FROM WNET
356 WEST 58 ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

L# 155

BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL

"Reflections on a Revolution"

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This program was made possible by an underwriting grant from THE FORD FOUNDATION, the CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING and public television stations.

BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL "REFLECTIONS ON A REVOLUTION"

(BAND MUSIC: "America The Beautiful")

BILL MOYERS: Americans are celebrating a revolution.

This was the first official celebration of the Bicentennial at the Concord North Bridge in the spring of 1975. The President came and spoke of our two-hundredth anniversary this way:

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD: In these two centuries the United States has become a world power. From a new-born nation with a few ships, American sea power now ranges to the most distant shores.

MOYERS: Across the river, another generation saw the country differently.

PRESIDENT FORD: The American military stands on the frontlines of...

MOYERS: Two hundred years later, America celebrates. Just what are we celebrating?

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER: The spirit of creativity, of innovation, of wisdom, of enterprise, of practicality, and of magnanimity. It had those qualities.

MOYERS: Tonight, some personal reflections on the Revolution.

I'm Bill Moyers.

(MUSIC)

MOYERS: To the passing eye, America is an impressive sight, a nation of energy and beauty, rich in resources and people, growing, changing, moving and building. But this is a troubled country.

Philadelphia, 1976. Seven blocks from where the Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, their descendants stand in line for unemployment checks, or walk around the corner and down the street to sign up for welfare. Four times as many people are out of work today than were living in all the thirteen colonies two hundred years ago. More people are on public assistance than were living in the whole country fifty years after Thomas Jefferson died. For these people and many millions like them, the pursuit of happiness is a promise gathering moss.

MAN: I walked out of about forty or fifty places around town, just walking in and out of department stores, banks. I'm trying to find something in my major. And then after a while, after that, I figure, well, maybe I can get a stepping-stone, and I tried clerical jobs and, you know, even a couple of employment agencies, and I just -- it's been rough.

WOMAN: I just want to find a job. I don't want unemployment.

MOYERS: For a people about to celebrate one of history's extraordinary events, Americans are running surprisingly scared. The polls report deep currents of pessimism flowing below the surfaces of the Bicentennial, and we're no longer sanguine about things we once took for granted.

Even down here in my home-state of Texas, where pessimism used to be considered un-American, the future isn't what it used to be. These long skies and broad spaces helped to inspire one of the heroic myths of America, the vision of a manifest, bountiful destiny. That vision is blurred now and people no longer speak of it with the same sense of confidence.

As a result, the gross national psychology of a once-optimistic people has taken a bearish plunge.

GEORGE GALLUP: There's a definite feeling of disillusionment....

MOYERS: Dr. George Gallup, dean of American pollsters, talks with my colleague, Martin Clancy.

GALLUP: As a matter of fact, I think there has never been a time in the forty years that we have been conducting our surveys that we found the -- the population to be so pessimistic.

MARTIN CLANCY: You lived through the Depression.

GALLUP: Yes, I'm one of the few. As a matter of fact, we started polling in 1935.

CLANCY: And you say the pessimism today is even greater than during that period.

GALLUP: Yes, I think so. When you speak of pessimism about the future, as well as the present, I think that's a fair statement.

MOYERS: Most of us are so thoroughly entangled in the notion of America that we can't separate our own attitudes and fortunes from the fate of the country. When Dr. Gallup reports a bewildered mood in America, I know what he means. I'm part of it. I find that every day my own illusions are up for grabs, and I am always discovering that not only are things not what they seem to be, but they were never, in fact, what I thought they had been.

In the 1940's I spent just about every Saturday afternoon in a movie-house like this, watching Lash LaRue, Roy Rogers, Johnny Mack Brown and the Durango Kid always get their man. Usually they got their woman, too, although not as explicitly as this.

I almost ruined my voice, as a boy, in east Texas, trying to imitate Tarzan swinging on a vine toward the rescue of his distressed mate, Jane, hollering bloody murder all the time.

(TARZAN'S CRY)

Now we're told Johnny Weissmuller and Buster Crabbe never made that noise. Three men made it -- one a baritone, one a soprano, and one a hog-caller.

(TARZAN'S CRY)

This world is hard on believers. Once I was sure I was a Democrat. Democrats were the only people permitted to live in the Governor's Mansion here in Austin. And just about every kid born during the Depression down here was fed a steady diet of mother's milk and Roosevelt's speeches. But the last time we Democrats held power in Washington, eight years in the 1960's, we left to our successors a raging war in Asia, an overheated economy and a fevered body-politic.

For a while then, I thought Richard Nixon would make of the Republicans what FDR had made of the Democrats thirty years earlier, the dominant power in American politics. Then came Agnew, Watergate, the tapes and recession.

Now I find myself increasingly in sympathy with something Thomas Jefferson said back in 1789. "I'm not a Federalist because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any man, whether in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. If I could not go to heaven but with a party," Jefferson said, "I would not go there at all."

You can't get to heaven with a party today, but you can't get to the White House, or even to the Texas State Capitol across the street, without one. Yet that's one thing that's troubling Americans, the failure of either party, once they gain office, to make a real difference. They are adept at winning elections, but that isn't the same as governing the country. Neither party has demonstrated recently that it can use power with self-effacing purpose for the welfare of the country.

So it all adds up to -- to ambivalence. And I find myself battered by a hundred new sensations every month, convinced we are either on the edge of the worst of times or the best of times. Like millions of you, I vacillate between the determination to change society and the desire to retreat into it. And I wonder if anyone in this great disputatious, over-analyzed, over-televised and under-tenderized country, including myself, knows what the devil he is talking about.

This alone seems clear: The system we have created seems beyond the reach of personal will and initiative. Out of control, it threatens to overwhelm the human ends it's supposed to serve. And we are wondering in America today if we've reached the limits of social justice, economic opportunity and official accountability.

RICHARD MORRIS: We started out as a country with seemingly limitless resources and a relatively small population, and today we know that we are in an area of very finite resources in our own country, and even finite resources throughout the world. So...

MOYERS: Dr. Richard Morris of Columbia University. He is president of the American Historical Society.

MORRIS: ...because it seems to me that in this Bicentennial celebration the one word that has been lost is the word "revolution." I think the revolution is a part of the American dream which holds our society together. The belief in progress, the belief in opportunity, the belief that one can advance — I think that many people still believe in that. If they've lost the belief in that, then I think the American dream is dying, and I would regret to see that.

MOYERS: Do you think it is dying?

MORRIS: No, I don't think it's dying. But I would say it's sick at the present time.

MOYERS: Hard blows struck the dream, the belief in progress and opportunity, in the Sixties and Seventies. Hardly a decade ago, we thought the promise of America was about to be fulfilled.

I still remember August of 1963.I came with a friend to the Lincoln Memorial for Martin Luther King's March on Washington. Hundreds of thousands of people, representing millions more, had been waiting for this hour, some for almost four hundred years.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING: I have a dream that one day, one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today. (CHEERS, APPLAUSE)

MOYERS: Five years later, a bullet killed Martin Luther King. Benign neglect buried his dream.

(FUNERAL DIRGE)

The Sixties became a season for coffins.

Violence is part of our creed. The Civil War killed and maimed a million men. The United States Cavalry wiped out a civilization. The Colts and Winchesters of the Old Frontier are cherished heirlooms, and there are members of the National Rifle Association who would rather go to jail than given up their fantasies of manhood.

(SOUNDS OF RIFLE SHOTS)

Fantasies die hard. We learned that in Vietnam. We fought there longer than we did in the Revolutionary War, and in the end we left without victory or grace.

The horror plagues us still.

(SHOUTS IN CROWD)

Long ago, some ancient wise man said, "There is nothing which power cannot believe of itself." Well, we moderns weren't immune, either.

"Cosmic vengeance," a friend said. Watergate and Vietnam were cosmic vengeance exacted for an original American sin, the sin of optimism. There wasn't anything we felt we couldn't do, and nothing we wouldn't do to justify the need for it.

RICHARD M. NIXON: As I recall the high hopes for America with which we began this second term, I feel a great sadness that I will not be here in this office, working on your behalf, to achieve those hopes in the next two and a half years.

MOYERS: Something called OPEC dealt our confidence another blow in 1973. It turned off the gushers. From now on, cheap energy, cheap food and cheap goods were no longer a sure thing. At home, the more things cost, and everything cost more, the less well they worked, including government. Huge expenditures failed to end poverty, arrest crime, stop the decay of our cities, or even deliver the mail on time.

Defense spending soared to a hundred billion dollars a year, although no one felt all that more secure. The Americanization of the world was over. Nations clamored now for our weapons, not our ideals, and Uncle Sam was Willie Loman, hustling missiles.

They were years of Catch-22, for real. You voted for peace and got war. You voted for law-and-order and high officials tried to steal the Constitution. You wrote to protest and a letter came back addressed to "Occupant." The toll: a loss of confidence at home, a lack of purpose abroad, a flagging public spirit. Few people felt it more acutely than the generation that came to majority in the Sixties.

This is Robert Solomon. He's an associate professor of philosphy at the University of Texas in Austin. He was a student in the 1960's.

ROBERT SOLOMON: I found the Sixties, it wasn't just a matter of the American dream. I mean dreams are flimsy. It was much more a matter, I suppose of just great expectations, a frozen-food mentality. It's as if -- it's as if, if you can defrost and cook dinner in seven minutes, certainly you can have a revolution in seven weeks, perhaps even change human nature in seven months. And if you think of some of the songs in the late Sixties, for example Jim Morrison in one song saying, "We want the world and we want it now," that's really indicative. And it was really just a matter of a short period of time until

everyone saw the light, and that was it. And we found out that not only were things going to be more difficult than that, but there was a well-entrenched opposition, and we hadn't expected that.

MOYERS: When do you think it all began to change?

SOLOMON: I think I'd date it pretty precisely in the week of the Cambodian invasion and the Kent State killings.

MOYERS: Why is that?

SOLOMON: I think that was the first time in five years of what looked like a grass-roots and fairly easy movement that people started to see that it was going to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, and, rather than face the difficulty, people dropped out. It turned into a kind of pessimism, that always I think comes when you've got bloated expectations. And I think, more than anything else, people just sort of turned inside and sort of forgot about the idea of social contract, forgot about the sense of community. The ideal was to somehow sort of take care of your own little corner and keep that in order, and the society could just go to hell.

MOYERS: That's the veranda from where the President will be able to see the fireworks on the Fourth of July. Given the country's mood, they're more likely to be a signal of distress, rather than a sign of celebration.

All the Bicentennial hoopla doesn't help, either. It smacks more of a Madison Avenue conspiracy than an affair of the heart. The bones of a hundred patriot graves must groan in protest everytime a big oil company invokes the memory of those revolutionaries who rebelled against a foreign potentate and his tea and trading companies.

They were rebels. We ought not to forget it, or play down the fact they rebelled for economic as well as political liberty. The two go together, or were meant to. These men bet their lives on it.

But do we mean today when we say "economic liberty"? Millions of people can vote who are not economically free. There is an exhibit in Washington in this election-year on the importance of voting. It says, "The ultimate choice, the ballot." That's misleading. What gives you real choice in our society is money. Democracy, in effect, says, equal rights. Capitalism, in fact, delivers unequal results. People with money can buy not only more goods and services than people who don't have it, they can buy more rights. The dream's in trouble, as Professor Morris says, because we have not yet learned how to deliver both political rights and economic security to people without money.

This is one of our basic mythic truths, something we live by even if it isn't altogether so. A century after Lincoln spoke these words, the Supreme Court stated the proposition another way: One man, one vote. However, imperfect it works out in practice, the idea is a powerful incentive to human dignity. It means, you matter. But it doesn't put groceries on the table.

The United States has twenty-five million officially certified poor, and millions more almost so. Capitalism and democracy don't know what to do with these people, so we give them a dole and hope they'll stay out of sight. In a perverse way, our system does need its poor. Who would do the menial, dirty jobs and keep down the cost of living for everyone else?

Officially, the system also needs its unemployed. Put them to work, the economists say, and they'll drive up inflation. Some paradox. The Promised Land can't provide all its citizens a job without making our money worthless.

Paradox. Television, our most powerful teacher, proclaims a prime-time message of

plenties, while teasing our appetites to confuse wants for needs. The next morning there is the reality again.

MAN: Yeah, I got a body-shop and I can't even pay my help, 'cause the people can't pay for their cars 'cause they ain't got no jobs, and then what is it I'm to do? I guess I got to get on the street, too, right? So...

MAN: All I've been able to do is find parttime work from time to time, and just enough to barely get by. It's a situation that's just become intolerable.

WOMAN: It's hard to make it, just two people. I don't see how people do it with one or two or three children, how they send them to school and keep them in clothes, especially on unemployment.

MAN: I feel -- I feel sort of almost inferior. I don't know, it's kind of hard to explain. I just feel bad, you know.

MOYERS: We feel nothing so keenly today as the loss of human proportion, of a society attuned to human ends. The system has taken on a life of its own. So concentrated and interlocking, so vast, impersonal and faceless are the institutions acting upon us, that people brought up on the notion of human uniqueness and dignity feel trapped in the workings of an inscrutable machine. The more complex that machine is, the more trivial the impact of a single human being.

DANIEL BELL: It's hard for people to be loyal to a society if the society isn't responsive to them. It's one of the reasons why I worry about unemployment.

MOYERS: Daniel Bell, the prominent author and sociologist, has written widely about the problems plaguing American society. We talked in the Harvard Yard.

BELL: If people feel somehow that they can't themselves have a stake in the society, they're going to be alienated in that respect, they're going to be estranged, and they are going to be hostile in that way. So that, if there isn't that fundamental notion of inclusion and participation, we're in trouble.

Now, if you look back on American history, what's striking, we've probably had more violence in this country than any country in the world, labor violence from 1870 to 1940. And that violence disappeared very quickly. It disappeared because you had an institution to include people in the society, which is the Wagner Act, collective bargaining, that created a set of matching institutions, grievance procedures, seniority procedures, and the like. In the same way, I think we were beginning to make an effort in the Sixties to include, blacks particularly, minorities, later to some extent women. But I think this was aborted.

MOYERS: So everything became a part of a national awareness, and yet was frustrated because there were no instrumentalities to try to resolve these particular....

BELL: All the instrumentalities which people began building on a kind of responsive basis themselves became aborted by the Vietnam war. And one of the things which strikes me as being the most fundamental sociological truth I know is, if you can't have institutions which match a new scale, you're going to falter and fumble.

MOYERS: The founders feared great power in too few hands. They sought to balance political power in the Constitution. In a colonial economy on a wilderness frontier, they didn't want government to restrain the forces of growth. What they couldn't foresee was the corporate, government and labor triumvirate that dominates our economy and shapes political priorities to its own ends. Muscle determines who takes home the bacon. If you want a monument to its power, look at what the banks and bond-sellers, the politicians and unions, did in New York City.

We haven't found a way to cope with their power. As the price-fixing scandals and revelations about ITT, Gulf and Penn Central show, as all the special subsidies, depreciation allowances, tax breaks, cost overruns and fraud make clear, these big organizations make up their own rules and pass the cost along to the suckers.

MAN: Do you swear that all of the testimony you will give in these proceedings will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

DANIEL J. HAUGHTON: I do.

Lockheed does not defend or condone the practice of payments to foreign officials. We only say the practice exists...

MOYERS: This is Daniel J. Haughton of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. Five years ago he got a 250-million-dollar loan guarantee for his company from the Congress. Recently, he was back on the Hill.

SENATOR CASE: What's a kickback?

HAUGHTON: I interpret a kickback as something in the price, Senator Case, that you return to the buyer. And a bribe as a -- to me, is where you go to somebody and say, "I'd like you to do something for you -- for me, and I'll pay you 'X'. Now, that's --that's the way -- that's the way it comes through to me. I -- you know, I'm no authority on these...(Laughter).

SENATOR CHURCH: If you aren't, I don't know who is.

HAUGHTON: Senator Church, if I may...

SENATOR CHURCH: My point is only this. I think it's one you'll have to concede. If you add a hundred million dollars to the cost of the sale for purposes of commissions and bribes, then the price of the product goes up at least that much.

HAUGHTON: That's right.

SENATOR CHURCH: That's right.

HAUGHTON: We -- we hope -- we hope we get it up that much.

SENATOR CHURCH: Yes.

HAUGHTON: And we do in most cases.

DANIEL YANKELOVICH: One of the greatest sources of malaise in the country, very widespread, is a feeling of social injustice, in the sense that people feel that the wrong people are getting the breaks, getting the rewards.

MOYERS: Daniel Yankelovich is a public-opinion analyst and sometime philosopher who just completed a major study on the attitudes of the American family. He told Martin Clancy what he found.

YANKELOVICH: A feeling, almost universal, throughout the country, that the people who live by the rules are getting the short end of the -- of the deal, and the people who violate all the rules are getting the rewards. When you have that kind of sense of social inequity you're going to have an erosion of values. They have to be reinforced in order to exist, in order to be strengthened.

(MUSIC: "Yankee Doodle-Dandy")

MOYERS: In the past, injustice stirred Americans to protest and struggle. They were rebels, remember? They didn't like the way things were, so they set out to change them. If we put the rebel spirit to work this year, instead of just celebrating the dead heroes who invoked it, we might put some life back into this country and get control of our fate again. Democracy's become the dullest game in town, a nursing-home of old hopes and dreams. And Americans strike me as not only baffled but bored. We've forgotten how much of our history is the struggle of ordinary people to hold and win their rights against privilege. We've forgotten how tough it was.

We conjure images of enlightened squires and statesmen holding forth eloquently in Philadelphia and forget the hazards that ensued. Of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence, at least nine were hounded across the country in fear of their lives. Fourteen had their homes burned and destroyed. The families of many were harassed and threatened. We also forget common people sacrificed, too. The first to fall in battle were farmers and a schoolmaster from Concord.

As the War for Independence raged, the seeds for future struggle were sown. Land-grabbing colonial governors and speculation, including some among the founders and their friends, prompted Jefferson to predict that, "from the conclusion of this war, we shall be going downhill. The people will forget themselves," he said, "but in the sole faculty of making money."

Actually, the thought of making it so fired the world's imagination that new seekers came in endless streams, looking for their share of the bounty.

RICHARD MORRIS: And we became a very materialistic nation. I think we always were a rather materialistic nation. But I think we were especially so after the Civil War, when American industrialization moved at a pace as rapid as any country in the world. The sense of mission became perverted into the notion of manifest destiny, that America had a right to expand to the Pacific. And from there we moved into trans-oceanic areas, with the Spanish-American War, and we acquired overseas possessions, and we became an empire.

MOYERS: Philadelphia, 1876. On their way to empire, Americans paused to observe their first Centennial. The country was a mixed bag of progress, pride and plunder. Millions of people poured into Philadelphia for the Centennial Exhibition. It was gaudy, vulgar and high-spirited. But so was America. The first marvels of the emerging industrialization were there to behold -- from Gothic soda-foundations to Bell's new telephone, from hydraulic pumps to huge steam-engines. You could look at these things of iron and steel, of strong metals and their infinite use, and see the national genius taking shape. Said an English journalist inspecting inventions and machines, "The Americans mechanize as the old Greeks sculpted and the old Venetians painted".

Outside the Exhibition the country was shot through with violence, corruption, crime and misery. As many as a million men tramped the country looking for work. In the South, the Ku Klux Klan used murder, arson and riots to thwart emancipation. And what they couldn't accomplish the politicians finished off.

Outlaws roamed the West, and at Little Big Horn the Sioux made one more futile gesture to stay the coming white hordes. They couldn't be stopped. In the ten years, beginning in 1880, more than five million new Americans arrived in the Promised Land, ending up in places like Kerosene Row, Poverty Gap, Bone Alley and Bandit's Roost.

Slumlords made fortunes, while a 15-year-old boy could be hung for picking pockets. The immigrants became industrial serfs in the mines, mills and railraod shops, or strike-breakers in the persistent drive to smash the union movement. It was a violent period. Ranchers and homesteaders fought it out on the frontier. Farmers organized a third party to fight Wall Street control, and reactionary newspapers blamed all the unrest on German

Communists, ignorant Bohemians, uncouth Poles and wild-eyed Russians.

While Eugene Debs was growing up in Terre Haute, Indiana, horrified by the human cost of industrial progress, Andrew Carnegie was philosophizing in his Gospel of Wealth.

ANDREW CARNEGIE (As read): The price which society pays for the law of competition is great, but, while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it ensures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, great inequality of environment, the concentration of power in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these is essential for the future and progress of the race.

MOYERS: There was the emerging American ideology. Get it while you can, get it any way you can; but, above all, get it before someone else gets it first.

Mark Twain, who etched the energy,folly, imagination and hope of that epoch into our national soul, also saw the roots of something else. The thirst for gain meant expansion, and that meant imperialism, with a price. Mark Twain said, "We have invited our clean young men to shoulder a discredited musket and do bandit's work. We have debased America's honor and blackened her face before the world."

Unfortunately, we aren't reared to think of Samuel Clemens as an outspoken leader of what was then called the Anti-Imperialist League. Nor do we dwell on the formation of the granges and co-ops that the farmers founded to fight the banks and railroads. We put their machinery in the Smithsonian Institution and the memory of their struggle in limbo. It's nicer to look back and see Aunt Polly sending Tom out to whitewash the picket-fence, with Huck Finn and Becky Thatcher standing by.

Given the coming presidential election, we'd do well to keep in mind how ordinary folks have stirred the grass-roots from the 1890's forward. When you talk about the America millions cherish, it was their struggle that produced the shorter work-week, an end to child labor, social security, a minimum-wage law, public education, suffrage, and ultimately the standard of living that enabled our parents and grandparents to look up from their toil and begin forming their own conclusions about the good life. But they had to fight for it.

For a long time, our textbooks ignored the brawling, bloody, bludgeoning part of our history, just as many folks prefer to ignore the dark side today. My generation, perhaps, wore the rosiest of all rose-colored glasses. We were first-class citizens of the American century. And in Texas, where I grew up, the road to the bountiful destiny ran to the State University, the mecca of Texas strivers.

On this spot, on a bright June day in 1956, the president and chairman of General Dynamics, our commencement speaker, spoke the prevailing gospel. The future of freedom, equality and liberty, he said, would be decided on economic battlefields. But he assured us we would win. And he said he could find no evidence of despair or cynicism anywhere in American society, only the expectancy of good.

So it was.

You need to have been alive then, to have been young, ambitious and born on the white side of the tracks, to appreciate just how rich with promise the Fifties were. Our parents had been through depression and war. They had had it with scarcity and sacrifice. Now they wanted the good life. And so did we, their progeny. It was there to have.

Norman Vincent Peale preached it. Marilyn Monroe fantasized it for us. A new-fangled device called television advertised it.

BETTY FURNESS: The most unusual and exciting feature ever built into any refrigerator. It's something that you'll find in no other refrigerator, not one in the world. And here it is. It's an automatic twin-juice fountain. It serves delicious fruit juice, freshly mixed, at the touch of a finger.

MOYERS: And a man named William Levitt took the good life to a Long Island potato-field and homogenized it.

WILLIAM LEVITT: Every other industry is affected. There are more refrigerators, more dishwashers, more washing-machines, strangely enough, more automobiles. If you have houses, you've got an automobile along with them. And so and so forth, right down the line. It's a good, healthy thing. And this country never had to worry about production. We've solved that.

MOYERS: Sociologists called it the "age of affluence." We remember it as the"age of exuberance." We had the world by the tail, and America was an inexhaustible promise. The Fifties lived it up.

(MUSIC)

At Texas University the good life didn't cost very much in the Fifties. Tuition was forty dollars a semester. A newly-married couple going to school together could find an apartment for forty dollars a month. And, although most of us had to work hard to make ends meet, there was always time on Saturday afternoons to feel the tribal loyalties stirred with every forty-yard throw.

The world was supposed to be living under the shadow of the H-bomb, with communism and capitalism locked in mortal conflict. What we cared about was the conflict in Memorial Stadium between the Longhorns of Texas and the Razorbacks of Arkansas.

There was another side to all this. Texans were supposed to stand ten feet tall, one Ranger to a riot. If individualism were the American characteristic, we should have been the roughest, toughest, non-conformist of all. But we weren't. The Korean War, Joe McCarthy, the hounding of dissenters, were issues for the very, very few true individualists on campus. Patriots were people who didn't disagree.

Blacks were barred from the Promised Land. Women still confronted a nagging double-standard. Four out of five women told Dr. Gallup that a wife's adultry was more to be condemned than a husband's. And the exodus to the suburbs would leave our inner cities pleading for their own Marshall Plan.

What mattered to most Americans was the boom of prosperity. In a very short period of time, within thirty years after the end of World War II, we were eating better, wearing better clothes, and enjoying more rights and privileges than any mass of people in history. You could sum up the whole era in one word -- "more." The people wanted it, the politicians promised it.

PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN: A strong United States means a country of sound domestic economy. It means a country that holds its place in the forefront of industrial production and continues its leadership in creating the techniques of abundance. (CHEERS)

(MUSIC)

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: Every dollar released from taxation that is spent or invested will help create a new job and a new salary, and these new jobs and new salaries can create other jobs and other salaries, and more customers and more growth for an expanding American economy.

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON: We can see an abundant America, where science and technology have been fully harnessed to the needs of all of our people. We can see over there an America where our cities are not a problem but a glory. We can see a compassionate America, where no one is ill without hospital care, medicare, and no one is in trouble without help. I think that's the kind of an America you want, isn't it? (CHEERS)

MOYERS: We wanted it. But were we prepared for what came with it? The congestion, pollution and chaos of millions of Americans chasing their wants were a recipe for frustration and conflict. We kept bumping into each other going to the same place at the same time. And, as prosperity abounded, no one wanted to be left behind.

DANIEL BELL: Everything got thrown into the pot at once, in a very short period of time, and it was hard for people to sort it out, and as a result it became -- we were sort of overwhelmed. I think what you have is a revolution of rising entitlements and suddenly the lack of resources, partly lack of planning of resources, to meet these things. So you suddenly have problems of health costs, housing costs, environmental costs, all piling up on one another. And these are ingredients for a real fiscal crisis. We can really see it in many areas.

DANIEL YANKELOVICH: The way people feel today is that government isn't performing well. They are sopping up our tax dollars, charging us enormous amounts of money, and not deliverying the goods. It's not that people don't want the services; they feel that they are paying for something that they are not getting.

MOYERS: Vast resentments arose when government tried to help the poor catch up, and when many of the efforts failed to accomplish all they seemed to promise, American politics came to an impasse. Old liberals wrung their hands and called for more grants in government. New conservatives lectured that the pursuit of equality would end in bankruptcy. They said if the poor would only lower their expectations while capitalism got on its feet and the economy started growing again, why, in just a few years the benefits would be trickling down.

But things have changed. A lot of Americans aren't sure they want to grow so fast again. And others, they're not so sure we can.

AMITAI ETZIONI: Well, if you would have come from a faraway planet and studied America and then come back to your lunar tribe and reported what you found, you would have reported that this society has been geared best to the production of material objects during the day and their destruction at night.

MOYERS: Amitai Etzioni of Columbia University is director of the Center for Policy Research. He is one of many observers who feel that Americans have started to look at their lives differently.

ETZIONI: There are more and more Americans, not just a few hippies or kids, who are no longer absolutely sure that they want to lead a life devoted to working hard in the day so they can use a lot of material objects after the day, or their family.

MOYERS: From the very beginning, the nation has consisted of people who always wanted more. Are you saying now that more is no longer and can no longer be the watchword of American society?

ETZIONI: No. But one of two things will happen. We face a choice now. We can either keep meaning by "more," more material objects, and then certain things will follow, or we'll have to redefine what we mean by "more." "More" could mean more of human in needs, but not necessarily fulfillment with gadgets, with electrical toothbrushes, with packaged martinis. "More" could mean more time for myself, "more" could mean more time with my family, more time to read, more time to reflect, more time to enjoy the sunset,

more travel in inner space. So "more" will have to start to mean, possibly, more satisfaction, but not necessarily derived from material objects.

What used to give meaning to life has come into question. We've been told for the last eighty years that if you're going to have a bigger car and a very thin television set and a boat and a refrigerator which salutes, then you will have the good life. And people, especially those who have got there, and especially their children, say, you know what, it ain't so satisfying.

MOYERS: While some people question the value of what they have, millions more have too little. If we don't grow, what happens to the casualties of that stalemate? All the talk about belt-tightening could give the future to the strongest, push back the middle class and ruin the poor, unless we find a way to grow without ruining the earth and to share better the great wealth we have.

In a self-centered age, wanting leadership that makes no more than marginal demands on our energies and money, it's hard to recall the revolutionary memory.

Well, if, from some distant Olympia, a voice said, "Richard Morris, this is Thomas Jefferson. How fares my revolution?" what would you answer?

RICHARD MORRIS: I would say, "Tom, I think you are in some trouble. Perhaps not deep trouble, but obviously trouble." It's quite obvious that there are a lot of people in this country who are not willing to regard the American Revolution as I think Thomas Jefferson did, as a continuing commitment, and feel that the revolution happened, the revolution was accomplished, now let's go home and forget about it. I think, to that extent, that we have unfulfilled commitments.

And that concept, I think, is one that a lot of people today I think have failed to remember, and should remember. We still have not completed all of the goals of the American Revolution, and perhaps we never will.

MOYERS: Perhaps not, almost certainly not. But our legacy guarantees we will try. It's a terrible thing, a revolutionary memory. It means you can never settle for the way things are, and can never have all you seek. It means living constantly with conflict, crisis and the hope of renewal.

This document expresses the memory we live by. It proclaims the right to change things if we don't like the way they are. That may be the most revolutionary idea of all, and the one most relevant in 1976.

The man who wrote those words built this house. Thomas Jefferson called it Monticello, "little mountain," after the hill he picked as its site, overlooking Charlottesville, Virginia. I returned there one night recently in the company of a man who's been an avid student of Jefferson for over half a century.

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER: ...built it, and no other house would so express his character and his personality and his detail of it, the detail of the bust that he chose, for example, the...

MOYERS: Henry Steele Commager of Amherst College is one of America's most distinguished historians. We talked in the small study that was part of Jefferson's bedroom.

COMMAGER: It is extraordinary, the man who built this place, and was a man who made what I sometimes think is the only real philosophical contribution to historical philosophy made in America. He substituted the future for the past. And he believed -- he knew the past as well as Adams or anyone else. They were all deeply versed in the past. They had these enormous libraries, and they studied incessantly. But Jefferson and many of his

followers were convinced, to use Thomas Paine's term that "Americans knew Adam and a new paradise" -- that here at last, for the first time in all recorded history, man could prove what he was capable of. Here at last we were free of the tyranny of monarchy, the tyranny of the church, the tyranny of the military, the tyranny of tradition, the tyranny of class, the tyranny of the past, the tyranny of poverty, the tyranny of ignorance. And man was free to show what he could do.

MOYERS: Just look at our problems, from poverty and crime and violence to bankrupt cities, to the power of huge organizations, to the loss of human proportion, to the conflict between hedonism and scarcity. What does that revolutionary generation of 1776 have to say to problems like these?

COMMAGER: Well, one very elementary thing it has to say is that it had its own problems. Every generation thinks its problems are the gravest, the most insoluble in the whole of history. I am sure the generation of Chester Arthur and Benjamin Harrison thought those problems were insoluble, of a magnitude never before faced by man. My heavens, when you think of the problems that confronted the new America, the problem of making a nation -- no one had ever made a nation before, of getting a federal system underway -- no one ever made a successful federal system. Problems can be solved if you have the leadership and the will and the magnanimity, the wisdom, to solve them.

MOYERS: Are you saying, then, that between 1776 and 1976 we have lost the magnanimity, the will and the leadership?

COMMAGER: Publicly, yes. We have it in other areas. Talent goes where it is rewarded. We have just as many men of talent today, proportionately, as we ever had. It goes into science, it goes into the arts, it goes into law, perhaps it goes into business. It does not go into the public enterprise. Our society worships at the shrine of private enterprise.

MOYERS: Isn't there a danger of expecting too much from ideas that belong to an agrarian, colonial, frontier, wilderness society?

COMMAGER: Well, of course there is. You don't go back to the particular ideas; you go back to the attitude of mind and of spirit that found those solutions, entertained those ideas...

MOYERS: What was that attitude?

COMMAGER: ...the same kind of talent that could solve the problem, let us say, of how to deal with the West should today be able to solve the problem of how to deal with the rest of the globe.

MOYERS: What was its characteristic?

COMMAGER: Its characteristic was, first, I think a readiness to serve public welfare. Second, and in some ways it's both the most exciting and the most tragic, a sense of posterity, the fiduciary sense. Every -- every leading figure of that generation talked incessantly about our posterity. "Our descendants to the thousands and thousandth generation," Jefferson said in his first Inaugural Address. And Washington returned to it, and John Adams. "We may rue this day," he wrote to his Abigail, when he had signed the Declaration, "but our posterity will not." And so forth. Over and over again, that sense of fiduciary obligation to the future, which we don't have at all. We are consumed with our own concerns and our own interest. And when you think that every major problem is global, the problem of population, the problem of air pollution, the problem of resources, the problem of nuclear fission. Turn it where you will, every major problem. Not one can be solved by the United States or by Russia or by China."

And yet we are not moving toward that solution. The problems are not local. We know that in the realm of cancer. No one would think that should belong to one nation. Why don't we know it in the realm of unemployment? It shouldn't be too difficult to make that transition.

They even talk about resources as if they belong to us. No resources belong to us. They belong to posterity.

MOYERS: But isn't it endemic to the American attitude, to the American character, that we want everything we can get now, we want it all today?

COMMAGER: It doesn't have to be endemic. It's endemic to a society that puts private enterprise ahead of public enterprise and that puts the welfare of one generation against the welfare of future generations, which we are doing, and other people are doing. But none on a I think more reckless scale than we are. These figures are so elementary. We have six per cent of the population and consume forty per cent of all the goods.

And Secretary Butz says why shouldn't we.

MOYERS: Is it possible for us to recapture that larger vision, the spirit of '76, the spirit of that revolutionary generation?

COMMAGER: And '87. Don't forget that, because we recapture the spirit that solved the kind of problem then that is now a world problem. That is, getting all the states to be one nation, getting all the particularism to agree on a general program, sinking the state sovereignty of thirteen states and of all incoming states, and nevertheless, as John Adams said, make thirteen clocks to strike together, a perfection of mechanism never heretofore known. Why can't we do that across national boundaries today?

What we have lost, for example, is something peculiar to the eighteenth century, but it should have been peculiar to the twentieth, and that is the community of learning, for example, the community of science, the community of scholarship, the sense on the part of the natural philosophers of the eighteenth century, the philosophes in so many areas, that they did not belong to one country but to mankind and to posterity -- the kind of sense you get in the great Edward Jenner of smallpox fame, when he said the sciences are never at war. Remember the Royal Society gave Franklin its Gold Medal in 1778, in the middle of the war. Remember the little episodes, one after another, that come to mind; they can be multiplied by the hundred. The British officer who was going to set fire to a house in -- it happened to be Francis Hopkinsens in Bordentown, and his Hessians did so. And he went in and he saw the great library and the scientific apparatus, and he said, "Put out the fires," and he wrote on the flyleaf of a book,"This man is doubtless a great traitor, but he is a scholar and a benefactor to humanity and he must be saved." That's gone.

MOYERS: Well, here we are about to celebrate an extraordinary event, and the American people strike me as being ambivalent, perplexed, pessimistic, disillusioned. What's left of that Revolutionary era that we really should be looking at today?

COMMAGER: Your diagnosis is indeed correct. I should add that it's equally correct to the French people, the British people, the -- probably the Russian people, who knows? The Chinese people seem to be the only one, as far as we know, to not feel these misgivings. Maybe they do, too.

What is left, of course -- all that's happened is still here. The resources are here, far more resources than the Revolutionary generation, plus we have -- the scientific learning, the scholarship, is all here. And what is lacking is I think philosophy, if you will. What is lacking is morality. What is lacking is ethics. What is lacking is a

leadership which puts first things first, and first things are not strip-mining so some coal companies can make money. First things are a concern for posterity, first things are concern to avoid nuclear destruction, which is on the way. And how you get -- maybe this could come through a different kind of education. I don't mean a different curriculum. The notion you can teach values is an absurdity. The values follow examples, and the examples have to start at the top. But the talent and the good-will I think, even, are there. But it -- it doesn't -- it has no voice.

MOYERS: There is also that idea in the Declaration that free people have the right to alter and abolish their government when it doesn't satisfy their freedom and happiness. The ability of a free people to create their society and then to recreate it as often as it was necessary.

COMMAGER: And to institute new government, yes. And of course that was translated into the great institution of the Constitutional Convention. And we can do that any time we want by instituting a new government. We can wipe out the present one and start over if we wish to. We don't wish to because we're either content or apathetic.

MOYERS: Have we lost either the opportunity or the belief, or the ability, to create and recreate our own social system?

COMMAGER: I see no sign of that at all. It seems to me there is a tremendous vitality in many areas. The upsurge of the women's rights movement and the way we have used the courts, which are one of our instruments of innovation, curiously enough, to -- and capital punishment -- to give broader rights to privacy, the privacy of women to have children or not, as they wish, for example. And the -- I think the court is the most innovative institution in American life today, though it is the one non-elected institution. And this is a commentary on the -- on the creativity of the two political branches, that it should be the judiciary which is creative.

MOYERS: As I walk around this house, I get the impression, overwhelming impression, of what Thomas Jefferson had to lose. He was willing to risk so much, and he could have lost it all if he had been wrong.

COMMAGER: Oh, the whole generation was willing to risk. Quite right. How touching to remember that Alexander Hamilton was bankrupt when he died and friends had to -- had to educate his children. That isn't what happens to secretaries of the treasury today. That Monticello was sold over Jefferson's head. He was bankrupt at the end and he tried to get a lottery and they wouldn't give him one so he could save Monticello. It didn't occur to any of those people to ask the government to give them a few million to build things up. They were willing to risk their own lives and their own welfare, their own -- when they said, "our lives, our fortunes, our sacred honor," they meant it. And these are just phrases to us today, but they weren't phrases to the people who fought the revolution and gave the whole of their lives to public service. Jefferson, from 1772 on to his death, was in public service.

MOYERS: Well, finally, if you could sum up for us the spirit of that Revolutionary generation, how would you express it?

COMMAGER: The spirit of creativity, of innovation, of wisdom, of enterprise, of practicality and of magnanimity. It had those qualities.

MOYERS: We are about to celebrate an extraordinary occasion, and it's about time. The lamentations from just about every quarter in this country threaten to turn this into a nation of breast-beaters and sack-cloth merchants. We're not finished with this republic just because life has proven tougher and more complex than we dreamed. But it will be a struggle. Almost everything about our third century will tax our resources and ingenuity.

Ingenuity. They believed in ingenuity, in the capacity of free people to shape knowledge of the world to the purpose of life. They won independence from the Crown, but they also freed their generation from a timid regard for their own natural rights. They met their circumstances and prevailed, and they made it possible for succeeding generations, including our own, to do so, too.

They left us a Constitution, they left us an example of courage, and they left us a revolutionary memory that, for every betrayal and insult, will not let go -- unless we quit it.

I'm Bill Moyers. For my colleagues, good night.