

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON,
WORLD FOOD EXPOSITION YOUTH DAY -
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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

In the past three days, I have traveled 3,400 miles, and I have seen as many sights. But there could be no more stirring experience than to stand here and see seven thousand young faces, turned toward the future; hear seven thousand voices, speaking hope for our country.

I'm happy and excited to be here. For one thing, both of my daughters have a distinct partiality for this part of the world. Apart from that, I'm moved by the things I have heard these past few days.

And I plan to return to Washington with a story for the President about the new America young people are helping to build.

Years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt spoke in moving words about the future of America. "One day," he said, "a generation may possess this land, blessed beyond anything we now know; blessed with those things, material and spiritual, that make a man's life more abundant."

That day may still be only a part of America's future -- a dream to be pursued. But it is coming true. I have seen it coming true in the past three days -- in Minnesota, in Michigan, in Indiana, in Missouri, and here in Wisconsin.

Let me tell you some of the things I've seen:

A small town comes to life with new projects: a housing development for older citizens; a revitalized downtown; an attitude of lively progress.

A sturdy Wisconsin family, in partnership with their government built three failing properties into a thriving dairy farm.

A forest and a lake are opened up for the pleasure of the people in the upper peninsula of Michigan.

Art and industry and architecture flourish in unexpected places, away from the cities: such places as Columbus, Indiana and in Spring Green, Wisconsin.

Even in the jet age where all 120 nations are only a short flight away, we are not just a nation of city dwellers. Our small towns and our farms still account for much of the nation's vitality -- and offer hope for the whole world.

As I listened to the young leaders who opened the program today, I marveled for a moment at the continuing vitality of America. And I wondered. What is it that makes it so? What is the spirit which makes American history not an endless circle on a treadmill, but an ever-climbing upward curve?

I think I know one answer: We have been, from our beginning, a nation of seekers: restless, questing, skeptical, never satisfied with things as they are.

That seeking spirit is a priceless gift -- handed down somehow from generation to generation until this moment.

It brought a legion of new Americans to this region -- men and women whose toil made this state the agricultural heartland of America.

That restless, wondering spirit moved Mark Twain to examine his world in a hard and unflattering light -- and thus gave the world some of its most memorable literature, rich and ironic, dry and wise.

That questing spirit pushed Frank Lloyd Wright toward a new way of thinking about forms and spaces -- and gave Wisconsin and the world a new, liberated architecture.

Today, I see the spirit of the seeker in America's young people: in their restlessness and questioning dissatisfaction.

You are not satisfied -- nor should you be -- when poverty still afflicts millions of American families.

You are not satisfied -- nor should you be -- when ugliness threatens the city and the countryside.

You are not satisfied when slums and disease and ignorance go unconquered in our world -- and when peace with justice remains unattained.

You are not satisfied -- and I am not -- with a world still so riddled with problems.

But you and I have an opportunity to take that world and make it different.

What I have seen in your region in these three days gives me hope that we will succeed -- confidence that rural America, small-town America, will play a vital role in bringing about that change.

Rural America, as you see, is changing: its gates are being rebuilt so that they open in as well as out. You can almost feel the new atmosphere of hope which prevails.

The heartland of America is coming into its own. Half a continent away from Broadway, art galleries and theaters are springing up. The midwest is glowing with the strength of commerce and industry; lively with new things happening.

Years ago, there was a verse which might be called the theme song of the flight to the city. We sang, "How You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm, After They've Seen Paree?"

Today, millions of Americans have, you might say, "seen Paree:" the glitter and pace of the city. But we are seeing its problems, too -- and that is helping us to re-discover the pleasures -- and the promises -- of the countryside, the farm, the small town.

In a world growing ever more crowded, you know the value of clean and open space.

In a world growing ever more distracted, you know the value of peace and quiet.

In a world growing ever more hungry, you young people have the skills to produce more food; you know the secrets of abundance.

So I urge you to be not only a seeker -- but a builder, too.

For it is not enough to have only the spirit of the seeker. It is not enough to be dissatisfied with things as they are -- unless you put that dissatisfaction to work.

It is not enough to use your voice against the world as it is -- unless you are willing to use your hands and your head to build the world that should be.

Suppose our Founders had written the Declaration of Independence -- but never marched to battle?

Suppose Mark Twain had applied his skeptical wisdom to the world -- but never put his pen to paper?

Suppose Frank Lloyd Wright had rejected the architecture of the past -- but never built a building of his own?

We must be seekers, yes -- and doubters; but builders and believers, too.

So I urge you to begin your building now.

A few weeks ago in the White House, the President greeted a group of young Americans with these words:

"Even your mightiest works," he said, "may change the world only a little. But to change the world a little -- that is mighty work, indeed!"

To that, I say, "Amen!"

And to all of you, my wish is: may your building live up to your seeking.

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