

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Delegate Juanita Jackson Mitchell.

*(Applause.)*

DELEGATE MITCHELL: Mr. President and fellow delegates: This is a great day. But it is not a day of triumph. Rather it is a day of rededication to the enduring principles on which our nation was founded.

One hundred years ago in this same State House the Constitution was adopted which precluded the people of this State who were members of the Negro race from voting. But today we have adopted a Constitution which expressly prohibits discrimination by the State on account of race, color, religion or national origin.

Further, this Constitution is vital proof that free men in a democracy, free men and women of purpose and good will, in the perilous and challenging times in which we find ourselves, can act with courage, speed and wisdom in meeting the needs of the people who are determined to live under a system of just laws.

We have forged here a document which is more than a statement of fundamental law. It is a symbol of our unity and our allegiance to the highest American political tradition of equality and justice. It presents an improved structure of the political system of our State, which is essentially to preserve liberty.

Importantly, we have provided here for the maximum participation of the people in their governing, and for keeping the government close to the people. And we have faced the necessity of making the law so clear that even the most humble will understand that it is designed to be their protector, not their oppressor.

In a diverse group of citizens which included a cross section of the population of this State there arose questions on which the delegates differed. Some proposals were included or excluded to the disappointment of their advocates, who sincerely believed them to be vital and important. Nevertheless, out of the careful study by each delegate, the unfettered and fair debate by all who wished to be heard, we have forged a new constitution that has commanded the support of the overwhelming majority of the delegates. The majority has spoken, and in our nation, that is the will of this assembly.

In this document there is to be found the common group on which all of us, the

weak and the strong, the poor and the rich, the black and the white, the believer and the non-believer, can march forward together in progress in this State, toward our duties of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As we sign this document we are confident that we have given our State an instrument of governance which is not only mindful of the needs of our time, but which has its eyes on the future of our children and our children's children.

But the drafting is only half the job, and we pledge today our best efforts to the education of the people of this State who have sent us here to know what we have done. We are confident that on May 14 when this Constitution becomes the law of Maryland, we will have given our State a shield for the defense of sacred rights and a sword to strike down the encroachments of tyranny.

But more than this, our State will set an inspiring example for all of its sisters in the Union. America, America, God shed His Grace on thee. Confirm Thy good in brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

*(The Convention rose and applauded.)*

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Delegate Carlton R. Sickles.

*(Applause.)*

DELEGATE SICKLES: Mr. President:

When I come up to sign, my head will swim with memories of this Convention—of my own impatience and of your persistence; of quorum calls and calls from home; of camera clicks and microphone squeals; of whispers from the walls and shouts in this hall. And I shall walk with pride, because we have done well.

Each generation makes some contribution to its country, and this generation in Maryland will list as one of its major accomplishments this Constitution and its fruits. This accomplishment is no accident. Each delegate contributed freely of his talents—some by experience, some by enthusiasm, some by words; and yes, some by silence.

We were tempted to be political, but we were not. We were urged to be parochial, but we were not. We were sought to protect special interests, but we did not. While constantly reminded of a yesterday that never really was, we dreamt of a tomorrow that just must be.

While this is an end, it is but another chapter in the saga of this Constitution of