

PRIME MINISTER  
TRYGVE BRATTELI

Speech by Prime Minister Trygve Bratteli at the  
Banquet given by Nordmanns-Forbundet and Sons of  
Norway. Fargo/Moorhead, October 15th, 1975.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for my wife and myself to be visiting you here in Fargo and Moorhead to take part in the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of Norwegian Immigration into the United States.

I want to express our sincere thanks to Governor Arthur Link for his most kind words of welcome tonight. Our sincere thanks also to Vice-Consul Chester Serkland and Mrs. Serkland for their preparation of an interesting programme for us in this part of the Upper Midwest. This region, as you know, is historically such a vital center of Norwegian settlements in America. We know, that many others have given of their time and efforts to make this a stimulating experience for us. Our heartfelt thanks go to one and all of you.

His Majesty, the King of Norway, is presently touring the United States to attend celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the Norwegian immigration. The King would have liked to visit all centres of Americans of Norwegian heritage. But he was soon forced to conclude that he could not do so without spending

several months in the United States.

However, the King has instructed me to bring to you here tonight his best personal greetings and his congratulations on the 150th Anniversary of the Norwegians in America. To this, I am happy to add the greetings and the congratulations of the Government of Norway.

"Gratulerer med jubileet!", as we say in Norwegian.

What we are actually celebrating this year is the sailing across the Atlantic of the small sloop "Restauration" in 1825 with the first group of Norwegian immigrants on board. The event was hardly noticed at the time when the sloop departed from Stavanger. Today, we know that it was the start of a mass migration. The next 100 years brought some 800 000 Norwegians to seek new and better lives on the largely unexplored and rapidly developing continent of North America. Other European nations, like Germany, Italy, Poland and Russia, saw even greater numbers of their citizens leave for the United States. But second to Ireland no other country gave such a large proportion of its population to America as Norway did. Still, the population remaining in Norway increased strongly during that same period. From 1815 to 1865, for instance, Norway's population nearly doubled.

Despite the fact that Norway at that time was thinly populated - and still is - it was over-populated in terms of economic opportunities offered to its citizens. It was not until industrialization started on a major scale by the entrance to the Twentieth

Century that the economic situation gradually improved. To some degree, Norway through a large part of the Nineteenth Century was in a situation similar to that of the developing nations of our modern world. But the Norwegians had one escape route which is closed to most of the poor and the overpopulated countries of today. They had the escape route of emigration. And America at that time needed exactly what they offered:: land-hungry farmers and job-hungry artisans.

Thus, Norwegian emigration to America to a large extent became a migration from the poorer classes of the people. The established society in Norway at the time, warned very strongly against the adventure of emigration. To leave Norway was sometimes presented as an un-patriotic act.

But there were people who saw migration in a broader perspective. A pioneer of the Norwegian labour movement, Marcus Thrane, at the middle of the Nineteenth Century became a leading advocate of emigration. He was searching a world where poor people by their own work were able to create a decent livelihood for themselves and their families. Norway, from his point of view, was stale in its social and economic structure and dogmatic in its political philosophy.

Marcus Thrane himself emigrated to America in 1863 after having spent four years in prison for his political activities. However, he remained a radical lecturer and publisher, mostly in Chicago, until his death in 1890.

Norway has changed fundamentally in social and economic structure since the days of Marcus Thrane.



His successors in the labour movement take some pride in the fact that it has fallen upon them to carry through many of the reforms which have changed the society. But let me also stress that the social, economic and political reforms have generally rested on a broad consensus among our political parties.

Today's industrialized Norway of four million people is thinly populated compared with other countries and compared with its economic potential. Under normal economic conditions on world markets, we have a shortage of labour. Today there are more Americans settling in Norway than there are Norewegians emigrating to the United States. But, of course, the number going in each direction is quite insignificant compared to the mass migration in the 19th century.

Since the turn of the century Norway has become a highly industrialized country with a very diversified economy. Hydro-electric power and the processing of our natural resources such as wood, ores, minerals and fish, together with shipping, gave the starting point of our industrial development. Later, more advanced industrial articles and skilled labour became the basis for further progress. This development has been closely integrated with the world economy. Our total exports amount to almost 50 per cent of domestic production. For the United States this figure is about 5 per cent.

Now, oil and gas from Norway's continental shelf in the North Sea, have been added to our economic assets. We are in the process of becoming an oil-exporting nation. Every care will be taken to assure a

controlled and prudent exploitation of these new resources. It is assumed that the exports of oil and gas in early 1980's will be of a size equal to our shipping earnings abroad and/<sup>to</sup>total exports of commodities.

Let me in the end return to our 150th Anniversary. From a Norwegian point of view, the emigration of 800 000 of our citizens meant a loss of human resources. To the New World it meant a significant contribution to the building of America. What we see every reason to celebrate is the existence in America of a sizeable group of people of Norwegian origin. They have meant so much for the development of close and friendly relations between our two nations. In fact, Norway has enjoyed more intimate ties of family bonds and personal friendship with the United States than with any other country in the world.

At a time of history when our two nations have been brought into closer cooperation than ever before, in the field of economy, security and cultural exchange, the innumerable ties of family and friendship have taken on added importance. Americans of Norwegian origin may very well see a reason for observing the 150th Anniversary, in that it gives an opportunity to reaffirm your common heritage. Good Norwegians have become good Americans. They have remained good Norwegians in the sense that they have contributed the best of Norwegian values to the building of America. It may be, as Professor Einar Haugen of Harvard University has said, that "the achievements of the Norwegians in America have been more solid than dramatic." This may be true also for today's Norway. It is "more

solid than dramatic" in its prosperity and prospects.

In any case, the wish of Norwegian-Americans to cultivate their common heritage has the understanding and the encouragement of the Norwegian people.

A token of this support is the decision of our Storting to grant money for a 150 Anniversary Scholarship Fund to bring American scholars and students of Norwegian descent to Norway.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to the many who have been so active in preparing the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary here in Fargo and Moorhead.

On behalf of all Norwegians, I extend my most heartfelt thanks to all of you.