

147 Remarks at the 80th Continental Congress
of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

April 19, 1971

Madam President General, Mayor Washington, Dr. Elson, all of the distinguished guests here on the platform and here at this Congress today:

I first want to tell you how very much Mrs. Nixon and I appreciated the fact that you were able to visit the White House today. We hope you enjoyed your tour.

I knew you were there because I had a rather long day, and about 6 o'clock, as I finished a meeting in the Cabinet Room with a group of men, we walked into the Rose Garden, which is now a tulip garden at this time of year, and I looked in the window and you were all waving. So I waved at all of you at that time.

And at this time, too, I know that this is, of course, a special occasion because I understand your president general, Mrs. Seimes, finishes her 3-year term, and you have a one-term tradition. So, I congratulate her and her successor.

And I do want to say that, as I appear here in Constitution Hall, that there are a number of things I want to say to this group, but particularly Mrs. Nixon asked

me to express appreciation for the many, many occasions in which this great Constitution Hall has been used for state events.

Oh, we think, of course, of the symphony. I remember the Inaugural Symphony that was held here, but through the years, the number of times that we have been here. And the Nation is most grateful and the Nation's Capital is most grateful that you have made it available so generously as you have.

I am sure you know this is a very special day, not only for your organization as it begins this Congress, but it is a very special day for America, because in Massachusetts, where the first shots of the American Revolution were fired just 196 years ago today, April 19, today, is celebrated as Patriots' Day.

So I think it is most appropriate for a President of the United States to greet the Congress of this great society of women who are descended from revolutionary patriots and who are patriots, all of you, in your own right as well.

I addressed this Congress, some of you

may remember, on several occasions when I served as Vice President of the United States. But in checking the record, I find that it has been 17 years since a President of the United States—and it was then in that year, 1954, a beloved American President, President Eisenhower—came across the Ellipse to this splendid hall of yours to pay his respects to the DAR. I felt it was high time another President did so. That is why I am here.

Now, as the man who proposed a new American revolution, you will recall, in the State of the Union, to the 92d United States Congress earlier this year, I have looked forward to talking with the 80th DAR Congress since I know that you are always receptive to the subject of America's revolutionary heritage. When I think of the principles that the Daughters of the American Revolution stand for, the fine work you do, I like to recall—and all of you will remember—Benjamin Franklin's reply to a Philadelphia lady, who asked him what kind of government the Constitutional Convention had given America.

"A Republic, madam," he replied. And then he added, "if you can keep it."

For more than three-quarters of a century now, beginning with Benjamin Harrison, whose wife was your first president general, 15 Presidents of the United States have known that they could count on the dedication of the DAR to this continuing challenge of keeping the American Republic strong and free.

Government by the people depends on education and responsible citizenship of the people. And this is where the DAR has made, in my view, its most important contribution.

I think many Americans are not aware of that contribution. You are. I would like to remind the whole Nation in my re-

marks today of what you have done and what you are doing.

I know about the fine grade schools, the high schools, that you support across this country, including schools for Indian children and schools in Appalachia, which you founded long before it became fashionable to be concerned with the needs of Indians and Appalachia.

And I know about the millions of citizenship manuals that you have provided to those immigrants who have come here over the years seeking a share of the American dream. I know about the hundreds of thousands of boys and girls who are benefiting from the activities of your Junior American Citizens Clubs.

For all of this, the Nation is in your debt. Your constructive service in the present does great credit to your patriot forebears of the past.

The American Revolution of 1776 was a permanent one. The Nation to which it gave birth has been an enduring and phenomenally successful vehicle for human happiness and progress. The American system has adjusted and grown in pace with the changing times. It has given more freedom, more prosperity, to more people than any other system in the history of the world. And let's never forget that.

And certainly, we have every right to take very great pride in this permanent American Revolution of which we are all a part.

Then why call, as I have done, for a new American revolution? Because the work of keeping the Republic requires more than just preserving the past. It also calls for renewing in order to meet the challenges of the future. As a patriotic heritage society actively engaged in bringing new generations and new citizens into

the mainstream of American life, you know this very well.

Now, let's look at government in this country today. You know what you hear on all sides—discouragement, disgust, which so many Americans feel about all government, Federal Government, State government, local government. We can sense the urgent need when we hear those feelings expressed for government renewal on what I call a revolutionary basis. The Federal system was brilliantly conceived, and it was erected in a way that we can all be very proud of.

But what has happened in recent years, particularly over the past 40 years, is that it has become seriously imbalanced. Political power, tax revenue, have flowed increasingly from the States and from the communities and from the cities to Washington, D.C.

What is the result? The result is, the State and local governments which, by rights, should be vigorous instruments of the people's power, have fallen into disrepair. At the same time, the rapid and largely unplanned expansion of the Federal Government has resulted in a structure so complicated, so confused, so contradictory, that it can neither serve the people well, nor respond reliably to the direction of the people's elected representatives.

In short, what the times call for now is decisive action. They demand a new American revolution, a peaceful revolution, to move us by giant steps towards Lincoln's ideal that America should have a government of the people and by the people and for the people.

Now, what are those steps?

First, you will recall that I have proposed a program of \$16 billion—the amount is not important; it is what it does,

the purpose—in revenue sharing, which will be a continuing Federal investment in revitalizing State and local government. Revenue sharing would give the cities and States, where the people have the best chance to make their wishes felt, both the money and the authority they need to govern effectively.

Second, I proposed a sweeping reorganization of the Cabinet departments here in Washington. This plan would trim and streamline the Federal executive branch. The new departments would be organized to serve broad public purposes rather than narrow, special considerations. They would be planned not just for the next few years, but planned, as those Revolutionary forebears of ours planned, for the entire century ahead and even beyond.

As heirs of the first American Revolution, you are in an excellent position to appreciate the pressing need for a new one. You know that the Declaration of Independence remains a living force in this Nation. You insist, and you should insist, that government derive its just powers from the consent of the governed.

And so you will not tolerate, and you should not tolerate, just as the Founding Fathers would not tolerate these circumstances—and now I am going to quote directly from the Declaration of Independence:

- circumstances which “erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent . . . swarms of Officers to harrass our People, and eat out their substance”;
- circumstances which altered “fundamentally the Forms of our Governments”;
- circumstances which weakened our legislatures and imposed burdensome taxation.

Now, all of those circumstances happen to be from the "long train of abuses and usurpations" which Jefferson listed in the Declaration of Independence against the King of England.

But all of them, when you stop to think about it, also add up to a not very exaggerated description of the current condition of the Washington bureaucracy, the Federal system, and the State and local tax load here and now. And they convince me that the time has come now for a new American revolution, a peaceful revolution, to set things right, a peaceful revolution which will return power to the States, to the local communities, and to the people of America where it belongs.

Now, I hope you will agree, and that each of you in your communities will help us achieve this great goal; working together we can breathe new life into the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

And now I would like to turn briefly just for a moment to another subject, which I know is of deep concern to this Congress of Patriots: America's mission of assistance to the country of South Vietnam. From the beginning, this Nation, as all of you know, has had a keen sense of worldwide responsibility.

Listen to Thomas Jefferson 196 years ago: We act not "for ourselves alone, but for the whole human race." We have always sought to set an example as a free people. We have always felt a strong kinship with other peoples struggling to be free.

Four times in this 20th century, World War I, World War II, Korea, now Vietnam, Americans have gone to war far away in defense of human liberty and national self-determination for other people. And this long and difficult and

agonizing conflict in Vietnam over the past 10 years, a conflict in which the American role is now rapidly ending, is part of our national tradition of standing shoulder-to-shoulder with free nations menaced by outside aggression.

I say tonight—and I think it should be said—that we can be proud of the more than 2 million brave and honorable American men who have fought in Vietnam. War is always a terrible experience for a nation, and particularly difficult for those who participate in it; and particularly this war, where a nation seems to be and has been divided about it. But these men—and I have seen them there—time after time, by their humane conduct, their personal integrity, they have done credit to America's highest principles.

We can be especially proud tonight of another group of men—hundreds of courageous soldiers and airmen missing in action throughout Southeast Asia, who are enduring years of brutal captivity in enemy prison camps.

And we can pay special and admiring tribute to the wives of those prisoners.

Mrs. Nixon and I have had the privilege of meeting them on several occasions. I recall particularly a year and a half ago at Christmastime. What really extraordinary women they are! When you talk to them, when you realize what they have sacrificed, their courage, each time it inspires me again to keep full faith with American prisoners of war, and to end America's involvement in this war, and end it in a way that can best provide the opportunity for a lasting and a just peace.

We hear it said very often these days that ours is not an age of heroes, and yet anyone who has talked with the POW wives knows this is not so. America has a long heritage of heroism, a deep-rooted

tradition of greatness, and I do not believe that the flame of the American spirit can be extinguished even by so dark a nightmare as the Vietnam war has been for all of us.

The killing in Asia, the war in Asia, must stop, and it is being stopped. All of us want that desperately. That fervent desire unites this Nation, whatever else may divide us. But the verdict of history will hinge upon how we stop it. Ending a war is not the problem. We have ended wars in the past. Ending a war in which we have a chance to build a lasting peace—that is our responsibility.

And shall we move now in a way that ends the death toll only for Americans and then only for a brief time? Or shall we act in a more difficult but a wiser way, to leave behind South Vietnam able to defend itself against Communist aggression and a Southeast Asia and a Pacific where peace is possible over the long term?

I believe that Americans will support the wiser course, and I will tell you why I believe it: because we want our grandchildren to remember the 1970's just as we remember the 1770's, as a decade of honor, of hope, of new birth for America.

And so the question we ask ourselves tonight: Can we arise to the challenge of these times which seem so difficult? Can we make a new revolution at home? Can we build a full generation of peace for America and the world? I believe we can.

Night after night on your television, and day after day in your newspapers you see and you read and you hear those things so often that are wrong about America. We should hear about those things. But we should recognize that the greatness of this country is that we have a system which allows us to correct what is wrong. And I would also remind us all that as we hear

and as we read of what is wrong about America, let's not overlook—as a matter of fact, let's put more emphasis on—what is right about America.

I have many visitors in the White House, and to see anyone is a very special experience. I particularly remember—as a matter of fact, I don't think I will ever forget—a lady from Virginia who came to see me at the White House last September. She brought a gift to me. It was a 3- by 5-foot American flag which she had made by herself. As I thanked her for it, and as I looked at it, I remarked what a lot of work it must have been, because I remember when my daughter Julie made a very small Presidential seal—crewel work—how much work it was for her.

And she said, "Yes, Mr. President, it was a lot of work." She said, "There are 78,000 stitches in that flag." And then she added, "But it was all worthwhile, because to me every one of those stitches just stands for something that is right about America."

And so this evening, I would only say that I am deeply thankful that such a spirit of love for this country is still alive in America today. It was in that lady's heart, it is in all of yours, and it is in millions of hearts across this land.

With that kind of patriotism, that kind of love of country, we shall never lose sight of the American dream. And with that spirit, we shall make that dream come true.

work: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. in Constitution Hall.

Dr. Edward L. R. Elson, Chaplain of the Senate, gave the convocation.

An advance text of the President's remarks was released on the same day.

The hand-knit flag was presented to the President by Mrs. Paul W. Heatwole of Harrisonburg, Va., on September 11, 1970.