

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DAY -- MINNESOTA JAYCEES
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
SEPTEMBER 25, 1976

It is a pleasure to be here with my friend Jim Strutz and this fine group of Jaycees and friends who represent the business community in our central state area.

You have serious business to discuss today. The question you must face is how we can get the citizens of this country to participate in making the political decisions that will affect their lives for years to come.

In this Bicentennial year, it would be a simple matter just to enjoy the fireworks and the festivities and let it go at that.

But for the thoughtful, this is not enough. Our Bicentennial is more than a celebration of the oldest democracy on earth. We must view it as an opportunity to reassess our strengths and our weaknesses as a people committed to enlightened self-government in a world beset by tyranny, conflict and the denial of human rights.

Franklin Roosevelt said we have a "rendezvous with destiny." Each of us is -- or should be -- struggling to find solutions to the difficult problems which threaten our national well-being and cast doubt on the future of the nation whose longevity we celebrate.

So this Bicentennial year gives us a wonderful opportunity to reconsider what we want from government -- and, perhaps even more importantly -- what we are willing to give.

As you think about this, I want you to remember two important points.

One. This government is not perfect. It is not perfect because it's run by 215 million people, none of whom are perfect.

That's right. Representative democracy is not -- it cannot be -- perfect, and I, for one, don't think it has to be perfect to be successful.

Winston Churchill once said, "Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. . . no one pretends that democracy is perfect or allwise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

The word "efficiency" is not found in any of our national documents. But you will find these words: equality, liberty, justice.

The second thing I want you to remember is that every one of our citizens has the right to try to influence the policies of this nation, whether as an individual or as a member of some organization or association.

Our people have special needs, subjective concerns, and they deserve to be able to voice these concerns before the State Legislatures, before the Congress, in the White House, and before the Federal agencies.

Not only is this acceptable; it is required if this government is to be responsive to the needs of its people.

The Founders, in their great wisdom, created what Daniel Webster called, "The people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people."

The Framers of the Constitution left no doubt where the concentration of power was to be in our government.

"We the People," they wrote. Not we the rich, or we the poor, or we the blacks, or we the whites, or we the politicians, or we the corporate executives, but "We the People." There are no words more beautiful in our heritage than these.

Vast power is concentrated in this phrase, "We the People." In it lies an enormous gift, a monumental challenge, and a charge to the citizens of this great land to make their government what it ought to be.

But the Founders have sent us a message in this Bicentennial year. Freedom is never a resting place. It is not a reward for having been born an American. It must be won anew by every generation -- earned by every citizen or it will be lost.

The Founding Fathers did not guarantee success. They spoke only of opportunity and promise. The Declaration of Independence did not guarantee rights or fulfill promises. It described them. The beauty of the political system which resulted from that revolution is its flexibility. And the beauty of the Constitution is the capacity it gives us to bring to fruition those ideals which are expressed so eloquently in it.

Yet at a time when those ideals are most in need of rebirth, we have witnessed a decline in participation in our political system.

We have only to look at the decline in voting to prove that participation is falling.

In the 1972 election, only 55 percent of America's eligible voters went to the polls -- the lowest percentage in a quarter of a century. Some 68 million eligible citizens did not vote.

And the turnout did not improve in 1974. The Census Bureau found that only 45 percent of the voting age population actually voted in the Congressional elections of that year.

Saddest of all are the figures for the 18-to-20-year-old group.

For those of us who fought to extend the franchise, it was a tough blow to find that 63.6 percent in this group did not even bother to register 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.

In the 21-to-24-year-old bracket, a slightly higher percentage -- about one quarter of those eligible -- registered and voted.

We must ask ourselves why, with more opportunity for free voting and freedom of political participation, the United States has the lowest voter turnout of any free country in the world.

This is a national disgrace. But it is more than that. When citizens who can vote don't, they are giving notice, in effect, that their share of the U. S. government is up for sale. Worse, they are giving it away -- to the biggest campaign contributor, the biggest corporations, the loudest voice.

Those who boycott the ballot box are doing so at their own peril.

So if you care about your government -- and I believe you do; if you care about your own future -- and I know you do -- get off the sidelines and participate. If you think politics is dirty -- and if you're clean, get in there with your bar of political Ivory Soap and clean it up.

If you want good government, if you want responsive leadership, you will have to put something of yourself into it.

We could just moan about "voter apathy" and let it go at that. My friends, that is one sure way to usher in government by the elite in this country.

Instead, we must examine the causes of apathy -- and you can do this in your own precinct -- among your own neighbors. You can convince them that their well-being is at stake.

This election year gives us an opportunity to prepare for the future in America:

-- a future in which every able and willing American has a productive job at a decent wage;

-- a future in which all our young people have access to a top-notch education;

-- one in which our senior citizens are assured of generous and decent care;

-- a future in which every American has good health care at a cost that is reasonable and fair.

Our future must bring revitalization of America's cities and rejuvenation of the towns and villages in rural America.

We can end the uncertainties facing both farmers and consumers; we can protect our environment and conserve our natural resources. We can ensure a prosperous and thriving business community and guarantee equal justice under the law.

I guarantee you the important decisions will be made. The question for you to answer is: will you have a hand in making them? If you care about what happens -- and I know you do -- then you must be prepared to get in the middle of the fight. No conscientious American can afford to let someone else make all the decisions. This government is everybody's business. I challenge you to get to work.

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DAY -- MINNESOTA JAYCEES
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

SEPTEMBER 25, 1976

- Cong Fraser
- Bill Frenzel
- Bruce Vento

Jim Strutz - State-wide
Jaycee Voter Turnout

Steve Ward - Jaycee chr
for Government
Affairs

John Adams

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE WITH MY FRIEND JIM STRUTZ
AND THIS FINE GROUP OF JAYCEES AND FRIENDS WHO REPRESENT THE
BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN OUR CENTRAL STATE AREA.

∠ YOU HAVE SERIOUS BUSINESS TO DISCUSS TODAY, ∠ THE
QUESTION YOU MUST FACE IS HOW WE CAN GET THE CITIZENS OF
THIS COUNTRY TO PARTICIPATE IN MAKING THE POLITICAL DECISIONS
THAT WILL AFFECT THEIR LIVES FOR YEARS TO COME.

∠ IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, IT WOULD BE A SIMPLE MATTER
JUST TO ENJOY THE FIREWORKS AND THE FESTIVITIES AND LET IT
GO AT THAT.

∠ BUT FOR THE THOUGHTFUL, THIS IS NOT ENOUGH. ∠ OUR
BICENTENNIAL IS MORE THAN A CELEBRATION OF THE OLDEST DEMOCRACY
ON EARTH. ∠ WE MUST VIEW IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REASSESS OUR
STRENGTHS AND OUR WEAKNESSES AS A PEOPLE COMMITTED TO ENLIGHTENED
SELF-GOVERNMENT IN A WORLD BESET BY TYRANNY, CONFLICT AND THE
DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS. *Less than 30 democracies
within 150 nations*

∠ FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT SAID WE HAVE A "RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY."

EACH OF US IS -- OR SHOULD BE -- STRUGGLING TO
 FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS WHICH THREATEN OUR
NATIONAL WELL-BEING AND CAST DOUBT ON THE FUTURE OF THE
NATION WHOSE LONGEVITY WE CELEBRATE.

So THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR GIVES US A WONDERFUL
 OPPORTUNITY TO RECONSIDER WHAT WE WANT FROM GOVERNMENT --
 AND, PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY -- WHAT WE ARE WILLING

TO GIVE

*To make Self Government, responsive,
 responsible, available, & effective*
 AS YOU THINK ABOUT THIS I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER TWO

IMPORTANT POINTS.

(Self Govt - Experiment)

① ONE. THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT PERFECT. IT IS NOT
 PERFECT BECAUSE IT'S RUN BY 215 MILLION PEOPLE, NONE OF WHOM
 ARE PERFECT.

THAT'S RIGHT. REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IS NOT -- IT
CANNOT BE -- PERFECT, AND I, FOR ONE, DON'T THINK IT HAS TO BE
 PERFECT TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

WINSTON CHURCHILL ONCE SAID, "MANY FORMS OF GOVERNMENT
HAVE BEEN TRIED, AND WILL BE TRIED IN THIS WORLD OF SIN

AND WOE. . . NO ONE PRETENDS THAT DEMOCRACY IS PERFECT OR ALLWISE. INDEED, IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT DEMOCRACY IS THE WORST FORM OF GOVERNMENT EXCEPT ALL THOSE OTHER FORMS THAT HAVE BEEN TRIED FROM TIME TO TIME. ¹

L THE WORD "EFFICIENCY" IS NOT FOUND IN ANY OF OUR NATIONAL DOCUMENTS. BUT YOU WILL FIND THESE WORDS: EQUALITY, LIBERTY, JUSTICE.

L THE SECOND THING I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER IS THAT EVERY ONE OF OUR CITIZENS HAS THE RIGHT TO TRY TO INFLUENCE THE POLICIES OF THIS NATION, WHETHER AS AN INDIVIDUAL OR AS A MEMBER OF SOME ORGANIZATION OR ASSOCIATION.

L OUR PEOPLE HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS, SUBJECTIVE CONCERNS, AND THEY DESERVE TO BE ABLE TO VOICE THESE CONCERNS BEFORE THE STATE LEGISLATURES, BEFORE THE CONGRESS, IN THE WHITE HOUSE, AND BEFORE THE FEDERAL AGENCIES.

L NOT ONLY IS THIS ACCEPTABLE; IT IS REQUIRED IF THIS GOVERNMENT IS TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ITS PEOPLE.

*Free speech
Assembly
Petition
for redress
of grievances*

Webster
 THE FOUNDERS, IN THEIR GREAT WISDOM, CREATED WHAT
 DANIEL WEBSTER CALLED, "THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT, MADE FOR
 THE PEOPLE, MADE BY THE PEOPLE, AND ANSWERABLE TO THE PEOPLE."

THE FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION LEFT NO DOUBT WHERE
 THE CONCENTRATION OF POWER WAS TO BE IN OUR GOVERNMENT.

↳ "WE THE PEOPLE," THEY WROTE. NOT WE THE RICH, OR
 WE THE POOR, OR WE THE BLACKS, OR WE THE WHITES, OR
 WE THE POLITICIANS, OR WE THE CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, BUT
 "WE THE PEOPLE." THERE ARE NO WORDS MORE BEAUTIFUL IN
 OUR HERITAGE THAN THESE.

↳ VAST POWER IS CONCENTRATED IN THIS PHRASE, "WE THE PEOPLE."
 IN IT LIES AN ENORMOUS GIFT, A MONUMENTAL CHALLENGE, AND
 A CHARGE TO THE CITIZENS OF THIS GREAT LAND TO MAKE THEIR
 GOVERNMENT WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE.

BUT THE FOUNDERS HAVE SENT US A MESSAGE IN THIS
 BICENTENNIAL YEAR. ↳ FREEDOM IS NEVER A RESTING PLACE. IT IS
 NOT A REWARD FOR HAVING BEEN BORN AN AMERICAN. IT MUST BE
 WON ANEW BY EVERY GENERATION -- EARNED BY EVERY CITIZEN OR
 IT WILL BE LOST.

and THE FOUNDING FATHERS DID NOT GUARANTEE SUCCESS. THEY
SPOKE ONLY OF OPPORTUNITY AND PROMISE. THE DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE DID NOT GUARANTEE RIGHTS OR FULFILL PROMISES.

IT DESCRIBED THEM. THE BEAUTY OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH
RESULTED FROM THAT REVOLUTION IS ITS FLEXIBILITY AND THE
BEAUTY OF THE CONSTITUTION IS THE CAPACITY IT GIVES US
TO BRING TO FRUITION THOSE IDEALS WHICH ARE EXPRESSED SO
ELOQUENTLY IN IT. (*Living Document*)

⊗ YET AT A TIME WHEN THOSE IDEALS ARE MOST IN NEED OF
REBIRTH, WE HAVE WITNESSED A DECLINE IN PARTICIPATION IN OUR
POLITICAL SYSTEM.

WE HAVE ONLY TO LOOK AT THE DECLINE IN VOTING
TO PROVE THAT PARTICIPATION IS FALLING.

IN THE 1972 ELECTION, ONLY 55 PERCENT OF AMERICA'S
ELIGIBLE VOTERS WENT TO THE POLLS -- THE LOWEST PERCENTAGE IN
A CENTURY, SOME 68 MILLION ELIGIBLE CITIZENS
DID NOT VOTE.

1974

AND THE TURNOUT DID NOT IMPROVE IN 1974, THE
CENSUS BUREAU FOUND THAT ONLY 45 PERCENT OF THE VOTING
AGE POPULATION ACTUALLY VOTED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS
OF THAT YEAR.

SADDEST OF ALL ARE THE FIGURES FOR THE 18-TO-20-YEAR-
OLD GROUP,

FOR THOSE OF US WHO FOUGHT TO EXTEND THE FRANCHISE, IT
WAS A TOUGH BLOW TO FIND THAT 63.6 PERCENT IN THIS GROUP
DID NOT EVEN BOTHER TO REGISTER 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.

IN THE 21-TO-24-YEAR-OLD BRACKET, A SLIGHTLY HIGHER
PERCENTAGE -- ABOUT ONE QUARTER OF THOSE ELIGIBLE -- REGISTERED
AND VOTED.

WE MUST ASK OURSELVES WHY, WITH MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR
FREE VOTING AND FREEDOM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, THE
UNITED STATES HAS THE LOWEST VOTER TURNOUT OF ANY FREE
COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

L THIS IS A NATIONAL DISGRACE. BUT IT IS MORE THAN
 THAT. WHEN CITIZENS WHO CAN VOTE DON'T, THEY ARE GIVING
 NOTICE, IN EFFECT, THAT THEIR SHARE OF THE U. S. GOVERNMENT
 IS UP FOR SALE. L WORSE, THEY ARE GIVING IT AWAY -- TO THE
BIGGEST CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTOR, THE BIGGEST CORPORATIONS,
THE LOUDEST VOICE.

L THOSE WHO BOYCOTT THE BALLOT BOX ARE DOING SO AT THEIR OWN
 PERIL.

L SO IF YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR GOVERNMENT -- AND I BELIEVE
 YOU DO; IF YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR OWN FUTURE -- AND I KNOW
 YOU DO -- GET OFF THE SIDELINES AND PARTICIPATE. L IF YOU
 THINK POLITICS IS DIRTY -- AND IF YOU'RE CLEAN, GET IN THERE
WITH YOUR BAR OF POLITICAL IVORY SOAP AND CLEAN IT UP.

L IF YOU WANT GOOD GOVERNMENT, IF YOU WANT RESPONSIVE
LEADERSHIP, YOU WILL HAVE TO PUT SOMETHING OF YOURSELF
INTO IT.

L WE COULD JUST MOAN ABOUT "VOTER APATHY" AND LET
 IT GO AT THAT, ~~THE ELECTION~~ THAT IS ONE SURE WAY TO USHER
 IN GOVERNMENT BY THE ELITE IN THIS COUNTRY.

INSTEAD, WE MUST EXAMINE THE CAUSES OF APATHY -- AND YOU
 CAN DO THIS IN YOUR OWN PRECINCT -- AMONG YOUR OWN NEIGHBORS.

L YOU CAN CONVINCE THEM THAT THEIR WELL-BEING IS AT STAKE.

L THIS ELECTION YEAR GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE FOR
 THE FUTURE IN AMERICA: — *Great goals*

-- A FUTURE IN WHICH EVERY ABLE AND WILLING AMERICAN HAS A
 PRODUCTIVE JOB AT A DECENT WAGE;

-- A FUTURE IN WHICH ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS
 TO A TOP-NOTCH EDUCATION;

-- ONE IN WHICH OUR SENIOR CITIZENS ARE ASSURED OF
 GENEROUS AND DECENT CARE;

-- A FUTURE IN WHICH EVERY AMERICAN HAS GOOD HEALTH
 CARE AT A COST THAT IS REASONABLE AND FAIR.

— *Environment — any race*
 OUR FUTURE MUST BRING REVITALIZATION OF AMERICA'S

CITIES AND REJUVENATION OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN
 RURAL AMERICA.

WE CAN END THE UNCERTAINTIES FACING BOTH FARMERS
AND CONSUMERS; WE CAN PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVE
OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. WE CAN ENSURE A PROSPEROUS AND THRIVING
BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND GUARANTEE EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER THE
LAW.

I GUARANTEE YOU THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS WILL BE MADE.
THE QUESTION FOR YOU TO ANSWER IS: WILL YOU HAVE A HAND IN
MAKING THEM? IF YOU CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS -- AND I KNOW
YOU DO -- THEN YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO GET IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE FIGHT. NO CONSCIENTIOUS AMERICAN CAN AFFORD TO LET
SOMEONE ELSE MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS. THIS GOVERNMENT IS
EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS. I CHALLENGE YOU TO GET TO WORK.

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