

THE HOLIDAY SEASON--A TIME OF REFLECTION AND HOPE

For my wife and children and myself 1961 has been a year of change, and a year of challenge. A Christmas holiday season in Washington--far from home and friends--is for us a constant reminder of that change.

We represent a wonderful state and we are proud to be a small part of the parliament of the most free and powerful nation the world has ever known. We all hope--with you--that 1962 will bring the people of our country and the world closer to the peace which we annually herald in song and pageant.

Here in Washington, as in Arizona, there is much hustle and bustle in preparation for the season of Christmas, New Year and Hanukkah. Many people criticize the overly commercial aspects of the season--and with good reason. But behind all this external display there is something significant that makes this season an important expression of the human spirit.

Through the year we sometimes feel devoid of direction and purpose. When the holidays come our lives suddenly acquire a purpose that is larger than ourselves. We find ourselves thinking of friends long forgotten, of loved ones long neglected, of neighbors long ignored. Strangely, through thinking of others, we seem to emerge with new hope for ourselves. This is the perennial mystery of the holiday season.

As a lawmaker, I'm glad to say that Christmas is a matter left untouched by the Congress of the United States. However, the New England colonies once forbade Christmas celebrations. And President Theodore Roosevelt, an ardent conservationist, once banned the use of evergreens in the White House, though his edict didn't last long. Two of the president's sons smuggled a tree to their room and, when it was discovered, a friend convinced Mr. Roosevelt that proper cutting of evergreens would not destroy our forests. There have been Christmas trees in the White House ever since. Alabama was the first state to make Christmas a legal holiday. All the other states and territories followed suit.

I have enjoyed communicating through these newsletters with a broad cross-section of Arizonans. May I use this one to express to you on behalf of myself, my wife, my children and my staff our best wishes for a happy holiday season. Our feelings are best expressed by a noted New York Times editorial of December 25, 1937:

"We hear the beating of wings over Bethlehem and a light that is not of the sun or of the stars shines in the midnight sky. Let the beauty of the story take away all narrowness, all thought of formal creeds. Let it be remembered as a story that has happened again and again, to men of many different races, that has been expressed through many religions, that has been called by many different names. Time and space and language lay no limitation on human brotherhood."



Hervey Gedee