

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE  
UPON DELIVERY

SEPTEMBER 13, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary  
(Dallas, Texas)

---

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED AT  
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

DALLAS, TEXAS

I am honored to address this opening autumn convocation marking the beginning of this historic year of S.M.U.'s 60 th Anniversary as well as your participation in the national Bicentennial.

I am pleased to congratulate your new President, Doctor James H. Zumberge. I know Jim Zumberge from his days as President of Grand Valley State College in Michigan. I know him not only as a distinguished educator and scientist but as an American who believes in the possibilities of the human individual. I am confident that under his Presidency, S.M.U. will instill into the Bicentennial Year a vision of the future -- a vision that typifies the great State of Texas and this distinguished University which has done so much to demonstrate what's right with America. And I have no doubt Texas will instill in your distinguished new President an even greater appreciation of what's right with Texas.

I have always felt at home in Texas because I admire so much the Texas spirit and Texan achievements. There is a touch of Texas in all Americans and I am not immune to the stardust cast by the Lone Star State.

In Texas, everything is possible. And there is just enough Texas optimism in me to believe that, in America, not only is everything possible but our fate as a Nation is in our own hands.

The prophets of gloom and doom have predicted:

- that the quality of life in America will worsen;
- that democracy, as we know it, is finished;
- that we face economic collapse;
- that we are either being poisoned by the food or will starve to death;
- that criminals are capturing our cities;
- that the President of the United States is no longer safe in greeting citizens in the Nation's streets;
- that if the earthquakes don't get us, a new ice age will.

(MORE)

I reject such pessimistic scenarios.

I would like to share with you today something of my own vision for the future. I would build upon our proud past. In America's first century, we developed political institutions responsive to the people. A great nation was painfully consolidated with unity growing from diversity. Our second century transformed an underdeveloped country into the most productive nation that ever existed. America reflected the pioneer spirit, the achievements of industry, agriculture, the incentives of free enterprise, the contributions of free trade unions, and the widespread sharing of economic gains at home and abroad.

As we approach our third century, I see this era as one of fulfillment for the individual citizen.

I see a century devoted to education which equips young men and women, like the students of S.M.U., to make their own decisions rather than permit their future to be programmed by massive government structures that an imaginative writer foresaw for "1984" -- a nightmarish fantasy of what our third century could be.

It is my deepest conviction that a government big enough to give you everything you want is big enough to take away everything you have.

Let us usher in a third century in which the individual rather than the government makes personal choices and decides how individual income is to be spent. Men and women must prevail over the endless agencies and bureaus that would reduce human beings to computerized abstractions and program people into numbers and statistics.

I place a premium on creativity, originality and your right to differentiate yourself from the mass. Today's mounting danger is from mass government, mass education and mass technology.

I am determined to do everything in my power to prevent conformist pressures from smothering individual expression or stifling individual opportunity. Individualism must stand as the sentinel of 1976 against the monolithic threat of sameness in our society.

Never forget that, in America, our sovereign is the citizen. Governments and institutions exist to serve people. The state is the servant of the individual. It must never become an anonymous monstrosity that masters everyone and is responsive to no one.

(MORE)

These propositions are the foundations of our Bicentennial.

My vision of America's third century is one of an era of achievements rather than apathy, of fostering the ennobling and transcendental qualities of the individual spirit rather than building huge new bureaucracies.

Two centuries of sacrifices and struggle, of conflict and compromise, have won an unprecedented measure of political and economic independence for each of us. I am proud to be the President of a free government that checks and balances its own excesses.

I am proud of our free economic system which corrects its own errors, controlled by the market place of free and enlightened consumers. And I am especially proud of the role of free education in preserving individuality.

Education is vital to my vision of our third century. Only education can equip individuals to take responsibility for their own lives in the face of the pressures of mass systems of society. Education must provide the perception upon which rests the quality of individuality.

I challenge educators and students to regain the excitement that made America great. Each generation brings a new spirit of competition, new reservoirs of enthusiasm, new responses to the humanitarian needs of others and regenerated pride in personal independence. This generation bears a special task -- the preservation of individualism.

You are the bulwark of individualism. So is your family. So is your local community. And, especially, schools like S. M. U. which join the public educational institutions in the cross-germination of ideas.

My own background included two experiences in higher education. One, the University of Michigan; the other Yale University. One public; the other private. I value both. I buy an open market for ideas.

Education is the key to the diversity which will determine the kind of people we will be. It must not become a mass product .

All the armies and weapons systems of our defense will mean nothing without self-reliant individuals who retain the cherished qualities of Americanism. That is one great purpose of education.

Educated men and women not only provide answers to problems but keep open the options in society that make life worth living. Our real first line of defense is in the quality of individual life -- in moral and spiritual values, compassion, courage, love of community and country, creativity, innovation, enterprise, originality -- and healthy sportsmanship and fair competition. None of these attributes of individuality can be mass produced. They must be encouraged and grow within each man and woman.

But that growth can be nourished. On the portico of Angell Hall on my old campus at Ann Arbor, there is an inscription from an Act of the Congress adopted in 1787 -- the Northwest Ordinance Act which states: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

(MORE)

The American tradition can inspire the highest virtues. But the government cannot achieve personal fulfillment for you. Your future depends upon your own determination to develop your highest potential.

Let us apply the theories of education in the laboratory of life. I urge students and graduates and faculties to direct their genius and their energy to the solution of the problems facing America.

I challenge you to help make not only America but American life beautiful and inspiring.

Let us take a new look at ourselves as Americans. By seeking a real partnership between the university and the rest of society, you can give greater meaning to your own life and help all Americans enhance the quality of their lives.

I look to S.M.U. and other privately supported institutions of higher learning -- both in harmony with and in competition with public institutions -- to help regenerate the values that make American life so special.

Students who prefer different philosophies of learning should be able to choose among the widest possible variety of options. This insures the diversity essential to educate the "whole person" -- the physical person, the intellectual person and spiritual person.

In private education, there is direct citizen participation in the educational process. S.M.U. is not dependent on government funding that establishes rigid requirements and guidelines. To maintain its unique qualities, S.M.U. takes responsibility for its own support. I commend its supporters.

I am concerned about the heavy burden falling upon the working, middle-income citizens who are struggling to pay tuitions and costs at both public and private colleges.

I am also concerned that private higher education is now in financial difficulty. Private institutions provide a leavening and stimulating influence for the public universities and colleges. Their continuing vitality is essential to all higher education.

Educators must innovate and respond to the world in which students -- of all ages and of all backgrounds -- find themselves.

Private institutions can best serve by emphasizing their uniqueness -- not by succumbing to any temptation to imitate the public university. But neither students nor government will support a private college just because of its antiquity or history.

They must offer something truly different and important. Private education -- free of governmental constraints -- enjoys boundless freedom to experiment in vital areas that may fall outside general public support.

(MICRE)

Let us encourage human growth which can transcend from despair to dynamism-- from confusion to clarity-- and from hopelessness to hope unlimited.

America is going through an unprecedented period of technological and economic change and dislocation. We have been jolted by shock after shock. But this nation is not disintegrating. It is going through a period of transition.

It is experiencing the growing pains of a mighty nation of over 214 million with the world's greatest record of achievement in the short time span of two centuries. We will transcend this period of trial. I believe in America and am convinced by all that is right about America.

I am proud to represent an Administration that has created a new climate of peace abroad while striving for solutions to complex problems at home. In the finest American tradition, we have served as peacemaker in the Middle East.

I am confident that the Congress will take quick action to ratify new agreements involving Egypt and Israel. All Americans can take unifying pride in our initiative in making peace, not war.

I have the deepest confidence in America's future and our educational resources.

The schools of this nation -- private as well as public -- can help inspire the lives of Americans with new meaning and new quality. Both private and public educators must combine their genius in preparing men and women for our third century.

I urge you, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, to "enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day."

#

#

#