

(Address given by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame, at the Commemoration Day exercises, marking the 104th anniversary of the founding of The Johns Hopkins University, February 22, 1980)

One of the most perceptive tourists ever to visit America made his trip to our shores about 150 years ago (1831). His name was Alexis de Tocqueville. On his return, he wrote two books, with a five year interval between them, although they bear the same title: Democracy in America.

De Tocqueville had many acute observations about America in these books, but I take for my theme today, something he says in Chapter Five of Book II, something that has proved to be one of the most important realities that makes America what it is, a country unique in all the world. A century and a half have enriched the reality he describes, so that it is even more important today than it was then. But first, let us hear from de Tocqueville in his own words:

"Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainment, to found

seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; in this manner, they found hospitals, prisons and schools. If it is proposed to inculcate some truth or to foster some feeling by the encouragement of a great example, they form a society. Wherever at the head of some new undertaking you see the government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association." (Vol. II, Chapter 5, P. 114, Vintage Books)

What de Tocqueville was describing, today we call voluntarism. I doubt that even he could have imagined to what extent this impulse was to build the America we know, in the next century and a half. All of the early institutions of higher education, including this one and mine, are the result of voluntarism. All of our churches, most of our hospitals, all of our businesses, all of our labor unions, all of our newspapers, radio and television stations, all of our clubs, all of our professional associations, all of our political parties, all of our opera, symphonies, and ballet companies, all of our entertainment, movies, and theater, all of our athletic teams, professional and amateurs, all of our transport system, all of our artistic endeavors, in a word, almost the total fabric of our society was initiated, developed, and maintained by voluntary activity in the private sector. We even have, at least for the moment, a voluntary Armed Forces. The voluntary support for all of this in gifts last year totaled over \$35 billion. No one could possibly calculate the monetary value of the volunteered services involved.

If you wish to see how unique this makes America, visit a Communist or Socialist society, Russia, China, or Czechoslovakia. There the society is grey, monochromatic, not multi-colored. If you read a paper, it is government issue, so is radio and television. If you do business, you do it with a government entity. Olympic athletes are government employees, so are all transport services. If you join a club, it is government sponsored and supported. To the extent that churches are allowed, so are they. All higher education, admissions, curriculum, professional and administrative appointments, are made by the government. Clubs, associations, to use de Tocqueville's word, hotels, entertainment, hospitals, artistic and cultural activities are an arm of the government. So are, especially, political parties of which there is only one. A famous Yugoslavian sculptor on our faculty for a decade before his death, Ivan Mestrovic, used to say that elections were free in his native land and that one had three choices, Joseph, or Broz, or Tito, all being the same person.

We take voluntarism so much for granted in America that its importance is really not appreciated until we compare our way of life to that in countries where everything is of the state, by the state, and for the state -- even citizens and their rights.

One might make the point more forcefully here if I were to put to you an interesting question. Suppose that tomorrow the most expensive multibillion/^{dollar}endeavor in our land, the federal

government, were to suddenly be inactivated. What would be the effect, the impact on your life? I suspect it would be enormously less than if all voluntary associations were suddenly eliminated.

May I make of myself a guinea pig for the moment, to test this hypothesis. I was born in a private hospital and grew up with private medical care, in a private home, not a government apartment. I was supported by money earned by my father who worked for a private concern, the Pittsburgh Place Glass Company. I attended private school for twenty-three years: parochial, elementary, and high schools, and three private universities. I was a Boy Scout, swam during the icy Syracuse Winters at the YMCA, went to Summer scout camp, played on a neighborhood football team, went to a church founded and supported voluntarily (thanks to the First Amendment -- an act of genius to launch voluntarism in the religious realm), joined a private religious order, taught and administered in a private university. Because I took the vow of poverty, all of my income goes to private causes, $\frac{1}{4}$ to the Order and $\frac{3}{4}$ to the University. I belong to a variety of voluntary professional organizations and clubs. I have served the government in a multiplicity of roles from Commissioner to Ambassador and am still serving as Chairman of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy without pay because it seems more fitting to volunteer my services. Take the voluntary element out of this one life, and there is practically nothing left. De Tocqueville

was right when he said later in Chapter Five: "What political power could ever carry on the vast multitude of lesser undertakings which American citizens perform every day?" (P. 116) All of you have had similar experiences in your own lives. Your President was recently Vice Chairman of the Hunger Commission, Chairman of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. All our lives, as presently lived, are inconceivable without the large involvement of voluntary associations, voluntary gifts, and voluntary services.

If you agree with me that all of this voluntarism is good for America and Americans, may I then suggest to you that in our day we are facing a counter movement that strikes at the heart of what has made America great and unique. Despite our history of voluntarism, despite our unique record of doing by and for ourselves what needs doing, I sense that today there is a tendency to say, "Let the government do it." I say in all earnestness that when the government does it, the doing is almost always more costly, less free, more complicated and generally less productive and effective for America and Americans.

We pride ourselves on being the land of the free. Free men and women in America have exercised their freedom broadly by doing for themselves that which needed doing. To the extent that we say, "Let the government do it," we are bartering away our freedom and generally paying for inefficiency and involuntary servitude, akin to that suffered in Socialist states.]

All this may seem to be overstated, so allow me to be more explicit. Before World War II, the federal involvement in higher

education was minimal, less than \$50 million a year. After the war, when we were tripling in three decades what we had achieved in three centuries of higher education, the federal government became our largest benefactor. In general, this seemed to all of us to be a good development. We needed government loans for academic buildings, we needed large research grants in science and technology. We needed scholarship help for the ever growing number of students who otherwise would be unable, financially, to attend our universities. We needed medical grants, capitation assistance, library subsidies. When all of this had grown to over \$80 billion a year, suddenly a wide variety of special interests began to descend upon our campuses. They were not members of the three branches of government, Judicial, Executive, or Legislative, but a new breed called regulators.

They were regulating health, environment, women's rights, minority rights, Osha, Erisa, employment beyond the age of 65, Title IX applied to athletics, IRS looking at unrelated income, and a whole spate of good causes that are only concerned with a single issue and unrelated to the common good of the whole endeavor.

A few weeks ago, we had an officers meeting at the University. It was long and difficult. Afterwards, it occurred to me that two-thirds of our time was taken up with problems involving federal intervention into the academic life of the University. This would have been unthinkable as recently as ten years ago. The question

arises: How did we get ourselves involved in such a tangle?

Does it say something to us about voluntarism?

I suspect that the real problem has to do most fundamentally with freedom, and the conduct of those most important institutions that freedom has founded in our land, maintained, and cherished. One can understand how we accepted the beneficence of the federal government when we needed it to fulfill our mission, but we did so without serious thought about maintaining that freedom which makes our institutions so important in the land of the free.

I believe that at this point we must reassess our situation. It may be that we cannot accept the largesse of the federal government if it means the end of those free institutions that are at the heart of what makes America unique and great among the nations of the world. Possibly regulation, this fourth form of government, unconstitutional, free ranging, and responsible to no one, not even the President, should be reined in by those three forms of government that are established by the constitution, mutually checked and balanced.

Even in the present confused situation, let us not underestimate the continuing creative value of voluntarism. I give you as a case study, something that has happened in the past several months, a classic example of the private and public sectors of our country cooperating for the common good, both national and international. In this case, their mutual roles are synergistic, not destructive.

Towards the latter half of last October, it suddenly became apparent that almost one-half of the Cambodian population, the educated and professional half, had been brutally exterminated by the Khmer Rouge, the Pol Pot regime, and that the other half was in proximate danger of dying from starvation, disease, and the usual ravages of war. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim was about to announce a relief plan, Phnom Phen was about to open up a bit, and thousands of refugees were crossing over the Western Kampuchean Border to Thailand. Contrary to a previous order of the Thai government, these later refugees were to be helped, not driven back this time to death and destruction.

At this time, there were more than thirty voluntary organizations, religious and secular, plus several national and international public organizations, interested in staving off this new holocaust. We summoned them all to the Board Room of the Overseas Development Council on October 25. In two hours, all agreed to act as one. We approved a letter to President Carter and Secretary Waldheim. Then we all went to the White House where President Carter granted our seven requests for government action and pledged over \$60 million for Cambodian relief and rehabilitation.

A few days later, representing all of these agencies, I went to the United Nations with Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, where we met with Secretary Waldheim and, together with other nations, pledged a total of more than \$200 million to activate our efforts.

Then Mrs. Carter went to visit the refugee camps on the Thai-Kampucheon border. On her return, we had another all-day meeting at the White House, opened by the President and continued with a report from the First Lady. As this November 13 meeting, we formalized our cooperation under the aegis of the American Council for Voluntary Agencies, established a Cambodian and Thai Border Committee, a Crisis Center in Washington to coordinate information and fund raising, put a representative in the headquarters of UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and another in the office of the United States Ambassador-at-large to coordinate all national refugee and relief efforts. This gave us hourly coordination.

Last month, on January 29, we had a third White House meeting of the group to establish a National Committee for Cambodian Relief, again with Mrs. Carter's presence and cooperation.

In the two months between the November and January meetings, we had raised \$30 million, multiplied fifteen times the medical people in the field, reached our quota of 30,000 tons of food delivered in Phnom Phen and Thailand, began rehabilitation efforts and surmounted innumerable roadblocks to progress in the area of distribution.

Much remains to be done, especially from next June's planting until late Fall's harvest, but the impending disaster has been averted, the path ahead clarified, and realistic goals established. All this was done in the best American tradition of voluntary leadership and cooperation between public and private, national and

international organizations. I truly believe that absent the voluntary effort in the private sector, much of what happened in the public sector would not have been possible. There was no unseemly rivalry, no reaching for publicity or acclaim, just generous and wholehearted cooperation in a good and just cause. No matter that the victims were mainly Buddhist, the effort was mainly Christian and Jewish. No matter that they were governed by various Communist factions backed by the USSR and our most recent political enemy, North Vietnam, they were suffering and dying human beings who desperately needed help and we gave it.

This case study is, I believe, a true paradigm of the kind of beneficent, creative, and voluntary activity that de Tocqueville had in mind, not only in building America, but reaching beyond our shores, "to the antipodes," as he put it.

There is a spirit here that needs to be rediscovered and reinvigorated in modern America. It is the antithesis of the attitude: "Let the government do it." It transcends the meddling of federal regulations and nit-picking bureaucrats. It surmounts the selfish zealots, unmindful of the common good of the nation and the world. This spirit springs from free citizens who prize and use their freedom to touch humanity in its basic needs and anguishes, by dedicated service, freely given. Voluntarism, in its variegated manifestations, is America uniquely at its best.

Rather than antagonism, interference, and confrontation of the kind so eloquently denounced by Derek Bok in a recent Public Interest article, "The Federal Government and the University," great American voluntary associations, be they hospitals, social agencies, churches, or universities, should be welcomed by government into a symbiotic relationship that recognized the great service voluntarism provides for America and Americans in a way that governments never can. Who would seriously trade the rich texture of our society for the grey monochromatic boredom of most Socialist societies? Who would seriously want to badger into extinction the rich array of voluntary activities that concern themselves with everything from battered children to loving care of the dying?

I began by citing de Tocqueville. May I conclude by sharing with you another of his prescient observation that occurs just before Chapter V of his Democracy in America:

"It would be unjust to suppose that the patriotism and the zeal that every American displays for the welfare of his fellow citizens are wholly insincere. Although private interest directs the greater part of human actions in the United States as well as elsewhere, it does not regulate them all. I must say that I have often seen Americans make great and real sacrifices to the public welfare; and I have noticed a hundred instances in which they hardly

ever failed to lend faithful support to one another.

The free institutions which the inhabitants of the United States possess, and the political rights of which they make so much use, remind every citizen, and in a thousand ways, that he lives in society.

They every instant impress upon his mind the notion that it is the duty as well as the interest of men to make themselves useful to their fellow creatures; and as he sees no particular ground of animosity to them, since he is never either their master or their slave, his heart readily leans to the side of kindness.

Men attend to the interests of the public, first by necessity, afterwards by choice; what was intentional becomes an instinct, and by dint of working for the good of one's fellow citizens, the habit and the taste for serving them are at length acquired." (P. 112, Vol II)

I take it to be one of the most important roles of higher education today not just to educate students to excellence and competence, but to give them as well the vision and the practice of serving the nation's needs, which in de Tocqueville's words is "working for the good of one's fellow citizens." May the beauty and dedication of voluntarism never wither or die for if it does, America, the land of the free, will die with it.

John Hopkins [1980?] Int. file w/ talks
on It has been traditional to
tell graduates that one hopes they
will go forward and remake the
world. This is not a bad tradition.

The problem is that most graduates today
think it is ~~naive and unrealistic~~ ^{an unrealistic expectation,}

perhaps even naive. Graduates are
eager enough to go forth and ~~live~~
live meaningful lives. But remake
the world? That seems a bit much.

It might be more honest to say
that most graduates feel quite
hopeless in the face of such a
monumental task, also, for most
of them it was not exactly what
they had in mind when coming
to John Hopkins for an advanced
education.

for example war and peace, poverty
and affluence, health and sickness,
justice and injustice, hope
and hopelessness, discontinuities

which are the
fore upon the shape
of the world as we see
it.

Let me try it from a
different angle. The world that
all of you inherit today is
full of terrible discontinuities,
that have been inherited from
the past and present realities:
communism, socialism,
democracy, capitalism,
colonialism, the industrial
and scientific and technological
revolutions, Catholicism,
Protestantism, ~~Judaism~~ Judaism,
planned and market economies,
slavery, both political and
economic, wars, terrorism,
torture and a host of other
political, social, economic
and ^{even} religious influences.

¶ The world as we know it
today, did not just happen.

+ ¹³ for good or for evil.
Men and women, intelligent
and free, made this world,
you too, in some measure,
unless you become a back
comber on a desert island, will
make or remake it further.
Even inaction, neutrality,
and apathy in their own
way make the world each
day, because they allow
the discontinuities to continue,
to fester, to destroy the promise
of a better world.

One might counter, "it's
not really my business. I
have a life to live, ambitions
to achieve, let someone else
remake the world."

and I've worked hard
to get ready to do this.

+

Some get ^{even} more specific. "Let
the United Nations do it; let
the world leaders do it; let
our President, our Congress
our Supreme Court do it. Let
~~those who are~~
Them remake the world. * I don't
want to get involved."

Well, that is certainly your
option as you face the next
phase of your life. I would only
~~want to~~ remind you that it was
not out of such ^{or} options that
whatever is good ~~at~~ in
our country and our world
emerged. You may have
heard the old saying that
people with good ideas take

+

Care of themselves, and people
with bad ideas take care of
everyone else.)
In America, at least, that
simply has not been true.

Alexis
named Alexis
de Tocqueville

About a century and a
half ago, a very perceptive
and very young Frenchman
visited America and commented
on his impressions in two
books written with a five year
interval between them, yet
bearing the same title, Democracy
in America.