5-1-1970

The University and the Emergence of a New Romanticism, delivered for the Law Day Program at the Muskegon Bar Association on May 1, 1970

Arend D. Lubbers

Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches

Part of the Archival Science Commons, Education Commons, and the History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches/36

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
THE UNIVERSITY AND THE EMERGENCE
OF A NEW ROMANTICISM

ADDRESS BY ARAH D. LUBBER

IT IS SOMETHING OF AN OCCUPATIONAL DEMAND THAT COLLEGE PRESIDENTS
ATTEMPT TO INTELLECTUALIZE AND TO MAKE ACADEMIC THE PROBLEMS THAT
SURROUND THEM. IT ALMOST SEEMS HUMOROUS, AS A MATTER OF FACT, TO
WATCH COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, WHILE THEIR ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IS
BEING OCCUPIED AND NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS ARE ROAMING THE CAMPUS
WALKS, ATTEMPTING TO PUT INTO PROPER SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVE THE
HAPPENINGS AROUND THEM. I WONDER PERHAPS IF SOMETIMES COLLEGE
PRESIDENTS SHOULDN'T MAKE A LITTLE MORE EXPLICIT THEIR PERSONAL
REACTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS THAT THEY FACE. PERHAPS THE OUTSIDE WORLD
WOULD UNDERSTAND THEM A BIT MORE. TODAY I'M GOING TO Rely A BIT UPON
THIS OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD OF INTELLECTUALIZING SOME OF THE PROBLEMS
THAT THE AMERICAN COLLEGE FACES, BUT I AM ALSO GOING TO EXPLAIN SOME
OF MY PERSONAL REACTIONS TO THE SITUATION THAT SURROUND US.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A STUDENT OF ROMANTICISM. THE ROMANTIC VISION HAS
BEEN AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FACTOR INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF
WESTERN CIVILIZATION. WE OFTEN THINK OF ROMANTICISM AS A PHENOMENON
OF BYGONE CENTURIES. AND IT'S TRUE THAT THE GROUNDWORK OF THE
ROMANTIC NOTION DOES LIE IN MANY GENERATIONS PAST. YET, AT THE SAME
TIME, IT'S VERY MUCH WITH US TODAY. BEFORE I GET ANY FURTHER LET
ME EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN BY THE ROMANTIC.

THE ROMANTIC IS, FIRST OF ALL, SELDOM IF EVER WHAT ONE COULD CALL A
NORMAL PRODUCT OF HIS SOCIETY. HE IS, INSTEAD, PRIMARILY AN ALIENATE.

NOW THAT WE'VE TALKED ABOUT WHAT ROMANTICS ARE, LET'S GET INTO THE SECOND PART OF OUR PROBLEM, NAMELY, HOW DOES ROMANTICISM AFFECT THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE NOW LIVE?

WRITES OF THE AMERICAN RADICAL RIGHT: "THE RIGHT WING TOLERATES NO COMPROMISES, ACCEPTS NO HALF MEASURES, UNDERSTANDS NO DEFEATS. IN THIS RESPECT, IT STANDS PSYCHOLOGICALLY OUTSIDE THE FRAME OF NORMAL POLITICS, WHICH IS LARGELY AN AFFAIR OF COMPROMISE. ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL QUALITIES THEN, IN THE RIGHT WING MENTALITY OF OUR TIME IS ITS SIMPLISTIC UTOPIANISM." THE UTOPIANISM OF THE RIGHT LEADS IT TO AN EMOTIONAL EMBRACING OF ALL THE THINGS OUT OF AMERICA'S PAST THAT SEEM THREATENED, AND LEADS IT TO EMOTIONAL CONDEMNATION OF MANY NEW THINGS THAT SEEM VERY THREATENING.

THE FORCES OF THE RIGHT HAVE VERY INTELLIGENT, RESPONSIBLE, AND POLITICALLY IMPORTANT SPOKESMEN FOR SOME OF THEIR VIEWS. BARRY GOLDWATER, FOR EXAMPLE, SYMBOLIZED FOR MANY PEOPLE ON THE RIGHT A POLITICIAN WITH WHICH THEY COULD FEEL AT HOME, AND THAT'S BECAUSE HE SHARED MANY OF THEIR ROMANTIC IDEALS, EVEN THOUGH HE MAY NOT HAVE SHARED THEIR PARTICULAR POLITICAL IDEOLOGY. HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH AS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN 1964 AT THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION WAS A PERFECT MODEL OF HIS VISION. HE SAW A MOVEMENT OF PEOPLES ALL UNITED TOGETHER IN A FUTURE OF AMERICANISM AS HE DEFINED IT. TODAY, VICE PRESIDENT SPIRO AGNEW HAS BECOME A VERY ARTICULATE SPOKESMEN FOR IDEAS THAT GAIN EMPATHY FROM THE RIGHT. WHEN AGNEW SPEAKS OF UNIVERSITIES FOR EXAMPLE, HE TALKS OF THE PAST AMERICAN IDEAL OF THE INTELLECTUAL HAVEN COVERED WITH IVY WHERE STUDIOUS YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN
PURSUE THE LEARNING THAT WILL MAKE THEM GREAT AMERICAN CITIZENS.

HE SEES THE UNIVERSITY AS AN ARISTOCRATIC KIND OF PLACE, A QUIET PLACE, UNTRAMMELED BY THE REALISTIC HARD KNOCK POLITICS WHICH SURROUNDS IT.

TO SPIRO AGNEW, AS TO MANY PEOPLE IN THE SOCIETY, THE UNIVERSITY IS A CITADEL THAT SHOULD NOT BE TARNISHED BY THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REALITIES OF THE DAY.

LIKE THE RIGHT IN THIS COUNTRY, THE LEFT IS ESSENTIALLY A ROMANTIC MOVEMENT. THE HOPEFUL RHETORIC OF THE AMERICAN LEFT IS COUCHED IN THAT OFTEN HEARD ROMANTIC SYMBOL - FREEDOM. WHAT COULD BE MORE OF A PORTRAIT FOR ROMANTICISM THAN HUNDREDS OF YOUTHS SPREAD OUT ACROSS THE WHITE HOUSE LAWNS WITH LOCKED ARMS SINGING "WE SHALL OVERCOME."

THE LEFT SEES THE FUTURE OF AMERICA BEING A NATION WHERE PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD REIGN SUPREME. THEY TALK OF A PEOPLE NOT CORRUPTED BY MATERIAL VALUES, A PEOPLE THAT WOULD BE ALLOWED TO LIVE A NATURAL, SIMPLE LIFE, FREE OF HANG-UPS AND THE PRESSURE OF CORPORATION JOBS AND TECHNOLOGY. THE LEFTIST SHANGRI-LA IS A LAND WHERE NATIONS LIVE IN LOVE AND PEACE, SHARE THEIR WEALTH, CREATIVITY. TO MANY OF THOSE ON THE LEFT, THE PROBLEMS OF BIASES AND BIGOTRY CAN BE THROWN AWAY IN A DAY.

THE LEFT, TOO, HAS IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCENE POWERFUL SPOKESMEN
FOR ITS CAUSE, JULIAN BOND WAS A DRIVING SPIRIT AT THE 1968 DEMOCRATIC
CONVENTION. IN INTERVIEWS AND ON THE FLOOR, HE SPOKE OF THE SLOGANS,
THE VALUES, AND THE VISIONS THAT ARE SHARED BY MANY PEOPLE OF THE
LEFT. SENATOR GEORGE McGOVERN AND SENATOR ROBERT KENNEDY VOICED
MANY OF THE IDEALS AND FEELINGS THAT ARE SHARED BY THE LEFT AS THEY
SEEK A VISION OF A BETTER SOCIETY.

WE HAVE SEEN IN RECENT YEARS A TUG OF WAR BETWEEN THE IDEAS AND
METHODS OF THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT. VERY RESPONSIBLE AND LEGITIMATE
PEOPLE IN OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM HAVE USED IDEAS OF THE LEFT AND THE
RIGHT TO INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE FOR OUR SOCIETY. BUT
LATELY A SERIOUS AND FRIGHTENING CHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE. THE TUG
OF WAR BETWEEN THE LEFT AND RIGHT IS INCREASINGLY POLARIZING OUR NATION.
THE CONFLICTING POINTS OF VIEW ARE NO LONGER FOUGHT OUT ON THE FLOORS
OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BY SUCH AMIABLE ENEMIES
AS JACK KENNEDY AND BARRY GOLDSWATER. INCREASINGLY THE GEORGE Mc
GOVERN AND THE SPIRO AGNEW DO NOT SYMBOLIZE ENOUGH THE DRIVING
EMOTIONS WHICH LIE BEHIND THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT. IN THE LAST YEARS,
ARGUMENTS ARE TAKEN INTO THE STREET FOR THEIR SOLUTIONS. INCREASINGLY,
THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES THAT HAVE BEEN SET TO DEAL WITH
CONFLICTING POINTS OF VIEW ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO HANDLE THE PROBLEMS
OR FIND SIGNIFICANT SOLUTIONS FOR THEM. THE ROMANTIC, YOU SEE, IS
UNFORTUNATELY A VERY APOLITICAL ANIMAL, AND IN A LIKE VEIN, THE
POLITICAL SPHERE OF OUR COUNTRY IS A VERY UNROMANTIC THING. POLITICIANS
ARE MOST OFTEN VERY NORMAL PRODUCTS OF THEIR SOCIETY.
POLITICIANS ARE EXPECTED TO SYMBOLIZE THE NORMAL ON-GOING ACTIVITIES OF THE NATION, AND THEY DO. POLITICIANS AS A GROUP, UNLIKE ROMANTICS HAVE NO TENDENCIES TOWARD SELF-ANALYSIS AND DEEP INTROSPECTION. QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, THEY ARE WHAT DAVID RIESMAN HAS LABELLED "OTHER DIRECTED." THAT IS, THEY OFTEN SEEK THE BASIS FOR THEIR THOUGHTS IN THE TRENDS AND CUSTOMS UNDER WHICH THEY LIVE. FAR FROM BEING ALIENATED, THEY'RE THE APOTHEOSIS OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOCIETY. THEY DO NOT PAINT OR CREATE IMAGINATIVE ROLES, AND THEY'RE OFTEN THE ANTI-THESIS OF IDEALISTIC OR UTOPIAN. THIS IS WHY A BARRY GOLDWATER, A ROBERT KENNEDY, A SPIRO AGNEW ARE SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM. THEY EXHIBIT, EVEN IF IT IS TO A SMALL DEGREE, ROMANTIC TENDENCIES NOT SHARED WITH THEIR FELLOW POLITICIANS.

INCREASINGLY THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT SEE EACH OTHER AS ENEMIES ON AN OPEN BATTLE FIELD WITH NO ONE IN THE MIDDLE TO KEEP THEM APART. THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN EXPLICIT ACTION AGAINST THE ENEMY AT HAND. SOMETIMES THIS ACTION TAKES THE FORM OF DIRECT INVOLVEMENT LED BY THOSE ON THE RIGHT IN A NEIGHBORHOOD TO KEEP BLOCK PEOPLE OUT. SOMETIMES THIS DIRECT ACTION TAKES THE FORM OF A RIOT LEADING THOSE ON THE LEFT IN WHICH LARGE PARTS OF THE CITY ARE BURNED DOWN. SOMETIMES THIS DIRECT ACTION TAKES THE FORM OF THE OCCUPATION OF UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS, OR GENERAL STRIKES DESIGNED TO KEEP THE UNIVERSITY FROM OPERATING AT ALL.

CULMINATED HIS VISIONARY ACCEPTANCE SPEECH IN 1964 BY CALLING HIS SUPPORTERS TO HIM AND SUGGESTING ALL THOSE THAT DID NOT LIKE HIS DREAM SHOULD "GET OUT." THE LEFT, WHILE THEY DREAM OF BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE ARE VICIOUS IN THEIR CONDEMNATION AND HATRED OF THOSE WHO DO NOT SHARE THEIR VISION. ROMANTICS THROUGH THE AGES HAVE OFTEN SHARED A CAUSE-WIELDING KIND OF ATTITUDE, AND IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT HISTORIANS TELL US THAT THE VISIONARY IS OFTEN CONSUMED BY A MONOMANIA AND AN ESSENTIAL AGOISM. THIS EGOISM LEADS EVENTUALLY TO A LACK OF CONCERN FOR OTHER INDIVIDUALS, WHO, YOU SEE, HAVE TO BE FORCED TO SEE THE LIGHT. THERE IS A STRONG TENDENCY IN THE ROMANTIC VISION TO RESORT TO ANY MEANS TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED END. THE ROMANTIC IS, IN ERIC HOFFER'S TERMS, A TRUE BELIEVER.

THE VISIONARY CONVINCED OF HIS DREAM, UNWILLING TO TOLERATE COMPROMISE WITH WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE THE TRUTH, IS VERY MUCH WITH US ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS. I TALK TO THESE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME. THE LEFT IS INCREASINGLY CENTERED ON AND AROUND OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, AND SO WE ARE THE FIRST STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY TO MEET THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE ROMANTIC MONO-MANIA THAT HAS BEEN BRED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS. IN THIS SAME SENSE WE SHARE A COMMON IDENTITY WITH LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS, AND CITY COUNCILS ALL ACROSS THIS NATION, WHO HAVE BEEN FACED FOR SOMETIME WITH VERY REAL EVIDENCE OF THE RIGHTIST TRUE BELIEVER. IN OUR CASE, WE FACE THE YOUNG MEN OR WOMEN WHO ARE ALIENATED FROM THE
SOCIETY; WHO SPEAKS OF LOVE, OF CHARITY, OF BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE, AND WHO ARE READY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT DEFINE LOVE, CHARITY, BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE THE WAY THEY DO.

WE DO HAVE A DEFENSE THOUGH, IF WE CAN EMPLOY IT, TO STEM THE FORCES THAT DIVIDE OUR SOCIETY TODAY. THAT DEFENSE, VAGUE THOUGH IT MAY SOUND, IS THE SAME ONE THAT HAS BEEN ULTIMATELY TURNED TO BY EVERY NATION THAT HAS BEEN FORCED TO PRESERVE ITS STABILITY. THE DEFENSE OF WHICH I SPEAK IS REASON. WE USE THE TOOL OF REASON PARTICULARLY IN THESE TRYING TIMES TO KEEP DEMAGOGUES FROM SWAYING THE STABLE AND ORDERLY MIDDLE CLASS MAJORITY OF OUR COUNTRY. TODAY WE DO NOT NEED A SILENT MAJORITY. QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, WE NEED VOICES EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT VISIONARIES OF ALL KINDS, THE MILITARISTS IN THE PENTAGON, AND REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE S.D.S. THE NOTED POLITICAL SCIENTIST V. O. KEY WROTE A BOOK PROVIDING CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT THE GREAT VIRTUE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN ITS ISSUE-ORIENTED REALISM, AND IT IS TO THESE ISSUE-ORIENTED REALISTIC PEOPLE THAT WE MUST NOW TURN FOR HELP. WE CANNOT LET OUR SOCIETY BE SWAYED INTO THE MAELSTROM OF THE RIGHT, OR THE MAELSTROM OF THE LEFT. THIS QUESTION IS THE DIFFICULTY THAT WE FACE ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS, AND IT'S WITH THIS DILEMMA THAT I WANT TO LEAVE YOU.
WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOCK UP EVERY ROMANTIC IN THE SOCIETY. OUR NATION CAN'T AFFORD TO INCARCERATE THE KEATS, THE BYRONS, THE SHELLEYS, THE NEITZCHES. THE MOST BRILLIANT AND PRODUCTIVE OF OUR PEOPLE ARE OFTEN THE MOST ROMANTIC. IN SPECIFIC TERMS, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOCK UP THE THOUSANDS OF CONCERNED STUDENTS ON OUR UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES. NOR CAN WE REALLY AFFORD TO BRUTALIZE THEM WITH POLICE TACTICS YET. NEITHER CAN WE AFFORD TO LET ROMANTIC VISIONARIES TAKE OVER INSTITUTIONS IN THIS SOCIETY FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. THE UNIVERSITY CANNOT BECOME A POLITICAL FOIL FOR EITHER THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT, AND THEREIN LIES OUR PARTICULAR DILEMMA, AND ALSO INCREASINGLY THE DILEMMA OF THE WHOLE SOCIETY. SO THE QUESTION ULTIMATELY BECOMES A VERY SPECIFIC ONE. AT WHAT POINT IS A ROMANTIC DANGEROUS ENOUGH THAT SOCIETAL ACTION MUST BE TAKEN AGAINST HIM? I HAVE FOUND THAT SO FAR ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS REASON IS STILL A VERY USEFUL TOOL IN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS THAT WE FACE. I FOUND THAT IN SPITE OF TREMENDOUS PRESSURES BOTH FROM THE OUTSIDE COMMUNITY AND PRESSURES FROM THE INSIDE, THAT HOLDING A FIRM MIDDLE GROUND HAS STILL WORKED OUT IN THE END. BUT I ALSO FEEL A BIT UNSETTLED BY THE VOICES OF THE VISIONARY DINING SO CLOSELY IN MY EAR. THE PROBLEM OF THE POLARIZATION OF SOCIETY, AT ONE POINT A DISTANT VAGUE KIND OF PHENOMENON, IS INCREASINGLY BEGINNING TO BE A PROBLEM THAT MAY BE STANDING RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR. WE NEED OUR ROMANTICS, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY WE NEED THE STABILITY AND THE REASON THAT HAVE MADE THIS NATION A GREAT ONE. LAW AND ITS PRACTICE MUST BE SYNONYMOUS WITH REASON, AND IT MUST BE AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE IN SOCIETY. IF JUSTICE IS UNAVAILABLE TO SOME THE IRRATIONALITY THAT DESTROYS A
SOCIETY THRIVES. ROMANTICISM IN A SOCIETY THAT IS PERMEATED BY THE DISCIPLINE OF REASON AND LAW IS A POSITIVE CREATIVE FORCE. ROMANTICISM IN A SOCIETY WHERE LAW AND JUSTICE IS INEQUITABLY PRACTICED OR UNAVAILABLE TO MANY WILL SPAWN CAUSES AND FUNCTION THAT LEAD ONLY TO DESTRUCTION.