hard work and dedication which are so plentiful in our nation.

We have the inner strength and moral courage to overcome momentary setbacks.

Let us not forget who we are and what we are. We are the most heterogeneous mixture of races, religions and nationalities ever to coexist peacefully under the tent of democracy. And we are now the world's largest democracy celebrating two centuries of freedom.

There is every reason to believe that our third century can be one of freedom and prosperity for all Americans.

There is every reason to believe that the progressive forces in America and abroad can make great gains soon in the struggle to eradicate injustice, hunger and poverty wherever they are found.

America's future is a bright one. As the poet and scholar, Carl Sandburg, so eloquently spoke:

"I see America, not in the setting sun of a black night of despair ahead of us. I see America in the crimson light of a rising sun fresh from the burning, creative hand of God. I see great days ahead, great days possible to men and women of will and vision..."

I know that the men and women of will and vision here this evening are ready to join hands and work for the kind of America which is in our hopes and dreams.

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