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Service to Mankind Program, February 20, 1979

Vern Riffe

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INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

TO Speaker Riffe DATE February 16, 1979
FROM Ann
SUBJECT: Speech for the Sertoma club banquet

-- Banquet will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 1979
6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Cocktails
7:30 p.m. Dinner

-- Held at Holiday Inn
Lane Avenue
Buckeye Room

-- You are the speaker for the Service to Mankind Program. They wanted a speech on Americanism and life in the United States.

SPEECH FOR SERTOMA CLUB

IT IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO ADDRESS A GROUP SUCH AS THE SERTOMA CLUB, A GROUP WHICH SETS ITS GOAL AS SERVICE TO MANKIND.

WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO LIVE IN A GREAT COUNTRY - IN A GREAT STATE. AS JOHN KENNEDY SAID, "WE ARE AMERICANS. THAT IS A PROUD BOAST."

THE CONTRIBUTION WHICH WE MAKE TO THIS COUNTRY IS, IN TURN, OUR GREATEST SERVICE TO MANKIND. IN MY REMARKS TONIGHT, I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS SERVICE TO MANKIND THROUGH THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

AS YOU WELL KNOW, OUR COUNTRY AND OUR ECONOMY WERE FOUNDED ON THE RIGHT OF FREE ENTERPRISE - THAT IS TO SAY THE RIGHT OF EACH INDIVIDUAL TO COMPETE FOR HIS OR HER SHARE OF THE BUYING MARKET.

FREE ENTERPRISE IS THE THEME WHICH YOUR NATIONAL HERITAGE PROGRAM PROMOTES. FREE ENTERPRISE IS THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY WHICH CONTINUES TO ENSURE OUR NATION'S PROSPERITY.

THERE IS AT THIS TIME A GROWING FACTION WHICH REBUKES THE IDEA OF FREE ENTERPRISE FOR PROFIT. THEY SPEAK OF CARTELS AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE CONSUMER, THEY TALK OF SOARING AND ASTRONOMICAL CORPORATE PROFITS, AND THEY CLAIM "CAPITALISM" IS A DIRTY WORD.

BUT, NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY, CAPITALISM - OUR FREE-ENTERPRISE, FREE-COMPETITION SYSTEM - IS STILL THE BASIS FOR THE GREATEST AND STRONGEST ECONOMY IN THE WORLD.

WE LIVE IN A DEMOCRACY. AT NO TIME BEFORE HAS A GOVERNMENT "OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE" EXISTED SO PURELY - A GOVERNMENT THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF WHICH IS COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON THE ACTIONS OF THE PEOPLE. THROUGH GOVERNMENT AND THROUGH SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE SERTOMA CLUB, THE CITIZENS OF EVERY COMMUNITY HAVE THE RIGHT AND OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A STAND, TO BE STRONG AND TO WORK TOGETHER. CITIZENS MUST UNITE TO RETAIN THE THINGS THEY BELIEVE IN AND TO WORK TO CHANGE THE THINGS OF WHICH THEY

YES, WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF WHAT OUR COUNTRY IS AND WHAT OUR COUNTRY STANDS FOR. WE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE OUR COUNTRY, OUR GOVERNMENT WHAT IT IS OR WHAT IT FAILS TO BE.

AS CITIZENS OF THIS STATE AND OF THIS COUNTRY, WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES - RESPONSIBILITIES TO OURSELVES, TO OUR FAMILIES, TO OUR COUNTRY AND TO OUR FELLOW MAN. IT IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE TO BE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES, AND WE MUST MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CONSCIENTIOUS, CONCERNED CITIZENS?

YOUR FIRST AND FOREMOST RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR COUNTRY IS TO VOICE YOUR OPINION THROUGH YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE - ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN THE CIVIC AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR STATE AND YOUR NATION.

THROUGH YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR VOTE, YOU HAVE WITHIN YOUR POWER THE CAPABILITY OF MAKING, ARTICULATING, ADVOCATING THOSE

POLICIES, PLANS AND PROCEDURES WHICH YOU FEEL WILL MOST BENEFIT OUR PEOPLE COLLECTIVELY AND AS INDIVIDUALS - A PERFORMANCE OF SERVICE TO MANKIND.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE 1970's HAVE COME TO BE CHARACTERIZED AS THE DECADE OF APATHY. THE VEHEMENT ACTIVISM AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE SIXTIES HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY POLITICAL INDIFFERENCE.

WHEN THE VOTE WAS EXTENDED BY THE 26TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, 11.5 MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF EIGHTEEN AND TWENTY-ONE WERE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. HOWEVER, IN THE 1976 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, ONLY 4.6 OF THE 12.1 MILLION EIGHTEEN TO TWENTY-ONE YEAR OLDS WHO WERE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE DID SO - A SORRY 38%.

THE OVERALL PICTURE OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS IS NOT ENCOURAGING EITHER. IN BOTH THE 1976 PRESIDENTIAL AND THE 1974 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS, LESS THAN ONE VOTE PER PRECINCT DETERMINED THE ELECTION'S WINNER. IF JUST ONE PERSON IN EACH OF OHIO'S 13,179 PRECINCTS HAD

CHANGED HIS OR HER VOTE, WE WOULD HAVE HAD A DIFFERENT GOVERNOR IN 1974, AND JIMMY CARTER WOULD PROBABLY BE FARMING PEANUTS IN GEORGIA.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE VOTE - OF YOUR VOTE - WAS PROBABLY MOST CLEARLY ILLUSTRATED THIS PAST NOVEMBER IN THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA. WHEN THE PRELIMINARY ELECTION RETURNS WERE TALLIED, THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WAS SPLIT WITH DEMOCRATS HOLDING ONE HUNDRED ONE SEATS AND REPUBLICANS HOLDING ONE HUNDRED ONE SEATS. THE RACE FOR THE 203RD SEAT - THE ONE WHICH WOULD DECIDE WHICH PARTY WOULD BE IN THE MAJORITY - WAS ALSO TIED. IN THIS INITIAL COUNT, ONE VOTE WOULD HAVE DETERMINED THE LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE STATE. THEREFORE, YOU CAN SEE JUST HOW IMPORTANT ONE VOTE - YOUR VOTE - CAN BE.

IT HAS BEEN SAID BAD GOVERNMENTS ARE ELECTED BY GOOD CITIZENS WHO DID NOT VOTE. EQUALLY TRUE WOULD BE THE STATEMENT: BAD GOVERNMENTS ARE ELECTED BY GOOD CITIZENS WHO DID NOT CHOOSE TO RUN

OR DID NOT TAKE THE TIME TO BECOME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE
POLITICAL WORLD.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY GOES FURTHER THAN VOTING. YOU HAVE BEEN
GIVEN THE RIGHT OF CHOICE AND THE POWER OF CHANGE - NOT ONLY THROUGH
THE VOTE, BUT ALSO THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN OUR POLITICAL
SYSTEM.

FULL CITIZENSHIP ENTAILS MORE THAN A TRIP TO THE POLLS ON
ELECTION DAY - FOR THE VALUE OF A VOTE LIES IN THE VOTER. IT IS HIS
OR HER KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATES AND ISSUES THAT DECIDES WHETHER A
VOTE IS THE VOICE OF THE TRUE SELF-GOVERNED, OR THE MERE UTTERANCES
OF THOSE WHO ARE CONTENT TO SIMPLY GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF PULLING
THE LEVERS ON THE VOTING MACHINE.

TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN GOVERNMENT. YOU CAN HAVE AN EFFECT ON
LEGISLATION BEING CONSIDERED - NOW AND IN THE FUTURE. AN EXCHANGE OF
IDEAS AND INFORMATION CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED AS EASILY AS WRITING A

LETTER OR PLACING A PHONE CALL.

OUR LEGISLATIVE PROCESS IS SET UP SO THAT YOU MAY TESTIFY BEFORE THE COMMITTEES HEARING BILLS OF INTEREST TO YOU.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH ACTIVITY WHETHER IT BE AT THE CAPITOL BUILDING, THE STATE HOUSE OR THE COURT HOUSE. READ THE NEWSPAPERS INCLUDING THE STATUS OF MAJOR LEGISLATION.

THROUGH YOUR PARTICIPATION AS MEMBERS OF THE SERTOMA CLUB, YOU HAVE SHOWN A GREAT INTEREST IN YOUR FELLOW MAN. YOU HAVE SHOWN YOURSELF TO BE INDIVIDUALS WHO CARE ABOUT THEIR STATE AND NATION.

DO NOT SIT BACK. ELECTED OFFICIALS NEED YOUR GUIDANCE SO THAT THEY MAY MORE ACCURATELY REPRESENT YOU ON THE VARIOUS MATTERS PENDING BEFORE THEM. THIS IS WHAT THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, CAPITALISM AND FREE ENTERPRISE ARE ALL ABOUT.

I WILL VENTURE TO GUESS THAT MOST IF NOT ALL OF YOU DO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN SERTOMA

INDICATES YOUR INTEREST IN SERVICE TO MANKIND. I HOPE THAT INCLUDES SERVICE TO MANKIND THROUGH THE POLITICAL PROCESS. THIS IS THE KIND OF INVOLVEMENT A DEMOCRACY NEEDS.

IF YOU ARE NOT INVOLVED - GET INVOLVED. THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE ALREADY ACTIVE, I ASK THAT YOU CONTINUE YOUR WORK IN THE SERTOMA CLUB AND OTHER GROUPS WHICH PROMOTE POLITICAL AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION. BUT DON'T LET YOUR INTEREST STOP THERE.

DO WHAT YOU CAN TO ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO DO THEIR PART. STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH AND EVERY VOTE - THAT VOTE IS YOUR VOICE IN GOVERNMENT.

THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY VIEWS ON SERVICE TO MANKIND THROUGH THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

IN CLOSING, LET ME LEAVE YOU WITH THIS THOUGHT, "PARTICIPATION IS THE WAY THAT WE AS AMERICANS CAN ASSURE THAT DEMOCRACY, CAPITALISM, FREE ENTERPRISE AND THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE REMAIN STRONG."