

# Lt. Gov. Pat Taylor's Speech To The Louisburg Lions Club

Delivered here on December 9, 1969

Several weeks ago I was returning home late one night and heard a radio program that was directed toward the young people of America. Many of the things that were said impressed me as being constructive and I would like to share some of them with you today.

Before doing so, I want to make it absolutely clear that I am not attempting to excuse our generation for its shortcomings. There are many things that we have done that we should not have done and many things that we have not done that we ought to have done long ago. Nonetheless, our generation has had its hands full of problems during my lifetime and I feel that we have something to say to young Americans about how we have handled the problems of our time. We cannot afford to just think about the good things we have done because you make no progress in this way. On the other hand, if we doubt or question our society too much, we could lose confidence in it and it might fall apart and we might not know how to put it back together again.

With this preface, I think we can say to young Americans we have heard and read a great deal lately from young people, about your disillusionment with the world, our society, and our generation. We have been so materialistic, they say, so intent on "making it" that we have forgotten the real values of life - love, fairness, peace, and brotherhood. As a result of our greed and timid conformity, we have missed life they say and in the process have left them a mess that can only be righted by destroying it and building better on the ruins.

By and large, I am proud of our generation and of how we have built on the foundation left us. I hope you will do as well. You will if you will leave your zeal with a little humor, your egotism with a little history, and ask why your insistence on universal love seems so often to express itself in hate for those who differ with you.

The generations from which you inherit, including mine, have given you a basically sound world; imperfect, full of flaws springing from human imperfections, but strong, dynamic, and exciting. For us, in many ways, these are indeed the best and worst of times, but the worst is on the surface; the best is underneath, solid and hopefully enduring.

It is strange that yours should be the most favored generation in history and yet the most dissatisfied, but a sense of self-tragedy has always been common to the young. When I was your age, I recall, we felt rather sorry for ourselves, victimized by depression, called upon to fight in a worldwide war.

You say that we are too concerned with profits, but if you think we value too highly the security of material possessions, let me remind you of this: We were born in the aftermath of one great conflict, grew up in history's greatest depression, and graduated in time to fight man's grisliest war. Getting out, we had one thing uppermost in mind-- we wanted better, for ourselves and for you, and we have pretty well gotten it.

I would say to young America, you speak of poverty, but we have known it, and not just from visits to Mississippi or Harlem. We remember when the fear of hunger hung heavy in almost every home. We remember the eyes of the homeless, the defeated faces in the bread lines, the soup kitchens, the Okies, the shuffling beggars in the streets, the endless parade of tramps at the back door begging for work or food; men with embarrassed eyes, men once able and self-sufficient whose hunger had eaten away their pride. We remember the winter deaths in the slums and sharecroppers' shacks in mountain hollows, deaths from cold and hunger that left infant bodies too weak to stave off disease.

You are angered - and you should be - that four per cent of our people are unemployed, and a good number are chronically hungry. You are incensed - and you should be - because some people in underprivileged areas have worms, lack medicine, live in wretched hovels, and suffer malnutrition. But we remember when intestinal worms were commonplace among people. We remember when 20 per cent of our men were jobless. And when Franklin Roosevelt cried that one-third of our nation was ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed, we knew he did not exaggerate. The failings of the past do not justify those of today, of course. But a realistic comparison reveals a continuing progress that I hope and believe is not a symptom of a sick society.

We have been materialistic because we have seen too many people suffer too much from material want, because we remember too many starving children, because we have walked too many miles through too many cold mornings to work long hours at low pay and return home at night to parents with fear and worry in their eyes. We determined it would not happen to you, that you would have vitamins and orange juice, and milk, warm clothes, a comfortable home, and good schools and a running start at life.

Because of it, you are the biggest, tallest, healthiest, brightest, and handsomest generation to inhabit this land, and perhaps the world. You are going to live longer, suffer sickness less often, work fewer hours, learn more, see more of the world's grandeur, and have more choice of your life's undertaking than any generation before.

I would say to young Americans, you cry out against the injustices suffered by Negroes - and you should. But we remember when a Negro lynching made news only when it was public.

We are now told that we should share the guilt of forebears responsible for their enslavement, and make reparations for their mistreatment. This may or may not be a valid premise, but on a more realistic basis, look at what our generation has achieved for equal justice: Negroes vote, hold offices from city halls to Congress, to a seat on the Supreme Court of the United States; wear lab smocks and police uniforms. They share schools and colleges, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and all other public accommodations. They are business, political, and professional leaders, dominate sports, and are prominent in the entertainment world.

If your generation can make as much progress toward racial equality in the next 20 years as we have made in the past 20, you should be able to solve what we call the racial problem. But it is not a problem to be taken lightly.

I would say to young America - You speak with commendable concern of economic injustice. But we remember when children worked in sweatshops, when miners attempting to organize were shot, when striking steelworkers were beaten down by police. We remember the county poorhouse, the chain gang, the hell of the insane asylum. Consider how far we have come, as well as how far we have to go.

A recent article in a magazine had this to say to our youth: You say we are greedy, possession-mad. Let me say this for my generation: Never has a people given more generously of its blood, effort, or material. We fought a far bloodier war than Viet Nam to save the world from an unspeakable tyranny, and we then gave our wealth in rich measure to heal the wounds not only of friend but of foe. No people in all of the world's history have been so generous.

Never has this nation taxed itself so heavily to give its

disadvantaged - its poor, sick, aged, and helpless - a second chance at a decent life. Welfare has become a way of life, perhaps too much so.

"We have given you a healthier world than we found. You no longer need fear epidemics of flu, typhus, diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever. We have banished the nightmare of polio. We are closing TB wards daily. Rickets and worms are rare. Childbirth is no longer feared. Improving safety laws protect the health of industrial workers.

"We have thrown open the doors of museums and concert halls where once only the rich entered. We have given you antibiotics, television, air conditioning, and transistors...We are writing new meaning into conservation, trying to stop the erosion of our soil, the pollution of our air and water, setting aside land for public enjoyment, learning to work with the forces of nature to preserve threatened life forms...

"It is in the field of social relationships that we, like all before us, have fallen shortest of the goal. We have developed weapons that can end all life and you should not lament this; nuclear power can be made to serve man as well as destroy him, and the questing mind cannot be asked to draw back from knowledge because it may prove dangerous. But even with the threat of annihilation hanging over us, we have not found an alternative to war. Perhaps you can perfect the social mechanism so that all men may, without the threat of force, pursue their course, in which we will no longer need laws or police to enforce them, or armies to prevent men of one belief from trespassing against others, though the violence with which you protest sometimes raise doubts that you will. You must learn to hate injustice without hating the unjust, to hate war without hating those who resort to it.

"Which brings us to one of the most sensitive of your protests - the war in Viet Nam. It probably is the number one source of discontent in the body politic.

"I think that any factual assessment of Viet Nam will show how decently we got into this situation. Many of you say that it will go down in history as a bloody mistake (though any thinking person knows that history's verdict is by no means in yet), but I am convinced we made our decision with the best of motives and that we remain in Viet Nam not for pride or profit, as so many young profess to believe, but because we have yet to find a way to terminate our involvement without endangering both the people and the principles we want to defend. And to infer sin in our decision indicates a misunderstanding of both government and man...

"You protest that the government lies, conceals, and compromises. But ideals alone are often an inadequate vessel for the rough trip through the rapids of international politics. And since neither Moscow, nor Peking, or Hanoi are run by holy men (and I might add that Washington is not run by men of omnipotence), survival sometimes requires compromise with full candor. All governments are run by human beings, as are the newspapers and great corporations you sometimes regard so bitterly.

"You say that you have been dumped into a world you never made. Frankly, I cannot recall a generation having been given the privilege of choosing the shape of the world into which it was born...

"You insist we have given you a rotten system. It is not rotten and we have not given it to you. No generation gives power to the next. You will grow into it and live in it, regardless of us. You will control its production and wealth as rapidly as your talents enable you to fight your way to

control. You will become its political leaders and set its policies as rapidly as you can convince people that your judgment is sound and your policies preferable...

"Believe me, I am glad to see your anger at discovering want and injustice. It speaks of something good in you. It will spur you, I hope, to make changes.

"You say the schoolbook view of America is false, that democracy, equality, brotherhood, liberty, and justice for all are myths. You are wrong. They are the ideals, the goals, the vision put before us by the men who started all this. Is our democracy less than a reality because some abuse its privileges? Are the ideals of liberty and justice for all less inspiring, less worthy, less believable because we, being human, fall short of them?"

I do not think so. I believe in the Democratic process as being fallible and imperfect but I believe that at the greatest moment in the American past Americans have had an image of what free men working together could make of human life. Next to our religion, I believe it is the best blueprint ever devised for society. I ask you to take our shortcomings and our problems and not consider them to be insurmountable burdens but as invitations to accomplishment in the years to come. If you will do this, you will be standing before a Rotary Club 25 years from today asking your children to do the same thing that I ask you to do today.

NOTE: The most of this speech came from an article by John Ed Pearce in the Louisville Courier-Journal & Times Magazine.



It ain't likely to ever happen, but if I was Santa Claus, this'd be a happy old world. I'd bring everybody what they needed most-whether they wanted it or not.

I'd give Spiro Agnes his own television station and if I was feeling generous, I might throw in his own newspaper. And I'd give Richard Nixon one of the games where you toss the dice and make your decisions. It'd give him something to do and he might throw 'em so's he could really git us together again.

I'd give Hugh Scott all the integrated schools he could ever want and I'd put them all in Pennsylvania where he could see them real good.

I'd stick a Clement Haynsworth doll in Abe Fortas' stocking, so's he'd have something he could feel sorry for. I'd stick a Abe Fortas doll in Clement Haynsworth's stocking for the same reason.

I'd draft Ted Kennedy so's he'd know what he's talking about. I think I'd put him in the infantry so's he wouldn't have to keep asking the experts about foot soldiering.

I'd give John Lindsey New York. But I'd let all the folks who wanted to move to Brooklyn before I done it.

I'd give Duke Terry Sanford (oops, somebody done beat me to it). Well that knocks out me saving him for Carolina. I guess they'll just have to settle for Howard Fuller. I'm plum sorry to disappoint that News and Observer editor, but there ain't but one Howard Fuller and I think Carolina deserves him most. And nobody got to tell me that leaves a empty stocking with the Episcopalians. Maybe I can give them that News and Observer editor.

The only thing about that editor is though, he done suffered so much lately, he ought to git something he wants. His whole Christmas done been ruined. Somebody shot at somebody's house in Wake County-and everybody who reads his newspaper knows that kind of thing can't happen nowhere but in Franklin County. It must a come as a terrible blow to him. Maybe I'll leave a George Wallace sticker under his tree.

I think if I can git by that new wall and if the ceiling don't fall on me, I'll leave Bob Scott some of my bills. He got all the money and it's got to go somewehes. It might make his Christmas merry knowing he got some place for it to go. I might git him to help me deliver all the presents. He wont need no pillow on his stomach, but I might not be able to find a suit his size.

And if I can git them together I might git a Russian Roulette gun for Robert Morgan, Pat Taylor, Lauch Faircloth and Skipper Bowles and Mel Broughton. They could all play and the one what's left could run without any opposition. Trouble with that is, with my luck, my man would git shot.

And you know I wouldn't forget all them characters here at home. I'd have to give the Sheriff a little hat-a white one a 'course. I'd git Ralph a loud sport coat. Them he wears dont show up so good against the Christmas decorations.

I aint shore what I'm gonna give Alex. He got everything he needs. I might let C. T. do the selecting. He knows Alex 'bout as good as anybody. Now if I can find somebody knows C. T.

I aint quite sure about Norwood, Buck, Brooks and them others. I been thinking about leaving them some chickens but somebody keeps saying they'd rather have some air conditioners. Chickens is easier to tote around and besides I aint been able to find no air conditioners.

There is a whole heap more folks I'd take care of, if I was Santa Claus. There wouldn't be a child in the world what didn't git exactly what he or she wanted. And I'd give their mamas and daddies what they needed to git it with, too.

I'd bring the world peace and I'd have folks be kind to each other and I'd do away with parking tickets.

But, I ain't Santa Claus, so all I can do is just say Merry Christmas, everybody. Remember old Frank.

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### LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT

#### It's Christmas

At this time of the year, most of us turn our thoughts to the truly important things in our lives-God, home and family. In so doing, we close our minds to the everyday problems and events. For a brief period, other things are forgotten and we rejoice in the closeness of loved ones.

Whatever problems we have can wait. It is time out for the day to day criticisms of our fellows. It is a season of good cheer and hearty greetings. It is mankind at his very best.

It is during these days that we look for those in need. It is at this time

that we freely consider the other fellow. It is now that we feel for him.

It is a time of renewing faith. Of taking count. A time to pause and to ponder.

It is a time for excitement among the young and pleasure to the old. It is a time to remember. Loved ones are recalled from Christmases past and part of the joy shared then is remembered now.

It is a sad season. It is a glad season. It is a season of love.

It is Christmas. If only it lasted the year round.

### WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

#### Is There A Santa Claus?

The News Reporter, Whiteville, N. C.

This is the season to recall again the famous "...Is there a Santa Claus?" letter written by eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas.

The time for publishing the letter again, as has been done many times over every year since it was written to the New York Sun in 1897, is particularly appropriate because Mrs. Douglas, nearing her 80th birthday, is in a Hudson, N. Y. hospital suffering from a heart condition.

Here is her letter in part: "Some of my little friends say there is no Santa," she wrote.

"Pap says, 'If you see it in the Sun, it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?"

The letter brought a celebrated

reply on the editorial page of the old Sun during the holiday season of 1897, and the editorial has been published year after year all over the world.

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas, how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias."

From All Of Us  
-- To All Of You

# CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

It's Christmas, and we're so glad to chime in with our own good wishes to you, your family and friends.

Elizabeth Johnson      Clint Fuller  
Dandra Wheeler      Carol Johnson  
Louise Muller      Dorenda Stewart  
Aster Bowden      B. Dayton  
Richard Parsons      Betty Jo Redmond

The Management and Staff of THE FRANKLIN TIMES

