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SEPTEMBER 15, 1975

Office of the Vice President  
London, England

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FOLLOWING ARE REMARKS OF  
VICE PRESIDENT NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER  
AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON, ENGLAND  
AT THE OPENING OF  
THE UNITED STATES BICENTENNIAL EXHIBITION,  
"THE WORLD OF FRANKLIN AND JEFFERSON"  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1975 AT 7:30 PM (GMT)

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Ambassador, Lord Trevelyan, distinguished guests: It is my high honor to head a delegation of American citizens who are here to present "The World of Franklin and Jefferson" to the people of Great Britain.

This exhibition is the centerpiece of our Bicentennial celebration overseas. Her Majesty's visit to America next summer will be the capstone of our joint commemoration. Your participation in the opening of this exhibition, Mr. Prime Minister, further strengthens one of the closest and most important relationships between nations in the history of mankind.

Thus we come to you today in reaffirmation of the principles that underlie our common heritage: Recognition of the spiritual nature of man, human liberty and self-government, the dignity of work, and the humane necessity of equal opportunity and freedom of enterprise.

Down through the years, our dedication to common principles -- principles which we importantly inherited from you -- has bound us together in fair weather and storm. And so we mark today, not a parting of two peoples, 200 years ago, but renewal of a common faith in freedom and the rights of man that has endured for 200 years.

The roots of the American Republic lie deep in British soil. Franklin and Jefferson, each in his own way, was a direct product of English concepts: Franklin the man of science, rational discourse and cosmopolitan wit; Jefferson, the apostle of natural law, a leader of political idealism. Both were identifiably American -- and yet, the character of each, in particular ways, was shaped by their ties with England.

Franklin was no stranger to London. As a Fellow of the Royal Society, and the Society of Arts, as the holder of honorary doctorates from Oxford and Aberdeen, Franklin thrived intellectually and socially in the most important circles here. "Upon the whole," Franklin wrote, "I have lived so great a part of my life in Britain, and have formed so many friendships in it, that I love it, and sincerely wish it prosperity..."

While Jefferson was more a man of the Continent, a familiar face in France, he was steeped in English political philosophy. Thus he was influenced by John Locke, as well as by Montesquieu and Rosseau, as he shaped the framework of the Declaration of Independence and its affirmation of human rights.

Franklin and Jefferson are representatives of that group of remarkable men who pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to the American cause -- mindful of their English heritage and the principles of English liberty, but determined to build a new Nation in which these principles of freedom and justice would be guaranteed to all citizens.

Through the years, we've stood by these principles. Twice in this century, the American people were inspired by the courage and tenacity of Great Britain's stand against totalitarian aggression. In each case, our own devotion to democracy and freedom led us to join you in the ultimate victory over the enemies of freedom.

Challenges to free peoples have continued during three decades of profound postwar changes. Today, all free nations are involved to varying degrees in events that dramatically illustrate the new dimensions of our national security. National security is no longer a military question alone.

Now, due to growing interdependence in the world, our national security is also profoundly affected by fundamental economic factors, and because of the ideological divisions in the world, it is subject to psychological and political subversion.

In this complex and competitive environment, we must restore the strength and health of our economies and develop a common defense against attempts at economic manipulation; we must work to achieve the energy independence of the free world through innovative and dedicated efforts; we must recognize that detente is a vital factor in reducing the risks of confrontation; however a quest for detente without strength could be disastrous; we must recognize that the NATO alliance remains the cornerstone of that military strength, and we must insure its solidity, and find solutions to the strains on its southern flank. We must renew our faith in the fundamental concepts that have brought our countries to the highest fulfillment of human aspirations of any society in history; freedom, human dignity, individual responsibility, the dynamism of democratic free enterprise and the steady growth of individual opportunity for all.

We need to recapture our confidence and faith in ourselves -- in our ability -- and in our national purposes. The basic test is whether we as free peoples can achieve the self-discipline necessary to take the actions and make the sacrifices essential to the preservation of that freedom. I'm optimistic that we can and that we will.

As Thomas Paine said, "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

We believe that the American Bicentennial is relevant and timely and holds a deep meaning for the world at this particular moment in history. For the Anglo-American ideals upon which the American Nation was founded are not artifacts of a dead past. They are vital components of a living present that give us meaning and direction as we seek our common destiny in this time of turbulent transition.

And so, in commemorating the American Bicentennial, we reaffirm to the world our fundamental and steadfast dedication to the propositions set forth in that great American document -- so uniquely English in its intellectual parentage -- the Declaration of Independence; that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and, that government everywhere is made legitimate only by the consent of the governed.

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