

The original documents are located in Box D33, folder “Elks - VFW Flag Day Observance, Grand Rapids, MI, June 14, 1972” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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As we pause in our busy lives to observe Flag Day, we should ask ourselves, "What do we see when we look at the Flag of the United States? What -- really -- does it mean?"

In an idyllic sense, our Flag is the symbol of all the wondrous things for which this Nation stood at the time of its founding and the great opportunities it has afforded us since that small beginning.

What does the Flag mean? It is a symbol of the people of this Nation. And because those people were a great people, our Flag came to be loved and respected all over the world, and the Nation for which it stood became known as the land of opportunity.

So the Flag of the United States is not just a piece of cloth "rippling in the breeze." It became synonymous with the people of the United States, and when other peoples saw our Flag they thought of the people who made up our Nation as it grew stronger and richer and more powerful and more wonderful.

Yes, the people are what make a flag. And so we should ask ourselves today, "Are our people still brave and strong and just? Are they defenders of freedom? Does our Flag still stand for bravery and strength and justice and freedom?"

I firmly believe we are still a courageous and a resourceful people.

We are a great people because America has never promised her citizens
prosperity without work, reward without effort, strength without struggle, or
security without sacrifice. It should ever be thus.

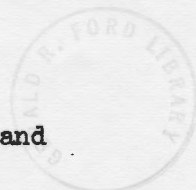
And our Flag is still the symbol of freedom. Freedom. No word was
ever spoken that has held out greater hope, demanded greater sacrifice, needed
more to be nurtured, blessed more the giver, damned more its destroyer, or come
closer to being God's will on earth. May Americans ever be its protector!

Under the Stars and Stripes, a nation was born, suffered its
adolescence, and matured to become the last best hope of humanity.

Today, however, there are some Americans who sneer at those who
openly revere our Flag, who deride those who unabashedly make known their
patriotism. Yet patriotism is simply the longing, desire, and will to make our
country the best it can possibly be.

There is no doubt that in these troubled days this is a time for
patriotism. It is a time when we should all stand up to the challenges that
confront our Nation and resolve that with our strength as a people we will prevail
over all adversities.

The enduring strength of America comes not from mighty figures and



dramatic forces but from our strength as a people, from our moral character as a people, from the steady flow of national life which never fails.

The spiritual, moral and physical strength of our people is the sustaining force and reservoir of power which we must tap in this time of crisis.

This is why it grieves me to see some Americans today departing from the basic principles on which this Nation was founded and on which it grew to greatness.

This country was born in a revolution against tyranny, and our history is filled with glorious stories of our struggle to end tyranny wherever we have found it.

The Flag has followed us all over the world -- not because we were bent on colonial conquest but because we were pursuing peace and freedom for all men. This takes the truest kind of courage, for it takes immense bravery to prevail in the face of hostile ideologies.

We must remind ourselves that a million Americans have died defending human liberty in various parts of the world.

We must remind ourselves that the task of maintaining our Nation's heritage of freedom never has been, and never will be, free of pain, free of struggle, or free of individual and national suffering.

*in almost
2 centuries*



Those who would undermine freedom know that the strongest support they have lies in the natural revulsion Americans feel toward war and their desperate longing for peace.

But we should tell those who trample on freedom that Americans will never agree to peace at any price.

We are searching for peace more avidly today than ever before in our history. But we are searching for it along paths of honor and dignity.

We now have a major understanding to halt the arms race.

Through the spirit of negotiations, we have achieved a cease-fire in the Middle East and avoided war there although genuine peace is still only a fond hope.

Regrettably our desire to negotiate differences has not led to an end to the war in South Vietnam. But that has not been due to a lack of effort or reasonableness on the part of the present Administration. Rather, our initiatives toward an honorable settlement have drawn only an obstinate, negative response from the enemy.

Today it's a whole new ball game in Vietnam. It's a new ball game because the North Vietnamese have made it so, not the United States. The enemy *with an invasion* has violated the Demilitarized Zone. They have rocketed population areas.

They have killed more than 20,000 civilians in the past two months alone.

Despite these facts, the defeatists in this country are at it again.

They keep calling for a unilateral pullout from Vietnam, in some instances not even conditioned on release of American prisoners of war.

In the frantic search for expedient solutions, they openly support resolutions which would tie the President's hands as he withdraws from Vietnam. Yet several years ago they were giving full approval to decisions that got us into Vietnam. Now they condemn the President for seeking to stop the enemy's aggression, but they direct not one single word of criticism against the enemy who is guilty of aggression.

The President is standing up against the enemy's blatant aggression. He is destroying the enemy's war-making capacity, rapidly and effectively. At the same time he has made a generous peace offer -- withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam within four months after American POW's are released and an internationally supervised cease-fire goes into effect.

The President has asked for the support of a united nation. I believe he deserves that support, and I believe that for the most part he is receiving it.

Today this Nation has a new direction. The Peking trip has dramatized that fact. The nuclear arms limitation agreement has dramatized that fact.

We are moving toward a generation of peace. We are moving in that direction because we are keeping America strong . . . because, as a Nation and a people, we are doing what is right.

In this time when so many Americans are confused about their birthright, when patriotism is denigrated, let us be ever mindful of the words of Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln said: "Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and, in that faith, let us dare to do our duty as we see it."

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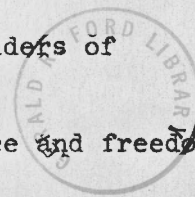
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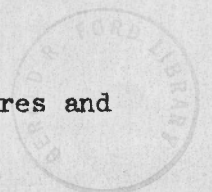
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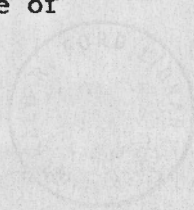
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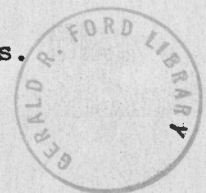
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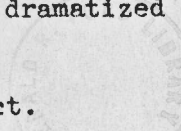
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