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OF THE UNITED STATES

Harry S. Truman

*Containing the Public Messages, Speeches and
Statements of the President*

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after long and careful negotiation, has brought 5,642 acres into public ownership, and I am incorporating this into the park. This insures the preservation of the 250-foot Sitka spruces of the Bogachiel Valley.

The Olympic National Park, established for the benefit and enjoyment of the Amer-

ican people, now becomes the only park in the world to extend from snowcapped mountains to ocean beaches.

NOTE: The President issued Proclamation 3003 "Enlarging the Olympic National Park Washington" (3 CFR, 1949-1953 Comp., p. 178).

366 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.

January 7, 1953

To the Congress of the United States:

I have the honor to report to the Congress on the state of the Union.

This is the eighth such report that, as President, I have been privileged to present to you and to the country. On previous occasions, it has been my custom to set forth proposals for legislative action in the coming year. But that is not my purpose today. The presentation of a legislative program falls properly to my successor, not to me, and I would not infringe upon his responsibility to chart the forward course. Instead, I wish to speak of the course we have been following the past eight years and the position at which we have arrived.

In just two weeks, General Eisenhower will be inaugurated as President of the United States and I will resume—most gladly—my place as a private citizen of this Republic. The Presidency last changed hands eight years ago this coming April. That was a tragic time: a time of grieving for President Roosevelt—the great and gallant human being who had been taken from us; a time of unrelieved anxiety to his successor, thrust so suddenly into the complexities and burdens of the Presidential office.

Not so this time. This time we see the normal transition under our democratic system. One President, at the conclusion of his term, steps back to private life; his successor, chosen by the people, begins his tenure of the office. And the Presidency of the United States continues to function without a moment's break.

Since the election, I have done my best to

assure that the transfer from one Administration to another shall be smooth and orderly. From General Eisenhower and his associates, I have had friendly and understanding collaboration in this endeavor. I have not sought to thrust upon him—nor has he sought to take—the responsibility which must be mine until twelve o'clock noon on January twentieth. But together, I hope and believe we have found means whereby the incoming President can obtain the full and detailed information he will need to assume the responsibility the moment he takes the oath of office.

The President-elect is about to take up the greatest burdens, the most compelling responsibilities, given to any man. And I, with you and all Americans, wish for him all possible success in undertaking the tasks that will so soon be his.

What are these tasks? The President is Chief of State, elected representative of all the people, national spokesman for them and to them. He is Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces. He is charged with the conduct of our foreign relations. He is Chief Executive of the Nation's largest civilian organization. He must select and nominate all top officials of the Executive Branch and all Federal judges. And on the legislative side, he has the obligation and the opportunity to recommend, and to approve or veto legislation. Besides all this, it is to him that a great political party turns naturally for leadership, and that, too, he must provide as President.

This bundle of burdens is unique; there is nothing else like it on the face of the earth.

Each task could be a full-time job. Together, they would be a tremendous undertaking in the easiest of times.

But our times are not easy; they are hard—as hard and complex, perhaps as any in our history. Now, the President not only has to carry on these tasks in such a way that our democracy may grow and flourish and our people prosper, but he also has to lead the whole free world in overcoming the communist menace—and all this under the shadow of the atomic bomb.

This is a huge challenge to the human being who occupies the Presidential office. But it is not a challenge to him alone, for in reality he cannot meet it alone. The challenge runs not just to him but to his whole Administration, to the Congress, to the country.

Ultimately, no President can master his responsibilities, save as his fellow citizens—indeed, the whole people—comprehend the challenge of our times and move, with him, to meet it.

It has been my privilege to hold the Presidential office for nearly eight years now, and much has been done in which I take great pride. But this is not personal pride. It is pride in the people, in the Nation. It is pride in our political system and our form of government—balky sometimes, mechanically deficient perhaps, in many ways—but enormously alive and vigorous; able through these years to keep the Republic on the right course, rising to the great occasions, accomplishing the essentials, meeting the basic challenge of our times.

There have been misunderstandings and controversies these past eight years, but through it all the President of the United States has had that measure of support and understanding without which no man could sustain the burdens of the Presidential office, or hope to discharge its responsibilities.

For this I am profoundly grateful—grateful to my associates in the Executive Branch—most of them non-partisan civil servants; grateful—despite our disagreements—to the Members of the Congress on both sides of the aisle; grateful especially to

the American people, the citizens of this Republic, governors of us all.

We are still so close to recent controversies that some of us may find it hard to understand the accomplishments of these past eight years. But the accomplishments are real and very great, not as the President's, not as the Congress', but as the achievements of our country and all the people in it.

Let me remind you of some of the things we have done since I first assumed my duties as President of the United States.

I took the oath of office on April 12, 1945. In May of that same year, the Nazis surrendered. Then, in July, that great white flash of light, man-made at Alamogordo, heralded swift and final victory in World War II—and opened the doorway to the atomic age.

Consider some of the great questions that were posed for us by sudden, total victory in World War II. Consider also, how well we as a Nation have responded.

Would the American economy collapse, after the war? That was one question. Would there be another depression here—a repetition of 1921 or 1929? The free world feared and dreaded it. The communists hoped for it and built their policies upon that hope.

We answered that question—answered it with a resounding “no.”

Our economy has grown tremendously. Free enterprise has flourished as never before. Sixty-two million people are now gainfully employed, compared with 51 million seven years ago. Private businessmen and farmers have invested more than 200 billion dollars in new plant and equipment since the end of World War II. Prices have risen further than they should have done—but incomes, by and large, have risen even more, so that real living standards are now considerably higher than seven years ago. Aided by sound government policies, our expanding economy has shown the strength and flexibility for swift and almost painless reconversion from war to peace, in 1945 and 1946; for quick reaction and re-

covery—well before Korea—from the beginnings of recession in 1949. Above all, this live and vital economy of ours has now shown the remarkable capacity to sustain a great mobilization program for defense, a vast outpouring of aid to friends and allies all around the world—and still to produce more goods and services for peaceful use at home than we have ever known before.

This has been our answer, up to now, to those who feared or hoped for a depression in this country.

How have we handled our national finances? That was another question arising at war's end. In the administration of the Government, no problem takes more of the President's time, year in and year out, than fashioning the Budget, and the related problem of managing the public debt.

Financing World War II left us with a tremendous public debt, which reached 279 billion dollars at its peak in February, 1946.

Beginning in July, 1946, when war and reconversion financing had ended, we have held quite closely to the sound standard that in times of high employment and high national income, the Federal Budget should be balanced and the debt reduced.

For the four fiscal years from July 1, 1946, to June 30, 1950, we had a net surplus of 4.3 billion dollars. Using this surplus, and the Treasury's excess cash reserves, the debt was reduced substantially, reaching a low point of 251 billion dollars in June, 1949, and ending up at 257 billion dollars on June 30, 1950.

In July of 1950, we began our rapid rearmament, and for two years held very close to a pay-as-we-go policy. But in the current fiscal year and the next, rising expenditures for defense will substantially outrun receipts. This will pose an immediate and serious problem for the new Congress.

Now let me turn to another question we faced at the war's end. Would we take up again, and carry forward, the great projects of social welfare—so badly needed, so long overdue—that the New Deal had intro-

duced into our national life? Would our Government continue to have a heart for the people, or was the progress of the New Deal to be halted in the aftermath of war as decisively as the progress of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom had been halted after the first world war?

This question, too, we have answered. We have answered it by doubling old age insurance benefits and extending coverage to ten million more people. We have answered it by increasing our minimum wage. We have answered by the three million privately constructed homes that the Federal Government has helped finance since the war—and the 155 thousand units of low rent public housing placed under construction since 1949.

We have answered with the 42 thousand new hospital beds provided since 1946 through the joint efforts of the Federal Government and local communities.

We have answered by helping eight million veterans of World War II to obtain advanced education, 196 thousand to start in business, and 64 thousand to buy farms.

We have answered by continuing to help farmers obtain electric power, until today nearly 90 per cent of our farms have power line electric service.

In these and other ways, we have demonstrated, up to now, that our democracy has not forgotten how to use the powers of the Government to promote the people's welfare and security.

Another of the big post-war questions was this: What we would do with the Nation's natural resources—its soils and water, forests and grasslands. Would we continue the strong conservation movement of the 1930's, or would we, as we did after the First World War, slip back into the practices of monopoly, exploitation, and waste?

The answer is plain. All across our country, the soil conservation movement has spread, aided by Government programs, enriching private and public lands, preserving them from destruction, improving them