

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

"MUSIC 76"

Washington, D. C.

July 20, 1976

America is celebrating a very special birthday. It is the 200th anniversary of our system of government -- the greatest force for freedom in the history of civilization. It is a time for celebration, and a time for reflection -- on what we have become and what we want to be.

We Americans always have had our eyes fixed on the future. The most distinguishing mark of American character since the first colonists arrived on this continent has been a profound faith in progress, in our ability to create a better life for ourselves and for future generations.

What was declared in 1776 was not the fullness of American freedom, but the common privilege of laboring for its fulfillment -- and that task never will be finished. Each generation has its own summons to the cause of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The record of America in the last 200 years reflects the gradual evolution of individual liberty, an idea that was revolutionary at its birth and remains so today. Our Bicentennial calls us to study that record: to focus our thoughts on our past heritage, our present prospects, and our hopes for the future.

In proclaiming the supreme and inalienable rights of the individual, the Founders set in motion the most powerful force for human freedom since the dawn of time.

They lighted for the world a beacon of hope that still exists today -- a beacon of hope and faith for generations.

And they transformed this philosophy into a contract of self-government that flows from these simple words: "We the People."

We the People. Not we the English, or we the French, or the Scandinavians, or the Africans, or the Slavics. But We the People.

This is the essence of our freedom. And the test of each generation is the progress it makes in fulfilling the ideals established as the basis for a free, democratic society.

We can keep the promises made 200 years ago by men of vision. They are a sacred trust, and they must be kept by men and women of vision today. We cannot rest until we have built the kind of nation which will preserve them inviolate for generations to come:

-- a nation which is dedicated to life -- not survival, not mere subsistence, not wealth for a few only, but the good life for every person;

-- a nation which is committed to liberty -- not anarchy, but real liberty which comes from duty and responsibility;

-- and a nation which offers the pursuit of happiness -- which holds out the hope, unfettered by poverty, that every American can achieve to the limits of his or her ability.

This is the essence of freedom.

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AMERICA IS CELEBRATING A VERY SPECIAL BIRTHDAY. IT IS THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT -- THE GREATEST FORCE FOR FREEDOM IN THE HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION. IT IS A TIME FOR CELEBRATION, AND A TIME FOR REFLECTION -- ON WHAT WE HAVE BECOME AND WHAT WE WANT TO BE.

WE AMERICANS ALWAYS HAVE HAD OUR EYES FIXED ON THE FUTURE. THE MOST DISTINGUISHING MARK OF AMERICAN CHARACTER SINCE THE FIRST COLONISTS ARRIVED ON THIS CONTINENT HAS BEEN A PROFOUND FAITH IN PROGRESS, IN OUR ABILITY TO CREATE A BETTER LIFE FOR OURSELVES AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

WHAT WAS DECLARED IN 1776 WAS NOT THE FULLNESS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM, BUT THE COMMON PRIVILEGE OF LABORING FOR ITS FULFILLMENT -- AND THAT TASK NEVER WILL BE FINISHED.

EACH GENERATION HAS ITS OWN SUMMONS TO THE CAUSE OF LIFE,
LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

THE RECORD OF AMERICA IN THE LAST 200 YEARS REFLECTS
THE GRADUAL EVOLUTION OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AN IDEA THAT
WAS REVOLUTIONARY AT ITS BIRTH AND REMAINS SO TODAY. OUR
BICENTENNIAL CALLS US TO STUDY THAT RECORD; TO FOCUS OUR
THOUGHTS ON OUR PAST HERITAGE, OUR PRESENT PROSPECTS, AND OUR
HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

IN PROCLAIMING THE SUPREME AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF
THE INDIVIDUAL, THE FOUNDERS SET IN MOTION THE MOST POWERFUL
FORCE FOR HUMAN FREEDOM SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME.

THEY LIGHTED FOR THE WORLD A BEACON OF HOPE THAT STILL
EXISTS TODAY -- A BEACON OF HOPE AND FAITH FOR GENERATIONS.

AND THEY TRANSFORMED THIS PHILOSOPHY INTO A CONTRACT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT THAT FLOWS FROM THESE SIMPLE WORDS: "WE THE PEOPLE."

WE THE PEOPLE. NOT WE THE ENGLISH, OR WE THE FRENCH, OR THE SCANDINAVIANS, OR THE IRISH. BUT WE THE PEOPLE.

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF OUR FREEDOM. AND THE TEST OF EACH GENERATION IS THE PROGRESS IT MAKES IN FULFILLING THE IDEALS ESTABLISHED AS THE BASIS FOR A FREE, DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

WE CAN KEEP THE PROMISES MADE 200 YEARS AGO BY MEN OF VISION. THEY ARE A SACRED TRUST, AND THEY MUST BE KEPT BY MEN AND WOMEN OF VISION TODAY. WE CANNOT REST UNTIL WE HAVE BUILT THE KIND OF NATION WHICH WILL PRESERVE THEM INVIOLETE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME:

-- A NATION WHICH IS DEDICATED TO LIFE -- NOT SURVIVAL,
NOT MERE SUBSISTENCE, NOT WEALTH FOR A FEW ONLY, BUT THE
GOOD LIFE FOR EVERY PERSON;

-- A NATION WHICH IS COMMITTED TO LIBERTY -- NOT ANARCHY,
BUT REAL LIBERTY WHICH COMES FROM DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY;

-- AND A NATION WHICH OFFERS THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS --
WHICH HOLDS OUT THE HOPE, UNFETTERED BY POVERTY, THAT EVERY
AMERICAN CAN ACHIEVE TO THE LIMITS OF HIS OR HER ABILITY.

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF FREEDOM.

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