

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

Washington, D.C.
February 3, 1975

I am delighted to be back with the Senate Youth Program delegates again this year. I have been privileged to participate in your activities on many occasions, and it is a matter of great pride that I have been able to have a part in helping your program along from time to time.

You probably have come to Washington with certain ideas about how the federal government works -- or doesn't work -- to meet the needs of its citizens.

Washington is the place to test your impressions of history against the realities of the present and your hopes for the future.

I hope that your minds are open to the new information you are gaining this week.

I hope that your thoughts are being challenged, worked over, and measured against what civics books say government in our democracy should be.

Mr. Dickens probably would agree that the America of 1975 offers both the best of times and the worst of times.

Many would say that the worst of times are upon us. We have witnessed over two years of the most turbulent, trying times in the history of our nation.

The President of the United States resigned in a cloud of scandal and corruption; the integrity of our constitutional system has been threatened; the system by which we elect public officials has been maligned. In short, our Constitution has met its greatest test outside of the Civil War.

And while the White House and the Congress tried to sort out the facts and bring about a solution to our constitutional problems, economic and social problems almost got out of hand.

As a result, our economic stability and national well-being have been threatened with a burning inflation and the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930's.

More than 6 1/2 million Americans are out of work, and this is a conservative figure.

Many of our people literally cannot afford to buy groceries for next week.

And there is lingering insecurity about the long-range availability of fuel supplies to keep factories in operation, to heat our homes, and to move people and products across this great land.

You don't need me to tell you that we have big problems -- problems which might qualify these as the worst of times.

But I'm not a pessimist by nature. I don't like to go around preaching gloom and doom, so I won't start now. While we must face our problems realistically, we must also acknowledge that we have the ability and the tools to transform these into the best of times.

Look at the evidence. Even with a serious recession, America is the most prosperous country on earth.

While our rate of inflation is totally unacceptable at 12 percent, it's not as bad as in England, say, where it is 18 percent. Or France, which has an inflation rate of 13 percent. In Italy, it's 20 percent.

And while we worry, with good reason, about a fuel shortage, we are one of the major oil producing countries. We consume more fuel than any country on the face of the earth, but we have the capability to develop alternative forms of energy -- unlike many countries.

Our constitutional system has indeed been threatened and abused. But our government is still standing. Our commitment to the purposes and ideals of the Constitution has been greatly strengthened. We have proven that we are, indeed, a government of laws and not of men. And our political and election systems are undergoing extensive reforms -- proving that ours is a living, vibrant, constantly improving democracy.

We have the resources, and we have the tools, to make these the best of times.

You are fortunate to live in the United States of America -- a land where natural resources, education, technology and communications are among the finest in the world. We have the tools to meet almost any challenge.

This week you are in Washington to take a first-hand look at the government. You might be thinking the government is in pretty lousy shape, that nobody is coming up with answers, that all they do is spend a lot of time fighting over ideas and proposals.

Some of you might like me to tell you that the government is perfect. Well, I'm here to tell you that it isn't perfect. And do you want to know why? Because it's run by 213 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 that 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 all-wise. 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 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."

Tempered by years of bitter struggle in the American colonies for justice and equal treatment by the "mother country" of Great Britain, 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.

They knew that democracy is not an efficient form of government. The word "efficiency" is not mentioned one time in any of our national documents. But you will find the words: compassion, justice, liberty, equality.

And how will we secure the blessings of liberty for all Americans? How will we harness the resources of this land and put them to work for the common good? How will we guide our inefficient democracy toward the goals we share? The answer to all these questions is -- You.

Yes, these could be considered the worst of times. But you, more than any other group of Americans alive, face the challenge of making these the best of times -- the best of beginnings.

I have a poster in my office which bears this slogan: "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." This expression appeals to me because it is a reminder that each day can be a new beginning.

In our dynamic democracy there always will be one constant -- the inevitability of change.

The problems and the challenges will always be replaced by new ones, which will require new approaches, new ideas, new solutions.

In a few years, it will be you who are proposing the solutions, and you must be prepared.

This week, you have a unique opportunity to begin your preparations to assume leadership. As you continue to meet with government officials, open your minds to accept new ideas. Listen well and then challenge what you hear.

When you go home, get involved in community activities -- in political affairs. Share what you have learned with your classmates, with your families, and make it your business to know what's going on in the world.

Because it is your business. In this country, government is everybody's business.

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Randy Hearst
Ira Walsh
Kathy Joseph

Dr. Glom

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SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C.

FEBRUARY 3, 1975

Lynn Erickson ^{New Brighton}
Wade Hendricks Albert Lee

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE BACK WITH THE SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM DELEGATES AGAIN THIS YEAR. I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR ACTIVITIES ON MANY OCCASIONS, AND IT IS A MATTER OF GREAT PRIDE THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HAVE A PART IN HELPING YOUR PROGRAM ALONG FROM TIME TO TIME.

YOU PROBABLY HAVE COME TO WASHINGTON WITH CERTAIN IDEAS ABOUT HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WORKS -- OR DOESN'T WORK -- TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ITS CITIZENS.

WASHINGTON IS THE PLACE TO TEST YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF HISTORY AGAINST THE REALITIES OF THE PRESENT AND YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

I HOPE THAT YOUR MINDS ARE OPEN TO THE NEW INFORMATION
YOU ARE GAINING THIS WEEK.

I HOPE THAT YOUR THOUGHTS ARE BEING CHALLENGED, WORKED
OVER, AND MEASURED AGAINST WHAT CIVICS BOOKS SAY GOVERNMENT IN
OUR DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE.

*Best of times,
Worst of times*

Mr. DICKENS PROBABLY WOULD AGREE THAT THE AMERICA OF 1975
OFFERS BOTH THE BEST OF TIMES AND THE WORST OF TIMES.

MANY WOULD SAY THAT THE WORST OF TIMES ARE UPON US. WE
HAVE WITNESSED OVER TWO YEARS OF THE MOST TURBULENT, TRYING
TIMES IN THE HISTORY OF OUR NATION.

L THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, ^{V.P.} ^{have} RESIGNED IN A CLOUD OF SCANDAL AND CORRUPTION; THE INTEGRITY OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN THREATENED; THE SYSTEM BY WHICH WE ELECT PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAS BEEN MALIGNED. IN SHORT, OUR CONSTITUTION HAS MET ITS GREATEST TEST OUTSIDE OF THE CIVIL WAR!

L AND WHILE THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE CONGRESS TRIED TO SORT OUT THE FACTS AND BRING ABOUT A SOLUTION TO OUR CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS ALMOST GOT OUT OF HAND.

L AS A RESULT, OUR ECONOMIC STABILITY AND NATIONAL WELL-BEING HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH A BURNING INFLATION AND THE WORST RECESSION SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930's.

MORE THAN 6 1/2 MILLION AMERICANS ARE OUT OF WORK, AND
THIS IS A CONSERVATIVE FIGURE. *- + it grows*

MANY OF OUR PEOPLE LITERALLY CANNOT AFFORD TO BUY GROCERIES
FOR NEXT WEEK.

L AND THERE IS LINGERING INSECURITY ABOUT THE LONG-RANGE
AVAILABILITY OF FUEL SUPPLIES TO KEEP FACTORIES IN OPERATION,
TO HEAT OUR HOMES, AND TO MOVE PEOPLE AND PRODUCTS ACROSS THIS
GREAT LAND.

But I'm sure
YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TELL YOU THAT WE HAVE BIG PROBLEMS
-- PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT QUALIFY THESE AS THE WORST OF TIMES.

But off in us
-5-

↳ BUT I'M NOT A PESSIMIST BY NATURE. I DON'T LIKE TO GO
AROUND PREACHING GLOOM AND DOOM, SO I WON'T START NOW. WHILE
WE MUST FACE OUR PROBLEMS REALISTICALLY, WE MUST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE
THAT WE HAVE THE ABILITY AND THE TOOLS TO TRANSFORM THESE INTO
THE BEST OF TIMES.

↳ LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE. EVEN WITH A SERIOUS RECESSION, AMERICA
IS THE MOST PROSPEROUS COUNTRY ON EARTH,

↳ WHILE OUR RATE OF INFLATION IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE AT 12
PERCENT, IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IN ENGLAND, SAY, WHERE IT IS 18 PERCENT,
OR FRANCE, WHICH HAS AN INFLATION RATE OF 13 PERCENT. IT ITALY,
IT'S 20 PERCENT! or Japan 25%.

AND WHILE WE WORRY, WITH GOOD REASON, ABOUT A FUEL SHORTAGE,
WE ARE ONE OF THE MAJOR OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES. WE CONSUME MORE
FUEL THAN ANY COUNTRY ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH, BUT WE HAVE THE
CAPABILITY TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ENERGY -- UNLIKE MANY
COUNTRIES.

OUR CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM HAS INDEED BEEN THREATENED AND
ABUSED. BUT OUR GOVERNMENT IS STILL STANDING. OUR COMMITMENT
TO THE PURPOSES AND IDEALS OF THE CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN GREATLY
STRENGTHENED. WE HAVE PROVEN THAT WE ARE, INDEED, A GOVERNMENT
OF LAWS AND NOT OF MEN. AND OUR POLITICAL AND ELECTION SYSTEMS
ARE UNDERGOING EXTENSIVE REFORMS -- PROVING THAT OURS IS A LIVING,
VIBRANT, CONSTANTLY IMPROVING DEMOCRACY.

WE HAVE THE RESOURCES, AND WE HAVE THE TOOLS, TO MAKE THESE
THE BEST OF TIMES,

YOU ARE FORTUNATE TO LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA -- A LAND WHERE NATURAL RESOURCES, EDUCATION,
TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS ARE AMONG THE FINEST IN THE
WORLD. WE HAVE THE TOOLS TO MEET ALMOST ANY CHALLENGE.

THIS WEEK YOU ARE IN WASHINGTON TO TAKE A FIRST-HAND
LOOK AT THE GOVERNMENT. YOU MIGHT BE THINKING THE GOVERNMENT
IS IN PRETTY LOUSY SHAPE, THAT NOBODY IS COMING UP WITH
ANSWERS, THAT ALL THEY DO IS SPEND A LOT OF TIME FIGHTING
OVER IDEAS AND PROPOSALS.

Some of you might like me to tell you that the government is perfect. Well, I'm here to tell you that it isn't perfect.

And do you want to know why? Because it's run by 213 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 that 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 all-wise. 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."

h 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."

L TEMPERED BY YEARS OF BITTER STRUGGLE IN THE AMERICAN
COLONIES FOR JUSTICE AND EQUAL TREATMENT BY THE "MOTHER COUNTRY"
OF GREAT BRITAIN, THE FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION LEFT NO
DOUBT WHERE THE CONCENTRATION OF POWER WAS TO BE IN OUR
GOVERNMENT.

L "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.

THEY KNEW THAT DEMOCRACY IS NOT ^{the most} AN EFFICIENT FORM OF
GOVERNMENT. THE WORD "EFFICIENCY" IS NOT MENTIONED ONE TIME

IN ANY OF OUR NATIONAL DOCUMENTS. BUT YOU WILL FIND THE WORDS:

COMPASSION, JUSTICE, LIBERTY, EQUALITY.

AND HOW WILL WE SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY FOR ALL

AMERICANS? HOW WILL WE HARNESS THE RESOURCES OF THIS LAND AND

PUT THEM TO WORK FOR THE COMMON GOOD? HOW WILL WE GUIDE OUR

INEFFICIENT DEMOCRACY TOWARD THE GOALS WE SHARE? THE ANSWER TO

ALL THESE QUESTIONS IS -- You.

YES, THESE COULD BE CONSIDERED THE WORST OF TIMES. BUT

YOU, MORE THAN ANY OTHER GROUP OF AMERICANS ALIVE, FACE THE

CHALLENGE OF MAKING THESE THE BEST OF TIMES -- THE BEST OF

BEGINNINGS.

h I HAVE A POSTER IN MY OFFICE WHICH BEARS THIS SLOGAN:

"TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE," THIS EXPRESSION

APPEALS TO ME BECAUSE IT IS A REMINDER THAT EACH DAY CAN BE A

NEW BEGINNING.

h IN OUR DYNAMIC DEMOCRACY THERE ALWAYS WILL BE ONE CONSTANT

-- THE INEVITABILITY OF CHANGE.

h THE PROBLEMS AND THE CHALLENGES WILL ALWAYS BE REPLACED
BY NEW ONES, WHICH WILL REQUIRE NEW APPROACHES, NEW IDEAS, NEW
SOLUTIONS.

h IN A FEW YEARS, IT WILL BE YOU WHO ARE PROPOSING THE
SOLUTIONS, AND YOU MUST BE PREPARED.

THIS WEEK, YOU HAVE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN YOUR PREPARATIONS TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP. AS YOU CONTINUE TO MEET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, OPEN YOUR MINDS TO ACCEPT NEW IDEAS.

L LISTEN WELL AND THEN CHALLENGE WHAT YOU HEAR.

L WHEN YOU GO HOME, GET INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES -- IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS. SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED WITH YOUR CLASSMATES, WITH YOUR FAMILIES, AND MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD.

L BECAUSE IT IS YOUR BUSINESS. IN THIS COUNTRY, GOVERNMENT IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS.

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