

**18<sup>th</sup> annual New York Herald Tribune Forum**, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City,  
October 24, 1949

“What kind of government is ahead? The responsibility of every citizen.” There in ten words, is the most important question of our day and the nub of the American political philosophy.

We believe in human dignity, in human rights not subject to arbitrary forfeiture or curtailment. We believe that these rights can be fully possessed and effectively exercised only so long as man asserts and maintains himself the master, not the serf of institutions he created. Unless he is free to use his birthright, it is worthless—in fact, does not exist. Freedom, however, is not unbridled license. Nor is it merely the expression of the jungle instinct to survive and dominate.

Free men, consequently, agree upon certain rules—which we call laws—and maintain political agents, or governments to codify and enforce upon all these self-enforced rules. In free countries, the agent may never become the master, if human rights and freedoms are to flourish, government must operate with its powers sharply defined and limited by the governed.

And unless we understand this, the American Dream may become the American Nightmare. For us Americans, the original limits on the authority conceded to the federal government are in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.