

The original documents are located in Box D26, folder “Opening Day Speech Introduction and Congratulations to Speaker John McCormack, January 3, 1969” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Gerald R. Ford.

as delivered

[Jan. 3, 1969

opening Day
Introduction &
Congratulations to
Speaker McCormack]

friends MR. SPEAKER, AND FRIENDS ^{*old*} ~~OLD~~ AND
NEW ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS AISLE. I STAND
BEFORE YOU TODAY AS THE ACKNOWLEDGED
CHAMPION AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE TRIED TO UNSEAT
THE GENTLEMAN FROM MASSACHUSETTS FROM THIS
SPEAKER'S CHAIR. THERE IS NOBODY IN THIS
ROOM WHO HAS TRIED HARDER ^{*or*} OFTENER THAN I
HAVE, SO I SPEAK WITH THE VOICE OF
EXPERIENCE WHEN I SAY IT IS NOT AN EASY TASK.
BUT I REFUSE TO ADMIT ^{*that*} ~~IT~~ 3 TIMES IS OUT.

X

EVER SINCE THE EARLY MORNING HOURS
OF NOVEMBER 6TH, WHEN LIKE MANY AMERICANS
I HAD SOME DIFFICULTY GETTING TO SLEEP, I
HAVE BEEN PONDERING WHAT I MIGHT SAY TODAY
THAT I HAVE NOT ALREADY SAID ON PREVIOUS
OCCASIONS ABOUT THE PLEASURE OF BEING
DEFEATED BY OUR BELOVED SPEAKER. IT IS NOT



AN EASY TASK TO BE GRACIOUS AND MAGNANIMOUS
IN DEFEAT, ALTHOUGH I MAY SAY IN PASSING
THAT BOTH OF OUR POLITICAL PARTIES IN RECENT
YEARS HAVE PRODUCED ~~VICE-PRESIDENTS WHO SET~~
HIGH EXAMPLES ^{OF} AS GOOD LOSERS IN CLOSE
PRESIDENTIAL ^{elections} ~~CONTESTS~~. BUT, IT IS AN EVEN
STERNER TEST OF STATESMANSHIP AND CHARACTER
TO BE MAGNANIMOUS AND GRACIOUS IN VICTORY --
AND FOR WHATEVER COMFORT AND CONSOLATION IT
MAY BE TO ANY OF MY COLLEAGUES I CAN TESTIFY
THAT THE DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN FROM
MASSACHUSETTS HAS ALWAYS BEEN MAGNANIMOUS AND
GRACIOUS TO ME -- EVERY TIME I HAVE TRIED TO
TAKE HIS GAVEL FROM HIM IN THE AMERICAN
POLITICAL ARENA.

RESERVING THE RIGHT TO TRY AGAIN
IN 1970, MR. SPEAKER, / MAY I CONGRATULATE YOU
MOST WARMLY ON BEHALF OF MYSELF AND MY
REPUBLICAN COLLEAGUES WHO VOTED AGAINST YOU,
I ASSURE YOU THAT AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED,

CERTAINLY, YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT WE HOLD YOU
IN THE HIGHEST RESPECT^{and regard.} THERE WAS
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING PERSONAL IN THE ROLL CALL
JUST RECORDED. NATURALLY, I HOPE IT IS
NOT HABIT-FORMING, BUT IF I HAVE TO LOSE
ANY ELECTION, THERE IS NOBODY I WOULD RATHER
LOSE TO THAN THE GENTLEMAN FROM MASSACHUSETTS.
IN PASSING, LET ME ADD I HAVE GAINED ON HIM A
LITTLE EVERY TIME.

THE 1968 ELECTION IS BEHIND US,
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN, AND THE
91ST CONGRESS IS GOING THROUGH ITS
BIRTH-PAINS. IN THIS BODY, AT LEAST, EACH
NEW CONGRESS IS A NEW CREATION OF THE
ELECTORATE. IT BEARS A STRONG FAMILY
RESEMBLANCE TO ITS ANCESTORS, ~~OF COURSE~~, BUT
IT IS ALSO DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE. IT COMES,
AS THE LATE, GREAT SAM RAYBURN SAID, EVERY
TWO YEARS FRESH FROM THE ^{American} PEOPLE. * AND THE
PEOPLE WILL, I'M SURE, BE AS GRATIFIED AS I



WAS TO READ IN THIS MORNING'S WASHINGTON
NEWSPAPER THAT THEY, AND WE, HAVE MOVED A
FRACTION OF AN INCH INTO THE 20TH CENTURY.

I DID NOT HAVE TIME TO READ THE
WHOLE ANALYSIS, AND I CHOOSE TO HOPE THAT
THIS HEADLINE REFERRED TO THE SOMEWHAT
INCREASED RATIO OF MEMBERS ON MY SIDE OF THE
AISLE, /THOUGH I AM NOT CERTAIN THIS WAS
PRECISELY DAVE BRODER'S LINE OF THOUGHT.

BUT I FOR ONE /BELIEVE I SEE THE
20TH CENTURY MIRRORED IN THIS ROOM. I CAN
ALMOST FEEL THE TREMENDOUS PROBLEMS AND
DIFFICULT CHALLENGES THAT THE OLD YEAR LEFT
UPON ALL OUR DOORSTEPS. AS I SEE AMONG US
TODAY /MANY OF OUR YOUNG SONS AND DAUGHTERS,
THROUGH THE THOUGHTFULNESS OF THE SPEAKER,
I THINK THAT WE ARE NOT ONLY SEIZED OF THE
20TH CENTURY BUT CLOSING FAST UPON THE
21ST. AND I THINK WE ARE ALL, REGARDLESS OF
AGE OR PARTY OR THE CONSTITUENCY FROM WHICH

WE COME, DETERMINED TO RESOLVE FOR THIS 21ST CENTURY GENERATION OUR PRESSING NATIONAL PROBLEMS AND TO MANFULLY MEET FOR THEM THE SEVERE CHALLENGES OF OUR OWN 20TH CENTURY.

NOBODY IS MORE DEDICATED TO THIS MONUMENTAL TASK THAN YOU, MR. SPEAKER, AND I PLEDGE MYSELF ONCE AGAIN TO WORK WITH YOU AND WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TOWARD THE GOAL OF A BETTER AND MORE UNITED AMERICA IN A WORLD AT PEACE. I WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR THE SPEAKER PLEDGE ON THE TELEVISION LAST NIGHT THAT THE MAJORITY MEMBERS IN THIS BODY WILL BE COOPERATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEW REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION WHICH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE CHOSEN TO LEAD US IN THE YEARS AHEAD. I WAS DELIGHTED, BUT NOT SURPRISED, BECAUSE I KNOW THAT OUR SPEAKER HAS NEVER BEEN A SUNSHINE PATRIOT NOR A SUMMER SOLDIER.

MY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL MY COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED THEIR RECORD OF SERVICE TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS, AND A VERY SPECIAL WELCOME TO THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE 91ST CONGRESS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE. YOU ARE EMBARKING UPON A MOST EXCITING, /A MOST DEMANDING, /AND A MOST SATISFYING JOB -- ONE WHICH DEMANDS AN EXTRA MEASURE OF ENERGY AND JUDGMENT AND PLAIN HARD WORK -- THE JOB OF SPEAKING FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS WHO HAVE GIVEN YOU THEIR VERDICT OF TRUST. IF I MAY OFFER ONE WORD OF ADVICE -- NEVER LET THEM AND THEIR BEST INTERESTS OUT OF YOUR MIND, AND YOU CANNOT GO FAR WRONG IN THIS, THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE.

FELLOW MEMBERS, ONCE MORE IT IS MY PROFOUND PERSONAL PLEASURE AND HONOR TO PRESENT TO YOU AN OUTSTANDING SON OF MASSACHUSETTS, A DISTINGUISHED HOLDER OF

THE HIGHEST CONFIDENCE THIS BODY CAN BESTOW,
AND ABOVE ALL A GREAT GENTLEMAN AND A GREAT
AMERICAN, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES, THE HONORABLE JOHN W.
M^cCORMACK.

-- END --

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By Dennis Lakomy Date March 6, 1978