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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

TAPING:

SYMPOSIUM ON THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY --

200 YEARS LATER, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 8, 1976

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GOOD EVENING●

I AM HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO GREET YOU, THOUGH I AM  
NOT ABLE TO JOIN YOU, IN THIS SYMPOSIUM ON "THE AMERICAN  
PRESIDENCY -- TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER●"

SPEAKING STRICTLY, THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY IS  
OF COURSE, NOT YET 200 YEARS OLD. IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1789,  
AFTER YEARS OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE LACK OF A STRONG  
EXECUTIVE, THAT THE CONSTITUTION REMEDIED THAT DEFECT AND  
GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT.

DESIRE FOR A STRONGER EXECUTIVE FOUND EXPRESSION

IN THE PROVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION. MUCH OF THE REST

OF THE CONSTITUTION EXPRESSES AN EQUALLY STRONG DESIRE TO

PREVENT ABUSE OF THE EXECUTIVE POWER. IN MORE WAYS THAN

ONE, THE PRESIDENCY HAS A CENTRAL PLACE IN THE CONSTITUTION.

THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT WASHINGTON INHERITED  
IN 1789 HAS BEEN DESCRIBED THIS WAY: A FOREIGN OFFICE, WITH  
JOHN JAY AND A COUPLE OF CLERKS TO HANDLE CORRESPONDENCE WITH  
OUR TWO AMBASSADORS; A TREASURY BOARD, WITH AN EMPTY  
TREASURY; AND A SECRETARY OF WAR -- HE WAS CALLED THE  
SECRETARY AT WAR -- WITH AN AUTHORIZED ARMY OF 840 MEN●  
INITIALLY, THIS WAS THE GOVERNMENT FOR 4 MILLION PEOPLE AND  
A TERRITORY GREATER THAN ALL BUT ONE EUROPEAN NATION●

CONSIDER HOW THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR POPULATION,  
OUR TERRITORY, OUR COMMERCE, AND OUR GOVERNMENT HAVE GROWN.  
AND CONSIDER ALSO, DESPITE THAT GROWTH, THAT THE ORIGINAL  
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS SETTING FORTH THE POWERS OF THE  
PRESIDENT HAVE REMAINED UNAMENDED ~~[BY LEGISLATION]~~ TO THIS DAY.

BUT THOUGH UNAMENDED, THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY,  
LIKE THE POWERS OF THE CONGRESS AND JUDICIARY, HAVE BEEN  
GREATLY ALTERED. OUR ABILITY TO ADAPT VENERABLE AND STABLE  
INSTITUTIONS TO NOVEL AND CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES HAS BEEN  
CONSTANTLY TESTED -- AND WE HAVE MET THAT TEST VERY WELL  
INDEED, IN MY OPINION.



WE HAD A FOUNDING 200 YEARS AGO, AND WE HAVE BEEN  
REFOUNDING STEADILY EVER SINCE.

ALTHOUGH OUR INSTITUTIONS ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING,  
I HOPE THAT WE WILL NEVER CHANGE OUR NATIONAL PURPOSE:  
TO BUILD A STRONGER AND BETTER NATION OF SELF-GOVERNING PEOPLE  
WHO RESPECT AND PROTECT THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF EVERY PERSON TO  
LIBERTY AND JUSTICE. WE ARE NOT YET THERE; BUT THAT  
REMAINS OUR GOAL.

BY ASKING WHAT HAS CHANGED, AND WHAT FURTHER  
CHANGES MIGHT ENABLE THE PRESIDENT TO SERVE ALL THE PEOPLE AND  
OUR NATIONAL PURPOSE MORE EFFECTIVELY, YOU FITTINGLY OBSERVE  
THE BEGINNING OF THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR●

FOR THAT, THANK YOU ALL●

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