



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

57)

# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

72-S-72

REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE LONG ISLAND GARAGEMEN'S ASSOCIATION, COLONIE HILL RESTAURANT, MOTOR PARKWAY, HAUPPAUGE, NEW YORK, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1972, 7:15 P.M.

I wish I could tell all of you here tonight, on this most pleasant occasion, that all things are going well. I wish I could tell you that all you need for success is to be honest, work hard, pay your taxes and vote a straight ticket. Unfortunately for most of us that is not the situation. So I think tonight calls for some "straight from the shoulder talk", man-to man. So don't look at me up here as a Cabinet Member. Look at me as a former hod carrier, a card-carrying plasterer, a businessman, a concerned citizen.

The world and the nation we live in is in a period of adjustment, a period of change, a period when old values are being challenged. In many ways, this is a period of confusion and downright frustration.

How did this come about?

I believe most of us go about our affairs in a forthright manner. We don't deliberately plan to undercut the other guy or disrupt his business. We believe in "live and let live". But that doesn't seem to be enough.

I think we must look a little deeper for our answer...back to the very reasons that this nation was founded.

The strength of America rests on two factors. We have a land that is blessed with tremendous natural resources. We Americans evolved in a country of fertile soil, great forests, and tremendous mineral reserves. This rich land, moreover, was favored by a benevolent climate and an abundance of strong rivers and streams that provided power, water and transportation.

At the same time, the people who came later on to this favored country, your ancestors and mine, were a special breed. Let me explain. The world was not surprised that America prospered and grew. But historians have been astounded at the sheer magnificence of this growth and development. Here we were -- a nation made up of the poor, the downtrodden, the illiterate and the misbegotten -- and yet in less than a century we surpassed the rest of the world in almost every field of human endeavor.

This story of the explosive enrichment of our nation and our people is one of the mysteries of the long human story. Where did all this talent come from? You who are the sons and daughters of immigrants probably have -- as I do -- an insight into that question. Most likely our forebears were short on money and on formal education, but they had something unique. And we have learned what that is. We have learned that in times of oppression, famine and other human disasters, the average man stays put. We have also learned that the uncommon man of talent and courage moves about and seeks other answers. And so in the great upheavels that shook Europe in the last half of the 19th century it was the men of daring -- the unusual and the uncommon -- who left home to try their fortune elsewhere. And so they came to America, and out of this strong select stock evolved the people we know as Americans.

The third element in our greatness is our democratic form of government and our democratic society. We have no classes; we have no aristocracy; we recognize no superiors. That is why this nation emerged as free men who worked together to produce the richest civilization in human history.

Yes, we have reached the top. But something has gone wrong. In many cases we seem to have lost our way. What has happened? We are the same people we were fifty years ago; our democracy flourishes and our land is still bountiful. I think the answer lies in our hearts. We have cast aside too many of the virtues that made us great. Would you agree that there are some in this land who seem to have forgotten how to work? It seems that today too many want the good life without being willing to make the effort to reach it. If they can't get it the easy way, they demand that it be given to them as a right. If someone else has it, they say they should have it too, without the necessity of putting forth work and energy and skills.

Some have lost their respect for institutions and the working together to solve common problems. Too many seem to have succumbed to a belief in advancement through violence and protest. We need to re-establish our respect for our legal processes and that's why I am delighted to see your association working within the system to right things you think are wrong. As a Federal

official, I do not believe I should comment on a state problem involving your effort to establish standards and licenses within the auto body repair industry. I can report, however, that all of us in President Nixon's Administration are actively interested in upgrading the quality of automotive service. Virginia Knauer -- the President's Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs and Ann Uccello my own consumer advisor, and I, all have been following with active interest the automotive industry's new program of mechanic certification. We are heartily in accord with the program but we would like to see it include standards of competence and equipment as a pre-requisite for certification.

I have also followed your efforts in connection with the "Consent Decree" agreement and again I am constrained by my office from speaking. I can say, however, that if you are working to improve the quality of your products and services to the automotive consumer, I am with you 100 percent. We are together on that!

And, again, I heartily applaud the mature and business-like way you are proceeding. Ours is a government of law, and the redress of wrongs must be through legal processes. This is what you are doing. I commend you most heartily.

Our country was founded on the belief that each of us was created equal and that we had the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Let me say that again: "the pursuit of happiness". "Pursuit" means you have the opportunity to chase it -- not sit back and wait for someone to bring it to you. And I say that among the under-privileged of today are the workers, the doers -- those who struggle to make ends meet while carrying the burden of taxation levied to provide for those who can't or won't work!

You men here tonight are not in manufacturing directly. You're in the aftermarket -- but I think you'll agree that we haven't in all cases taken full advantage of our improved technology to increase our production and we certainly haven't, in all cases, used it to upgrade overall quality! We have, in fact, used it too frequently to allow us to work less diligently for more money. Now the laziness of some Americans is catching up with us.

I think too, some Americans have lost some of their pride -- pride in achievement, pride in craft, pride of country and pride in ourselves. Too many people today are more interested in retirement benefits than they are in the opportunities for promotion. They have lost their sense of adventure and daring. They seem unwilling to even think of enduring sacrifice and hardship. The great word seems to be "security". I can not believe we Americans are ready to give up the glorious cause of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for the slavery that complete security all too often demands.

I think, too, we have suffered an erosion of our moral strength.

We must return again to the concepts of law and order, certainly, but we must also re-discover the work ethic. We must produce, and what we produce must have quality. We must find again pride in what we do and what we make.

I think too, there is a need for a return to the concepts of decency and respect for each other. We must rediscover again the principles of right and wrong, and as Americans, we must make them a part of our daily lives. We must put them to work and we must see that others do so also. We have to reinstill them in our governments at all levels. We have to elect officials who believe them.

And while we are talking about government, what's wrong with a return to good old fashioned American patriotism? Who doesn't get a thrill out of saluting the flag?

I mention these difficulties of our times because I believe you people here tonight and others like you can help us get back on the right track. You and I are the inheritors of a rich tradition and this tradition -- in these times of uncertainty -- gives us stability. We have added strength and we can turn back the times. And so, my friends, I ask you to stand by the ancient virtues, they are as good today as they were fifty or a hundred years ago when our ancestors brought them to this country. They will triumph over the evils of the time.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Official Business

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID  
DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION  
DOT 518

FIRST CLASS

