

Speech by Theodore Roosevelt

Analysis of the speech "Duties of American Citizenship"

The speech by Theodore Roosevelt is important in creating awareness among the American citizens on the roles and responsibilities they have towards their country. Politics has always been considered to belong to a certain category of people and therefore making many people not to want its active participation. It is not considered by many American citizens to be an evil that only those willing to compromise on their values can participate in. Roosevelt however insists on the fact that politics is part of every citizen and those who shun it are mere pretenders who are not concerned about the welfare of the people. I found this speech so educative and wish that every American citizen would read it. The speech is one piece of writing that views politics as a duty, which should concern every American citizen. It is unfortunate that many people tend to shun away from politics yet they are the first to complain especially when things are not working out well.

Apart from the right of voting and choosing a leader, every citizen has a right to influence the destiny of American politics in many ways. I loved the fact that Roosevelt mentioned that one does not need to hold a political position to influence the political climate of America. This implies that political leadership is not about political position but rather influencing people to make the right decisions for the leadership of the nation (Shklar 24). By this, Roosevelt implies that a person can influence change by their personal action of not accepting or giving bribes, praying for the well being of the nation, supporting those in leadership positions, speaking out on poor governance and participating in the very responsibility of choosing leaders. Some of the people who desire political power do not necessarily have the needs of the country at heart. They mainly seek for such positions to gratify their personal needs, which may not work for the good of the nation or even for their own good. In an instance a person wants political leadership simply because they want to gain control of a certain region or people, they will realise once they are on the seat that it is not that easy. As they will be busy pursuing their selfish needs, they will be encountered by other challenges, which will require their attention. However, since they were not passionate about such responsibilities, they wear off and therefore not being able to serve their people effectively. This in most cases leads to people complaining of not being adequately represented, unequal development projects and claiming how a particular leader changed once they came into power.

It is a high time that people learn not to be moved by the seductions of aspiring political leaders who promise more than they can deliver. The fact is that a person who is passionate about change in their surrounding will not wait to have a political position. Even in their ordinary state, they will aspire to venture into smaller projects to empower the people. Every great and successful political leader started serving his people at their small level. They influenced change right from their college level until they did not have to struggle to be in leadership. Just as Roosevelt, I dream of a land where a person will not have to campaign to convince people of his political prowess. We need to reach a place where as a country, people commend us unanimously to be leaders

because we have shown such qualities.

We need to reach a point as a country where we are sought for offices when it comes to leadership. This is should not be because we have been so much verbearly lured but that the actions of individual people have proved to us that

we have more capable people than we can imagine. This should not be based on their racial inclination, political parties, level of education or status in society. As a matter of fact, there are many good leaders within such diversified groups yet we are so much tied to political parties and level of education that we never realise what we are missing (Roosevelt 5). Since we are a people of diversified backgrounds and communities, we will definitely require

such diversification in order to succeed as a country.

If for instance we say that we only need post graduates to lead us, how will those who have acquired minimum education

meant to relate with the result should be noted that for people to feel well represented, a leader must have the ability

to empathise with their situation and ultimately deliver them from it. An educated person may not be able to speak a

language that the least educated person can speak. There will also be a clash on interests and therefore creating a big gap.

This is the same with the rich and the poor. Sometimes, some of the ambitions that political leaders have which they require the participation of the people may be quite ridiculous. A leader cannot for example venture into an expensive

project among the poor people and expect them to fund it. This is because such people are struggling to put food on their

table and may not necessarily have extra funds to fund the project. It will however be reasonable if such a leader encouraged people to pull their resources together and think of ways of uplifting their living.

The reason why there is unequal development in the country even many years after independence is because of poor leadership

strategies. Most of the leaders that are voted in mainly go in because they want power or want to fulfil personal goals.

They may not even know what the needs of the people are and even if they know it may not bother them much. They will

instead focus on what brought them into leadership and forget why they were voted in. It is unfortunate that even after

several frustrations that the people of America have been exposed to in terms of poor leadership; they still make the same

mistakes by voting in the wrong people. They are deceived by improperly coined manifestos most of which are clearly ridiculous.

The excitement they have on what they hear makes them fall victims to such bad leadership.

Another important highlight of the speech was on those who claim that politics is some sought of evil

of which spiritual people are not supposed to engage in. Despite the fact that politics has its own ways of negatively influencing people, that is a personal decision that a person should never blame on politics. The need to walk contrary

to one's set principles emerges when a person was influenced by external rather than internal forces to join politics.

Wherever there was pressure involved to pursue political power, a person is haunted by such influences to fulfil their

personal needs. For instance, some people find themselves in positions of leadership simply because they were pushed in

by people from their communities (Roosevelt 10). They even guarantee such a person the numbers that he or she will need

to clinch the position. In such cases, the agenda of joining politics is not with such an individual person but rather with the people that pushed them into it.

Once they are there, they will also be forced to act according to their influence since they did not have a specific agendas for the community. Surprisingly, most of the people that fall victims to such influences are people of high moral values. They get in thinking they are doing a favour to the people who influenced them into positions not realising that it is a trap that has been set against them. They are hence intimidated and made to engage in evils just to please those who advised them to join politics. There are however few leaders who have stood the test of time

since they knew why they pursued leadership positions. They do not allow the dirty side of politics to influence their principles and instead use their positions positively to impart their communities.

The fact is that politics never make a person bad, on the contrary it is people who make politics to be bad. The influence and power that comes through politics makes people desire to be part of politics, compared to other careers that require certain abilities, anybody who know how to twist his words and influence people by their speech can become a politician. Politics is one of the careers that directly engage people. Some people who do not have the necessary qualification to pursue a career or are in need of quick money consider this as an escape goat. Apart from few

positions that require a person to have attained certain levels of education, some positions can be pursued by anybody

that people feel has what it requires to be a leader (Sklar 65). These are some of the considerations that have polluted

politics.

Finally, what Roosevelt points out is the fact that politics is not for a few selected people but for every person.

A person should never be discouraged to think that they are too irrelevant or unqualified to shape the political climate of the land. They do not have to wait for a political position to influence the people. After all, there is a lot of competition especially for the winning people who feel they have adequate support. The ordinary once may never get to shape

the country if they have to wait for such positions. However, when a person knows what needs to be done then they will

not have to wait for a specific position to do so. The change that is required by a nation lies with every person irrespective of his or her age, status or even level of education. One can start being a leader in their small environment

such as family, school or even their small group of friend. Once such strong leadership foundations are set, the country

will not face a leadership deficit in the near future.

Works cited

Roosevelt, Theodore. "The Duties of American Citizenship." Address to the Liberal Club, Buffalo, NY, Jan 26.1893 (1967): 3-16.

Shklar, Judith N. American citizenship: The quest for inclusion. Harvard University Press, 1991.

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