

DEMOCRACY—ABOVE AND BEYOND

HON. BILL BARRETT

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 1997

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I have received the following script, by Sarah Brozek, a fine young Nebraskan. Sarah is the Nebraska winner for the Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest, conducted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary. I believe her statement on the costs and obligations of living in a free society are important for us to consider:

DEMOCRACY—ABOVE AND BEYOND

(By Sarah Brozek)

As Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

As citizens of democracy, we are compelled to take action against that which threatens our freedom. Democracy, as opposed to any autocratic style of government, depends upon that voluntary responsibility and sacrifice of its citizens, unlike other forms of government such as totalitarianism, communism and socialism which take away the responsibilities of its citizens and create dependency, instead of independence.

Therefore, as citizens of the United States, it becomes essential to rise above the mere act of belonging to a great nation. We must move beyond settling for privileges and forgetting our principles. We must be responsible enough to take action above and beyond those that satisfy our own self-serving needs. It is not enough to say our pledge to the flag and say we love our country. It is not enough to simply label our form of government as a democracy. It takes action on the part of each individual: voting, standing up for the principles we hold dear, taking responsibility for others who may be oppressed. Democracy involves moral decisions. It pursues a positive hope for the future. It implies a trust in the general integrity of men and women. It cannot survive without sacrifices. There must be a sacrifice of will: that of abiding by the majority rule. This does not mean sacrificing the integrity of self. It means taking a stand of principle on each occasion. Blind allegiance is useless to a strong, democratic country.

There must be a sacrifice of income. A democracy needs the support of its citizens. Because democracy does involve moral decisions, we must have the means to care for our people, especially those less fortunate and needing our care.

Democracy also demands a sacrifice of our time. If we let someone else do all the decision making, and let someone else serve our cities and counties, we abdicate our right to be included as a part of the majority and lose our role in our own future. It is necessary for each person to title his or her time to a community service, on a local, state or national level in order to remain aware of current events and to get all the jobs done that need to be done. It also requires a sacrifice of our time to follow and understand national and international events since we are part of the greater world and one of the world leaders. It takes informed choices to make a democracy work.

Democracy can require a sacrifice of life, sometimes. America was built on people fighting for their values and beliefs. From the revolutionary war to the present, we have had citizens who believe so strongly in the ideals of democracy on a personal level that they have willingly taken arms and laid down their lives to defend those ideals. An

ideal not worth fighting for is easily trampled by others. We could lose everything without lifting a finger. As Americans we have the privilege of taking a stand for what we believe in.

We can sit on our couch and rant and rave against our politicians, but not walk across the street to vote for the one we think will be most effective. We can complain and bemoan our taxes, then curse the condition of the roads and the lack of current technology for our children to learn on at school and never volunteer to help in any community endeavor that has lost funding. We can cry at the rising criminal statistics and yell at the people whose job it is to protect us, but when asked to help in neighborhood watches or attend community meetings to help take a stand against drugs and crime we say we're too busy and what do we "hire these people for anyway?" And when we're sitting on our couch and our country is at risk, but we expect someone else to take care of it, we should not be surprised when everything we took for granted disappears in a moment. And the only one we can blame is our self. I am one of thousands who would share the blame. Democracy takes the effort of all of us. We must hold ourselves accountable. That is the heart of effective, living democracy.

Democracy is not just a noun. It is not just an object to be placed on a pedestal and dusted off any time we feel a little patriotic. Democracy is not only an adjective, just a pretty sounding word that makes us feel superior and smug when we say it. Democracy is a verb. It is action, involvement, doing and saying. It is time, and talents and great effort. It is constant reinforcement and participation. It is vitality and battle. It is continuous work in progress. As Abraham Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address, an "unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

HONORING JOSHUA TRENT, VFW
AWARD WINNER

SPEECH BY

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 5, 1997

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, each year the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its ladies auxiliary conduct the Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest. This year more than 109,000 secondary school children participated in the contest competing for the 54 national scholarships which were distributed among the 54 national winners. The contest theme this year was "Democracy—Above and Beyond."

I am proud to announce that Mr. Joshua Trent from my 6th Congressional District in Tennessee won the 1997 Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest for the State of Tennessee. Like myself, Joshua is a resident of Murfreesboro, TN.

Joshua's script exudes the spirit of enthusiasm that beckons us to feel as he does about our great Republic. That Joshua has attained such a zeal and been blessed with the talent to convey his feelings, speaks well for his future as a leader in America.

For the benefit of all, I would like to share Joshua's award winning script with you at this time.

1996-97 VFW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM—TENNESSEE WINNER JOSHUA TRENT

Democracy: Above and beyond!

Man, what kind of assignment is this? Teacher say to write a paper on "Democracy: Above and Beyond". What in the world does that mean?

Come: I will show you. Huh?! Who said that? Me. Who are you? What are you doing here?

I am the spirit of democracy, I am answering your question. I will show you what "democracy—above and beyond" means.

Look pal, I don't know who you are, but you'd better just go back to wherever you * * * where am I? WWWhas goin' on? What did you do?

Look, tell me—who are those men?

It looks like two pictures of—oh my! That looks like Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin—and they're real! Hey! Fellas! Can you see me?

Quiet! No, they cannot see you, only you can see them. Listen to what they are saying.

Franklin: "Congratulations Thomas! You drafted an excellent piece of work! I especially like the part of um * * * 'We hold these truths, * * * Would you mind reading that part again?'"

Jefferson: "Certainly. I am honored that you think it is good Mr. Franklin. Ahem! 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'"

Franklin: "Jefferson, you've got a point. That is what it's all about. All men created equal—all men having a say in government—all men having equal chances in business. Democracy, as you know, means "rule by the people". That's the idea. Common sense people running the government, not King George or anyone else.

Come, we must go now, we have more stops to make before our journey is over.

Hey, that's pretty neat! That was Ben and Tom just chattin away, and dude, they were * * *

You are missing the point. What did you learn?

Learn? Uh, well * * * Democracy means that people are level—equal—and that they rule, not some far off king.

Good. Do you see where we are now?

Why we've changed again! How do you that? Man, if I could do that . . .

Look where we are.

I see where we are, but I don't know where this is. We're in some sort of a balcony, and there are a bunch of guys in suits down there, and there is a big American flag over there. Where are we?

We are in the balcony of the House of Representatives—in Washington, DC, you are going to learn your next lesson on democracy. Listen, your Congressman is getting ready to speak.

Congressman: My fellow congressmen, the Democratic style of government which we have, has provided us with over 200 years of political, social, and economic success. True, we have had our differences, disagreements and difficulties, but this system of government by the people, free enterprise, and the idea that "all men are created equal" has propelled us to become a world super power, and has given us the title of the "greatest nation on earth." But democracy is more than American success, it is a form of government where people have freedom. It is not bound by racial or national lines, so I urge you to vote for this bill.

We must leave now. Catching on?

Hey, I just realized something. Democracy isn't limited to us! Yeah, other countries are democracies, too. Democracy has helped us succeed, and I guess that was why he wanted them to vote for that bill—so other people could succeed under democracy too!