

The original documents are located in Box D18, folder “Order of AHEPA, Grand Rapids, MI, June 13, 1965” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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READING TEXT
M. J. AHEPA
Grand Rapids City Chapter

In all modesty, I would like to say that I am uniquely qualified to be your speaker. As Republican Leader of the House--where there are 140 Republicans and 294 Democrats---I can speak as something of an authority on the plight of the oppressed minorities.

May I add a postscript----I fervently hope that we in the minority party of Congress exhibit the same courage, ingenuity and integrity as have the Greek Cypriots on the troubled island of Cyprus.

You may recall that I was elected Minority Leader by a landslide vote---- 73 to 67. This shows that all you need is an allegation of virtue, a moderate amount of hard work, and lots of luck.

At this point I suspect my good friend Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen might caution me that the oil can is mightier than the sword.

Certainly, Senator Dirksen and I agree most of the time---but we have differences of opinion about barbershops and hairstyles.

By the way--coming directly from Washington I can give you a report on how the government is operating under the Johnson Administration.

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If you doubt there have been some changes on the banks of the Potomac, I suggest you watch for next year's Internal Revenue forms. Across the top will be the words--"The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You."

By the way, a lot of Americans take a dim view of the Internal Revenue official warning each year on income tax forms. In the space which the Revenue service tells taxpayers to leave blank, a lot of strong-willed Americans write a short message ~~in reply~~ in reply. It reads--"I'll write anywhere I please!"

You may be interested to know it's not true that Lyndon Johnson is planning to change the name of the Nation's Capitol to "Austin-East."

It seems appropriate at this moment--speaking of changing names--to congratulate my good friend and widely-known reporter George Zarry. I hope to learn from Zarry how Dowagiac was persuaded to rename an alley after George. Knowing Zarry, I'm certain he will have an appropriate -- and quotable---answer.

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I am delighted to be with you for many reasons in a friendly atmosphere of universality and brotherhood.

First, I have a report on the situation in Cyprus..an island now enjoying a measure of peace in the wake of barbaric acts of violence and aggression.

Before coming here to be with you, I was given a report by the State Department, which described the political situation on Cyprus as fairly stable at this time.

Greek Cypriots have launched an effective peace offensive...fighting has stopped, except for an occasional outburst....the economy is reported as still going strong.

I applaud the efforts of the people there to obtain the right of self-determination for all citizens of Cyprus, including the protection of the minority's legitimate rights.

The dark pages of history dating back 511 years can be turned back by both the majority and minority working their will as free people--- without dictation, influence and threats from the outside.



Summary

We can look to the United States as an historic example of a nation being built by people exercising the right of self-determination, the very foundation for human dignity and individual freedom.

Unfortunately at this critical point in time, there is a threat to the political system in our Nation that has worked successfully since the Constitution was written.

The threat is in the form of a growing danger that our strong two-party political system will become a myth.

Our Nation needs a strong two-party system. It is Democracy's assurance against any drift toward tyranny. Conversely an over-balance of strength in either party for too long will make a mockery of our traditions in government and will weaken the voice of the people.

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over-balance of strength in either party for too long will make a mockery of our traditions in government and will weaken the voice of the people.

Our two-party system, although not written into the Constitution, builds into government an additional set of checks and balances.

Early in our history, a wise decision was made to follow the pattern of a two-party framework. Thus, we avoided the loss of freedom that accompanies a one-party government; we were spared the chaos and confusion of a multi-party government.

Not only do two strong political parties provide the electorate with legislative alternatives, but also the means for attaining a high level of honesty and frankness.

A current social philosopher has so well pointed out that the strength of our form of government lies not so much in the fact that we always elect the best person to office, but rather that the electorate can always remove an unworthy official from office by exercising the voting franchise.

*At present no opportunity for a "hearing" if
Executive branch says NO.*



Fact that we should have two strong equally balanced
political parties does not mean they should always oppose
each other -
Vanderburg/Tamm 12-

Hand-in-hand with the need for two strong political parties in the American democracy is the necessity for a proper balance in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

When the balance in Congress is steeply and dangerously tilted by an overwhelming majority in either political party, our system of checks and balances is in jeopardy.

The legislative-executive-judicial balance, as established by our Constitution, is a simple, yet ingenious, system of insuring our freedom.

Certainly, there is criticism of Congress, the legislative branch. I believe this is a manifestation of our frustrations -- the tensions built up by a prolonged cold war and recent strife in two hemispheres, the existence of poverty in the midst of plenty, the highly-complex problems linked with urbanized living, the gap between the American Ideal of equality and its realization.

Of Congress, perhaps the critics would say, "Let's stop talking and stalling and get things done."



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*Perhaps when this is said
we should remind ourselves*

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Congress was designed to be a deliberative body with Representatives in the House and two Senators from each State bearing the responsibility of reaching majority decisions, but only after thorough study and debate.

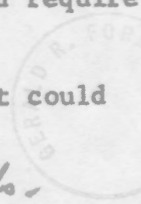
For those who view Congress as too cumbersome, too old-fashioned, too slow to act, there are two sound answers.

First, the two houses of Congress have repeatedly proved they can act with calculated swiftness to meet crisis -- domestic or foreign.

Second, the advantages of precipitous action are often outweighed by the safeguard of deliberation and the resulting slowness.

With a balance of power in the Congress, there is no chance of racing to the brink of decision with the possibility of tumbling into the yawning chasm of irresponsibility.

The power of the executive branch -- the White House -- the President -- is given awesome proportions when one political party ^{*overwhelmingly*} dominates the Congress and also elects the Chief Executive. Great power in a Democracy should require great self-restraint. And if power is consistently used improperly, it could mean the eventual death of the two-party system *with its safe-guards.*



For this reason I have proposed that when both the Executive and Legislative branches are dominated by the same political party -- and it matters not which -- the Committees on Government Operations of the House and Senate should be under the control of the minority party. These *two* committees have a special responsibility to investigate official action *or inaction* within the Executive branch of the government.

With broad investigating authority, this arrangement would provide an effective vehicle to assure that the voice of the minority would be heard and that the best interests of our citizens and taxpayers would be protected. The majority would be constantly on notice that its actions or inactions were subject to thorough and critical review.

The duty of the third branch of government -- the Federal Judiciary -- is to interpret and apply the Constitution and the laws.

When the Judicial branch arbitrarily elbows its way to new positions of authority, it disregards the wise suggestions of judicial restraint made by the late Justice Frankfurter and others.



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When the Supreme Court ordered states to reapportion on the "one-man, one-vote" concept, Justice Frankfurter in a dissenting opinion was critical of an assumption by the Court of "destructively novel judicial power."

"In this situation, as in others of like nature, appeal for relief does not belong here," Justice Frankfurter wrote. "Appeal must be made to an informed electorate," he explained, and added: "In a democratic society like ours, relief must come through an aroused public conscience that sears the conscience of the people's representatives."

In concluding, I emphasize that among the challenges of our time ~~are~~
~~especially for those of your generation~~ are the strengthening of the two-party system and the re-establishment of balance in the three branches of government.

What are your guidelines in helping to preserve our Democracy?

Where do you start?



I urge that you become more involved in the political world; that you become even more active in an informed, civically militant electorate.

It seems to me that too many Americans pride themselves as being political ~~independents~~ ^{independents}. These are the citizens who vote once every four years, who decline political partisanship with many excuses, who criticize both political parties from the sidelines.

Our Democrat friends and my own Party, it seems to me, should direct much of our efforts toward helping each of these well-meaning Americans choose a political party.

The choice of being either a Republican or a Democrat should be made only after carefully studying the philosophies of each party. Perhaps, some will switch alliances. This is a choice under freedom.

You can accept even greater responsibilities in an exciting, demanding and changing world by becoming active in politics.... as voters, as taxpayers, as partisans, as party workers, yes--as candidates for public office.

I am confident you will meet the challenges of 1965 America with unlimited patience, imagination, confidence, courage and willingness to

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sacrifice to make the future better than the past.

Thank you for inviting me to share this hour with you.

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* * * *

Among the great challenges of our time are the strengthening of the two-party system and the re-establishment of balance in the three branches of government. I am confident these challenges will be met by citizens with patience, imagination, courage and willingness to sacrifice to make the future better than the past.

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