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EXCERPTS FROM AN ADDRESS BY
HONORABLE TOM C. CLARK
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
KENTUCKY BAR ASSOCIATION
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
JUNE 27, 1946
2:00 PM

Almost in the moment in which I speak, the mere appointment of Fred Vinson to the chief justiceship has already given the whole country, in a troubled hour, a wave of comfort.

This is significant of the weight of a profound reputation, the reputation that Fred Vinson built up as a congressman, as a judge, and as a government administrator and Cabinet official.

In a disturbed instant when the tempers of men had been worn raw, the appointment by President Truman of Fred Vinson acted like the balm of Gilead.

This is the gift from Kentucky to the people of America.

That is why I say this is a gratifying hour in the history of this State.

Few men have risen to the Supreme Court amid anything like the universal paen of praise that met the announcement of the Vinson appointment.

And back of Fred Vinson is a learned line of other Kentucky jurists who sat on the bench over which he presides.

In Washington, as you know, we have many and manifold problems in this reconstruction period.

We are very fortunate in a great many ways, although the picture

must seem extremely confused, and it sometimes is obscure to many observers in various parts of the country.

However, as we compare this reconstruction period with others, we realize that despite current dissatisfaction, we have done remarkably better than our forebears in the days following the American Revolution, and the days following the war between States, and following the First World War.

If you consult with history, you will find that after the Revolution there was unrest, inflation troubles, and, in some cases, armed revolt.

After the Civil War, you all have learned we had a bad time with a run-away Congress and tremendous sorrow and suffering and disrespect for government and law.

After the First World War, we had the spectacle of the Senate withdrawing support of President Wilson's plan for world peace as a body in the League of Nations.

As we have learned, to our sorrow, never has so much evil been visited upon the many by so few as on that day when the Republicans' eldest statesman sowed discord and dissatisfaction so that we reap the harvest which we call World War II -- and what a bloody harvest that was!

Today, we also have a restive people.

No matter what the issue, and no matter what planning is done, there is little, excepting dissatisfaction, expressed.

It has gotten so with each day bringing forth a new problem that

there are those in the government who say "Why worry about today? There will be another crisis tomorrow".

Yet, notwithstanding, the simple, honest and direct Missourian in the White House has prevailed against all odds in maintaining a direct course through the turmoil of conflicting opinion and has proven the one sincere and able public official who can keep his head when other men are losing theirs.

I have been around the country a lot, especially speaking to bar associations, and because it is part of my duty to be in close touch with the legal profession, I have often asked for written suggestions to be sent to me in Washington. In consequence, I have received many letters. Some of them have pointed out that a great many of our troubles might be caused because of certain public men who are playing politics and are fearful about re-election.

That fear, my friends, does not extend to the White House.

I have no illusions on that score.

The simple formula which the President follows by instinct and conviction is that "What is good for the American people is good for Harry S. Truman".

The American people have never failed to recognize just that.

I have seen in the President the rare ability given to mankind to rise to an occasion. It is a quality which transcends the calamity of the moment. It gives to American presidents that solemn fortitude which enables them to serve their country better and better with each recurring crisis.

Everywhere I go in this country, I am asked by people about the President and invariably I am asked the question "Has he changed much?"

The answer is that the President has been in office over a year and I must admit, to be frank about it, that he has changed a good deal.

What man wouldn't with the tremendous weight of national and world responsibility upon his shoulders.

He has lost none of his warm-heartedness and his ability to think of the other fellow first and himself second.

He still can laugh heartily and act and feel and think like the real American that he is.

But, he has become stronger in his insistence that the good of the whole people shall be the characteristic of the Truman Administration and that no special class and no special group will be favored or privileged by him.

He has selected some able men for his Cabinet, I am told, and I assure you that in the deliberations in the Cabinet Room in which informed men take part, there is no better informed or more patriotic person than the man who sits at the head of the table.

He shows that in the silence and stillness of his own study he is burning the midnight oil, just as he did when he was Chairman of the Truman Committee, to absorb the information and the background which is necessary for solution of the manifold problems which confront us today.

He is growing bigger in stature as time goes on.

He is studying hard and he is alert to the dangers which confront our country from within and without.

The presidency is in safe hands because the President is a man of character.

There have been many things which tend to check that respect in the minds of many people.

We have had the unsettled world for the past several years -- a world beset by war and full of strange and fearful circumstances.

But now the active fighting is over and the vast armies are being demobilized and men have returned home.

The youngsters, during the years their elders were engaged in helping the country run the war, have seen the lack of restraint and we have a juvenile problem to which I give many hours and much thought.

We have a rising crime wave inspired, no doubt, by the unsettled conditions of the past few years.

General disrespect for law is growing upon the bodied politic and as good American citizens and as lawyers, it is our duty to strive to counteract it by whatever means come to hand.

High upon the laws which we at the Department of Justice try to enforce are the antitrust laws, the traffic lights of business.

We do not believe in monopolies here, no matter if they are government monopolies.

We are a great creator of nations.

We have enormous accumulations of capital.

We want no system of detailed regulation of industry by the government, nor by private interests.

We do not want bureaucracy or regimentation of any kind -- but we must prefer governmental to private bureaucracy or regimentation -- if we must make a choice.

We cannot permit private corporations to be private governments.

We must keep our economic system under the control of the people who live by it and under it.

In the words of the late President Roosevelt in his second inaugural address, "We must find practical controls over blind economic forces and blindly selfish men."

The choice lies with business.