

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

KANSAS STATE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

OLATHE, KANSAS

SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1977

I AM HONORED BY THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS IMPORTANT EVENT IN YOUR LIFE. GRADUATION, WHETHER FROM HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR HIGH, OR COLLEGE, IS ALWAYS A MEMORABLE EVENT, A DAY THAT WILL HAVE SPECIAL MEANING FOR YOU THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

LOOKING BACK, BUT PLANNING AHEAD

I REMEMBER THE GRADUATION DAYS OF MY LIFE TO BE A TIME OF MIXED EMOTIONS -- A TIME TO LOOK BACK WITH NOSTALGIA AND PRIDE AT WHERE YOU'VE BEEN, WHAT YOU'VE DONE, AND HOW MUCH YOU'VE LEARNED. BUT ALSO A TIME TO LOOK AHEAD, TO PLAN AHEAD, TO SET NEW GOALS, AND TAKE ON NEW CHALLENGES. COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES SYMBOLIZE THE COMPLETION OF A TASK, A TIME OF CHANGE, BREACH WITH THE OLD AND A STEPPING FORWARD INTO THE NEW -- NEW FRIENDS, NEW ENVIRONMENT, AND A NEW CHALLENGE. IT IS AN EMOTIONAL TIME AND AN IMPORTANT DAY IN YOUR LIVES.

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THE RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAVE DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST 12 YEARS, THE EXPERIENCES YOU HAVE SHARED, THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED HAVE BECOME A PART OF YOU WHICH YOU WILL CARRY WITH YOU THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. IT IS, THEREFORE, WISE TO STOP AND REFLECT -- TO STORE AWAY MEMORIES OF THESE YEARS, YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR TEACHERS, YOUR EXPERIENCES -- FOR THEY WILL HAVE GREATER AND GREATER MEANING IN THE YEARS TO COME.

REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC

BUT GRADUATION IS ALSO A TIME TO LOOK AHEAD, TO SET NEW GOALS, AND TO REDEDICATE YOURSELF TO THE PRINCIPLES IN WHICH YOU BELIEVE. IT'S A TIME TO BE OPTIMISTIC. AND I BELIEVE THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC. FOR IN SPITE OF ALL THE TALK ABOUT WORLD AND NATIONAL PROBLEMS, HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, AND THE FALTERING ECONOMY, MORE AMERICANS ARE EMPLOYED NOW THAN EVER BEFORE IN HISTORY. BIGGER AND BETTER OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOUNG AMERICANS. OVER THE LAST EIGHT YEARS, JOB OPPORTUNITIES HAVE EXPANDED AT A MORE RAPID RATE THAN EVER BEFORE IN HISTORY. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT RATE WAS NOT QUITE FAST ENOUGH TO KEEP PACE WITH THE NUMBER OF NEW ENTRIES IN THE JOB MARKET.

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BUT THE POINT TO BE MADE IS THAT IN SPITE OF THE TALK OF GLOOM AND DOOM, THE AMERICAN FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM IS CREATING MORE JOBS AND PRODUCING BIGGER AND BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU AS GRADUATES THAN ANY OTHER SYSTEM IN THE WORLD.

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

I REALIZE IT IS NOT THE "IN THING" TO BE PATRIOTIC THESE DAYS, BUT I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT OPTIMISM WITHOUT SAYING SOMETHING GOOD ABOUT AMERICA, ABOUT OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, AND ABOUT OUR PEOPLE. ALL TOO OFTEN, WE FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON OUR PROBLEMS, A NON-RESPONSIVE BUREAUCRACY, HIGH TAXES, INFLATION, CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT, THE ENERGY CRISIS. AND AS A RESULT, WE LOSE SIGHT OF OUR HERITAGE, OUR STRENGTHS, AND WHAT'S RIGHT ABOUT AMERICA. OUR NATION FACES GREAT CHALLENGES OVER THE NEXT DECADE. BUT WE -- YOU -- ALSO HAVE A TREMENDOUS CAPACITY TO MEET THOSE CHALLENGES.

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I AM CONVINCED THAT WE LIVE IN THE GREATEST NATION IN THIS WORLD -- THAT WE HAVE THE BEST SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD AND THAT THIS SYSTEM OFFERS MORE OPPORTUNITIES AND FREEDOM TO ITS PEOPLE THAN ANY OTHER SYSTEM IN THE WORLD, AND THAT OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE IS AVAILABLE TO YOU AS GRADUATES OF THIS SCHOOL.

IN MY 17 YEARS IN CONGRESS, I HAVE RECEIVED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF LETTERS FROM CONSTITUENTS BRINGING TO MY ATTENTION WHAT IS WRONG WITH AMERICA AND SUGGESTING WAYS TO IMPROVE. BUT I HAVE NEVER RECEIVED ONE LETTER FROM AN AMERICAN WHO WANTED TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY. AND I THINK THAT STATISTIC SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

MAKING A TOTAL COMMITMENT

IF I COULD LEAVE GRADUATES WITH A THOUGHT TODAY, IT WOULD BE THIS: OPPORTUNITIES ARE NUMEROUS. SET YOUR GOALS HIGH, DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO DO, AND PURSUE YOUR GOALS WITH A TOTAL COMMITMENT. WHETHER YOU ARE GOING INTO A JOB, ON TO COLLEGE OR OTHER TRAINING, OR WHATEVER, GET INVOLVED.

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MAKE A TOTAL COMMITMENT. STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE. WIN OR LOSE, THE REWARDS ARE GREATER, BECAUSE YOU HAVE MADE THE TOTAL COMMITMENT AND YOU WILL HAVE SATISFIED YOUR OWN STANDARDS.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

I WOULD ADD THAT I HOPE SOME OF THAT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMITMENT MIGHT BE WITHIN THE POLITICAL ARENA. WHETHER YOU ARE A DEMOCRAT OR A REPUBLICAN, OR EVEN AN INDEPENDENT, FIND A CANDIDATE, A CAMPAIGN, OR AN ISSUE AND GET INVOLVED. OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM IS BASED ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION. THE MORE YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ISSUES AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS, THE BETTER IT WORKS.

MY OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE HEARING IMPAIRED

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT BRIEFLY ON SOME OF THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT I HAVE HAD TO WORK WITH HEARING IMPAIRED CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS.

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LAST SUMMER, I SERVED AS THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION. AFTER SOME RATHER DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS, I WAS ABLE TO HAVE MY REMARKS BEFORE THE CONVENTION SIGNED FOR HEARING IMPAIRED TELEVISION VIEWERS. AFTER I WAS SELECTED AS PRESIDENT FORD'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE, WE CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE HEARING IMPAIRED COMMUNITY. I TRIED REPEATEDLY TO HAVE AN INTERPRETER WITH ME DURING THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES, BUT WE WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. HOWEVER, DURING THE PROCESS, WE DEVELOPED NEW AND VALUABLE CONTACTS.

I HAVE BEEN AN ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTER OF CLOSED CAPTIONING ON COMMERCIAL TELEVISION AND SLOW BUT STEADY PROCESS IS BEING MADE IN THAT AREA.

RECENTLY, I INTRODUCED A BILL IN THE SENATE FOR A TELETYPEWRITER TO BE INSTALLED IN THE CAPITOL SO THAT HEARING IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS COULD PICK UP THE PHONE AND CONTACT THEIR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES.

I HAVE WORKED WITH THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS. KEN CLARK, ONE OF YOUR FACULTY MEMBERS, WILL BE A DELEGATE TO THAT CONFERENCE.

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THIS SPRING, ONE OF THE BRIGHT COLLEGE STUDENTS INTERNING IN MY OFFICE WAS DEAF. HE WAS AN ASSET TO OUR OFFICE AND I TRUST THE INTERNSHIP WAS BENEFICIAL TO HIM. HE HAS RECENTLY BEEN ACCEPTED BY A LAW SCHOOL FOR THE FALL SEMESTER.

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

I MENTION THESE HAPPENINGS ONLY TO ILLUSTRATE THAT WE HAVE EXPANDED OUR CONTACT WITH THE HEARING IMPAIRED. WE ARE LEARNING MORE ABOUT YOUR WORLD. AND THE PROCESS HAS BEEN BENEFICIAL TO ALL OF US. I INTEND TO BUILD UPON THIS EXPERIENCE AND LOOK FORWARD TO A CONTINUOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL.

CLOSING

I UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR CLASS IS THE LARGEST EVER TO BE GRADUATED FROM THE KANSAS STATE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF. I WANT TO WISH EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU THE BEST OF LUCK.

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THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOU HERE IN KANSAS ARE TREMENDOUS. NEXT YEAR, THE JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS EXPANDING ITS SERVICES IN COOPERATION WITH GALLAUDET COLLEGE. THIS IS THE FIRST EXTENSION PROGRAM FOR GALLAUDET COLLEGE AND IS A LANDMARK EVENT FOR KANSAS, WHICH OFFERS UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITIES TO HEARING IMPAIRED PERSONS IN THE MIDWEST.

GALLAUDET COLLEGE IS CONSIDERED THE WORLD'S FINEST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF, AND IT IS A TRUE COMPLIMENT FOR JOHNSON COUNTY TO BE CHOSEN TO INITIATE THIS EXTENSION PROGRAM.

ALL OF THESE PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU. I KNOW YOU WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM. WHETHER YOU PLAN TO GO ON FOR FORMAL EDUCATION, OR WHETHER YOU LOOK FOR EMPLOYMENT, DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO KEEP LEARNING. EVERY DAY, SOMEONE NEW BREAKS THE "SOUND BARRIER," AND YOU CAN DO IT, TOO.

THANK YOU, AND GOOD LUCK TO YOU ALL.

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