

REMARKS

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STUDENT CONVOCATION - UPSALA COLLEGE

EAST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

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My fellow students, I always welcome the opportunity to speak on a college campus.

President Truman has often said that college audiences are the best audiences. They listen intently -- weighing each word with a scholarly mixture of skepticism and objectivity -- and then ask questions that make you wish you had stayed in Washington. And he is right.

As a refugee from the classroom -- a former professor of political science -- I am careful to keep my academic credentials in order by regularly facing campus audiences.

I must say that, in the past few years, I have found changes on the campus. Ten years ago most students were primarily concerned with their own well-being and security. It was "Me First."

But this is not true today. This is the era of committed young Americans.

Today's college students are less introspective and more outward-looking, less unconcerned and more involved in the political and social issues of the day than at any other time in our history.

You are in the forefront in the battle to restore civil rights, correct social injustice, and enhance human dignity.

You comprise the majority of volunteer workers helping to teach the illiterate, train the unskilled, and administer to the sick and poor.

What motivates our students today to become involved?

I believe it is the same motivation that has inspired us to seek a Great Society -- a realization that today we have our best chance in history to better the human condition.

The Great Society is not a welfare state, but a state of opportunity.

Man must possess opportunity in tangible terms to develop his abilities to the fullest, if he is to be truly free.

Some men may choose to squander their opportunities. But all men must be given the chance to lead meaningful and satisfying lives.

The Great Society is based on the proposition that every American shall have that chance.

We are now, in unity, fully developing our most important resources: our human resources.

President Johnson has proposed -- and your Congress is passing -- legislation to help create the freedom and security we seek.

Programs have begun to provide adequate medical care . . . to better educate our children . . . to eradicate poverty . . . to give every American truly equal rights under the law and in reality. These are investments in our future.

These are costly investments.

But the cost of national problems like illiteracy, school dropouts, poverty, delinquency, and yes -- discrimination -- is far greater than the cost of our efforts to overcome these problems.

We spend 450 dollars a year per child in our public schools. But we spend 1800 dollars a year to keep a

delinquent in a detention home . . . 2500 dollars a year for a family on relief . . . 3500 dollars a year for an inmate in state prison.

We are making the necessary investments so that all in our society can be productive. Poor and uneducated people are poor consumers. They are a drain on our economy. They are wasted resources.

My friends, no opportunity is more vital to the future of our nation than the chance to receive a good education.

Thomas Jefferson once said: "If you expect a nation to be ignorant and free, you expect what never was and never will be."

In the past 65 years we have made impressive progress in expanding educational opportunities.

In 1900, four Americans in every hundred between the ages of 13 and 21 attended college.

In 1961 it was more than thirty-two. In 1900 rich and poor alike, if adequately qualified, had the right to attend college, but how much real choice existed?

By 1900 standards, seven-eighths of you would not be here listening to me. Seven-eighths of you would not be looking forward to putting your education to creative use in the years ahead.

You are still among a privileged minority in this country. Each year more than 100 thousand of our brightest high school graduates do not go to college because opportunities have not been expanded.

And what of the million young people who leave high school each year because we fail to make learning an exciting and challenging experience?

What of the 400 thousand new classrooms needed to absorb the young minds coming to our elementary and secondary schools in the next five years?

President Johnson proposed in his historic education message to the Congress that we declare a national goal of Full Educational Opportunity.

The evidence indicates that the American people support his goal. This year -- for the first time -- public opinion polls show that Americans consider educational opportunities to be their most important domestic concern.

This feeling reflects a growing realization of the cost of inadequate or incomplete education -- in terms of wasted talent and resources.

Inadequate education leads to unemployment:

The high school dropout is twice as likely to be unemployed as the high school graduate, and five times as likely as the college graduate.

Inadequate education leads to poverty: Two-thirds of the families in which the father had less than eight years of schooling find themselves locked in economic hopelessness.

Inadequate education perpetuates itself in future generations: The children of the unemployed and poor become themselves unemployed and poor.

The American people want bold and creative efforts in education. And the Congress has responded to their demands.

The 89th Congress has enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Bill of 1965 that will help more than 48 million school children. It provides one and a third

billion dollars for elementary and secondary education. (24 million dollars will come into New Jersey). More than a billion dollars will be devoted specifically to helping the children of the poor.

This Bill will attack other problems -- old problems extending beyond help to the poor.

It provides funds for elementary and secondary school libraries.

It helps local schools acquire up-to-date textbooks and teaching materials.

It authorizes the development of community education centers to enable students of all ages to supplement and continue their education in new and imaginative ways.

It provides for greater educational research and development -- an area of serious neglect in recent years.

Our President has also ~~pp~~posed a comprehensive program of assistance for colleges and universities. The Johnson Administration's Higher Education Bill provides undergraduate scholarship grants of up to eight hundred dollars a year for high school graduates from low income families. It establishes a student loan insurance fund and extends the National Defense Education loans program for an additional three years.

This legislation establishes a five-year program to help colleges and universities acquire library materials and trained library personnel.

It authorizes a program to help colleges and universities develop more effective adult education and extension courses. And, finally, it establishes a program to assist smaller colleges in strengthening their academic programs.

These Acts, together with the Vocational Education Amendments, the Manpower Training and Development Act, and The Teaching Professions Act, have done more for American education than any in our history.

We want to help students. And to do so, we have looked beyond conflicts that have divided us in the past -- regional conflicts, federal-state conflicts and church-state conflicts -- to confront the real challenge: The education of millions and the future of our country.

I am proud to say that your distinguished Governor, my friend Dick Hughes, has confronted the education problems here in New Jersey with this same spirit of boldness and determination. He has brought you medical schools for the first time in your state's history -- at Rutgers and Seton Hall . . . he has increased state college scholarships 400 per cent and established a

new system of community colleges. I know that the people of New Jersey will continue to support such programs.

My fellow students, the foundations of this Republic rest on a people capable of accepting the burden of choice -- a people who can assume voluntarily the burden of freedom.

Our founders accepted that responsibility. And they changed the world. Today a similar opportunity is within our grasp -- the chance to more nearly complete this task in America.

The Great Society offers our people the rare opportunity of self-fulfillment. Let us, then, accept seriously our obligation to liberate the human spirit in America and embrace the responsibilities of freedom.

- 13 -

Today we are embarked on one of the greatest adventures in our history -- to join in the creative task of building the America begun but never complete.

I am confident that we will continue to move forward with the help and support of all our people.

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