

TRUE AMERICAN SOVEREIGNTY

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Thank you very much. I'm happy to be with you today, and I thank your board members and hosts. As I told some of you during the reception, this is the first time I have addressed a major function of the Society since 1967. Those were heady years, and I'm very happy to return to see that you have regained a full head of steam. This is a splendid turn-out. It looks to me like forces that are capable of doing great good. And I wish to congratulate you all.

At the outset I ask you to indulge me in a word of prayer: Our father in Heaven, we bring praises for your mercies. In gathering us together you shower us with the blessings of courage and increased strength. We celebrate the wonders of faith working through hours of darkness. And we thank you, Lord, for a promise of salvation that bears our hearts beyond the perils that face our land. We return the gratitude of dedicated service for the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The last time I offered a prayer at the commencement of a public address was in June of this year, two weeks before the season of Rescue began in Wichita, where I addressed the PLAN convention at the start of those activities. I explained to them at the time that I was doing so specifically because Americans had become singularly tongue-tied when it comes to expressing their faith in public. We really need to recover the ability to stand on our own feet, and to open our own mouths, if we intend ever to enjoy genuine freedom in this land again.

It strikes me that that is a much more important lesson for us to learn than the beguiling and misleading promises that we hear from people constantly invoking school prayer, who want thirty seconds of silence or non-denominational prayer, in a deathly bargain, for turning over their children to atheistic education. I believe that it is time we all became much wiser in what we demand of the state and much more prudent about what we are willing to accept. I for one am not open any longer to the proposal that schools that fail to educate, and that exclude the Bible, will nonetheless be acceptable to free people so long as those schools admit a momentary non-denominational prayer.

Anyone who thinks seriously about these questions will realize how often we are distracted by proposed constitutional amendments for this or that, when the real challenge we face is to stand up as free men and women, and simply to assert the sanctity of our beliefs and the importance of our heritage. Is it not ironic to find a manly people standing, waiting for government to satisfy their longings; waiting for office-holders to promise this or that regulation, this or that constitutional amendment, instead of simply standing forth and asserting with pride and dignity the liberty that was bequeathed to them?

I find that a strange picture, stranger still because it is so often brought to us, not by those who are often hostile to liberty, but all too often by those who appear to be sponsors of liberty and religion.

This afternoon I am to speak about true American sovereignty. I take it up bearing in mind that I am frequently called upon to make presentations today. I am on the campaign trail, as some of you know. And folk often wonder about people who are busy politicking, as the expression goes, what they can believe of what they have to say: when they actually speak their hearts, and when instead they are only speaking to the occasion.

There is no way for me to place you all in my hip pocket to carry you around the state with me, so that you may see that the song never changes, however much the choir may vary. I am often asked the question, why are you doing this. What is the consequence of doing this? Is there any prospect of success? I want you to know that success is not measured, in my estimation, by the vote tally on election night. I won't dismiss a positive vote tally, mind you. I will labor for one. But that is not for me the measure of success. The measure is to bring home to people, to bring to bear in this country of ours, some sense of urgency about the need to reassert the priority of the people in this land in determining the course of this government.

I am already satisfied. A week ago I offered to the public through an address to the California Credit Union League a fourteen-point plan for economic recovery in the United States, dealing with short-term and long-term considerations. Before fully a week was out Governor Wilson had already adopted two of the planks in my plan. I believe that we have an effect when we speak directly to the issues that concern us, and when we assert our ability to make the judgments about the direction of our own lives and the life of this country.

If we can spread from among this immediate circle in radiating patterns throughout our state and our land a renewed confidence, a renewed sense of courage that we can make these decisions, that we can govern our own lives, that we can rise to the occasion without waiting for a silver bullet to be brought from Washington or Sacramento, then I will have had the effect I seek to have. Then I will have succeeded.

That means that I have not come to make a point; I have come to make a difference. I do not speak day after day because I need practice for my vocal chords. After twenty years working as a university professor, I don't need opportunities to pontificate. Students at Harvey Mudd College will tell you that. So, I do not need additional occasions to pontificate. But I carry a burden that requires me to come to you, as I do to people throughout this state, to ask you to share this burden. That burden is that we are losing slowly, invisibly, silently, the right to call ourselves a free people.

We are losing sovereignty as it is properly understood, and we can regain it. We can resist the erosion of our liberties. I will not offer you the whole story in this short talk this afternoon. But I will give some examples of how this is happening and why it poses a danger for us. Permit me to ask you to bear two things in mind that we often try to separate for ourselves. I want you to bear in mind that how we respond to the urgencies of our domestic politics is very much tied to how we respond to the urgencies of national security. They are not in fact separable issues. The way we might best reconcile ourselves to thinking of them as one is to remember, as we ponder the necessities of an American defense, that we bear still more heavily the responsibility to make America worth defending.

That is why the issues of our domestic politics leads ineluctably toward a discussion of our national security status in the world, at a time – 1991, the late twentieth century—when there is more confusion about where we stand in the world than we have ever witnessed before. When I traveled last spring to Czechoslovakia, which is of course now the land of freedom as the story goes, I was constantly perplexed as I asked my hosts whether the Soviet troops had left.

You see, I arrived there the week after the troops were to have departed. As I looked around I saw no evidence of troops in the streets. Nevertheless, I saw no evidence of departure, for as I drove around I saw in old Soviet barracks, not people to be sure, but lots of motor pool vehicles and similar equipment behind the walls. So I kept asking: Are they gone? Everyone assured me: Yes, they are gone. Finally, ten days after my return from Czechoslovakia, there was another announcement: The Soviet troops are withdrawing today!

It is a very confused picture, a confused part of the world. It is doubly confused because the people there are indeed what you would expect them to be: human beings for whom the promise of freedom is meaningful. What makes it meaningful to us makes it meaningful to human beings everywhere. The promise of self-government, the affirmation of the American founders that all human beings are capable of self-government is no less realizable in Czechoslovakia than it is realizable here. Yet, we see there a people whose dreams, now spawned by whatever is taking part in that part of the world, are probably doomed to disappointment. For they are rather the playthings of political dynamics that don't provide even the occasion to begin with to create a truly free nation—a nation in which people can see themselves as one people, united through consent to a common good founded on the unshakeable proposition that self-government is the source of all strength and goodness in the political regime. That is what they are not going to be able to accomplish, just as the people in Yugoslavia cannot today accomplish it.

That is what two hundred years ago was offered to the people of the United States, and that is what today is imperiled in the United States—perhaps not as much as it is imperiled in Czechoslovakia at this moment but nevertheless imperiled. Why? We, characteristically in the late twentieth century, defer to office holders and would be office holders when it comes to making decisions about how we should live our lives, how we should govern ourselves.

We seem to think that unless various economic, social, educational, finance, and other policies come with a stamp of approval from bureaucrats or elected officials, then they cannot determine the course of our lives. That is a mistake, my friends. We are today in the posture of asserting faith, indeed we are often demanded to have faith, in the nostrums of government and almost never asked to have faith in ourselves as a free people.

Ronald Reagan used to tell a story about the chap who had fallen off a cliff and grabbed the branch of a tree growing out of the side cliff on his way down. There he saw himself suspended three hundred feet above the canyon floor, which was a straight drop down. He did not know what to do, and he looked up. He said, “Lord, if there’s anyone up there, give me faith. Tell me what to do.” A voice came back to him and said to him, “Have faith, let go.” The fellow looked down again. He looked back up and said, “Is there anyone else up there?”

The reality is that, when we are told by government today, “Have faith, the deficit will shrink. Have faith, jobs will return to this economy. Have faith, we can be number one in math and science if you just let the bureaucracy decide it.” You know that that is not the voice of God. That is the voice of the fellow who pushed us off the cliff in the first place. We require to say to government today, “Keep the faith. Let us take care of restoring prosperity. Let us educate our offspring.

Let us take care of resolving the continuing tensions of urban and rural life—what you so blithely dismiss as “social problems” but what we know and experience as real family problems. We will do it. You keep the faith and keep out of our way.”

This is no longer an argument of convenience. When Ronald Reagan came in 1980 and said, “The American people are not the problem. American business is not the problem. The free enterprise system is not the problem. Government is the problem,” that was just the beginning. We have to face the reality now that what was asserted in 1980 has not been realized in 1991. We have not gotten the point across. We will get it across, if we simply recover into our hands the full and proper authority to deal with these issues.

Here is one now looming that is going to confuse so many of us. It is called the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act.” It is not an assault upon religious freedom by liberals. It is a misguided attempt to save religious freedom by conservatives. They are responding to a Supreme Court decision called *Employment Division v. Smith*. The decision was very simple. It said that people who use the drug peyote are still subject to regulations that rule, that people who lose their jobs for cause cannot receive unemployment. When such people have jobs in public transportation, and they fail to pass drug tests, when they go to the unemployment division in Oregon they cannot receive unemployment payments since they were dismissed for being drugged. The Court ruled that that is not a law against religion; that is a law against being drugged. Therefore it does not violate religious freedom, even though the ritual use of peyote by Indians is religiously based.

Some people think that this means that all religious conduct can be regulated by the state. Thus, they have introduced in Congress a measure called the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act,” to overturn the decision in *Smith*. Overturning it would mean, that whatever your practices are that are rooted in your claim of religious faith, they will provide you an exemption with respect to otherwise general government regulations. In short, the people doing this seem to believe that religion can not fend for itself. They think that religion must go to the state to carve out special protections, just the way those who now demand school prayer in faithless schools are praying to the state, and not to Heaven, to guide their lives.

I think that this is a tremendous mistake for a people steeped in the heritage of religious freedom and sincere faith to make. Whenever true religion prays to the state for the opportunity to pray, religion is dead. We have been confused, because those who have used the state and regulatory processes for the last fifty years, always in the cause of the left, the cause of the welfare state, the cause of advancing socialism, have crept into our own way of thinking. They lead us now to imagine that we can arrogate the powers of the state to the defense of freedom and faith.

They miss the point. The point is that freedom and faith themselves defend us from the state. We don't get them from the state. When we saw my friend Clarence Thomas being pilloried before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary for his faith in natural rights, for his affirmation of the maxim from the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal,” we saw in living color the complete rejection of America, the complete rejection of America in the mouths of those elected to govern. That should have brought home to us the nature of the crisis.

They say, “What has natural law to do with the Constitution?” And these are the people who have been elected conformably to a constitutional tradition born of the “laws of nature and of nature's god.” That tells you how deep the trouble is. The fact that Clarence ultimately became Justice Thomas is not because they gained wisdom. It is because the American people spoke so loudly that they did not dare resist. I want you to know that, when I was with Justice Thomas in Washing-

ton three weeks ago, he himself insisted, “the Senate did not confirm me. The American people did.”

That is a clear example of how we regain sovereignty: by speaking out against expectation, against the odds, against power; by asserting our beliefs and our determination to live the life of freedom, whatever the policy requirements of the day call for.

Here is another example: We are faced today with the requirement to deal with an Administration that wants to save the crumbling Soviet Union. We are told that it is our interest to stabilize that area of the world. For there are nuclear weapons there, which in the hands of unpredictable, unstable parties, could very well create havoc in the world. That argument is true, by the way. Nuclear weapons are dangerous, and unstable people having them could create havoc in the world. But we are told that the way we are going to do this is through fostering free institutions and free market economics in the Soviet Union by sending taxpayer dollars to the government of the Soviet Union.

Just think of it. We are going to use the methods of a centralized political system to build a free economy in the Soviet Union! It defies common sense. In fact, it makes no sense. The United States once was a new democracy, newly developing a market economy. Two hundred years ago that was our fate. And, yes, we did have assistance from foreign financing. It did not come in the form of government to government relief. It did not follow the model of socialism. It came effectively through what I call development bonds. From Holland, France, Spain, and elsewhere there came purchases of American bonds which, when they were repaid, allowed those who purchased the bonds to share fully in the rising profits of this robust, new economy.

If the Administration is so persuaded that freedom has dawned in the Soviet Union, that capitalism is the wave of the future, that these people are going to enter into the productive ways of a free economy, why shouldn't they be willing to invite them to come to this country to sell development bonds? We know from the polls that most Americans believe what the Administration has told us—that a “new order of the ages” has arrived. Therefore, the bonds would be sold. That's the way of the market, and it is up to us to communicate that message.

It is up to us to reassert the priority of the methods of freedom in dealing with grave political problems, if we intend to assure that this remains a free country. We will do that with respect to the Eastern bloc in proportion as we have learned to do it at home, with respect to the critical questions that face us.

If we ever learn to abandon the failed experiment in education, and to recover in our hands the authority to educate our children, then we will have equally the courage to insist on using American methods to provide for American national security in the world.

I am somewhat concerned about people whom I hear today, who once upon a time used to attack the United Nations because, of course, it represented an unconstitutional delegation of American sovereignty to an unelected, unrepresentative world body, but who in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf crisis, now begin to say that “the U. N. is o.k. It collaborated with George Bush; maybe it can work after all.”

Now, I do not have to regret the victory over Iraq in order to say that that strikes me as folly. You see, the power the American government exercises is not the power of the American government. It is our power. We gave it to them with strings attached. It's limited government, and they cannot give it away. And I, for one, think it scandalous that an American president goes first to the

U. N. General Assembly, in order to gain authority to wage war, all the time ignoring the Congress of the United States.

When we have to calculate where we stand in this country on the basis, not of our inherent constitutional strength and privileges, but on the basis of a fluctuating diplomacy and something called “world public opinion,” we have lost control. We no longer know what the common good established by consent ought to produce. That means that we can no more provide for American national security in the world than we can at home uphold the strength of American principles.

We can recover that, if we are ready to assume the responsibility it entails; if we, within our own communities and within the politics that we practice, are ready to stand forth. It is not enough for us to become critics. We must also remember the heavy weight of responsibility that the American founding imposed upon the citizens of this land.

I said at the outset that the American founders affirmed a confidence in mankind’s sufficiency or capability for self-government. That was not just a pipe dream. What took place was unheard of theretofore in history. The thought that any and everybody could govern themselves was simply unheard of. It was a moral proposition, and not just a rule for establishing political institutions. It means more than majority rule or democratic procedure. It means that we expect people to govern themselves, to live within a spirit of moderation, with sufficient self-control to make their lives examples of human accomplishment.

Look at our society today, and ask how often we are willing to reaffirm the capacity of humankind for self-government. You will find that the instances are rare. You will find that we have constructed a welfare state, in which we breed dependence, not responsibility. You will find that we are unwilling to turn to policies that will say to people, Self-care, not welfare, is the American way.

We are tied together, morally and politically, in a chain of ever increasing responsibility, which will save and restore American sovereignty, in proportion as we are prepared to take it up in all seriousness and to insist upon it. That leads me to leave you with this challenge: Across a long list of policy areas in our country today, we face the urgent need for reconsideration. One of those is of course the area of affirmative action, where we have just passed a new law, enacting under Congress’ authority for the first time racial and gender preferences. These are again erosions of the notion of personal and direct responsibility. We face laws in the regulation of our banks and our credit unions that are destroying the foundations of free banking in America. Through a long list of areas, we face policies and regulations that threaten to destroy faith in self-government, indeed the very existence of self-government. Your challenge is to say that now is when that stops; to say that you will reassert that essential spirit of control that characterized American government in its first hours. If you will join me in doing that, I believe that American sovereignty will once again defend America.