



Department of Justice

PS
668
.K36

ADDRESS BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY

SEATTLE WORLD'S FAIR

AUGUST 7, 1962

Mr. Gandy, I want to express my appreciation to you and to the Directors of the Fair not only for your generous invitation to me to speak here this afternoon but for this memorable day you have given my family. It truly has been a day to remember. I only wish we could devote several more days to the Fair -- but your state has competing attractions. Tomorrow we are going salmon fishing, and after that we will have four days of camping in the Olympic Mountains.

I have waited a long time for this visit to the Pacific Northwest. Mr. Justice Douglas has often assured me that it is the most beautiful and exciting part of the United States; and, as a mere Attorney General, who am I to argue against the Supreme Court?

Moreover, there are, I believe, about as many graduates of the University of Washington in Washington, D. C., as graduates of Harvard -- and they are worse than Texans in their enthusiasm for their native state.

And, in any case, as a citizen of Massachusetts I must agree with one of our great Massachusetts -- and American -- writers, Henry D. Thoreau, who said a century ago: "Eastward I go only by force, but westward I go free."

Westward I go free -- these words sum up the historic experience of the United States. The Pacific Northwest, in a sense, is America's last frontier -- and it is therefore especially appropriate that Seattle should hold this great fair with a startling preview of the frontiers of the future.

From its earliest beginnings, Seattle has distinguished itself by its determination to move ahead, defying odds and obstacles to reach for achievement. This can be seen by the fact that the University of Washington was founded here in 1861, long before statehood, at the outset of the Civil War, and only ten years after the first settlers landed at Alki Point. It was demonstrated again, after the Northern Pacific had picked Tacoma as its western terminus, when the residents of Seattle began with their own hands to build a railroad toward the East -- the railroad which eventually brought the great northern here.

Through the years this has been your tradition and your faith. This fair is only the latest expression of the imagination and drive which mark your city and the whole Northwest.

You remember the poem about Kit Carson and his men:

"Though we travel far and travel light
And now on summer grass,
The mountain men ride west again
To find a newer pass.

"We mark the fords and map the routes,
For pioneers on rails --
We mountain men ride west again
To blaze the newest trails."

This is the spirit of the Pacific Northwest and of pioneer America -- the unceasing search for new frontiers. And it is, I may perhaps add, particularly refreshing to come from the other Washington to a region of the country which is not mired in the past, not constantly looking backward over its shoulder, not timidly content with the status quo, not weighed down by doubt and foreboding, not fearful of the future -- but instead is peering boldly and joyfully ahead into the 21st Century.

This Fair has on vivid display some of the fantastic resources which science and technology have placed at man's disposal. It must inspire us therefore to think beyond the present -- to visualize how man can put these vast new powers to the service of freedom and opportunity and humanity.

As your great mountains lift our hearts above the cares of every day existence, so the Fair lifts our minds and our sights and subordinates the irritations of the present to the potentialities of the future.

Above all, it inspires us to visualize the kind of world and the kind of nation we want to have in the 21st Century. If we are going to move ahead as a society, we must first of all know where we are going.

Every man must have his own vision of things to come. But many Americans, I believe, share broad and deep hopes for the world -- the hope of a world without war -- of a world where peoples now suffering in poverty and oppression can win a better life for themselves and their children -- of a world where the imagination and energy of mankind are dedicated, not to destruction, but to building a generous and spacious future.

And many Americans too, I think, share broad and deep hopes for our own land -- the hope of a land in which every child born has a decent opportunity for education, medical care and employment -- of a land where intolerance and segregation become a memory, and a Negro child born in a cotton field in Alabama is as secure in his rights as a white child born here in Washington -- of a land where poverty is a thing of the past, and every American has a free and equal chance to realize his own individual talents and possibilities.

If this is the vision of the future -- if this is the direction in which we want to move -- the next thing we must consider is how we propose to get there, and what obstacles lie in our path. For such a vision is never self-fulfilling. We cannot stand idly by and expect our dreams to come true under their own power. The future is not a gift: It is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future. This is the essential challenge of the present.

Let us not deceive ourselves about the difficulties which lie ahead in the world. The earth today is divided by a great global civil war. It is shaken by the aspirations of long submerged peoples for independence and justice. It is shadowed by the frightful menace of thermonuclear destruction.

In such a world, the vision of a world without war seems remote -- so remote as to fill some with despair and to produce a longing for drastic and definite solutions, whether through unilateral disarmament or through nuclear war.

I do not share this despair, and I reject these quick and easy solutions as mirages. The road to peace may be long and tortured. But it can be successfully traversed.

In the first stages, the preservation of peace requires, above all, the preservation of our own nation's capability to defend peace. This was brought home clearly to me on my trip around the world last winter.

A high official in Indonesia told me that his country would lose its independence if the United States' Seventh Fleet, with all it implies, was removed from Far Eastern waters.

In Berlin, I saw crowds cheering with an intensity I had never seen before -- men and women whose whole existence was staked in their trust in the military power of the United States. When I hear men of good will urging us to abandon our military strength, I can only think of the people whom such action would deliver to the enemy, and of the human misery which would result.

We have taken major steps in recent months to strengthen the frontiers of freedom. The proof of our progress is that the reservists who were called up last summer at a time of crisis are now returning to their homes all across the country. Where a year ago the situation in South Viet Nam was dark, the forces of natural independence now have a fighting chance.

We must maintain our military strength so long as our adversaries maintain theirs. But, at the same time, we must be unceasing in our quest for ways to place military power under international control.

We must strive day and night to devise the machinery which will limit and eventually abolish national arms and destroy forever the means and opportunities of aggression. Our representatives in Geneva and the United Nations are themselves pioneers in pushing back the wilderness of war and moving toward the security of peace.

There are obstacles, too, to the achievement of our hopes within our own land. Our cities have grown out of control; the very productivity of our agriculture becomes a source of embarrassment; automation threatens to replace men by machinery; our population continues to grow. Enrollments in our colleges are going to double in just ten years. The annual cost per student, now averaging \$650 a year, is going steadily upward though almost half our families earn less than \$5,000 annually.

In the next decade twenty-six million young people will be coming on the labor market. Seven and a half million of these young men and women will not have finished high school and two and a half million will not have completed the eighth grade unless we do better than we are doing now. These

young people will be entering a labor market constantly demanding better education and higher skills.

As our population increases, ever greater attention must be given to the protection and conservation of our natural resources and of our wilderness areas -- like the Olympic National Park which I look forward to visiting on Thursday.

The obstacles are great -- but to men and women who crossed the mountains of the Northwest anything was possible. It is idle to say that the wealthiest nation known to history cannot afford to educate its children, take care of its old people and offer equal opportunities and productive employment to all its citizens. In recent months, we have begun to move to close the gap between our needs and our performance in a number of these areas.

We still have far to go, and there will always be new frontiers opening up before brave men. But we are definitely on the march. Our nation is pulsating with a new vitality and a new determination. We have established new goals in our national life, and we are moving constantly ahead to transform those goals into human reality. This is the beginning of a great new epoch in our history -- an epoch of faith, and an epoch of fulfillment.

In the last analysis, our success, both at home and abroad, will depend on ourselves -- on our steadfastness and courage and intelligence as people -- on the strength of our determination to give full meaning to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and to advance our own revolution of liberty, justice and progress.

We know that freedom has many dimensions. It is the right of the man who tills the land to own the land; the right of the workers to join together to seek better conditions of labor; the right of businessmen to use ingenuity and foresight to produce and distribute without arbitrary interference in a truly competitive economy. It is the right of government to protect the weak; it is the right of the weak to find in their courts fair treatment before the law. It is the right of all our citizens to engage without fear or constraint in the discussion and debate of the great issues which confront us all. We understand this regardless of the extent to which we may differ in our political views. We know that argument in the open is one of the sources of our national strength.

Above all, here in Seattle, where our last frontier looks forward into challenging future, we cannot but invoke the image of the men and women who came west by covered wagon and fortified by their spirit, we can boldly confront the great new frontier which today extends into the vast reaches of outer space. The future demands of us today the resolution, the sacrifice, the courage and the faith of the pioneers.

I believe that the President spoke for all of us when he said at his Inauguration:

"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility -- I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it -- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."