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GOLD STAR MOTHER'S DAY OB-
SERVANCE IN ST. LOUIS

HON. LEONOR K. SULLIVAN

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 28, 1970

Mrs. SULLIVAN. Mr. Speaker, in 1936, in Public Resolution 123 of the 74th Congress, the people of the United States set aside the last Sunday in September as Gold Star Mother's Day to honor those who had made "the supreme sacrifice of

motherhood" in "the World War." This was the war which was to have ended wars, and even though the seeds of World War II were already germinating; most Americans in 1936 felt and hoped we would never again be involved in warfare. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have been killed in wars since then, and American mothers are still joining the ranks of Gold Star Mothers, as civilization finds itself far from the objectives which were supposedly accomplished by the world in the termination of World War I 52 years ago.

Yesterday, at ceremonies at the Soldier's Memorial in St. Louis, it was my privilege to join with Gold Star Mothers of the St. Louis area in observing the day set aside by the 74th Congress to honor mothers whose sons have died in the armed services of the United States. My remarks on that occasion may be of interest to my colleagues in the House, and I submit them for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, as follows:

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE LEONOR K. SULLIVAN, DEMOCRAT, OF ST. LOUIS, MO., TO OBSERVE GOLD STAR MOTHERS' DAY AT THE SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1970, AT 2 P.M.

The span of a human lifetime is so brief compared to the life of our country—now nearly 194 years old—that we know well only the most recent periods of that history, and take a lot for granted, or on faith, as to what transpired before our time. We studied about the heroes of our American heritage and the wise and far-sighted policies they were usually supposed to have pursued; we remember little, or never learned, about the deep and bitter discords which accompanied the development of those same policies.

There is much about present-day America which is disconcerting, disillusioning, and even frightening. On almost every plane of human endeavor, we are disappointed in the attitudes of so many of our people even while they are enjoying a level of material advantages never before known to any people on earth. And so we ask ourselves where America went wrong—what happened—why we have so much to divide us and worry us when we should be rejoicing as a people in the blessings of liberty which enable us to engage in our own ways in the pursuit of happiness.

Are these the "bad new days" compared to the "good old days" in our history? It is certainly easy to think so. Yet, if we look to the newspapers of any other era in American history, we find headlines and editorials which reflected even more emphatically than they do today a deep concern over the direction and course of American life and the impending doom of decency and civilization. If you read the debates in the Congress of the United States for almost any day of any bygone year, you will find expressed the same misgivings and fears for our country's future and the survival of good manners and decency as we find today.

FINDING ANCHORS OF NATIONAL FAITH

It is a good thing to refresh our understanding of our past by searching out the news and commentary of other days of strife and discord in America, for we thus develop some perspective on the worrisome problems and deep divisions we encounter today. Perhaps the tone of America is neither worse nor better today—but of course it certainly is different.

We have difficulty in finding anchors of national faith which can hold us steady against the swirling waves of controversy and the harsh winds of change and confusion.

Some say we have had it so good for so long that we have lost our capacity as a people to cling together in any common cause. Many Americans see no threat today from outside and no danger at home, while others see only scourge and pestilence and disaster everywhere.

But things aren't really that good or bad. They are, as I said, different—different from what we had grown up expecting, different from what we remember, different from what we like to think were the conditions which preceded us in America. In company with, I am sure, the majority of you, I don't like a lot of these changes either.

And yet, the basic strength of the American experiment in self-government remains tough and vibrant and alive. Lincoln called it "the last, best hope of earth"—and he used those words during one of the darkest moments in our national existence, to describe a country whose survival was in doubt and whose people were engaged in destroying each other. We have been through many terrible ordeals since that time, but nothing to match our own civil war in terms of loss of American lives. In the past, too, we suffered economic disasters beyond the comprehension or belief of today's affluent young people, and there were wars of incomparable savagery; but we not merely survived, we grew to unmatched economic and technological power.

THE LUXURY OF UNLIMITED CRITICISM

But none of it came cheap—or by wishing—or by accident—or by villainy.

I thought of these things as I left Washington to come back to St. Louis, knowing I would be meeting with you today and joining you in celebrating a national observance of deep significance to you and of great meaning to all of those Americans who truly care what we are as a country and as a people. Throughout our history, most Americans were called upon to give at least a little toward the common good; many gave a lot, some gave everything. At the time these events occurred the causes for which the sacrifices were made loomed larger, perhaps, than they often appeared later in retrospect—certainly larger than they now appear to those who have never had to make similar sacrifices, or make any sacrifices at all. The obligations of citizenship unfortunately fall unevenly, and always have. So too, do the rewards of citizenship fall unequally. But there is a sense of pride which comes to those who have had to do much, or give much, so that others who give little can nevertheless enjoy all of the advantages of citizenship in a country which permits any one of us the luxury of unlimited criticism of everything about our national life and heritage.

Much as we sometimes might despair over the shortcomings and defects of human conduct which affront our national conscience or besmirch our heritage, these are neither new nor fatal threats to our survival as a good people, a decent people, a nation which enshrines freedom not merely in statues and slogans, but in our hearts, too.

Of course, it is not easy to tolerate the constant attacks on and criticisms of the structure of our government; and our laws or remain calm through the raucous challenges to public order and common decency.

But our heritage requires such tolerance—not to the point of permitting lawlessness without punishment, but to clearly separate illegal acts from unpopular thoughts and opinions.

"THE HOME AS FOUNTAINHEAD OF THE STATE"

We are not nearly as divided as we appear. But we argue a lot—and bitterly.

In passing the joint resolution which set aside the last Sunday in September as "Gold Star Mother's Day", Congress declared that we honor ourselves, as well as the mothers

of America, when we "revere and give emphasis to the home as the fountainhead of the state." This I deeply believe—that our country will retain greatness only as long as we revere the home as the focus, the center, of the values which give a people self-respect and national purpose. Much of the discord which attempts to destroy our unity as a people stems from the dissatisfactions and animosities and inadequacies of many American homes in providing the haven of love and mutual respect a child needs and craves for healthy growth. Where there is love and respect flowing to the child from parent and to parent from the child; there may not always be luxury or even comfort, but there is a rocklike sense of wellbeing and stability and security and that youngster will make it all right—will find satisfying avenues in life to translate his ideals into causes for his country and his fellow man.

There is great idealism among today's youth, even though it often doesn't show—or shows up sometimes in ways we find immature and offensive. Aside from the fringe of hooks and revolutionaries, most of the youth of today will find ways—satisfying and challenging ways—to contribute to change and improvement to American life, within the structure of what many of these impatient young people denounce as the "establishment."

"A PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF LOVE, SORROW, REVERENCE"

We can all remember our own impatience with authority when we were their age. And we have watched the older brothers and sisters of today's youth go through those same periods of doubts and questioning and even despair—and then find their way, too.

Nations go through those periods of self-doubt, too. But for those who gave a great deal to enable this nation to survive and to grow to its present incredible dimensions of strength and prosperity and opportunity and achievement, there can be no doubt that it was not in vain—this last best hope of earth, this sometimes united, often divided, raucous, argumentative place of free minds and searching souls and clashing ideas we have managed to hold together through nearly 200 years.

Young as it is among nations, the States is the oldest democracy in a world operating under the same written constitution. And the mothers here today for whom this day is named can take deep and personal and distinctive pride in that historic achievement, for it was made possible by sacrifices such as they have made. I salute the Gold Star Mothers as mothers of our heritage of freedom.

Some day, perhaps, the world will have learned other, better ways of assuring freedom's survival than those which have had to be used in the past. When that day comes, if it does, I'm sure every Gold Star Mother will thank God.

In the meantime, in behalf of all of your fellow citizens, I thank you as we here observe what Congress has instructed should be set aside as a day to demonstrate "a public expression of the love, sorrow and reverence of the people of the United States" for those mothers who suffered what Congress described in Public Resolution 129 of the 74th Congress as "the supreme sacrifice of motherhood." Thank you.

KY HAD TO BE STOPPED?

HON. JOHN R. RARICK

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 28, 1970

Mr. RARICK. Mr. Speaker, the power boys had to stop Vice President Ky from