

Excerpts of Remarks By
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

Veterans High School Commencement

Washington, D. C.
June 12, 1962

I am honored to be with you tonight,
sharing ~~a part of~~ the proud moment which
belongs to you.

And as a United States Senator, I find
deep satisfaction in witnessing this Commencement
ceremony.

It is not often that a legislator can
see^{so}₁ clearly the dramatic result of his
efforts and his votes in Congress.

Our job in Congress is to work for programs

~~hand~~
which are needed, We seldom have the time
to consider the programs which are already
established.

At the end of World War II, there was
a clear need for new legislation to
establish a new program -- a program to
offer educational opportunities to those
who served their Nation in the Armed Forces.

Congress acted wisely, and the Nation
and millions of veterans took a big step
ahead with what we fondly labeled the
"G.I. Bill."

At the end of the Korean War, we faced
a new need -- the extension of the G.I. Bill

to include veterans who had served their
nation and the cause of freedom in another
time of crisis and conflict.

As a Senator, I did not hesitate for
a moment to work for Congressional approval
of legislation extending educational benefits
to veterans. *Co Sponsor*

And tonight -- thanks to you -- I am
permitted to see the dramatic evidence that
Congress was right and that my vote for the
G.I. Bill was wise.

Right now, you who are being graduated
from Veterans High School are better men and
more effective citizens because of your education.

You earned this moment of pride
yourselves, and you earned this new
effectiveness with your own study and effort.

~~But perhaps you will permit me a bit of
personal satisfaction to say that the
legislation for which I voted opened the
way for you to help yourselves to a better
life and more effective careers.~~

There is no doubt that the action of
Congress to extend educational benefits to
veterans was a wise step. But, frankly, I
sometimes find myself disagreeing with
others over the question ^{and we ask,} "Why was this
legislation for the G.I. Bill wise?"

Some say that the program was necessary to keep returning veterans busy, and to reduce unemployment.

Others say that the G.I. Bill is a sort of a prize -- an extra little dividend for those who have served in the Armed Forces.

There is a bit of truth to both statements, but I believe the real reason and the basic justification for the G.I. Bill goes much deeper.

To me, the most precious and valuable asset this nation has is not ^{financial} wealth, or valuable natural resources, or a growing economy, or a mighty military arsenal.

all important

Our most valuable asset -- our
greatest strength -- is our people.

And our greatest hope for the future
rests with this Nation's young people, with
you.

The G.I. Bill rests solidly on that
principle. It is an investment in America's
future. And it is the wisest possible
investment because it builds the skills
and the effectiveness of individual Americans.

~~That is why I have supported the G.I. Bill.~~

The results of our investment have been
spectacular.

Since the end of World War II, millions

of veterans have been educated to new
skills, new trades and new occupations
through the G.I. Bill.

They have been given the tools of
knowledge to enable them to provide better
lives for themselves and their families.

And they have built a stronger America,
a more dynamic America, and a more exciting
America in which to live.

Seventeen years ago, this Nation was
just beginning to knock on the door of the
jet age.

Today, America has passed through the
jet age and is well on its way into the

Space age - Need Educated
People

Space Age.

L Seventeen years ago, this Nation was just beginning to utilize a new "wonder drug" called penicillin.

Today, new medical techniques and drugs have extended the life span and medical science is closing in on what we once called "incurable" diseases.

L Seventeen years ago, we were forced to ration food.

L Today, the work and the skills of our farmers have built the greatest agricultural abundance and capacity in the history of mankind.

L Seventeen years ago, this Nation was taking the first, tentative steps to help the people of war-torn nations to recovery.

L Today, Western Europe stands as a prosperous and dynamic ally in the struggle against totalitarianism.

L And seventeen years ago, we were wondering if the average worker or small businessman or farmer could survive the expected post-war recession.

L Today, the American people enjoy the highest standard of living of any people in history.

L These general, national achievements

have not been natural or spontaneous.

They have been won by hard work and
determined effort. They have been earned --
in large measure -- by veterans who grasped
the opportunity for education and then
contributed their new skills to their
communities, their nation and the Free World.

And let me pause a moment to say that
I am not just commending the veterans who
have been at the forefront of our dramatic
achievements. I am not just talking about
men such as John Glenn who carried this
nation into the Space Age or Jonas Salk
who carried mankind away from the crippling

effects of polio.

I speak of -- and commend -- all of
our veterans who have contributed their
work and skills to our progress -- the
carpenter, the electrician, the farmer,
the mechanic, the small businessman.

For these are the real people of
America. And you are among them. You
are builders. You -- who took of the duty
of soldiers for war -- are now citizens
for peace.

Today, you face exciting challenges.
And I would fail the traditional purpose
of the commencement speaker if I did not

remind you of them.

As educated men and as American citizens,
you have two basic obligations.

The first is the quest for excellence.

Do well

This is an obligation for all of us.

It does not matter what job we hold, or what

trade we pursue. Whatever we do, our goal

should be the highest quality of work -- *of Performance* --
and excellence of result and achievement.

This is the tradition of America. We
are not a nation which has been satisfied
with "adequate" work. We are not a nation
which is content to pursue an "OK" philosophy.

This age, in particular, demands an "A-OK"

performance not just from our astronauts,
but from all citizens.

└ If this nation is to remain strong,
if the United States is to grow and prosper
and secure freedom, all of our citizens
must strive to realize the best that is in
them. — and all *muscle power*

└ And the best that is in every man
should be applied to his job and his daily
work.

└ Personally, I have far more respect
for a mechanic or a carpenter who exerts
his best effort in his work than I do for a
careless scientist or -- for that matter --

an indifferent Senator.

h The second -- and equally important --
obligation you face is continuing service
to your fellow men.

I do not speak of military service. I
speak of service to your community.

L Service to the community can take many
forms. It can be channeled through your
church, or through a neighborhood association,
or through a labor union or trade association,
or by an individual effort.

L My purpose is not to advise you of the
precise details and methods of community
service. It is to challenge you to find the

best way to serve, to help and to improve
the community in which you live.

I assume that many -- and perhaps
most of you -- will settle permanently
in this city.

The challenge in Washington, D.C., for
community service is pressing. ~~This Capital~~

~~City of the United States is, tragically,~~
~~far behind most other cities of its size~~

~~in many different ways.~~

~~I believe that~~ Real and enduring progress
cannot be won for the people of this city
until they are granted the basic right of
representative government, or "Home Rule."

Home
Rule!

There are many of us in the Congress who will continue the fight for Home Rule in Washington. We will not give up. And someday we will win.

But until then, the individual citizens of this city must work all the harder to gain the progress of which Washington is capable. They must work with a sense of dedicated, unselfish service until Washington is the proud city and the proud National Capitol it should be.

Let me end with a brief example of service which should challenge us all.

In recent weeks, I have been deeply

disturbed to learn that the supply of
textbooks and library books in many of
the schools of the District of Columbia

Books

is shockingly inadequate.

And about a month ago, I met with a
group of high school and junior high school
students who have banded together to lobby
for better facilities in District of
Columbia schools.

These young people -- most of them in
their mid-teens -- have worked hard.

They have spent their precious spare hours
not at play but in a project to survey books
needs in District schools. They have come

up to Capitol Hill to seek support from
Washington's "city council" -- the Congress.

↳ They won my support. And they won my
determination to seek an increased appropriation
for books for District schools.

↳ The example of these young people is
compelling. They have had little experience.

They did not start with any influential
"contacts" or "pull." They had no ^{directive} ~~supervision~~
from adults or teachers.

↳ But they did and do have what I hope
all the citizens of this city and this nation
will soon develop -- a sense of service to
their community.

Once again, thank you for letting me

share this proud evening with you.

Congratulations to each of you. Good
luck to all of you.

(END)



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org