PS3 for 5/1/87#THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AMERICAN INVENTORS

When the Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia 200 years ago this month, economic conditions for the majority of people had changed very little in thousands of years. Then, suddenly, in the short space of 200 years, America experienced a tremendous rise in living standards that exceeded all the economic changes in the thousands of years that preceded our Constitution. Why did this happen?

What made America different was the magic ingredient of economic freedom, which the framers of our United States Constitution knew was just as important as our liberties of religion, speech, press and assembly. ONLY if you are secure in the ownership of your personal property, and the right to choose your occupation, can you attend the church of your choice and speak your mind about politics without fear of having your livelihood confiscated.

In addition to guaranteeing the right to own the fruits of our own labor, the framers of our Constitution for the first time in history specifically recognized the right of authors and inventors to own ""the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.'' The result of the American patent system has been the remarkable series of inventions that have given us such a fantastic increase in our living standards, and made America the industrial and technological leader of the world.

Some of the greatest American inventions have been in agriculture. As a result, only the United States has never had a famine, and even our poorest people can eat abundantly.

We started out as poor as any other nation, farming with the same crude tools that men have used for thousands of years. After the Constitution guaranteed freedom, applications for patents began to pour in from inventors, and our world began to change.

Eli Whitney's cotton gin replaced the hand labor of four dozen

men, and created new prosperity for the southern states that grew cotton and for the northern states that manufactured cotton cloth. Cyrus McCormick's reaper enabled farmers to harvest wheat by machine instead of by hand, and assured Americans of an endless supply of cereals from our great midwestern plains.

American agriculture has become the envy of the world, providing Americans with an endless variety of fresh foods in winter as well as summer, our grain bins overflowing, and enough left over to feed millions in other lands.

At the time our Constitution was written, the fastest way to get a message from one town to another was typified by the horseback ride of Paul Revere. Due to Alexander Graham Bell and American ingenuity, we can now direct-dial almost anywhere in the world, with speed and clarity of sound that are almost magical.

The U. S. Patent Office also issued patents for Thomas Edison's phonograph and motion picture camera, the wireless telegraph, the radio, the typewriter, the xerox copy machine, and the transistor.

The transistor has brought about changes in our lives that could not have been imagined even 20 years ago. In the capitalist climate of Silicon Valley, California, new companies compete with each other to build better, faster and cheaper products, and now 25 million computers are in use in America.

Just as the great American inventors developed new ways of talking over long distances, so they also invented new ways of transporting people and freight from here to there. American inventors are responsible for the first practical steamship, the Westinghouse air brake which made train travel safer and faster, the first airplane, the first automobile to come off an assembly line, and rubber tires.

From the covered wagons that carried Americans to the Western frontier to the space ships that carried our astronauts to the moon is

a long way to go in 200 years, farther and faster than the whole world had gone in the previous 10,000 years. But then, those other nations didn't have the magic ingredient of economic freedom which stimulated so much creative talent in America.

The most dramatic changes have come about in the home. When our Constitution was written, American women cooked over an open fire, carried water from a spring or well, and made their own soap and candles. They made all the family's clothes and even spun the thread and wove the coarse cloth with the same crude implements used for thousands of years.

Today, we enjoy a dazzling array of conveniences made possible by Edison's greatest contribution to our society. Electricity and American genius have provided us with light, refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, and air conditioning. American inventors also deserve the credit for central heating, frozen foods, and even the modern safety pin.

The creative genius unleased by our economic freedom has been responsible for tremendous inventions to cure disease, save lives, and lengthen the healthy life span of Americans to 75 years. Our patent system protects both the inventor and the costly investments in laboratory research that make the wonder drugs available at reasonable cost.

The greatest of all American inventions is the Constitution itself. It was an original design that came from the creative minds of a remarkable group of men who understood that economic freedom, in which each one can own his own inventions and investments, is the key to economic prosperity in which all can share.