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Commencement Address
Spring Arbor College

May 31, 1965

In humanity's search for progress, some say there is an air of uncertainty, an uneasy fatalism, because not enough know the answers. I take strong exception to this doctrine of pessimism.

There is strong evidence and reassuring proof that a responsible majority of our citizens faces the challenges of 1965 America with strong moral convictions and intelligent optimism.

Graduation time here and on other campuses across our land is the answer to the critics, the prophets of doom and despair who see only staggering adversity rather than the accomplishments and dedication of a free Nation.

Certainly, there is armed conflict, the terror of gunfire, the viciousness of aggression in the world. This is an inescapable fact of our times. However, I believe this Nation is joined in unwavering purpose



and strong unity to the proposition of eventual peace in the world.

There may be differences as to the methods of achieving international tranquility, but there is overwhelming agreement as to the desperately-needed result.

And most certainly there are domestic problems -- diseases to conquer, social ills to cure, large areas of our country to rehabilitate, challenges everywhere. In this area there are also differences of opinion among responsible citizens as to the ways and means of solving the problems.

More importantly, there are hopeful signs that our Nation has the unlimited patience, the imagination, the willingness to sacrifice, the confidence and courage to make the future better than the past -- without losing or forsaking our hard-won traditions of a free Republic.

Institutions of higher learning, religiously-oriented colleges, universities, schools large and small, face a remarkable opportunity for intellectual adventure.



The opportunity includes the encouragement of independent effort, the development of self-discipline, the opening of minds and hearts to the great truths -- some of them yet to be discovered.

Certainly, the concept of Spring Arbor College is a splendid blend of these qualities which are paramount in the search for knowledge.

I understand that your college is dedicated to assisting students to become seriously involved in the study of liberal arts, thoroughly committed to Christian values, and alert to responsibilities and opportunities as intelligent citizens in the contemporary world.

A Nation challenged by the threat of Communism on the outside and the dangers of an irresponsible, restless minority within, needs each of you, and must exhibit a national unity.

Away from our homeland, we are fighting Communist aggression in two hemispheres. A major battleground is in Viet Nam where the President has committed troops, planes, and ships.



Some 6,000 miles from the Viet Nam scene of strife and war, there is trouble in the Dominican Republic, which, too, is the result of Communist leaders creating turmoil and conflict.

Just 90 miles from the United States -- in Cuba -- Fidel Castro is the generalissimo of Communism in this hemisphere. He is the arsonist, the fire-starter in Latin America.

While we are engaged in fighting Communism abroad, there are dangerously significant events taking place on the domestic scene which, though isolated, threaten potentially precarious eruptions in the land of freedom.

I mention several instances only to focus attention on the need for strong national unity and a special awareness among all segments of our society that forces of irresponsible dissent are active in our land.

State Department representatives have been given boorish receptions by a small minority of students at two state universities. At another prominent educational institution, pickets forced cancelation of a ceremony



to award members of the university's Naval Reserve unit. Glass was broken and police officers were roughed up. On another campus a United States ambassador was the target of hecklers who shouted "liar" while he was speaking on foreign policy. When he asked "How many of you are Communists?" a number of hands were raised.

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However, I emphasize that to view these isolated protests as indicative of today's college generation would mean dignifying the questionable antics of a very tiny, angry minority.

In contrast to some outbursts of irresponsibility, there are numerous examples of young men and women using their grit and energies to give of themselves for the sake of fellowmen, to effectively right the wrongs committed by other students, to demonstrate the great wealth of ability with which today's generation is endowed.

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society.....and you, the first graduating seniors of Spring Arbor College, are among them.

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Yes, young Americans are not only ready to defend the cause of freedom, they are stepping forward on their own at a time when the Nation and the free world needs them.

The overwhelming majority of young people today -- as in the past -- are fine, dedicated, thoughtful, resourceful citizens. It is most obvious that today's student generation has been right all along while being merely exposed to public misunderstanding by a very small minority on some campuses.



At this point, I especially salute and congratulate the student body of Spring Arbor College for its patriotic, responsible conduct while we have seen demonstrations of dissent on some other campuses throughout the State and Nation.

We cannot label the current college generation with a common descriptive phrase. There are many faces and moods on the campuses today, and perhaps it is well that they do not fit into a rigid pattern of regimentation.

Individual freedom of action and choice, within the framework of the law and the orderly processes, gives each person a choice without being crowded into the position of accepting one pattern, one way of life, if he has preferred alternatives. In a word, this is -- freedom.

We all know so very well that the intelligence of responsible scholars is needed in many areas of our business, industrial, economic and social life -- and most certainly in government.



Without indulging in partisanship, I urge that you become involved in the political world; that you become a part of an informed, civically militant electorate.

It seems to me that too many Americans pride themselves as being political independents. These are the citizens who vote once every four years, who decline political partisanship with many excuses, who criticize both political parties.

Our Democrat friends and my own Party, it seems to me, should direct much of our major efforts toward helping each of these well-meaning Americans choose a political party.

The choice of being either a Republican or a Democrat should be made only after carefully studying the philosophies of each party. Perhaps, some will switch alliances. This is a choice under freedom.

Our Nation needs a strong two-party system. It is Democracy's assurance against any drift toward authoritarianism. Conversely, a crushing



over-balance of strength in either party for too long will make a mockery of our traditions in government and will weaken the voice of the people.

Our two-party system, although not written into the Constitution, builds into government an additional set of checks and balances.

Early in our history, a wise decision was made to follow the pattern of a two-party framework. Thus, we avoided the loss of freedom that accompanies a one-party government; we were spared the chaos and confusion of a multi-party government.

Not only do two strong political parties provide the electorate with legislative alternatives, but also the means for attaining a high level of honesty and frankness.

A current social philosopher has so well pointed out that the strength of our form of government lies not so much in the fact that we always elect the best person to office, but rather that the electorate can always remove an unworthy official from office by exercising the voting franchise.



Hand-in-hand with the need for two strong political parties in the American democracy is the necessity for a proper balance in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

When the balance in Congress is steeply and dangerously tilted by an overwhelming majority in either political party, our system of checks and balances is in jeopardy.

The legislative-executive-judicial balance, as established by our Constitution, is a simple, yet ingenious, system of insuring our freedom.

Certainly, there is criticism of Congress, the legislative branch. I believe this is a manifestation of our frustrations -- the tensions built up by a prolonged cold war and recent strife in two hemispheres, the existence of poverty in the midst of plenty, the highly-complex problems linked with urbanized living, the gap between the American Ideal of equality and its realization.

Of Congress, perhaps the critics would say, "Let's stop talking and stalling and get things done."



Congress was designed to be a deliberative body with Representatives in the House and two Senators from each State bearing the responsibility of reaching majority decisions, but only after thorough study and debate.

For those who view Congress as too cumbersome, too old-fashioned, too slow to act, there are two sound answers.

First, the two houses of Congress have repeatedly proved they can act with calculated swiftness to meet crisis -- domestic or foreign.

Second, the advantages of precipitous action are often outweighed by the safeguard of deliberation and the resulting slowness.

With a balance of power in the Congress, there is no chance of racing to the brink of decision with the possibility of tumbling into the yawning chasm of irresponsibility.

The power of the executive branch -- the White House -- the President -- is given awesome proportions when one political party dominates the Congress and also elects the Chief Executive. Great power in a Democracy should require great self-restraint. And if power is consistently used improperly, it could mean the eventual death of the two-party system.



For this reason I have proposed that when both the Executive and Legislative branches are dominated by the same political party -- and it matters not which -- the Committees on Government Operations of the House and Senate should be under the control of the minority party. These committees have a special responsibility to investigate official action within the Executive branch of the government.

With broad investigating authority, this arrangement would provide an effective vehicle to assure that the voice of the minority would be heard and that the best interests of our citizens and taxpayers would be protected. The majority would be constantly on notice that its actions or inactions were subject to thorough and critical review.

The duty of the third branch of government -- the Federal Judiciary -- is to interpret and apply the Constitution and the laws.

When the Judicial branch arbitrarily elbows its way to new positions of authority, it disregards the wise suggestions of judicial restraint made by the late Justice Frankfurter and others.



When the Supreme Court ordered states to reapportion on the "one-man, one-vote" concept, Justice Frankfurter in a dissenting opinion was critical of an assumption by the Court of "destructively novel judicial power."

"In this situation, as in others of like nature, appeal for relief does not belong here," Justice Frankfurter wrote. "Appeal must be made to an informed electorate," he explained, and added: "In a democratic society like ours, relief must come through an aroused public conscience that sears the conscience of the people's representatives."

In concluding, I emphasize that among the challenges of our time and especially for those of your generation are the strengthening of the two-party system and the re-establishment of balance in the three branches of government.

What are your guidelines in helping to preserve our Democracy?

Where do you start?



First of all, you have the power of knowledge to analyze and interpret the issues of our age. You have the intellectual ability to study the philosophies of both major political parties to help you make a choice. You have the proved willingness to sacrifice -- to give more of yourselves than you receive. You have strengthened your basic Christian values which give meaning to life and purpose to our endeavor.

You have demonstrated your ability to accept challenges, to work very hard to meet them, to accept new ideas, to eagerly learn.

As young scholars, as loyal members of a free Republic, as knowledgeable persons embarked on chosen careers, as dedicated servants of God, you can take the extra step toward helping to make this a better Nation and a better world for others and yourselves.

You can accept even greater responsibilities in an exciting, demanding and changing world by becoming active in politics.....as voters, as taxpayers, as partisans, as party workers, yes, even as candidates for public office.



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*President McKenna -
- Graduates - first*

*Inaugural Convocation - 1963 - Romney -
Christian Perspective in the Federal Arts*

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When the balance in Congress is steeply and dangerously tilted by an overwhelming majority in either political party, our system of checks and balances is in jeopardy.

The legislative-executive-judicial balance, as established by our Constitution, is a simple, yet ingenious, system of insuring our freedom.

Certainly, there is criticism of Congress, the legislative branch. I believe this is a manifestation of our frustrations---the tensions built up by a prolonged cold war and recent strife in two hemispheres, the existence of poverty in the midst of plenty, the highly-complex problems linked with urbanized living, the gap between the American Ideal of equality and its realization.

Of Congress perhaps the critics would say "let's stop talking and stalling and get things done."

Congress was designed to be a deliberative body with "representatives in



the House and two Senators from each State bearing the responsibility of reaching majority decisions, but only after thorough study and debate.

For those who view Congress as too cumbersome, too old-fashioned, too slow to act, there are two sound answers.

First, the two houses of Congress have repeatedly proved they can act with calculated swiftness to meet crisis---~~domestic~~ domestic or ^{foreign} ~~military~~.

Second, the advantages of precipitous action are often outweighed by the safeguard of deliberation and the resulting slowness.

With a balance of power in the Congress, there is no chance of racing to the brink of decision with the possibility of tumbling into the yawning chasm of irresponsibility.

The power of the executive branch~~00~~ the White House---the President--- is given awesome proportions when one political party dominates the Congress ^{also} and elects the Chief Executive. Great power in a Democracy should require great self-restraint. And if power is consistently used improperly, it could mean the eventual death of the two-party system.

For this reason I have proposed that when both the Executive and Legislative branches are dominated by the same political party--and it matters not which---the Committees on Government Operations of the House and Senate should be under the control of the minority party. These committees have a special responsibility to investigate official action within the executive branch of the government.



With broad investigating authority, this arrangement would provide an effective ~~vehicle~~ vehicle to assure that the voice of the minority would be heard and that the best interests of our citizens and taxpayers would be protected. The majority would be ^{constantly} on notice that its actions or inactions were subject to thorough and critical review.

The duty of the third branch of government---the Federal Judiciary---
is to interpret ^{and apply} the Constitution and the laws.

When the Judicial Branch arbitrarily elbows its way to new positions of authority, it disregards the wise suggestions of judicial restraint made by the late Justice Frankfurter and others.

When the Supreme Court ordered states to reapportion on the "one-man, one-vote" concept, Justice Frankfurter in a dissenting opinion was critical of an assumption by the Court of "destructively novel judicial power."

"In this situation, as in others of like nature, appeal for relief does not belong here," Justice Frankfurter ^{wrote, I} said. "Appeal must be made to an informed electorate," he explained ^{and added,} "In a democratic society like ours, relief must come through an aroused public conscience that sears the conscience of the people's representatives."

In concluding, I emphasize that among the challenges of our time and especially for those of your generation are the strengthening of the two-party system and the re-establishment of balance in the three branches of government.



What are your guidelines in helping to preserve our Democracy?

Where do you start?

First of all, you have the power of knowledge to analyse and interpret the issues of our age. You have the intellectual ability to study the philosophies of both major political parties to help you make a choice. You have the proved willingness to sacrifice---to give more of yourselves than you receive. You have strengthened your basic Christian values which give meaning to life and purpose to our endeavor.

You have demonstrated your ability to accept challenges, to work very hard to meet them, to accept new ideas, to eagerly learn.

As young scholars, as loyal members of a free Republic, as knowledgeable persons embarked on chosen careers, as dedicated servants of God, you can take the extra step toward helping to make this a better Nation and a better world for others and yourselves.

You can accept even greater responsibilities in an exciting, demanding and changing world by becoming active in politics.... as voters, as *a party worker,* taxpayers, as partisans, yes, even as candidates for public office.

I congratulate you for your achievements in education, which we salute here today. And, I am confident you will *grow in these qualities* contribute the ingredients *good* of citizenship, *which will enable* ~~that~~ our Republic *to* survive, prosper, *and* ~~and~~ *only* ~~accept the responsibilities of leadership in today and~~ *Then our* ~~that it and you will help others in the world to accept their role in the~~ *Tomorrow's world.* ~~society of free nations.~~

