

## "SHARING OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE"

### INTRODUCTION

Each year on Memorial Day every state in the Union commemorates the service men and women who have given their lives for our country. It's a time when we decorate the graves. It's a day to remember our heritage, our human rights, the faith of our fathers, whose revolutionary spirit made possible the birth of our nation.

This revolutionary spirit which founded our nation 190 years ago has been catching on around the world. Americans, the first modern revolutionaries, have had a great influence on the nations of Africa and Asia who have been finding their freedom more recently. In the last twenty years, we have seen the number of member nations in the United Nations go from 50 to 115. So many of these nations have come into being because they have been inspired by our kind of freedom. Our revolutionary heritage is admired around the world by so many peoples.

Along side the revolutions in politics and government, there have been a number of profound revolutions taking place in other areas - in knowledge, for example, and in technology and in economics. And these revolutions, led mainly by our nation, are having an even more profound influence on the life of the world.

### REVOLUTION IN KNOWLEDGE

Consider the revolution in knowledge. This has been truly incredible. Since the beginning of time through 1900, we are told that all of mankind's knowledge doubled. Then from 1900 to 1950 this knowledge doubled again. But, from 1950 to 1960, the knowledge of mankind doubled again. And, we're told, it is doubling every ten years. What an incredible effect this is having on our world. I share with you a remark made recently by a New York City physician, who is also a teacher in one of the medical schools of this city. He said that the young medics today have to absorb just about 25 times as much medical knowledge as he did. Think of it. This has happened in just one generation.

Or consider the revolution brought about by automation and cybernation - these two words we hear flipped off here and there about what's happening in the manufacturing world. Automation - the word which describes the use of machinery instead of man's hands. Cybernation - the word which describes the use of electronics in place of man's thinking. (The combination of revolutions in both automation and cybernation is changing the future of every person who lives or will live.)

We're told, although it is impossible to believe, that within 20 years 2% of the population in America will be able to produce all of the goods and services needed by the 100%. Think of it - 2% of us will be able, if we use all of the cybernetics and technology, to produce all that the 100% will need. Suppose they're wrong with that estimate. Suppose it is only 4% or 10%. What are the 96% or the 90% of us going to be doing in 20 years, if machinery can produce all that is needed. It's also hard to realize that 90% of the scientists who have lived in all history are still alive. This gives us an indication of how recent this revolution is in terms of our knowledge and the accompanying technology.

(Now it's hard for us to believe that this is happening, but it is.) Another way to help understand the tempo of this revolution is to think about the rate with which man has increased his speed on earth. In some ways the revolution in technology is moving this fast. For example, we are told that from the beginning of time to 1900 man reached the astonishing speed of 20 miles an hour. But from 1900 to 1930 we moved up to 50 mph in just 30 years. From 1930 to 1950 we were going 300 mph. Recently I had the experience of flying in a jet and the pilot calmly announced that we were cruising at something like 600 mph. I looked down and it appeared that we were just barely moving.

And this past year two astronauts circled the globe at 25,000 mph with one of them getting out and looking around. These speeds are impossible for us to comprehend. This revolutionary age is evolving in geometric proportions. The increase in the speed with which man can move has brought our world so much closer together. In so many ways this revolution in all of man's knowledge is quite frightening. In other ways it may open vistas of a new life for mankind.

### REVOLUTION IN ECONOMICS

Just as significant and even more challenging is the economic revolution which has been taking place virtually without our noticing it. The revolution in knowledge and technology has created unlimited physical resources. Until the day before yesterday, figuratively speaking, there was not enough food to go around. Half the world presently goes to bed hungry every night. Now, however, it is theoretically possible to produce enough food to fill the stomach of every living person. You wonder: why can't we do it. Why don't we do it. You know the reason why. Obviously, it is a problem of distribution. Food is not scarce. The scarcity is only in our imagination and our sympathy in getting the food to the hungry and starving of the world. It is not resources that are lacking as it use to be. It is our will, our wisdom, our concern, our ability which are lacking.

There is absolutely no reason for poverty in America. There is no reason for it, except that the economic revolution has not caught up with the technological revolution. To me, it is inconceivable that millions of people in India this year are facing starvation in this the 20th century and that we as a nation cannot do more to prevent this from taking place. How we find ways to eliminate poverty in America and in India and in the world in general will require the kind of imagination that Christian laymen - businessmen, leaders of industry - will have to develop. The clergy and the church do not know this field. The role of the clergy and the church is to remind you of the speed of this revolution, to make you aware of the needs that exist, and of the need of God for your imagination. Shelly has a penetrating phrase that comes to mind, "The creative faculty to imagine what we know." A consecrated imagination in his children is one of God's chief instruments for the saving and the blessing of mankind.

Consider for a few moments the results of this economic revolution in America as compared to the rest of the world. Some years ago Stringfellow Barr wrote a book entitled, "Let us Join The Human Race". He helps us visualize the contrast of this economic revolution which has meant so much to America but has not touched half of the world. He wrote:

"Imagine, if you can, that you are about to be born some time during the next 12 months somewhere on earth. Then estimate your chances for a healthy and happy life. On the day you are born, over 300,000 other babies will be breathing their first breath. You and I have one chance in 20 of being born in the United States."

"More likely, or most likely, you and I would be born colored. Two chances to one we will be black, brown or yellow. The chances of being Chinese would be one in five".

"If you are born in India, which more likely than being born in the United States, you'd have a little better than one chance out of four to live more than one year". (Now that is improving and creating another problem. As the health gets better in these economically under-developed nations the population expansion creates another terrific problem).

Or think of it this way. If in our imagination we might compress the total population of the world, now more than three billion persons, into an imaginary community of 1000 persons living in a single city block representing the entire world, we would have the following picture of contrasting peoples and elements:

"Sixty persons would represent the entire population of the US. The rest of the world would be represented by 940 persons. The 60 Americans would be receiving half of the total income of the community; the 940 other persons would share the remaining half. Of the Americans in the community, 36 would be members of the Christian church and 24 would not. In the town as a whole about 330 would be classified as Christian and 670 would not.

At least 80 people in the town would be believing Communists and 370 would be under Communist domination. Classified as to skin color, 303 people would be white and 697 would be classified as non-white."

"The 60 Americans would have 15 times as many possessions per person as all the rest of the people. The Americans would produce 16% of the world food supply, yet would eat 72% above the minimum requirements of the rest of the world. Most of the non-American people in this imaginary compressed community would be ignorant, poor, hungry, and sick. Half of them would be unable to read or write. Moreover half of these people in this community would never have heard of Jesus Christ or what He taught and for what He lived".

#### WHAT IS THE ANSWER

Now the question that Christians need to ask themselves is this: what can we do about all of this? We in America have led the way with political revolution. (We are the first modern revolutionaries.) We have taught the world what it means to be a free nation. On this Memorial Sunday we come to express our gratitude for those who have given so much that we may have so much. Now is it not possible for us to lead the way in an economic revolution.

In a speech a few days ago Defense Secretary McNamara identified poverty as the basic cause of violence around the world and urged broader action to help the poor nations develop. Where the poverty is....this is where the insurgency is. Broader action is needed. Surely this is a problem that deserves the deepest research by the best minds in economics the world can provide. If there is enough food to go around so that no one need be hungry, can we not find ways to distribute it.

From our Biblical heritage we know what needs to be done. When God came to Cain and asked him about Abel, Cain's response was "Am I my brother's keeper?" And Jesus provided us with the answer to that question in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The neighbor is the one who helps. The brother is the man in the ditch, the one in need. I think that through these world revolutions God is making self-evident some of his fundamental truths. He is saying to us - now, my people, I have provided you with unlimited resources. All that I ask of you is the will and the imagination and the ability to use those resources for the world.

For the first time in human history, people in Asia, Africa and South America know that there is enough food to go around. There is an abundance. They hear about us spending a million dollars a day to just store our surplus. They know they do not have to live in poverty.

#### CONCLUSION

What then is our conclusion on this Memorial Day. It is not enough for us to praise the service men and women who have died that we may have

this freedom. It is not enough for us to say to the rest of the world that we have this great freedom here, that it's good for the whole world and encourage them politically. We must somehow do more. We must be ready for this inevitable revolution in technology and in industry to lead the world so that the abundance of God's provisions may be distributed so no man will go hungry. God asked Cain about Abel. Cain answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Jesus answered in the affirmative, "Yes - you are. Whoever is in need - he is your brother".

LET US PRAYER

As we direct our thoughts to the great problems of life, help us, O God, to think clearly, and then lead us out of ourselves toward him who is the purpose of all men, that we may show forth in our lives something of his life, that the world through us may be reconciled to thee. In the spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen