

Speech by:

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Carolinas District Kiwanis Convention  
"K" Fellowship Breakfast  
Timme Plaza Motor Hotel  
Wilmington, N. C.

September 11, 1972

It is a real privilege for me to be in Wilmington this morning and to have an opportunity to talk with this group. I am especially pleased to see so many young people. I know how important you are to the Kiwanis Clubs and likewise I know how important you are to the future of our State and Nation. In every sense of the word, you are the future.

It is appropriate, then, that we talk about the future today and in doing so, reason dictates that we also look briefly at the past. The two are tied together; they are a continuous thread. And we have seen so many times that when that thread is broken, the fabric of any society is weakened. In these days we cannot allow that to happen.

Some of you may have read, as I did earlier this summer, an issue of Life magazine, in which an editor wrote that "It is hard to hear America singing anymore", that "It requires an act of faith to call up images of a land we all

think we once knew - an America framed with affection."  
There is no doubt in my mind about the truth of this editor's  
remarks.

As America approaches her two hundredth birthday and we reflect upon the past, many of us, especially those of us who are older, are filled with nostalgia. In many ways, America's past, when compared to its present, seems like a festive occasion. In thinking about our Nation's past, we have images of a happy people, working industriously, but enjoying their daily lives; and we wish we were as happy today.

Surely, we all tend to idealize the past to some degree, but still we should ask ourselves,

"What is it about America's past that makes us remember it so affectionately, and what is there about the present that we find so disturbing?"

When our ancestors came to America, they left behind a world they referred to as "old" to come to one they called "new" because they had a dream - The American Dream. To them, the old world was not only aged, it was old-fashioned, its ideas were outmoded, and its people had little hope of bettering themselves. To our ancestors, this new world offered that hope.

In the old world, upward mobility was impossible because everything was established: a person's place was fixed by the circumstances of his birth - his economic worth, his social status, and his intellectual attainments were determined not by who he was, but by who his parents were. The old world was a world of entrenched classes in which different classes were treated differently under the law.

To people held back by the traditions of the old world, America offered its dream. This dream allowed people to question traditional doctrines and values. It allowed them to promote individualism, to believe in the possibility of universal human progress, to seek knowledge through free inquiry and thought, to dignify the worth of man, and to seek their own successes through reason and hard work.

America, to our ancestors, was the land of the unexpected, the land of unbounded hope. It was the land of ideals, of a quest for an unknown perfection. It was a land of ample opportunity that was based upon the idea of free enterprise and the optimism of its citizens.

It was only in America, as the proverbial expression goes, that the impossible was thought to be only slightly less attainable than the difficult. In America, a person could become whatever he or she wanted to become, for only

talent and the capacity for hard work mattered. The American Dream is the dream of a better, richer, happier life for all, and it alone accurately describes the hopes of all Americans.

Although the two hundred year span of our history is brief when compared to the history of those nations of the world from which our ancestors came, these two hundred years have proved to be long enough to produce this unique outlook on life, this sustaining national tradition, which is characterized by equal opportunity. This national tradition is perhaps the greatest contribution we as a people have yet made to the thought and welfare of mankind. It has served as a torch of inspiration that amply justifies the Statue of Liberty's inscription:

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,  
Send those, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me:  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

But we must remember that a dream is not reality, and that if America is to be true to this one great tradition, we Americans must not only believe in The American Dream, we must continue to dream it. And one thing wrong with the present, it seems to me, is that while we Americans still believe in The American Dream, many of us no longer dream it. We no longer dream it because to some of us it has become a reality while to others it seems to have become an impossibility.

I think we often fail to understand our young people for this very reason. Many of our young people still believe in the American Dream - we have taught them well for the most part. Many of our young people still believe in the American Dream and in their own way are striving to perfect it. On the other hand, many of us because of our standing and relative success, have accepted our society's imperfections.

To those who still have not attained the benefits of the American way of life, the actions and words of those of us who have, often seem like barriers to their advancement. And to those of us who already have used these American traditions to better ourselves, the actions and words of those who have not, often seem like threats to our society.

Yet neither of these attitudes is justifiable on American principles. The security of each and every one of us depends upon the aspirations and mutual respect of all of us. If we are to protect our heritage and our own continuing hopes of doing even better than we have yet done, we must see that American society is kept open so that it continues to provide each and every person with equal treatment and equal opportunity for economic, social, and educational advancement. We must not stifle the hopes of men as the old world did, for fulfilling those hopes constitutes the blessings of liberty that our Constitution was meant to secure.

This means many things:

First, it means to me as an attorney and as your Attorney General, that the constitutional rights of each and every person must be protected and guaranteed. We must try not to be unduly apprehensive about judicial decisions that protect the rights of persons accused of crimes, for every person must be given equal treatment under the law, and justice must be distributed with an even hand. Furthermore, we cannot have one set of penalties for the rich and another for the poor, nor can the rich have one set of privileges while the poor have none. The framers of our Constitution knew this when they forbade titles of nobility.

So we must support those movements in our Nation that are working to make judicial sentencing more uniform. It is simply not right when two well-to-do men who embezzle more than six million dollars are given three year suspended sentences, while a poor man who burglarizes a one hundred forty dollar television set is given a life sentence.

Second, we must broaden the meaning of free enterprise. When we hear that expression today, we think of Capitalism and the business community. But what free enterprise means basically is that every man - regardless of how he earns his living - should be given an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of his labor that is equal to every other man's opportunity. In other

words, the wage earner must be treated just like the investor - one must not be expected to pay a higher price for his society than the other - and the consumer must be treated just like the supplier - one cannot be given an advantage the other does not have. So we must support tax reform measures, consumer protection laws, the curbing of monopolistic practices, whether by industrial giants or our own State's milk industry, and strong consumer advocacy in rate hearings before public utility commissions. For if one person is given an economic advantage, another person is being financially exploited. He is not being given an equal opportunity to advance himself economically. To such a person, the American Dream has no meaning.

Third, we must strive to give everyone an equal opportunity to the same quality of education. We cannot, as a society, be satisfied as long as one school is better at the same level than some other school. Third grade instruction at one school ought to be as good as third grade instruction at any school. A college education at one institution should be as good as a college education at any institution; for otherwise someone is being denied an equal opportunity to better himself intellectually.

And fourth, it means we must recognize that environmental quality is a human need and not simply a luxury. We must make sure our economy grows and our people prosper in an environment that conserves our countryside, streams, rivers, ocean and air.

We must make sure our citizens realize now and our children learn early that "The earth can be an abundant mother ... if we learn to use her with skill and wisdom, to heal her wounds, replenish her vitality and utilize her potentialities." (JFK) We want our people to understand that we are interdependent, that we share the same air, the same water, the same environment - that one cannot abuse the environment without abusing the rights of his neighbors. We want our people to understand that beauty is a requisite of the good life, that man, amidst dismal surroundings, becomes a dismal creature himself.

We must make sure our people, especially our young people, have reason for renewed pride in a common heritage and that we all recognize that this nation cannot survive as a great nation, strong and proud, unless her natural resources are used with wisdom and discretion and unless her beauty is preserved for all to enjoy and draw strength from.

I often ask myself how we can really expect our young people to be disciples of law and order, to seek peace and harmony, when the environment about them is becoming increasingly disordered, when litter abounds and quiet and tranquility are the exception rather than the rule. We ask them to act contrary to their environment, and this is no mean task. Perhaps as we move to bring order to the

environment we shall also be successful in bringing more order to this generation of Americans. Perhaps renewed harmony in the environment will help bring harmony among men.

We must do these things to insure the blessings of liberty our Constitution was meant to secure and give meaning to The American Dream. And this dream is what has made America's past a happy one. If we want America's future to be happy, we must make The American Dream as meaningful tomorrow as it was yesterday. For if we do not, we will have turned our new world into the old world that our ancestors fled from. We will have set the world back two hundred years and not only will we not hear America singing anymore, we may well hear her weeping.

A desperate man, my friends, is a person who has nothing to look forward to. If we can provide him with an attainable dream, a hope for the future, a goal to work for, we will have overcome his despair. I believe this is what our responsible young people and minorities are asking for.

I believe we can revitalize our American Dream and when we do, the voice of Americans, all Americans, working together harmoniously to make life better, richer and happier, will sound like an hallelujah chorus that will again inspire the world to respect, honor and imitate our freedom-loving way of life.

I challenge you all, young and old, to join in this effort and to lend your voices to that chorus.

Thank you.