

SPEECH DELIVERED BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

TWELFTH ANNUAL DESIGN AWARDS LUNCHEON

May 4, 1949

Miss Shaver, distinguished guests: We assemble here today to pay tribute to the strength of man. We honor on this occasion a group of men and women who have proved themselves to be the outstanding contributors of the past year to the world of creation and to the world of ideas. The men and women we honor represent all fields of human endeavor. They have in common, however, the honor of being people of ideas and persons of creative thought.

It is said of a mythical Greek hero that by extra-ordinary physical skill he was able to jump the surface of the earth to the planets, and after accumulating the wisdom of his visit, returned to the earth to be worshipped as a god for his superior knowledge.

Those who have been honoured today by receiving The American Design awards have been able, not by virtue of great physical strength, but by virtue of the penetrating mind, to lift themselves from the surface of the earth and explore the mysteries of the universe. We honor them just as our ancients honored their ancestors as the great men of our age.

The thinkers of the world represent the real strength of mankind. The pages of history demonstrate beyond question that it is the idea - the creative idea - that survives thru the ages, not the conqueror.

As we pay tribute to the importance of creative design and the concept of the idea in man's development, we can receive renewed assurance that we in this audience are not alone. With us are the immortals - - the great spiritual leaders of the world. With us sits Buddha (his knees crossed, his feet in sandals, his shoulders covered with a shawl, his body firm but his face beaming) as he says to us:

"A single day amongst the learned is longer than the longest life among the ignorant. The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr."

We are not alone in this hall, for with us too sits Confucius, his head hairless, his face ascetic, as he says to us:

"Every piece of marble has a statue in it, waiting to be released by a man of sufficient skill to chip away the unnecessary parts. As the sculptor is to the marble, so is education to the soul. It releases it, for only educated men are free men. You cannot create a statue by smashing the marble with a hammer, and you cannot by force of arms release the spirit or the soul of man."

We are not alone, for with us too sits Mohammed, with black beard and fiery black eyes, who says to us:

"The wise man is instructed by reason; the ordinary man by experience; the stupid man by necessity; the brute by instinct. The essence of knowledge is this: having it, apply it."

We are not alone, for with us sits Christ, who recites the parable of the Good Samaritan in order to express his scorn for those who have minimized the equality of other creeds or races. There is no discrimination among them, because there is no limit to God's bounty. His is the great teaching of love, compassion, humility and of democratic principles.

We are not alone, for with us sits Moses, his vigorous, athletic body covered with flowing robes. He says to us in the Talmudic manner of question and answer:

"Who is wise? He who learns from everything,
Who is strong? He who conquers himself. Who
is rich? He who is satisfied with what he has.
Who is honourable? He who is honoured by his
neighbors. What is the great law? That which

is hateful to thyself do not do to others.
That is the great law. All the rest is its
commentary."

We are not alone, for with us sit all these great spiritual leaders, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Christ, Moses. They give us comfort and solace in our conviction that ideas are immortal, that through Truth man can be free.

There are two ways of reporting history. The first is in terms of battles won and lost and the fall and rise of governments; the other is in terms of the discoveries of the mind. In every generation the mind of man reaches out to new length and never shrinks back to its former dimensions. Fortunately, though man is mortal, his thoughts and ideas are immortal. Each generation salvages the immortality of the succeeding ones to create a steady progression of civilization.

The creative ideas of man have developed fast in recent years. It was only 300 years ago that man began to seriously question himself about the nature of the physical world in which he lived. The 17th Century was characterized by the great intellectual revolution, the Age of Science. Men became possessed with the idea that the physical universe was their concern - that they could ask questions about natural phenomena without incurring the wrath of God. They became possessed with the idea that there were physical laws they could fathom. Here indeed was the triumph of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton -- men of ideas, men possessed by ideas.

The 18th and 19th Centuries were characterized by new ideas that possessed men -- the idea that if there were physical laws of the universe that men could fathom and ask questions about, then why not ask questions about the nature of man-made society.

With this questioning, the ideology of democracy came into being.

Until the first world war this ideology was on the offensive. The action against it was rear-guard, defensive, and uncertain. Democracy was the concept of today and tomorrow. Men everywhere heard of it and spoke of it and acted to achieve it.

But, in this generation democracy has been challenged by another ideology. In Italy, Germany, and Russia the leaders talked of what they said was a "new order", - something new and streamlined.

But what did we see when we examined this "new order"? We have found it wasn't new at all. It was the old, old doctrine of authoritarianism, pushed with the force of guns and marching feet -- yes, nothing more than the ancient curse of "divine right" of the strong to rule the weak.

Democracy met and conquered this old concept years ago in nearly every civilized nation of the world. Today, if we fully understand the power of our idea and its full meaning, we can easily maintain the eminence of the democratic faith that only yesterday spread from mind to mind and heart to heart throughout the world.

When the prophets of the ancient religion of totalitarianism say to us -- you need something new, we can answer: It is you who need the new; our ideology is always new -- only the truth can make you free.

Of all people who should understand the immortality of the idea and the power of ideology, the American people should be the first. Our idea of democracy was embodied in the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence, and in the words of our Constitution. It has as its philosophers Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Tom Paine, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt. These men all spoke of the same ideology; all were possessed of the same idea. They sought to free men from fear; to free them from poverty; to free them from social and economic injustice, and from insecurity.

Strange as it may seem, America has let loose upon this world the most powerful and dynamic political and social force in the history of man. It has its roots deep in the spiritual substance of Judeo-Christianity. It receives its political inspiration from the logic of the stoics, the compassion of the martyrs, the faith of the philosophers of natural law. We are of the first to present to the modern world a coherent political faith. It is the ancient curse of "divine right" of the strong to rule the weak.

based upon the dignity of the individual, the equality and fraternity of mankind. We are of the first to pattern a structure of government and a form of society in which the liberties of a people were guaranteed and opportunity was to be assured.

This was an idea - or better to say - an ideology more powerful than the armies of the conquerors. History proves this fact. It was our call to freedom in 1776 and our realization of a government of the people, by the people and for the people that let loose in this world a social and political revolution. This revolution upset the thrones of Europe and convulsed the continent. It put into the hearts and breasts of the colonial people, the under-privileged and the subjected, the consuming desire of individual liberty, a desire which today is manifested by such rebellions as we see in Indo-China, in Indonesia, and in the fact of India's freedom. We never moved a battalion or a regiment on the continent of Europe in the 1800's, yet the idea of the Declaration of Independence produced the doctrine of the "Rights of Man" and broke the back of oppression and the power of kings.

Today, too, the vital force in the world is the search for freedom. We see many manifestations of it: the rise of nationalism of the colonial peoples; the oppressed and the poverty stricken following the leadership of those who use the symbols of freedom, even though their purpose may be otherwise. We find economists and political philosophers talking in terms of abundance within the framework of individual freedom. Men are no longer just content to talk of their security. They want security, and liberty. The humanitarian of this generation is one who understands the interdependence of these two principles -- freedom and security.

There are those who today feel we have moved away from this idea, when in fact it is but maturing. It is growing strong in its own sense of competence and rich in its experience. The great political and social experiments taking place in Europe -- in the free countries of Europe -- are but another expression of this idea of democracy. Our groping and experimentation in the hall of Congress, evolving such programs as the New Freedom and the New Deal are but further expressions of a people with the desire to emancipate themselves from fear, from insecurity, and from oppression.

No better example of our maturing democracy can be found than the ever-growing demand that all people, regardless of race, color, or creed, be guaranteed full and equal civil rights. The morality of our democratic faith compels us to cleanse our body politic of the guilt that arises from our distortion of Democratic principles through discrimination and bigotry. The American people are acting to redeem their honor. In city after city - in State after State - human rights are being reaffirmed and protected by law. The democratic spirit of the people now calls upon our national government to destroy the last vestige of intolerance.

Our maturing democracy calls for the recognition that all must be free from insecurity. All must be privileged to enjoy the opportunity of good health, of productive work, of education, of adequate housing, and of decent living conditions.

This is democracy's answer to the fraud of dictatorship.

To be sure our generation lives in a world, part of which has lost its mind. We have the faith and conviction, however, that the forces of creative thought, of education, and of civilization will, as they have through the ages, survive the obstacles. Future generations will look at the period in which we live as merely one of a moral crisis. It will record, however, that we survived that crisis and moved forward to the greater fulfillment of the idea of freedom. Yes, despite a generation terrified by concentration camps, dictatorship, and world war -- in the perspective of Time, the achievements of the first half of the 20th Century will outweigh the tragedy and the suffering.

Out of every bitter experience of history, out of every tragedy -- man learns in his sorrow. And out of the sacrifice of two world wars we again come back to the immortal idea -- of the oneness of man -- of his essential unity. It was out of this conviction and out of the recognition of this eternal truth that mortal man, with all of his limitations, his prejudices and inabilities, created the United Nations.

This idea of a world order and the United Nations is ~~not~~ new. It has its own immortality. Mankind from the very beginning has sought a society in which he can live in peace and security, and has groped his way. That society is only obtainable when the principle of government by the consent of the governed, rule by majority, and respect for minority rights is firmly engrained in the social fabric of all nations and all the world.

The United Nations is a summarized expression of the desire of mankind to live in a world of law and order.

History has always demonstrated that this is a long struggle and is not something that can be accomplished immediately. These are long run aims of people of democratic faith for a type of world government based upon law in which individual rights are preserved, and where there is room for a diversity of cultures. This is our objective -- a world of free and equal men, who will in their freedom create and secure a just and enduring peace.



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