

STATEMENT OF LT. GEN. JOHN R. HODGE
UPON OPENING OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

13 Dec
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Members of the Interim Legislative Assembly and good people of South Korea:

I consider that this initial meeting of the Legislative Assembly marks the most important step forward in the development of Democratic processes as well as the greatest single step in the progress of Korean self-government in South Korea.

The legislative Assembly is the public servant only of the people of South Korea, and through its establishment the American Command has high confidence of furthering the self-governing program for, by and of the South Korean people. With sincere service by the members of the Assembly itself, and the full support of the people of South Korea, the tempo of democratic progress in government will be greatly increased, pending the establishment of the Provisional Government of united Korea by the Joint US-Soviet Commission.

With the opening of this great assembly, the people have for the first time a law making body, a body free to discuss and study the many Korean problems and devise ways and means according to the wishes and psychology of the people to make for better social and economic life. In addition to its legislative status this body will be an open forum for free discussion of Korean affairs through which the Korean people can make known their wishes. As elected and selected representatives of the people, this Assembly takes on great responsibilities which I have full confidence that it will faithfully discharge.

Discharge of our sacred duties here will not be easy. In study of all problems, we will have to seek facts as opposed to rumors and propaganda. We will have to study carefully and think through proposed reforms

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clearly to determine their final effect on the future welfare of the nation. We will have to hear all sides of every question in order to insure sound judgement in final action. We will have to set aside any purely political ideas where they conflict with the welfare of the country, and unite behind those reforms for the general good. We must rise above party politics and avoid action tied strictly to party lines, concentrating on the national welfare.

Progress in truly democratic practices and true representation of the people in government must go on unimpeded. Therefore, I charge this Legislative Assembly as one of its first duties to provide laws and machinery whereby all adult Southern Koreans will, at an early date, be able able to exercise direct universal suffrage in the election of an all-elected national legislative body as well as in election of key officials on all levels. Through this process I foresee progress in representative democracy beyond the highest hope of most of those who hear my voice.