

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
THE HONORABLE BOB DOLE
BETHANY COLLEGE
LINDSBORG, KANSAS
SUNDAY, MAY 25, 1969

ON THIS, THE DAY THAT YOU AS A STUDENT BID FAREWELL TO THIS INSTITUTION, I WOULD GUESS YOU ARE RELIVING THE YEARS THAT YOU SPENT HERE. ALTHOUGH I HESITATE TO INTERRUPT THE NOSTALGIA OF THE MOMENT, THE ISSUES OF THE DAY REQUIRE THAT WE CONSIDER THE PRESENT AND FUTURE COURSE OF OUR NATION AND ITS INSTITUTIONS. FOR AS YOU LEAVE THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY, YOU ENTER A WORLD AND A SOCIETY THAT IS FACING GREAT CHALLENGES TO ITS INSTITUTIONS. I DO NOT MEAN TO IMPLY THAT OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING HAVE BEEN FREE OF THE PRESSURES EXPERIENCED BY OUR SOCIETY. IN FACT, OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES NOW FIND THEMSELVES IN A CONFRONTATION THAT HAS WIDERANGING IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR SOCIETY.

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TO MY GENERATION YOU MAY SAY, "DON'T TALK TO US OF THE PROBLEMS YOU HAVE CREATED, FOR IN THE WORDS OF JAMES T. FARRELL, "THIS IS A WORLD I NEVER MADE". SUCH AN EXCUSE FOR FAILING TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE SOLUTION OF THE DEMANDING PROBLEMS OF OUR SOCIETY IGNORES A FUNDAMENTAL HISTORICAL FACT, THAT NO GENERATION MAKES ITS OWN WORLD AFRESH. WE ARE THE UNWITTING LEGATEES OF PRIOR GENERATIONS. FEW OF US WERE SATISFIED WITH THE WORLD AS IT WAS WHEN WE GRADUATED, NOR DO WE WISH TO HAVE IT REMAIN IN THE CONDITION IN WHICH YOU FIND IT.

IN THE PAST ONE THIRD OF THIS CENTURY, MY GENERATION HAS BEEN CONCERNED WITH THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE, WHO RECEIVED WHAT SHARE OF THE ECONOMIC PIE. DURING THE LAST ONE THIRD OF THIS CENTURY, YOUR GENERATION MUST ALSO BE CONCERNED WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPERATIVE -- POLLUTION, LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND OUR GREATEST PROBLEM THE DIS-ADVANTAGED, WHETHER THEY BE FOUND IN AN URBAN GHETTO OR THE RURAL AREAS OF OUR NATION. IN THE YEARS AHEAD, THE SOLUTIONS TO THESE MATTERS WILL REQUIRE THE THOUGHT AND ENERGIES OF ALL OF US, BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT. AS THE TAXPAYERS, VOTERS, AND LEADERS OF YOUR

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COMMUNITY, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU INFORM YOURSELVES ON THE PROBLEMS OF OUR TIME. IT IS TO SEVERAL OF THE ISSUES CONFRONTING YOU AS COLLEGE GRADUATES AND CITIZENS THAT I ADDRESS MYSELF TODAY.

VIETNAM

UPON GRADUATION FROM COLLEGE, MY GENERATION WAS FACED WITH WORLD WAR II, JUST AS YOU ARE NOW CONFRONTED BY THE VIETNAM CONFLICT. UNLIKE OUR DEFENSE OF FREEDOM FROM THE THREAT OF THE AXIS POWERS, WHICH WAS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, MUCH OF THE DISSATISFACTION ON OUR COLLEGE CAMPUSES AND THROUGHOUT THE NATION TODAY IS INEXTRICABLY INTERTWINED WITH OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR.

THE YEARS OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION HAVE PAINTED A VIVID PICTURE FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE -- A PICTURE OF OVER 35,000 AMERICAN BOYS WHO HAVE DIED FOR THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND THERE IS NO PEACE. WHEN VICE PRESIDENT NIXON LEFT OFFICE IN 1961, THERE WERE 113 AMERICAN ADVISORS IN VIETNAM. THERE ARE NOW OVER 500,000 TROOPS AT A COST OF MORE THAN 30 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR.

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PRESIDENT NIXON ESTABLISHED "PEACE" AS THE FIRST PRIORITY OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. IN RESPONSE TO THIS OBJECTIVE, THE PRESIDENT LAST WEEK OUTLINED HIS POSITION ON VIETNAM. A REALISTIC APPRAISAL INDICATES WE CANNOT EXPECT TO ABANDON OVERNIGHT A COMMITMENT THAT HAS BEEN THE BASIS OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS.

RATHER, THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THAT THE UNITED STATES MUST REMAIN FLEXIBLE IN ITS APPROACH TO THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS. WHILE THE IMPOSITION OF A PURELY MILITARY SOLUTION ON THE BATTLEFIELD WAS RULED OUT, HE ALSO INDICATED THERE WOULD NOT BE A ONE-SIDED DISENGAGEMENT, OR THE ACCEPTANCE IN PARIS OF TERMS THAT WOULD AMOUNT TO A DISGUISED DEFEAT. SUCCESS IN VIETNAM WILL NOT BE MEASURED BY BATTLES WON OR ENEMY KILLED OR CONCESSIONS MADE, IT WILL BE COUNTED IN PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE.

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MORE IMPORTANT TO OUR FOREIGN POLICY THAN THE ACTUAL VIETNAM PEACE SETTLEMENT IS THE RECOGNITION BY OUR GOVERNMENT THAT THE UNITED STATES MUST REASSESS ITS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE WORLD. SO TOO, MUST WE ASSESS THE RESOURCES WHICH WE AND OTHER NATIONS CAN BRING TO BEAR IN THE CAUSE OF MAINTAINING WORLD PEACE.

THE DRAFT

CLOSELY RELATED TO THE VIETNAM WAR AND A CAUSE OF DISILLUSIONMENT ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS IS OUR OUTMODDED DRAFT SYSTEM. THE YOUNG MAN OF DRAFT AGE TODAY THINKS OF CONSCRIPTION AS AN INSTITUTION, A WAY OF LIFE, WHICH HE CANNOT JUSTIFY AND IS UNABLE TO CHANGE. 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

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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 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 SELECTION OF BIRTHDATES.

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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.

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 PROPOSES 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,

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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.

STUDENT UNREST

AS MEMBERS OF AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ABOUT TO ASSUME THE ROLE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS OF OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING, AN ISSUE THAT IS PROBABLY PARAMOUNT IN YOUR MINDS, IS THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE STUDENTS, A DAILY OCCURRENCE 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. FOR IN THE WORDS OF JOHN GARDNER, FORMER SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, "WE WANT A SOCIETY

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THAT IS SUFFICIENTLY HONEST AND OPEN MINDED TO RECOGNIZE ITS PROBLEMS, SUFFICIENTLY CREATIVE TO CONCEIVE NEW SOLUTIONS AND SUFFICIENTLY PURPOSEFUL TO PUT THOSE SOLUTIONS INTO EFFECT."

STUDENTS CHALLENGE OUR INSTITUTIONS BECAUSE THEY ARE A PRODUCT OF OUR SOCIETY. THE YOUTH OF AMERICA ARE THE BEST EDUCATED, MOST SUCCESS ORIENTED GENERATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD. RECEIVING AN EDUCATION HAS NOT BEEN MERELY THE ACCUMULATION OF FACTS AND FIGURES. OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO EXERCISE FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND IN THE PROCESS HAVE FOUND A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT WE AS ADULTS PREACH AND WHAT WE DO. WHAT THE YOUTH FIND IS A GULF BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE REAL, BETWEEN AN AGENDA OF UNSOLVED PROBLEMS AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF PAST GENERATIONS.

IN PART, THE CONCEPTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE MAY BE THE RESULT OF YOUTHFUL IDEALISM. IN PART, THEY ARE A CONSEQUENCE OF THE GULF BETWEEN THE REALITY THEY SENSE AND THEIR YOUTHFUL CAPABILITIES FOR COMING TO GRIPS WITH THEM. THUS THE ACTIVIST MAY BECOME DISCOURAGED WHEN HIS EFFORTS ARE NOT IMMEDIATELY SUCCESSFUL AND "DROPS OUT" OF SOCIETY. BUT, IN PART, ALSO THE DISILLUSIONMENT EXPERIENCED BY MANY

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OF THE YOUTH IS LEGITIMATE. MANY OF OUR INSTITUTIONS HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO THE DEMANDS FOR CHANGE. THESE INSTITUTIONS HAVE FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE NATURE OF OUR SOCIETY IN THE LATE 60'S HAS CHANGED DRASTICALLY FROM THAT OF THE 40'S, 50'S, AND EVEN EARLY 60'S. YET, OUR INSTITUTIONS HAVE NOT ALWAYS RESPONDED TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF A COMPLEX, TECHNOLOGICALLY-ORIENTED SOCIETY. AS SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE, ROBERT FINCH STATED IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE: "IN ALL TRUTH, MANY ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE BROUGHT MUCH ON THEMSELVES. THEY HAVE NOT ALWAYS RESPONDED TO THE CLEAR NEED OF ANY VIABLE INSTITUTION FOR CONSTANT SELF-EXAMINATION AND SELF-RENEWAL. IN THE QUEST FOR MORE AND BETTER RESEARCH GRANTS, THEY HAVE NOT ALWAYS ATTENDED TO THEIR PRIMARY OBJECTIVES AS TEACHING INSTITUTIONS. IN ATTEMPTING TO SERVE MANY MASTERS -- GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY AMONG THEM -- THEY HAVE TENDED TO SERVE NONE OF THEM WELL."

THE CRITICISM OF OUR INSTITUTIONS MAY, THEREFORE, IN MANY RESPECTS, BE HEALTHY, BUT WE CANNOT CONDONE THE VIOLENT METHODS USED BY THE STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS. LAWFUL DISSENT IS A TOUCHSTONE OF AMERICAN FREEDOM.

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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. THE KEEPERS OF OUR INSTITUTIONS SHOULD NOT RESORT TO REPRESSION; RATHER, IT SHOULD BE OUR OBJECTIVE TO PROMOTE A MORE RATIONAL, MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS.

MEMBERS OF THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY MUST ASSUME A GREATER SHARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT OF LAWFUL DISSENT.

I DO NOT ADVOCATE DIRECT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AS A REAL OR EFFECTIVE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM. MORE EFFECTIVE THAN WITHDRAWING FEDERAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH WOULD ONLY HINDER THE POOR OFFENDER, WOULD BE EXPULSION FROM THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY. FOR THOSE WHO VIOLATE THE LAW, WE MUST INSIST THAT THE POLICE, AND THE COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS DEAL WITH THEM AS THEY WOULD ANY OTHER LAW BREAKER. IF THE COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS DO NOT RETAIN CONTROL OF THE SCHOOLS THERE WILL BE INTERVENTION BY THE STATE LEGISLATURES OR THE CONGRESS. IN MY OPINION, THIS WOULD BE AN UNFORTUNATE 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".

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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.