

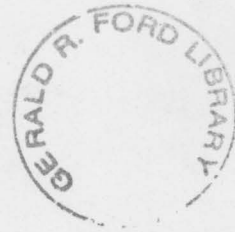
The original documents are located in Box 25, folder “November 26, 1969 - Thomasville Senior High School, Thomasville, NC (Speech by Robert J. Brown)” of the Stanley Scott Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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REMARKS BY

ROBERT J. BROWN
SPECIAL ASSISTANT
TO THE PRESIDENT



BEFORE THE

THOMASVILLE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
THOMASVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

NOVEMBER 26, 1969

I ALWAYS ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, AND PARTICULARLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE
POSSESSING THE ENTHUSIASM AND AMBITION YOU APPEAR TO HAVE.

IT HAS ONLY BEEN A FEW YEARS AGO (PERHAPS 16 OR 17 YEARS)
THAT I SAT IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM AS YOU SIT TODAY
ANTICIPATING THE WORDS OF A GUEST SPEAKER. I VIVIDLY RECALL
PONDERING THE QUESTION - IS THIS FELLOW GOING TO STOP SPEAK-
ING IN TIME FOR ME TO REVIEW MY NEXT COURSE ASSIGNMENT? I
ALSO RECALL THAT, IF THE SPEAKER WAS BRIEF, AND LEFT ME A
FEW MINUTES FOR COURSE REVIEW, BEFORE MY NEXT CLASS, I
BLESSED HIM. NOW, I AM NOT INFERRING THAT A SOPHISTICATED
GROUP SUCH AS THIS ONE WOULD ENTERTAIN SUCH THOUGHTS, BUT
I SURMISE THAT ONE WAY TO EARN A PLACE IN THE MEMORY OF SOME
OF YOU IS FOR ME TO BE BRIEF. I WILL.

MY SUBJECT TODAY IS IN THE GENERAL AREA OF PREPARING



ONESELF TO MEET SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE. I WANT TO SPEND A FEW MOMENTS DISCUSSING THE DEMANDS PLACED UPON YOU TODAY BY THE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FORCES EXISTING IN OUR SOCIETY. AND DURING MY REMARKS, I WANT YOU TO REFLECT UPON HOW YOU ARE GOING TO COPE WITH THESE FORCES NOW AND IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

IN THIS REGARD, I AM REMINDED OF THE PASSENGER WHO, ABOUT TO LEAVE NEW YORK CITY FOR A NEW DESTINATION, HASTILY PURCHASED HIS TICKET AND BOARDED A TRAIN. AFTER TRAVELING A SHORT DISTANCE, THE CONDUCTOR CAME ALONG AND REQUESTED HIS TICKET. THE PASSENGER BEGAN SEARCHING THROUGH ALL OF HIS POCKETS FOR HIS TICKET BUT WAS UNABLE TO FIND IT. THE CONDUCTOR, AFTER WAITING PATIENTLY FOR A FEW MOMENTS, FINALLY SAID: "DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SIR. WE KNOW YOU HAD A TICKET. JUST MAIL IT IN TO THE RAILROAD OFFICE WHEN YOU FIND IT."



THE PASSENGER REPLIED, "THAT'S NOT WHAT'S BOTHERING ME.

THE TROUBLE IS - WHERE AM I GOING?"

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE STOPPED TO ASK YOURSELVES THIS
QUESTION?

YOU YOUNG PEOPLE ASSEMBLED HERE TODAY ARE EXPERIENCING
A MOST IMPORTANT PERIOD IN YOUR LIVES AND ARE APPROACHING
ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CROSSROADS YOU WILL EVER FACE.
SOME OF YOU WILL FACE THIS CROSSROAD WITHIN THE NEXT FEW
MONTHS, OTHERS WITHIN THE NEXT TWO OR THREE YEARS, BUT
ALL WITHIN A VERY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. THE CROSSROAD THAT
I AM REFERRING TO IS, OF COURSE, THE DATE ON WHICH YOU WILL
COMPLETE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CAREER. YOU MUST HAVE DETERMINED
LONG BEFORE THAT DATE, OR AT LEAST BY THAT DATE, WHETHER
YOU ARE GOING TO CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION, PURSUE A TRADE OR
SPECIALITY, OR MOVE OUT TO FACE THE VICISSITUDES OF LIFE WITH



THE LIMITED SKILLS YOU HAVE ACQUIRED HERE IN HIGH SCHOOL. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE ENTERING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL, NOW IS THE TIME FOR YOU TO MAKE THIS DECISION. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE SENIORS, IT IS LATE, BUT THERE IS STILL TIME FOR YOU TO ACT - TO ASCERTAIN WHERE YOU ARE GOING, TO FIND OUT WHAT YOUR MISSION IN LIFE IS AND DIRECT YOUR ENERGIES TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THAT MISSION.

FAR TOO MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOL TODAY HAVE FAILED TO ASK THEMSELVES WHERE THEY ARE GOING IN LIFE; THEY HAVE SIMILARLY FAILED TO ESTABLISH WHOLESOME GOALS AND SET THEMSELVES ON A PROPER COURSE TOWARD THE REALIZATION OF THOSE GOALS. IN FAILING TO SET GOALS EARLY IN LIFE, OR AT LEAST AT SOME POINT IN YOUR LIVES WHEN YOU ARE CAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO THEM, YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO COPE WITH MANY OF THE CHALLENGES THAT INEVITABLY WILL CONFRONT YOU AS YOU



PROCEED THROUGH LIFE.

TWENTY-FIVE OR THIRTY YEARS AGO THE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE PARTICIPATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY WERE NOT NEARLY AS DEMANDING AS THEY ARE TODAY. UNSKILLED LABOR IN AGRICULTURE AND IN NON-FARM OCCUPATIONS COMPRISED A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE LABOR FORCE. COMMON SENSE, RATHER THAN SCIENCE, PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MOST OF OUR ACTIVITIES AND JUDGMENTS. A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WAS CONSIDERED A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT, AND MARKED THE END OF THE EDUCATIONAL CAREER FOR MANY.

HOWEVER, SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II, TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY GREATER ROLE IN THE CONDUCT OF AMERICAN LIFE. THE RAPID RATE OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, AND DEFENSE HAS SO CHANGED THE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL LABOR FORCE



THAT THE CHANCE FOR A YOUTH OR YOUNG ADULT WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION TO OBTAIN EVEN SUBSISTENCE EMPLOYMENT IS BECOMING ALMOST NON-EXISTENT. AS WE SHALL SEE LATER, ONE'S CHANCE IS NOT APPRECIABLY BETTER IF HE CEASES HIS TOTAL LEARNING PROCESS AT THE POINT OF OBTAINING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

TODAY'S LABOR FORCE IS COMPRISED OF ONLY 7 PERCENT FARMERS AND FARM LABORERS, AND 6 PERCENT OF UNSKILLED LABORERS IN OTHER FIELDS. THE REMAINING 87 PERCENT OF THE LABOR FORCE IS COMPOSED OF SEMI-SKILLED, SKILLED LABOR AND PROFESSIONALS. MANY OF YOU HAVE VIEWED THE EFFECTS OF AUTOMATION UPON JOBS PREVIOUSLY FILLED BY UNSKILLED OR SEMI-SKILLED LABOR, AND THE INNUMERABLE INSTANCES IN WHICH THE INTRODUCTION OF MACHINES HAS CAUSED THE DISPLACEMENT OF THOUSANDS OF SUCH WORKERS.



HOWEVER, JUST AS AUTOMATION HAS SHARPLY REDUCED THE DEMAND FOR UNSKILLED AND SEMI-SKILLED LABOR, IT HAS PRECIPITATED AN EQUIVALENT DEMAND FOR SKILLED EMPLOYEES IN THOSE OCCUPATIONS REQUIRING A FAIRLY HIGH LEVEL OF EDUCATION - IN SUCH AREAS AS ENGINEERING, SCIENCE, THE HEALTH SERVICES, EDUCATION, THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND ADMINISTRATION.

AS YOU CAN SEE, WITH SUCH A LIMITED DEMAND FOR UNSKILLED LABOR, A YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL BOY OR GIRL WHO DOES NOT DECIDE WHERE HE IS GOING IN LIFE AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO ACQUIRE PROFESSIONAL, SEMI-PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL COMPETENCE, WILL FACE A BLEAK FUTURE FILLED WITH INEVITABLE FRUSTRATIONS AND DESPAIR.

I CITE THESE CHANGING DEMANDS IN OUR ECONOMIC LIFE NOT TO FRIGHTEN YOU BUT TO AWAKEN YOU TO THE NECESSITY OF



ADEQUATELY APPLYING YOURSELVES IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY GET THE MOST FROM YOUR PRESENT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, AND TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO PURSUE FURTHER EDUCATION BEYOND YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

WHILE I WANT TO URGE EACH OF YOU TO THINK HARD IN TERMS OF ACQUIRING A COLLEGE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE, I DO NOT WISH TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PURSUIT OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION IS THE ONLY WAY TO COPE WITH THE ECONOMIC DEMANDS OF OUR SOCIETY OR TO ACHIEVE A WHOLESOME LIFE. THE GREAT PRESTIGE WHICH COLLEGE EDUCATION HAS ACHIEVED IN OUR SOCIETY LEADS MANY TO ASSUME - QUITE FALSELY - THAT IT IS THE ONLY FORM OF CONTINUED LEARNING AFTER HIGH SCHOOL. MANY FALSELY ASSUME THAT ONE IS RESTRICTED TO THE ALTERNATIVES OF EITHER GOING TO COLLEGE AND CONTINUING TO LEARN OR GOING TO WORK AND CEASING HIS LEARNING - THAT THE PATH TO COLLEGE



IS THE ONLY EXCITING POSSIBILITY, THE ONLY PATH TO SELF-
DEVELOPMENT. I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT THERE IS A GREAT
DEAL OF LEARNING AND GROWING THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE COLLEGE.
SHOULD YOU ELECT NOT TO PURSUE A COLLEGE CAREER, YOU
SHOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE GROWTH AND LEARNING; IF YOU DO NOT,
YOU WILL MAKE A DREADFUL MISTAKE. THERE ARE SEVERAL
OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOU IN THIS REGARD. HOWEVER, THE
COURSE THESE OPPORTUNITIES WILL TAKE AND THE NATURE OF YOUR
GROWTH AND LEARNING WILL DEPEND UPON YOUR INDIVIDUAL
INCENTIVE AND CAPACITY.

TRAINING PROGRAMS WITHIN INDUSTRIAL CORPORATIONS ARE
CONSTANTLY BEING EXPANDED AND PROVIDE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY
FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING. APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEMS OF THE
VARIOUS SKILLED CRAFT AND TRADE UNIONS PROVIDE ADDITIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES, BUT A FEW OF THESE PROGRAMS PRESENTLY HAVE



RESTRICTIONS UPON THE ENTRY OF NEGROES AND OTHER MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS. WE ARE DIRECTING OUR EFFORTS TOWARD ELIMINATING THESE BARRIERS OF ENTRY INTO THESE CRAFTS AND TRADES.

VARIOUS BRANCHES OF THE GOVERNMENT OFFER JOBS TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHICH INVOLVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN WHILE WORKING. THE ARMED SERVICES OFFER TRAINING IN A GREAT MANY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALITIES.

NIGHT CLASSES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE BREAKING ALL ATTENDANCE RECORDS, AND OFFER A VARIETY OF COURSES FOR SKILL AND SEMI-SKILL DEVELOPMENT.

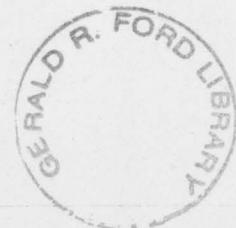
THERE ALSO EXIST, ON AN INCREASINGLY LARGE SCALE, A NUMBER OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS - ART SCHOOLS, MUSIC SCHOOLS, NURSING SCHOOLS, SCHOOLS FOR DATA PROCESSING, X-RAY TECHNICIAN SCHOOLS, AND OTHERS WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.



IN ADDITION, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ON RADIO AND TELEVISION CONTINUE TO EXPAND, OPENING UP A WIDE RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES.

THESE POSSIBILITIES THAT I HAVE REVIEWED ARE BY NO MEANS EXHAUSTIVE, BUT ARE INTENDED ONLY TO ACQUAINT YOU WITH THE DIVERSE PATHS FOR FURTHER LEARNING AND GROWTH OPEN TO YOU WHO DO NOT CHOOSE TO PURSUE A COLLEGE EDUCATION. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO THINK HARD ABOUT YOUR ABILITIES AND INTEREST NOW, AND LOOK AT THE VARIOUS AVAILABLE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT, YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO YEARS OF LEARNING AND GROWTH - WHETHER YOU ACQUIRE A COLLEGE DEGREE OR NOT.

ONE OF THE MOST DISMAYING FACTORS WE ARE EXPERIENCING AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL IS THE LACK OF INTEREST AND DESIRE ON THE PART OF MANY YOUNG AND ADULT PERSONS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE



OF THE INNUMERABLE LEARNING AND SKILL BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE WIDE RANGE OF BLUE AND WHITE COLLAR JOBS WAITING TO BE FILLED.

I URGE YOU TO DECIDE NOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING IN LIFE AND DIRECT YOUR EFFORTS TOWARD ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS. THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU TO BE WHATEVER YOU YOURSELVES DETERMINE THAT YOU WANT TO BE. START PREPARING YOURSELVES NOW FOR THE DIFFICULT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JOURNEY AHEAD. REMEMBER, A PERSON OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF SKILLS AND OUT OF A JOB IN TODAY'S SOCIETY IS UNLIKELY TO BE A HAPPY PERSON OR A CONSTRUCTIVE CITIZEN.

NOW, FOR THE PAST FEW MINUTES, I HAVE DISCUSSED THE BASIC ECONOMIC PROBLEMS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER AS YOU COMPLETE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CAREER AND SOME APPROACHES YOU MAY TAKE TO COPE WITH THEM.



BEFORE CLOSING, I WISH TO SAY THAT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY LIES NOT ONLY IN PREPARING YOURSELVES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE MANY JOB OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE TO YOU.

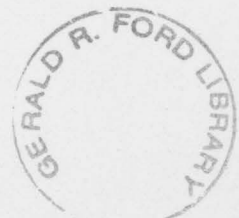
YOU ALSO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL LIVES OUT OF MATERIALS SO STRONG THAT YOU CAN STAND UP AT ANY TIME AND BE COUNTED WITH A CLEAR AND FIRM POSITION ON THE MANY PERPLEXING SOCIAL ISSUES WHICH AFFECT YOUR LIFE AND THE DESTINY OF OUR COUNTRY - SUCH ISSUES AS:

1. THE SPIRALING RACIAL TENSION AFFLICTING MANY OF OUR COMMUNITIES;

2. THE VIOLENCE THAT IS SWEEPING OUR INNER CITIES AND SPREADING TO MANY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS;

3. THE EVER-WIDENING GAP BETWEEN MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND OUR OLDER GENERATION;

4. THE ATTEMPTS BY SOME TO DESTROY MANY OF OUR



ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS, RATHER THAN TO SEEK BENEFICIAL CHANGES TO THEM FROM WITHIN.

NEVER BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY HAS YOUR HELP BEEN NEEDED AS BADLY AS IT IS TODAY, TO HELP RESTORE A SENSE OF REASON AND GOODWILL AMONG THE PEOPLE.

I ASK YOU TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD ADVOCATE BIGOTRY AND THOSE WHO FAN THE FIRES OF RACIAL DISCORD AND STRIFE; TO CONDEMN THOSE WHO WOULD SANCTION VIOLENCE FOR ANY CAUSE; TO JOIN WITH THOSE PERSONS WHO STRIVE TO KEEP OPEN THE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE YOUNG AND THE OLDER GENERATION; AND TO DENOUNCE THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY OUR SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO SATISFY THEIR OWN VANITY OR EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES.

AS I HAVE MENTIONED EARLIER, NOT ALL OF YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ATTEND COLLEGE. NOR WILL MANY OF YOU BECOME GREAT PUBLIC FIGURES. BUT THERE IS NONE AMONG YOU WHO WILL BE



UNABLE TO CONTINUE TO LEARN, TO GROW, AND TO STRIVE FOR
A WHOLESOME AND BETTER LIFE FOR ALL AMERICANS.

NO MATTER WHAT YOUR STATION IN LIFE WILL BE, EACH OF YOU
HAS A SHARE IN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SHAPING YOUR DESTINY
AND YOUR COUNTRY'S DESTINY. YOU SHOULD LIVE YOUR LIFE WITH
DIGNITY AND ALWAYS SHOW CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF OTHERS.
BE PROUD OF YOURSELF AND MAKE YOUR DAILY CONDUCT SUCH THAT
NO MAN CAN SPEAK EVIL OF YOU.

FINALLY, I WANT TO URGE YOU TO DEDICATE YOURSELVES TO
THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE IN WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE TO BE OR
WHATEVER ACTIVITY YOU UNDERTAKE. BE THE BEST OF WHATEVER
YOU ARE. PERHAPS THIS ADMONITION TO YOU IS BETTER EXPRESSED
BY DOUGLAS MALLOCH IN HIS POEM WHICH STATES:

"IF YOU CAN'T BE A PINE ON THE TOP OF THE HILL,

BE A SCRUB IN THE VALLEY -



BUT BE THE BEST LITTLE SCRUB BY THE SIDE OF THE HILL;

BE A BUSH IF YOU CAN'T BE A TREE."

"IF YOU CAN'T BE A HIGHWAY THEN JUST BE A TRAIL,

IF YOU CAN'T BE THE SUN, BE A STAR;

IT ISN'T BY SIZE THAT YOU WIN OR FAIL -

BE THE BEST OF WHATEVER YOU ARE!"

I THANK YOU.

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