

OPENING REMARKS

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER

FOR SCHOLARS

WASHINGTON, D. C.

MARCH 6, 1969

This is a moment of special importance and excitement in American history.

We are gathered today to set in motion a new American institution: The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. It promises to be a unique meeting point for the two worlds of scholarship and public affairs. So it is appropriate, I think, that this Board includes distinguished figures from both worlds: public servants, famous scholars, and a few like John Roche, who represent both disciplines.

The International Center is this nation's memorial to

President Wilson -- the final recommendation of the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Commission, established by Congress in 1961. The concept has been enriched further by the proposals of the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission for including the Wilson Center as part of this dynamic urban design.

For me, it is a special honor to be associated with this venture. One of the formative influences in my life was my father, a great reader, a devoted student of public affairs, and a passionate admirer of President Wilson. He used to read to me from the papers and speeches of Wilson. My own career owes a great deal to my father and his love for President Wilson, so the chairmanship of the Board has genuine personal symbolism for me.

When the Woodrow Wilson Center was only an idea, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation published a document which best expresses the purpose of this memorial to Woodrow Wilson: "More than a memorial to the President," the Foundation said of the Center, "It will be a gift to the world. Bringing to the Capital a center of intellectual inquiry directed primarily to the problems of world order and all their many ramifications, we conceive nothing less than an institution of learning that the 22nd Century will regard as having influenced the 21st."

That, you will agree, is a large and ambitious mandate. But this is a talented and energetic Board. I have every confidence that the Woodrow Wilson Center, under the leadership of this group, will soon become a vital and exciting intellectual force in the life of our Capital city and our country.

From the beginning, those who advanced the idea for this Center -- the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue, the Smithsonian Institution and members of Congress -- envisioned the Memorial as a key point of interest and activity along Pennsylvania Avenue.

As we develop more specific ideas as to the Center's location and its design, I hope we will keep alive their vision -- and remember that we are creating not only a scholarly institution but a living monument which should combine liveliness and dignity -- which must be both impressive and inviting. We must strive to make the Wilson Center an integral part of the downtown neighborhood where we hope it will be constructed -- a place of beauty which will renew and revitalize its surroundings.

I hope we will strive to make the Woodrow Wilson Center truly the intellectual center of the nation's capital -- a crossroads for scholars, diplomats, and statesmen from all over the world:

- A professor from a foreign university, interested in the workings of the United States Government, could reside here for a time -- within easy distance of the Capital, the White House, the National Archives and the riches of the Library of Congress.
- The Center can be a home for historians and political scientists from our own universities.
- And I certainly hope that public servants who find themselves suddenly returned to private life might find encouragement and inspiration through an association with this Center!

The central purpose of the Woodrow Wilson Center will be to marry thought and action -- and we can begin at once to develop a program to achieve this objective.

In this spirit, our job today is not only to think about the Center, but to act also. As Dr. Ripley will tell you, there are temporary facilities available here at the Smithsonian to support the Center's program while long-range construction plans are being formulated. By the end of today's meeting, I hope that every member of the Board will have a clear knowledge of what our next steps should be. And I hope every Trustee will feel a sense of urgency about his contribution to this rich intellectual resource for America and the world.

To spur us both to think and act, I have invited S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, to tell us about the relationship between the Woodrow Wilson Center and its parent institution, the venerable and lively Smithsonian.

Mr. Ripley.

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