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UA3/3 Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce Speech

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Bowling Green has approximately thirty thousand people. Warren County, forty-five thousand. The city is located strategically on the Barren River, which flows into the Green, which flows into the Ohio—one of the main waterways of the world.

Bowling Green has a fine highway position. Kentucky highways 67, 80, and 234 and Federal highways 31-W, 231, and 68 funnel into it. I-65, the new Interstate, will serve it directly.

An excellent airport and daily airline service are great assets.

Tennessee Valley Authority pours power into Bowling Green not only in abundant quantities, but makes it possible for us to have the lowest electric rate in the United States. An excellent Electric Plant Board and REA operation administer this power.

High-grade coal is available from short hauls.

Our city and county services are far above average, even though our tax rates are relatively low.

Our community is blessed with good playgrounds and recreation facilities. We have outstanding service clubs, Girls’ and Boys’ Clubs, and Country Clubs.

We have outstanding churches serving almost all religious denominations.

Bowling Green has high quality elementary and secondary schools.

We have one of the finest colleges in the United States.

Speech given by President Kelly Thompson at the Chamber of Commerce dinner honoring major industries of Bowling Green, July 29, 1963
We have an outstanding Chamber of Commerce, manned by a competent Executive Vice President who works under outstanding leaders of our community.

There are innumerable other community assets for which we have every right to be proud: Progressive stores, markets and shops; good banks; modern hospital facilities and a modern health department; special schools for the handicapped; good city and county government; a people-owned industrial park; main railroad and bus affiliation; an abundant water supply; excellent natural gas service; superior library availabilities; modern press, radio, and television; and above all, a progressive and kindly people.

Contributing to the sustenance of all of these is a three-pronged economy boasted by very few cities in America--an economy based upon agriculture, education, and industry.

Please allow me to rapidly condense a review of our agriculture:

The office of the Warren County Agricultural Agent tells me that we have 2,744 farms in Warren County. It is estimated that the gainfully employed will average three people per farm, or 8,232, who make their living through agriculture. The income from farm products is estimated to be slightly more than twelve million dollars annually. I could go into detail about the production of tobacco, cattle, hay, swine, and corn products in our county, and I could also point out the great strides which have been
made in the dairy field and others; but I will ask you at this time to remember only the fact that more than 8,200 people are channeling more than twelve million dollars annually from agriculture into our local economy.

Now, a quick look at education—and in Bowling Green, this is a most important factor in the total economy:

Based on the present enrollment at Western Kentucky State College and a reasonable per capita daily student expenditure, together with Western's payroll and budget, a bonanza of approximately seven millions of dollars per year of outside money is injected into the local economy, and this does not include any capital outlay or any construction figures.

The third leg of the tripod upon which our total economy rests is, of course, industry; and we gather here tonight to honor a great number of leaders in our industrial field.

Quite naturally, there are many, many industries in Bowling Green which are not listed because of the necessity of using a particular industrial classification. I am sure that those who are not listed, however, know also of the appreciation which our community has for them.

Let me read the list of major industries:

J. E. Bohannon Company
Bowling Green Manufacturing Company
Colonial Baking Company
Detrex Chemical Industries, Inc.
Dibrell-Burford Tobacco Company
Field Packing Company
Modern Welding Company, Inc.
Pet Milk Company
Proffitt's Tool and Dye
Scott Tobacco Company
Gordon Smith and Company
L. F. Strassheim Company
Tri-State Bedding Company
True Temper Corporation
Union Underwear Company
Wren Products Company

These sixteen companies have an annual payroll of approximately twelve million dollars; and, according to the figures which I have received, provide employment each year for approximately four thousand individuals. This indeed is a most important bulwark of the economy not only of Bowling Green and Warren County, but of this entire area.

Let me recapitulate:

Twelve million from industry; twelve million from agriculture; and seven million from the College mean thirty-one millions of dollars per year to feed and sustain the general economy.

This is a financial river which, in a measure, fertilizes the entire countryside of our economy; and it is, I think, a balanced economy which
should be both appreciated and protected because very few communities have such a triple type of financial backing—industrial, agricultural, and educational.

This unusual economy structure, as well as all of the fine blessings which I have enumerated, are ours because of the efforts of a relatively few who are here tonight. Many of us have worked in the development of one or more of these assets; but in the main, they have come because of those whose efforts toward civic betterment preceded ours.

It should then, I think, be our responsibility to work and plan for those who will follow us and be sure that both the climate and the actualities of a prosperous economy can be passed on to them.

Tonight we honor industry in Bowling Green and Warren County. The City of Bowling Green and the Bowling Green-Warren County Chamber of Commerce have staged this dinner in appreciation of our industrial organizations and their contributions to the welfare of all of us. As I express appreciation on behalf of the entire community to all of the fine industrial leaders who are here, may I quote a poem with which you all are probably very familiar:

"AM I A BUILDER?"

Our present industrial organizations will move forward, if we are builders.
A desirable number of industrial organizations can be attracted here, if we are builders.

Our agriculture will flourish, if we are builders.

Our educational assets will prosper, if we are builders.

Our community, our county, and our geographical area will prosper, if we are builders.

In a world undergoing the most cataclysmic changes in history, presenting the most dynamic challenges in history, with knowledge and new methods and techniques and automation changing our lives almost daily, it is our challenge to think not only as builders, but with vision sufficient for an almost unpredictable future. We have the assets; we have the people; we have the leadership.

The only thing that we need is to remember that we do not, as individuals, own the great assets which surround us. They have been entrusted to us for our gain, our use, and our enjoyment.

Those of you who represent industry tonight and who are our special honorees, you are helping immeasurably to preserve this trust. We are not only proud of your payrolls—we are proud of the contributions which you are making to the betterment of our entire local social structure.

Your collective leadership is an asset upon which we place the highest of values. Your personal interest in our people is a value which cannot be measured. You are we, and we are you. This overflow gathering
assembled in your honor is a testimonial itself to our community's desire to move on and forward. In this connection, there is much work already cut out and needing to be done. May I suggest that among the work items to be attended are:

Working with our agricultural interests.

Working for improved roads and bridges and good market conditions for farmers so that Bowling Green has better access both as a trading center, a manufacturing center, and a cultural center.

Pushing relentlessly to open up the Green River Valley and the Barren River Valley. (103 miles of the Green River is already navigable. The Barren, because of antiquated locks, is now open only to barges and other small craft).

Cooperating with and supporting Western and all other facets of our educational system.

Working for the civic betterment of Bowling Green.

Pushing for urban renewal improvements.

More emphasizing of proper planning and zoning.

Continuing the drive for an adequate sewer system.

Encouraging the small businessman. (Remember that our biggest financial assets today were at one time "little fellows").

Supporting our churches and our elementary and secondary schools.
Planning for the welfare of all of our citizens, regardless of race, creed, and color.

Being willing to spend whatever is necessary and do whatever is necessary for our greatest resources, the children of this community and this county.

Working with the industries which are here and soliciting only those which, like the ones we have, are capable of long-time financial contribution and individual leadership.

Eliminating from our individual lives, the spirit of the worker who "walks the town, content with the labor of tearing down," and becoming builders--building for a better community and a better future for those who shall take over when we have finished our very short run across the stage of Bowling Green's history.

Distinguished honorees, we appreciate you. Tonight, we salute you. You have honored us by allowing us to honor you. Tonight you are King.

Long Live the King!