

Ladies and gentlemen, on this solemn but joyous occasion of the celebration of this nation's 200th birthday, I find myself in what is a most unusual position; that of one participating in a patriot's dream. I have lived for four decades in uninterrupted offense at the very thought of national pride - for reasons that many of you would share, as well as some that are due to the idiosyncrasies of my own experience.

I do believe, however, that this dream of future glory springs not from my ephemeral imagination, but from the depths of this nation's real past - and that having not to do with the incredible prosperity with which the accidents of nature and the accomplishments of ingenuity have endowed it, but rather with the painful and glorious events with which the course of human history has confronted it. And these events occasion our asking what the future holds.

The events to which I will point do not remove the offense I have felt - quite the contrary is true. It seems to me that we are the scarred survivors of two great civil wars: in the first, our original countrymen fought for political freedom; in the second, citizens of the young nation battled for economic unity. Both wars, at a cost too terrible to enumerate, are, in fact, what birthed this nation, and inasmuch were contributions of great global significance. In both cases, the 100 years following the formal conflict were spent in appropriating the consequences.

I will say only a word about each of these wars in order to bring us to the present time, in which we are faced once again with the prospect of great national travail. Yes, the birth analogy is quite appropriate, because that is the root meaning of the word "nation." I am offended that existence comes forth in pain, but that seems to be the inescapable journey of becoming a people.

In 1776, those who formulated our original declaration to the world said that we have the right to determine our own destiny, and they pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to each other in support of that radically human conviction. It is not that there had never been a free people before, but this war, somehow, was a dramatic new experiment.

Then, after a hundred years of living in a loose federation, an issue of unity arose that had to be faced on behalf of all the nations of the earth: that is, whether the inalienable right of equal economic opportunity would be honored. Would a portion of the population be designated for animal labor to serve the rest, or would the fruits of technology be used to set all citizens free for the pursuit of happiness, with the equity due to every human creature by the simple virtue of his birth? Thus our second "civil war" stated once-and-for-all that the purpose of human life is not bondage to animal activity, but rather the unending exploration of what it means to be human.

It is conceivable that, by a variety of means, we could have aborted both our political and economic opportunities. Yet, without these two great conflicts

having been resolved, the third would be unthinkable. But, the course of human history has determined once again that the struggle is upon us. And, as before, we can shrink from it only at the peril of our whole planet. We have been chosen, not because of some moral superiority, but in the light of historical faithfulness.

Now, what is this struggle we face for the next hundred years? And what are our resources for participation? It is, in gratitude for the price our nation paid for political rights and economic opportunity, to pledge ourselves in mutual effort toward the appropriation of a cultural revolution which history has offered us as our inheritance, but which the whole planet needs to the point of desperation. I mean a revolution in human settlement, the formulation of a new style of local living. This is, in the first place, a state of being: it's name, in the language of one of my colleagues, is "new town."

But the realization of this great dream finds us faced with unavoidable conflict. We would not have wished it, but we cannot avoid deciding whether the aim and implementation of this revolution are worth the giving of our lives. The choice is clear: we can do nothing and the forces of anti-humaness will engulf us. We can let our fellow citizens sleep, and never bring their dream to consciousness. We can abandon them to natural inclinations until the silent equality of death takes over.

Or, with the skills and implements that we have developed in recent years, we can conduct the twin campaigns which this war against unhumaness requires. This is the time for us to be the generals - by which I mean the high-minded and self-sacrificing leaders we have for so long trained ourselves to be. We can, with Town Meeting, awaken every village and city neighborhood, calling them to rise and join the march of civilization into the 21st century. We can, by our example, persuade them to demonstrate a new quality of human life, never before seen on this planet. Such dreaming is, to me, not made of whimsy and wishes, but of firm resolve and radical determination. And I add this sobering concretion: the next 12 months will tell the tale for the Town Meeting Campaign, and set the course for Social Demonstration.

One thing is sure as the Order gathers here today, the sensitive and responsive part of a nation facing its future role, which is still struggling after 200 years to live on behalf of all the world's citizens: These are the times. We are the people.