

TO: RN

FROM: LG

THE INAUGURAL

1. The mood of the nation. This is the most special occasion of all. Transition ended, power passed, the new President speaks to chart the nation's course. For a moment, the ~~the~~ angers and passions abate. The people wait expectantly, but the underlying mood remains the same. And it is this mood that has to be deciphered and addressed.

I think the mood of America is the sum of 1968, a year which brought to the surface a mass of accumulating individual discontents. The common thread is the notion of power -- not national power, or power over foreign policy -- but power to take part, to act, to have a role in events that affect ones daily life, to have what has been endlessly referred to as a "piece of the action". Man has a deep, primitive need to exercise his faculties. The use of energy creates more energy. Passivity, boredom, isolation, lead to fatigue, tension frustration, even, finally, anger. As we have gotten bigger (more people, bigger cities, more computers, more things) our resources for individual expression through meaningful words and deeds have diminished. Television tells people what is happening but not how they fit into the scheme of things. Isolated and powerless they hear the clamour of protest, they witness the comings and goings of great men but they are not consulted, have no role, seem not to count. This is the setting in which the trauma of Vietnam, the burning of cities, the explosions of disorder occurred.

In 1968, for millions, the anger turned to contempt for the political process and our political leaders.

Violence has its cycles and the cycle has run its course for the time being. The mood of discontent is roughly in balance with the sense of hope.

2. The Address. The Inaugural should recognize the discontent but "celebrate hope." Its language should echo ~~what~~ what I suggest is the central mood: the unarticulated yearnings of millions of individuals to do what no government of shadowy men in remote places can do for him: to take part in creating neighborhood communities, environments that enhance the quality of ~~the~~ individual life. It should exhort all Americans to join in the great task of the next eight years: to humanize technology, to make it work for individuals in ways that conform to his wishes and to do so through the smallest effective units of government and where possible through a concert of individuals and groups in non-governmental activities. It should bring the rhetoric of social progress down to a modest personal scale - family, neighborhood, community. It should relate the rebuilding of the American Community to the hope for peace in the world community.

3. General. There were many eloquent passages in the campaign speeches (Bridges, the Presidency, etc.) But there is much to be said for complete freshness of language. That was the campaign. This is the Presidency. There is substantive value in separating

the two. The inaugural is a response to the moment. It should not have the feeling of a composite structure. Its strength will derive from simplicity of structure and a single unifying theme. Good phrases in the wrong environment produce good moments but disappointing speeches.

I am stating the obvious when I counsel against pledges, programs and dramatic proposals. The drama of this speech will come if it gives voice to the reality intuitively known to the great mass of Americans - that accomplishment in life depends on an accumulation of modest transactions, that the task of rebuilding a "sense of community" depends on an infinite number or deeds not a handful of words.

One more thought: Somebody said, and I think correctly, that there was no hope for a massive assault on the problems of the destitute (white and black) without the "consent" of millions of lower-class urban whites who are caught between the apparent luxury (and safety) of the suburbs and the favored treatment (political concern) extended to the central-city blacks. These millions are perhaps the most discontented because seemingly the most trapped. Whatever is said must reach them, their dilemma, their agonies and angers. So we must think not of programs for this or that group, but of approaches that will better the lives of all Americans.

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