

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

BETTY CROCKER SEARCH FOR LEADERSHIP IN FAMILY LIVING

Washington, D. C.

April 26, 1976

It is a special pleasure to meet with you today and to have this opportunity to congratulate the 51 State Scholarship Finalists in the Betty Crocker Search for Leadership in Family Living.

This fine program, made possible by General Mills, is valuable not only because of the scholarships it makes available, but because it gives you an opportunity to see the Nation's capital first-hand.

I first visited this city some 40 years ago. I still remember my first visions of Washington -- the buildings, the people and the debates. And needless to say, I was quite taken with the workings of the Federal Government, particularly the Congress.

Few Americans have had the opportunity to reach out and touch the very structure of their government. Washington is a mystical city which enthralls most of its visitors. The bright and bristling buildings which house our government have become the very symbols of this Republic.

One of the principal tasks of any student is to separate the form from the substance, to learn how to differentiate appearance from reality. That's something no one can fully accomplish in one week, or in one lifetime.

But it is an effort that must be undertaken by every citizen.

So I hope that each of you will test your assumptions about the Federal government. For 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. I hope your thoughts are being challenged, worked over, and measured against what civics books say government in our democracy should be.

No other government on earth operates in such an open manner. Ours is a government with its processes and decisions open for public inspection. But an open government without an informed citizenry is not accountable.

You must not simply trust government, but be informed and vocal about its work and the problems with which it is grappling, and then make your own judgments.

The perspective and appreciation you have for the immensity of this government should serve you well throughout your lifetime.

Time and again this country will be faced with difficult and controversial issues -- problems with no simple answers.

Honest differences of opinion exist as to the best way to solve these problems. This is further complicated by the fact that we have no perfect leaders to make and administer the decisions adopted by the majority. We are human beings.

So this is why the ultimate decisions must rest with all the people. We have no single sovereign in America, no one source of power, no final single arbiter. Every citizen must be that final judge and, in a sense, a politician.

That is why, regardless of age, every American must be willing to exert some kind of leadership, a measure of political responsibility. And although we sometimes forget, it is that sense of individual responsibility and citizenship that allows us to celebrate this Nation's Bicentennial.

The 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia were effectively putting their names to their own death warrants.

During the War of Independence, nine of those men died of wounds or hardships, five were captured as traitors, twelve had their homes ransacked or burned, and the sons of many others were killed, wounded or captured.

But the job they did was worth the price they paid, for they had set in motion the most powerful force for human freedom since the dawn of time. They had lighted for the world a beacon of hope that still shines today.

And I want to remind you young people that the Signers were themselves very young. Nineteen of these 56 signers were in their 40's. Sixteen were in their 30's. Two were only 27.

In 1776, Thomas Jefferson was 33, James Madison was 25, and Alexander Hamilton was 21.

Two hundred years ago we the people came together to form a more perfect union. We took a risk that never had been taken before in the history of mankind -- not the risk of rebellion, but the risk of a grand experiment in Democracy.

We formed a union of persons who -- whatever their station in life, their level of income, their education, or their background -- were to be regarded as equal in creation and in their protection under the laws.

The Document those 56 men took a risk in signing -- the Declaration of Independence -- affirmed that there are certain God-given, inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And, to secure these rights, a government was instituted, deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed.

It was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who effectively translated for our time the demand for a new pioneering leadership to make the promise of the Declaration of Independence a reality. He said: "I do not believe that the era of the pioneer is at an end. I only believe that the area for pioneering has changed. Our country needs bold, persistent experimentation."

Each of us -- but especially you young people -- ought to have a great sense of purpose and idealism as we step forward to explore the future. It is part of the American character to be optimistic -- to have faith and confidence in the future. Our whole history is filled with adventure and pioneering.

Americans through the years have opened up a continent -- developed a new nation. We have showed the world new technologies in agriculture, medicine, education, transportation -- indeed, in every aspect of life.

You are in the spring of life. Today, you are better equipped to challenge old assumptions and the traditional way of doing things than any generation in human history. Now is the time to question and to probe -- to gain new understandings and to live each day to its fullest.

We are not a Nation that seeks the certainty of sure stability. We are a people who thrive on exercising free choice.

So test your knowledge and your ability to the utmost. Continue your education and your political involvement throughout your lifetime. Trust in your own judgment and remain open to new ideas. You can make a difference if you take the risk of becoming informed and involved. And it is in your interest to do so.

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IT IS A SPECIAL PLEASURE TO MEET WITH YOU TODAY AND TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE THE 51 STATE SCHOLARSHIP FINALISTS IN THE BETTY CROCKER SEARCH FOR LEADERSHIP IN FAMILY LIVING.

THIS FINE PROGRAM, MADE POSSIBLE BY GENERAL MILLS, IS VALUABLE NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE SCHOLARSHIPS IT MAKES AVAILABLE, BUT BECAUSE IT GIVES YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE NATION'S CAPITAL FIRST-HAND.

I FIRST VISITED THIS CITY SOME 40 YEARS AGO. I STILL REMEMBER MY FIRST VISIONS OF WASHINGTON -- THE BUILDINGS, THE PEOPLE AND THE DEBATES. AND NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WAS QUITE TAKEN WITH THE WORKINGS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY THE CONGRESS.

FEW AMERICANS HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH THE VERY STRUCTURE OF THEIR GOVERNMENT. WASHINGTON IS A MYSTICAL CITY WHICH ENTHRALLS MOST OF ITS VISITORS. THE BRIGHT AND BRISTLING BUILDINGS WHICH HOUSE OUR GOVERNMENT HAVE BECOME THE VERY SYMBOLS OF THIS REPUBLIC.

ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL TASKS OF ANY STUDENT IS TO SEPARATE THE FORM FROM THE SUBSTANCE, TO LEARN HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE APPEARANCE FROM REALITY. THAT'S SOMETHING NO ONE CAN FULLY ACCOMPLISH IN ONE WEEK, OR IN ONE LIFETIME.

BUT IT IS AN EFFORT THAT MUST BE UNDERTAKEN BY EVERY CITIZEN.

SO I HOPE THAT EACH OF YOU WILL TEST YOUR ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. FOR 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. I HOPE YOUR THOUGHTS ARE BEING CHALLENGED, WORKED OVER, AND MEASURED AGAINST WHAT CIVICS BOOKS SAY GOVERNMENT IN OUR DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE.

NO OTHER GOVERNMENT ON EARTH OPERATES IN SUCH AN OPEN MANNER. OURS IS A GOVERNMENT WITH ITS PROCESSES AND DECISIONS OPEN FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION. BUT AN OPEN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT AN INFORMED CITIZENRY IS NOT ACCOUNTABLE.

YOU MUST NOT SIMPLY TRUST GOVERNMENT, BUT BE INFORMED AND VOCAL ABOUT ITS WORK AND THE PROBLEMS WITH WHICH IT IS GRAPPLING, AND THEN MAKE YOUR OWN JUDGMENTS.

THE PERSPECTIVE AND APPRECIATION YOU HAVE FOR THE IMMENSITY OF THIS GOVERNMENT SHOULD SERVE YOU WELL THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFETIME.

TIME AND AGAIN THIS COUNTRY WILL BE FACED WITH DIFFICULT AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES -- PROBLEMS WITH NO SIMPLE ANSWERS.

HONEST DIFFERENCES OF OPINION EXIST AS TO THE BEST WAY TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. THIS IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT WE HAVE NO PERFECT LEADERS TO MAKE AND ADMINISTER THE DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE MAJORITY. WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS.

SO THIS IS WHY THE ULTIMATE DECISIONS MUST REST WITH ALL THE PEOPLE. WE HAVE NO SINGLE SOVEREIGN IN AMERICA, NO ONE SOURCE OF POWER, NO FINAL SINGLE ARBITER. EVERY CITIZEN MUST BE THAT FINAL JUDGE AND, IN A SENSE, A POLITICIAN.

THAT IS WHY, REGARDLESS OF AGE, EVERY AMERICAN MUST BE WILLING TO EXERT SOME KIND OF LEADERSHIP, A MEASURE OF POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY.

AND ALTHOUGH WE SOMETIMES FORGET, IT IS THAT SENSE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CITIZENSHIP THAT ALLOWS US TO CELEBRATE THIS NATION'S BICENTENNIAL.

THE 56 MEN WHO SIGNED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN PHILADELPHIA WERE EFFECTIVELY PUTTING THEIR NAMES TO THEIR OWN DEATH WARRANTS.

DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, NINE OF THOSE MEN DIED OF WOUNDS OR HARDSHIPS, FIVE WERE CAPTURED AS TRAITORS, TWELVE HAD THEIR HOMES RANSACKED OR BURNED, AND THE SONS OF MANY OTHERS WERE KILLED, WOUNDED OR CAPTURED.

BUT THE JOB THEY DID WAS WORTH THE PRICE THEY PAID, FOR THEY HAD SET IN MOTION THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE FOR HUMAN FREEDOM SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME. THEY HAD LIGHTED FOR THE WORLD A BEACON OF HOPE THAT STILL SHINES TODAY.

AND I WANT TO REMIND YOU YOUNG PEOPLE THAT THE SIGNERS WERE THEMSELVES VERY YOUNG. NINETEEN OF THESE 56 SIGNERS WERE IN THEIR 40'S. SIXTEEN WERE IN THEIR 30'S. TWO WERE ONLY 27.

IN 1776, THOMAS JEFFERSON WAS 33, JAMES MADISON WAS 25, AND ALEXANDER HAMILTON WAS 21.

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO WE THE PEOPLE CAME TOGETHER TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION. WE TOOK A RISK THAT NEVER HAD BEEN TAKEN BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND -- NOT THE RISK OF REBELLION, BUT THE RISK OF A GRAND EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY.

WE FORMED A UNION OF PERSONS WHO -- WHATEVER THEIR STATION IN LIFE, THEIR LEVEL OF INCOME, THEIR EDUCATION, OR THEIR BACKGROUND -- WERE TO BE REGARDED AS EQUAL IN CREATION AND IN THEIR PROTECTION UNDER THE LAWS,

THE DOCUMENT THOSE 56 MEN TOOK A RISK IN SIGNING -- THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE -- AFFIRMED THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN GOD-GIVEN, INALIENABLE RIGHTS, INCLUDING LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. AND, TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS, A GOVERNMENT WAS INSTITUTED, DERIVING ITS JUST POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED.

IT WAS PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT WHO EFFECTIVELY TRANSLATED FOR OUR TIME THE DEMAND FOR A NEW PIONEERING LEADERSHIP TO MAKE THE PROMISE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE A REALITY. HE SAID: "I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE ERA OF THE PIONEER IS AT AN END. I ONLY BELIEVE THAT THE AREA FOR PIONEERING HAS CHANGED. OUR COUNTRY NEEDS BOLD, PERSISTENT EXPERIMENTATION."

EACH OF US -- BUT ESPECIALLY YOU YOUNG PEOPLE -- OUGHT TO HAVE A GREAT SENSE OF PURPOSE AND IDEALISM AS WE STEP FORWARD TO EXPLORE THE FUTURE. IT IS PART OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER TO BE OPTIMISTIC -- TO HAVE FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE. OUR WHOLE HISTORY IS FILLED WITH ADVENTURE AND PIONEERING.

AMERICANS THROUGH THE YEARS HAVE OPENED UP A CONTINENT -- DEVELOPED A NEW NATION. WE HAVE SHOWED THE WORLD NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN AGRICULTURE, MEDICINE, EDUCATION, TRANSPORTATION -- INDEED, IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE.

YOU ARE IN THE SPRING OF LIFE. TODAY, YOU ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO CHALLENGE OLD ASSUMPTIONS AND THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF DOING THINGS THAN ANY GENERATION IN HUMAN HISTORY. NOW IS THE TIME TO QUESTION AND TO PROBE -- TO GAIN NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND TO LIVE EACH DAY TO ITS FULLEST.

WE ARE NOT A NATION THAT SEEKS THE CERTAINTY OF SURE  
STABILITY. WE ARE A PEOPLE WHO THRIVE ON EXERCISING FREE CHOICE.

SO TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND YOUR ABILITY TO THE UTMOST,  
CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION AND YOUR POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT THROUGHOUT  
YOUR LIFETIME. TRUST IN YOUR OWN JUDGMENT AND REMAIN OPEN TO  
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