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REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
DEDICATION OF PEORIA COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
PEORIA, ILLINOIS

I am glad to be here in the magic city of Peoria -- a magic city because it is filled with magicians. As one of your leading citizens told me: "Those people have transformed downtown Peoria into one of the prettiest cities in America." And that is magic indeed.

I do not know what Peoria was like before this. But I can see for myself that the tribute is a just one. Your downtown is marked by an ease and grace of landscaping and architecture that masks the long hard work and planning that built it. And this new courthouse is the capstone of your effort.

And so I come here not just to dedicate a building -- but to celebrate the men and women who not only have brought beauty to this city, but have provided an example and a model for an entire nation. And that is as it should be. For since the Lincoln-Douglas debates Peoria has helped to lead and build this country.

I am especially happy to be here with Mrs. Dirksen and Mrs. Douglas. Like Mr. Lincoln and the earlier Mr. Douglas, their husbands do not agree about everything. But they are both brilliant servants of your state and our country. And in the battle to restore and protect the beauty of America they fight side by side -- on the front lines of the United States Senate.

Here in Peoria you are meeting one of the profound challenges of our civilization. It is to preserve the oldest and most cherished of our values in the midst of the newest achievements of our genius and growth. It is to ensure that the spiritual needs of the people are not lost and submerged by abundance and progress.

After all a city is not just a collection of stores and homes and shops. It is a place for people to live. And, hopefully, it is a place where they can live the good life. That is why it is so important that families -- even in the heart of the city -- have places to walk, playgrounds for their children, and surroundings which please the eye and lift the spirit.

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Today, we have a wonderful opportunity to build that kind of America. We are in the midst of a construction revolution. According to an outstanding urban authority we will, in the next ten years, erect new buildings equal in value to all that are standing today. This gives us a chance at a fresh start. We can build homes and shops crowded together, without imagination or open space, soon to become new slums. Or we can do what you are doing in Peoria: planning and working so our downtown areas will be an object of pride to those who built them and a source of gratitude to generations yet unborn.

It was the President of the American Institute of Architects who said: "Most of our ugliness is a result of wealth, not of poverty. A poor people wouldn't be able to replace trees with parking lots, litter the streets with signs and fill the air with wires. We need to make ugliness unprofitable."

Of course ugliness is unprofitable. Not just in terms of dollars and cents, but in the toll it takes of human pleasure and the quality of our daily life.

You are working to end this terrible drain. In doing so, you are providing an example for every other city in America.

This courthouse is a keystone in your program. It shows that government can work hand in hand with private business in the steady improvement of the life of our city. Government has not always built with grace and distinction. But I hope, and believe, this building demonstrates that we too have learned the painful lessons of past failures.

This courthouse perfectly exemplifies the task of preserving old values in the midst of change. A building which is a brilliant reflection of the 1960's replaces an old and venerable edifice. Yet the words, and the essential purpose -- equal justice under law -- are unchanged.

So I dedicate this building to our people -- to their efforts to blend the best of the past with the radiant possibilities of the future. May this always be the house in which justice abides and hope is fulfilled.

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