

The Charlotte Civitan Club
Charlotte, North Carolina
May 13, 1977

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, President Lloyd Baucom, distinguished recipients, and my fellow North Carolinians. I am indeed privileged to be able to speak to such a distinguished audience at such a fine gathering. And we are indeed privileged to have such a fine gathering here in your city every year. When your chairman, Oliver Rowe, came to Washington to extend to me an invitation to come here, some few weeks ago, nothing could have pleased me more because I think probably at the time he was there I was somewhat at a low ebb.

You know, somehow or other, in Washington we don't hear many good things these days. At about that time, if you will pardon a personal story, I had just been home for the weekend and I had attended my church on Sunday morning. My minister had told me just about everything in the world that was wrong with our country, which he probably should have, and put a large share of the responsibility on me, as well as the rest of us. And that afternoon after dinner, one of my kinsman came over who is just a great fellow with a heart of gold, but I am satisfied that if he ever reaches the Pearly Gates he will be unhappy with the way the Lord is running things-- they are not quite going right.

Then on Monday night I went back to Washington, and I attended a very plush dinner out at the Shoreham Hotel, held in honor of the Grand Master Masons of America and throughout the world. All black-tie, we had a seven-course dinner, and then we sat back to listen to the speaker, and we heard one of my former colleagues, Senator Bill Saxby, former Attorney General of the United States, former Ambassador to India, spend 45 minutes lambasting this country with all the things that are wrong with it.

Then on Thursday night I went to another plush hotel where I attended the dinner for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and we had the band playing and the color guard, as we had here, and I am somewhat of a super patriot anyway, and we sang "The Stars Spangle Banner," and tears sorta rolled down my cheeks. Then I listened to one of my colleagues in the Senate for thirty minutes tell us what was wrong with America. And then I couldn't help but think of the Christmas party I went to in my home town Christmas. I was invited to go down below the Town of Dunn to Auburn Brothers for their annual Christmas party. There were about 200 people and more than 100 employees. As I sat there I remembered -- my mind began to turn back a few years when I was a third year law student at Wake Forest, coming from a small rural farm in Harnett County, and someone had talked me into running for Clerk of the Superior Court. I went down to this same area campaigning and the two Auburn brothers were running a very small store,

with a small meat counter. And yet, on that particular night they were having their Christmas party and were so great that in the fact that last year they had done nine million dollars worth of business in this country. And then I was reminded of the fact, and this is a true story, that the night before I had attended the White House party given by the President, and as I stood talking to him I remember that he himself had been abandoned by his father when he was two years old and I knew that on January 20 he would take leave of absence of the office of the President of the United States and would be replaced by another man who was born on a small farm and he lived in a small town in the State of Georgia.

And then I thought of what Lord Ramsbottom, the Ambassador from England, had said to me just shortly before when they came over to bring the Magna Charta. They had a dinner, and it fell my lot to sit between he and his Lady. And as I tell my wife, and I probably shouldn't say this, you know most women have a little curiosity. Lady Ramsbottom wanted to know a little something about my background, and of course I began to tell her that I came from a small farm in central North Carolina and that my parents were good people of meager means, etc. And finally Lord Ramsbottom turned to me and said, "Young Man, you couldn't have happened in England." he said, "there is no way, with your background, that you could ever have served in the upper house of Parliament in England."

And then I was reminded of what one of your fellow townsman, Harry Goodwin, said: "Only in America can all these things happen."

So, I commend you on your celebration, and the patriotism that the Civitan Club demonstrates here once a year.

And I want to tell you that we Americans are a unique people. Our nation was founded in order to protect us from the abuses of our own government. And throughout our history in this country we have made a conscious effort to preserve this protection as the very core of our way of life. Many nations have been founded since ours was founded, and many nations have made an attempt to copy the American constitution. As a matter of fact, most constitutions now in effect throughout the world, even in the Soviet Union, contain so-called "Bills of Right." But the role of protecting the rights of the individual in many of these nations, if not in most of these nations, comes second to that of enhancing the welfare of the State.

In those nations the duties of citizenship far outweigh the privileges. And we know that in too many nations in this world today, the lives of citizens are regimented to supply the needs of the State. We know that there are men and women who cannot choose their own occupations. We know that in many of these nations there are men and women who cannot travel freely from place to place as they choose, as I personally observed in Russia last year.

And we know that in so many places in the world today that men cannot say what they believe unless what they believe happens to serve the best interest of their nation. We know that Soviet writers were tried for treason. And how the Berlin Wall was built to prevent the citizens of East Germany from leaving the country, not for the purpose of preventing others from coming into it. And we know how the Cuban and the Chinese governments force people into the fields to harvest sugar and rice.

In Indo China, since our troops left there less than two years ago, hundreds of thousands have died in forced marches and mass executions. To be patriotic in these Communist nations a person must perform the duties of citizenship whether or not they conflict with his rights. And a citizen who fails to perform those duties is to that extent a traitor.

We all know the extreme lengths to which these duties are stretched in Communist countries and nations. But we, ourselves, some times marvel at the zeal of citizens there, and we wonder why our own citizens fail to respond with equal zeal and enthusiasm. When 99 and three-quarters percent of the electorate in the Soviet Union votes in an election in which there is little or no choice, we often ^{wonder} why our citizens do not turn out in equal numbers to vote in elections which present a very large measure of choice. But we shrug it off as apathy.

When millions of Chinese marched through the streets

of Peking chanting slogans from the little red book of Chairman Mao's writing, we sometimes wonder why we Americans cannot gather together to recite the maxims of freedom upon which this great nation of ours was founded. But we shrug it off as indifference. And when whole nations seem to believe in the ideologies of Marx and Lenin, Stalin and Mao, we wonder why we Americans cannot be unanimous in our belief - belief in the ideologies of Jefferson and Jackson or Washington and Lincoln, and all those other great Americans who have done so much to mold the character of this land of ours.

We marvel and wonder about these things because we know that our elections represent the will of the people more truly than do those in the Soviet Union. And we know that our slogans are as inspiring as those of Mao. And we know that our ideologies are truer than theirs. And yet sometimes we conclude from all of this that we Americans are not a very patriotic people. That we do not take the duties of citizenship seriously, and that we wallow in a corrupt and self-seeking individualism.

But let me say to you that whenever we, or whenever anyone, concludes such things he greatly misjudges the American people. We are not paper tigers, and we do not in this country cultivate a corrupt individualism. We are not an unpatriotic people who fail to take seriously the duties of citizenship. And anyone who thinks we are does not understand, and I think sometimes we ourselves tend to forget the uniqueness of our

tradition and our history. For according to our way of life a nation has obligations to its citizens before its citizens have obligations to it.

Our nation exists for the purpose of securing our inalienable rights . It does not exist for the purpose of promoting its own greatness or its leaders. Our constitution was adopted in order to establish justice and insure domestic tranquillity, and to provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare. And to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.

Our constitution enumerates a citizen's rights and not his use. And throughout our history, we Americans have often demonstrated our willingness to defend and to maintain and to preserve this constitution. And we shall defend it again if the occasion, and whenever the occasion arises.

But what those people who misjudge us fail to understand, and what we sometimes forget, is that our citizens do not have the duty to vote but the privilege of voting. For to be an American means that we are free to vote or not to vote. It means that the choice is ours.

Our citizens do not have the duty to support and respect those in power, but more importantly, they have the privilege of supporting and respecting them. And again, the choice is ours. For to be an American means that we are free to support our leaders, or not to support them. And our citizens do not have the duty to believe in the ideals upon which our nation was founded. But much more importantly, we Americans are free

to believe in these ideals or not to believe in them as our reason dictates and not as our rulers dictate. And we must remember that the greatness of America lies in our ability to take our patriotism, our ideology and freedom for granted, for only a people whose freedom is not endangered by its government can afford to do so. And we must be forever vigilant in this country to make sure that those freedoms are not endangered because of situations or conditions which may exist at any given moment or any given time in our history.

The individualism that we cultivate is not corrupt. It is rather the high principled individualism which encourages a richness of diversity and the fullness of life. We must remember that being a patriotic citizen does not require that we Americans wave our flags in the streets in order to prove that we love it--although I love to do so-- any more than the love of our family requires that we make a display of them, nor that we chant verses from little red and white books while we march in the streets.

Yet, we do have responsibilities as citizens. We do not owe these to any government. Rather these are things which we owe to ourselves, and I want to mention two today.

First is the duty never to let ourselves believe that continued wrong doing in the exercise of power makes it right. And this is especially important when the wrong doing involves the use of government power for political purposes.

I believe also that the real ethics of patriotism is knowing and understanding what our principals are and being willing to protect those principals--the principals that have

lasted for 200 years in this country.

What we stand for, and what our forefathers stood for 200 years ago is unchanged. And somewhere in the world right now there is a man scratching out a meager living in a country with/^{no}tradition of economic freedom, and with no resources to make that kind of freedom possible. And when that man stands up from his plow and wipes away the sweat, and allows himself to dream for a moment of a place where he could prosper by his efforts, I am sure that it is America that he dreams of. And somewhere in the world at this moment, perhaps in one of the nations of eastern Europe, there is a man who stops what he is doing, suddenly sick of the repressiveness of his own government, and when he dreams of one place on earth where he could say what he wants and go where he wants without fear of a secret police, I am sure that its America that he dreams of.

And still, in too many corners of the world there are human beings who feel the lash of government by terror. And such people, I am sure, they dream of an unbelievable country in which the arm of authority does not always hold a club above the people's head. And when they dream so, they dream of America. Ours is that unbelievable nation.

If the world could wake up from its unending nightmare, it is America to which it would wake, remembering that it is the key to patriotism.

In the end, the only thing that proves, in my opinion, whether or not one is truly a patriotic American is the extent

of his love of and devotion to freedom-- his own as well as everyone else's. It is not the of our rhetoric that matters, nor the of our demonstrations, but rather the extent of our respect for the rights of others. The true test of American patriotism is the extent to which we as individuals are willing to go in defending freedom from attack both from within our land and from outside of our borders. And the depth of this revolution to be sure, sometimes requires that we be willing to fight to preserve this freedom, when at other times it requires that we be tolerant of the acts of others when they are exercising freedom and not threatening it. The depth of this revolution, to be sure, requires that we present the case for freedom whenever the need and occasion arises. But it also requires that we sometimes listen to the sincere and honest disagreement of others, for the ability to express our disagreement is one of our greatest freedoms here in America.

My fellow North Carolinians, devotion to freedom is a complex devotion. It is not simple minded as is totalitarian devotion to conformity, for freedom in itself sometimes tends to be divisive and spawn repression. Thus, freedom is a tender object which needs to be handled with care. We cannot abuse it as extremists sometime do for freedom is fragile; and we cannot repress it as totalitarians do for freedom is destructive. We can only love it as we would a child and protect it, and nurture it, and sometimes tolerate it; but always honor it. Thank you very much.