

## **PRESIDENT TUBMAN's ADDRESS (1970)**

*In the history of political thought, it is said that in order to understand the present reality, it is important to revisit the past. And when the past and present are understood, scientific political prognosis can be correctly made. It is against this backdrop that the **allaboutliberia.com** website presents an instructive speech vis-à-vis Liberia-US Relations delivered by Liberia's 18th President William V.S. Tubman at the dedicatory ceremonies of the City Hall in Harper, Maryland County during his administration. Dr. Tubman's speech is still relevant to today's reality.*

*In an impromptu speech at the ceremony, President William V.S. Tubman recalled some aspects of his development policy, especially with regard to public works and utilities, and referred to the malice shown by some foreign information media in reporting the Liberian scene. Foreign friends, he said, should "leave us alone," allowing Liberia to attend to her own affairs. He also took the opportunity to recall his childhood in Harper City and to condemn the attack on Guinea by groups of mercenaries.*

I think I should start the brief remarks that I intend to make by first congratulating the commissioner of the Commonwealth District of Harper, the members of his Council and the Freemen of the City of Harper. I think it is also necessary to tell you how this beautiful building was started and completed. Several years ago I directed the Commissioner of the Commonwealth District of Harper to place in each of his annual budgets no less than \$10,000 to be used for building a City Hall in Harper City. He did that, and finally, last year, he had set aside in the bank to the credit of the city over \$100,000 for this Hall. I then decided that work should begin and that the Government would pay the balance. Hence we have this Hall today.

### **"My Order of Priorities"**

I have tried to pursue a policy of making my hometown come last in development and public improvement. The paving of streets went to all of the counties and Harper City, in Maryland County, was the last. They are still paving here now. Electricity went to all of the counties and Harper City, in Maryland County, was the last. They are still paving here now. Electricity went to all of the counties, Maryland being last. Ports were built in other counties but Maryland was left last and nearly didn't get one.

I am happy to tell the people of this part of the country that we now have an agreement signed for the financing of a port here -\$15 million and, if necessary, \$17 million. The owner of the bank in Brussels who gave this credit sent me a wire to say he would be coming here to attend these ceremonies.

Public buildings are very important. They give expression to the aesthetic taste of a community. They speak as well as the language of what the people stand for. Shabby buildings, erected in any place are of no use. When people enter such buildings they do not think much of those who put them up.

When I took office all the foreign newspapers said Liberia was a place of tin-pan shanties, unfinished structures, and that all Government offices were housed in rented buildings. I tried to correct that. With the support of the Legislature we decided to proceed according to the constitutional rank of the different Departments of Government. And so we first built the Legislative Hall, the Capitol. Next came the Executive Mansion.

Then, those who had scandalized and criticized us for not having buildings said we wasted money on public buildings. They were so vicious and wicked as to write that enough fufu could be cooked in the kitchen of the Executive Mansion to feed all of Africa. Well, that is what we eat, fufu -some of you like to eat potatoes. Then, the next public building to go up was the Temple of Justice the Supreme Court.

### **"If our Detractors do not like it..."**

I am very happy about what has been done. There is nothing they can say that will change me. I am very happy to know that the Executive Mansion, the Capitol building and the Temple of Justice are as good as any such buildings anywhere in the world. And if our detractors do not like it, if they are jealous, or if they hate us because we are black people, let them tear themselves to pieces and go to pot. More than that, there are some nations in the world who believe that their system of government, or whatever they do, is correct and everything else is wrong.

They talk about the one-party system of government, saying it is iniquitous and it is corrupt. Hm...! I have visited their countries. I remember once visiting one of these countries that believe in the two-party system of government; the former President whom I knew very well - I stayed at the Presidential Mansion with him and his wife when I was there--- had died. They asked me to say what places I wanted to visit.

Among the places I mentioned was this former President's tomb. And this was written in the program. But at the official dinner, given by the President, the Secretary of State came over to me when they were about to serve liqueur and said, "We don't want you to go to this tomb."

I said, "How can I not go? You have agreed and have written it into the program and the widow of the former President and her children are there waiting for me--- I know them!"

"Well," he said, "You can't go there because an election is to be held in such and such a place the very day that you are to go there, and one of the sons is running for Attorney General for that State. And if you go there, you'll encourage colored voters to vote for him."

Now, a one-party system of government is much better than that kind of corruption!

### **"They cannot change our Minds"**

There is another thing in which they don't believe. They do not believe in one man being President more than twice and they think the whole world must follow them in saying that they are right! Where do they get their righteousness and their perfection? And they will undertake to interfere in the domestic affairs of other nations.

Now, an NBC team came here the other day and reported all kinds of nonsense. You know what the object of that was? They believe in but two terms and they had heard that the President of Liberia had had six terms and that the people were asking him to take the seventh. They felt that by their propaganda they could change the people's mind. They can write anything they like; they can do anything they

like! But they cannot change the opinions and desires and will of the people of Liberia!

There is but one thing that they can do to stop it, and that is to use the bullet. They have done it in other places; and in those places where they did it there is now plenty of trouble, like in Indochina. Now let me stop quarreling.

### **"I am proud of my People"**

We are happy to have all of you here. We welcome you and we feel greatly humbled that so many of you, so many of our foreign friends, have come to do us honor on our 75th birthday. I have a lady friend who told me once, "Mr. President, there are two sets of people whom nobody respects and whom people don't like; they are the poor and the old." And that's generally true. But I don't know how at 75 they seem to like me. Perhaps it's because at 75 a man is not considered old. However, be it as it may, I am very grateful to the people of Liberia.

The only thing that I want to ask these foreign friends is to leave us alone. They have enough corruption, wickedness, and viciousness in their own kitchen and right at their front doors. Lawlessness! There is no law, there is no order! Anarchy prevails! And they talk one thing and do another. That's why our brothers in Sierra Leone say: "You make one side of the mouth call the other side liar." They made one side of the mouth call the other side liar! I am proud of Liberia; I am proud of the people of Liberia!

### **Diving among the sharks**

And when it comes to Harper City, I belong here so I can't say very much about it. This is where I grew up and pounced the Sheppard Lake. I used to chop crab in that lake. I used to go on the beach all along the coast, dive under water, fire dynamite to catch fish; while diving, sharks would come and we would go down to the bottom until the shark ate its part of fish and left; then we would come up again to catch our part of the fish and swim ashore.

The only fish that we ran away from were the barracuda and the grouper and we did all we could to get out of their way. For the other

fish must turn over to get you and, if you go down it has no chance to turn over. But the grouper and the barracuda don't have to turn over: so you had better get out of their way.. and we did!

I thank you very much again and congratulate you. Mr. Commissioner and the Freeman of the City of Harper. Continue the good work, I have heard although I have not seen it yet, that tremendous progress has been made in a relatively short time. Good for you. We give you a big hand of applause.

*Concluding his speech, President Tubman introduced to the audience Mr. Diallo Abdoulaye Portos, the Guinea Minister of Youth and leader of the three-man Guinean delegation attending the celebrations. With Mr. Portos standing next to him on the platform, President Tubman said:*

May I present to you at this time the representative of His Excellency President Sekou Toure of our sister State of Guinea whose country was recently attacked by dissident groups of Mercenaries. President Toure has sent him and two others to us to attend this occasion and to bring us a special message. We welcome them. Thank you.

*Culled from [allaboutliberia.com](http://allaboutliberia.com).*

*From Siahyonkron Nyanseor's Archive*