

Ferdie J. Deering

JUN 30 1983

## What Would Nation's Founders Think?

THE Statue of Liberty in New York harbor was given to the people of the United States by France as a symbol of this nation's freedom.

Officials say the Statue of Liberty is "literally falling apart." Metal is deteriorating, pieces of the statue are breaking off and rain seeps in at the seams. That also could be symbolic.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," authors of the Declaration of Independence wrote.

The document was signed on July 4, 1776, and that date was our supreme national holiday before politicians started moving it around for recreational reasons. This year historical and political dates concur but few celebrations will recognize the day's real significance.

If signers of the Declaration of Independence could return for a visit they would be astonished by many

things. They would marvel at the area and population of the United States, the technological progress, automobiles and airplanes, computers and television, our comfortable houses and our incomes.

They also might be amazed to find that this nation's government far exceeds that of King George III in extent and authority. Taxes, which were an issue in 1776, have gone up somewhat, too.

The most recent tabulations available list 79,862 units of local government, including counties, municipalities, school districts, townships and special districts. There also are numerous branches of government in 50 states and hundreds of federal agencies.

Historians note that quite a few vigorous debates occurred before the pattern for protecting our Liberty and pursuit of Happiness was agreed upon. These arguments appear infinitesimal when compared to the line-up of more than 3,300 identifiable political action committees now lobbying Congress for laws or federal money.

These special interest groups represent trade associations, teachers, farmers, corporations, labor unions, environmentalists, animal rights advocates, and what-have-you.

This nation's founders would be frightened by the flagrant violation of laws by public officials and the many ways by which felons escape punishment for violent crimes. They would be embarrassed by the lewdness that permeates almost every form of entertainment and business.

They probably would be horrified to learn of rulings handed down by the Supreme Court of the United States as valid interpretations of the Constitution, adopted in 1787.

Thomas Jefferson, a principal author of the Declaration of Independence, had a premonition of threats to freedom when he wrote:

"Yes, we did produce a near perfect Republic. But will they keep it? Or will they in the enjoyment of plenty lose the memory of Freedom? Material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction."