



## From the President

On a cold January day in our nation's capitol, the president of the United States spoke about freedom.

He warned that "the democratic way of life is at this moment being directly assailed in every part of the world" and our future and our safety "are overwhelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders."

So said Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1941 in his famous "Four Freedoms" address.

On another cold January day, another president, George W. Bush, addressed the nation. He too spoke of freedom and said, "survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands."

Two presidents, nearly a lifetime apart, both facing global challenges. On the surface, their words parallel one another. But below the surface, is the intent the same? Is Bush accepting FDR's humanitarian challenge?

FDR's "Four Freedoms" address also asserted that freedom must encompass "freedom from want." "Translated into world terms," Roosevelt said, this "means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world." Bush borrowed from this speech as he, too, spoke of the need for "freedom from want." Was he merely echoing a respected historical figure? Or does he understand the need for action these words demand?

Sixty-four years after Roosevelt's speech, his vision is still a distant dream. As Bush delivered his second inaugural address, more than one billion people on this

planet live under absolute economic tyranny; they live on less than one dollar a day. One billion people lack access to safe water. Thirty thousand children die each day from easily preventable diseases, including malaria and diarrhea caused by dirty water. The number of childhood deaths due to poverty is equal to ten World Trade Center attacks every day, a tsunami every week, and three jumbo jet crashes every hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Among all the developed nations, the world's only superpower devotes the smallest share of its national wealth to helping others around the globe. U.S. government aid amounts to 14 cents per American per day. Compare that with Norway at 92 cents per citizen per day. Why is the connection between investing in global poverty reduction and securing a safer future so very hard to see from the Oval Office in 2005?

In his "Four Freedoms" speech, FDR spoke of the "fruits of scientific progress in a wider and constantly rising standard of living." In our day, the Bush administration is the all-too-willing partner of those who seek to deny scientific progress. Bush opposes stem cell research. He supports medically inaccurate "abstinence-only" sex education. He actively courts those who deny the theory of evolution. He shuns science while embracing the politics of fear. And he ignores the population connection at every turn by cutting reproductive health care funds and instituting the Global Gag Rule.

Another president, that bully Republican conservationist Theodore Roosevelt, once wrote: "Alone of human beings the good and wise mother stands on a plane of equal honor with the bravest soldier; for she has gladly gone down to the brink of the chasm of darkness to bring back the children in

whose hands rests the future of the years."

It is a coincidence—but no mere accident—that the coalition formed after the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is called "A Mother's Promise." This coalition, of which Population Connection is an active member, is working to ensure that the commitments made at the ICPD are enacted.

There is no better way to push back the darkness, to fulfill that good and wise "Mother's Promise," than by providing every woman and every couple with access to family planning services and to the education and opportunities needed to raise a healthy family.

Even in 1941, when the United States was on the brink of entering a world war, FDR asserted that, "this is no time for any of us to stop thinking about the social and economic problems."

Roosevelt was right then—and now. Yet Bush's actions do not reflect compassion for those in desperate poverty around the world. He does not demonstrate an understanding of the connection between global security and social and economic problems such as poverty and population growth. Perhaps he deems it sufficient merely to repeat the word "freedom" 27 times in a 2000-word speech. But mere repetition does not create action.

Bush may ignore the poverty connection, the human rights connection, and the population connection. We will not.

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