

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
THE HONORABLE BOB DOLE
HARVEYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
HARVEYVILLE, KANSAS
THURSDAY, MAY 22, 1969

BY GRADUATING TODAY FROM HIGH SCHOOL, YOU HAVE REACHED A PLATEAU IN LIFE. SOME OF YOU WILL GO ON TO COLLEGE WHILE OTHERS WILL SELECT A VOCATION WHICH IS COMMENSURATE WITH YOUR ABILITIES. WHATEVER COURSE YOU TAKE, YOU WILL ALL FIND YOURSELVES LIVING IN A WORLD MUCH DIFFERENT THAN YOUR PARENTS FOUND AT YOUR AGE.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF OUR AGE HAS BROKEN DOWN MANY OF THE GEOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS THAT PREVIOUSLY EXISTED IN OUR COUNTRY AND THE WORLD. TONIGHT, WE ARE ONLY THREE HOURS FROM EITHER COAST, OR 9 HOURS FROM EUROPE, OR SOUTH AMERICA. WHAT HAPPENS IN VIETNAM OR PARIS IS INSTANTLY AVAILABLE THROUGH OUR RADIO OR TELEVISION NETWORKS. WE HAVE HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS THAT 20 YEARS AGO WERE NOT ANYTHING MORE THAN DRAWINGS IN A SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.

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WHILE TECHNOLOGY HAS BROUGHT MANY BENEFITS TO OUR SOCIETY, IT HAS ALSO CREATED PROBLEMS WITH WHICH YOUR GENERATION IS GOING TO HAVE TO GRAPPLE. OUR TRANSCONTINENTAL JETS CARRY US ACROSS THE COUNTRY AT BREATHTAKING SPEEDS ONLY TO ARRIVE AT AIRPORTS WHERE THE PLANES MUST PLACE THEMSELVES IN A HOLDING PATTERN BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY TRAFFIC. OUR INNER CITIES ARE SUFFERING FROM A FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE URBAN POPULATION EXPLOSION. INDUSTRY, WHICH CREATED YOUR CONVENIENT HOME APPLIANCES, ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO WATER AND AIR POLLUTION.

YOU MAY SAY, THESE PROBLEMS ARE NOT RELEVANT TO MY LIFE. TO THIS, I WOULD SAY THAT WHATEVER YOU DECIDE IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOU TO DO UPON GRADUATION, YOU MUST BE CONCERNED WITH THE WORLD AROUND YOU. TECHNOLOGY HAS MADE US DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER. AS WE CAN FLY TO EUROPE OR HEAR ABOUT THE WAR IN VIETNAM, TECHNOLOGY REQUIRES THAT WE BE INFORMED ON EUROPEAN PROBLEMS OR THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATING A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE VIETNAM WAR.

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DRAFT SYSTEM

DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE WAR AND UNDOUBTEDLY OF INTEREST TO YOUNG MEN OF DRAFT AGE, IS THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL FOR CHANGING THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM. THE DRAFT WAS INSTITUTED IN 1941 AS A TEMPORARY EMERGENCY MEASURE DUE TO THE EXIGENCIES OF AN IMPENDING WAR, BUT HAS REMAINED WITH US AS AN INSTITUTION. IT SEEMS TO YOUR GENERATION THAT WE HAVE ALWAYS HAD A DRAFT AND A LARGE ARMY, BUT THE FACTS ARE THAT MAINTENANCE OF A LARGE STANDING ARMY IS A RELATIVELY NEW PHENOMENON. BEFORE WORLD WAR II OUR ENTIRE ARMED FORCE CONSISTED OF ABOUT 139,000 MEN. WE WERE UP TO 8 MILLION DURING THE WAR WHICH WAS, OF COURSE, NECESSARY. BUT IN 1950, EVEN AFTER THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS OF THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION, OUR ARMED FORCES CONSISTED OF ONLY APPROXIMATELY 600,000 MEN. AND WHAT IS THE SITUATION TODAY? THREE AND ONE-HALF MILLION MEN ARE IN UNIFORM.

BECAUSE OF THE DEMANDS OF THE VIETNAM WAR, IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO INSTITUTE A FULLY VOLUNTEER ARMY UNTIL THE FIGHTING ABATES CONSIDERABLY. FOR THIS REASON, I JOINED WITH OTHER SENATORS AND CO-SPONSORED LEGISLATION REVISING THE PRESENT DRAFT SYSTEM. THE PRESIDENT

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HAS RECOGNIZED THAT THE SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE REFORMS, AND HAS PROPOSED CHANGES THAT WILL PROVIDE INTERIM RELIEF.

IN PARTICULAR, UNDER THE PRESENT SYSTEM, SOME YOUNG MEN CAN AVOID THE DRAFT ENTIRELY THROUGH DISCRIMINATORY DEFERMENTS. UNDER THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL ALL MALES WOULD HAVE AN EQUAL CHANCE OF BEING DRAFTED. EACH SELECTIVE SERVICE YEAR A NATIONAL LOTTERY WOULD BE HELD FOR THOSE WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY REACHED THE AGE OF 19. THESE YOUNG MEN WOULD BE SUBJECT TO CALL THROUGH A RANDOM SLECTION OF BIRTHDATES.

ALTHOUGH IT IS CONTENDED BY SOME THAT STUDENT DEFERMENTS ADD AN ELEMENT OF UNFAIRNESS TO THE RANDOM SELECTION PROCEDURE, THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL DOES NOT ALLOW THE STUDENT TO ESCAPE THE POOL OF POTENTIAL DRAFTEES. UPON REACHING THE AGE OF 19 OR 20 THE STUDENT WOULD BE GIVEN HIS SEQUENCE NUMBER, DEFERRED UNTIL HE COMPLETES HIS UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION OR A YEAR OF GRADUATE WORK, AND THEN HIS NAME IS RETURNED TO THE POOL.

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MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE AMENDED LAW WOULD REMOVE MUCH OF THE UNCERTAINTY CREATED BY THE PRESENT SYSTEM. DURING THOSE CRUCIAL YEARS WHEN DECISIONS ABOUT EDUCATION, CAREERS, MARRIAGE AND RAISING A FAMILY MUST BE MADE, THE YOUNG MEN ELIGIBLE FOR THE DRAFT WILL NOT HAVE TO LIVE IN FEAR OF HIS LOCAL DRAFT BOARDS MONTHLY QUOTA. PRESIDENT NIXON PROPOSED THAT THE DRAFT BOARD MUST FIRST SELECT THE 19 YEAR OLDS AND WORK ITS WAY UP RATHER THAN STARTING WITH THE OLDEST ELIGIBLE MEN. THE DRAFTEES WOULD THUS BE ON THE AVERAGE, MUCH YOUNGER, WITH FEWER RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROBABLY IN BETTER PHYSICAL CONDITION. SECOND, EVERYONE WOULD HAVE ONLY ONE YEAR OF "MAXIMUM VULNERABILITY" TO THE DRAFT WHETHER AT 19 OR AFTER COLLEGE.

ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSED REFORMS REPRESENT A FAIR AND ORDERLY APPROACH, WE MUST NOT BE DETERRED FROM FURTHER STUDY OF THE METHOD BY WHICH WE CAN INSTITUTE A VOLUNTARY ARMED FORCE. THE SUPPORT GENERATED BY THE DISCONTENT WITH THE VIETNAM WAR MUST BE USED TO DEVISE A SYSTEM WHICH WILL PROVIDE OUR COUNTRY WITH "SUFFICIENT" MILITARY FORCE, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF INFRINGEMENT ON OUR INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND DESIRE FOR FREEDOM FROM UNJUSTIFIED GOVERNMENT INTRUSION.

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STUDENT UNREST

WHETHER YOU CONTINUE AS A STUDENT OR BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY, YOU MUST BE CONCERNED WITH THE STUDENT CONFRONTATION TAKING PLACE IN MANY HIGH SCHOOLS AND ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES THROUGHOUT AMERICA. IN MY OPINION, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE AS A SOCIETY EXAMINE THE REASONS FOR THE STUDENT'S ACTIONS AND TRY TO LEARN WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO REMEDY THEIR COMPLAINTS. ALTHOUGH THE CRITICISM OF OUR INSTITUTIONS MAY IN MANY RESPECTS BE HEALTHY, WE CANNOT CONDONE THE VIOLENT METHODS USED BY THE STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS. LAWFUL DISSENT IS A TOUCHSTONE OF AMERICAN FREEDOM, BUT AS THE SOCIETY CANNOT PERMIT EVERY CITIZEN TO JUDGE THAT LAW WHICH HE WILL OBEY, SO, TOO, THE SOCIETY CANNOT EMBRACE THE LANGUAGE AND TACTICS OF VIOLENCE.

I DO NOT ADVOCATE DIRECT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AS THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM. THE COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS MUST RETAIN CONTROL OF THE SCHOOLS. IF THEY DO NOT, THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE INTERVENTION BY THE STATE LEGISLATURES OR THE CONGRESS. THIS WOULD BE AN UNFORTUNATE

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OCCURRENCE, BUT AS PRESIDENT NIXON SAID RECENTLY, "THERE MUST BE NO COMPROMISE WITH LAWLESSNESS AND NO SURRENDER TO FORCE IF FREE EDUCATION IS TO SURVIVE".

CONCLUSION

ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEMS FACED BY OUR SOCIETY ARE GREAT, SO TOO ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES. WHEN HISTORIANS WRITE OF THIS AGE, THEY MAY SAY, WITH DICKENS:

"IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES,
IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES:
EVERYTHING WAS OVER, AND YET
EVERYTHING WAS JUST BEGINNING."

BUT WE MUST SAY: WE WERE THERE -- WE WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED IT. OUR LIVES HAD MEANING. AND WE MADE A DIFFERENCE.