



# CONGRESSMAN'S REPORT

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## "Come, Let Us Reason Together"

I've changed my mind. Every editor and journalist in the country has commented on the tragedy at Dallas, and it seemed futile to say more. But I think I'll give it a try just the same.

This is a time when the American people are looking into a mirror trying to see what we are, where we are going, and how we look to others. As I look I see much to be proud of and thankful for (our free and democratic institutions, our personal liberties, our incentive economic system, and our material wealth). Yet the murder of our talented young president and other events of our recent history raise some sober questions about our national character.

### A MAN WHO HAD EVERYTHING

John F. Kennedy had everything. Born with wealth and a brilliant mind, he married a beautiful young lady whose dignity and courage in recent days has graced and honored our country beyond measure. He had two fine children. This man could have lived a life of luxury and ease; instead he chose public service. For 17 years he tried to do for his state and his country those things he thought were right. While most of his countrymen honored and respected this man, there were thousands of Americans who rewarded his choice of public service by slanders and hatred toward him and his family. One demented American, on a day of national shame, rewarded him with a bullet fired from ambush. Lee Oswald described himself as a "Marxist"; as far as we now know he had no accomplices. This deed was apparently the product of one twisted mind.

Certainly it is unfair to blame a whole country, or the many fine people of Dallas for this foul deed. But why, I keep asking myself, have other nations killed only tyrants, while we cut down Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy?

This is a time to reflect not just on our national virtues but on some of our faults as well. We are told in Proverbs that "before honor is humility", and that "pride goeth before destruction". Let me raise then these questions: Has our pride sometimes become arrogance? Is there some strange sickness or defect in our character as a nation? Are we really a mature, civilized society?

### A CONTRAST BETWEEN NATIONS

Look first at our treatment of our Presidents:

- \* This isn't Russia or China. This is the United States -- a nation founded on the rule of law and respect for differing points of view. It has chosen 36 Presidents. Four of them -- more than 10% -- have been assassinated despite extensive security precautions unknown in any other free country. In my lifetime alone, two more Presidents, Roosevelt and Truman have narrowly escaped murder. In just one year -- 1963 -- we have seen these and other lawless events: our President assassinated; four Birmingham girls dynamited into eternity as they prepared for a Sunday school play; Medgar Evers (who had the preposterous idea that Negro Americans in Mississippi ought to be allowed to vote) shot in the back as he walked into his home; our representative to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, spat upon in Dallas.

What is the record in other countries:

- \* We took much of our heritage from the British. Their political and social issues are argued just as bitterly as ours. But there hasn't been a prime minister assassinated in 200 years. The "security force" for a Churchill or MacMillan consists of just one man.
- \* In other highly educated, industrialized countries -- Germany, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Sweden, even France -- I can't recall a single elected head of state killed in this century.

We have urged nations in Africa, Asia, and South America to make governmental changes by thoughtful, democratic process rather than by violence. This advice must sound a little hollow now.

### WE ABUSE OUR LEADERS

The Presidency is a lonely, awesome job. Decisions of historic importance must be made every day and events will not wait. Have we rewarded the men who shoulder this load with loyalty, with trust? Have we given them credit for good motives? In times of trouble do we give them the benefit of any reasonable doubt? The answer, for many Americans, must be, "no". Our record is a sorry and non-partisan one which indicts Americans of both political parties and all shades of opinion. Every President and important national leader of modern times has borne the same heavy cross. Here are some examples:

- \* Herbert Hoover, a talented, kind and distinguished American, had the misfortune to be President when the depression came. Was there any excuse for the cruel charges and ridicule heaped upon his head for a decade?
- \* Franklin D. Roosevelt, four times elected our President -- a man of imagination, courage and action, who, with his family, suffered every kind of abuse and derogation. If there is a foul word not applied to him, I don't know it.

- \* Harry S. Truman, whom history will record as a great President, subjected to sneers, taunts, cruel jokes, and attempted assassination.
- \* Dwight D. Eisenhower, a fighter for America in war and leader in peace, openly accused of being "a dedicated agent of the Communist conspiracy." In 1963 his former Secretary of Agriculture was asked to repudiate this disgraceful charge and replied, "No comment"!
- \* Chief Justice Earl Warren, an Honored California governor and distinguished political leader. His sincere belief in the dignity and freedom of the individual has subjected him to anonymous threats and to cries of "treason."

### THE HATE MAIL GOES ON

What gives some people in this great country this kind of sickness? My mail may offer some clues.

Last summer I was so alarmed by the kind of "hate" mail we regularly receive that I did a newsletter called [Fright for Sale](#). I cited typical examples of vitriolic statements written to me by our neighbors in Tucson, Yuma, Bisbee and other places. And I concluded:

"The greatest need in America today is not fear or suspicion. The greatest need is trust. We need to trust and respect and support the leaders our people have elected."

The hate mail still went on. In October, a month before Dallas, a sane, intelligent Tucson housewife wrote me in violent opposition to the civil rights bill. She concluded with these words:

"I hope President Kennedy gets beat bad and personally I hope he shoots himself before he gives this country to the Communists and you are helping him 100 per cent."

I mistakenly thought that perhaps the assassination would bring a halt to these kind of expressions. But on November 25, the day of the funeral, an educated Phoenix man sat down at his typewriter -- perhaps at the very moment I was standing by the grave on a hill in Arlington National Cemetery -- and wrote a long and bitter letter characterizing congressmen and our federal government's programs as:

". . . . . a hypocrisy of 'Jew deals' by the Christian hating Zionist Mongolian Marxist Satanic perverted Jews who control every phase of our once great Republic. And the Marxist Jews move 'Jew-stooges' like you and your brother around like checkers on a board."

I cherish and value my daily mail. It's my "hot-line" to the people I try to represent. Strong, intelligent, forceful criticism has sometimes helped me rethink on issues and change my position. But letters like these leave me sick and worried about my country.

### A STRANGE FANATACISM

Of course, there have been fanatics in every day and in every society. I think ours is exceptional only in the extent of the hatred and cruelty expressed -- AND in the sad fact that hatred is preached in this country not just by the ignorant and the demented, but too often by the educated and the wealthy. How many times have you been at a party when a cultured and educated person (who would never commit a murder himself) has said, not entirely in jest, "They ought to shoot Kennedy" (or Goldwater, Truman, or Eisenhower, or Warren or whoever is out of favor with his point of view). It is sad to note that at the moment President Kennedy drove through Dallas to his rendezvous with death, handbills were being distributed on college campuses in that city showing his picture with the words, "Wanted For Treason."

### LET'S GROW UP

Isn't it time for this country to grow up? Isn't it time we learn to resolve our divisions on national issues without hating the person on the other side of the argument? I think it is, and I choose to hope that Arizonans and Americans have had just about enough of hate. I choose to believe that Americans are more accurately represented by those who flowed into churches of every denomination on November 24 to pray for President Kennedy and his family and for President Johnson and for our country. I choose to believe that moderation, dignity, self-respect and honor are more the traits of Arizonans than are extremism, brutality, and suspicion.

### DEBATE WITHOUT HATE

Let me conclude with one plain and constructive suggestion for the days ahead. Medicare may be good or very bad. We may or may not need additional federal aid to education. It might or might not be wise to pull out of the United Nations. The proposed civil rights bill may be exactly what we must have, or it might be a disastrous mistake. Surely we can debate these issues without hating the person on the other side of the argument.

The Commandments tell us to love our enemies. This does not mean we must agree with them, or surrender to them. But it does mean that we can wherever possible credit our elected leaders in our own country, those in the other political party, and those who oppose us on any government issue, with motives and intentions as good as our own. Loving our enemies means at least that we can try to understand them. Let us stop assuming that our position is pure 100% patriotism, and our opponent's position is treason.

Some time ago, President Johnson was asked by a national magazine for his favorite quotation. He responded with something which should be a creed for every American:

"Come now, and let us reason together."

Isaiah 1:18.

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