

THE COMMITMENT GAP

REMARKS OF
CONGRESSMAN BOB DOLE
REGIONAL JAYCEE MEETING
HAYS, KANSAS
APRIL 27, 1968

CAN ANYONE DENY THAT SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY WRONG WITH AMERICA? CAN ANYONE DISPUTE THAT THE AMERICAN DREAM IS IN DANGER OF BECOMING THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE? CAN ANYONE CHALLENGE THAT OUR NORMALLY OPTIMISTIC, CONFIDENT NATION IS RACKED AND RIDDLED WITH PESSIMISM AND UNCERTAINTY?

LOOK IN ANY DIRECTION. OUR SOARING CRIME RATE NOW COSTS US 20 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR. A MAJOR CRIME IS COMMITTED EVERY EIGHT SECONDS. PARKS ARE AVOIDED AT NIGHT FOR FEAR OF MUGGERS. A WOMAN IS STABBED TO DEATH IN THE STREET, AND 20 OF HER NEIGHBORS DO NOTHING BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO GET "INVOLVED".

A PROMINENT AMERICAN IS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD AND WITHIN ONE WEEK 125 CITIES ARE RIPPED BY RIOTING AND INSURRECTION. DURING A SEVEN-DAY PERIOD, EARLIER THIS MONTH, MORE THAN 40 PERSONS WERE KILLED, MORE THAN 3,500 INJURED, MORE THAN 20,000 ARRESTED, MORE THAN 2,600 FIRES SET, AND PROPERTY DAMAGE ACROSS THE NATION AMOUNTED TO AT LEAST 50 MILLION DOLLARS.

-SERIOUS FINANCIAL CRISIS-

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD SAYS THAT WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST SERIOUS FINANCIAL CRISIS SINCE 1931 -- THE DEPTHS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION.

BUT THIS TIME WE ARE FACED WITH INFLATION, NOT RECESSION, AS A RESULT OF THE UNRESTRAINED SPENDING POLICIES OF OUR GOVERNMENT OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. FOR EXAMPLE, BETWEEN 1960 AND 1968, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SPENT NEARLY 57 BILLION DOLLARS MORE THAN IT COLLECTED IN TAXES.

FURTHERMORE, THE UNITED STATES IS CONFRONTED WITH THE PROSPECT OF BACK-TO-BACK FEDERAL DEFICITS AND OF 20 BILLION DOLLARS FOR LAST YEAR AND THIS YEAR. AND IT IS ESTIMATED THAT AT THE END OF THIS FISCAL YEAR THE NATIONAL DEBT WILL REACH AN ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE TOTAL OF 370 BILLION DOLLARS.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S RESPONSE HAS BEEN TO CALL FOR A 10 PERCENT TAX INCREASE WHILE CONCEDING THAT SOME CUTS CAN BE MADE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET. HE DOES NOT -- OR IS UNWILLING -- TO CONCEDE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE PERMANENT, NOT TEMPORARY, REDUCTIONS IN UNNECESSARY SPENDING AND THEN SET SENSIBLE PRIORITIES AND STAND BY THEM.

-PRESTIGE ABROAD-

ABROAD, POLLS SHOW THAT AMERICAN PRESTIGE HAS NEVER BEEN SO LOW, NOR OUR ALLIES MORE UNWILLING TO SUPPORT US.

ONE REASON FOR THEIR RELUCTANCE OCCURRED IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, WHEN THE U.S.S. PUEBLO WITH ITS CREW OF 83 MEN WAS SEIZED IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS BY NORTH KOREAN COMMUNISTS. TODAY THE SHIP AND CREW ARE STILL IN COMMUNIST HANDS.

IN VIETNAM, WE ARE ENMESHED IN A GIGANTIC LAND WAR CURRENTLY INVOLVING 500,000 AMERICAN TROOPS. THE PRESIDENT HAS STATED FLATLY THAT HE OR REPRESENTATIVES OF OUR GOVERNMENT WILL GO ANYWHERE AT ANY TIME TO TALK ABOUT ENDING THE WAR. AT PRESENT, WASHINGTON AND HANOI ARE DEBATING THE RESPECTIVE MERITS OF WARSAW AND GENEVA AS A MEETING PLACE WHILE THE WAR CONTINUES.

-ANYTHING GOES???

"ANYTHING GOES" SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME A NATIONAL MOTTO.

PORNOGRAPHY FILLS BOOKS, FILMS AND PLAYS. STUDENT POWER THROBS ON CAMPUSES LIKE SAN FRANCISCO STATE WHERE STUDENTS BEAT UP THE CAMPUS NEWSPAPER EDITOR BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T LIKE A STORY ABOUT THE HOMECOMING QUEEN. DRUGS LIKE MARIJUANA AND LSD ARE "IN". THE PILL IS SMART. A FAITH IN GOD AND IN ONE'S SELF HAVE BECOME OLD-FASHIONED AND SQUARE.

EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING IS SUSPECT. A RECENT GALLUP POLL REPORTED THAT SIX OUT OF TEN PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT UNETHICAL CONDUCT BY CONGRESSMEN IS "FAIRLY COMMON".

I TAKE NO PLEASURE IN RECITING THE PRECEDING.

BUT I BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO FACE THE REALITY OF AMERICA
1968, AND THEN RESOLVE TO RECLAIM THE AMERICAN DREAM.

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE CAN. WE HAVE ALWAYS RESPONDED
TO A CRISIS, TO A CHALLENGE. WE ARE A NATION OF PROBLEM
SOLVERS. "PROGRESS IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT PRODUCT" IS NOT
JUST AN ADVERTISING SLOGAN BUT THE WAY OF OUR LIFE. WE ARE
A "CAN-DO" NATION -- AND YOU HERE IN THIS AUDIENCE ARE LIVING
PROOF THAT YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING TOGETHER CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. AND IF ENOUGH MEN AND WOMEN WORK
TOGETHER IN A THOUSAND DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES, THEY CAN MAKE
THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR NATION.

-THE CREDIBILITY GAP-

WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICA?

WELL, WE ALL HAVE HEARD A GREAT DEAL OF LATE ABOUT
THE CREDIBILITY GAP IN WASHINGTON -- OF THE PEOPLE'S LACK
OF FAITH IN THEIR GOVERNMENT. I HAPPEN TO THINK THAT THE
PRESENT ADMINISTRATION HAS DONE MORE THAN A LITTLE TO CREATE
SUCH A GAP.

RARELY IF EVER BEFORE, HAS A NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION SO
MUZZLED THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, MANIPULATED NEWS AND INFORMATION
AND ATTEMPTED TO MESMERIZE THE PRESS AND THE PEOPLE.

BUT I CANNOT LAY THE ENTIRE BLAME FOR THE CRISIS IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES ON THE ADMINISTRATION.

-THE COMMITMENT GAP-

NO, I THINK THAT AMERICA IS BEWITCHED, BOTHERED AND BEWILDERED TODAY BECAUSE OF A COMMITMENT GAP -- WHICH EXISTS IN EVERY STATE AND EVERY COMMUNITY IN THIS UNION.

TOO MANY OF US ARE CONTENT TO LET THE OTHER FELLOW DO IT. WE WASH OUR HANDS OF ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE GHETTOS OR ELSEWHERE.

WE CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH LENDING A HAND TO OUR FELLOW CITIZENS. WE USE THE RATIONALE THAT "WE'RE TOO BUSY", BUT ACTUALLY WE'RE TOO SELFISH TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT ANYONE BUT OURSELVES.

THE ULTIMATE ABSURDITY OF THIS POSITION WAS PINPOINTED BY GEORGE CHAMPION, CHAIRMAN OF THE CHASE MANHATTAN BANK, WHO SAID OF SOME BUSINESSMEN:

" 'LEAVE IT TO GOVERNMENT,' THEY SAY IN ONE BREATH. AND IN THE NEXT, 'GOVERNMENT IS GETTING ITS HAND INTO EVERYTHING'."

OF COURSE IF YOU AND I DO NOTHING, GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEMPT TO GET ITS HAND INTO EVERYTHING. BUT YOU AND I KNOW THAT GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER HARD IT MAY TRY -- AND LET'S FACE IT, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TRYING PRETTY HARD SINCE 1933 -- GOVERNMENT CANNOT DO EVERYTHING.

THE WAR ON POVERTY HAS PROVEN THAT ~~BY~~^EOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT. BILLIONS OF DOLLARS HAVE BEEN EXPENDED, MUCH OF IT IN AREAS LIKE DETROIT, WASHINGTON AND NEWARK, AND STILL THERE ARE RIOTS AND LOOTING AND DEMANDS FOR MORE FEDERAL AID.

AMONG ALL THE COMMENTS IN THE WAKE OF THE RIOTING, I WAS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THOSE OF GOVERNOR SPIRO AGNEW OF MARYLAND AND ARCHIE MOORE, FORMER LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD.

IN A MEETING WITH 100 NEGRO LEADERS OF BALTIMORE, GOVERNOR AGNEW PULLED NO PUNCHES AS HE CRITICIZED THOSE PRESENT FOR NOT CONDEMNING BLACK RACISM AS HE HAD CONDEMNED WHITE RACISM. "THEY WILL SURELY DESTROY US," HE DECLARED, "IF WE DO NOT REPUDIATE THEM AND THEIR PHILOSOPHIES."

HE OFFERED THE NEGRO LEADERS A SOLEMN COMPACT: "LET US PROMPTLY AND PUBLICLY RENOUNCE ANY WHO COUNSEL OR CONDONE VIOLENCE. LET US ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE A REAL STAKE IN OUR SOCIETY. LET US PROUDLY ACCLAIM OUR PATRIOTISM AND OUR RECOGNITION THAT NO NATION OFFERS SUCH OPPORTUNITY."

ARCHIE MOORE, A PRODUCT OF A NEGRO GHETTO IN ST. LOUIS, WAS NO LESS ELOQUENT WHEN HE SAID:

"THE WORLD OWES NOBODY --BLACK OR WHITE-- A LIVING. WE MADE IT BECAUSE WE HAD A GOAL, AND WE WERE WILLING TO WORK FOR IT. DON'T TALK TO ME OF YOUR 'GUARANTEED NATIONAL INCOME'. ANY FOOL KNOWS THAT THIS IS INSANITY. DO WE BRING THOSE WHO WORKED TO GET AHEAD DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF THOSE WHO NEVER GAVE A DAMN?"

"...GRANTED THE NEGRO STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO TO GAIN A FAIR SHAKE WITH THE WHITE MAN IN THIS COUNTRY. BUT BELIEVE THIS: IF WE RESORT TO LAWLESSNESS, THE ONLY THING WE CAN EVER HOPE FOR IS CIVIL WAR, UNTOLD BLOODSHED AND THE END OF OUR DREAMS."

EACH MAN, BLACK AND WHITE, MADE THE SAME POINT: WITH LAW AND ORDER, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE; WITHOUT IT, NOTHING IS POSSIBLE.

-WE MUST COMMIT OURSELVES-

IN MY OPINION, IF 5 OR 10 BILLION DOLLARS HAS NOT MADE ANY APPRECIABLE DENT IN THE POVERTY OF THIS COUNTRY, THE ULTIMATE ANSWER IS NOT THE EXPENDITURE OF 20 OR 50 BILLION DOLLARS BY THE GOVERNMENT.

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO POVERTY AND TO ALL THAT IS WRONG WITH AMERICA TODAY LIES WITHIN YOU AND ME.

WE MUST COMMIT OURSELVES. WE MUST NOT LET THE OTHER FELLOW DO IT -- WE MUST DO IT OURSELVES. WE MUST REACH OUT AND HELP THOSE AMERICANS WHO NEED HELP -- NOT JUST TO PREVENT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FROM INTRUDING FURTHER INTO OUR LIVES -- BUT BECAUSE SUCH HELP, SUCH CHARITY, IS RIGHT!

- BUSINESS IS LEADING THE WAY-

HAPPILY AND HOPEFULLY, MANY AMERICANS ARE DOING JUST THAT, AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS BEGINNING TO LEAD THE WAY.

DURING MY EIGHT YEARS IN THE CONGRESS, I HAVE CONSTANTLY URGED BUSINESSMEN TO BECOME ACTIVE IN POLITICS THROUGH THE PARTY OF THEIR CHOICE, IN THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OF THEIR CITY OR COMMUNITY.

MANY HAVE ASKED WHY THEY SHOULD BECOME INVOLVED. THEY SAY THEY ARE FEARFUL THEY MIGHT LOSE OR ALIENATE A CUSTOMER.

HERE'S MY ANSWER:

THE AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN OUGHT TO BE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT LOSING CONTROL OF HIS BUSINESS IF HE DOESN'T GET INVOLVED.

IF HE DOESN'T SPEAK UP AND OUT ABOUT HIS GOVERNMENT AT THE LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL, HOW WILL THOSE OF US IN GOVERNMENT KNOW WHAT HE IS THINKING? IF THE BUSINESSMAN DOES NOT DO A SELLING JOB ABOUT THE VITALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM, WHO WILL? IF THE BUSINESSMAN IS TOO "BUSY" TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF HIS COMMUNITY, HE CANNOT BLAME ANYONE BUT HIMSELF IF DECISIONS ARE MADE WHICH DO NOT PLEASE OR SATISFY HIM.

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT MORE AND MORE BUSINESSMEN ARE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT IT MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE TO GET INVOLVED, TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

THEY ARE BEGINNING TO COMPREHEND THE GREAT POWER AND INFLUENCE THEY CAN WIELD -- OUTSIDE THE BOARD ROOM, THE FRONT COUNTER AND THE SHOWROOM.

YOU JAYCEES KNOW THE POTENTIAL OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY BETTER, PERHAPS, THAN ANYONE ELSE. YOU KNOW HOW TO APPLY IT TO LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PROBLEMS. REST ASSURED THAT YOUR DETERMINATION AND CAN-DO SPIRIT ARE AFFECTING AND INFECTING MANY OTHERS, INCLUDING THE SENIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

YOU HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD. KEEP TAKING IT.

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS TO ME THAT AMERICA RESEMBLES A GIANT GULLIVER IN RECLINE AND HALF-ASLEEP WHICH ONLY NEEDS TO BE ROUSED FROM HIS LETHARGY TO WORK WONDERS.

-NEEDED: COMMITMENT BY ALL-

WHAT I AM SUGGESTING, AND WHAT YOUR PERFORMANCE AND THAT OF COUNTLESS OTHER AMERICANS PROVES IS POSSIBLE, IS A CRUSADE BY 200 MILLION AMERICANS, ALL AMERICANS, NOT SOME OR HALF OR TWO-THIRDS OR NINE-TENTHS, BUT A CRUSADE BY ALL AMERICANS TO RECLAIM THE AMERICAN DREAM OF FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL.

IT IS POSSIBLE. BUT SUCH A CRUSADE CALLS NOT FOR COMPLACENCY BUT COMMITMENT -- NOT FOR DERISION BUT DEDICATION -- NOT FOR INDIFFERENCE BUT INVOLVEMENT.

SUCH A CRUSADE IS POSSIBLE AND WILL SUCCEED IF YOU
AND I AND EVERY OTHER AMERICAN COMMIT OURSELVES TO
CLOSING THE COMMITMENT GAP.

end