

The original documents are located in Box 132, folder “June 7, 1974 - Speech, Ravenscroft School Commencement, Raleigh, NC” of the Gerald R. Ford Vice Presidential Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

RAVENS CROFT SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, JUNE 7, 1974

THIS IS A PROUD MOMENT.

IT IS A PROUD MOMENT FOR YOU GRADUATES. YOU HAVE COMPLETED
THE COURSE OF STUDY AT AN OUTSTANDING SHCOOL.

IT IS A PROUD MOMENT FOR YOUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS WHO
ARE GATHERED HERE. SOME OF THEIR MOST CHERISHED HOPES HELPED TO
CREATE THIS OCCASION.



IT IS A PROUD MOMENT FOR THE ADMINISTRATORS OF YOUR
SCHOOL, FOR THOSE PUBLIC-SPIRITED CITIZENS WHO BACK IT FINANCIALLY,
AND ESPECIALLY FOR YOUR TEACHERS. HENRY ADAMS SAID, "A TEACHER
AFFECTS ETERNITY; HE CAN NEVER TELL WHERE HIS INFLUENCE STOPS."
YOU HAVE KNOWN YOUR TEACHERS A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME, BUT THEY
WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF YOUR LIVES.



AND THIS IS A PROUD MOMENT FOR ME. I AM DEEPLY HONORED TO BE A PART OF THIS 1974 COMMENCEMENT AT RAVENSCROFT. FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY THIS SCHOOL HAS BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GREAT INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT HAS BEEN AN AMERICAN TRADITION SINCE OUR NATION'S FOUNDING. I COMMEND THOSE WHO CARRY ON THE WORK OF JOSIAH WATSON BY GIVING THEIR TIME AND MONEY TO KEEP RAVENSCROFT IN THE FOREFRONT AMONG THESE INSTITUTIONS. WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE HEALTH AND VIGOR OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS AS MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE EDUCATION OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.



As a product of & graduate from the public school system, obviously, I believe in ^{the} public school establishment, supported by local, state & federal tax monies.

However, I feel equally as strong about non-public schools from kindergarten to college & even on to graduate study institutions.

Competition between public & non-public schools produces better educational opportunities for ALL students

YOU HAVE SELECTED AN ESPECIALLY WORTHWHILE TOPIC FOR ME
TO DISCUSS TODAY: "A VALID PERSPECTIVE ON OUR COUNTRY FOR THE REST
OF THIS DECADE."

WITH YOUR PERMISSION, HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND
THAT TIME PERIOD AND TRY TO SEE OUR COUNTRY FROM VANTAGE POINTS THAT
WILL BE VALID BEYOND THIS DECADE. I WANT TO FOCUS NOT SO MUCH ON
SURFACE EVENTS OF THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, BUT ON SOME OF THE LARGER,
TIDAL FORCES THAT ARE SHAPING OUR NATIONAL DESTINY.



TO GET THIS PERSPECTIVE, LET'S LOOK AT OUR COUNTRY AND ITS SITUATION IN THE WORLD FROM TWO VANTAGE POINTS. BOTH HAVE A SPECIAL RELEVANCE FOR YOU.

THE FIRST IS A VANTAGE POINT PROVIDED BY THE CAMERAS OF OUR ASTRONAUTS ON THEIR WAY TO THE MOON. THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHS THEY BROUGHT BACK, WE GOT AN UNFORGETTABLE NEW VIEW OF OUR BEAUTIFUL BLUE EARTH, WREATHED IN WHITE CLOUDS, FLOATING IN SPACE. YOURS IS THE FIRST GENERATION IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF MANKIND TO HAVE THE ADVANTAGE, ALL OF YOUR LIVES, OF THIS SPECIAL VISION OF THE PLANET ON WHICH WE LIVE.



MY GENERATION, AND ALL THOSE THAT WENT BEFORE, HAVE HAD ONLY A LIMITED VIEW OF THE EARTH MOST OF OUR YEARS. THROUGH THE ASTRONAUTS' PHOTOGRAPHS, YOU WILL ALWAYS SEE IT DIFFERENTLY.

YOU WILL HAVE A VISION OF THE EARTH AS THE CREATOR MIGHT SEE IT. YOU CAN SEE IT IN THE WHOLE. YOU CAN SEE ITS ESSENTIAL UNITY, ITS ONENESS, ITS UNDIVIDEDNESS. YOU CAN SEE THE CLOSE LINKS AMONG ALL THE ELEMENTS THAT ARE COMMON TO LIFE--LAND, AIR, WATER.



AND WITH THIS NEW REALIZATION OF THE COMMON NATURE OF THE
EARTH'S PHYSICAL STRUCTURE COMES A NEW VIEW OF MANKIND. YOUR
GENERATION WILL HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING THAN ANY OTHER BEFORE
YOU OF THE ESSENTIAL UNITY OF MAN ON THIS EARTH. YOU WILL SEE
MORE CLEARLY THE COMMON NATURE OF HIS INTERESTS: HIS COMMON NEEDS,
HIS COMMON ASPIRATIONS--AND HIS COM^MON DESTINY. AND YOU WILL HAVE
A BETTER GRASP OF THE FACT THAT THE ONLY COURSE FOR MEN EVERYWHERE
IS TO LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER IN PEACE AND HARMONY FOR THE COMMON GOOD.



NOW THIS VANTAGE POINT FROM AFAR, PROVIDING US WITH
THIS NEW VIEW OF MANKIND, IS ESSENTIAL, IT SEEMS TO ME, IN ACHIEVING
THE VALID PERSPECTIVE OF OUR OWN COUNTRY THAT WE SEEK HERE TODAY.
FOR IT BRINGS HOME TO US, AS NEVER BEFORE, THE CLEAR AND PRESENT NEED
FOR OUR COUNTRY, THE GREATEST AND MOST POWERFUL ON EARTH, TO TAKE
THE LEAD IN PROMOTING PEACE AND PROGRESS AMONG ALL NATIONS.



The President

AND THIS IS THE VERY MISSION THAT ~~THIS ADMINISTRATION~~
HAS UNDERTAKEN SO DILIGENTLY--IN THE SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA,
IN DETENTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND IN OUR NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

BUT PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL IS THE NEW CEASEFIRE IN
THE MIDDLE EAST. THIS AREA HAS BEEN A POWDER KEG THREATENING WORLD
PEACE FOR MANY YEARS. IT HAS NOW BEEN LARGELY DEFUSED, WITH THE
PROSPECTS FOR A JUST AND LASTING SETTLEMENT BETTER THAN THEY HAVE
BEN FOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY.



MY GENERATION IS MERELY SCORING THE INITIAL BREAKTHROUGHS.
THE REAL CHALLENGE, THE BIG OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE GIANT STRIDES
ALONG THE ROAD OF PEACEFUL COOPERATION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WILL BE
THE TASK OF YOUR GENERATION. AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU WILL FULFILL
THAT MISSION.





THE OTHER VANTAGE POINT I WOULD LIKE TO USE IN TRYING FOR THIS VALID PERSPECTIVE IS THE DIRECT OPPOSITE OF ONE FAR AWAY IN SPACE. IT IS RIGHT HERE--RIGHT HERE IN YOUR HOMETOWN, YOUR COUNTY, YOUR STATE.

VIEWING OUR COUNTRY FROM HERE, OR ANY OTHER LOCALITY, OUR THOUGHTS TURN FIRST TO WASHINGTON. THAT IS THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT. THAT'S WHERE THE POWER LIES. THAT'S WHERE THE GREAT DECISIONS ARE MADE. THAT'S WHERE THE LAWS ARE WRITTEN. THAT'S WHERE THE TAX MONEY GOES.

FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ARE
SEEN AS LESSER ENTITIES. THEY ARE RELATIVELY WEAK. THEIR TAX
REVENUES ARE INSUFFICIENT TO ENABLE THEM TO COPE WITH THEIR MOUNTING
PROBLEMS--CRIME, URBAN DECAY, POLLUTION, SUBSTANDARD HEALTH FACILITIES.
THEY INCREASINGLY LOOK TO WASHINGTON FOR HELP, FOR FUNDS, FOR EXPERTISE,
BUT WHEN THEIR REQUESTS GET ENTANGLED IN THE RED TAPE OF THE FEDERAL
BUREAUCRACY, MONTHS, EVEN YEARS, CAN INTERVENE BEFORE HELP ARRIVES.



almost 200 yrs ago

YOU WILL REMEMBER THAT OUR COUNTRY BEGAN AS A LOOSE
CONFEDERATION OF STATES. BUT **IT** WAS SOON REALIZED THAT A STRONGER
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE NEEDED TO ASSURE THE GROWTH OF
OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR PEOPLE.



a balance in Washington
1) 2) 3)

THE IDEA WAS TO ESTABLISH A BALANCE OF POWER. WE WOULD
HAVE A STRONG NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON, BUT THE STATES AND
LOCALITIES WERE TO REMAIN STRONG IN THEIR OWN RIGHT. WE WOULD THUS
ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT IDEAS AND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR
PROBLEMS FROM MANY SOURCES OF POWER.



BUT OVER THE YEARS THE IMPACT OF WAR AND FINANCIAL
CRISIS CAUSED MORE AND MORE POWER TO FLOW TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.
AND AS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GREW, IT BECAME REMOTE FROM THE
PEOPLE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO SERVE, REMOTE FROM THE PROBLEMS IT WAS
SUPPOSED TO SOLVE. AT THE SAME TIME, GOVERNMENT IN THE STATES AND
TOWNS AND CITIES GREW WEAKER AND LESS EFFECTIVE.



TODAY, A HISTORIC CHANGE IS UNDERWAY. IN THE LAST FEW YEARS--DURING THE TIME THAT YOU'VE BEEN IN HIGH SCHOOL--THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS BEGUN A REVERSAL OF THAT FLOW OF POWER. UNDER THE CONCEPT OF THE "NEW FEDERALISM," WE ARE RETURNING POWER TO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, WHICH ARE CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE, WHICH ARE FAMILIAR WITH THEIR SPECIAL NEEDS, AND WHICH CAN PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS THAT FIT THEIR PARTICULAR SITUATION.



AND ALONG WITH THIS POWER, WE'RE SENDING THE MONEY THAT
MAKES IT EFFECTIVE. THROUGH THE INSTRUMENT OF REVENUE SHARING, WE
ARE SENDING FEDERAL TAX REVENUES BACK TO THE STATES WHERE IT CAME
FROM. THE MONEY WILL BE SPENT BY LOCAL PEOPLE, TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS
AND TO PROVIDE LOCAL SOLUTIONS.



TODAY, THIS HISTORIC SHIFT OF POWER IS ONLY BEGINNING TO
ROLL. BUT AS IT PICKS UP MOMENTUM DURING YOUR LIFETIME, YOU AND
YOUR GENERATION WILL BE CALLED ON TO SHOULDER MORE AND MORE OF THE
RESPONSIBILITIES^E NOW CENTERED IN WASHINGTON. YOU WILL BE CHALLENGED
TO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP IN REBUILDING YOUR CITY, PROVIDING DECENT
HOUSING, ADEQUATE HEALTH FACILITIES, EFFECTIVE CRIME PREVENTION, AND
IN MEETING MANY OTHER NEEDS OF YOUR CITY AND STATE.



SO IN THE PERSPECTIVE ON OUR COUNTRY'S FUTURE THAT I'VE
TRIED TO OUTLINE TODAY, YOUR GENERATION WILL FACE NEW CHALLENGES
AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD.

BUT WHEREVER YOU SERVE, IN WHATEVER CAPACITY, THE MOST
URGENT NEED OF ALL WILL BE FOR BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE FAITH
IN AMERICA AND ITS HIGH IDEALS.



FOR NEARLY 200 YEARS, THIS NATION HAS STOOD AS A BEACON
OF TRUST, HONOR AND REVERENCE FOR THE ETERNAL FITNESS OF THINGS. IT
HAS BEEN A GUIDING LIGHT FOR ETHICAL CONDUCT AMONG MEN AND NATIONS.

BUT TODAY THERE ARE PROPHETS OF DOOM WHO SAY THAT THE
LIGHT OF MORAL PRINCIPLE IN AMERICA IS GROWING DIM. THEY SAY OUR
STANDARDS OF TRUTH AND HONESTY HAVE BEEN LOWERED. THEY SAY WE
CAN NO LONGER CLAIM TO REPRESENT THE BEST THAT IS IN MEN AND WOMEN.



I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AMERICA
HAS LOST FOR A MOMENT ITS STRONG SENSE OF CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY.

INDEED, I BELIEVE THE VERY OPPOSITE. I BELIEVE THAT OUR
COUNTRY IS DEMONSTRATING TODAY A FIDELITY TO ITS MORAL PRINCIPLES
THAT EVERY AMERICAN CAN BE PROUD OF. THE FLAME OF DECENCY AND
RIGHT STILL BURNS AS BRIGHTLY AS EVER IN OUR LAND.



EVERY GENERATION OF AMERICANS HAS THE OBLIGATION TO
REKINDLE THIS FLAME WITH ITS OWN YOUTHFUL IDEALISM--ITS OWN
FAITH AND TRUST AND HOPE, ITS OWN HIGH REGARD FOR HONESTY AND
RIGHT. JUST OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT, THE FORCES OF DARKNESS
ARE ALWAYS WAITING, AS THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE TIME BEGAN. BUT
THEY HAVE ALWAYS FEARED--AND SHRUNK BACK FROM--THE BRIGHT FLAME OF
HONESTY IN YOUNG PEOPLE.



SO I WOULD SAY TO YOU TODAY, AS THE GREAT CELLIST
PABLO CASALS ONCE TOLD SOME OF HIS PUPILS: "I WANT YOU TO BE
YOUNG, YOUNG ALL YOUR LIFE, AND TO SAY THINGS TO THE WORLD
THAT ARE TRUE."

NOTHING YOU DO CAN GIVE MORE MEANING TO YOUR LIVES.
NOTHING YOU DO CAN DO MORE FOR THE AMERICA WE ALL LOVE.

####



Draft of Vice President's speech at Ravenscroft High School

Commencement, Raleigh, N.C., June 7, 1974

Remarks by Vice President Gerald R. Ford
Ravenscroft School Commencement
Raleigh, N.C. June 7, 1974

~~Paul~~ ~~OK but~~ ~~about~~ ~~try to cut~~ ~~pages~~ ~~North Carolina~~

FOR RELEASE ~~AT~~ ~~2:00 P.M.~~ FRIDAY P.M.'S.



This is a proud moment.

It is a proud moment for you graduates. You have completed the course of study at an outstanding school.

It is a proud moment for your families and friends who are gathered here. Some of their most cherished hopes helped to create this occasion.

It is a proud moment for the administrators of your school, for those public-spirited citizens who back it financially, and especially for your teachers. Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." You have known your teachers a relatively short time, but they will always be a part of your lives.

And this is a proud moment for me. I am deeply honored to be a part of this 1974 commencement at Ravenscroft. For more than a century this school has been an integral part of the great independent educational system that has been an American tradition since our Nation's founding. I commend those who carry on the work of Josiah Watson by giving their time and money to keep Ravenscroft in the forefront among these institutions. We must continue to maintain the health and vigor of private schools as major contributors to the education of our young people.



~~One of the most gratifying things about being invited here today is the privilege of speaking before graduates whose future success is already assured by their demonstrated executive ability. Any class that knows exactly what topic it wants its commencement speaker to discuss--and doesn't hesitate to tell the Vice President of the United States that this is his assigned subject--that class is going places!~~

~~Here you have selected an especially worthwhile~~
for me to discuss today:
topic "A Valid Perspective on Our Country for the Rest of this Decade."

With your permission, however, I would like to extend that time period and try to see our country from vantage points that will be valid beyond this decade. I want

to focus not so much on surface events of the immediate future, but on some of the larger, tidal forces that are shaping our national destiny.

To get this perspective, let's look at our country and its situation in the world from two vantage points. Both have a special relevance for you.

The first is a vantage point provided by the cameras of our astronauts on their way to the moon. Through the photographs they brought back, we got an unforgettable new view of our beautiful blue earth, wreathed in white clouds, floating in space. Yours is the first generation in the entire history of mankind to have the advantage, all of your lives, of this special vision of the planet on which we live.

My generation, and all those that went before, have had only a limited view of the earth most of our years. Through the astronauts' photographs, you will always see it differently.

You will have a vision of the earth as the Creator might see it. You can see it in the whole. You can see its essential unity, its oneness, its undividedness. You can see the close links among all the elements that are common to life--land, air, water.

And with this new realization of the common nature of the earth's physical structure comes a new view of mankind. Your generation will have a better understanding than any other before you of the essential unity of man on this earth. You will see more clearly the common nature of his interests: his common needs, his common aspirations-- and his common destiny. And you will have a better grasp of the fact that the only course for men everywhere is to live and work together in peace and harmony for the common good.

Now this vantage point from afar, providing us with this new view of mankind, is essential, it seems to me, in achieving the valid perspective of our own country that we seek here today. For it brings home to us, as never before, the clear and present need for our country, the greatest and most powerful on earth, to take the lead in promoting peace and progress among all nations.

And this is the very mission that this Administration has undertaken so diligently--in the settlement in Southeast Asia, in detente with the Soviet Union and in our new relationships with the People's Republic of China.

~~achieve a new~~
But perhaps most important of all is the new ceasefire
in the Middle East. This area has been a powder keg threaten-
ing world peace for many years. It has now been ~~largely~~ defused, with
the prospects for a just and lasting settlement better than
they have been for a quarter of a century.

Moreover, our aim is not simply the prevention of
armed conflict among nations. In helping to achieve a
durable peace, we have also taken the lead in helping to
raise living standards throughout the world. We are striving
to give new hope to that ancient dream of a world free of
hunger, ignorance, poverty and disease.

One of the best ways to achieve this goal is through
trade that opens up markets for the products of working
people everywhere. And our country is the leader in the
movement to lower the barriers to trade, creating more
jobs and better paying jobs for workers on the farms
and in the factories of nations on every continent.

~~But~~ my generation is merely scoring the initial break-
throughs, ~~in these areas~~. The real challenge, the big
opportunity to take the giant strides along the road of
peaceful ~~cooperation~~ ^{throughout the world} will be the task of your generation.
And I am confident that you will fulfill that mission.

~~Because you will be equipped for it through education~~





~~and training, but most of all because you will have a clearer vision of the world, a new and better appreciation of the common interests of all the world's people, a new realization of what John Donne said long ago: "No man is an island."~~

The other vantage point I would like to use in trying for this valid perspective is the direct opposite of one far away in space. It is right here--right here in your hometown, your county, your state.

Viewing our country from here, or any other locality, our thoughts turn first to Washington. That is the seat of government. That's where the power lies. That's where the great decisions are made. That's where the laws are written. That's where the tax money goes.

From this ~~local~~ ^{lesser} vantage point, state and local government are seen as inferior entities. They are relatively weak. Their tax revenues are insufficient to enable them to cope with their mounting problems--crime, urban decay, pollution, substandard health facilities. They ~~are~~ increasingly look to Washington for help, for funds, for expertise. But when their requests get entangled in the red tape of the Federal bureaucracy, months, even years, can intervene before help arrives.

This idea of an all-powerful central government and weak local government was not what the Founding Fathers had in mind. For the American experience began differently.

The freedoms that form the basis of our Republic were not conceived in Philadelphia in July 1776 and handed down to the people. They originated in the colonies and were taken to Philadelphia. They were born in the hearts and minds of the farmers, the trappers, the artisans and the merchants in such places as Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

But nowhere did the seeds of liberty enjoy more vigorous growth than in the mountains and valleys, on the Piedmont and at the seashore of your own great State of North Carolina. The armed patriots who led the resistance to the Stamp Act here; the men who gathered at Mecklenburg; those who signed the Halifax Resolution making North Carolina the first colony to declare officially its readiness for independence--they were the leaders in the movement to establish the first great democracy on this earth.

You will remember that our country began as a loose confederation of states. But it was soon realized that a stronger central government would be needed to assure the growth of opportunity for our people.



The idea was to establish a balance of power. We would have a strong national government in Washington, but the states and localities were to remain strong in their own right. We would thus enjoy the benefits of different ideas and creative solutions to problems from many sources of power.

But over the years the impact of war and financial crisis caused more and more power to flow to the central government. And as the Federal Government grew, it became remote from the people it was supposed to serve, remote from the problems it was supposed to solve. At the same time, government in the states and towns and cities grew weaker and less effective.

Today, a historic change is underway. In the last few years--during the time that you've been in high school--^e ~~this~~ ^{Nixon} Administration has begun a reversal of that flow of power. Under the concept of the "New Federalism," we are returning power to state and local governments, which are closer to the people, which are familiar with their special needs, and which can provide solutions to problems that fit their particular situation.

And along with this power, we're sending the money that makes it effective. Through the instrument of revenue sharing, we are sending Federal tax revenues back to the states where it came from. The money will be spent by local people, to meet local needs and to provide local solutions.



Today, this historic shift of power is only beginning to roll. But as it picks up momentum during your lifetime, you and your generation will be called on to shoulder more and more of the responsibilities now centered in Washington. You will be challenged to exercise leadership in rebuilding your city, providing decent housing, adequate health facilities, effective crime prevention, and in meeting many other needs of your city and state.

So in the perspective on our country's future that I've tried to outline today, your generation will face new challenges and new opportunities for service both at home and abroad.

But wherever you serve, in whatever capacity, the most urgent need of all will be for brave men and women who have faith in America and its high ideals.

For nearly 200 years, this nation has stood as a beacon of trust, honor and reverence for the eternal fitness of things. It has been a guiding light for ethical conduct among men and nations.

But today there are prophets of doom who say that the light of moral principle in America is growing dim. They say our standards of truth and honesty have been lowered. They say we can no longer claim to represent the best that is in men and women.

I do not believe this. I do not believe that America has lost for a moment its strong sense of character and integrity.



-9-

Today, this historic shift of power is only beginning to roll. But as it picks up momentum during your lifetime, you and your generation will be called on to shoulder more and more of the responsibilities now centered in Washington. You will be challenged to exercise leadership in rebuilding your city, providing decent housing, adequate health facilities, effective crime prevention, and in meeting many other needs of your city and state.

So in the perspective on our country's future that I've tried to outline today, your generation will face new challenges and new opportunities for service both at home and abroad.

But wherever you serve, in whatever capacity, the most urgent need of all will be for brave men and women who have faith in America and its high ideals.

For nearly 200 years, this nation has stood as a beacon of trust, honor and reverence for the eternal fitness of things. It has been a guiding light for ethical conduct among men and nations.

But today there are prophets of doom who say that the light of moral principle in America is growing dim. They say our standards of truth and honesty have been lowered. They say we can no longer claim to represent the best that is in men and women.

I do not believe this. I do not believe that America has lost for a moment its strong sense of character and integrity.

Indeed, I believe the very opposite. I believe that our country is demonstrating today a fidelity to its moral principles that every American can be proud of. The flame of decency and right still burns as brightly as ever in our land.

~~Every~~ Every generation of Americans has the obligation to rekindle this flame with its own youthful idealism--its own faith and trust and hope, its own high regard for honesty and right. Just outside the circle of light, the forces of darkness are always waiting, as they have been since time began. But they have always feared--and shrunk back from--the bright flame of honesty in young people.

So I would say to you today, as the great cellist Pablo Casals once told some of his pupils: "I want you to be young, young all your life, and to say things to the world that are true."

Nothing you do can give more meaning to your lives.
Nothing you do can do more for the America we all love.

#



REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD
RAVENSCROFT SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
June 7, 1974

FOR RELEASE IN FRIDAY P.M.'S

This is a proud moment.

It is a proud moment for you graduates. You have completed the course of study at an outstanding school.

It is a proud moment for your families and friends who are gathered here. Some of their most cherished hopes helped to create this occasion.

It is a proud moment for the administrators of your school, for those public-spirited citizens who back it financially, and especially for your teachers. Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." You have known your teachers a relatively short time, but they will always be a part of your lives.

And this is a proud moment for me. I am deeply honored to be a part of this 1974 commencement at Ravenscroft. For more than a century this school has been an integral part of the great independent educational system that has been an American tradition since our Nation's founding. I commend those who carry on the work of Josiah Watson by giving their time and money to keep Ravenscroft in the forefront among these institutions. We must continue to maintain the health and vigor of private schools as major contributors to the education of our young people.

You have selected an especially worthwhile topic for me to discuss today: "A Valid Perspective on Our Country for the Rest of this Decade."

With your permission, however, I would like to extend that time period and try to see our country from vantage points that will be valid beyond this decade. I want to focus not so much on surface events of the immediate future, but on some of the larger, tidal forces that are shaping our national destiny.

To get this perspective, let's look at our country and its situation in the world from two vantage points. Both have a special relevance for you.

The first is a vantage point provided by the cameras of our astronauts on their way to the moon. Through the photographs they brought back, we got an unforgettable new view of our beautiful blue earth, wreathed in white clouds, floating in space. Yours is the first generation in the entire history of mankind

(more)

to have the advantage, all of your lives, of this special vision of the planet on which we live.

My generation, and all those that went before, have had only a limited view of the earth most of our years. Through the astronauts' photographs, you will always see it differently.

You will have a vision of the earth as the Creator might see it. You can see it in the whole. You can see its essential unity, its oneness, its undividedness. You can see the close links among all the elements that are common to life -- land, air, water.

And with this new realization of the common nature of the earth's physical structure comes a new view of mankind. Your generation will have a better understanding than any other before you of the essential unity of man on this earth. You will see more clearly the common nature of his interests: his common needs, his common aspirations -- and his common destiny. And you will have a better grasp of the fact that the only course for men everywhere is to live and work together in peace and harmony for the common good.

Now this vantage point from afar, providing us with this new view of mankind, is essential, it seems to me, in achieving the valid perspective of our own country that we seek here today. For it brings home to us, as never before the clear and present need for our country, the greatest and most powerful on earth, to take the lead in promoting peace and progress among all nations.

And this is the very mission that this Administration has undertaken so diligently -- in the settlement in Southeast Asia, in detente with the Soviet Union and in our new relationships with the People's Republic of China.

But perhaps most important of all is the new ceasefire in the Middle East. This area has been a powder keg threatening world peace for many years. It has now been largely defused, with the prospects for a just and lasting settlement better than they have been for a quarter of a century.

My generation is merely scoring the initial break-throughs. The real challenge, the big opportunity to take the giant strides along the road of peaceful cooperation throughout the world will be the task of your generation. And I am confident that you will fulfill that mission.

The other vantage point I would like to use in trying for this valid perspective is the direct opposite of one far away in space. It is right here -- right here in your hometown, your county, your state.

Viewing our country from here, or any other locality, our thoughts turn first to Washington. That is the seat of government. That's where the power lies. That's where the great decisions are made. That's where the laws are written.

(more)

That's where the tax money goes.

From this vantage point, state and local government are seen as lesser entities. They are relatively weak. Their tax revenues are insufficient to enable them to cope with their mounting problems -- crime, urban decay, pollution, substandard health facilities. They increasingly look to Washington for help, for funds, for expertise. But when their requests get entangled in the red tape of the Federal bureaucracy, months, even years, can intervene before help arrives.

You will remember that our country began as a loose confederation of states. But it was soon realized that a stronger central government would be needed to assure the growth of opportunity for our people.

The idea was to establish a balance of power. We would have a strong national government in Washington, but the states and localities were to remain strong in their own right. We would thus enjoy the benefits of different ideas and creative solutions to problems from many sources of power.

But over the years the impact of war and financial crisis caused more and more power to flow to the central government. And as the Federal Government grew, it became remote from the people it was supposed to serve, remote from the problems it was supposed to solve. At the same time, government in the states and towns and cities grew weaker and less effective.

Today, a historic change is underway. In the last few years -- during the time that you've been in high school -- the Nixon Administration has begun a reversal of that flow of power. Under the concept of the "New Federalism," we are returning power to state and local governments, which are closer to the people, which are familiar with their special needs, and which can provide solutions to problems that fit their particular situation.

And along with this power, we're sending the money that makes it effective. Through the instrument of revenue sharing, we are sending Federal tax revenues back to the states where it came from. The money will be spent by local people, to meet local needs and to provide local solutions.

Today, this historic shift of power is only beginning to roll. But as it picks up momentum during your lifetime, you and your generation will be called on to shoulder more and more of the responsibilities now centered in Washington. You will be challenged to exercise leadership in rebuilding your city, providing decent housing, adequate health facilities, effective crime prevention, and in meeting many other needs of your city and state.

So in the perspective on our country's future that I've tried to outline today, your generation will face new challenges and new opportunities for service both at home and abroad.

(more)

But wherever you serve, in whatever capacity, the most urgent need of all will be for brave men and women who have faith in America and its high ideals.

For nearly 200 years, this nation has stood as a beacon of trust, honor and reverence for the eternal fitness of things. It has been a guiding light for ethical conduct among men and nations.

But today there are prophets of doom who say that the light of moral principle in America is growing dim. They say our standards of truth and honesty have been lowered. They say we can no longer claim to represent the best that is in men and women.

I do not believe this. I do not believe that America has lost for a moment its strong sense of character and integrity.

Indeed, I believe the very opposite. I believe that our country is demonstrating today a fidelity to its moral principles that every American can be proud of. The flame of decency and right still burns as brightly as ever in our land.

Every generation of Americans has the obligation to rekindle this flame with its own youthful idealism -- its own faith and trust and hope, its own high regard for honesty and right. Just outside the circle of light, the forces of darkness are always waiting, as they have been since time began. But they have always feared -- and shrunk back from -- the bright flame of honesty in young people.

So I would say to you today, as the great cellist Pablo Casals once told some of his pupils: "I want you to be young, young all your life, and to say things to the world that are true."

Nothing you do can give more meaning to your lives. Nothing you do can do more for the America we all love.

#