

**(Concord)** - *Stewart Weeks*

Thank you very much.

I have tried to lead a responsible life as a parent and a wife and a citizen. I think I know what that means in terms of trying to not do harm to those around us, and to provide service to those who need our help. But what does it mean for a community to be responsible? Surely, we responsible people ought to live in responsible communities, too.

Let's imagine that a big city has an opportunity to use solar or other renewable energy for its houses and offices and transit system, and that, by so doing, the community will stop spewing toxins from its smokestacks, which pollute the communities downwind. Or take it a step further, and realize that the city has been spewing out carbon dioxide which has been contributing to the warming of the planet. What is a responsible community to do?

Take the new path if it is economically possible to do so, or stay with the old way, which not only pollutes, but drives our nation's foreign policy toward the acquisition of oil at the expense of our higher ideals. What is a responsible community to do? When you ask the question, the answer seems obvious. So maybe we had better ask the question, especially in the larger cities where there is no opportunity for the surrounding natural countryside to digest the toxins.

And what is a responsible community to do in other areas? What should a responsible community do to assure that its citizens grow up with enough civic education to be proper guardians and participants of a free society, rather than hypnotized consumers and worker ants? What should a responsible community do to provide a healthy and expanding middle class, which has always been the strong footing of our Republic?

We have given our main streets and our family businesses over to big-box neo-colonialism that saves us a few dollars when we shop, but at a monstrous expense to our culture and its future. It is hard or impossible to be responsible citizens when we do not control the businesses in our communities, because we own them. If we are but customers and taxpayers instead of true and equal townspeople, we cannot do much more than find parking spaces and hope for sales, when we might have been the free people of a great democracy. Our economic life shapes our political life, and Main Street and the family business are the bedrock of true democracy, for democracy requires the human scale of things.

No person can be responsible without the power to do things according to his or her will. In the same way, communities cannot act responsibly unless they have the political power to act upon their values. Getting special interest influence out of our politics is therefore an important

precondition to becoming a responsible community. I have been working in that particular area, and it far from complete, to say the least. We can, I believe, after so many years of observation, derive a political maxim, and it is that the greatest provider of support for a candidate will receive the greatest representation from that candidate. If the community is to be represented, therefore, the community must be the source of campaign support, either through the public funding of elections or through small contributions given evenly by a wide segment of the voting public. Only when we have real representation will our government be our own tool for moving toward responsible civic behavior.

How do we move toward more responsible civic behavior? I think it is valuable to make statements like the one before us today, but we also need strategies to actually move people into better action. I think the key to this can be our children. They are wiser than we are, in that their idealism is unruined and

unpolluted. It is not that they are naïve, but that they have not lost their vision. If we ask our children to help set goals for our communities, and then we, as adults, join in that effort and try to put political force behind a community goals program, we can move rapidly and joyfully in many areas. Our towns and cities can be much improved, humanized, beautified, and made more fair and enjoyable. I have spoken to many schools in my present campaign, and their questions are better than the adult questions. They are more alive to the possibilities of life, and we must put this energy and vision to work for all of us.

I believe a Goals for New Hampshire program, with its town and city component organizations, can tie the idealism of youth with the wisdom of age. I would like to help with such a project in the years ahead.

We do have a responsibility, after all, to those who sacrificed everything to give us a free society. We owe it to ourselves to think

about the meaning of the phrase enshrined in our founding, "the pursuit of happiness." It invokes, at least in me, a dream of the politics of joy and of cooperation, where we find the balance between our responsibilities, joys and freedoms as individuals, and the responsibilities, joys and opportunities we have as communities of free and cooperative people.

Thank you.