

July 16
GUEST EDITORIAL BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS
FOR THE LANCASTER HIGH SCHOOL "SPOTLIGHT"

THE BICENTENNIAL: AFTER THE PARTY'S OVER

For more than the past two years, thousands of Americans have been waiting and planning for the big party on July 4, 1976. They have been planning city, county, state and national celebrations. These have been generally dedicated Americans, interested in having the biggest and the best birthday party our nation has ever seen.

Today, as July 4 approaches, their enthusiasm seems somewhat subdued. An occasional comment, newspaper editorial or cartoon conveys an unfortunate message: many Americans have become tired of the Bicentennial before it even gets here.

These people have blamed various reasons: The Bicentennial does not represent all Americans or it has become the "Buy-centennial."

To those who have lost their enthusiasm for the Bicentennial, I offer a suggestion: perhaps you may have missed the real point of it all. The Bicentennial doesn't just mark the end of the nation's first two hundred years...it marks the beginning of the next hundred years.

The Bicentennial could and should be a year of national reassessment. Perhaps it's a time to take stock of what America has become. Perhaps it's time to get some idea of where we want America to go.

In many ways, our future as a nation is just as challenging today as it was two hundred years ago. There is one major difference between then and now. We Americans have become too complacent. We have become too comfortable. We have become apathetic. When elections roll around, not much more than half the registered voters go to the polls. When a community has a problem, too often, the buck gets passed around so long that the problem goes away by itself.

The challenge of our future, in my opinion, lies with the people of America. We need an end to apathy and a regeneration of concern. We need to re-kindle love of country and rededication to the goals of America.

This Bicentennial year, let's think beyond the celebrations of the coming year...let's look ahead to the decades to come.

I hope we build a new generation of re-dedicated Americans. When 1976 has passed, let's keep going with a new Spirit in America.

Let's celebrate this year with all the parties we can...but when future generations look back upon 1976, let's hope they set it as a year of national destiny that made America an even greater nation.