

LONG MAY OUR LAND BE BRIGHT

Speech delivered by Ferdie J. Deering
to several civic and women's clubs
in 1975 and 1976 during the
Bicentennial Celebrations
of the signing of the
Declaration of Independence

The United States of America is a dream of freedom that became a reality, an ideal that became a reality of such magnitude that many who enjoy liberty under its laws still can hardly believe it is true after 200 years.

Our religious freedom is far greater than was experienced or expected by the Pilgrims and the Puritans.

Our political freedom is more extensive than that enjoyed by 80 per cent of the world today.

Our economic freedom is richer than that of the most powerful ancient kings and potentates.

Our personal freedom is as broad as our land is wide, and is more than some people can accept with appropriate responsibility.

With all of this freedom, it would seem that we would have unequalled security and that nobody would want to change it.

That is not the case. These great freedoms that are so much a part of our lives and so vital to our future are in grave danger. There are lots of people who want to limit them or destroy them.

It is fitting and proper that we should observe the historic signing of that great document, the Declaration of Independence for the United States of America with another good look at our nation's history. We would do well to reaffirm its worthy aims and objectives and rededicate ourselves to the preservation of our liberty that it may always be a shining quality of our great nation, that our land may always be bright with freedom's holy light, as we sing in our our national anthem, "My Country 'tis of Thee."

Trouble and danger are not new to the United States and apparently hazards are a perpetual part of any government. Our strength is not in avoiding difficulties, but in overcoming them and building for the future. This we have done repeatedly.

Dee Brown, librarian at the University of Illinois, has published a book **"The Year of the Century 1876"** in which he describes conditions at the time of the Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia in 1876. He wrote:

"For many responsible citizens, the nation appeared to be passing through a period of crisis, with indications of moral decay on every hand. Partly as a result of scandals involving members of the Grant Administration, there was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction among the people, a distrust of the nation's leaders."

Agitation for women's rights were in the news. Women were behaving in unfeminine ways. That year saw the first public boxing match between

women, the first female professional jockey won a horse race, and women dressed in boys' clothing were engaging in other sensational stunts like running foot races and swimming.

Adults complained about the clothing, hair styles, speech and comportment of young people. Young men were spending time and money on an absurd contraption consisting of one huge front wheel and one tiny rear wheel---something called a bicycle.

Vulgar slang was being introduced into our language, like "Oh, fix your bustle," "Buckle your belt," "Wipe the gum off your lip." Smart talk!

For most Americans, Brown says, 1876 brought a grand rediscovery of America, a revival of the characteristics that had made this country a great nation. Let us hope that something of that sort will happen again in this Bicentennial year, in order that the **Light of Freedom** may be undimmed for centuries to come.

On July 4, 1876, there were 37 states in the Union, and Colorado was admitted to statehood August 1 that year. Twelve states have been added in the past 100 years and our flag now displays 50 stars, one representing each state of the Union.

The 13 stripes in our flag commemorate the 13 original colonies that formed the nucleus of our nation. I suggest that these 13 stripes also might serve as reminders to us of principles that those colonies adhered to as foundations for building a commonwealth greater than any of them ever imagined.

The RED stripes or principles involve government:

1. Limited government;
2. Majority rule, with citizens' votes;
3. States still have rights;
4. Freedom from foreign entanglements;
5. Minimal taxation, levied by representation;
6. Free enterprise;
7. Progress by productivity.

The WHITE stripes or principles involve the people:

1. Spiritual foundation for government, without political control of religion.
2. Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Speech;
3. Safety of the individual, security of private property, and sanctity of the home;
4. A sense of morality and responsibility;
5. Integrity and honesty of individuals;
6. Individual initiative and thrift.

Politicians, reformers, writers, and commentators bombard us continually with suggestions that our old way of government is not working today and that we ought to change or abandon it.

I submit for your consideration the premise that too many changes already have been made and **it is these revisions that are not working but which have led us into national bewilderment.**

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What we need to do is to turn away from governmental forms that have failed throughout history and restore basic American principles to their proper perspective, to permit the Red Stripes of Limited government and the White Stripes of Individual Responsibility to wave again wherever the Star Spangled Banner is displayed.

Let's look a little closer at what is happening in 1976..

The founders of our nation favored limited government, the less government the better. We have been led into **Big Government**, a political machine so vast that a new bureau has been proposed to study how to reduce the number of bureaus in government.

Thomas Jefferson wrote: "I am not a friend to energetic government; it is always oppressive."

President Gerald Ford said: "A government big enough to give us everything we want is a government big enough to take from us everything we have."

Big government is a system of professional rulers and despots; not a government of, by, and for the people. Our Congress originally was made up of representatives of the people--laymen. Now it consists of career public officials, with much rule-making delegated to appointed bureaucrats in the myriad of governmental departments.

Big Government does not lend itself to majority rule by vote of the citizens. Big Government creates a feeling of futility on the part of citizens, a feeling that they accomplish nothing by voting. So we have an alarming falling away of voters at the polls.

Big Government wants to do everything, and we have seen the separate rights and powers of states eroded to virtually nothing as Big Government advocates have established national policies and centralized control of local matters in Washington. Standardization and impersonalization seem to be our national policy.

Big Government does not want to stay at home, but it looks greedily at other lands, and we find our nation continually involved in other nations' business. We, the American People, have only a vague notion of how deeply entangled we are in an international web of freedom, dictatorships, communism, tyranny, monarchies, tribal conclaves, and war.

A principal complaint of the Colonists was that they were taxed unfairly without representation. A principal complaint heard today is that we are being taxed unfairly by the representation we have. In both cases, Big Government takes resources of the People and frequently spends them on unneeded and unwanted causes or wastes them on political projects.

The sixth Red Stripe represents Free Enterprise. This is in serious danger of being strangled by an ever-growing maze of government

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regulations, taxation, and legislation. One corporate executive said that more decisions concerning his company's business are now made in Washington than in his corporation board of directors meeting room.

Few business men seem to feel that they understand the full extent of government regulations that control their operations. Enterprise loses freedom almost daily.

The seventh Red Stripe has changed from emphasis on progress by productivity to a philosophy of prosperity without work. This is based on a false premise that because a person is a human being, he or she is entitled to equal shares of whatever any other human being has produced, created, or accumulated, even though the recipient might produce nothing and contribute little, if anything, to the community wellbeing.

Because this is taking something which belongs to another, it is contrary to the White Stripes in our Flag. It is essentially Communistic and is fundamentally un-American. This political philosophy denies the spiritual foundation and faith upon which this country was founded. It places faith and dependence in Big Government, politics and welfare, instead of in individual initiative, integrity, and honesty.

Our mounting crime wave reflects our loss of morality and personal responsibility. In many places an individual is not safe to walk the streets, our property is insecure, and our homes are subject to raids by bandits, some of whom have been prematurely released from prison for similar crimes. Outlaws do not fear light or maybe punishment.

A prime function of government is to protect its citizens from attacks by other countries or from outlaws within our borders. Big Government has demonstrated that it is unable to cope with this problem. Eventually, the People may have to demand that appropriate action be taken in simple forms that even the dumbest bandits can understand.

We also see frequent attacks on our Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press, because these are safeguards against despotism, dictatorship, and tyranny. Big Government wants to reserve these rights for itself; not for the people.

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America established a new way of life, and dictators of other lands trembled. Tyrants did not want this effort to succeed in 1776, and they do not want it to succeed now. It threatens their power. It denies that slavery is better than liberty.

Our freedom is in danger because despotic forces have succeeded in building Big Government that they can use to political advantage. It is founded upon a vast, unwieldy bureaucracy which is steadily stripping us of our individual rights and making us ever-more dependent on Washington.

If we hope to keep **OUR LAND BRIGHT WITH FREEDOM** we must do more than celebrate the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence with speeches and fireworks. We must rededicate ourselves to the principles of Freedom and work against those who would undermine this nation by limiting, modifying, or destroying those principles in action.

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