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ADDRESS

BY

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BEFORE

THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

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It is with reverence and keen satisfaction that I join with you on this significant occasion. May I extend my sincerest congratulations to all who had a part in the planning and erection of this newest Y.M.C.A. building.

Dedicated to God, to country and to youth, this building is a shining symbol of the cherished things which help to form our American way of life. It is encouraging and heart-warming to see this tangible evidence of faith both in our nation's future and its young citizens.

Let us pause to pay special honor and tribute to the memory of two men whose names are familiar only to a very few persons, yet who were responsible for the birth in England and in America of the Y.M.C.A.

It was George Williams, a clerk in a London dry goods store, who in 1844 perceived the value of a central meeting place for the purpose of improving the mental, moral and physical condition of young men. He started the movement with prayer meetings and Bible readings in the rear of the store where he worked. This clerk of humble rank in life became a benefactor of mankind whose accomplishment will be honored through the years. These exercises today add new luster to his important contribution to the welfare of young people.

Like praise is also due to a sea-faring American Captain - Thomas V. Sullivan - who in 1851 launched the first Y.M.C.A. in the United States at a small church on the Commons in Boston, Massachusetts.

From its introduction into this country 103 years ago, the Y.M.C.A., with its lofty objectives and exemplary standards, has played a basic role in our cultural and recreational development, especially among youth.

And the foundation for leadership of our nation is set, in innumerable instances, in such halls of learning and training as we are presently dedicating in this progressive California area.

Of course, sterling character and good citizenship are not the product alone of such material things as a fine building, elaborate equipment or money. These precious qualities -- good character and good citizenship -- which go together as baseball and bat -- cap and gown -- result from the essence of the spirit inculcated in the home, the Church, the school, and such institutions as the Y.M.C.A.

As President Eisenhower aptly said: "The things that make us proud to be Americans are of the soul and the spirit. They are not the jewels we wear, or the furs we buy, the houses we live in, the standard of living, even, that we have. All these things are wonderful to the esthetic and to the physical senses. But let us never forget that the deep things that are American are the soul and the spirit."

In our country the Y.M.C.A. has become a vital factor in the march toward a fuller and happier community life. It achieves this notable status through its significant work in our armed forces in peace and war, its high school Hi-Y clubs, its camp activities, the day and night courses in vocational and cultural subjects, vocational and guidance aid, health and physical education, recreational activities, and other wholesome projects.

With like groups functioning in 67 foreign countries there also exists a real opportunity for an interchange of views that tends to bring about a clearer and better understanding among the peoples of those lands -- all exceedingly helpful in mankind's determined search for an enduring peace.

It is particularly noteworthy that an integral element pervading these activities is the constant emphasis placed on the spiritual. Countless thousands of leaders in far-flung communities during the first century of the Y.M.C.A.'s existence were helped immensely by the teaching and training they received in this environment of faith, hope and inspiration.

In these times of Communist idolatry, with its pernicious philosophy and false propaganda, a real resurgence of man's spiritual qualities, which the Y.M.C.A. stresses in its work, is vitally needed to help thwart the ambition of the Kremlin to rule the world and prevent it from putting freedom in chains everywhere. This spiritual element is a matchless bulwark against all foes of freedom.

While the Constitution of our country has established the doctrine that the Church and State are to be separate, yet from its beginning this nation has recognized a responsibility to the Divine.

After adoption of the sacred document, Benjamin Franklin upon being asked, "What kind of Government have you given us?" replied, "We have given you a Republic, if you can keep it." The rights and privileges bequeathed to us by our Founding Fathers cannot be ours in perpetuity without effort on our part. Each generation must guard Freedom - each generation must be ever alert to protect, preserve and strengthen our American heritage. That is the responsibility that goes with our inalienable rights.

In the awful conflict that rages today between the godless masters of the Kremlin and the free peoples of the world force of arms and material resources are not the only weapons. There is a great

competition in the realm of ideas, and the free nations are under a compelling necessity to demonstrate the superiority of their moral and social principles.

I am happy to state that in this country there have recently occurred events of outstanding significance in this area. These events have hit with great force the Communist propaganda claims, trumpeted loudly throughout the world, that this nation, although preaching the freedom and equality of all men abroad, follows a different code at home.

I refer to the momentous decisions of the Supreme Court announced last month in the so-called segregation cases. In two unanimous opinions delivered by your great governor, now Chief Justice of the United States, the Court struck down as forbidden by the Federal Constitution the practice prevailing in some seventeen states and the District of Columbia of having separate public schools for White and Negro children. And the following week the Court sent three cases, involving various aspects of racial segregation, back to the lower courts with directions that they be considered in the light of its ruling in the school segregation cases.

Two of these cases involved the question of admission of Negroes to state colleges for White students; in the third case a Negro had been denied admission to certain facilities of a municipal park reserved for White persons. At the same time the Court refused to review lower court judgments in three other cases which had held that particular segregation practices were unconstitutional. In one case the lower court had held that Negroes were entitled to play golf on a municipal

course reserved for White players; in the second case, the court had ruled that Negro students were entitled to admission to a state junior college for Whites; and in the third case, which came up from your own state, it had been held that it was a violation of the Constitution to exclude Negroes from a housing project in San Francisco intended for families of Italian extraction.

From this it should be clear to everyone, including the Communists, that the United States has taken a long step to eliminate what President Eisenhower has described as "any trace of second-class citizenship", intolerable, because in his words, it is "a reflection of second-class Americanism."

We in the Department of Justice have been proud of our participation in these historic cases and of our contribution towards a truly just and godly resolution of a problem that has plagued our country for almost a hundred years. We have come a long way from the concept of the Dred Scott decision in 1857 that Negroes are a subordinate and inferior class of human beings.

As the Court stated, "we cannot turn the clock back to 1868 when the (Fourteenth) Amendment was adopted "**** We must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation." Can anyone doubt the truth of the following observations of Chief Justice Warren, which are of such significance in life today that I will take your time to read what he said:

"Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. * * * In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."

And from this the Chief Justice proceeded to the conclusion, supported by modern authority, that "To separate * * * (Negro school children) from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone."

It is indeed fortunate that the provisions of our Constitution are not mathematical, impotent and lifeless formulas imposing forever the imprint of the past upon the future. They are rather living principles permitting us to advance in our standards of what is reasonable and right and enabling us to meet new conditions and new challenges as they arise. It is in this sense that these recent decisions of the Supreme Court are to be viewed - as but another step towards the American goal of a life of freedom and dignity for all our children, regardless of their race, their color, or their religious faith, and not for some of them.

An optimistic picture can be painted of the wonderful opportunities that face the youth of this generation. Historians could fittingly

characterize this era as the Age of Marvels. Indeed, fabulous scientific and industrial discoveries, inventions and developments have opened wider the doors of opportunity than at any other period since our Nation's beginning.

During the past 50 years mankind has made more technical and material progress than in the previous 2,000 years of its history. Today over 62,000,000 persons in this country are in gainful employment --the greatest number in the country's history. Yet we sometimes wonder if our spiritual growth has kept pace with scientific achievement. A few years ago a survey of 50,000 children in one of our large cities revealed that three-fourths of them did not know the Ten Commandments. This is an impressive indication of the need for the work of the Y.M.C.A. and related organizations in every city, town and hamlet -- an impelling challenge.

As we dedicate this magnificent monument to the guidance of youth in its desire to become physically strong and spiritually equipped, we envision similar structures rising throughout the nation for the well-being of young men and women.

Events like this are convincing evidence that there can be only one resounding answer to Benjamin Franklin's comment, and that is "The Republic Will Live On" - live on to greater achievements and greater glory to God, to country and to youth - live on not only for the sake of our own people, but as a Beacon of Hope for freedom and peace-loving peoples everywhere.