meeting of Catholic Bishops in Rome in the mid-1970s. In his presentation, John Paul II, working in the Dignitatis Humanae, the Declaration on Religious Liberty, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in December, 1965 after five drafts and two years of vigorous debate. Called by the Pope to the Vatican City, his pontificate began with a visit to the Vatican a deep understanding and a genuine admiration for the guarantees established by the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights. It may have been indirect but there is no doubt that the American experience, dating back to the Toleration Act of 1649, found a responsive echo in St. Peter’s Basilica.

If there was any question about this new initiative it was resoundingly dispelled by our new Pope, John Paul II, in 1979 during the very first year of his pontificate. Here was a man whose only fellow seminarian was snatched in the night and executed by the Gestapo precisely because he was a Catholic seminarian. He was later ordained a priest, who later prevailed over the disabilities imposed upon him and his flock by an atheistic Communist regime.

In his papal letter Redemptor Hominis, John Paul II would recall and reaffirm that Vatican Council document and again declare that the right to religious freedom together with the right to the freedom of conscience is not only a theological concept but is one also “reached from the point of view of natural law, that is to say, from the purely human perspective, the basis of all human rights given by man’s own experience, his reason and his sense of human dignity.” (Redemptor Hominis, 17)

For over 20 years, on every continent, again and again the Holy Father has stressed that the human dignity of each individual is the basis for all law.

Within the last year, in his New Year’s message, addressing people of good will everywhere the Pope reiterated his conviction that “when the promotion of the dignity of the human person, the conviction of conscience and the search for the common good is the overriding commitment” (World Day of Peace Message, 1999, 1) the right to life, to religious freedom, of citizens to participate in the life of their community, the right of ethnic groups and national minorities to exist along with those rights to self-fulfillment covering educational, economic and peace issues become possible.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, intimately associated with the United Nations Charter, affirms the innate dignity of all members of the human family along with the equality and inalienability of their rights. Even though these ideals are being blatantly ignored in many places across the globe, here in this land we must not ignore the unique opportunity we have to solidify the principle enunciated and developed in the Church’s teaching that “human rights stem from the inherent dignity and worth of the human person.” (Cf. In particular the Vienna Declaration, May 1973)

CRAFTING principles is easy in comparison to applying them to the extraordinary complexities of modern life. Mistakes have been made and in some cases of both church and state there have been excesses of evangelistic zeal; in the halls of justice nobody seems proud of the Dred Scott decision. We live in an imperious world where people do not expect God-lowering and timid law-abiding closing.

There will always be tension between church and state. This tension, in many ways, creates a safety valve. It is, after all, the line that this tension disappears that we should worry.

In the enactment and administration of civil laws, people of faith do not expect privileges but they do expect fairness. George Orwell in his classic, Animal Farm, coined the phrase that “all animals are created equal, but some are more equal than others.” Is there a danger that the devotes of secularism are “more equal” than those who are proud of the faith they profess? Do secular symbols enjoy more protection than religious symbols? In every age there are some who would like to have religion disappear.

As religion has proven itself remarkably durable, the next line of attack is the attempt to trivialize it into insignificance. It seems incredible but now and again there are those who maintain that believers have no right to participate in public life; or that they somehow be considered a danger to free religious and moral convictions upon which the United States was certainly not an effort towards the total absorption of all religious conviction from the public life. Through these years, Mayor Dobies' administrations have grappled with some basic suburban dilemmas, such as preserving open space while attracting development and keeping municipal services up and taxes down. Among his accomplishments, Mayor Dobies has secured flood-control measures and on-going capital projects and recreation areas, and overseen the construction of the borough’s Senior Citizen Housing complex.

Mayor Dobies is originally from Scranton, Pennsylvania, and attended the University of Scranton. He graduated with a degree in chemistry and philosophy, and ultimately joined basic training at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Georgia. After serving in the military
police corps overseas, Ronald and his wife Blanche returned to the United States.

Mayor Dobies has added to his impressive record of community service by demonstrating his abilities in the business world as well. He is currently the Director of Analytical Research for Wyeth-Ayerst Research in Pearling, New York. While this job is a full-time one, he still finds the time to devote between 30 and 40 hours each week to his responsibilities as Mayor. Each Friday night, Mayor Dobies hosts meetings with his constituents, a tradition he began during his first term. Mayor Dobies has won the respect of both Republicans and Democrats in his borough, and his non-contentious style has promoted a successful bipartisan spirit at all levels of government in Middlesex County. This year, Mayor Dobies will conclude his fifth term, and he hopes to return for a sixth next year. I look forward to his continued service in this office, and I extend my congratulations to him on his honor by the New Jersey Elected Officials Hall of Fame.

WORKER SAFETY AWARD FOR FORT JAMES MILL OF OLD TOWN

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce that this past June 2, 1999, the Fort James Corporation Paper Mills 2 was recognized for its impressive safety record of performance for the entire year of 1998. The award was presented by the Pulp & Paper Association, which honored the St. James Mill at its Awards Banquet at the Association’s annual Professional Development Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida. The award is the highest honor given for safety performance throughout the paper industry, and reflects the most improved safety record in the class of 56 mills working between one and to two million hours per year. Mr. President, the mill logged over 1.3 million work hours with an extremely low incidence of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recordable work injuries-only 21, yielding an exemplary incident rate of 3.2. This incident rate reflects that very few employees required any type of medical attention while carrying out their demanding jobs.

Further, in light of their accomplishments on behalf of the safety of the community and its people, the City of Old Town issued a resolution to the Fort James Corporation honoring its employees for their outstanding commitment. And at a follow-up picnic, mill employees were given a true Maine “thank you” as mill management, along with corporate environmental and safety leaders as well as local officials, helped out in cooking and serving a Celebration Picnic to all of the mill’s employees. Each employee was also presented with a gift in recognition of the worker safety accomplishments.

To the entire workforce and management at the Fort James Mill, I would like to add my congratulations and a sincere Maine thank you as well for their efforts in worker safety that have culminated in this well deserved award, and I thank the Chair.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERMONT DEVELOPMENT CREDIT UNION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, 10 years ago, Caryl Stewart, Executive Director of the Vermont Development Credit Union, had a dream for a grassroots community development “bank” to serve low and moderate income people in Vermont. He would have guessed them that her dream would become a growing credit union with over $1 million in assets and 5,000 members in 175 Vermont towns!

Through it all, the credit union, with Caryl at the center, has held true to its vision of serving lower income families and small business entrepreneurs in Vermont. Not just with loans, but also with the personal attention and counseling needed to ensure that loan recipients succeed, whatever their goals. It is that commitment to Vermonters and the communities they live in that has won the Credit Union the support and patronage of so many Vermont businesses and organizations. It has also won the organization support from far beyond Vermont’s borders. From Fannie Mae to the Community Development Financial Institutions program the Vermont Development Credit Union has received funding and won national recognition for its innovative lending and support programs.

Vermont Development came from very small beginnings in a very small city of our very small State. But like that State, it had very big ideas and has earned its place as a model for organizations providing credit and financial assistance to low and moderate income people throughout the country.

Happy Birthday, Vermont Development Credit Union and congratulations on 10 years of bringing hope and opportunity to thousands of Vermonters.

THE CONSTITUTION IN TODAY’S CLASSROOM

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an important matter brought to my attention by one of my constituents. I recently received a letter from G. Ross Darnell, and he pointed out the importance of educating our students about the Constitution at an early age. In his letter, though, he also mentioned that our educational system has not been performing well in this area. I agree with Mr. Darnell on both points.

The importance of education in preserving our liberties has been realized since the founding of our Republic. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison with his reflections on the new Constitution. In that letter he said, “I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.” Jefferson knew if the people were not aware of the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution they would be powerless to stop any encroachments upon them. I’m sure Mr. Jefferson would be quite alarmed at the state of ignorance today.

While it is a cliche that a generation always finds faults with the one which follows, there is no denying that in today’s schools the idealism of the Declaration of Independence, is the tragedy not only for students but also for the nation.

It’s also troubling to note that when constitutional history is discussed today, the Founding Fathers are portrayed as racist, sexist elitists. This caricature of the Founders, which fails to take into account how the Constitution was intended to balance the very foundation upon which our nation is built. To not devote sufficient space in textbooks or time in class to it is a tragedy not only for students but also for the nation.

How should this deficiency be addressed? I’m not here to suggest another federal program which would impose standards on the state and local school districts. I have long believed that curriculum is best determined by local school boards which are much closer to the people than we are here in the Congress.