

THE LIE IN THE SOUL

Remarks Made on Election Night
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We just had an interesting ride on the elevator. It insisted on going up and down two or three times before it finally reached the peak. I do not know what that means, but I think it is significant. I am glad that you are here and that you are having a good time. I think it is important for us to reflect now on what you have done and where we are going.

It is clear now that the evening will conclude with the vote result showing that the Party's incumbent nominee will receive fifty percent or less of the Party's vote in this election. In one sense you might say the "Party's over"—I don't mean the party here; this party's only just begun.

It is very important for us to bear in mind what we have been about. When we gathered in prayer last night, I prayed that we would all have the strength to submit. The submission that I prayed for was the submission to do our duty, to do the work we are called to do. I am very proud to stand here tonight, and to be able to say that thus far we have done that work.

This is not an ordinary political effort. We have deep and abiding concerns that will continue to energize us. Nothing is more important than recognition of the fact that the leadership of the Republican Party is morally and intellectually bankrupt.

We are here tonight, rather than on the ballroom floor, primarily for that reason. There will be of course calls made on Party loyalty, requesting us to do what we have done so often these last thirty years. It is also the case that we have arrived at a new awakening. As I explained in one gathering, I intend never again to apologize in the classroom for public insanities, whether it's my Party's insanity or anyone else's. I intend never again to say to the public that they are worthy who are manifestly unworthy.

I do not take that position out of a concern to undermine the careers of public servants. But I am of the opinion that we now practice in politics, at least in this Republican Party, something akin to academic grade inflation. In fact, the political variety is even worse, because there is so much at stake. Policies of social promotion do quite enough harm to grade school students; but they destroy societies.

Those who will represent the people of this state and this great nation must be called to a higher standard of performance, morally and intellectually. We will not do our Party any good service to pretend that people for whom we have no respect are people whom we can recommend to its approval.

That may seem rather a hard line to take. But the reality is that it is harder still to do the one thing which Socrates called the thing that causes the greatest pain for a good man. Socrates said that a good man hates most of all the lie in the soul.

I have resolved, and I here highly resolve, never again to bear a lie in my own soul. I will not praise as worthy the unworthy in the name of Party loyalty. There may be many uncertainties that will affect the outcome of events in this election year as we go forward. And we will doubtless be called to consider whether what we are asked to do may not be the lesser evil rather than the greater good. But we stand at a twilight hour in our nation—an hour in which anything but good is itself a partner of evil.

Those are ideas which can no longer be buried within our breasts. They must be spoken, at all costs and on every occasion. This is such an occasion. We do not now know what the final vote tally will be, and in one way it is not now our business to worry about that. Our efforts, which have been great in spirit and in energy, will do themselves proud. We have nothing to be ashamed of. The resources which we have commanded, and the good will which we have manifested, will continue to speak in this state and in this land long after the final vote tally shall have been reported.

Our task is to understand what speaks beyond the vote tally. Politicians have the burden of expressing opinions. It is to voters to express will. We will receive that will in the same spirit with which we appeal to it in the first instance, as determining the question, for now. But we do not go so far as to equate democratic will with sobriety and good sense. We know that the true work of politics is to persuade. And we are not so foolish as to imagine that persuasion happens at the mere drop of a speech. No, it is far rather for us to understand that the work of persuasion is a moral duty, to which we are called for so long as there are ears to hear. The work of persuasion is an affirmation of confidence in the true dignity of our fellow citizens. We do not read their capacities from any momentary failure to persuade; we read rather the necessity to redouble our efforts.

Tonight or tomorrow morning or sometime, as the fates will provide, there shall be a final tally reported, a final vote summation. It will show, apparently, that we have garnered somewhere around 10% of the vote with the other candidates arrayed in differing relative proportions. What the vote cannot show is the work to which we have committed ourselves. If it be true, as I now and long before have suggested, that the leadership of the Republican Party is morally and intellectually bankrupt, then it is no less true that it is incumbent upon us continually to demonstrate the better way.

In invoking a better way I can no better way convey to you my appreciation of the immensity of the task and the virtues of those who willingly undertake it than to express my enduring gratitude to all of you. There is not a person here who has not borne in a special way the burden of this campaign. There is not a person here who has not earned pride of place in what will remain for me forever a pantheon of heroes. And there are some persons here who have given more than even the last full measure of devotion. To them I cannot do less than publicly to acknowledge, not just gratitude (that seems such a feeble expression for the debt that I owe) but complete and utter dependence on their faithfulness. They stand here, some of them, around me. You know them. All of you will recognize in my recognition of them my very deep desire that you, too, will appreciate what they have given to all of us.

And so I now bid you, enjoy the party! Let it not grow old. Let it not wane for lack of enthusiasm. Let it not tire you for promise of work yet to do.