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It has been a little over a year now since the people of North Carolina sent me to Washington, and I recently have been trying to take stock of that year. It is especially important to look back and get things in proper perspective, because Washington is like no other city in one respect. When you land in Washington, you are bound to land in the middle of an argument.

A constant battle goes on in Washington to decide how the issues of the day shall be answered. Partisans of one theory or another, and special interest groups, all raise a hue and cry, trying to pull government policy this way or that. I have been deluged by legislation, all of which must be

judged for its philosophical worth and its practical effect.

And in the middle of all this, I, for one, have paused to reflect, because it often seems to me that among the hundreds of individual issues, the basic question can get lost.

The basic question, as I see it, is this: What shall be the role of government in American society?

In trying to answer this question, I found myself wondering where I, as a legislator, could turn for guidance. Well, the answer I found for myself is one which ought to be of interest particularly to those here tonight. I found I had to turn back to the traditions I grew up in, and back to the people, and the principles behind their local institutions.

This is one source of wisdom I knew would not fail. And
it did not.

I asked why one community prospered, and another did
not. In order to illustrate what I found out, let me pose
a couple of questions, and let each person here tonight
answer it for himself. Do you feel you have as much freedom
as your father and grandfather did? And here is another
question: Do you feel your children and grandchildren are
likely to have as much freedom as you yourself have?

I think those are two very important questions. The
first one will let you know where you stand in the historical
process. And the second will tell you what you ought to do
about it. I am afraid too many of us will feel we have less

freedom than our grandfathers did. And I hope all of us feel it would be tragic if our grandchildren have less liberty than we ourselves.

You know, we tend to grin and bear it when it comes to our own losses of freedom. But we shouldn't. That is not our responsibility at all. Rather, it is our responsibility to see to it that freedom is not diminished from generation to generation. And if we keep quiet, then what we really do is let our children's liberties be eroded.

The point of all this is a concept you may recognize as Jaycees -- the concept of stewardship. Stewardship means simply that you are responsible for something which must

outlive you. It means you are also responsible for something which is the property of the community, and not yours alone.

As Jaycees, you are committed to the idea of service.

But it seems to me that stewardship is the idea behind service, and the reason for it. The person who gives service in his community is acting on his responsibility as a steward of that community. He sees to it that valuable community institutions are kept viable and alive. Thus, through service, he passes on to his children the gifts that were left to him.

The concept of stewardship seems to me to answer the basic questions I set out at the beginning of my talk. The role of government in American society ought to be primarily one of stewardship. All of us have the responsibility for certain things which we received as gifts. We take these gifts, enjoy them and see to their safe keeping, and pass them on. Government shares that responsibility.

What are these gifts? Let me list what I think are the basic ones:

We all have to be the stewards of fiscal responsibility.

We are all the stewards of our natural and moral resources.

We are all responsible for the stewardship of education and knowledge.

We share the responsibility for peace and safety.

And we are, each and every one, the stewards of hope and confidence.

Now, I don't want to go into a long dissertation tonight on which of these duties of stewardship ought to be purely a local responsibility, and which is federal. The fact is, these are shared responsibilities, and the decision as to how much the federal government ought to get involved depends on the need and the case. But, in general, I believe it is essential for the pendulum to swing back toward local control and local initiative.

I think

we ought to remember that America was not built in Washington.

It was built into the economic and social wonder of the world

by local people working for local business, government,

charities, and institutions.

The most important of these, I believe, are local

educational institutions. My experience in the Senate has

taught me why this is so.

American democracy has always depended on education.

If the people are to run their own show, then they must

have minds well enough trained to do it.

But I am not talking about the three R's alone. I have learned that in a very direct way, the survival of our nation needs a special kind of education -- education as to what is right and what is wrong. The greatest responsibility we have

is that of being the stewards of our moral resources.

Now, when I said we are the stewards of our natural and moral resources, you might have wondered why I put the two together. I think they are very similar things. Our air and water and raw materials can disappear on us if we do not use them with the greatest care. Our standards of conduct can also disappear if they are not properly husbanded.

I think we will do well to teach our children that standards are not rules to hold us back. They are possibilities for us, things for us to work with -- they are the natural resources of the just person.

In this country, we have a government which depends

completely upon the wisdom and moral sense of those people who have been delegated great power. We speak of our system of checks and balances, but I ask you to consider how long that system would last, were it not for a nation of people whose parents taught them to live within the law.

Because of my service on the Senate Intelligence Committee, which investigated the CIA, the FBI and the IRS, I have come to realize that only this ingrained idea of playing by the rules has saved us as a nation, these 200 years.

I must tell you I was shocked and worried by the revelations the committee heard. I was worried because I came to see how fragile our constitutional system can be, if people entrusted with power lose their wisdom, good will and

moral sense. I have realized that it can happen. People who were delegated enormous power broke the very laws which will mean the death of a democratic state, if broken often enough.

Two of our most fundamental laws were broken. One is the law that when power is used, it will be used within the rules designed to protect personal privacy and the civil guarantees in the Bill of Rights. The second is that powers of the state shall not be used for purely political ends.

The fact is, though, that we are not in anywhere near the dire shape other countries are in, with regard to the abuse of power. We have never had a military coup in this country. That makes us a member of a tiny minority of nations.

What is the reason? There is no reason, except that as Americans we have the ingrained idea it must not happen. The military services have the weapons to do anything they wish. And we are blessed beyond the world's belief that the people of our armed services have the wisdom, good will, and sense of duty to want to do only what is right.

You know where that ingrained idea of living within the law comes from. Children get it at home and in school, because

parents and teachers exercised their duty of moral stewardship.

If we are to be unending as a nation, we have to have an unending succession of generations who immediately see it is wrong for a president to use the Internal Revenue Service to harass his political opposition. I am afraid the difference between using the IRS for purely political ends, and using the armed forces for political ends, is only a matter of degree.

When you hear of such things, don't say to your children, "Oh, they all do it." Say instead, "That's wrong." Why? Because their freedom depends on it.

Finally, I have said we are the stewards of hope and confidence. You might ask what this has to do with freedom and government. Well, I think they are essential to freedom

because despair is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we as a people come to expect we cannot succeed in the preservation of freedom, then we most certainly will not succeed.

I believe our institutions can work, provided people at the local level see to it they do. So let's not give up. The freedom of a positive and confident cast of mind is the best inheritance we can give our children.

Let me bring this to a close by asking two more questions, and by taking a shot at the answers.

The playwright Ibsen said once, "I hold that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future."

The question is, who is that man? Why, I think he is none other than the good steward of his freedom and his community.

The second question is, who decides the future? We do.

There will be a future, and the quality of it is being determined right now, by what you and I do.

Let's strive to be good stewards of freedom in this country. After all, a man's home is his castle, as the old saw has it. But a man's freedom is his son's castle.