

FOR RELEASE AFTER 4:00 P. M.  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1965

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
AT A MEETING TO DISCUSS FORMATION OF  
A COMMITTEE FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL CAPITAL

I'm so pleased that all of you could come here today to talk about what we can do to make our capital more beautiful.

Perhaps some of you read, as I did, recently the statement of a British diplomat back in 1913 who had just spent six years in Washington. He wrote: "Your admirable river, the Potomac, is quite as beautiful as that which adjoins any of the great Capital cities of Europe, except of course, Constantinople with its Bosphorus. No European city has so noble a cataract as the Great Falls. You have such a chance for building up a superb capital that it would be an act of ingratitude to Providence and to History, and to the men who planned the city if you did not use the advantages that you here enjoy..." He ended with the prediction -- "Someday the people are going to see the true value on these things."

I think I have here in front of me today you who set "the true value on these things."

Most of you are involved in groups already hard at work on different facets of Washington beautification.

Our purpose today is to see how we can implement what is already underway, supplement what should be underway, and be the catalyst for action.

I have never received such truly thrilling mail as was prompted by the announcement of this committee. Thoughtful suggestions of "what we have done in our town" -- enthusiastic inquiries of "what can we do."

There is a great yearning, I find, in our country to take stock of the places we live and see that they truly offer "life, liberty," -- and an environment for "the pursuit of happiness."

Washington has never been short of committees. And Washington has never been short of imagination and planning. But, what I would hope that we could do together, is perhaps to lift our planning and our imagination off the drawing boards.

I'm willing -- and I know you are willing -- to do everything we can to substitute for the delight of debate -- the art of action.

There are many specific things we can do in both great and small projects:

1) We can provide immediately -- a showcase of beauty on the Mall making it magnificent national landscape worthy of the American people -- and usable by the American people. I hope this project will excite the interest of all of us here and sow the seeds of similar projects throughout the country.

2) Our effort should lend strong support to the broad concept of such splendid projects begun by President Kennedy as the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan and the Plan to preserve Lafayette Park.

3) Among our thoroughfares, Washington is filled with small triangles and squares most of them barren and devoid of even a sprig of grass.

Think what it might mean to have these planted in flowers or shrubs! But even if a neighborhood association, or a business firm wanted to contribute flowers for such a purpose, it legally cannot. I'm sure that we can find a way to shorten the red tape tangles and give permission.

4) Perhaps some neighborhood competitions on beautification would help encourage beautification plans throughout the District.

5) Perhaps a volunteer committee of landscape architects would be helpful in drawing up plans which neighborhoods could use.

6) I hope we can concentrate on several pilot projects so there will be some planting done this spring as well as planning.

Think of the world's great civilization! A nation's greatness is measured not only by the power of its economy and the strength of its military forces, but by its sense of beauty as well.

But I'm sure you are filled with ideas and so I'm going to ask Secretary Udall to serve as director of this seminar and let's see what we can do to get things moving.

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