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# Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Collections

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*Am. Legion*

Mylio S. Kraja  
Executive Director, Washington Office  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

Mylio S. Kraja has been Executive Director of The American Legion's Washington Office since July 1, 1981, where he is responsible for the day-to-day operations of 80 employees of the national organization who deal with veterans affairs and rehabilitation, economics, national security and foreign relations issues, legislative affairs and public relations. He shares the No.2 position on the paid staff of the Legion's national headquarters with a similar officer in Indianapolis.

Kraja, a Navy veteran of World War II, joined the national staff of The American Legion in 1974 when he became aide to the 57th National Commander, James M. Wagonseller of Ohio. The following year, he moved to the Washington area and became the Legion's principal legislative spokesman as Director of the National Legislative Commission. Among the achievements he participated in were the return of Veterans Day to its traditional date of November 11 and passage of the Veterans and Survivors Pension Improvement Act of 1978 (PL 95-588).

Born on July 24, 1920, in Youngstown, Ohio, Kraja received his early education there and attended Indiana University until World War II interrupted his studies. After the war, he attended Marquette University where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1947.

Following college, he worked in printing and publishing, rising to vice president of his company in Youngstown. In 1968, he became an investment broker and a registered representative of the New York Stock Exchange. When he joined the Legion staff as National Commander's aide in 1974, he was branch manager of a stock brokerage firm in New Castle, Pennsylvania.

Active in governmental affairs and community projects in Youngstown, Kraja was appointed to numerous local positions and served on many local boards. He served three terms as president of the Red Feather agency in Youngstown, a community supported charitable organization equivalent to the United Appeal, and worked closely with the problems of immigrants, displaced persons and other new arrivals to this country in adapting to America and achieving citizenship.

Kraja joined American Legion Post No. 15 in Youngstown in 1946 and served as Post Commander and District Commander before being elected Commander of The American Legion Department of Ohio in 1959. He was also a member of the Elks, Lions Club, Rotary Club and Theta Chi Fraternity. He was involved in the Boy Scout movement for over 25 years and is a recipient of one of scouting's highest honors, the Silver Beaver Award.

Kraja and his wife, the former Virginia Mikula of Milwaukee, live in Springfield, Virginia, and are the parents of two grown children.

For God and Country

**National Public  
Relations  
Division**

Wm. M. Detweiler, Chairman  
Frederick Woodress, Director

P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206  
(317)-635-8411

1608 K St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
(202)-861-2792

**NEWS RELEASE**

NEWS HOTLINE (800) 428-2686  
(INDIANA) (317) 637-6649

**CONTACT:** Bob Hermann/Washington

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SUBJECT SUMMARY:** The American Legion Pledges Support for Reagan  
Bipartisan Budget

WASHINGTON, D.C.--The American Legion advised the White House today that it will support President Reagan's bipartisan FY 1982 budget proposal in the House of Representatives because it is best for the country, even though it contains less funding in several areas of interest to its 2.7 million veteran members.

Legion Commander Michael J. Kogutek told the President's Assistant, Elizabeth Dole, that the additional defense funding in the altered budget is "vital to the security of the Nation" and must take precedence at this time.

With the dispatch of the letter to Mrs. Dole, Legion Headquarters began providing its leaders throughout the country in each State the details of the budget proposal.

The bipartisan recommendation to be introduced in the House by Representatives Phil Gramm (D. Tex.) and Delbert L. Latta (R. O.), satisfies a Legion mandate to increase defense outlays by at least 15 percent, and restores \$600 million to the Veterans Administration budget.

(end)

42481

*sent to  
Bill Gubbin  
Ann Fairbanks  
Don Moran*

*4/27/81*



*File*



For God and Country

*Budget Briefing*

**National Public  
Relations  
Division**

Wm. M. Detweiler, Chairman  
Frederick Woodress, Director

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**THE  
AMERICAN  
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(end)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Frank Manson  
128 D St. S.E.  
Wash. D. C. 20003

*File: American Legion*

STATEMENT BY FRANK MANSON

On 30 April 1981, I was called into the office of my superior, G. Michael Schlee, Director of National Security and Foreign Relations Division, and told to close the door.

"As of 1, April 1981 your employment with the American Legion is terminated 'for cause,'" said Schlee. "The cause is your political activities. You have violated the Constitution of the American Legion. Also your relationship with certain members of the staff have not been the best. That is a secondary cause. The primary cause is your political activities."

I asked my associate Col. Samuel T. Dickens to come into Schlee's office as my witness. I asked Schlee to put in writing the "cause" of my termination. Schlee refused. Col. Dickens was asked to leave the room. He refused.

Subsequently, with Col. Dickens as my witness, I called Indianapolis, Indiana; American Legion Headquarters. A Mr. Caldwell in the office of the Personnel Director said he had just received a teletype communique' citing political activities, lack of harmony with some of the staff and my attendance of meetings on the Hill without authorization as the three causes of my termination. He also related that it had been discussed with National Adjutant, Frank Momsen, and that the termination would stand.

Col. Dickens and I then went to the Washington Director, Mr. Robert Spanogle and asked that the cause be put in writing. He refused the request, but said he would grant a post-termination hearing at 1 p.m., 6 April 1981. He also granted me a few extra hours beyond the previous interim of 25 hours to clear out my office. Spanogle made it clear that he fully supported Schlee's firing order.

I retained an attorney, Mr. Marion Harrison who is now handling the case with respect to all matters concerned, including the fact of their attempts to reach me through registered mail without dealing through my attorney, opening, reading and retaining mail addressed to me personally since my termination.

Subsequent to my termination, Spanogle contacted General Milnor Roberts, Executive Director of the Reserve Officer Association to ask why I was fired from the R.O.A. General Roberts corrected Spanogle, informing him of their desire to retain my services and concomitant inability to match the salary offered by the American Legion.

My associate on the staff, Col. Samuel T. Dickens USAF (Ret.) and a West Point graduate, resigned from the Legion in protest and as a matter of principle. His letter of resignation is on file with the Legion. It speaks for itself.

In conclusion, I have the highest regard for the 2.7 million members of the American Legion and the 1.3 million members of the Auxiliary. They represent the heart and soul of the United States. I believe in all the American Legion's Resolutions and Mandates from the Commissions, especially those which I have helped formulate on foreign policy. I sincerely hope that my termination will have no adverse effect on the positive force for good which The American Legion represents in the United States. To the few staff personnel who are deceiving and manipulating Legion members, and do not subscribe to the Legion mandates and resolutions. I reserve judgment.

Please mail letters to

Commander Michael J. Kogutak  
61 Leonard Street  
Lackawanna, N.Y. 14218



*file - American Legion*

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OF COUNSEL  
  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY\*  
PALM BEACH, FLORIDA\*\*  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY\*\*\*  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE\*\*\*\*

April 3, 1981

By hand

Mr. Robert W. Spanogle  
Executive Director  
Washington Office  
The American Legion  
1608 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20006

Re: Captain Frank A. Manson, USN, Retired

Dear Mr. Spanogle:

We represent Captain Frank A. Manson, Assistant Director for Foreign Relations, The American Legion.

Captain Manson has turned over to us the original of Mr. G. Michael Schlee's letter to him of March 30, 1981, purporting to terminate his employment with The American Legion effective April 1, 1981, and reciting no cause.

Captain Manson informs us that The American Legion has scheduled an informal conference or hearing on the matter for 1:00 PM, Monday, April 6. Unless The American Legion is prepared to detail the charges in writing and adequately in advance any such hearing at best would be nonproductive. Further, unless the parties are determined to litigate the matter there would be no point in a hearing. As you probably know, regardless of the content of the charges, if in fact there are any, the action touches broad political implications and already has triggered the interest of a number of Members of Congress. We doubt that protracted

Mr. Robert W. Spanogle  
April 3, 1981  
Page two

litigation, inevitably generating widespread attention to American Legion internal matters well beyond the confines of The American Legion staff, would be mutually beneficial.

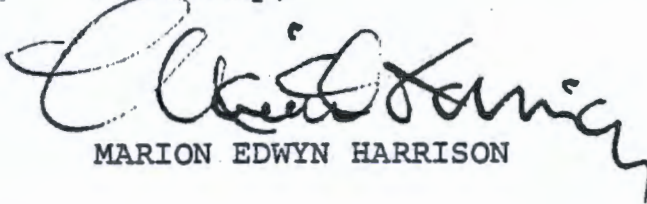
Presumably The American Legion has counsel experienced in litigation, and more particularly in the litigation of personnel matters. We request that such counsel contact us at his very earliest convenience.

Meantime, we are attempting to dissuade persons interested in this matter from expressing any public view. Confidential rational discussion between experienced counsel ought to result in an amicable resolution.

In view of the arbitrary purported deadline set forth in Mr. G. Michael Schlee's referenced letter of March 30, 1981 we suggest that you forthwith contact your counsel.

Our client fully reserves his rights in the premises.

Sincerely,



MARION EDWYN HARRISON

MEH:kg  
cc Mr. Frank Momsen  
Mr. G. Michael Schlee



# The American Legion

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★  
(202) 393-4811 ★



*For God and Country*

April 7, 1981

Mr. Frank C. Momsen  
National Adjutant  
The American Legion  
P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206

Dear Frank,

I hereby tender my resignation as an employee of The American Legion, serving as Consultant, National Security/Foreign Relations, effective May 1, 1981.

During the fifteen months I will have been employed I have learned that the Legion is potentially an extraordinarily strong voice and influence for the nation's strength and well being. There is a reservoir of respect and admiration for The American Legion throughout the country. I have been pleased that I could play a part in developing an understanding among fellow Legionnaires of a number of critical foreign policy and national security issues facing our nation. The "rank and file" of The American Legion is "true blue," and in the center stream of the bed rock foundations which have made our country great. They have produced mandates in the areas of National Security/Foreign Relations which I strongly support. I do believe, however, that they could be more forcefully presented to the Congress, to other organizations in and out of government and to the American people. That is my opinion.

Recent events suggest that the role I have played has outlived its usefulness. There have been ever increasing pressures from management suggesting their preference for a low profile in many areas. That is not my nature. I am grateful for the latitude of initiative that has been offered me in the past in helping to identify and focus attention on national issues. It is obvious that by the pressures being exerted, some not so subtle, that those days are past.

I have been particularly gratified to have worked closely with two gentlemen, distinguished in their own right. Dr. Robert Foster, Foreign Relations Commission Chairman, serves The American Legion outstandingly with an extraordinarily well founded background in Foreign Relations and with an unusual ability of communicating effectively and convincingly with fellow Legionnaires. A fellow associate of mine in my work, who I first met in February of 1980 and is now no longer with the Legion, Captain Frank



Manson, is one of the most distinguished naval officers I have ever met. As a naval historian, writer and confidant of several Chiefs of Naval Operations while on active duty, he brought a rare sense of duty, dedication and patriotism to his assignment as Counsellor for Foreign Relations. I had the privilege of working for and being directly associated with two National Commanders, Frank I. Hamilton and Michael J. Kogutec, both outstanding leaders of the Legion. I know The American Legion is in good hands when such outstanding leaders are developed by the Legion; dedicated, patriotic Americans.

I have been distressed with pressures placed upon me to conform to some sort of low profile. It has been suggested to me that I should be content with the status quo and not take too many initiatives. Other pressures have been by innuendo where there has been no opportunity to discuss the difficulties with the direct line of management. My past experience in previous work has been one of placing emphasis on discussion of problems prior to making decisions. Too many decisions in my case have been nothing short of edicts, allowing no discussion. For me this is intolerable and makes it impossible to remain working for the Legion.

Two incidents best illustrate the pressures. I testified before Congress in March of this year. This was at the request of a minority staffer working for a sub-committee in the House. I was not asked to tailor my remarks in any way, but it was known that the Legion had a mandate on the subject. Legion management criticized me over the cover sheet of my testimony which identified me as a Colonel, retired. I had made no input to the cover sheet prepared by the Legislative Division and those criticizing my identification by rank knew that I had had nothing to do with it. I was "grilled" as to why I had been asked to appear on two day's notice. (I was not complimented on my ability to be responsive with written testimony so rapidly.) Later I was asked to prepare a statement in writing as to why I had been identified by the staffer as a Director of the Council of Inter-American Security. (In fact I am a Director of this organization.) This matter was not discussed with me in a civil manner in which I could discuss or explain. I was peremptorily directed to prepare an answer, "in writing."

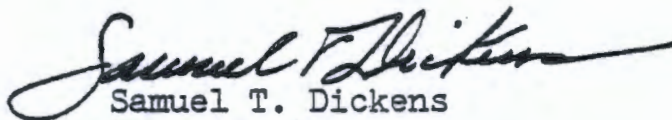
On April 1, 1981 I was called to the office of the Director, Washington Office, Robert Spanogle. My immediate supervisor, Michael Schlee, was present. I was told that it was no longer appropriate for me to appear as a witness for Frank Manson in any review of his case. I was told that I was an employee of The American Legion and that he was not. (Captain Frank Manson had asked me to be his witness, on short notice, the previous day when he had asked both Michael Schlee and Robert Spanogle, in turn, for a written explanation of the reasons for his separation from the Legion, "for cause." Both denied his request



with Robert Spanogle telling him that he would receive this information later, after his separation.) When asked if I intended to continue being Captain Frank Manson's witness I replied that I would make that decision at a later date. I was then immediately reminded that only the National Adjutant holds a contract for service in the employment of the Legion and all others served, essentially at his pleasure. I acknowledged that I understood that the Adjutant was responsible for "hiring and firing." There is no question in my mind that this action, taken by Robert Spanogle, was meant to intimidate me, since no other matters were discussed.

For these reasons I believe it is in my best interests to resign from my duties as an employee of The American Legion.

Sincerely,



Samuel T. Dickens  
Consultant  
National Security/  
Foreign Relations

# The American Legion

★ NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS ★ P. O. BOX 1055 ★ INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46206 ★  
(317) 635-8411 ★



OFFICE OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMANDER

July 7, 1981

Robert M. Garrick  
Rear Admiral, USNR (Ret.)  
Deputy Counsellor to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Admiral Garrick:

I enjoyed our visit the other day in your office. I am sending you our press kit with background on The American Legion with its 2.7 million members.

If you don't already subscribe to The American Legion Magazine, let me know and I will arrange for a complimentary subscription for you.

I am back here in Indianapolis to install Bob Spanogle, who recently headed our Washington Headquarters, as our new National Adjutant. Bob is the first Vietnam era veteran to hold the highest staff position in the Legion.

Thank you for your interest in our organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Kogutek".

MICHAEL J. KOGUTEK  
National Commander



**Preservation Copy**





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*Camera Reflections*

by

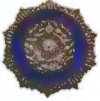
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# The American Legion

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N. W. ★ WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 ★  
(202) 393-4811 ★



OFFICE OF THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 3, 1981

Mrs. Elizabeth Dole  
Assistant to the President  
for Public Liaison  
The White House, West Wing  
Washington, D.C. 20500

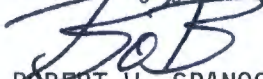
Dear Mrs. Dole:

For your information I have enclosed a press kit concerning The American Legion. This kit contains the following fact sheets: "The American Legion --- What It Is; What It Does; and Where It Stands On Current Issues." It also concerns itself with our programming events for children and youth, Americanism, energy, and other matters of great interest to The American Legion. I believe that after reviewing this material you will find The American Legion is not a "special interest" group, but one who is interested in all facets of American life.

Perhaps one item not explained in the fact sheets is our connection with the American Legion Auxiliary. While our Auxiliary of approximately one million members functions as an almost separate entity their legislative program parallels that of The American Legion and they are represented by American Legion lobbyists on Capitol Hill. Therefore, the legislative division of The American Legion represents 25,000 local units and posts of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary with a combined membership of 3.7 million.

Though I am sure you know much about The American Legion since your husband Senator Dole was and is an active member, of whom we are very proud, there might be some material enclosed which will provide you with additional information. Looking forward to seeing you, and with warmest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

  
ROBERT W. SPANOGLE  
Executive Director

Enclosure  
cc: Messrs. Blackwell, Valis

3/4

MICHAEL J. KOGUTEK  
NATIONAL COMMANDER  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
(Biographical Sketch)

Michael J. Kogutek, 54, of Lackawanna, N.Y., was elected National Commander of The American Legion at the closing session of the 62nd annual National Convention, Aug. 21, 1980.

Kogutek is the fourth New York Legionnaire to attain the post of National Commander. A veteran of the U.S. Navy with service in the South Pacific during World War II, he is a charter member of Lackawanna's Matthew Glab Post No. 1477 and was honored with life member status in 1965.

During his 34 years as a Legionnaire, Kogutek has steadily climbed the ranks of responsibility at all levels of The American Legion. In 1961-62 he was Commander of Post No. 1477, after having served in a variety of post positions. He was Erie County (N.Y.) adjutant prior to becoming County Commander in 1964-65 and was elected Eighth District Commander for 1966-67.

Kogutek was Commander of the Department of New York during The American Legion's golden anniversary in 1968-69. At the state level, he has served as chairman of special activities, resolutions, membership, convention arrangements and as a member of the National Executive Committee.

He is a past alternate National Executive Committeeman and currently is a member of the National Finance Commission and the Board of Directors of the National American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc. His previous national appointments include the National Economic Commission, National Veterans' Preference Committee and the National Economic Subcommittee for which he served as liaison with the Small Business Administration of the federal government.

Kogutek was born in Lackawanna, N.Y., Sept. 30, 1925, and was educated in Lackawanna's public and parochial schools. He studied industrial and labor relations at Cornell University and holds an Associate Degree in Science from Empire State College.

(more)

He is plant manager for Buffalo Brake Beam Company and a former police commissioner and commissioner of public works for the City of Lackawanna.

He is past president of both the Lackawanna Chamber of Commerce and the Central Railway Club of Buffalo, and holds membership in the Professional and Businessmen's Association, the Associated Industry Association of New York, the Knights of Columbus, and the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce.

Kogutek and his wife, the former Dorothy Druzvik, are the parents of two children, Michael and Sharon.

(end)



# Introducing Michael J. Kogutek

## The Legion's New National Commander

The seventh National Commander to hail from the Empire State, Michael J. Kogutek was elected to The American Legion's highest office at the 62nd National Convention in Boston, MA, August 15-21.

A self-made man who characterizes himself as "just a grass-roots Legionnaire," the new Commander directed his acceptance remarks to all Legionnaires, but especially to the bluecappers.

"You are the rock the Legion rests on, the foundation it's built on and the base that keeps it on a strong and sure course," he told them. "If a leader is only as good as those he leads, then I say I cannot fail because I look out on some of the bravest, most courageous and most determined people the world has ever known."

At 54, Kogutek sees his election as the culmination of a lifetime dedicated to hard work and personal achievement. The son of Mary and John Kogutek—Polish immigrants who came to this country at the turn of the century—Mike is a life-long resident of Lackawanna, NY.

Located on Lake Erie about five miles south of Buffalo, Lackawanna is today, as it was when Mike's father worked in its mills, a steel town. Teeming with steel-related industry and suburban businesses, the city's 30,000 inhabitants typify Walt Whitman's poetic conception of America at work.

And that is the America the Kogutek family thrived on—a country where each person ate of the fruits of his own labor and made his way based on ability and hard work. One of six children, Mike attributes many of his values and perceptions to the principles instilled in him by his parents. "They were always injecting the love of country and the love of God into our lives," he said. "As a result, I am a very strong American and a deeply religious person."

After graduation from Lackawanna High School in 1944, Kogutek entered the Navy, eventually attaining the rank of petty officer second

class. He went to boot camp in Samson, NY; from there he was sent to amphibious landing craft school in Little Creek, VA. Fully trained for the duties that lay ahead, Kogutek was transferred to Portland, OR, where he helped put his ship—*LCI-747*—into commission.

Bound for the South Pacific, it wasn't long before Petty Officer Kogutek got his first taste of combat in New Guinea and, later, in the Philippines. He was awarded the South Pacific Ribbon with battle stars for his part in the action.

Discharged in May 1946, the Commander went back to Lackawanna where he married a hometown girl, Dorothy Druzvik, in October. At the time of his marriage, he was a forklift operator at Buffalo Brake Beam

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**"Just living on past glories and traditions . . . is not enough."**

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Company, a railroad supply firm, where he had worked briefly before going into the Navy.

Kogutek was a conscientious employee during the day and later, as an ambitious college student at night, he received an Associate of Science degree from Empire State College. Soon he was made a foreman at Buffalo Brake Beam. Touching every rung of the promotion ladder, he climbed to his present position as Plant Manager. In that capacity, Kogutek has full, personal responsibility for a vast number of company functions ranging from manufacturing to inventory control to contract negotiations.

Commander and Mrs. Kogutek's children also possess the drive characteristic of the family. Michael D., 30, received his doctorate from the University of Denver and is a practicing psychologist in California where he lives with his wife, Jane.

Sharon, 29, a graduate of State University College at Buffalo, is an elementary school teacher in Newfane, NY, and the Past Junior President of the Matthew Glab Auxiliary Unit 1477 in Lackawanna.

Dorothy Kogutek, Past President of the same unit, is very active in community volunteer work and is the Commander's right-hand "man" when it comes to civic, Legion and fraternal programs and projects. The Koguteks are parishioners of Our Lady of Victory Basilica which was constructed under the guidance of Father Nelson Baker, world renowned as the "Padre of the Poor," and currently under consideration for beatification.

When the Koguteks are not involved in community service work or Legion affairs, they relax by going to the theater or the movies, just reading a good book or taking in spectator sports.

Yet, there is precious little time for entertainment when an individual is as active as the Commander. Since 1946, when he joined the Matthew Glab Post 1477 immediately after receiving his honorable discharge, Kogutek has held virtually every Legion office from the Post level right up to Department Commander (1968-69). A firm believer that "service to one's Post is the backbone of American Legion strength," he seeks active involvement in all Legion activities.

At the Department level, Kogutek served as chairman of several committees including Special Activities, Resolutions, and Convention Arrangements. In addition, he serves on the Executive Committee of the Department of New York. As State Membership Chairman, the Commander spearheaded the most successful membership drive in Department history. Carrying that same enthusiasm into national office, Kogutek wants to be remembered as the Commander who boosted Legion membership to the 3 million mark. To that end, he always carries a

(Continued on page 22)

over



# Michael J. Kogutec

(Continued from page 12)

membership application in his suit-coat pocket.

At the National level, the Commander's record includes service as Alternate National Executive Committeeman, Vice Chairman of the Veterans Preference Committee and membership on the National Economic Commission, National Finance Commission and Board of Directors of the National Child Welfare Foundation.

Legion work, however, is not the extent of Kogutec's service. In his "spare time," he has devoted full-time effort to a number of public offices and positions of trust, including Police Commissioner of the City of Lackawanna, Commissioner of Public Works and President of the Lackawanna Chamber of Commerce. In 1977, he was doubly honored as Lackawanna's "Man of the Year," and the *Am-Pol Eagle* newspaper's "Citizen of the Year."

This caliber of public service combined with an exemplary Legion record and many years of professional managerial experience more than qualify Mike Kogutec to assume leadership of the world's largest veterans' organization. His reputation for fair dealing with fellow Legionnaires and employees, and his unmasked desire to see people put out 100 percent are assets he will carry with him into National office this year.

Commander Kogutec recently shared his views on national issues and topics of particular concern to him. The following are selected quotes from that discussion.

**On National Security:** "This country is more vulnerable today than it has been in years. Foreign governments casually invade other nations without fear of U.S. intervention; American diplomats are held hostage without fear of American reproach or retaliation. This situation, I submit, is the product of foreign powers perceiving the United States to be weak.

"There is no better time for us to flex our military muscles than right now. We must demonstrate to belligerent nations that the United States has the will and the might to resist aggression anywhere it may occur. We must do whatever is necessary to ensure that politicians and the Pentagon stand up to this sort of international terrorism."

**On the Armed Forces:** "I think the Legion should loudly reiterate its desire for an armed forces second to none. We keep talking about it, but we have to give the issue a stiff push because our military forces are in a very, very sad state of affairs right now. This voluntary force concept has produced services that are not ready or able to cope with situations that may arise in the near future."

**On the Legion's Influence:** "Before we can make things happen, the Legion must regain a strong voice in Washington. Those young Representatives and Senators know little or nothing about our programs. Many are neither Legionnaires nor veterans and that wasn't the case 25 years ago.

"Changing times demand that we develop a program of education for Congressmen which will clearly point out what the Legion has accomplished and what it stands for."

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**"I'd like to see the Legion reach that magic number of 3 million."**

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**On Citizen Participation:** "When your Congressman doesn't receive telephone calls or letters about a bill or issue, he thinks there is little or no interest. We have to get active. We have to work as a unit to make our voice heard on legislation in which we have an interest."

**On Voting:** "We cannot be taken seriously in Washington either individually or as a group unless we recognize and exercise our right and duty to vote. Nor can we forget that 2.7 million votes carry a lot of clout—no politician can afford to ignore such a display of unity and power."

**On Membership:** "Just living on past glories and traditions of our organization is not enough. We have to get to the task of making sure we do something positive. Then, and only then, will we gain the membership, respect and image that is rightfully ours.

"Somewhere along the line, I would like to see The American Legion reach that 'magic number' of 3 million. I am sure that would have much more impact than saying, 'We have

Continued ...

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2.7 million members,' or 'We have 2.65 million members.'"

**On Vietnam War Veterans:** "We must procure more positive programs for the Vietnam veterans. Only then can we expect these vets to join our ranks. Somehow they got the feeling that they were not wanted, not appreciated, even by their fellow veterans of previous wars—that's simply not true and we can, and we must, change that impression.

"The American Legion has to start giving Vietnam veterans some identity in our Posts, Districts and Departments. We have to recognize them by electing them to responsible offices. We have to show them that we are willing to listen to them and give them the backing they need to manage this organization.

"They are ready for that now. If The American Legion is going to be a strong force, a viable force, we must get Vietnam veterans, *en masse*, into Legion caps."

**On the Veterans Administration:** "We can't afford to turn our backs on those fellows who served this nation in wartime now that they are beginning to need medical care. World War II veterans will, more than ever, be turning to the VA for medical care within the next few years, and even some of the Vietnam veterans need help now. It is imperative that we ensure that VA facilities will be able to handle the load and that they will be maintained for veterans and strictly for veterans."

Persistent, dedicated and optimistic; concerned, thoughtful and patriotic—that's National Commander Michael J. Kogutec. "I just take the bull by the horns and try to get things done," he said. "We're going to get some programs—programs that may not have been clearly enough defined in the past—into the right perspective, and we're going to arouse the interest of Legionnaires everywhere and solicit their help.

"But more than anything else," he said, "we are going to be heard nationally on issues that are germane to this organization and of concern to all Americans. People are going to know that The American Legion means business; that we know our business; and that our business is America." ■





# Fact Sheet

Indianapolis, Indiana 46206  
(317) 635-8411  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
(202) 861-2792  
News Hotline (800) 428-2686  
In Indiana (317) 637-6649

## The American Legion--What it does

At the national level, The American Legion's most visible activity may be its work on behalf of veterans, their survivors and dependents, and its advocacy of seeking peace through a strong national defense. While the Legion's charter forbids endorsement or support by the organization for any party or political candidate, the nation's largest veterans group is active in public debate and support involving current national issues. According to 1980 government figures, two-thirds of all Americans who ever served in uniform over the past two centuries are alive today--and nine out of every ten, 26.2 million of them, served during defined periods of armed hostilities. The American Legion's membership is drawn exclusively from this latter group and accounts for about 10 percent of it.

So The American Legion speaks on behalf of tens of millions of adult citizens whose service and sacrifices have given them extraordinary interest in the nation's affairs. Legislators respect this interest. Ninety-two percent of American Legionnaires are registered to vote--a significantly higher rate than for the male population in general. Meanwhile, in the 96th Congress, more than half the Senators and four out of every 10 members of the House were themselves members of The American Legion.

But the real work of the 2.6 million strong American Legion and its million-member Auxiliary is felt at the community level, and here their programs are--well, legion. In the past year, the Legion raised and channeled \$23 million into activities to help America's youngsters achieve their potential for this country's future. Recent reports from posts representing just under 60 percent of total membership show 2.5 million hours of Legion voluntary community service in the past year, \$5 million raised for aid and research benefitting children and youth, and \$4.7 million spent on athletic teams.

What follows is a partial list of specific Legion-wide programs and activities.

**AMERICANISM.** To foster knowledge and respect among young people about our country and its institutions, The American Legion conducts many programs cited separately in this list. In addition, to encourage the recognition of students showing the highest qualities of citizenship, American Legion School Medal Awards are presented annually to about 27,000 boys and girls in elementary, junior or senior high schools who are outstanding in honor, courage, scholarship, leadership and service.

**ASSISTANCE.** In the 1920s the Legion began a national program of temporary financial assistance to keep the children of deceased or disabled veterans at home rather than in institutions. This cash aid remains available for the rare cases not covered by subsequent state and federal programs for the needy. In the 12 months ended May 31, 1980, \$778,459 was given in direct assistance to children, another \$774,645 went in cash aid to veterans. Since the 1950s, however, most financial support has been channeled to grants by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., and other programs to benefit all children.

**BLOOD DONATIONS.** The American Legion, which is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Blood Commission, encourages posts to set up blood donor programs. Special emphasis is placed on holiday blood drives when accident rates are high and



hospital blood stocks are usually low. More than 30 of the 58 departments now have active blood donor programs. The Department of Rhode Island received the National Commander's citation last year for post participation with over 95 percent of American Legion units statewide giving blood, while the Department of Maine was recognized for membership participation--46 percent of all Legionnaires in the state gave blood in the past year.

**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA.** The Legion's interest in this popular, character-building "for God and Country" program goes back to an endorsement at its first annual national convention in 1919. Posts across the country currently sponsor some 1,500 Scout units, and are encouraged to nominate a local youngster for The American Legion's Boy Scout of the Year award. The Legion also supports Boys' Clubs of America by offering meeting facilities, raising contributions and donating flags, although financial sponsorship of individual clubs is not undertaken.

**BOYS STATE/BOYS NATION.** Fifty departments of The American Legion conduct annual Boys State government education programs each summer for outstanding young men in the following year's graduating high school class. About 30,000 boys are sent by local Legion posts or other patriotic, civic, fraternal or religious groups to the statewide events to learn for themselves how local governments are organized and operate. Two of the participants in each Boys State are chosen as delegates to Boys Nation, an annual week-long program at the national level held in Washington, D.C. The Legion Auxiliary conducts parallel programs for young women with Girls State and Girls Nation.

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH.** The American Legion and Auxiliary raised over \$27 million last year to benefit America's young people through the programs mentioned separately in this list and such grass-roots events as the Legion's effort in thousands of communities across the land to "Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night." Special concerns of the Legion include children's diseases, drug abuse, brutality, abandonment and the sexual abuse of children.

**CHILD WELFARE.** The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., now in its 25th year, made grants totaling \$106,000 to eight nonprofit organizations aiding children and youth in 1980. The largest was \$24,980 to the National Reyes Syndrome Foundation of Benzonia, Mich., to finance an educational film for television and public use about this little-known children's disease that kills half its sudden victims.

**INFORMATION.** Every year the Legion publishes "Need a Lift?"--called by educators the most comprehensive and up-to-date handbook available on loan, scholarship and career opportunities for high school students. Sample copies are distributed through Legion departments to local Posts, which are urged to order more for hometown schools, libraries and youth-service organizations. More than 120,000 copies of the 30th edition (1981) were made available last October 1 and some 75,000 had been sent out by January 31. Single copies can be ordered by anyone for \$1 each from "Need a Lift?," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206.

**JOBS.** With veterans unemployment running above that for the adult male population in general during the current recession, strengthening and implementation of veterans preference legislation, SBA loans, the contracting out of government services continue to be priority Legion issues at the national level. Campaigns at the department (state) and post (community) level to "hire the handicapped," "hire the veteran," and "hire the older worker" produce results that are monitored in a bimonthly newsletter of the Legion's National Economic Commission. Two national awards of "Employer of the Year for Hiring Veterans" help focus attention in the private sector on the economic needs of those who have served their country in uniform. Over 28,000 veterans received job help or training last year through The American Legion.



LEGION BASEBALL will play its 56th season in 1981. Each year some 75,000 boys improve their physical fitness and develop a keener sense of good sportsmanship by competing in over 3,800 post-sponsored teams across the country. Over half of those playing major league baseball today started as youngsters with Legion Baseball; at the annual All-Star Game last July 8 at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, there were 29 Legion Baseball grads among the 56 American and National League players on the roster, and 12 were among the 16 starters chosen by the nation's baseball fans.

ORATORICAL CONTEST. Each year thousands of high school students across the country address a vast audience of the American public, informing them about the substance and meaning of the United States Constitution. Hundreds win scholarship prizes at the post, district and department (state) level, and go on to compete in 12 regional contests where the winners receive \$500 to pursue their education beyond high school. At sectional semifinals, four youngsters are selected to vie for scholarships that will be doubled in 1981 to \$4,000, \$6,000, \$10,000 and a top prize of \$16,000 from The American Legion Life Insurance Trust Fund.

POPPY FUND. A major activity of the American Legion Auxiliary is raising money for veterans rehabilitation projects and children/youth programs by distributing poppies to persons who contribute to the fund drive. The paper flowers, made by disabled veterans in occupational therapy workshops, memorialize the World War I battlefields of France where The American Legion was born. About 19 million poppies are made by some 6,000 convalescent ex-servicepeople and handed out on the streets of America by 150,000 Auxiliary volunteers to charitable fellow citizens.

SCHOLARSHIPS. In addition to about \$65,000 distributed in the Legion's high school oratorical contest at the national level, state and local American Legion units disburse between \$750,000 and \$1 million in scholarships per year. Also, five National President's Scholarships of \$1,500 each and five of \$1,000 each are awarded annually by the national organization of the American Legion Auxiliary. The Auxiliary's subsidiary, the Eight & Forty, provides scholarships of \$1,500 each for advanced nurse's training in the control of lung and respiratory diseases; 24 such scholarships were awarded last September, bringing to 285 the awards made since 1956 to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS. Last year The American Legion and its Auxiliary raised over \$800,000 to help physically handicapped and mentally retarded young people achieve dignity and share their personal courage by participating in athletics. Hundreds of volunteer hours were reported from virtually every state as Legion and Auxiliary members furnished coaches, honor guards, parade marshals, transportation, food and equipment to over 8,000 Special Olympics organizations in communities across the nation. More will be done this year, because everyone is a winner in this program.

UNIFORMED GROUPS. The American Legion invented the drum corps and perfected the beauty, excitement and precision of the modern parade. Thousands of posts all over the country organize and support junior and senior drill teams, color guards, field bands, choruses and marching groups that bring color and meaning to all kinds of local events. And firing squads of comrades accompany old soldiers to their grave to pay a final volley of respect for forgotten sacrifices. Partial reports from some 45 percent of Legion posts show they spent \$1.2 million on such groups in the past year. The national organization has a committee charged with disseminating information on musical organization management, training judges and providing contest rules.

VETERANS AFFAIRS. The American Legion helps tens of thousands of veterans and dependents each year obtain medical, educational and other benefits, submit claims for medals and benefits, upgrade their discharges and receive certificates in lieu of lost



discharges, terminal leave pay, missing checks and other matters. This service is free and available to all veterans whether Legion members or not. In addition, accredited experts on the Legion's Washington staff serve as counsel for some 3,000 veterans a year before armed forces discharge and review boards and boards for the correction of military and naval records. Two medical consultants with specialties in neurology, psychiatry and internal medicine are available to assist on the more involved disability claims, and an attorney serves as staff legal consultant. Few of the cases attract public attention. A recent exception was the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor last September to Tony Casamento of West Islip, Long Island, 38 years after he earned it as a Marine on Guadalcanal.

...AND REHABILITATION. Volunteers from the Legion, Auxiliary, and its junior volunteer program have brought and continue to bring cheer and comfort to hospitalized veterans over the years and across the country. Legion volunteers gave over 900,000 hours of service to disabled veterans in the past year. American Legion Department Service Officers attached full-time to VA regional offices in every state provide free help and independent counseling to veterans there. Field representatives from the Legion's Washington office also make about 100 evaluation visits annually to Veterans Administration hospitals and domiciliary homes, and the VA replies to each recommendation in their reports, which go to headquarters, the government and Legion officials at the state level.



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Indianapolis, Indiana 46206  
(317) 635-8411  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
(202) 861-2792  
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## REMAINING 1981 AMERICAN LEGION OBSERVANCES AND EVENTS

February 21-27 National Commander visits Department of Mexico

February 22 WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

February 28-March 4 National Commander visits Department of Panama

March 8-14 EMPLOY THE OLDER WORKER WEEK

March 15-17 62nd Birthday of The American Legion

March 16 Dedication of Distinguished Service Medal to Vietnam missing at Tomb of Unknowns

(The American Legion will bestow its highest honor, the Distinguished Service Medal, to our Vietnam missing in action at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery. The American Legion, which proposed the original monument to the Unknown in 1921 and has led the nation in paying homage to U.S. war dead after every conflict thereafter, is the first veterans organization to so honor America's MIAs in Indochina.)

April 6 Regional American Legion Oratorical Contests

April 8 Sectional American Legion Oratorical Contests

April 10 Final American Legion Oratorical Contests

(Each year since 1938, thousands of high school students across the country have addressed vast audiences of their friends, neighbors and relatives about the substance and meaning of the U.S. Constitution as part of The American Legion National Oratorical Contest. This year each state winner will receive \$500 from the American Legion Life Insurance Trust Fund before vying in further eliminations in 12 regional and four sectional contests. The top four youngsters will appear in the final contest April 10 at Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis to compete for scholarships of \$16,000, \$10,000, \$6,000 and \$4,000. The top winner will also attend the Legion national convention in Hawaii.)



May 4-5

"Scout of the Year" Award

(The American Legion's interest in Scouting as a character-building "for God and Country" program goes back to an endorsement at its first annual national convention in 1919. Posts across the country currently sponsor some 1,500 scout units and are encouraged to nominate a local youngster for the Legion's Scout of the Year award. To be eligible, Boy Scouts 15 to 18 must have achieved Eagle rank, have been cited by their church for outstanding service, have shown excellence and leadership at school and have also demonstrated active citizenship in their community. Nominations from every state are reviewed and the Scout of the Year is selected by the Legion's Americanism Commission. The outstanding young man attends the Legion's annual national convention, along with the presidents of Boys Nation and Girls Nation and the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.)

May 16

ARMED FORCES DAY

May 23-25

National Commander visits Department of France  
(before or after visit to Department of Italy)

May 25

MEMORIAL DAY

June and early July

Boys State and Girls State events across country

June 14

FLAG DAY

(The American Legion was responsible for the drafting of an official Flag Code in 1923 and has been consulted by Congress on subsequent amendments. As a Post-level program, it emphasizes education in proper flag etiquette and offers flags, pamphlets and demonstrations to schools and civics classes. The Legion is the nation's second largest civilian outlet for American flags (after Sears Roebuck and Co.). In 1980, it distributed 372,561 cloth U.S. flags in all sizes.)

July 4

INDEPENDENCE DAY

July 11-18

Girls Nation, Washington, D.C.

July 17-25

Boys Nation, Washington, D.C.

(Boys Nation is a week-long exercise in political organization and democratic self-government conducted by the Legion in Washington, D.C., every summer for outstanding young men from across the country who will be in the following year's graduating high school class. The participants, two from each state, are selected from some 30,000 high school juniors who take part in the annual Boys State programs. The American Legion Auxiliary conducts parallel government-education programs for young women with Girls State and Girls Nation.)



August 26-30 American Legion Baseball regional tournaments  
August 28-September 3 63rd National Convention, Honolulu  
August 30-September 2 Legion Auxiliary Annual Convention, Honolulu  
September 3-7 Legion Baseball World Series, Sumpter, S.C.

(This year will mark the 56th season of American Legion Baseball, a Post-level program through which thousands of high school boys improve their physical fitness and develop a keener sense of good sportsmanship by competing in some 3,800 amateur teams across the country. Legion Baseball is popular in every state of the Union, with a dozen states fielding over a hundred teams each (in 1980, Pennsylvania had 509 Legion teams, Nebraska, 336, and Minnesota, 242). Over half of the players in major league baseball today started as youngsters with Legion Baseball, including such greats as Ted Williams, Stan Musial, Carl Yastrzemski, Harmon Killebrew, Al Kaline, Rick Monday and George Brett. The major leagues have helped underwrite the cost of Legion Baseball since 1928 with total contributions of over \$2.7 million.)

September 15-23 Armed Forces Chess Tournament

(The Armed Forces Chess Championship Tournament was inaugurated by the American Chess Foundation in 1960 with funds bequeathed by the late Thomas Emery, a World War I Marine and member of the American Legion. Since 1964, it has been conducted by the Legion at its Hall of Flags in Washington, D.C. In the tournament, six-player teams from the Army, Air Force and Sea Services contend through 12 rounds for highest team and individual scores. To date, the Air Force has won eight team championships, Army seven and Sea Services two. Air Force and Army teams shared top honors twice. There was no team competition in 1960 and 1961. The annual awards are presented at a reception buffet in the Hall of Flags.)

September 17 CITIZENSHIP DAY

October 4-10 NATIONAL EMPLOY THE HANDICAPPED WEEK

October 12 COLUMBUS DAY

November 11 VETERANS DAY

November 15-21 AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

(American Education Week grew out of the revelation during World War I that an alarming proportion of the American people were illiterate and physically unfit. Representatives of the National Education Association and the newly-formed American Legion discussed this problem and organized the

November 15-21

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK (cont'd)

first American Education Week in 1921. They were joined as sponsors the following year by the U.S. Office of Education, and in 1938 by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. Each November, the four sponsoring organizations promote school visits by parents and citizens to acquaint the public with the aims, achievements and problems of educating America's young people.)

December 7-31

American Legion Holiday Blood Donor Drive

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE  
AMERICAN LEGION

\* \* \* \* \*

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate at one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, State, and Nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice; freedom, and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

\* \* \* \* \*



ENERGY POLICY  
of  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion supports the concept that strong immediate conservation of energy measures are essential to the very survival of this country. National security is tied directly to the availability of adequate energy to keep this country moving forward. The ability of the American economy to provide jobs for a growing number of people cannot be separated from an expanding energy supply.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of America will support whatever is necessary to keep our economy vibrant and growing -- to basically maintain a standard of living that's the envy of the world. We do not believe that Americans will support punitive taxes that have been suggested if the income from these taxes does not go directly into research and development of long range energy solutions that can make America reasonably independent of foreign energy sources.

The American Legion supports as essential a constantly expanding energy consumption rate. A reduced energy consumption growth rate or a no growth policy is acceptable for only that short period of time when energy conservation will allow continued GNP growth and will not cause a marked lessening of job opportunities.

The American Legion supports the development and implementation of an effective national energy conservation policy which will insure a continuing energy growth rate sufficient to avoid a serious recession, increased joblessness and any severe decline in our standard of living.

The American Legion believes that immediate energy conservation measures are necessary but that we cannot delay the development of alternate energy sources nor the full utilization of present sources.

The American Legion considers the following major areas of primary concern if America is to achieve energy self-reliance within the next ten years:

1. There must be a strong public educational program on all energy matters.
2. Standby preparedness for energy emergencies should be undertaken immediately.
3. Resource information should be increased and made more readily available.
4. Increase exploration and development of resources of oil, natural gas, shale, coal and coal gasification now.
5. Increase research and development of nuclear fusion, solar energy, geothermal energy, wind power and other energy sources as alternatives for our present increasingly scarce energy sources.
6. Improve, expand and make more efficient the present energy delivery systems.
7. Increase research and development on nuclear power production with emphasis on nuclear safety, transportation protection of nuclear materials, thermal water pollution and long-term storage of nuclear waste.
8. Locate and reserve an 18-month supply of oil and natural gas to be used only if foreign suppliers become unavailable (embargoes) or too expensive (energy price blackmail) and to relieve international tensions based on competition for imports.
9. Provide equitable economic incentives, pricing and/or penalties involving energy conservation.



10. Offer retraining programs to prepare for new technological and vocational jobs that will develop as we move toward new energy sources and away from fossil fuel energy consumption.

11. Provide energy conservation programs and activities for individuals and organizations such as The American Legion.

Finally, The American Legion urges a national energy policy that will provide transitional planning for shifting from immediate emergency measures for energy conservation to long-term strategies that will insure a future for America — a future that will include an expanding energy base and economic growth without unfair additional financial burdens on any segment of American people.



## SUGGESTED ADDRESS

A PATRIOTIC MESSAGE

For

American Legion Speakers

*For God and Country*

## National Public Relations Division

P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206  
(317)-635-8411

1608 K St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
(202)-393-4811

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm deeply honored with this opportunity to appear before you as representative of The American Legion to discuss the subject of patriotism, or, as we in The American Legion believe, the word to be synonymous with Americanism.

Almost from the days of the struggle for American independence, it might truly be said, we have lived in times that try men's souls. Yet, for all the strife, and all of the personal sacrifice that has been demanded of Americans to win, to hold and to expand upon collective and individual human freedoms, we can truly say it has been worthwhile and it remains worthwhile today.

As American citizens we truly are members of the greatest society on earth, the society of free men, and while we sometimes think our freedoms are limited, we should remember that all things are relevant. All who hold citizenship in this land of the free can say without reservation, that we have greater freedom than any other citizens of any other nation in any period of history.

Patriotism and the willingness to sacrifice for those principles we hold dear have made us what we are--and adherence to those principles will insure that our children and their children will enjoy the blessings that are ours.

This nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, is a leader in the world, and has been for nearly a century. This nation, that transformed the ideals of the western world from colonialism to freedom for all, must be ever vigilant to guard and protect the freedom that we enjoy.

Perhaps we should review our own Americanism. Just what is Americanism? Reduced to its simplest terms it is simply an inspirational, sacrificial and unselfish love of country! Americanism and patriotism are synonymous! Both stem from a belief in and love of God.



What can we say when someone asks us to define Americanism? If you would permit me, I would like to review some definitions that we of The American Legion believe to be relevant and pertinent today.

Americanism is -- love of America; loyalty to her institutions as the best yet devised by man to secure life, liberty, individual dignity and happiness and the willingness to defend our country and flag against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Americanism is -- a vital, active, living force. Americanism means peace, strength, the will and the courage to live as free men in a free land. It means a friendly hand to people everywhere who respect our institutions and our thinking. It is not a word; it is a cause, a way of life, a challenge and a hope in the world of turmoil.

Americanism is -- a way of life, the best way of life every known.

Americanism is -- an ideal of loyal patriotism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom, fearless courage, honest integrity, abiding faith in the commanding destiny of the United States, and fathomless love for the principles which led our forefathers to found this country.

Americanism is -- complete and unqualified loyalty to the ideals of government set forth in the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. It is respect for, and ready obedience to duly constituted authority and the laws of the land. It is freedom without license, religion without bigotry, charity without bias or race hatred, love of flag, and a readiness to defend that for which it stands against every alien and subversive influence from without or within.

Americanism is -- an unflinching love of country, loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; individual allegiance to the flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.

The characteristic which distinguishes our form of government from others is the recognition of the truth that the inherent and fundamental rights of men are derived from God and not from governments, dictators or majorities.



To us today, this ideal of government seems axiomatic. We ask, "What other basic idea of government can there be?" But we must realize that a large part of the world today subscribes to a form of government that is unalterably opposed to our own philosophy.

They say that the state, not God, is the author of our rights. This is Totalitarianism, which appears under the guise of Communism, Naziism, Fascism, and many other isms. Often it is presented under a patriotic guide that fools those who do not see its basic evils. When it is too late, men realize that they have been sold on a program injurious to themselves.

If the state gives the individual his rights, the state may withdraw those rights for its own convenience. Thus, for propaganda purposes or for any other reason, the state may even take back from the citizen the right to live. In doing this, it assertedly does no injury to the individual since he essentially has no right to live except at the sufferance of the state.

Whether we view democracy as a system of popular self-government, or as a way of life in which the equality of individuals is generally recognized, America approaches true democracy more closely than any other country in the world.

But these privileges will not be maintained unless we create for ourselves, and among the youth of this country, a renewed faith in our system of government.

We need a rededication of American faith, clearly defined and acted upon. Each one of us should say in his or her mind and heart, "This country belongs to me and I must cherish it. I believe in the right of human beings to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; in government by the consent of the governed; in freedom of the press, speech and assembly; and in the right to worship according to one's own conscience. I believe in the rights of all to justice and in the other rights declared in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution. I believe that these rights belong to others as well as to me, and that I have not only the privilege to enjoy them, but the obligation to cherish and maintain them.

I ask each of you to join with me and my fellow members of The American Legion in a rousing campaign of Americanism, a return to basic values--the old virtues of loyalty, work and integrity, in the individual and in government.

To be a good American is the most important job that will ever confront us. But essentially, it is nothing more than being a good citizen, helping those who need help, trying to understand those who oppose us and doing each day's job a little better than the day before.

I am sure all of you will agree that America does have serious problems. And I am sure you will all agree with me that we must do more to meet the needs of our people. We must commit ourselves to the fight against poverty, crime, pollution and the other social and economic ills of this nation.

Smith Hempstone writing in the Philadelphia Inquirer stated: "The most serious crisis we face, both as individuals and as a nation, is the one nobody talks or writes about: we are mired in an Age of Disbelief which is eroding our will not only to succeed but to survive.

"Sons do not believe fathers, blacks do not believe whites, stockholders do not believe corporate executives, the public does not believe the President... If any one thing built this country it was a sense of self confidence, a perhaps naive pride in the past, an almost certainly overly optimistic faith in the future.

"...We owe it to ourselves and to our children to dream new dreams, to have pride in our past and faith in our future. For without such dreams, such pride, such faith, we will have no future."

As American Legionnaires, we work constantly to bring about a renewal of faith in and love for the principles that founded our great nation. We believe that to "stand and wait" while others serve is not enough. We must take up the challenge before us--to recapture the values which made us a great people--and rise up to a new sense of love for our country.



Tyranny had no place in America then. Certainly it does not now as we conclude the 1st year of the third century of America--America, the most dynamic monument to the bold idea that man can live in freedom with grace and with dignity.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your kind attention.