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news release

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President Arnold, members of the board of directors of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, friends, I feel privileged to be here, representing National Park Service Director George Hartzog, to accept for the Department of the Interior this splendid gift from your great organization.

Your generous and patriotic interest in the work of the National Park Service has been evidenced in a material way for a long time -- in aid in the restoration of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, most notably. The preservation and development for public inspiration and use of the national historical heritage is a vital part of the Great Society, which President Johnson has challenged us to achieve. Listen to what he said at Ann Arbor:

"The purpose of protecting the life of our Nation and preserving the liberty of our citizens is to pursue the happiness of our people. Our success in that pursuit is the test of our success as a nation. For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people. The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization.

"Your imagination, your initiative, and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the great society. The great society rests on abundance and liberty for all."
The theme of the Federation, "To Strengthen the Arm of Liberty", is an inspiring one, so fitting for an American Museum of Immigration at the base of the Statue of Liberty. Sculptor Bartholdi called his work "The Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World," and the symbolism of the upraised arm is apt indeed, as apt today as it was when the great tide of immigrants entered the harbor of New York.

The lady of Liberty overlooks the harbor and welcomes visitors, as she has for all these decades. But her visitors are not strangers any more. The vast majority of those who inscribe their names on our roll of visitors at the Monument are from our own land. Of her foreign visitors or viewers, whether they come to the monument, or see the statue from the aircraft windows or the ships' decks, few can now be called strangers. For good or ill, they know America -- Telstar is only the newest way for America to be mirrored abroad. Our TV programs, our movies, our comic strips, our books, and our people are as familiar across the seas as their own capitals. Some of this familiarity has its usual offspring.

Graham Wallas a half-century ago talked of The Great Society, and published a book on it, discussing the question of how human nature responds to the conditions of the complex urbanized environment which industrial and technological change has created. A quarter century ago John Dewey expressed a condition to the achievement of The Great Society -- to him the concept was one of a Great Community, and the secret to him was "a subtle, delicate, vivid and responsive art of communication (which) must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation."

The art of communication has now reached a zenith unimagined by Wallas or Dewey -- now the conditions are within our grasp, and the President's call to the task of bringing harmony of life and environment is inspired and timely.

The construction of the American Museum of Immigration will strengthen and amplify the light of the torch of liberty, and help us toward the Great Society. Visitors to the Museum will see portrayed the story of what immigration has meant to our country and what immigrants have contributed to the American concepts of liberty. Immigrant Carl Schurz, civil war general, friend of Lincoln, U. S. Senator, civil service reformer, and a great Secretary of the Interior brought from his native Germany a fierce love of liberty which he left with his adopted countrymen.

To study immigration is to see more clearly what our responsibilities are, now, to eradicate poverty, to erase civil wrongs and bigotry, to hold high the personal torch of liberty. As the President also said at Ann Arbor, the great society "demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time."
When the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in 1886, the pedestal was left incomplete. Richard M. Hunt, the architect who designed the pedestal upon which Bartholdi's figure was to stand, intended that it should have a broad terrace at its foot, with stairways leading down to the promenade at the top of the enclosing old Fort Wood. For lack of funds this terrace was not built, and the great ornamental doorways leading to it remained functionless in midair.

The Department has long wished to complete the design. A few years ago, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society became actively interested in developing a museum where the story of the immigrant, one of the major themes of our history, could be told. Conferences resulted in the plan to combine these objectives -- to build the museum at the base of the Statue of Liberty and to include in its design the terrace that Hunt had intended. A cooperative agreement between the Secretary of the Interior and a private, patriotic organization known as the American Museum of Immigration was negotiated to carry out the plan.

Since 1954 planning and fund raising have gone forward, sometimes actively, sometimes haltingly. The financing plan ultimately adopted was based on what is known as the "matching fund" principle. Under this plan the Congress provides Federal appropriations for half the cost of a project, these appropriated funds becoming applicable only when they are matched by private donations.

Much has been accomplished toward the building of the museum. The major construction, begun two years ago, is now far advanced. Last year the steel and concrete shell of the structure was completed. A contract is now actively going forward to cover this shell with stone matching the original pedestal, to pave the promenade surrounding the terrace and the plaza in front of the entrance, and to construct an attractive new entrance feature. Meanwhile, the planning of the exhibits and the assembling of objects associated with the story of immigration have kept pace with the physical construction. The exhibit plan is finished and it is expected that assembly and installation of the exhibits themselves will follow immediately upon the completion of the building.

Much remains to be done. The total cost of the American Museum of Immigration was first estimated at $2,500,000. With some improvement and expansion of the original design, the overall cost will somewhat exceed this figure. Something more than $700,000 is still needed in private contributions to assure completion of the museum at an early date.

A vigorous campaign has been underway toward raising these funds, under the leadership of Alexander Hamilton, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Museum of Immigration, and his associates. Great national organizations such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs have helped immeasurably.
You, Mrs. Arnold, as President of the Federation, have made the theme of your administration the slogan, "To Strengthen the Arm of Liberty". The "Dimes for Liberty" campaign, cooperated in by your numerous affiliated clubs, has raised $41,369.45. This amount, under the matching-fund principle, is automatically doubled, giving us $82,738.90, toward the completion of the Museum.

With the other pledges in hand or in good prospect, we are assured that construction will go forward. Regrettably, it has not been possible to meet the original objective of opening the American Museum of Immigration to coincide with the opening of the Fair. But it is still possible to complete the museum before the Fair closes. Your fine contribution, Mrs. Arnold and ladies of the Federation, gives us great encouragement.