

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

NEIL ARMSTRONG HIGH SCHOOL

ROBBINSDALE, MINNESOTA

MAY 21, 1976

Don Ahlberg - Co chr
Vern Ege " "
Geo Scarborough Principal

I'M PLEASED TO BE HERE TO TAKE PART IN THIS FINE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION. AS I TRAVEL ACROSS OUR COUNTRY, I FIND AN INCREASING AWARENESS OF OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE BEING FOSTERED THROUGH EVENTS SUCH AS THIS, AND I WANT TO OFFER MY CONGRATULATIONS AND COMMENDATION TO ALL THOSE PARTICIPATING IN THIS COMMUNITY CELEBRATION.

dl
I BELIEVE THAT HISTORIANS WILL ONE DAY MARK THIS YEAR AS A TIME WHEN AMERICANS REDISCOVERED THEIR TRUE VALUES AND STRENGTHS, AND RECAPTURED THE SENSE OF PURPOSE WHICH HAS SUSTAINED OUR COUNTRY FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS.

*"With awareness of our Past
with commitment to our future
dedicated in this Bicentennial
for the students and staff
of Armstrong Hi-School
May 21, 1976*

AS A PEOPLE, THIS IS A TIME TO PAUSE AND REFLECT ON OUR HISTORY
AND THE KIND OF POLITICAL GOALS SET BY OUR FOUNDERS. WE HAVE WITNESSE^D
IN RECENT YEARS, A STEADY ATTACK ON OUR PRINCIPLES OF CONSTITUTIONALIS^M
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES. WE HAVE LIVED THROUGH A NIGHTMARE OF CONFUSION
AND DASHED HOPES, COMPOUNDED BY THE DARK SPECTER OF SIMULTANEOUS
RECESSION AND INFLATION.

FOR MANY, AMERICA SEEMED TO HAVE LOST HER SENSE OF JUSTICE AND
DECENCY. TO SOME OF OUR PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT ITSELF, RATHER THAN BEING
A SYMBOL OF LEADERSHIP, HAS BECOME REGARDED AS AN ALIEN POWER.

BUT WE KNOW THAT THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF AMERICA, TIME AND ^{AGAIN} ~~AGAIN~~
 WHEN THE BASIC RIGHTS OF OUR CITIZENS HAVE BEEN UNDER ATTACK -- WHEN
 OUR NATION HAS SEEMED TO LOSE ITS SENSE OF DIRECTION AND PURPOSE --
 THE PEOPLE HAVE TURNED TO THE ^{Fundamental} ~~FOUNDING~~ DOCUMENT OF THIS COUNTRY FOR
 NEW STRENGTH:

"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT; THAT ALL MEN
ARE CREATED EQUAL, THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH
CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, THAT AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY,
AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS -- THAT TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS,
 GOVERNMENTS ARE INSTITUTED AMONG MEN, DERIVING THEIR JUST
POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED..."

THESE ARE THE CRUCIAL WORDS THROUGH WHICH THE FIRST AMERICANS
DECLARED THEIR INDEPENDENCE, AND UPON WHICH THE POLITICAL LIBERTY OF
EACH SUCCEEDING GENERATION HAS RESTED. IT IS A DECLARATION -- SO
SIMPLE, YET SO MAJESTIC -- OF POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY. IT ASSERTS
THAT GOVERNMENTS ARE INSTITUTED AMONG MEN ONLY BY AND WITH THEIR
CONSENT.

BUT THE RIGHTS OF LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS
ARE NOT SIMPLY GIVEN TO US -- WE MUST ALL CONSTANTLY WORK TO PROTECT
AND PRESERVE THEM.

GOVERNOR ADLAI STEVENSON ONCE SPOKE ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT. HIS WORDS ARE A STIRRING REMINDER TO US OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CITIZENS. ADLAI STEVENSON SAID:

"DEMOCRACY IS NOT SELF-EXECUTING. WE HAVE TO MAKE IT WORK, AND TO MAKE IT WORK WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND IT. SOBER THOUGHT AND FEARLESS CRITICISM ARE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT CRITICAL THINKERS AND THINKING CRITICS.

"DEMOCRACY'S NEED FOR WISDOM WILL REMAIN AS PERENNIAL AS ITS NEED FOR LIBERTY; NOT ONLY EXTERNAL VIGILANCE, BUT UNENDING SELF-EXAMINATION MUST BE THE PERENNIAL PRICE OF LIBERTY BECAUSE THE WORK OF SELF-GOVERNMENT NEVER CEASES."

Neil Armstrong Senior Hi School
6
Ben Franklin - Tom Jefferson

↳ THE ULTIMATE DECISION ON ANY MATTER OF PUBLIC POLICY ALWAYS
RESTS WITH THE PEOPLE. ↳ WE HAVE NO SINGLE SOVEREIGN, NO ONE SOURCE
OF POWER, NO FINAL SINGLE ARBITER.

↳ EVERY AMERICAN MUST BE WILLING TO EXERT SOME KIND OF LEADERSHIP,
A MEASURE OF POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY. ↳ AND ALTHOUGH WE SOMETIMES
FORGET, IT IS THAT SAME SENSE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND
CITIZENSHIP THAT ALLOWS US TO CELEBRATE THIS NATION'S BICENTENNIAL.

↳ #
THE 56 MEN WHO SIGNED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ON THAT
HOT, HUMID JULY DAY IN PHILADELPHIA WERE EFFECTIVELY PUTTING THEIR
NAMES TO THEIR OWN DEATH WARRANTS.

- Don Ahlberg
- Vern Eggen
- Geo Scarborough

L 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.

L 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,

L I CONTINUE TO BE IMPRESSED OVER HOW RELATIVELY YOUNG THESE
 MEN WERE. L NINETEEN OF THE 56 SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF
 INDEPENDENCE WERE IN THEIR 40'S, SIXTEEN WERE IN THEIR 30'S,
 TWO WERE ONLY 27.

L In 1776, THOMAS JEFFERSON WAS 33, JAMES MADISON WAS 25,
ALEXANDER HAMILTON WAS 21.

L GEORGE WASHINGTON HELD THE POSITION OF PUBLIC SURVEYOR OF
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AT THE AGE 17. L WHEN HE WAS ONLY 20, HE
WAS SOLE MANAGER OF A 4,000 ACRE TOBACCO PLANTATION, WHILE
SIMULTANEOUSLY HOLDING A COMMISSION AS A MAJOR OF ADJUTANT OF
ONE OF THE FOUR MILITARY DISTRICTS OF VIRGINIA.

L AT 21, HE WAS ENTRUSTED WITH A CRITICAL DIPLOMATIC MILITARY
EXPEDITION TO THE FRENCH POSITIONS IN THE OHIO VALLEY. THE REPORT
WHICH HE WROTE WAS PUBLISHED IN VIRGINIA AND ENGLAND AND HELPED
ALERT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO THE ENCROACHMENT OF THE FRENCH INTO
THE WESTERN AREAS OF THE COLONIES.

At 22, WASHINGTON WAS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL, AND A YEAR LATER HE WAS MADE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF ALL VIRGINIA MILITIA.

WHEN ALEXANDER HAMILTON WAS 20, HE WAS AN IMPASSIONED AND EFFECTIVE PAMPHLETEER IN DEFENSE OF COLONIAL POLICIES. A YEAR LATER HE WAS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL ON GEORGE WASHINGTON'S PERSONAL STAFF.

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.

IT WAS NOT THE RISK OF REBELLION, FOR MANY REBELLIONS HAD BEEN TRIED AND FAILED. RATHER, IT WAS THE RISK OF A GRAND EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY -- OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT UNDER WHICH ALL THE PEOPLE WERE SOVEREIGN AS WELL AS SUBJECT, RULERS AS WELL AS RULED.

L THE RISK WAS THAT OF UNION, 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.

L AND AS MINNESOTANS, WE SHOULD TAKE PARTICULAR PRIDE IN THAT
WILLINGNESS TO RISK, TO DARE AND TO PIONEER THAT ENABLED THIS
COUNTRY TO GROW AND TO PROSPER.

L WE CAN CELEBRATE TODAY, IN PART, ONLY BECAUSE OF THE
 ENTREPRENEURING SPIRIT WHICH BROUGHT THE FRENCH TRADERS RADISSON,
marquette, Nicolet, LaSalle, Hennepin
GROSEILLIERS AND DU LHUT TO THESE LANDS. THEY WERE AMONG THE FIRST
 TO TRAVERSE THIS TERRITORY IN THE 1600'S. A CENTURY LATER, THEIR
 WORK WAS EXPANDED UPON BY THE NORTH WEST COMPANY.

AND IN 1787, THE SAME YEAR AS OUR NATION'S CONSTITUTIONAL
 CONVENTION, THE CONGRESS OF THE CONFEDERATION BROUGHT THE "RIGHTS
 OF MAN" AND THE RULE OF LAW TO THIS NEW LAND THROUGH THE ADOPTION
 OF THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE.

THIS CHARTER ESTABLISHED A GOVERNMENT FOR THIS TERRITORY. IT
 WAS THE FIRST NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS. IT
 PROVIDED FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF EDUCATION, PROHIBITED SLAVERY,
 AND ESTABLISHED THE PRINCIPLE THAT NEW STATES WOULD BE ADMITTED
 TO THE UNION ON AN EQUAL FOOTING WITH THE ORIGINAL STATES.

AGAIN, THIS KIND OF DECLARATION WAS ONLY MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH
 THE GREAT COURAGE OF A YOUNG PEOPLE, WILLING NOT ONLY TO TAKE ON
 THE SETTLEMENT OF A WILDERNESS, BUT TO DO SO ONLY IF THE BASIC
 PRECEPTS OF AMERICAN LIBERTY WOULD BE IN FORCE.

L In 1848, THE "STILLWATER CONVENTION" ^{L A I D} ~~L A Y E D~~ OUT A CLAIM TO
 CONGRESS THAT MINNESOTA BE GRANTED STATEHOOD. L AFTER TEN YEARS
 OF STRUGGLE IT WAS GRANTED. L AND TYPICAL OF THE KIND OF CHALLENGES
 FACING THESE PIONEERS, ONE OF OUR STATE'S FIRST TASKS WAS TO
ORGANIZE VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR.

L OF COURSE, THIS IS JUST A GLIMPSE AT ONLY A FEW CRITICAL
 MOMENTS IN MINNESOTA HISTORY L BUT IT DEMONSTRATES THE KIND OF
INITIATIVE AND COURAGE THAT THE TIMES DEMANDED OF FREE MEN AND
WOMEN.

L THOSE WHO ARE YOUNG ^{must} ~~ought to~~ HAVE THAT SAME SENSE OF PURPOSE
 AND IDEALISM AS THEY STEP FORWARD TO EXPLORE THE FUTURE. L AND
 TRADITIONALLY IT HAS BEEN PART OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER TO BE
OPTIMISTIC -- TO HAVE FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE.

THAT IS WHY I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED WHEN I SEE SOME OF OUR
 YOUNG PEOPLE REFLECTING A MORE PESSIMISTIC, NEGATIVE MOOD -- WHEN
 THEY SEEM UNWILLING TO TAKE A RISK ON THE FUTURE.

L OUR WHOLE HISTORY IS FILLED WITH ADVENTURE AND PIONEERING.

L AMERICANS THROUGH THE YEARS HAVE OPENED UP A CONTINENT -- DEVELOPED

A NEW NATION. L WE HAVE SHOWED THE WORLD NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN

AGRICULTURE, MEDICINE, EDUCATION, TRANSPORTATION -- YES, IN EVERY

ASPECT OF LIFE.

L YOU ARE IN THE VERY 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. L NOW IS THE

TIME TO QUESTION AND TO PROBE -- TO GAIN NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND

TO LIVE EACH DAY TO ITS FULLEST.

I SENSE A NEW SPIRIT DAWNING IN AMERICA, THE LONG NIGHTMARE
 OF CONFUSION AND DASHED HOPES FOR ALL TOO MANY AMERICANS IS
 GOING TO END, BECAUSE AT THE ROOT OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IS
 A DETERMINATION NOT TO LOWER EXPECTATIONS, BUT TO ENGAGE IN BOLD
 EXPERIMENTS.

WE ARE NOT A NATION THAT SEEKS THE CERTAINTY OF ^{SURE} ~~SOME~~ STABILITY.

NO, WE ARE A PEOPLE WHO THRIVE ON EXERCISING FREE CHOICE.

SO TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND YOUR ABILITY TO THE UTMOST 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.

IN CLOSING, I WANT TO REMIND YOU OF WHAT THAT GREAT
PHILOSOPHER, VICTOR HUGO, SAID:

"THE FUTURE HAS SEVERAL NAMES. FOR THE WEAK
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED, IT IS THE
UNKNOWN. FOR THE THOUGHTFUL AND VALIANT, IT IS
IDEAL. THE CHALLENGE IS URGENT. THE TASK IS LARGE.
THE TIME IS NOW."

#



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org