

Introduction of Hon. Robert B. Reich
Sixth Coffin Lecture on
Law and Public Service
Portland High School,
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We Americans, though prizing our independence and our individuality, nevertheless find ourselves all too often the prisoners of the customs of our culture. One such, particularly noticeable at public meetings of this sort, where it governs such introductions as I am called on to make, is what is commonly called the Rule of Inverse Proportionality. Translated, this means that the less a speaker needs an introduction, the more of an introduction he or she is going to get. And if the audience leaves before the speaker takes the podium, so be it.

I wish I had the courage to sack this rule. But I am not a rash person; I want to try out the idea gradually. So I'm going to wait until we have a perfectly mediocre, not to say drab, speaker to say, "Without further ado, I present Mr. or Ms. Whats'isname." Nevertheless, I do want to save some time for our speaker tonight, so I'll hurry on.

I wish I could say that I taught him everything he knows. Perhaps you have the mental image of me as the judge and Robert Reich as my law clerk sitting down on a log facing each other, as the famed educator Mark Hopkins was reputed to have done with his students, or perhaps you have imagined us strolling sedately as Plato and his young followers did in the grove of his academy. I often wish it were like that. It would be nice, sometime, to deliver some profound thoughts to a law clerk and feel that you have been reverently listened to. Actually, I seldom say anything that isn't vigorously questioned. My only solace is that very little my clerks say gets by without question.

Certainly our speaker began his time with me here in Portland, 24 years ago, in the fall of 1973, with an already impressive background: an outstanding career at Dartmouth (which included wrestling), a tour of Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar (along with Congressman Tom Allen of this city and a William Clinton from some obscure western state), and a distinguished record at Yale Law School. So, when he reported for duty, you can understand why I had to choose my advice-giving occasions carefully -- like where would be a good place to live.

Even here, I think he and Clare followed their own instincts. Clare had landed a job at Bates College, helping teach debating and speech (following in Tom Moser's shoes). Having keen eyes for scenic beauty, they picked the very top floor of an old apartment house at the crest of Munjoy Hill. And here, exactly 24 years ago this night, October 6, my journal records the following:

Friday night we went to Bob and Clare's third story walk-up on Munjoy Hill. They had repainted the whole garret, and outfitted it with eclat. It is cozy with second hand furniture, mattresses on the floor, a Victorian lamp, bookshelves. Lovely evening with a good meal, pleasant wine, and easy talk. That was October 6. What Bob and Clare didn't reckon on was the uninterrupted vigor of the Arctic air, which came straight from the Pole and through every chink and cranny of their ancient hilltop manse. When Bob came to our chambers, he wouldn't thaw out till noon.

Our year together was one of my busiest and most productive. We wrote 81 full opinions and 102 memoranda and orders. We faced the first wave of prisoner rights cases, dealt with some criminal cases involving the Mafia, and a rich diet of cases ranging from court procedure to challenging constitutional issues. What I keenly appreciated was Bob's help in preparing me for a

month's lecturing in the summer of 1974 to the Institute of American Studies in Salzburg, Germany. Even at that early stage in his career he showed a breadth of outlook and interest that was relatively rare among young law graduates. The give-and-take between Bob, his co-clerks and me not only contributed to my lectures but to my first book on judging, "The Ways of a Judge."

When Bob and Clare left me, they headed for Washington, where Bob worked first for Solicitor General Bork (whose hiring decisions were obviously not geared to ideology) and then for the Federal Trade Commission. Clare pursued her legal career, teaching at American University. Eventually Bob came to the Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge. By this time, Adam and Sam had come along to complete as tight a foursome as you have ever seen.

At this point Bob increasingly turned his mind to the overarching problems facing this country: the increasing gulf between those at the lower part of the economic ladder and those at the top, between the unskilled and the highly trained, between the sphere of government and politics and that of business and economics. He saw the looming challenge of surviving and prospering in the new highly technological and interdependent world economy as one dictating new ways of management and labor working together. He saw new demands for education and job training. His bottom line is that social justice is not only compatible with economic growth but essential to it.

He has written no fewer than seven books, including "The Resurgent Liberal," first published in 1981; "Minding America's Business," in 1982; "The Next American Frontier," in 1983; "Tales of a New America," in 1987; and "The Work of Nations," in 1991.

It was with this rich reservoir of ideas that he entered the Clinton administration as Secretary of Labor. He has dramatically and at times playfully (for he has revived the old idea that humor has a place in the life of a public person) described his battles, triumphs, and frustrations in his latest book, "Locked in the Cabinet." Now he holds a distinguished professorship at Brandeis where he is adding to his stature as one of this country's foremost analysts and prophets of economic policy. If we enter the new millennium with increased resilience and confidence, not a little credit may be traced to tonight's guest.

It is with the deepest personal pride and pleasure that I present the Honorable Robert B. Reich.