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THANKSGIVING THANKS

Although the United States celebrated its 208th birthday last July 4th, and will celebrate the Bicentennial of the Constitution in 1989, this year's observance of Thanksgiving Day will be our 361st. It offers a good opportunity for each of us to count our blessings of living in the freest and most prosperous nation the world has ever known.

I'm thankful to the Pilgrim Fathers -- the same ones who gave us the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth Colony in 1620 -- that they had the good judgment to abandon their naive and nonsensical ideas of communal living under which the workers and the loafers shared equally in a common fund.

When they saw the error of their early socialist experiment, they changed to a system of private property and individual ownership, allowing each man to keep his own earnings. That was a wise move which started America on the road to abundant harvests and economic prosperity.

I'm thankful that the framers of the U.S. Constitution gave us "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man." I'm thankful that the drafters of the Bill of Rights were extraordinarily vigilant in their specific protection of individual freedom.

I'm thankful that the Founding Fathers gave us a government based on the Separation of Powers between the Federal government and the several states, and the Federal government then separated again among the three branches.

A Thanksgiving for abundant harvests is even more appropriate in 1984 than ever before. Our thanks should go not only to God, but to the American farmer who is the world's most advanced and efficient producer. He feeds himself and 79 other persons on a high-protein diet, in contrast to the Russian farmer who feeds himself and only 10 other persons on a starchy diet.

The American farmer produces the best, the most, the greatest variety, and the

lowest-priced food in the world. The inefficient, low-productivity socialist nations are envious of our abundance but haven't yet discovered the mainspring of our success.

Many other countries of the world have just as fertile soil and even longer growing seasons than we have. What makes the difference is the climate of freedom in America which has given our farmers the incentive to produce, and has encouraged American industry to invent and manufacture the agricultural machinery which now enables a single family to operate a 1,000-acre farm.

I'm thankful that those who settled America in the 17th and 18th centuries established a nation in which the family is the fundamental unit, and the work ethic is respected and rewarded. The unique American formula for economic success is hard work motivated by family in a climate of freedom.

The lack of the work ethic in the Third World is the principal reason why U.S. foreign aid and big bank loans have failed to improve living standards. It takes hard work by all the people to lift a nation out of poverty, and most Third World peoples won't put in the work week that Americans do.

I'm thankful that the signers of the Declaration of Independence had the faith to proclaim, in this fundamental American document, that we recognize the existence of our Creator as a "self-evident" truth. I'm thankful that George Washington set the precedent in 1789 when he issued our first annual proclamation of Thanksgiving Day as America's special religious feast.

Here is what he said: "Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor, and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint committee requested me 'to commend to the people of United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness', now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next, to be devoted to the service of that great and glorious Being, Who is the beneficient Author of all the good that was, that is, or will be."