

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT

Collegeville, Minnesota

May 25, 1975

You do not have to be reminded that we are heavily into the bicentennial season.

I suspect that scarcely a commencement speech will be delivered this year and next that does not extol the virtues associated with our country's moment of independence.

Well, mark this speech down as an exception -- almost.

Without question, the lessons of those revolutionary times are important. I have no doubt that Americans can -- and will -- learn much of value in comprehending and overcoming our current agenda of national problems.

But there is a time in early American history that is even more relevant than the revolutionary period to our present circumstances. Despite the problems that the first Americans faced in severing our colonial ties with Great Britain, this historic decision was made easier by the realization that at last America's destiny would be her own.

The slate was clean. The injustices that caused the revolution were over. It was a moment of hope, expectation, and near euphoria for our revolutionary leaders.

How different it was a decade later.

The unity that bound the states together during the War of Independence had all but vanished. States were regarding each other as something akin to foreign powers. Commerce was nearly at a standstill. Accusations and recriminations resounded in Congress, and The Articles of Confederation offered no system for resolving these bitter disputes.

The optimism and confidence that launched our experiment in self-government had all but vanished. A federal convention was called for May, 1787, to consider how the Articles could be made to work. But James Madison voiced grave doubts as to the probable outcome of this gathering.

In 1787 he wrote: "... No very sanguine expectations can well be indulged. The probable diversity of opinions and prejudices . . . renders the issue totally uncertain. The existing embarrassments and mortal diseases of the Confederacy form the only ground of hope, that a spirit of concession on all sides may be produced by the general chaos. . . ."

A year earlier, George Washington had urged his countrymen to focus their attention on the broader purposes of their common endeavor. He wrote: "Let prejudices, unreasonable jealousies, and local interests yield. . . . Let us look to our national character, and to things beyond the present moment. No morn ever dawned more favorably than ours did: and no day was ever more clouded than the present. Wisdom and good examples are necessary at this time to rescue the political machine from the impending storm."

The political crisis that led to the Federal Convention of 1787 and ultimately produced the Constitution tested the American character to a far greater degree than the War of Independence. And the mixture of despair and self-confidence that characterized the labors of the founding fathers during the spring and summer of 1787 in Philadelphia is a far closer approximation of the attitudes that have been decisive throughout American history.

What course did the founding fathers follow? Despite their monumental differences of opinion and interest, it was never one of defeatism or discouragement.

To the contrary, the founders seized the moment to design a new system of government capable of bringing order and justice to the United States.

It has been noted that the delegates to the Federal Convention exceeded their authority in taking this decisive step, for they had been charged only with amending the Articles of Confederation. Yet they were willing to risk the consequences because they understood that to do less was to make dissolution certain.

It was the founders' willingness to risk, buttressed by their optimism, faith and confidence in the ultimate wisdom of their actions, that saved the Union -- scarcely a decade after the separation from Great Britain.

It has been these two characteristics -- a sense of adventure and a willingness to risk, combined with a mature self-confidence and optimism -- that historically have been at the roots of the American character.

But one more ingredient was essential in the spring and summer of 1787 in Philadelphia: a willingness to compromise on the substance of the new Constitution.

The compromises between large and small states, between states concerned primarily with manufacturing and those concerned with agriculture, were not easily reached. More than once the enterprise almost collapsed. But the acrimony and bitterness slowly drained away as the delegates found, much to their surprise, that compromise solutions could be hammered out and accepted.

In the shadow of his remarkable life, Benjamin Franklin -- then 82 years of age -- captured this spirit of accommodation in his historic address to the Convention after the final draft had been completed and as the delegates were faced with the ultimate decision of whether or not to sign.

Franklin said: "I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present, but, sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it. . . . When you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? . . . Thus, I consent, sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best . . . ."

I mention these events surrounding the writing of the Constitution because I believe they are at the heart of America's continuing experiment in self-government -- a willingness to risk, to pioneer -- a sense of optimism and self-confidence -- a capacity for compromise and accommodation.

Time and again, these three characteristics have brought us through national trials and difficulties far more imposing than anything that confronts us today.

One is tempted to recite a litany of national adversity.

There were secessionist movements in the early 1800s, long before the Civil War. The first Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army was accused of being in the pay of the Spanish Emperor.

We had corruption and land scandals. Immigrants to our shores were herded together in our cities, exploited, and subjected to violence and discrimination.

We invaded Mexico in an act of open aggression, and we fought a bloody and nearly catastrophic Civil War. We created a cruel and vicious caste system in the aftermath of this war, and for fully a century maintained a system of legally sanctioned exploitation of blacks and other minorities.

We had post-Civil War corruption, the rape of our natural resources, the plundering of land and people by the railroad barons. The industrial revolution brought huge trusts and monopolies that functioned with little regard for the public interest. Children were exploited in sweat shops and factories.

We refused to join the League of Nations and closed our eyes to Hitler's incredible inhumanity toward Europe's Jews. We lived through a Great Depression that brought our economic system to the brink of collapse.

We fought a tragic war in Vietnam.

All this and more is part of our history.

But if we are honest with ourselves, we also must recognize that the attitudes and beliefs that saved the Federal Convention of 1787 existed concurrently with this darker side of the American character.

We survived these adversities and progressed as a free nation by risking greatly, by retaining our self-confidence and optimism, and by compromising what seemed to be totally hostile and incompatible points of view.

As a result, the injustices were rooted out, our democracy refined, and the security and happiness of our people advanced.

But what of the American character today?

On the one hand, there is abundant evidence that we may be experiencing a fundamental change in our national attitude and outlook.

We find ourselves in a national mood that is both reticent and negative. We know too many people today who want to play it safe -- who avoid adventure in their lives and careers -- who are unwilling to try something new. This is true in education. It is true in corporate life. And it surely is true in government.

Every opinion poll tells us of the public's growing cynicism and disenchantment with all of society's institutions: the Presidency, Congress, the courts, business, the church, the educational establishment, and so on down the line.

Where is the sense of optimism and self-confidence that always has set America apart from other nations?

And, finally, we encounter a growing unwillingness to accept the compromises and accommodations that ultimately permit a nation of this size and diversity to function.

The sense of community that makes compromise possible seems to be ebbing away. In its place we encounter a very disturbing trend toward self-aggrandizement -- a determination to look out for Number One, regardless of all other considerations.



This is the picture of America that increasingly dominates the mass media and, I suspect, it is a picture that more and more Americans believe to be accurate.

But is it? I recognize it as only a partial and very incomplete picture of the United States I know.

One of the most unfortunate habits of the mass media -- motivated, I'm sure, by a desire for objectivity and independence -- is a constant repetition of our national and individual shortcomings.

My concern is that the duty to expose corruption and abuse of power -- to probe for shortcomings and injustice in our society -- is not balanced in the mass media by reports of the other America that most of us encounter daily -- an America of compassion, of courage and commitment, of self-sacrifice.

There is another side to the American character that we seldom find reported in the press or covered by television. We experience this America in our own lives, and we see it in our communities.

It is an America that openly acknowledges failures and imperfections -- as this country surely did in Vietnam -- but that also recognizes our country's continuing ability to learn from mistakes -- to become more forward-looking in the aftermath of defeat -- to use adversity as an instrument for progress.

These, surely, were the attitudes that sustained our founding fathers in 1787. And they have been recaptured in the words and actions of all great American leaders since then.

I recall particularly the admonition of Franklin D. Roosevelt as he assumed the Presidency during one of the nation's darkest hours. He said: "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."

It also was Roosevelt who observed: "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today."

This attitude, I truly believe, is one of the essential ingredients in building a nation that merits our pride and that commands our participation and support.

We live in the worst of times, but also in the best of times. But that almost always has been true in America.

Each generation has found itself confronted with great challenges and great opportunities. Each generation has faced the same doubts and discouragement that many of you experience and that today occupy so prominent a place in our national life. But each generation has made its contribution.

And as from our country's earliest moments, the willingness to risk, supported by a robust self-confidence and faith, tempered by a capacity to compromise, have been the decisive factors in sustaining the American experiment.

It is the realization of these qualities in your lives and among your generation of Americans that, once again, will decide the issue.

But let us cherish no illusions. The future, as always, is uncertain and dangerous, even as our spirit is bright and resilient.

John F. Kennedy said it well. Listen to his words:  
'Peace and freedom do not come cheap, and we are destined -- all of us here today -- to live out most, if not all, of our lives in uncertainty and challenge and peril.'

Join me in saying: So be it.

# # # # #

Father Michael  
- Father Abbott  
Faculty  
Graduates, & friends

---

Rev Father Michael Blecker - President

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT

COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA

MAY 25, 1975

Bob Hope. My Advice to you graduates who are about to  
go out into the real world - Don't go!  
Husley - I've Peered into the future - It won't work.  
Einstein - I never think of the future - It comes soon enough.  
L YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE REMINDED THAT WE ARE HEAVILY INTO

THE BICENTENNIAL SEASON.

L I SUSPECT THAT SCARCELY A COMMENCEMENT SPEECH WILL BE  
DELIVERED THIS YEAR AND NEXT THAT DOES NOT EXTOL THE VIRTUES  
ASSOCIATED WITH OUR COUNTRY'S MOMENT OF INDEPENDENCE.

L WELL, MARK THIS SPEECH DOWN AS AN EXCEPTION -- ALMOST.

L WITHOUT QUESTION, THE LESSONS OF THOSE REVOLUTIONARY TIMES  
ARE IMPORTANT. L I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT AMERICANS CAN -- AND WILL --  
LEARN MUCH OF VALUE IN COMPREHENDING AND OVERCOMING OUR CURRENT  
AGENDA OF NATIONAL PROBLEMS.

L BUT THERE IS A TIME IN EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY THAT IS  
EVEN MORE RELEVANT THAN THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD TO OUR PRESENT  
CIRCUMSTANCES.

L DESPITE THE PROBLEMS THAT THE FIRST AMERICANS  
FACED IN SEVERING OUR COLONIAL TIES WITH GREAT BRITAIN, THIS  
HISTORIC DECISION WAS MADE EASIER BY THE REALIZATION THAT AT  
LAST AMERICA'S DESTINY WOULD BE HER OWN.

L THE SLATE WAS CLEAN. L THE INJUSTICES THAT CAUSED THE  
REVOLUTION WERE OVER. L IT WAS A MOMENT OF HOPE, EXPECTATION,  
AND NEAR EUPHORIA FOR OUR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS.

But L HOW DIFFERENT IT WAS A DECADE LATER. !

L THE UNITY THAT BOUND THE STATES TOGETHER DURING THE  
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE HAD ALL BUT VANISHED. L STATES WERE REGARDING  
EACH OTHER AS SOMETHING AKIN TO FOREIGN POWERS. L COMMERCE WAS  
NEARLY AT A STANDSTILL. L ACCUSATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS  
RESOUNDED IN CONGRESS. L AND THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION  
OFFERED NO SYSTEM FOR RESOLVING THESE BITTER DISPUTES.



THE OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE THAT LAUNCHED OUR EXPERIMENT  
IN SELF-GOVERNMENT HAD ALL BUT VANISHED. A FEDERAL CONVENTION  
WAS CALLED FOR MAY, 1787, TO CONSIDER HOW THE ARTICLES COULD  
BE MADE TO WORK. BUT, JAMES MADISON VOICED GRAVE DOUBTS AS  
TO THE PROBABLE OUTCOME OF THIS GATHERING.

IN 1787 HE WROTE: ". . . NO VERY SANGUINE EXPECTATIONS  
CAN WELL BE INDULGED. THE PROBABLE DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS AND  
PREJUDICES . . . RENDERS THE ISSUE TOTALLY UNCERTAIN. THE  
EXISTING EMBARRASSMENTS AND MORTAL DISEASES OF THE CONFEDERACY  
FORM THE ONLY GROUND OF HOPE, THAT A SPIRIT OF CONCESSION ON  
ALL SIDES MAY BE PRODUCED BY THE GENERAL CHAOS. . . ."

L A YEAR EARLIER, GEORGE WASHINGTON HAD URGED HIS COUNTRYMEN  
TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON THE BROADER PURPOSES OF THEIR

COMMON ENDEAVOR. HE WROTE: "LET PREJUDICES, UNREASONABLE  
JEALOUSIES, AND LOCAL INTERESTS YIELD. . . . LET US LOOK TO  
OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER, AND TO THINGS BEYOND THE PRESENT  
MOMENT. NO MORN EVER DAWNED MORE FAVORABLY THAN OURS DID; AND  
NO DAY WAS EVER MORE CLOUDED THAN THE PRESENT. WISDOM AND GOOD  
EXAMPLES ARE NECESSARY AT THIS TIME TO RESCUE THE POLITICAL  
MACHINE FROM THE IMPENDING STORM."

L THE POLITICAL CRISIS THAT LED TO THE FEDERAL CONVENTION  
OF 1787 AND ULTIMATELY PRODUCED THE CONSTITUTION TESTED THE  
AMERICAN CHARACTER TO A FAR GREATER DEGREE THAN THE WAR OF  
INDEPENDENCE.

AND THE MIXTURE OF DESPAIR AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

THAT CHARACTERIZED THE LABORS OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS DURING

THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1787 IN PHILADELPHIA IS A FAR

CLOSER APPROXIMATION OF THE ATTITUDES THAT HAVE BEEN DECISIVE

THROUGHOUT AMERICAN HISTORY

WHAT COURSE DID THE FOUNDING FATHERS FOLLOW? *well -* DESPITE THEIR

MONUMENTAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AND INTEREST, IT WAS NEVER

ONE OF DEFEATISM OR DISCOURAGEMENT.

TO THE CONTRARY, THE <sup>*literally*</sup>FOUNDERS SEIZED THE MOMENT TO DESIGN

A NEW SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF BRINGING ORDER AND JUSTICE

TO THE UNITED STATES.

↳ IT HAS BEEN NOTED THAT THE DELEGATES TO THE FEDERAL  
CONVENTION EXCEEDED THEIR AUTHORITY IN TAKING THIS DECISIVE  
STEP, FOR THEY HAD BEEN CHARGED ONLY WITH AMENDING THE  
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION. <sup>Presumably so - but</sup> ~~Yes~~, THEY WERE WILLING TO RISK THE  
CONSEQUENCES BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT TO DO LESS WAS TO  
MAKE DISSOLUTION CERTAIN. — ~~Here we are~~

↳ IT WAS THE FOUNDERS' WILLINGNESS TO RISK, BUTTRESSED  
BY THEIR OPTIMISM, FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE ULTIMATE WISDOM  
OF THEIR ACTIONS, THAT SAVED THE UNION -- SCARCELY A DECADE  
AFTER THE SEPARATION FROM GREAT BRITAIN.



IT HAS BEEN THESE TWO CHARACTERISTICS -- A SENSE OF ADVENTURE AND A WILLINGNESS TO RISK, COMBINED WITH A MATURE SELF-CONFIDENCE AND OPTIMISM -- THAT HISTORICALLY HAVE BEEN AT THE ROOTS OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER.

BUT, ONE MORE INGREDIENT WAS ESSENTIAL IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1787 IN PHILADELPHIA: A WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION.

THE COMPROMISES BETWEEN LARGE AND SMALL STATES; BETWEEN STATES CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH MANUFACTURING AND THOSE CONCERNED WITH AGRICULTURE, WERE NOT EASILY REACHED! MORE THAN ONCE THE ENTERPRISE ALMOST COLLAPSED BUT THE ACRIMONY AND BITTERNESS SLOWLY DRAINED AWAY AS THE DELEGATES FOUND, MUCH TO THEIR SURPRISE, THAT COMPROMISE SOLUTIONS COULD BE HAMMERED OUT AND ACCEPTED.

L IN THE SHADOW OF HIS REMARKABLE LIFE, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN --  
THEN 82 YEARS OF AGE -- CAPTURED THIS SPIRIT OF ACCOMMODATION  
IN HIS HISTORIC ADDRESS TO THE CONVENTION AFTER THE FINAL DRAFT  
HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND AS THE DELEGATES WERE FACED WITH THE  
ULTIMATE DECISION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO SIGN.

L FRANKLIN SAID: "I CONFESS THAT I DO NOT ENTIRELY APPROVE  
OF THIS CONSTITUTION AT PRESENT, BUT, SIR, I AM NOT SURE I SHALL  
NEVER APPROVE IT. . . . WHEN YOU ASSEMBLE A NUMBER OF MEN TO  
HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR JOINT WISDOM, YOU INEVITABLY  
ASSEMBLE WITH THOSE MEN ALL THEIR PREJUDICES, THEIR PASSIONS,  
THEIR ERRORS OF OPINION, THEIR LOCAL INTERESTS, AND THEIR  
SELFISH VIEWS.

FROM SUCH AN ASSEMBLY CAN A PERFECT PRODUCTION BE EXPECTED?

. . . THUS, I CONSENT, SIR, TO THIS CONSTITUTION

BECAUSE I EXPECT NO BETTER, AND BECAUSE I AM NOT SURE THAT IT  
IS NOT THE BEST . . . .

I MENTION THESE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE WRITING OF THE  
CONSTITUTION BECAUSE I BELIEVE THEY ARE AT THE HEART OF  
AMERICA'S CONTINUING EXPERIMENT IN SELF-GOVERNMENT -- A  
WILINGNESS TO RISK, TO PIONEER -- A SENSE OF OPTIMISM AND  
SELF-CONFIDENCE -- A CAPACITY FOR COMPROMISE AND ACCOMMODATION!

TIME AND AGAIN, THESE THREE CHARACTERISTICS HAVE BROUGHT  
US THROUGH NATIONAL TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES FAR MORE IMPOSING  
THAN ANYTHING THAT CONFRONTS US TODAY.

*And we have had our troubles,  
believe me!*

ONE IS TEMPTED TO RECITE A LITANY OF NATIONAL ADVERSITY.

THERE WERE SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS IN THE EARLY 1800'S, LONG BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR. THE FIRST CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE U.S.

ARMY WAS ACCUSED OF BEING IN THE PAY OF THE SPANISH EMPEROR,

WE HAD CORRUPTION AND LAND SCANDALS. IMMIGRANTS TO OUR SHORES WERE HERDED TOGETHER IN OUR CITIES, EXPLOITED, AND SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION.

WE INVADED MEXICO IN AN ACT OF OPEN AGGRESSION, AND WE FOUGHT A BLOODY AND NEARLY CATASTROPHIC CIVIL WAR. WE CREATED A CRUEL AND VICIOUS CASTE SYSTEM IN THE AFTERMATH OF THIS WAR, <sup>FOR</sup> AND <sup>^</sup> FULLY A CENTURY MAINTAINED A SYSTEM OF LEGALLY SANCTIONED EXPLOITATION OF BLACKS AND OTHER MINORITIES.



✓ WE HAD POST-CIVIL WAR CORRUPTION, THE RAPE OF OUR NATURAL  
RESOURCES, THE PLUNDERING OF LAND AND PEOPLE BY THE RAILROAD  
BARONS. ✓ THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION BROUGHT HUGE TRUSTS AND  
MONOPOLIES THAT FUNCTIONED WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR THE PUBLIC  
INTEREST. ✓ CHILDREN WERE EXPLOITED IN SWEAT SHOPS AND FACTORIES.

✓ WE REFUSED TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND CLOSED OUR  
EYES TO HITLER'S INCREDIBLE INHUMANITY TOWARD EUROPE'S JEWS.

✓ WE LIVED THROUGH A GREAT DEPRESSION THAT BROUGHT OUR ECONOMIC  
SYSTEM TO THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE.

✓ WE FOUGHT A TRAGIC WAR IN VIETNAM,

✓ ALL THIS AND MORE IS PART OF OUR HISTORY.!

L BUT IF WE ARE HONEST WITH OURSELVES, WE ALSO MUST  
RECOGNIZE THAT THE ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS THAT SAVED THE  
FEDERAL CONVENTION OF 1787 EXISTED CONCURRENTLY WITH THIS  
DARKER SIDE OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER.

L WE SURVIVED THESE ADVERSITIES AND PROGRESSED AS A FREE  
NATION BY RISKING GREATLY, BY RETAINING OUR SELF-CONFIDENCE  
AND OPTIMISM, AND BY COMPROMISING WHAT SEEMED TO BE TOTALLY  
HOSTILE AND INCOMPATIBLE POINTS OF VIEW.

L AS A RESULT, ~~THE~~ INJUSTICES WERE ROOTED OUT, OUR DEMOCRACY  
REFINED, AND THE SECURITY AND HAPPINESS OF OUR PEOPLE ADVANCED.

L BUT WHAT OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER TODAY? ?

~~ON THE ONE HAND~~ THERE IS ABUNDANT EVIDENCE THAT WE MAY  
BE EXPERIENCING A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN OUR NATIONAL ATTITUDE  
AND OUTLOOK.

WE FIND OURSELVES IN A NATIONAL MOOD THAT IS BOTH  
RETICENT AND NEGATIVE. WE KNOW TOO MANY PEOPLE TODAY WHO WANT  
TO PLAY IT SAFE -- WHO AVOID ADVENTURE IN THEIR LIVES AND  
CAREERS -- WHO ARE UNWILLING TO TRY SOMETHING NEW. THIS IS  
TRUE IN EDUCATION. IT IS TRUE IN CORPORATE LIFE. AND IT  
SURELY IS TRUE IN GOVERNMENT.

EVERY OPINION POLL TELLS US OF THE PUBLIC'S GROWING  
CYNICISM AND DISENCHANTMENT WITH ALL OF SOCIETY'S INSTITUTIONS:  
THE PRESIDENCY, CONGRESS, THE COURTS, BUSINESS, THE CHURCH,  
THE EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT, AND SO ON DOWN THE LINE.

*We have to ask -*

WHERE IS THE SENSE OF OPTIMISM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE THAT  
ALWAYS HAS SET AMERICA APART FROM OTHER NATIONS?

AND, FINALLY, WE ENCOUNTER A GROWING UNWILLINGNESS TO  
ACCEPT THE COMPROMISES AND ACCOMMODATIONS THAT ULTIMATELY  
PERMIT A NATION OF THIS SIZE AND DIVERSITY TO FUNCTION.

THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY THAT MAKES COMPROMISE POSSIBLE  
SEEMS TO BE EBBING AWAY. IN ITS PLACE WE ENCOUNTER A VERY  
DISTURBING TREND TOWARD SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT -- A DETERMINATION  
TO LOOK OUT FOR NUMBER ONE, REGARDLESS OF ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

THIS IS THE PICTURE OF AMERICA THAT INCREASINGLY DOMINATES  
THE MASS MEDIA AND, I SUSPECT, IT IS A PICTURE THAT MORE AND  
MORE AMERICANS BELIEVE TO BE ACCURATE.



L BUT IS IT? RECOGNIZE IT AS ONLY A PARTIAL AND VERY  
INCOMPLETE PICTURE OF THE UNITED STATES I KNOW.

L ONE OF THE MOST UNFORTUNATE HABITS OF THE MASS MEDIA --  
MOTIVATED, I'M SURE, BY A DESIRE FOR OBJECTIVITY AND  
INDEPENDENCE -- IS A CONSTANT REPETITION OF OUR NATIONAL  
AND INDIVIDUAL SHORTCOMINGS.

L MY CONCERN IS THAT THE DUTY TO EXPOSE CORRUPTION AND  
ABUSE OF POWER -- TO PROBE FOR SHORTCOMINGS AND INJUSTICE  
IN OUR SOCIETY -- IS NOT BALANCED IN THE MASS MEDIA BY  
REPORTS OF THE OTHER AMERICA THAT MOST OF US ENCOUNTER DAILY  
-- AN AMERICA OF COMPASSION, OF COURAGE AND COMMITMENT, OF  
SELF-SACRIFICE -- *of growth and participation*

- ✓ Drawn 9 trunks from tension -
- ✓ Drawn more trunks out of barn -
- ✓ ~~Forward taking out of defect -~~

✓ THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE TO THE AMERICAN CHARACTER THAT WE  
SELDOM FIND REPORTED IN THE PRESS OR COVERED BY TELEVISION.

✓ WE EXPERIENCE THIS AMERICA IN OUR OWN LIVES, AND WE SEE IT IN  
OUR COMMUNITIES.

✓ IT IS AN AMERICA THAT OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGES FAILURES AND

IMPERFECTIONS -- AS THIS COUNTRY SURELY DID IN VIETNAM -- *and*

*water*  
BUT THAT ALSO RECOGNIZES OUR COUNTRY'S CONTINUING ABILITY

TO LEARN FROM MISTAKES -- TO BECOME MORE FORWARD-LOOKING IN

THE AFTERMATH OF DEFEAT -- TO USE ADVERSITY AS AN INSTRUMENT

FOR PROGRESS.

*Depression . changes Bank reform -  
Soc Sec -  
unemployment -*

✓ THESE, SURELY, WERE THE ATTITUDES THAT SUSTAINED OUR

FOUNDING FATHERS IN 1787 ✓ AND THEY HAVE BEEN RECAPTURED IN

THE WORDS AND ACTIONS OF ALL GREAT AMERICAN LEADERS SINCE THEN.

↳ I RECALL PARTICULARLY THE ADMONITION OF FRANKLIN D.  
ROOSEVELT AS HE ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY DURING ONE OF THE  
NATION'S DARKEST HOURS ↳ HE SAID: "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!"

↳ IT ALSO WAS ROOSEVELT WHO OBSERVED: "THE ONLY LIMIT TO  
OUR REALIZATION OF TOMORROW WILL BE OUR DOUBTS OF TODAY."

↳ THIS ATTITUDE, I TRULY BELIEVE, IS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL  
INGREDIENTS IN BUILDING A NATION THAT MERITS OUR PRIDE AND  
THAT COMMANDS OUR PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT.



WE LIVE IN THE WORST OF TIMES, BUT ALSO IN THE BEST OF  
TIMES BUT THAT ALMOST ALWAYS HAS BEEN TRUE IN AMERICA,

EACH GENERATION HAS FOUND ITSELF CONFRONTED WITH GREAT  
CHALLENGES AND GREAT OPPORTUNITIES. EACH GENERATION HAS FACED  
THE SAME DOUBTS AND DISCOURAGEMENT THAT MANY OF YOU EXPERIENCE

AND THAT TODAY OCCUPY SO PROMINENT A PLACE IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE.

BUT EACH GENERATION HAS MADE ITS CONTRIBUTION.

*"a more Perfect Union"  
the challenge  
the Promise*

AND AS FROM OUR COUNTRY'S EARLIEST MOMENTS, THE WILLINGNESS  
TO RISK, SUPPORTED BY A ROBUST SELF-CONFIDENCE AND FAITH,  
TEMPERED BY A CAPACITY TO COMPROMISE, HAVE BEEN THE DECISIVE  
FACTORS IN SUSTAINING THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT.

IT IS THE REALIZATION OF THESE QUALITIES IN YOUR LIVES  
AND AMONG YOUR GENERATION OF AMERICANS THAT, ONCE AGAIN,

WILL DECIDE THE ISSUE.

↳ BUT LET US CHERISH NO ILLUSIONS ↳ THE FUTURE, AS ALWAYS, IS  
UNCERTAIN AND DANGEROUS, EVEN AS OUR SPIRIT IS BRIGHT AND  
RESILIENT.

↳ JOHN F. KENNEDY SAID IT WELL. LISTEN TO HIS WORDS:

"PEACE AND FREEDOM DO NOT COME CHEAP, AND WE ARE DESTINED

-- ALL OF US HERE TODAY -- TO LIVE OUT MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF

OUR LIVES IN UNCERTAINTY AND CHALLENGE AND PERIL."

↳ JOIN ME IN SAYING: SO BE IT. !

# # # #



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