

Musikkhøyskolen  
1. desember 1989

Med forbehold om endringer  
SPERRET til kl. 09.00

Statsminister  
Jan P. Syse

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FULBRIGHT-HAYS PROGRAM

Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To most of us, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Fulbright-Hays Program means more than taking part in a historical event. It rather means re-living an important personal experience.

Growing up as youngsters in the immediate post-war period, we centered our hopes for a better world on American-inspired initiatives like the Nato Pact, the Marshall Plan, and the Fulbright Program. They became household words to us, in their different ways, cornerstones for peace, prosperity and progress.

40 years later they still inspire such feelings: not as relics of the past, but as initiatives and institutions for present-day needs. Freedom of government, freedom of choice and freedom of ideas. What the Fulbright Program has meant for my own country is stated in the simple facts that the Senator was made a commander in the Order of St. Olav in 1960, and that he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Trondheim in 1982.

We are all familiar with the scope of the Program. It offers Fulbright awards for Norwegian - and American - researchers, teachers and students, to carry out scholarly work in the other country, at institutions of higher education. As some of you may know, I recently have taken an interest in the Program as a father, since my younger son has obtained a Fulbright Award. So I am glad to hear that he is in Boston carrying out scholarly work. I became a little worried the other day, when a Norwegian magazine told me that he would like to test his abilities as a stand-up comedian. It sounded like the young man was thinking of going into politics!

Looking back, and looking ahead, that's what anniversaries are for. What has been achieved? And, where do we go from here? I think it is right to say that the ideas on which the Fulbright Program was built, back in the forties, have succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. These forty years were also the period of cold war, of an iron curtain dividing east and west. It was, underneath the military containment, a silent struggle between two contrasting and conflicting ideas of government.

And then, suddenly, the walls are coming tumbling down across Europe. They are coming down because the ideas of freedom have proved the stronger. Not only that the market economy, based on the freedom to choose, has proved stronger than the centralised state-planned economy. But even more because all nations are demanding the same rights: the right to speak and vote freely, the right of travelling freely, and the free exchange of ideas. Which is the core of the Fulbright Program.

In a narrow sense the Program was based on an idea of mutual intellectual enrichment, and, even narrower, it was a generous one-sided American gift to other nations, regardless of whether we were able to pay back equally. A lend-lease program for poorer countries not in weapons this time, but in scientific research.

(At least it was very one-sided in the beginning. The most memorable Norwegian contribution I can find in the papers is that the first scientist to land on the moon - dr. Harrison Hagen Schmitt - came to Oslo to study geology. He was obviously finding Norway a good testing ground.)

But in a wider context - and I think the Program must be looked at in this wider context - it has upheld and strengthened a free flow of ideas, which is not only the basis for democracy, but also the basis for peace between nations. Consequently today's seminar will be dealing with "the effects of glasnost on the international intellectual climate". As I see it, the Fulbright Program has been in glasnost for forty years. It will therefore have major contributions to give in the years ahead, as it has done in the past.

I congratulate the Foundation with its great achievements so far, and wish it the best of luck.