

SUGGESTED REMARKS --- INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Four years ago we assembled here under the imperative of going forward together, and now we assemble in the affirmation that we will continue forward. Our course shall not be determined by the words spoken here; it shall be determined by the commitment we take from here.

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We no longer suffer the agony of raucous division. For the first time in a decade we can turn our energies with a unity of purpose toward good works and purposeful effort.

The cloud of confrontation which has so long plagued the world has been replaced by a spirit of negotiation which gives us the greatest potential for lasting peace that America and the world has witnessed in this century.

Yet, the lessening of division and the soothing promise of peace do not permit the luxury of complacency. Instead, we have an urgent opportunity to make basic decisions about ourselves. And one of those decisions -- perhaps the most fundamental one -- concerns our capacity to govern in an era of constant flux.

A short three and a half years from our 200th birthday as a nation, we can proudly bear witness that the United States Government has been the vessel of enormous change and progress. However, the threat to our capacity to govern lies precisely in the unwarranted belief that our government provides the primary thrust of the American experience.

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When America was summoned to greatness, the answer did not come from government, which is the repository of power -- but from the people, who are the wellspring of that power.

Consider this for a moment: if we had but half our wealth; if our cities did not gleam with tall buildings and our farms produce in full abundance; if we did not have high technology and sophisticated machinery; if we did not have all this, we would still possess our most precious resource: the will and tenacity of the American people to take themselves beyond limiting boundaries.

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For nearly 200 years, America's polestar has been unwavering: freedom for all men; prosperity at home; and peace abroad. Happiness, fulfillment and security within our shores, and openness and peaceful intentions without our shores. These remain our goals today -- the constant principles of our nationhood.

But let us look to the year 2000 as we set our course today. Unless we choose change that works over undisciplined and uncharted change, we may well find technical freedom and technological perfection in the years ahead, yet also find spiritual bondage and social and cultural depletion. If we make our choice unwisely, then we will reap as we have sown.

We may become proficient at managing our lives, but deficient in redeeming our spirit. As we bend our will and resources to the future  
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we cannot allow mechanical attainments /override the sensitivity of our soul. Instead, we must manage the complexities of change with a

simplicity of purpose.

If social governance becomes dangerously intoxicated with the process by which things are done instead of the purpose for which things are done, it is not process at all. It is merely a managerial achievement.

As we move to reverse the trend which has the government consuming the best of our resources and talents, we will not abandon the solemn commitment of representative government. Rather, it is to abandon the smug notion that enough people or enough words or enough money and charts and papers and buildings can preserve our republic against the advance of time.

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We Americans have come to expect too much of our institutional arrangements. In truth, we must come to expect less of our government and more of ourselves.

And America's leadership has committed too much of our institutions. We have asked our citizens to sacrifice their power and their resources, and have not sacrificed in return. The personal sacrifice of an American should not lie solely in what he commits to his country's power to govern, but in what he can do resourcefully to eliminate his government's necessity to govern excessively.

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As a people, we have never set our standards too high; we have only set our expectations too high. Liberty is our standard, but license has become the inflated expectation of too many. The pursuit of happiness



and prosperity is our standard, but the high expectation is too often that a life of ease will come without toil.

In the process of elevating our expectations and mistaking them for standards, we have come dangerously near to undermining our very ability to operate our social system. The legacy of unfulfilled promises and overblown rhetoric is a failure to meet expectations -- a failure that is confused too often with the failure to conform with basic standards.

We will be judged harshly if we think our government and leaders can and should do everything -- that our Congress can enact any law to solve any problem; that the presidency can touch everyone's life with an all-powerful arm; that each individual's existence can be transformed by institutional energy.

I will challenge the wisdom of any policy which would turn us into supplicants of the government instead of suppliers of good governance. And I shall challenge any guidepost which exalts form over substance and the collective over the individual.

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I seek not to tear down what the American people have so carefully nurtured in two centuries. I seek, instead, to recapture the spirit of those who bravely gathered to establish our first principles. While theirs was a spirit of revolution, ours must be a spirit of the continuing revolution -- the transformation of an ambitious experiment into a glorious reality.

In the end, our lives and fortunes will be determined by the nature of our resolve and our ability to confront self-doubt with qualities of strength, fortitude, perserverance, patience and love. If we lose our will or weaken our resolve, we will not merit the mantle of greatness.

Our self-confidence, born of humility, will sustain the majesty of America -- this great and good nation of ours -- in the same way she has been sustained from the hot summer's day in Independence Hall to the marvel of Apollo XVII. By the grace of our spirit and with an untiring fidelity to that in which we believe, we cannot fail.

We will not fail because we ask of ourselves to keep going, for there is work to be done, and it is every man's work.

And as we continue forward, seeking the guidance of the Almighty and the blessing of His will, we shall do more than simply accept our rich national patrimony. We shall build on it in a way to insure that the generations who follow will judge us through the prism of time as gracious, good, and the sure stewards of our destiny and mankind's.