

EXCERPTS FROM SENATOR WAYNE MORSE'S SPEECHES

AMERICA IN TODAY'S WORLD, June 18, 1961. Suffolk University, Boston, Mass.

It is important to remember that events of each day in which we live are part of history. History, change, growth, evolution, and revolution did not stop on the date of the last printing of your history textbook. We live today in a world of as much turmoil, unrest, progress, and decline as has ever occurred.

(Recent events) signify the impossibility of one nation maintaining a status quo for very long, in a world whose population is exploding and whose communication in ideas and aspirations is rapidly increasing.

In my opinion, our greatest means of influencing world events is through the example we set in our own country.

This freedom which we cherish imposes heavy burdens. Our acts must conform to our words. An open society must do what is says. A closed society can do what is pleases and say what will serve its purposes.

There has never been a time when the liberty of American people was not threatened from one source or another. There has not been a period in our history when someone was not saying that unless we dispense with some or all of the Bill of Rights, the country was doomed.

What we must strive for in this generation is a realization that a devotion to our liberties, especially to those set forth in our Bill of Rights, is probably the strongest and greatest influence we have in the world.

So it seems to me we must re-examine what it is that we prize most highly about our country. It is what we prize the most that we must insist be preserved and if possible, strengthen and expand it. I think it is not far wrong to say that it is our political and personal freedoms which we prize the most highly. It is the right to speak, to assemble, to petition, to worship, and to publish what the think and feel.

We say we are a government under which the people are the masters and the government is the servant. Not only is this a great ideal, but it is an absolute necessity if we are to remain free.

To protect us from personal power, our forefathers gave us the precious Bill of Rights. They gave us a free press which in a very real sense is the most potent weapon in the arsenal of democracy against tyrannical government. They gave us freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, trial by jury, freedom of religion, protection from unwarranted search an seizure, protection from self-incrimination, our home as our castle.

They gave us the most important personal freedom of all - the right to govern ourselves – the right of the free ballot. From beginning to end, they gave every generation of American boys and girls the greatest charter and covenant of self-government yet penned by man – the Constitution of the United States.

As you commence your life of citizen statesmanship today, please remember that the rights of freedom guaranteed you by that Constitution are your greatest wealth. It is the greatest wealth you can will to your children and theirs.

LIVING WITH OURSELVES, May 29, 1966. Commencement Exercises, Milo Academy, Milo, Oregon

I think the grave problems which confront us as individual citizens and as an American population call upon us to give some thought to the problems presented by the topic, “Living with Ourselves.” I do not mean “Living Unto Ourselves,” although I fear that too many people these days are “Living Unto Themselves” rather than “Living With Themselves.” The degree of selfishness which permeates the American society today is disturbing and ominous. A spirit of self-centeredness among individuals is so prevalent in America today that I think it threatens our national well-being. To my way of thinking, the greatest problem that must be solved by the individual who seeks happiness through living with himself is learning how to be true to his own conscience. For many people that requires discovering that they have a conscience. It requires the developing of a set of ethical standards which reflect selfless spiritual values. It is a view of mine that the ethical standards of government can be no higher nor stronger than the ethical standards of the individuals who comprise our American society.

I am not asking you to agree with me, because that is not important. I am not nearly so interested in the question of whether people agree with me on an issue as I am in the question of whether they are thinking about an issue. Jefferson was right when he pointed out that a democracy can be no stronger than the enlightenment of its people. However, enlightenment involves the exercises of one’s thought processes. If our citizenry is to be enlightened on the great issues that confront our country in this dark hour of crisis, then each individual in our citizenry must do more individual thinking about the problems which confront us.

One of the sad facts I see on the American scene today is that millions of our people have stopped thinking for themselves. In this age of ready-made goods and mass production, too many people have placed padlocks on their own minds and have closed up their own intellectual workshops. They are buying their intellectual food of low political nutrition value for what they think is a great bargain at the cafeteria propaganda counters of a varied sort of political soup kitchen.

It is sad, but true, that they have only themselves to blame because they are trafficking in the drugs of smear politics and gorging at the counter of personal greed and materialistic values.

LEADERSHIP IS SERVICE WITH HONOR, December 19, 1966. Nestucca Union High School Chapter of the National Honor Society, Cloverdale, Oregon

The key in (my) preparing for public service was a willingness to take a positive stand based upon a factual analysis of the issues. Then, fortified by intelligent argumentation, stressing rational factors as opposed to emotional factors, I awaited the decision with confidence. This approach may not always win popularity contests, but it provides the foundation upon which a reputation for integrity can be built. That reputation and its solid foundation are the best, and really only, offerings that can be given an electorate by a candidate. It is the sound metal which rings when thrown on the table as opposed to the thud that is heard when debased metal is proffered.

CITIZENSHIP DAY, October 26, 1964, Morehead State College, Kentucky

One of the great issues posed for our people in their role as citizen-statesman is to recognize those instances when the promises of the Constitution are not available in practice to those people in our society who lack the social or economic standing to make a long legal fight for them.

Today, there is a wider practice of true liberty and freedom by our people than at any time in the history of our country. That means to me that our people have in fact practiced a high degree of citizen-statesmanship. The quality of our democracy has steadily advanced, not eroded. It seems incredible to many today that for 100 years the United States of America practiced and protected the institution of human slavery. It seems unbelievable that the young man from Hood River, Oregon, who today is the health officer and a leading citizen of Juneau, Alaska, spent two years of his youth in an American concentration camp for no crime whatsoever, but only for the circumstance that his parents had been born in Japan.

We look back on those events now and wonder how this country could ever have supported such horrendous things. And we know that the differences between our professions and our practices is always the result of critical circumstances that make the violation of human rights seem necessary and even in the interest of the public good.

That is the hard thing about constitutional liberties. In good, safe times, it is easy to practice them. But when someone else's actions, or even his mere existence, appear to threaten our own safety and happiness, then it becomes so easy to find reasons why the other fellow's theoretical rights should be curtailed in the interest of our own.

This has been one of the continuous threads of our history. This struggle to make our practices about human rights and freedom conform to our devotion to the language of the Constitution. The fact that our history is one of progressing, and not retrogressing, toward the merger is one that should encourage us in the judgments we make about the future of our country.

I would say that one of the major demands upon us in a democratic society is to weigh objectively, and in all instances where they are called into question, the extent to which the rights actually practiced by others, as well as ourselves, conforms to what is promised by the Constitution.

FRIENDLY ACTS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS AMONG NEIGHBORS, June 11, 1959. Commencement Exercises, Mexico City College

The goals of world peace, political freedom, universal decent standards of living, and the rights of individual liberty are dependent for their attainment in no small measure upon raising the level of enlightenment of millions of people. As Jefferson once put it, “the strength of a Democracy can be no greater than the enlightenment of its people.”

Today (they) enter into full citizenship and responsibility, not only as citizens of a particular nation, but also as citizens of the world and its community of nations. No one of us can ever escape these responsibilities. We may evade or avoid them, but they are ours, nonetheless.

The strength of the force of freedom is revealed by the international strength of the apparatus it has destroyed, and the durability of the force of freedom is revealed by the fact that it was achieved by the people themselves.

In the free community, the support of the people must be solicited for the nation’s program. It can only be done by giving the people a permanent stake in the community’s welfare.

I foresee, thus, as the product of the present surge for freedom, a new level of friendship – friendship between the United States and its neighbors based upon equality in freedom and equality in our confidence to master and employ for the good of all, the instruments of progress.

MY REASONS FOR SUPPORTING ADLAI STEVENSON, Oct 24, 1952.

Volunteers for Stevenson Rally, Portland, Oregon (Stevenson was the Democratic candidate for President, Dwight Eisenhower was the Republican candidate, with Richard Nixon as his running mate. Sen. Morse was at that time a Republican)

I am aware of the fact that my decision in this campaign to place what I think is the best interest of my country above the political expediency interests of my Party may be the beginning of the end of my political career. However, that would be a small sacrifice indeed for me to make if my stand for what I believe to be right in this campaign may have some constructive influence on the course of American politics.

I have always said to young people who have asked me if they should enter into politics, yes, enter into politics if you are not afraid to be defeated; watch out for the man who places political victory above political principle.