

THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON  
20510

*Sweearing-in of  
Bicentennial Commission  
on the American Revolution  
Feb. 22, 1967*

February 22, 1967

MR. RIPLEY, MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION TO

COMMEMORATE THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN

REVOLUTION, MEMBERS OF THE SMITHSONIAN BOARD OF

REGENTS, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, GUESTS.

*L* IN OUR NATION IT IS A RARE OCCASSION WHEN THE  
GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR AN EVENT A DECADE IN THE  
FUTURE.

*L =* MOST OF OUR PLANNING FALLS INTO MULTIPLES  
OF TWO YEARS, ENDING WITH FOUR OR SIX.

*L* WE HAVE MADE AN EXCEPTION IN THIS DECADE OF  
SPACE EXPLORATION, *manifesto to the moon* AND I AM CONFIDENT THIS PLAN  
WILL BE FULFILLED.

L TONIGHT WE CHARGE A COMMISSION OF DISTINGUISHED  
AMERICANS WITH PLANNING FOR <sup>1976</sup>~~1967~~. AS A PEOPLE WE  
WISH TO COMMEMORATE AN EVENT WHICH STANDS AS A  
REMARKABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT . . . . . TWO HUNDRED  
YEARS OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY WITH RIGHTS SECURED  
BY ONE CONSTITUTION, UNDER A GOVERNMENT BY THE  
PEOPLE. L INDEED, AN EVENT MORE REMARKABLE IN THE  
HISTORY OF MANKIND THAN ~~THIS DECADE'S WALK ON THE MOON.~~

L TONIGHT WE RECALL THOSE WHO BROUGHT THIS NATION  
INTO BEING AND LAUNCHED IT WITH THE HERITAGE OF  
LIBERTY AND A VISION OF PURPOSE THAT TRANSCENDS ALL  
SIMILAR VENTURES OF MAN SEEKING TO GOVERN.

IT IS THIS SPIRIT OF LIBERTY, AND THE CONFIDENCE  
IN FREEDOM AND EQUALITY THAT WE CHARGE THIS  
BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION TO CAPTURE.

THIS TASK WILL NOT BE EASY.

JUDGE LEARNED HAND ASKED ONCE "WHAT THEN IS  
THIS SPIRIT OF LIBERTY?", AND HE ANSWERED:

"I CAN NOT DEFINE IT; I CAN ONLY TELL YOU MY OWN  
FAITH.

THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY IS THE SPIRIT WHICH IS

NOT TOO SURE THAT IT IS RIGHT. THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY

IS THE SPIRIT WHICH SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND THE MINDS OF

OTHER MEN AND WOMEN. THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY IS THE

SPIRIT WHICH WEIGHS THEIR INTERESTS ALONGSIDE ITS OWN

WITHOUT BIAS. THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY REMEMBERS THAT

NOT EVEN A SPARROW FALLS TO EARTH UNHEEDED. -more-

4- (quote continues)

THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY IS THE SPIRIT OF HIM WHO NEAR  
TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, TAUGHT MANKIND THAT LESSON  
IT HAS NEVER LEARNED, BUT HAS NEVER QUITE FORGOTTEN:  
THAT THERE MAY BE A KINGDOM WHERE THE LEAST SHALL  
BE HEARD AND CONSIDERED SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE GREATEST."

LONG BEFORE JUDGE HAND, CONDORCET, WRITING ON  
THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, COMMENTED THAT IT IS  
NOT ENOUGH THAT THE RIGHTS OF MAN "SHOULD BE WRITTEN  
IN THE BOOKS OF PHILOSOPHERS AND IN THE HEARTS OF VIRTUOUS  
MEN: IT IS NECESSARY THAT IGNORANT OR WEAK MEN WOULD  
READ THEM IN THE EXAMPLE OF A GREAT PEOPLE. AMERICA  
HAS GIVEN US THE EXAMPLE, THE ACT WHICH DECLARES ITS

-more-

INDEPENDENCE IS A SIMPLE AND SUBLIME EXPOSITION  
OF THESE RIGHTS SO SACRED AND SO LONG FORGOTTEN. ||

SO SO, TONIGHT MY CHARGE TO THOSE FELLOW AMERICANS  
WHO WILL SERVE AS COMMISSIONERS FOR THE NATION'S TWO  
HUNDRETH BIRTHDAY, CAN BE STATED SIMPLY IN THE WORDS  
OF DANIEL WEBSTER:

"IF WE WORK UPON MARBLE, IT WILL PERISH; IF ON  
BRASS, TIME WILL EFFACE IT; IF WE REAR TEMPLES, THEY  
WILL CRUMBLE INTO DUST; BUT IF WE WORK UPON IMMORTAL  
MINDS, AND IMBUE THEM WITH PRINCIPLES, WITH THE JUST  
FEAR OF GOD AND LOVE OF OUR FELLOW MEN, WE ENGRAVE  
ON THOSE TABLETS SOMETHING THAT WILL BRIGHTEN TO ALL  
ETERNITY."



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