

7 June 1967

REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY GRADUATION USNA

I was for a moment somewhat perplexed as to how I might address you and how I might open this ceremony, at least my part of it. But I am very fortunate today to be able to begin my message to you with a message from your Commander in Chief, a message from the President of the United States. And it is my honor and privilege to read it to you.

"It is a pleasure for me to extend my best wishes as you complete your college education.

"You are graduating into a society in which you will be warmly welcomed. Our country has never had so great a need for high educated men and women. Never have young Americans moved from the campus into a world offering so broad a range of opportunities for individual fulfillment and contribution to the welfare of humanity.

"Your generation of students has been distinguished by its fresh and vigorous concern for the quality of American life and its commitment to American democracy. Perhaps the greatest opportunity awaiting you is the challenge to make this a life-long commitment.

"Today, Americans from every walk of life are striving together to shape a society that can offer a meaningful and rewarding life to all of its members. Never have so many of our countrymen been so deeply dedicated to eradicating the old evils of ignorance, poverty, and bigotry from every corner of the land.

"Through your years of study, you have prepared yourselves for positions of leadership in this quest for a better America.

"I congratulate you, and urge you to take full advantage of that opportunity.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON"

Gentlemen of the Class of 1967 it is to you that I direct my remarks. In the spirit of that message, let me call your attention to the future.

My friend and your friend Bob Hope, in addressing the commencement at Georgetown University some years ago said something like this. He said, "We are sending you out into a world. You are being asked to go into a troubled world." And then in his unique sense of humor he said, "my advice, is don't go."

But gentlemen you have no choice. And my advice to you is go, and go willing and go with that same spirit that has characterized your years of study and training here at this great Academy. You are indeed an honored class and you have honored the traditions of this great institution.

For you a future is one of dedicated service. That's your future. Its a future of sacrifice too but its also a future of duty, of responsibility, of leadership for which you have been trained. And May I add that leadership today is not a luxury. Hardly is it a privilege. It is indeed a burden and it is one that you must take willingly. So I commend to you that future because you can fashion it. Fashion it as you will. When your generation, and I am interested in your generation for several reasons. You are going to have al awful lot to say about the next 33 years of this the 20th century. This is the last third of the 20th Century you know. Only 33 years from now our familiar 20th Century will end and a new century will begin. You are going to be in charge of many things including my medicare so I want you to be sure that you know exactly what your duties are.

Now there are those who predict that we'll never make it alive through this century, much less the next. They predict that the nuclear Armageddon, the nuclear holecaust is bound to come, these men of little faith.

But there are others and I am proud and happy to say that I am among them, who believe that the year 2000 which is just around the corner for you can bring not only a new century but it can bring the beginning of a new millenium of human hope, of human

aspirations, and of happiness. And it is this characteristic of cautious optimism, prudent optimism, which I hope that you will maintain forever. Because the history of this republic commends it to you. And what the future will offer will depend in a large measure on what we Americans do with our time.

A discussion of present and future progress in these days almost always seems to be stated in terms of scientific and technological wonder or horror...comfort or cataclysm.

We seem to be people of at least extremes in speech and description. And then too that future is generally characterized largely in terms of the quantitative: How much? How Many? How big? How far? How fast? We constantly equate our country with gross national products, television sets, scientific papers, jobs. But might I add that there is something else to a future besides this.

A noted Englishman, author, prophet and cynic, Thomas Huxley, wrote when he visited us a century ago these words: I cannot say that I am in the slightest degree impressed with your bogness, or by your material resources, as such. Size is not grandeur, and territory does not make a nation. The great issue, about which hangs the terror of overhanging fate, is what are you going to do with all of these things?" And my fellow Americans that is the issue. With our power, with our wealth, with our history, with our incredible science and technology, with our learning, what are we going to do with all of these things. Because the end of life is not knowledge alone but action. Today more and more Americans are asking Huxley's question to themselves. With our power and resources and our great creative capacity magnified a thousand times, what are we going to do with all of these things?

Now if the achievements of America are to be no more than the hardware of science and the machinery of technology and the extension of material abundance, I do not believe that we will have fulfilled our mission, or our destiny. We will, in fact, have made only a minor contribution to mankind. Because other societies also can make that contribution.

But more important than machines, and the wealth that they produce, are the people, the quality of the people and what happens to the people who inhabit this earth and the rights that they possess or should possess.

Gentlemen of this Class of 1967 you are the custodians of those rights as well, may I say, as the guarantors of even greater rights.

Let me say a word about this drama of the extension of and the attainment of what we call the rights of man. If a future historian were to set out to trace the preservation and the realization of the rights of man in this millennium, of the 20th Century or the 19th Century, he would be able to describe a pattern of progress. Why he could start, for example, with the Middle Ages where only the ruling classes had any rights. He could dwell on the significance of the Magna Carta, defining the rights and the duties of kings and barons, and becoming the symbol of the rule of law for succeeding kings.

And he would note I suppose even the enactment by the British Parliament in 1689, of what they called their "Bill of Rights," which declared the rights and liberties of British subjects under the crown.

And I would hope that that historian would give a full page and preferably a full chapter to the American Constitution of 1789 and the amendments added by the first Congress in 1791, and how they became known throughout this country and throughout the world as the American Bill of Rights. They would be spelled out as we know them so well in the historian's page: The right of the free exercise of religion, freedom of conscience, of free speech and press, the right to assemble and to petition the government, and the right to be secure against unreasonable searches, the right of trial by jury, and there would even be more.

That historian of the future would relate two patterns of development which have followed in your time, in my time. How America itself, through the Congress and the courts, has refined and

extended all of these rights to all of its citizens, one of the great achievements of American democracy. And how other peoples have been inspired by this example and how they have learned and fought for the same rights.

Remember, gentlemen, rising expectations are a reality at home and abroad and it is to the eternal credit of this republic which you symbolize that rising expectations shall be fulfilled.

Now then, what of the future? What will our future historian report as the role of America in extending the rights of man as this millenium, the 20th Century, raced to a close?

Permit me to suggest a hopeful, hypothetical paragraph in that new history book yet to be written. In the bland, detached prose of the scholar, that historian might write the following words about our United States in the year 1967:

Here's what I think he will say: "It was a time of crisis and challenge for the United States. While seeking to improve its own standards for its own people and to redefine its own rights at home, for its own people that nation was tested as never before, tested as it sacrificed to protect and extend human rights to other areas of the world as it stood guard at the gates of freedom. This will be the measure of its greatness.

And then in conclusion, we would hope that that historian would set down this final line in that paragraph.

"America met the test."

Now there are those that say history cannot be made; that it must be accepted. That it is somehow or another preordained. But we Americans have never looked upon human history with fatalism or a sense of despair. We have never written off the future to the winds of chance and the whims of nature. As I have said to many a student that it has been my privilege to work with, it is good to study history, you should and you had to, but gentlemen, it is even better to make it. Make it in your own image. Make it in your own time. Make it with your own hearts and spirits and with your own hands. But you and I know that before the act of the making there

must be the vision.

So what are the rights -- and what are the corresponding responsibilities -- because rights carry with them responsibilities. These two great structures represent the pillars of freedom, rights and responsibilities.

So what are the rights which man may envision in the century ahead, which he may work towards today. But first of all, in the past we equated man's life with protection against coercion by his government.

The protection of the people against abuse by authority but in a world where destruction is only a half-hour away, as the intercontinental missile flies, and the world that we know of today in the headlines of this morning's press, we all know that man's rights are affected by forces far beyond those possessed by his own immediate government.

We are no longer just children of America. No longer just citizens of this republic. We are people of the world. The events of this week underscore this fact of interdependence. We know that every major event -- or trend -- taking place on this earth sends ripples outward to all places. And sometimes it's like a tidal wave that engulfs nations and people.

This is what Wendall Wilke said it was. One world, and it will ever become even more so, smaller, more constricted, much more your world.

If we wish man's life therefore to be nourished and not to wither, then I submit that we must move beyond the goals of merely helping mankind resist the incursions on his life, of his immediate government. We must move beyond the business of the protection of rights to a much more positive doctrine. To the assertion of rights and the extension of them.

In short, we must help man become not just protected, but liberated.

Emancipated so that he can realize his potential.

Now does this seem to be a new and revolutionary doctrine? You know you have to be careful these days. Well let me say frankly to this graduating class, it is revolutionary, within the frame of reference of your revolutionary. But it is hardly new. It is, in fact, the doctrine of Thomas Jefferson. Its the doctrine that proclaims "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as the inalienable rights of all men.

Gentlemen, you about to be commissioned with the high honors of this republic, life is more than mere existence, and survival. Liberty that we want is not only to be proclaimed, but it must be practiced. And happiness that Jefferson spoke of and that we know of is found in the rich life of men who are both secure and free. We do not settle merely for survival. Nor is it enough merely to have the philosophical belief in liberty. We want happiness. Richness, the fullness of a meaningful life.

We know through our own experience that the rights of man are never real unless they are constantly reasserted. We have seen what happens to them when they are left to fend for themselves.

We know that the rights of man are a never-ending unfinished business, just as America is a nation never-finished, a destination never quite reached.

The quest for the rights of man can never end at our own doorway. Nor can it be pursued in any narrow, nationalistic, protective sense.

Therefore, I hope you will not consider me presumptuous Gentlemen, if I say here and now that we Americans must dedicate ourselves to a new Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for the 21st Century -- rights and responsibilities, pillars of freedom, which fit new times and new circumstances. The times and circumstances of your time, of your future.

What are some of these? They are familiar to you because we build on the past.

The first right, gentlemen, is the right to peace -- so that man may live and hope free from the threat of those who would march to power through brute force. This is a precious right for which you may well give your life.

The right to justice -- so that man may stand before his peers and his society on truly just and equal basis with his neighbor.

And the right to free expression -- unfettered, so that man may speak and be heard, despite the decisions and beliefs of any temporary compact majority.

The right to the search for knowledge -- for education, so that no man may remain another's slave through the denial of potential skill or education.

The right to public accountability -- so that man may remain the master of the state, rather than the state the master of the man.

The right to a meaningful role in society -- so that man may follow his own cadence, set his own step and live with self-respect and dignity among his fellow citizens.

And gentlemen, the right to full opportunity -- so that man may lift himself to the limits of his ability, no matter what the color of his skin, the tenets of his religion, or his so-called social class.

The right to a wholesome environment, clean air, clean water, safe streets, and a decent neighborhood.

The right to public compassion -- so that he may live with the knowledge that his health and his well-being and his old-age and loneliness are the concern, not only of himself, but of his society.

The right to movement and free associations -- so that man may freely move and choose his friends without coercive restraints.

And the right to privacy -- so that man may be free of the heavy hand of the snoopers, the watchers and the listeners.

The right to rest and recreation -- so that the necessity of labor may not be permitted to cripple human development, and the experience of cultural relaxation and fulfillment.

Gentlemen, these are some of the rights that we seek and there are more I am sure but this is a big order in itself and we must continue to seek these rights, to make alive every one of them and make them real for ourselves and for others. But these rights will not be achieved at home or even in the world without the exercise of consonant responsibility by those of us who are fortunate enough to possess most of them.

Then what are the responsibilities of modern man? Because so many of we Americans like to talk of our rights, but we hesitate to speak of our responsibilities. Citizenship includes both. Freedom requires both.

The responsibility to participate, to participate in every aspect of life -- lest critical initiative and decisions be left to those who would bend them to their own use.

The responsibility to speak out -- lest silence in the face of injustice be interpreted as its acceptance.

The responsibility of public service which you symbolize today by your very presence -- lest service be to self rather than to fellow man.

The responsibility to support the rule of law -- lest the law of the jungle at home and abroad become the pattern of human behavior.

The responsibility to protect the ideals that we believe in in the face of force -- lest ideals be lost and violence become a habit, and spread throughout the earth.

The responsibility to respect and defend the rights of others -- lest freedom become license, and opportunity be changed into coercion.

And these responsibilities, I might add, are nowhere more clearly spelled out than in those two remarkable documents for the future: The Charter of the United Nations being tested now once

again and the recent Encyclical of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI where he reminds us of our duties and tells us that development is but another name for peace.

Both of these documents point the way to your future responsibilities, the responsibilities of our blessed America and all other free nations. They point the way to the creative, constructive work that will be necessary if peace with freedom is ever to be achieved. And that peace with freedom means the work of nation building, of peace keeping, of self-sacrifice in the cause of mankind.

I know there are certain self-styled realists who believe that both the United Nations Charter and the Pope's Encyclical are the documents of dreamers. Unrealistic they say. But I say they are not only realistic they are essential. For it is more unrealistic gentlemen to expect man to survive through the years ahead if the purpose of these historic documents go unheeded. Man has created the means of his own destruction. He must now create the moral force in his own spirit for his own salvation.

Now a final thought. I have been speaking to you of rights and responsibilities. And who better should hear the message than those who are the guardians of those rights and those who take on such heavy responsibility.

And I have said to you that these rights and responsibilities represent pillars of freedom. They truly are the superstructure that makes our life worthwhile. But in essence my remarks have been directed also to the necessity for the security of peoples and lands in this modern and yet changing world. The two are intrincically linked. Security in the broadest sense of our aspirations is not possible without freedom and freedom is not attainable without the security of peoples and nations. Security is the physical well-being of man. Freedom is the realm of his mind and his soul. We can never focus our efforts on one without the attention to the other. And what better moment is there to focus attention upon those things of the mind and the spirit than at a time of

graduation. At a time of commissioning when you take on a new life, new responsibilities and the guardianship of our precious rights. The pillars of our nation's freedom for me are not therefore to be described only in historic academic, economic, military or even moral terms. The pillars of American freedom are the people of this nation all of them. Our strength rests on the individual dignity and the freedom of the almost 200 million Americans, Americans of all persuasions, creeds, races, ages. Americans who quietly support the majority and Americans who on occasions decent from it, but Americans all.

And Gentlemen if the freedom of any Americans is denied him our total strength is diminished. And our total national freedom becomes unbalanced and thus incomplete. Our American freedom therefore is only as secure as the freedom of our most obscure and humble citizen, and I happen to believe that freedom in the world is only as secure as the freedom of the newest, the humblest nations and the people within it.

Carl Sandburg, the great American poet, wrote these words: "Who shall speak for the people, who speaks for the family of man."

Gentlemen and fellow Americans I think that we as Americans can give only one answer. We have spoken and we shall continue to do so for we are a nation of nation-builders, not nation-destroyers. We are life-givers, not life-takers. We are educators, not tyrants. We are the children of peace, not the parents of violence. And we must never lose sight of this our heritage, of our purpose. I give you the words of the wartime president in World War I, Woodrow Wilson, statesman and scholar, man of spirit and will. Words that I believe ring with eternal truth and words for us to live by. And words which I hope will be in your hearts and minds and spirits through the days of your life.

"America," said Wilson "will come into the full light of day when all shall know that she puts human rights above all other rights and that her flag is the flag not only of America but of humanity."

This is our purpose. This is our goal. And I am happy to look out upon an audience and a graduating class, the gentlemen of the Class of 1967, and know that you gentlemen have a better appreciation and realization of Wilson's dream and hope than any generation of Americans in the history of our country.

I salute you. I commend you and may the Good Lord bless you in all the days of your service.

Thank you.



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