

# Sustaining Members' Luncheon Address

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SINCE MANY IF NOT ALL of you are close friends or associates and we have worked together on common problems, it is probably not appropriate for me to address you formally. I think we each have the same set of value judgments and we are trying to do the same things. The best thing I can do is to spend just a few moments on a subject which I don't understand very well and which perhaps you don't understand very well either, and talk about how we can work towards understanding it better.

The subject I have in mind is the difficulty of coping with change. The fact is that we are in a period of very substantial change which the leadership of the military services and the leadership of the electronics community together need to figure a way through. The need to find a way to cope with change is something which is not new, something which others have struggled with and something which really cannot be ignored.

John Steinbeck, the Nobel laureate, wrote many very important works, but his lifelong fascination with the legend of King Arthur was not revealed until after his death when his uncompleted version of Malory's *Idylls of the King* was published by his wife. In trying to relax from the tedium of the Pentagon one evening, I read through that book and thought that you might enjoy finding that others who preceded us by a thousand years have had problems similar to ours. Steinbeck writes:

"After a long and turbulent time, King Arthur, through fortune and force of arms, destroyed or made peace with his enemies inside his realm and out, and established in men's minds his right to rule. To accomplish this, the King had drawn to his person and his court the best knights and the hardest fighting men in the world.

"Having made peace through war, King Arthur found the dilemma of all soliders in tranquillity. He could not disband his knights in a world where violence slept uneasily. And, on the other hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep the strength and temper of fighting men without fighting, for nothing rusts so quickly as an unused sword or an idle soldier.

"Arthur, knowing this, took the way of all generals in all time. He set up games which imitated war to keep his knights hard and hardy—jousts, tournaments, hunting, and endless warlike images. By these deadly games the fellowship of the Round Table sought to keep skill and courage high by venturing their lives in return for fame. In these games of simulated battle some knights increased in honor, while others were thrust down through misfortunate encounters with spear and sword on the tourney ground.



"And while the older war-bred knights kept their arms bright, perhaps in memory of real battle, the young men, whose knighthood knew only the games of combat, did not love them.

"Then Arthur learned, as all leaders are astonished to learn, that peace, not war, is the destroyer of men; tranquillity rather than danger is the mother of cowardice, and not need but plenty brings apprehension and unease. Finally he found that the longed-for peace, so bitterly achieved, created more bitterness than ever did the anguish of achieving it. King Arthur watched in apprehension while the young knights who should have filled the fighting ranks, dissipated their strength in the mires of complaint, confusion, and self-pity, condemning the old time without having created a new one."



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That description is, in fact, not so different from today. The difficulty, of course, is that we all wish things could stay constant, we all want to be able to do the things that we have trained ourselves for and know how to do and we are ill at ease with the kinds of change which are forced on us by rough transitions like that from peace to war.

I would like to return to Steinbeck's book to read you another passage which I think aptly describes the symptoms of a disease which afflicts many of us in the Pentagon. One difficulty at the Pentagon is the potential for developing a lack of self-confidence. It seems that the only problems we see are those which are insolvable and hence we begin to believe that all problems are insolvable and come to believe that we cannot solve them. Listen to this interchange between Sir Lancelot and Sir Kay. Sir Kay was the natural son of Arthur's foster parents and because of Arthur's gratitude he had been made the seneschal, or chief bookkeeper, or chief program manager of Camelot. Lancelot says:

"You are foster brother of the king.

". . . And in the first troubled years you were a very lion at his side. Your name lighted terror in the king's enemies. When the five kings of the north made war against Arthur, you with your own hands killed two of them, and the king himself said your name would live forever."

Sir Kay's eyes were shining. "It is true," he said softly.

"What happened, Kay? What happened to you? Why are you mocked? What crippled your heart and made you timid? Can you tell me—do you know?"

Kay's eyes still shone, but with tears, not pride. "I think I know," he said, "but I wonder whether you could understand it."

Lancelot said: "Tell me, my friend."

"Granite so hard that it will smash a hammer can be worn away by little grains of moving sand. And a heart that will not break under the great blows of fate can be eroded by the nibbling of

numbers, the creeping of days, the numbing treachery of littleness, of important littleness. I could fight men but I was defeated by marching numbers on a page. . . . If only I had never been seneschal! To you a feast is festive—to me it is a book of biting ants. So many sheep, so much bread, so many skins of wine, and has the salt been forgotten? Where is the unicorn's horn to test the king's wine? Two swans are missing. Who stole them? To you war is fighting. To me it is so many ashen poles for spears, so many strips of steel—counting of tents, of knives, of leather straps—counting—counting of pieces of bread. . . . Look, sir, did you ever know a man of numbers who did not become small and mean and frightened—all greatness eaten away by little numbers as marching ants nibble a dragon and leave picked bones? Men can be great and fallible—but numbers never fail. I suppose it is their terribly puny rightness, their infallible smug, nasty rightness that destroys—mocking, nibbling, gnawing with tiny teeth until there's no man left in a man but only a pie of minced terrors, chopped very fine and spiced with nausea. The mortal wound of a numbers man is a bellyache without honor."

And that's the problem we all face. We would like to be something else but we end up having to be what we are. You in the industrial community and we in the military community have to change our ways because the times are changing. We find ourselves essentially unable to do that, and my plea to you is that together we must find a way to do what has to be done. The financial situation of this country demands that we have fiscal planning which is reasonable, and which allows us to pull ourselves out of the many difficulties that we are in—problems of inflation, of energy and of aggressive Soviet actions.

We need to be able to plan and understand our future. You give us advice as to how much things may cost, knowing that your estimates are valid only to the extent that the Lord could meet them were He the Chief Engineer and Chief Production Agent. We accept these, knowing very well that the Lord will probably not be involved but knowing also that it is the only way we can get it through the Congress. I think it is very clear that we have set up for ourselves a planning process which is unrealistic, and which does a disservice to our country and to ourselves to let that continue. Together we have to find a way to improve that.

Another thing that I think we have to realize is that we have developed many systems since the end of the Vietnam era which we are going to have to buy in the coming years. It is therefore unrealistic for us to keep on dreaming up new things to design when we have perhaps 10 to 20 or 50 billion dollars worth of items which we have already designed and which we cannot afford to buy. So together we are going to have to be very selective in deciding which new areas we are going to work in. We need to do a better job than we have done in the past.

We in government must get from you in industry an understanding of where the truly great opportunities lie in our technology—in research and development and, probably more importantly, in production techniques.

Somehow between us we have to develop a clear sense of priorities because, unlike all previous times since World War II, we truly are in a bind of such dimensions that we cannot continue to order more and more things.

Another thing we must do together is see how we can continue to be a credible adversary. I think we have to decide whether we want to compete with the Soviet Union on their terms—to make the sacrifices to our standard of living that they choose to make and to fight a battle of numbers, or whether we can find a way to stimulate the free enterprise system to make the technological and engineering innovations which have been made before. We are not today stimulating technology to any degree even close to the way we have in former years. In former years, we used the moon program and other equivalent "tours de force" as the vehicles for stimulating our innovations. We do not have the same programs now and we need to somehow find techniques that we can use to stimulate that innovation which has brought us to our current position of economic dominance, at least in our standard of living.

We together need to understand how to stimulate this economy and it really cannot be done by a bunch of bureaucrats. Now, some bureaucrats become reformed, like John McLucas, and they develop insights of the industrial type. But most of us are bureaucrats wedded to this "Sir Kay" syndrome of really not understanding what to do and getting beaten down by it. So we really need to have you tell us the ways that you, as the dominant leaders of industry, can work with us, the leaders of the military, to make the technology that we have continue to dominate. This may be accomplished by working the tax laws to make investment in production equipment easier; by working the laws with respect to your getting together; or by any of a number of things—but we need to have you come forward with the techniques to stimulate the technology which provides the opportunities for technological dominance.

The final thing I would like is advice from groups like this on how, in an era where we will have bought almost everything we need but yet will wish to upgrade it, we can keep the free enterprise system in play. Up until now, to replace the F-4, there was always an F-15 and an F-16 and an F-18 and an F-5.

Probably, we will have to keep the F-15 and the F-16 for quite a while, and like the F-4, we will continue to upgrade them. The free enterprise system argument has been to keep a widely diverse industry, able to compete in a market which is dominated by primes as most of the primes now dominate the business that we have. In the future, however, there will not be as many additional systems. Once we get the satellites up, and once we get the SINGGARS out, we will in fact be living with them for quite a while. So there will be quite an inversion in the system which has had free enterprise at play at the prime level. We are going to try and find how to make free enterprise be at play at a secondary level.

These are all new situations, almost as dramatically new and different as the ones that I described in the first place. As King Arthur had to figure out how to survive in that period of uneasy peace, as Sir Kay had to figure out a way to keep the numbers whether he wanted them or not—we are going to have to face a strained procurement budget and a reduced technology base which will attrite unless we find a way to stop it. We have a set of hardware in the field which we must either upgrade or replace. These are ideally things that groups like this can do and I would just close with a particular request that, as today, you be a forum for us, and conversely, that we be a forum for you, as you address some of these issues and come forward to talk about them.

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