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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1964 - 2:50 p.m. CST

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
MOBILE, ALABAMA

What a happy day this is for me! I am proud to be here in the State that sent our great Senators, Lister Hill and John Sparkman, to serve their neighbors and their nation with such distinction. These are the men my husband depends on and we count them old and valued friends.

I am delighted to be here in this lively City of Mobile. By coming just a few blocks from the station, I have already been impressed by the happy results obtained when modern ingenuity and pride in preservation work hand in hand. It is exciting to find that the respect for tradition has been harnessed to do justice to Mobile's history.

Mr. Mayor, in accepting the key to your city and your proclamation, I want to tell you that a ceremony such as this, fusing the best of the old and the new South, is one that gives me great satisfaction.

As Honorary Chairman of the American Landmarks Celebration, I am certainly proud to be here to dedicate the historic Phoenix Fire Station. I know that young and old will walk through this museum and be inspired by the resourcefulness and valor of our volunteer firemen of the early days. It does us all good to be reminded of how hard it was then to meet the emergencies of everyday life.

As the wife of a politician, I have known many smoke-filled rooms, and I'm happy to report that we have not yet had to ring the fire alarm.

As many of you know, Alabama is close to my heart. I am proud to be in the State where my mother and father were born and raised, and being in Mobile is in part a sentimental journey for me. I used to visit here with my University of Alabama roommate, Hermione Roe. And I'm mighty glad to be in that part of the country where, although you might not like all I say, at least you understand the way I say it.

From the time I was six years old, summer meant coming back to Alabama. As I think back to my girlhood, I have so many memories filled with the special charm of the people and their ways:

memories that float back -- of watermelon cuttings, of hayrides, and visiting uncles and aunts and cousins in Selma and Montgomery, and Billingsley and Prattville. When I went to Huntsville last spring, I wrote my cousins and 67 came.

Standing here today, I feel that having spent so many summers of my past here and having traveled quite some since, I can speak of what the New South means to the nation. I can talk about the warmth and courtesy of the South of my youth, which will never change, and about the New South that I saw at Huntsville where man turns his face to the moon, and the New South I see here in Mobile.

Here in this teeming harbor ships fare forth to every port in the world. In 1960, your export and import trade amounted to 272 million dollars. By the end of 1964, it is estimated that it will reach 458 million dollars. The increase in exports has been 110 percent.

There are signs of prosperity everywhere. The rate of unemployment dropped from 6.8% in 1961 to 4.6% in 1963. The Alabama increase in percapita income is 13% -- the national increase is only 8%. And the Administration's tax cut will create 24,000 new jobs -- spendable income of 360 million dollars in the State.

But we still have a big task ahead of us. Thirty-nine percent of the people of the State are below the poverty line -- this must be changed.

The landmarks of the past serve us only as a challenge to build the landmarks of the future. I find myself in complete accord with Mr. Dewey Crowder, the President of your (Mobile) Historic Commission, who said, "There is no merit in recalling the past at all unless it helps us to a greater faith in a greater effort toward a richer future."

So today, Mr. Mayor, you have tendered me a homecoming as well as an honor.

And because I feel so close to the people of this State, I must also speak of what is in my heart.

Ten months ago on a dreadful day that shook our country, my husband became your President. Since then he has tried with all that is in him to keep our country on a steady course of economic

prosperity, to face the world with firm strength, and to seek practical ways to help those Americans still in need.

It is our privilege to choose our leader. In doing so, we make a constant choice in shaping our personal destiny. Thomas Jefferson said, "Let the people know the facts and they will decide wisely." History has proven him right.

I believe in our President and I believe in your right to choose and your wisdom to do so wisely.

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