

BALTIMORE MAYOR, 1963-1967
(THEODORE ROOSEVELT McKELDIN)

Inaugural Address
of
THEODORE R. McKELDIN
Mayor of Baltimore



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SECOND INAUGURATION

May 21, 1963

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

THE ADDRESS OF
THEODORE R. McKELDIN
UPON HIS SECOND INAUGURATION
AS MAYOR OF THE CITY OF BALTIMORE

DELIVERED AT NOON

May 21, 1963

DURING INAUGURAL CEREMONIES IN WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

TO be inaugurated Mayor of Baltimore is a solemn and auspicious experience. I would be less than frank if I did not confess that this is a very great moment for me personally. This is an office I sought. This is an office I asked of my fellow Baltimoreans. I am profoundly grateful for your confidence and support. I now have the opportunity to fulfill the pledges upon which my administration will stand. With God's help, I will devote my entire energies to seeing that they are accomplished.

However, any success must and will be a joint success! It will result from a harmonious effort on the part of the executive and legislative bodies of our City to accomplish our aims. I am quick to recognize the party differences that exist between parts of these two arms of government. This does not mean, however, that municipal progress cannot be accomplished. This type of government relationship is not uncommon to me. It has worked on the City and State levels in the past. It will work again in the future.

I ask, therefore, that all citizens—Democrats and Republicans, but more importantly, Baltimoreans—pledge with me today to conduct the government of our great City, not as a power struggle or a method of personal achievement, but as a means of accomplishing sincere aims and lofty goals for all of our people.

Twenty years and three days have passed since I delivered my first inaugural address as Mayor of Baltimore, so, naturally, I have been thinking of the contrast between conditions then and now.

At that time the Nation was fighting for its life, and not for its life only, but for the survival of liberty.

Inevitably, interest in purely municipal affairs was muted.

Loyal citizens at that time had no choice; they were compelled to put the safety of the Nation first, so it necessarily became the leading theme of my address.

But the war was won, and since the victory, no armed enemy has undertaken to destroy us by military power. Today I am free to invite your attention to the affairs of Baltimore with an insistence that would have been inappropriate in 1943.

Yet, I do not harbor the delusion that because no armed enemy fires on the flag today, therefore, our responsibilities, and specifically the responsibilities of a Mayor of Baltimore, are reduced.

On the contrary, they are increased, for if we fail in our civic duty today, we can no longer plead, in extenuation, that the Nation's danger demanded our first attention.

Therefore, it is with no trace of complacency that I have approached today's ceremony. I am well aware that the task I am undertaking is

harder, not easier, than it was twenty years ago. The mere increase in the size of the City would assure more work for the Mayor; but in addition to the increase in size, it has increased in complexity, because so much of the growth is beyond the old City boundaries, thereby complicating every administrative problem.

Because of this situation—and not ‘in spite of it’—we are an especially fortunate people, we Baltimoreans of 1963.

Why?

Because, I think, we have been blessed by the Almighty with a special responsibility, for never in our history have our challenges been so great and our goals so eminently worthy of attainment.

There was a time, we know, when the fire-ravished Baltimore of 1904 faced a decision somewhat comparable to the one confronting us today—that is, whether to make the supreme effort required to achieve the type of prize reserved solely for the bold, the valiant, the imaginative, and the dedicated.

The decision in 1904 was clear and positive.

The result of that decision was a new Baltimore.

Now, in this year of 1963, we find that a Baltimore recently reduced in spirit, to ashes by the smoldering fire of neglect, is once again rising in renewed pride and splendor.

The Charles Center, our State Office buildings, the new office and apartment buildings which punctuate our skyline—these are proof in mortar and steel that men of foresight and determination are translating the Baltimore spirit of old into a vibrant new hope for tomorrow.

But these modern structures which we see around us, these monuments to the initiative of private citizens, are only a beginning, an introduction to the history of our new Baltimore.

To us has been entrusted the enormous responsibility of completing the task.

Toward this end, we must utilize the fresh wave of enthusiasm which is sweeping from Curtis Bay to Hamilton, and from Highlandtown to Mount Washington, and we must harness it for specific tasks.

Where crime runs rampant, we must combat it through a fully staffed and adequately paid law enforcement department.

Where confusion and economic distress plague our citizens as a result of vacillation in our planning for public works projects, we must act promptly, decisively, wisely, making changes for the common good with a minimum of inconvenience to those persons required to make adjustments.

We must assure an adequate system of mass transportation, for each

undue delay in transit makes a mockery of our efforts to utilize our priceless time in a rewarding and effective way.

We must staff our schools with teachers of special skills and high dedication—teachers who are properly compensated.

We must widen or reroute certain major arteries while the land required for such work remains undeveloped.

We must establish greater efficiency and economy in government.

But these are old problems, familiar problems, problems that we willingly accept as the initiation through which we must pass today to merit the new Baltimore of tomorrow.

We can solve them, I am sure.

We must solve them.

But when we have done so, we will merely have provided belated remedies for ills which seem almost ancient. We will merely have brought ourselves up-to-date.

What I want especially to share with you today is my enthusiasm for those new and fascinating challenges which we shall courageously select for ourselves.

For instance, envision with me, for a moment, a new Baltimore with three soaring centers of activity—the State Office buildings, where Maryland conducts so much of her official business—the Charles Center, the hub of our business and commerce—and a third focal point, a new Municipal Center, with City accommodations worthy of this great metropolis.

Is this too visionary? Too much composed of the stuff of dreams? I think not.

In fact, the very demands of practicality cry out for new arrangements to replace the antiquated, inefficient, expensive hodge-podge of municipal offices which now sprawl so awkwardly throughout our downtown area.

The City Hall, for instance, is in a condition not merely deplorable, but actually dangerous. We must do something about it very soon; and I hope that when we act, we shall not make a patch-work job.

As Governor, I took the lead in starting the project that has resulted in the three great buildings in our City in which are concentrated most of the State's business offices. We spent a lot of money there, but the rise in property values in the adjacent area has already returned much of it and is steadily returning more. It is my firm belief that within the next ten years, the increased revenue will reimburse us for the initial outlay.

We can observe the same process in Charles Center. This is primarily

private enterprise, but the City is already assured of a handsome return on its relatively small investment.

But now that the State and private business are forging ahead, why should the City lag behind? Why should we not seize the opportunity to create around the War Memorial Plaza a municipal center worthy of comparison with the business center and the State center? Since we must do something about the City Hall anyhow, why not plan to draw together the offices that are now scattered all over town at great expense and inconvenience? I favor such a program and shall do my best to advance it.

Envision with me, too, a new Inner Harbor area, where the imagination of man can take advantage of a rare gift of Nature to produce an enthralling panorama of office buildings, parks, high-rise apartments and marinas. In this we have a very special opportunity, for few other cities in the world have been blessed, as has ours, with such a potentially beautiful harbor area within the very heart of downtown.

Too visionary, this?

Too dream-like?

Certainly not, for our new Baltimore is beginning to throb again with the resolution of the Calverts and the Carrolls, and to glow once more with the civic pride of the Peabodys, the Pratts, the Walters, and the Hopkinses.

We, the heirs of those civic giants of old, must prove ourselves worthy of the flaming spirit of purposeful adventure which is our legacy.

In doing so, however, we must not forget, as we have been prone to do in the past, that many of the assets bequeathed to our generation are not visible and tangible, but that, properly exploited, they might be more valuable than all our land and buildings.

We have history and beauty and culture and charm, ingredients for which many a mid-Western community would pay a king's ransom, but we have neglected them, or used them in a half-hearted way.

For instance, there is the frigate *Constellation*, that could be a national shrine, but we have allowed it to remain merely a local curiosity.

We did save the Flag House, but at Lombard and the Fallsway we are allowing the city-owned Charles Carroll mansion—built by Charles Carroll for his daughter, and the home in which he died, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence—to crumble into ruin.

Through our streets Washington's and Rochambeau's legions of freedom marched on their way to Yorktown, and Lincoln passed on his journey to martyrdom and immortality.

Here lived the first American bishop of the Roman Catholic Church and the man whom most of us still regard as the American Prince of the Church, James Cardinal Gibbons, who was born on this very spot where the War Memorial Building now stands. Lovely Lane Meeting House was the cradle of Methodism, and Otterbein and Old St. Paul's Episcopal Church and others are no less hallowed in our minds.

Nor can we forget the old Lloyd Street Synagogue, the first-built synagogue in Maryland, which the Jewish Historical Society intends to restore to its original beauty as one of our most magnificent examples of Grecian architecture.

Such martial, political and religious history clusters around Baltimore, and there is more, for I have not even touched on the economic history, which, from Ross Winans' railway truck and Morse's telegraph, to Martin's space-age marvels, is a synopsis of the industrial development of America.

What Boston would have made of all this passes imagination.

What little we have done must make all of us hang our heads in shame.

Yet we live in the presence of remnants of a city that culturally and intellectually led the nation. Long before the Johns Hopkins became the first modern American University, in the days when the Battle Monument was erected, and somewhat later, the Washington Monument was built, Baltimore citizens did not hesitate to put their money and their labor into the creation of municipal beauty, believing as firmly as Pericles did in ancient Athens that the adornment of a city constitutes one of its chief values.

I am for urban renewal in the sense of redemption of blighted areas. But I am still more strongly for urban renewal in the sense of a revival of that spirit which was Baltimore in the days when Charles Carroll was laying the cornerstone of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, when the famous Baltimore Clipper ships were sailing the seven seas, and when Pratt and Peabody and Hopkins were accumulating the money that, *planted in the cultural life of the City, was to blossom in music and art and learning.* For I am convinced that a renewal of that spirit would bring us riches far exceeding anything we can achieve with steel and glass and concrete.

I confidently expect to see Baltimore steadily increase in economic riches and power. But that is not the limit of my aspiration for her, and I ardently hope that my administration may help to increase her wealth in other things. For I am not ashamed to admit that I share the feeling of Charleston's poet, DuBose Heyward, when he wrote:

*"They tell me she is beautiful, my City,
That she is colorful and quaint, alone
Among the cities. But I, I who have known
Her tenderness, her courage, and her pity,
Have felt her forces mould me, mind and bone . . .
How can I think of her in wood and stone!"*

Ours is an enormous task.

It excites us.

It lures us forward, upward.

And, in our recognition of our human limitations, it strikes fear into our zealous hearts, for we know that we cannot succeed unaided.

It is to the Almighty that we must turn our minds and our hearts, and it is in His Providence that we must seek assistance.

And so once again I dedicate myself as the humble and loyal servant of God, and with the help of our Lord, I shall earnestly do my best to serve Him and you.

To have the opportunity of sharing in the creative development of our beloved City as its chief executive is a supreme privilege.

I trust that all of us may consider ourselves as fellow-workers in the constructive task of making this City the home of an ever-happier and more prosperous people.

Let it be known too, in every clime and to the ends of the earth, that here in Baltimore—the sixth largest city in the Nation, the largest city south of the Mason-Dixon Line, on the soil of Maryland—every man is of sacred worth as a child of God, and all share equally in the responsibilities and blessings of freedom.

To that end we dedicate ourselves anew to the further advancement of human values as the greatest contribution we may make to our day and age.

Therefore, I solemnly dedicate myself not only to preserve and uphold the charter of our City, but to maintain and strengthen its noblest traditions as well, the traditions of tolerance, brotherhood and human freedom without limitation.

Sincerely and earnestly do I ask your prayers, my fellow citizens, as indeed I pray for all of you.