

**Remarks of
The Honorable Carl Albert,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Dedicating the Start of the Restoration of Honeyshuck
July 7, 1973**

Thanks to your very distinguished Congressman, the Honorable William L. Hungate, "Honeyshuck," Bowling Green, Missouri, tonight becomes a national shrine. The city that gave Champ Clark to America now joins one of his successors, Bill Hungate, in preserving important vestiges of the home and community life of this twentieth century giant. By this action, you honor the memory of a man who in his life so highly honored you.

This shrine brings closer the graphic view of the life and works of a Missouri statesman who literally changed the course of American history. In generations to come, Honeyshuck will join Mount Vernon and Monticello as a source of inspiration to all who are devoted to the American way of life.

I am the present occupant of the office which Champ Clark helped to immortalize and so it is appropriate that I be here. Only one other man living today has held this office. You will pardon a personal reference, however, if I tell you that this is not just another official and passing ceremonial event for me. I do not come here simply because I am one of the successors in office to Champ Clark. I come here as one who has had life long inspiration from Champ Clark's service. You honor me by inviting me to take part in this dedication. I cannot begin to express to you the thoughts which the events of this day have stirred in me.

I have long been a Champ Clark fan. He has been in my life ever since I was a small boy in a two-room country school in Bug Tussle, Oklahoma. My thoughts have gone back hundreds of times to one of my teachers there. His name was Robert M. Craighead. He was from Callaway County, Missouri. He was a constituent and personal admirer and friend of the great man from Bowling Green. His accounts of the triumphs of Champ Clark, a boy who lost his mother before he was old enough to remember her tender caresses and who, like Lincoln, had been born in an unpainted Kentucky cabin, kindled in me sparks of inspiration that have never died.

The House of Representatives in which Champ Clark served and in which I serve was established by the founding fathers as the people's branch of the government. Indeed, Alexander Hamilton, who had little faith in the capacity of the people to govern themselves, once pointed to the House and said, "There, sir, the people rule." Thomas Jefferson had abiding faith in the capacity of the people for self-government, and Champ Clark was a Jeffersonian Democrat. Of the great modern Speakers who had preceded him, his Speakership was by far the most democratic.

The House of Representatives – important to the people from the early days of the Republic – is more important now than every before. This country, in the course of its national existence, has moved from an essentially agricultural society to a very complex industrial society. It has changed from a nation isolated from the rest of the world to one of undisputed world

leadership. Our national government has changed from a relatively simple structure to a vast organization that touches every phase of American life and every single American citizen.

Yet in all this governmental structure, under our Constitution a seat in the House of Representatives is the only national office or position that can be attained only by popular election. Federal judges are appointed; in case of vacancy, Senators may receive their seats by gubernatorial appointment; Presidents may ascend to the office by succession. Representatives in the Congress, however, can obtain their positions only by election of the people.

The House of Representatives is the one place in government where members must answer directly and frequently to the people. In my judgment, the two-year term for Representatives is the most important single safe-guard of our democracy. It would be convenient for Members of Congress to have longer terms. Both President Johnson and President Nixon recommended four-year terms for Representatives. In each instance, the leadership of the House, both Democratic and Republican, turned them down.

Champ Clark belonged to the House. Upon the death of Senator William Stone, Governor Gardner of Missouri offered him an appointment to the Senate, and like Speaker Charles F. Crisp of Georgia before him, he turned it down. He understood the House of Representatives and realized its preeminent importance in the federal structure. The great Speakers have all been staunch advocates of the House and of the Speakership. Sam Rayburn used to say he would rather be Speaker than forty Senators. In the opinion of Sam Rayburn, no public office offered greater opportunity for service than a dedicated career in the House of Representatives.

Champ Clark believed it was the duty of every Congressman to represent his district and to serve the interests of his constituents. Even after he became the most prominent Speaker since Henry Clay, he never did forget that he was Congressman from the 9th District of Missouri. He worked at the problems of his constituency with the same zeal, energy and concern with which he approached the most pressing problems of state. In his book, *My Quarter Century in American Politics*, he gives the finest account of the manner in which Congressmen who served with him were called upon to do "the chores of their office."

Champ Clark looked upon Congressional service as a professional occupation. He once said, "The truth is being more and more realized by the public that, other things being equal, the value of the Representative increases in proportion to the length of service. A man must learn to be a farmer, carpenter, blacksmith, merchant, engineer, lawyer, doctor, preacher or anything else. The best plan for a constituency to pursue is to select a man of good sense, good habits, and perfect integrity, young enough to learn, and reelect him so long as he retains his faculty and is faithful to his trust. Such a man grows into power and high position as surely as the sparks fly upward."

This 9th Congressional District of Missouri is one of the rare districts of the nation. Except for a brief interlude of two years following the Harding landslide, it has only had three Congressmen in 80 years. The first of them, Champ Clark, was elected when he was 42 years old; the second, Clarence Cannon, was elected when he was 43 years old; the third, Bill Hungate, was elected

when he was 41 years old. But this is only a small part of the story. With one of the greatest Speakers in the nation's history in Champ Clark, with the strongest Appropriations Committee Chairman of all time in Clarence Cannon, with a brilliant rising star in the House of Representatives in Bill Hungate, this has been the best represented Congressional District in the United States in this century.

Champ Clark was not only a great Congressman: he must be ranked as one of the greatest Speakers of all time. He understood the Speakership as well as any man who ever held the office. In his own words, "The Speakership is the hardest office in the world to fill, and the hardest to get." In the line of succession and protocol it ranks behind the Vice Presidency. In the power and importance of the office, it ranks second only to the Presidency itself.

The impact of Speakers is often as important and sometimes more important than that of the Presidents who serve with them. This was true of Clay, Reed, Cannon, Clark, Rayburn, and many others. Even when his own party is in power, the Speaker is the head of the people's branch of the government: he is not a lieutenant of the President. Sam Rayburn made this clear to me. I recall that a Democratic cabinet officer was sponsoring a bill which Mr. Speaker Rayburn thought unwise. After he had talked with Speaker Rayburn about the bill, the Speaker said the House would not pass the bill as written. The cabinet member responded: "I hate to have to go tell the President what you have told me." Rayburn declared firmly: "It does not make any difference what you tell the President of the United States. I have served with eight Presidents. I have not served under any."

When he first took office on April 11, 1911, Champ Clark said, "Election to the high Speaker's position is an exceptional honor for which you have my profound gratitude."

The singular privilege of being elected Speaker of the House of Representatives has come to only 47 men since the first Congress met in 1789. Only five Speakers have represented districts west of the Mississippi River: Clark, David B. Henderson, John Nance Garner, Rayburn, and myself.

Champ Clark must be ranked with Rayburn, McCormick, and Joe Cannon as one of four great Speakers in this century. The statistics of his record in the House of Representatives sound like those of a legislative Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth combined.

He was one of only three men who served eight years or more as Speaker. He tied Joe Cannon for continuous service in office. He was second only to Henry Clay in total service. He was the only man in history to have been elected Speaker when the opposition party was in control of the House. He was the first Speaker ever to be nominated for his first term by a unanimous vote of his party caucus. He was the only Speaker whose inaugural speech became the basis of his party's platform and, in fact, a State of the Nation address. He was the only Speaker since Henry Clay to develop in the House of Representatives the issues upon which his party came to power. At the Baltimore convention in 1912, he was by far the overwhelming favorite of his party and had a clear majority for the nomination on eight ballots. Under modern Democratic

Convention Rules he would have defeated Woodrow Wilson for the nomination on an early ballot and, with the Republican Party divided, he would have become President.

But statistics do not really tell the Champ Clark story. The impact he had upon the House of Representatives and on the nation earned him his high place in history.

To understand the revolution which Champ Clark brought about in the House requires a brief account of two great Republican Speakers under whom he served. One was Thomas B. Reed of Maine. The other was Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois.

Reed was the first great rules reformer of the House. Clark admired him more than he admired any other Speaker. Clark wrote of him: "In the Fifty-first Congress that masterful great man, Mr. Thomas Brackett Reed, wrought a far reaching revolution in parliamentary procedure." He established the count for a quorum in the House and thereby killed a form of House filibuster. Speaker Reed ruled that when a member was present on the floor he was going to count him present whether he answered the roll call or not. This rule was upheld by the Supreme Court and has been a standing rule of the House ever since.

Starting with this ruling, Mr. Reed launched upon a course of expanding the powers of the Speaker until he became a virtual legislative Czar. Indeed he was called Czar Reed. Joe Cannon built upon the Reed rules and became the undisputed power center and power source in the House of Representatives. He ran the House with an iron hand and was known as Czar Cannon. He appointed all members to all committees. No important bills from legislative committees could be considered without a resolution from the Rules Committee. As Speaker, Cannon was also Chairman of the Rules Committee and appointed its members. He became the most powerful and uncompromising office holder in the nation and the House virtually lost its status as a democratic body and became subject to one man rule.

Champ Clark led the fight against Cannonism and the concentration of almost unlimited power in the Speaker. This was a formidable task when he undertook it. His party was in the minority and his efforts were thwarted at every turn by Speaker Cannon. Under Champ Clark's leadership all Democrats in the House and a group of dissident Republicans organized to throw out the Cannon Rules. George Norris of Nebraska was the leader of the Republican rebels. He became one of America's most famous men and a long time United States Senator from Nebraska for having offered the resolution that sounded the death knell of Cannonism. He got the major credit for it, but Clark was the leader of the movement, and the resolution which Norris offered was written by Oscar Underwood who became Clark's Majority Leader. The work was really done by Champ Clark and his lieutenants, but they bowed out of the limelight and let the Republican renegades get the credit in order to get them to support the resolution.

This resolution took the Speaker off the Committee on Rules. It provided for the election of members to all standing committees by the House after nomination by the Committee on Committees. It did more to strengthen the independence of members of the House and to make the House truly the people's branch of government than anything that had been done since the Constitutional Convention.

When Champ Clark became Speaker he lived by the rules he had caused to be established as Minority Leader. He was the first Speaker in modern history who did not seek to enhance the Speaker's powers. He was the first to recognize the rights of the minority and of individual members of the House. He was the first to use the caucus instead of the Speaker's Rooms to make legislative policy. His tremendous legislative record as one of the outstanding Speakers of all time was complete proof that a man to be a great leader did not need to be a dictator.

The Clark reform movement swept the nation and almost swept him into the White House. It carried the Democrats into complete control of both Houses of Congress and into the Presidency. For the first time since Henry Clay, the issues which led a party to victory were developed in the House of Representatives and not by party caucuses or vested interests across the land.

Whenever Champ Clark took the chair he always dropped the cloak of partisanship and became the Speaker of the House and not just the Leader of his Party. Speaker Frederick H. Gillette who defeated Champ Clark for the Speakership in 1919 said at Speaker Clark's funeral services: "I have served here under five Speakers: Crisp, Reed, Henderson, Cannon, Clark - all men of great ability, men of striking qualities, for all of whom I have great admiration and regard. Yet above them all, it seems to me, in an impartial construction of the rules, in the power of setting aside partisanship and standing forth as the judge, Mr. Clark was preeminent."

Speaker Clark also gave evidence of his patriotism and his greatness in his cooperation with the man who had literally snatched the Presidency from his grasp in Baltimore in 1912. He worked with Woodrow Wilson in the implementation of every important program during his administration. He took the lead in the Constitutional amendment providing for the direct election of United States Senators. He pushed through the House of Representatives the first major congressional campaign reforms in history. These were his objectives when he picked up the gavel; they were his accomplishments when he stepped down.

He was the legislative leader of the nation in the dark days of the First World War, and to the successful conclusion of that war he devoted his great talents of leadership.

Here in this small Missouri City, in this small rural county whose fertile fields are nestled in the valley of the great Father of Waters, once lived and loved and worked one of America's great noblemen. A disciple of Thomas Jefferson, he made the people's branch of government a living example of Jeffersonian Democracy in action in a parliamentary body. He brought the House of Representatives into the Twentieth Century.

The scenes that he cherished here we preserve to be cherished by all. Honeyshuck is a national shrine because Champ Clark lived there. We dedicate it to the life he lived, the things he did to preserve for ourselves and for our children the hope and promise of America.

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