

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE NATIONAL FUTURE

by

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Liberty Bell Award
The Television and Radio Advertising
Club of Philadelphia
June 10, 1960

Bob Pryor and other officers of The Television and Radio Advertising Club of Philadelphia, honored guests, friends of broadcasting and advertising:

It is difficult for me to express to you adequately the great feeling of warmth and pride that Westinghouse Broadcasting Company enjoys as a result of the honor you've conferred upon us today. It is superfluous for me to point out the close feeling we have for Philadelphia as a community. We welcome this occasion as the chance to renew old acquaintances and make new friends. What you have done has justified everything we undertook over the past several years. Obviously, my involvement is a limited one and I share the honor at this moment with the other members of the management of WBC and its stations.

The past several months have held so much for broadcasting and the related industry of advertising that it seems that every statement uttered has related in some measure to these far-reaching and important happenings. Virtually every important point of view has been expressed and I hardly consider myself qualified to add anything new for you in this connection.

I'd like to talk to you today not about where we have been but perhaps in the context of where we are going -- where we are

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going in areas of opportunity over the next several years.

A highly respected national magazine -- LIFE -- and the equally respected NEW YORK TIMES, are currently distributing an editorial series in which many leading Americans are featured, commenting upon our National Purpose. I assume most of you have come across these outstanding articles. I have had occasion to study them and have been impressed. In fact, WBC has undertaken to have these articles by prominent Americans reduced to a radio program using the voices of these same people. As you know, they include Archibald MacLeish, David Sarnoff, Adlai Stevenson, Jim Reston, John Jessup, and others. I would like to address myself to this series.

The premise upon which these articles are based is, in effect, an inquiry into whether or not we, in this country, have lost sight of the objectives which once lead us to create the greatest haven for free men in the history of man. More importantly, the articles query as to whether we have, in fact, lost the delineation of a purpose, goal, or objective. As the opening article indicated, in quoting Walter Lippmann:

"The critical weakness of our society is that for the time

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being our people do not have great purposes which they are united in wanting to achieve. The public mood of the country is defensive, to hold on and to conserve, not to push forward and to create. We talk about ourselves as if we were a completed society, one which has achieved its purposes, and has no further great business to transact...."

It is obvious to all of us, I am sure, that the Soviets have created a vital industrial, economic, and social system, however much we may deplore their political methods. They have kept it going at a rapid pace not alone through dictatorial control exercised by the State under the Communist system, but by taking advantage of the fact that they are engaged in a new pursuit and possess a strong sense of nationalism and national purpose. It was in an effort born of freedom but similar in its vigor to the Soviet's that some years ago we fought our way back through a revolution to cast off the controls of monarchical rule. Thus were we engaged in this very city two centuries ago when our nation's leaders at that time drafted the basic document that spelled out the American pattern of liberty.

Having struggled through the intervening generations with great spirit and greater energy, to the summit among nations,

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the question today is do we find ourselves content to rest and contemplate, in utter complacency, the struggle of others and thereby perhaps dissipate the very spirit that brought us, as a nation, to this greatness. These, generally, are the questions that are being posed in this printed series . . . and I believe the management of LIFE and THE NEW YORK TIMES should be congratulated for focusing the attention of their readership on these questions.

Today, at this meeting, and in no effort to hold myself forth as an expert in these complex areas involving a national conscience, I would like to talk with you as a communicator about the responsibilities we have to the public of this nation and thus to ourselves to examine more closely what might be the peril in a potential national lethargy. It might be appropriate that we study this matter with some intensity in a form that is devoted to the Liberty Bell itself and which is the keynote of this meeting.

The recent weeks have seen events and happenings that are without precedent in diplomacy. The import and impact of these have yet to be precisely determined. Whether the gyrations of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic in these events are in fact manifestations of

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internal Russian politics, or whether they are mere boasts in the power-play struggle for control of the sensitive Berlin situation, or whether, in fact, they portend the ultimate unleashing of atomic forces that will annihilate much of mankind, are beyond our ability to ascertain. Certainly the U-2 and the role it played in this recent situation demonstrates clearly the seriousness of the international problem this country faces in the area of propaganda. It is a proud fact that the medium of radio was the device by which the captive peoples of Central and Eastern Europe were told our side of the story through the facilities of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. It is equally significant to observe the phenomenal and homogeneous reaction of our public to President Eisenhower's action and demeanor at the Summit meeting.

But I am concerned -- I am concerned that now that the actual activities are concluded we have as a nation gone back to a sedentary posture. I am concerned that perhaps we are so constituted as human beings in this country and in other free countries throughout the world that there must be heard the clear sound of gunfire before we respond to the imminence of danger. Are we -- as communicators -- doing enough to clarify, to balance, and to present for the people of our countries, the great issues that exist between statism and democracy? To be specific,

if we have brought -- if we could bring to the citizens of this nation a realistic appreciation of the U-2 and the Summit situations, then an important contribution would be achieved in the area of public awareness and, hopefully, response. This right, this need, this obligation, to inform and be informed, springs from the basic document written in this city almost two hundred years ago. I was re-reading the other day the Bill of Rights and some of the history concerning its adoption. These Rights were spelled out as amendments because there was wide disturbance among our nation's leaders and citizens in those days that the Constitution itself, without such limiting language as the Rights express in certain areas, might permit authoritarian control by the government. As a matter of fact, the Preamble to the Resolution offering the proposed amendments by Congress stated:

"The conventions of a number of the states having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added, and as extending the ground of public confidence in the government will best insure the beneficent ends of its institution, be it resolved. . . ."

This Bill of Rights consisted of ten amendments dealing with the very basic considerations of protecting the people against such centralized control as is represented in the Communist philosophy today and has been seen in our own lifetime in the Fascist states as well. It is interesting to note the total number of words in these ten articles is 462. And a similarly important document -- the Gettysburg Address -- contained but 271 words. It would seem almost that democracy as we conceive it is best explained and is best expressed when treated with brevity.

Without this Bill of Rights and its limitations that in turn are placed on our Governors, there would be little to stand between our form of government and the possibility of the emergence of a dictatorship within our own nation.

But one sometimes wonders whether the complexities that surround our current economic and social growth have, in fact, taken on the form of an Iron Curtain of our own in which our conscious minds no longer comprehend the fundamental values of these original concepts. And it is possible that we've become so desperately entangled in the complications of daily living in a highly organized society that the simple truths have vanished from our vision.

Civilization has been called, "The victory of persuasion over force." One of the most skilled professional pursuits in the American way of life today is advertising. In a period of less than 100 years, the advertising man has become a symbol of salesmanship and he is a central figure in the whole panorama of our society.

His business is persuasion.

It is his purpose and objective to devise means through words and pictures to persuade vast numbers of people to act in purchasing goods or services or in adopting ideas.

But what is the most saleable product that America has today to sell -- what is the most significant ingredient of our society in the second half of this century? It is truth.

And the greatest single truth in America today is the fact of freedom -- that it does exist in the absence of oppression, that we are a nation under law and that individually we may aspire to greater heights and seek them upon our own initiative. If that truth goes by default -- is lost either to the invasion of a conflicting ideology -- or, more aptly, through the erosion of neglect, it can be no fault other than that of the people themselves,

who created the opportunity for freedom in the first place.

Every socialistic approach, whether obviously or overtly made, finally gets around to basing its theories on some concept of individual security above all other factors. In our country today, security is the one major element in our day-to-day search for happiness. This, strangely enough, was of rather minor concern to those who fought in the War of Independence. This flows from the fact that there was something more important than security -- that was (and is) this freedom which is the keystone of democracy.

We in broadcasting during the past year have had an opportunity to prove that we hold security more dear than we do basic rights that are guaranteed to us in the charter of our system of living. We have permitted, without aggressive defense, many people to excoriate us publicly in a campaign based upon limited evidence of shortcomings or indiscretions.

To me, the most disturbing aspect of this hell-fire that we have been getting from numerous sources is not alone implicit in the wrongdoing which has been acknowledged, and I believe corrected, but in the attitude of "sweet surrender" with which most of the industry has accepted such public condemnation.

I mention all of this here today and before you men and women because it is my conviction that, if we are willing to undertake the task, the American broadcasting industry can take up an elusive but vital challenge of restating the fundamentals which many believe we have forgotten or at least neglected. Through the combination of the creative talents available in advertising and those available in broadcasting, we could mount on commercial radio and television a veritable campaign, educational in its design, but fully appealing in its content, that would re-assert in this period of history when ideals are most surely needed, the basic qualities of the American national character and creed.

Perhaps there is no better time to undertake such a task then during this critical election year when some of these issues are so difficult to define. How we go about doing this in our individual ways is not as important as is the firm resolution to do something. The areas of action are many. For example, this past week, the President of our country, in addressing the graduates at Notre Dame University, uttered remarks that I believe will be among the most significant of his public life. Some of these remarks -- which I will quote in a moment -- represent great leadership and pointing of the way not just to

that small handful of graduates receiving their degrees in South Bend but, hopefully, also to the mass of this great country. The President was talking about the American attitude toward politics. He pointed out that over a long period the view was developed that political life is somewhat degrading and that politics is primarily a contest with the spoils to the victor and the public paying the bill. The President acknowledges some justification to this during periods of our history and in certain local situations, but decries the fact that our most highly talented people have, as a result, refrained from entering into public life because of these factors.

Let me now quote liberally from President Eisenhower's Notre Dame address last Sunday:

"...But times have changed, and the change includes the character of government. The first major party platform drafted in 1840 required only 500 words; in the last national election each major party used over 15,000 words to deal with the highlights of the principal issues. This thirty-fold growth in political platforms is illustrative of the increase of governmental influence over all our lives.

"The need for the best talent in positions of political

responsibility is not only great, but mounts with each stroke of history's clock.

"A few years ago government represented only a small fraction of the total national activity. Today, to support our national, state and local governments, and to finance our international undertakings, almost one-fourth of the total national income is collected in taxes. In every phase of life, government increasingly affects us -- our environment, our opportunities, our health, our education, our general welfare.

"Government is, of course, necessary, but it is not the mainspring of progress. In the private sector of American life, commanding as it does the productive efforts of our citizens, is found the true source of our nation's vitality. Government is not of itself a part of our productive machinery. Consequently, its size, its growth, its operations can be justified only by demonstrated need. If too dominant, if too large, its effect is both burdensome and stifling.

"Only an informed and alert citizenry can make the necessary judgments as to the character and degree of that need...."

And further in the speech the following:

"... Though we recognize this vast change -- and though most persons in public office are selfless, devoted people -- we are still plagued by yesterday's concept of politics and politicians.

"Too many of our ablest citizens draw back, evidently fearful of being sullied in the broiling activity of partisan affairs.

"This must change. We need intelligent, creative, steady political leadership as at no time before in our history. There must be more talent in government -- the best our nation affords. We need it in county, city, state and Washington.

"Human progress in freedom is not something inscribed upon a tablet -- not a matter to be shrugged off as a worry to others. Progress in freedom demands from each citizen a daily exercise of the will and spirit, and a fierce faith; it must not be stagnated by a philosophy of collectivity that vainly seeks personal security as a prime objective...."

Here, dramatically, we have had set forth before us an opportunity of national dimension and importance to engage us as people but more importantly to engage us as broadcasters. As people, we must subscribe to the idea that conviction in this world today is more important than comfort, that free enterprise itself is

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a product of freedom not alone measurable in material resources but strongly oriented and related to the spirit of rugged endeavor which made this nation what it is today.

It was Lincoln who said, "If destruction be our lot, we ourselves must be its author...."

By the same token, through intelligent and constructive use of the vast talent and facilities available to us, we can help immeasurably in further vitalizing this nation, in re-emphasizing the verities of spiritual and social wellsprings, and in re-echoing the words of wisdom left to us by the men and women who made these gifts possible. It was Goethe who said, "There appears to be a correlation between affirmation and the rise of nations, between negation and their decline."

In such a direction lies the greatest and most abundant opportunity offered to those of us privileged to be in this dynamic field of communications. If we grasp the opportunity and do something about it, the impact upon the future of our country is almost without comprehension and to us will be the greatest reward of all -- the satisfaction of having served others.

Pragmatically, in such knowledge and in such action now and in the future, we will be united and militant in the defense of the free

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concept of broadcasting in the United States which, after all, is the defense of the freedom of the people themselves.

This is the challenge -- it is one of many.

This is the opportunity -- it is but one of a score.

Through such efforts and undertakings can broadcasting and advertising achieve heights and dimensions hitherto unknown and insure its unfettered and respected position within the society of our times and of the future.

Thank you.