



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

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EXCERPTS OF SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE'S REMARKS TO THE CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS, MONTICELLO, NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1972

You do me a great honor this evening. To be rewarded for "Americanism" -- for standing up and speaking out for America -- is a rare tribute these days. Yet it should be, and indeed used to be, the workaday duty of every citizen of our land. "The American's Creed," written by William Tyler Page, was adopted by the House of Representatives on behalf of the American people 54 years ago, during a time of war. Neither the words of the Creed, nor the guiding principles of our Republic, have changed.

Yet how many of those who ridicule our flag, rebel against our institutions, and publicly support our enemies could call themselves Americans if they truly honored the spirit and the language of the Creed, which concludes, and I quote: "I believe it is my duty to my Country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies."

During the last 30 years, as America's role in world affairs has expanded, our love for our Country and the freedom it affords has led us to defend the freedom of others -- in World War II, in Korea, and now in Indochina; in wars hot and cold; at bargaining tables, friendly and frigid.

The roots of this passion for freedom reach back two centuries, and were well expressed by Abraham Lincoln in 1858, when he said, "Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere."

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U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION EXPOSITION  
DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT \* MAY 27-JUNE 4, 1972

To my way of thinking, the word "Americanism" is the highest compliment that can be bestowed on a man. And I humbly thank you.

Yet if anyone truly deserves this award tonight, it is President Richard Nixon.

In a time of national crisis and political ferment, when the temptation to take the path of least resistance would surely sway a lesser man, President Nixon has remained loyal to his oath of office and steadfast in defense of our military forces, our allies and the honor of our Nation.

He loves this country, supports our Constitution, obeys our laws, respects our flag, and defends this Nation against all enemies.

While those who seek the office he holds are advocating what amounts to an admission of defeat, President Nixon is putting his own political welfare aside in his efforts to secure a peace that will be just, fair to all concerned and that will protect the people of South Vietnam.

It was Daniel Webster who said: "God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to guard and defend it."

The years have not altered the wisdom of those words. Time has not discounted the price of freedom.

While there are those who could deny it -- and do deny it in campaign speeches every day -- there is much at stake for the United States in Vietnam today.

The safety of 60,000 American troops is at stake.

The future of 17 million citizens of South Vietnam is at stake.

The national honor of the United States is at stake.

Stability in other trouble spots -- such as the Middle East where the same modern Soviet weapons confront the people of Israel -- is at stake.

The prospect of arranging a future peace with honor anywhere in the world is also at stake.

We arrived at this critical period of national testing -- testing of our will, our unity and our ethical stamina -- because there were no honorable alternatives. President Nixon has offered North Vietnam the most generous peace terms in history, entailing neither defeat nor humiliation for either side.

But the enemy refused to negotiate.

President Nixon had offered to discuss any settlement, with the single exception of the forced imposition of a Communist government on South Vietnam.

But the enemy refused even to talk.

President Nixon had endeavored to renew peace negotiations, public and private.

But the enemy responded by an undisguised invasion of South Vietnam -- an invasion fueled and armed by modern weapons and heavy supplies.

The President took the action he had to take. And the people, by a vast majority, have rallied to his support.

In the 48 hours following the President's televised statement, 20,000 telegrams poured into the white house, with 20,000 more jamming telegraph offices across the country. Public support, which was running 4 to 1 in the early count, is now more like 6 to 1. The first telephone survey taken by Opinion Research Corporation indicated that 3 out of 4 Americans support the President's decision to mine the harbors.

There are, of course, those who do not approve. Much of the disapproval, I am sure, is honest dissent. But much of it is motivated by partisan politics, and much of it emerges through the mob temper tantrums of people intellectually incapable of working within the system.

It seems that many of those who stand with the President write; many of those who do not, riot.

But I must confess I can only wonder at those who protest the President's moves on grounds of humanitarian concern for the "innocent" people of North Vietnam, But show nothing of the same concern for the people of South Vietnam caught in the path of the Communist juggernaut.

It is not the South that is invading the North.

It is not Saigon that seeks political control of all Indochina.

Surely it is within the power of Hanoi to halt the war instantly, with nothing to lose except the license to wage military and political aggression against the South.

<sup>27</sup>  
<sup>28</sup> President Nixon has given North Vietnam every opportunity to bargain in good faith.

<sup>29</sup>  
He has been withdrawing our ground forces according to schedule, as he promised.

<sup>30</sup>  
He has advocated a free election in South Vietnam under international supervision.

<sup>31</sup>  
He has offered economic help to North Vietnam to repair the ravages of war.

The leaders in Hanoi must either assume they can win a military victory against South Vietnam, or they are counting on dissent and division within the United States to force our complete capitulation and the collapse of independence in Indochina.

It is tough enough to fight a ruthless and unprincipled enemy. It is tougher when the fight must be also waged against partisan critics at home, who apparently see no value in depriving the enemy of the necessities of war and no virtue in upholding the honor of our Nation.

My friends, I do not believe we have come to this inverse state of patriotism because of America's growing prosperity, affluence and permissiveness. But I can remember, as can many of you, when our Nation was poor -- when the depression was upon the land, and a square meal was a luxury.

I remember what it was to shovel coal all winter -- when there was coal to shovel. I can recall walking long miles to work, going hungry for a day, putting cardboard in shoes, and thanking the Good Lord, on my knees, for the privilege of working and worshipping in the United States of America.

There is no joy in hard times, but they do stiffen the spine and discipline the soul. In poverty we had virtue; in adversity, strength; in privation, determination; and in depression, faith. Under the threat of oppression, we rallied to our country's need, not always without dissent, but certainly without rancor. We thanked God for America, and we meant it.

If in God we truly trust, then we must continue to thank Him for the blessings that are ours in America. We must ask His continued guidance for our leaders, compassion for our afflicted and strength for our Nation. And we must pray for our enemies, as Christ has commanded.

To Listen to the critics of our country, one would think that America must be the worst of all nations. Yet half the people on Earth would willingly trade places with the most deprived, the most underprivileged among us.

Thomas Jefferson, in citing the virtues of America, spoke of "its soul, its climate, its equality, its liberty, laws, people and manners.

"How little do my countrymen realize," he said "what precious blessings they are in possession of, and which no other people on earth enjoy."

In his second inaugural, Abraham Lincoln spoke of a war that was also divisive and threatening the unity of our Nation.

"With firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right," he said, "let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wounds ... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Today, as in Lincoln's day, there is no better, no nobler course of action. It is the path President Nixon has determined we must take.

We owe him our united support. We owe the Nation our undivided loyalty.

We owe posterity our fidelity to the principles of liberty, wherever the flame of freedom flickers or the desire for human dignity is proclaimed.