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"This Is My Country"

Keynote Address by Senator Daniel K. Inouye at the Democratic National Convention

REMARKS

OF

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD

OF MONTANA

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Wednesday, September 11, 1968

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on August 26, 1968, the distinguished Senator from Hawaii [Mr. INOUYE] delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Ill.

Senator INOUYE, as the first and temporary chairman of the convention, delivered an inspiring address to the delegates assembled. I ask unanimous consent that the address, which was so universally well received, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ADDRESS BY SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUYE, KEYNOTE OF THE 1968 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION, AUGUST 26, 1968

My fellow Americans: This is my country.

Many of us have fought hard for the right to say that. Many are now struggling today from Harlem to Danang that they may say this with conviction.

This is our country.

And we are engaged in a time of great testing—testing whether this nation, or any nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to opportunity for all its citizens, can not only endure but continue to progress. The issue before us in such a time is how shall we discharge, how shall we honor our citizenship.

The Keynote Address at a national political convention traditionally calls for rousing oratory. I hope to be excused from this tradition tonight for I do not view this occasion as one for flamboyance or levity.

I believe the real reason we are here is that there is a word called "commitment," because we are committed to the future of our country and all our people, and because of that future, hope and faith are much more needed now than pride in our party's past.

For even as we emerge from an era of unsurpassed social and economic progress, Americans are clearly in no mood for counting either their blessings or their bank accounts.

We are still embarked on the longest unbroken journey of economic growth and prosperity in our history. Yet we are torn by dissension, and disrespect for our institutions and our leaders is rife across the land.

In at least two of our great universities, learning has been brought to a halt by student rebellions; others of the student revolution have publicly burned draft cards and even the American flag.

Crime has increased so that we are told one out of every three Americans is afraid to walk in his own neighborhood after dark.

Riot has bludgeoned our cities, laying waste our streets, our property and, most important, human lives. The smoke of destruction has even shrouded the dome of our Capitol. In Washington the task of restoring order drew more than twice as many Federal troops as were involved in the defense of Khe Sanh in Vietnam.

Voices of angry protest are heard throughout the land, crying for all manner of freedoms. Yet our political leaders are picketed and some who cry loudest for freedom have sought to prevent our President, our Vice President and Cabinet officers from speaking in public.

None go so far as publicly to condone a politics of assassination. Yet assassins' bullets have robbed our country of three great leaders within the last five years.

Why? What has gone wrong?

Why—when we have at last had the courage to open the attacks on the age-old curses of disease and ignorance, poverty and prejudice—why are the flags of anarchism being hoisted by the leaders of the next generation? Why—when our maturing society welcomes and appreciates art as never before—are poets and painters so preponderantly hostile?

Some conveniently blame all our ills and agonies on a most difficult and unpopular commitment overseas. The Vietnam war must end, they say, because it is an immoral war.

Of course, the war in Vietnam must be ended. But it must be ended, as President Johnson said last March, by patient political negotiation rather than through the victorious force of arms—even though this may be unpalatable to those raised in the tradition of glorious military victories. But like our other complex problems, this one must also be solved responsibly. Just as we shun irresponsible calls for total and devastating nuclear military victory, so must we guard against the illusion of an instant peace that has no chance of permanence.

Of course, the Vietnam war is immoral. Whether by the teachings of Moses, or by the teachings of Christ, or by the teachings of Buddha, I believe that all wars are immoral. During the Crusades, Christians in the name of Jesus Christ slaughtered innocent men, women and children and plundered their cities—because they were of another faith. These were immoral wars. In Vietnam we build schools across the countryside and feed the hungry in the cities, and our President has pledged massive sums in aid to all Vietnamese—and yet, this is an immoral war.

Perhaps by the time my four-year-old son is grown, men will have learned to live by the Ten Commandments. But men have not yet renounced the use of force as a means to their objectives. And until they do, are we more immoral—if there be such a degree—to fracture our solemn commitments and see our word doubted, not only by our friends abroad, but by our enemies? Knowing that this could lead to tragic miscalculations, is it less immoral now to take the easier course and gamble the lives of our sons and grandsons on the outcome?

These are not easy questions and perhaps there are no certain answers.

But when young people have rioted in China and Czechoslovakia as well as at Columbia, in Paris and in Berlin as well as in Berkeley, I doubt that we can blame all the troubles of our times on Vietnam.

Other critics tell us of the revolution of rising expectations. They charge that it has reached such proportions that men now take it as an insult when they are asked to be reasonable in their desires and demands. If this is too often true as a generalization, it is all too frequently aimed particularly at our fellow citizens of African ancestry, whose aspirations have burst full-blown on us after more than 100 years of systematic racist deprivation.

As an American whose ancestors came from Japan, I have become accustomed to a question most recently asked by a very prominent businessman who was concerned about the threat of riots in the cities and the resultant loss in life and property. "Tell me," he said, "Why can't the Negro be like you?"

First, although my skin is colored, it is not black. In this country, the color of my skin does not ignite prejudices which have smoldered for generations. Second, although my grandfather came to this country in poverty, he came without shackles. He came as a free man enjoying certain constitutional rights under the American flag. Third, my grandfather's family was not shattered as individual members of it were sold as chattel or used as security on loans. And, fourth, although others of my ancestry were interned behind barbed wire during World War II, neither my parents nor I were forced by covenants and circumstances to live in ghettos.

Unlike those of my ancestry, the Negro's unemployment rate is triple the national average. The mortality rate of his children is

319-857—14308

twice that of white children. He often pays more for his miserable tenement than comparable space will cost in the white suburbs. He is likely to pay more for his groceries, more for his furniture, more for his liquor and more for his credit. And, my fellow Americans, today many thousands of black Americans return from Vietnam with medals of valor. Some of them have been crippled in the service of their country. But too often they return to economic and social circumstances that are barely, if at all, improved over those they left.

Is it any wonder that the Negro questions whether his place in our country's history books will be any less forgotten than were the contributions of his ancestors? Is it any wonder that the Negroes find it hard to wait another hundred years before they are accepted as full citizens in our free society?

Of course, expectations are rising—and they are rising faster than we in our imperfect world can fulfill them.

The revolutions we in the United States are experiencing was born of democratic processes that not only accommodate economic progress and social mobility, but actively encourage them. But it is important to remember that these expectations are the children of progress and that today's restlessness has been nurtured by our very real achievements. Out of these should emerge a brighter and better society than we have known.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the situation of our young people today. The success of our economic system has freed them in ever-increasing numbers from the tragedies of premature mortality and early labor. It has built the schools in which they are being educated to higher levels than ever in our nation's history. And this progress has been achieved in a political system that not only admits but safeguards the right of dissent.

So it should hardly surprise us when the children of such progress demand to be heard when they become aware of inequities still to be corrected. Neither should we fear their voices. On the contrary, whether we know it or not, the marching feet of youth have led us into a new era of politics and we can never turn back.

What should concern us is something far more fundamental. The true dimension of the challenge facing us is a loss of faith. I do not mean simply a loss of religious faith, although this erosion is a major contributor to our unease. I mean a loss of faith in our country, in its purposes and in its institutions. I mean a retreat from the responsibilities of citizenship.

The plain fact is that in the face of complexity and frustrations, too many Americans have drifted into the use of power for purely destructive purposes. Too many Americans have come to believe it is their right to decide, as individuals, which of our laws they will obey and which they will violate.

I do not mean to say that all our laws are just. They are not. And I do not mean to suggest that protest against unjust laws is not proper. Performed in an orderly manner, the right to protest is a cornerstone of our system. Men must have the opportunity to be heard, even when their views are extreme and, in a lesser democratic country, dangerous. I, too, have spoken against laws I considered wrong and unjust. I am sure I will speak—and vote—against many more.

But, my fellow Americans, I have not burned my birth certificate and I will not renounce my citizenship.

Those who would do such things are relatively few. But there is a much larger number who in the face of change and disorder have retreated into disengagement and quiet despair. Less destructively, but no less surely, such men are also retreating from the responsibilities of citizenship.

Now let us not deceive ourselves about the consequences of such abdication. It is anarchy. It is a state in which each individual demands instant compliance with his own desires. And from there it is but a short step to the assumption by each individual of the right to decide which of his neighbors shall live and which shall not. And so accelerates the sickening spiral of violence which has already cost us our beloved John F. Kennedy, our great leader Martin Luther King, Jr., and the voice of this decade, Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

We have been told that the revolts are against "the system," that "the establishment" must be torn down. But, my fellow Americans, in Paris recently, students cut down hundred-year old trees to erect temporary street barricades. Those trees had lived through two World Wars. Some of them had even survived the Revolution of 1848. Were the goals of these students served by the destruction of those trees? How long will it take for their beauty and the vitality they symbolized to grow again? What trees did the students plant in their place?

If we cut down our institutions, public and private, and with indifference starve the systems which have given us our achievements, who will feed the hungry? Who will train the unskilled? Who will supply the jobs that mean opportunity for the generation whose voices are not yet heard? And who will launch the much needed Marshall Plan to rebuild our cities and open opportunity for all Americans?

These undertakings are too great for individuals going their separate ways.

Finally, my fellow Americans, let us remember that even anarchy is only a way station. Man the social animal has always craved order. He has made the most essential function of his government the maintenance of some level of order. Chaos and anarchy have never been more than preludes to totalitarianism. Tyrants like Adolf Hitler have taught us this before.

So, my fellow Americans, let us reject violence as a means of protest and let us reject those who preach violence. But let us not tempt those who would hide the evil face of racism behind the mask of law and order.

To permit violence and anarchy to destroy our cities is to spark the beginning of a cancerous growth of doubt, suspicion, fear and hatred that will gradually infect the whole nation. Poverty, discrimination and deprivation, as evil as they are, do not justify violence or anarchy, do not justify looting or burning, and do not justify murder or assassination. Law and order must be respected and maintained to protect the rights—yes, the civil rights—of all citizens.

But let us resist also the temptation to apathy because we can never cure the causes of violence with indifference. And, my fellow Americans, in the last analysis, law and order can only rest securely with justice as its foundation.

So let us look at how much we have already built, and then get on with the work.

At a time when guns are still heard in some areas of the world, we have laid in place such building blocks of mankind's survival as the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Banning of Atomic Weapons in Space of 1967, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968. These are vital foundations—vital foundations of peace—and we must build on them.

Under the health measures first proposed during the Presidency of our most beloved Harry S. Truman and passed during the remarkable administration of Lyndon B. Johnson, 20 million older Americans are now protected under Medicare. Our elder Americans can now live their autumn years in dignity and in security. And infant mortality has declined to a new low, and federally-funded community health centers are now serving nearly 50 million Americans. These too are vital foundations, and on them we must build fuller lives for our citizens.

And since 1963, President Johnson has proposed and Congress has enacted more than 40 major new laws to foster education in our country. Since 1963, our government has tripled its investment in education and, in the past four years alone, we have invested twice as much as was spent in the previous one hundred years. These are foundations from which the towers of human achievement can soar.

The last eleven years have seen the passage of the five Civil Rights bills passed in our entire history of the United States. And I might note in passing that Lyndon Johnson is the author, chief architect or primary sponsor of each of the Civil Rights Laws. When all summers are long and hot, it is well to remember that after 100 years, the Emancipation Proclamation is finally, but slowly, becoming a reality. And the occupants of some of our highest offices are testimony that black talent is just as important as white talent.

Working together, we have done much. Together, we can—and must—do much, much more.

Fellow Democrats, we are here tonight because in large part we share a faith in our country and in its processes of orderly, humanistic change.

Change and challenge should not deter us now; we have long been the party of change and challenge.

The need for new ideas and improved institutions should not deter us now; we have long been the party of new ideas.

That today's crisis is one of the human spirit should not deter us; we have long been the party which gave priority to the needs of human beings.

So let us go forward with the programs responsive to the needs of today and responsive to the needs of tomorrow.

Fellow Americans, this is our country. Its future is what we, its citizens, will make it.

And as we all know, we have much to do. Putting aside hatred on the one hand and timidity on the other, let us grow fresh faith in our purpose and new vigor in our citizenship.

Let us welcome the ideas and energies of the young and the talents and participation of all responsible people.

Let us plant trees and grow new opportunity. And, my fellow Americans, let us build not only new buildings but new neighborhoods.

And then let us live in them—all as full citizens, all as brothers.

In closing, I wish to share with you a most sacred word of Hawaii—"Aloha". To some of you who have visited us, it may have meant "hello". To others, Aloha may have meant "goodbye". But to those of us who have been privileged to live in Hawaii, Aloha means "I love you". So, to all of you, my fellow Americans, Aloha.

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