

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
LILLY ENDOWMENT FOR THE LIBERAL ARTS

ROOM 450
OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING

3:53 P.M. EST

Dr. Bell, Dr. Trotter, distinguished colleagues and university Presidents, I think some of my former colleagues in the House as well as the Senate, students and others:

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be here, and I welcome you on not only my behalf but on behalf of the White House staff, and I certainly hope that your trip here is worthwhile and will be very beneficial.

As a former member of the Board of Trustees of one of the participating colleges here, Albion College, I appreciate the important relationship between liberal education and professions and the need to understand that relationship better.

Since the early middle ages, colleges have been sheltered, almost cloistered communities set apart from general society. Unfortunately, this has caused a certain amount of suspicion and in some cases unfortunate distrust. And I don't think in the current environment we can afford that today.

Benjamin Disraeli once said, and I quote, "A university should be a place of light, liberty and of learning." In a free society like our own where education is open to many, not just the few, the universities light, liberty and learning must not be abstract but rather must relate to reality.

A sound liberal education can and should be the key to preparing young people, men and women, for a full life beyond their student years; that is, as I see it, at least a creative productive member of our greater community.

This is not just a democratic ideal; it is a practical necessity, one on which we are working at this time in the preparation of our domestic policy recommendations for the State of the Union.

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(OVER)

I met this week, earlier this week, with Secretary Weinberger, Dr. Trotter and Ted Bell. We focused on maximizing available Federal resources to improve opportunities for and the quality of post secondary education.

In addition, Secretaries Dent, Weinberger and Brennan are working to build a better relationship and a better balance between the world of work on the one hand and education on the other.

This is vitally important to our young peoples' search for meaningful and satisfying careers. It is equally vital to our Nation's continued requirements for well-educated and well-qualified manpower.

I am hopeful that the National Institute of Education will play an important part, an important part in research and development role in meeting these two important goals. Changing population trends and the emotional aftermath of the turbulent 1960s have contributed to the problems facing liberal education today.

And, as I see it, with two sons in colleges and one about to enter next year, and a daughter also about to enter a year from now, the problems remain serious. However, I deeply believe that they can be overcome.

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Part of the reason for my belief is programs like yours, programs that articulate and strengthen the bonds between learning and living, between the world of books, philosophy and ideas and the world of human problems and human solutions.

Dr. Samuel Johnson recognized the need for this link, this vital interrelationship. He urged his readers to pause a while for learning to be wise, to take time to understand and apply the lessons of the classroom to the conditions of the world.

As I understand it, that is what you are doing, developing human and humane insights that only a liberal education provides and applying them to the many professional jobs that must be done in a modern society.

In looking over the list of participants and the events for this conference, I see that you have pursued well your goal of focusing attention on the social responsibility of professionals and the role of the liberal arts college in preparing people for these professions.

The range of your agenda is impressive, including figures from business, the professions and the communications media as well as the academic community. I am always an optimist and I happen to believe that you will succeed.

Your basic product and your basic methods of looking at the problem are sound. I believe that the liberal arts college can cope with the change without injuring its roots or its purpose. Your institutions are a much needed part of the modern education system and, of course, of our society.

The ties you are building with business, with the professions and with the media will help to create a better future for your colleges, your students and I think our country.

In the months ahead, because of my interest in the subject, and my concern for a solution, I will be following your work with a personal interest. You do have my support and you certainly have my best wishes for a continued success.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 4:00 P.M. EST)