

CHAMBER AWARDS BANQUET SPEECHES  
Delivered in Redmond, Roseburg and Astoria  
January 19-27, 1980

The most significant thing about tonight is that we've come to honor some very special people. They're being recognized, and thanked, for countless contributions they've made to this community over the years.

If these people are like others who have won similar awards in other cities across our state, they understand something. They understand what it means to have a community. What it means to make it thrive. To make it grow. To make it last.

They understand that a community is made with pride...sacrifice...direction...and confidence; rather than self-pity...or selfishness...or drift...or self-doubt.

I tell you that's worth celebrating; and I want to take my hat off to those who will be honored tonight, to each of you who will be honoring them, and to those who came before you, for the sense of community that you've built and are celebrating tonight here in Astoria.

And ladies and gentlemen, as the country moves into the 1980s, there's a national lesson to be learned here this evening because when you think of those same things that make a national community -- pride, and sacrifice, and direction, and confidence -- it sometimes seems they're getting awfully hard to find.

Given this, I suppose it's no coincidence that we're hearing some sophisticated commentators beginning to wonder aloud if America's moment in history has begun to come to an end.

Tonight I'd like to examine that question of national community and America's greatness -- without skirting over for a moment the problems we face.

There are many ways to measure the greatness of a country but two of them are its economic vitality and its standing in the world.

Let's take the economy -- the thing that men and women and families stake their livelihoods on. If it begins to crumble, then the American Dream -- the wellspring of America's strength -- crumbles with it.

And so, what are the economic facts tonight?

As the commentators will tell you, inflation is running at a pace that will cut the value of a dollar in your pocket to 50 cents in less than ten years. In 1978, our trade deficit reached an all-time high of \$34 billion. In turn, the dollar -- the once-solid symbol of American strength -- has been slipping dangerously in value for a decade.

What about world affairs? An American citizen has always been able to stake his or her future on the ability of the U.S. to prevent other forces from running loose or running over him. But tonight who can be smug when 50 Americans are being held hostage in our own embassy in Tehran by a third-rate government of fanatics, terrorists and thugs?

Who among us can take our position in the world for granted when the Russians have crushed Afghanistan in a move that helps encircle the Persian Gulf which produces most of the oil used by the Western world?

And who can actually believe that in Iran tonight with Soviet tanks and riflemen destroying fellow Moslems in neighboring Afghanistan, and with a mounting internal threat of civil war, that a madman called an Ayatollah can actually make his countrymen believe that "capitalist America" is Iran's biggest enemy?

Ladies and gentlemen, when you review these facts and others, it's clear that all is not right for America tonight. And it goes deeper than the events themselves. It comes down to the climate in which these things have occurred -- a climate we've pretty much created ourselves.

And so, we've reached another great moment of decision for America. The question is, are we going to accept these events as a normal part of our lives and, by doing that, invite more of the same -- or worse?

Or will we recognize the truth; that these events are due not to any flaws in our political or economic systems, nor to an absence of military might, nor to a lack of talent and technology -- but rather they are the result of a society which has turned in on itself, to its own private concerns, misplacing a sense of community, a sense of purpose, and the will to use what it has been given?

These are the questions before America tonight as the curtain rises on the 1980s in a world of new dangers. These are the questions each of us must ask ourselves as part of the national community.

My friends, you and I know there's only one answer to these questions. It's for Americans to put their act back together again. It's for each of us to start giving more of ourselves back to the country. We've been taking from her for too long.

Those are community instincts. And I have an unshakable faith that we can reawaken those instincts in ourselves and the American people. We can do it by stopping the hand-wringing, stopping the endless psychoanalyzing, stopping this paralyzing self-doubt -- and getting this country on the move again.

Let us begin by unshackling our economy. There was a time when it was a colossus -- when the more a worker or an investor put into it, the more it returned. That's the kind of vitality we've got to restore. There are many steps that would help do it. Let me name five.

One, let there be no more Chrysler bailouts. Let the marketplace reward good business management with profits, poor management with losses -- and let the competitive survive and thrive.

Two, limit -- by law -- government spending to a fixed percentage of the nation's gross national product.

Three, resist across-the-board, political tax cuts that increase the already bloated federal deficit. Instead, implement selective tax cuts to stimulate productivity, the real cure for inflation. These include tax reductions for capital gains, for accelerated depreciation of business equipment, and for industrial research and development. And let's also have a tax cut to encourage thrift for a change -- a tax break for earnings on savings accounts to make this country a nation of savers again and help provide the capital our nation needs.

Four, set a 20-year plan to slash our energy imports in half by the year 2000.

Five, bring the bureaucracy and its rule-making authority under control again. Equip the elected branch of government, the Congress, with the power to veto regulations that go beyond legislative intent by a simple vote of either the House or Senate.

This brings me to the state of our influence on the world. Let me suggest some specific steps we can and should take -- steps that are required, in my judgment, by the troubling events of recent days.

The time has come to enter into a regional military agreement with China and other sympathetic countries to help stabilize the Persian Gulf and protect Pakistan from a Soviet thrust from Afghanistan. If such a Soviet move were successful -- and if Russian-backed government overthrows were to occur in Oman and South Yeman, adjacent to Saudi Arabia -- the Russians could control the Straits of Hormutz. Through those straits pass 90% of the oil from the Mideast to the rest of the world.

Moreover, we should extend military aid to Pakistan.

We should help provide necessary arms and supplies to the Afghan resistance.

We should replace the crucial loss of U.S. military installations in Iran by building new ones in Egypt.

Finally, we should use every international institution, every international conference, every international communications device to unmask the world's real "imperialist," the one nation that has suppressed three sovereign nations since the end of World War II -- the Soviet Union. And we should throw that fact in the face of any hostile nation -- whether it's in the U.N. or anywhere else in the world -- whenever it tries to slander the record of the United States.

Some might find these measures stern. But what counts at this moment is a show of American resolve that will be unmistakable.

I would not place into that category -- with all due respect -- proposals to eliminate "cultural exchanges" or to boycott the Moscow Olympics. Nor do I include a grain embargo which in the final analysis may simply allow the Soviets to buy their grain elsewhere and leave our farmers emptyhanded.

Clearly, the 1980s are here. And at this moment there are different straws blowing in the wind in America -- some of which are signs of hope, some of which are not so hopeful.

On the economic front, we've seen Congress, on the one hand, strike a blow for capital formation by lowering taxes a bit on capital gains; yet on the other hand, the same Congress has protected economic inefficiency by bailing out Chrysler, a company rejected in the consumer marketplace. In foreign policy, we can see mixed signals of the same kind, and much in the same way.

I mention this state of flux for this reason: that decisive citizen action now can move this country either way, perhaps in ways that will shape it far beyond the 1980s. It's simply a question of how much we care.

And that brings me back to the award winners tonight.

They realize -- in a direct, personal, immediate sense, that they are responsible for this community.

Let's let this be a larger example to prove our greatness, not to those commentators who are speculating about our "decline," but to the most important people of all -- ourselves -- and let that example lead us to a new sense of community for our country.

If we want to change the economic situation, or our management of natural resources, or our position in the world -- let's realize that in a direct, personal, immediate sense, we are responsible for America.

Not someone else.

But you...and you...and you...and me,