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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
1975 PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

THE EAST GARDEN

3:17 P.M. EDT

Secretary Weinberger, Senator Bob Dole, Dr. Trotter, Dr. Bell, Chairman Wallace, ladies and gentlemen, and particularly all of you honored guests -- the Presidential Scholars:

First, let me welcome you all most sincerely to the White House, in this beautiful East Garden. This is a typical Washington day. (Laughter)

I must also, with emphasis, congratulate you on the outstanding record of achievement and leadership ability which has made it possible for you to be here today.

As Presidential Scholars, you represent one of the most select, truly one of the most distinguished groups of young people in this country today. You have demonstrated your talents in a diversity of fields -- in the humanities, in the arts and in the sciences.

And outside of the academic realm, which I think is vastly important, you have been active in a great variety of student and community service organizations where you have shown remarkable leadership capabilities.

I would like to commend the Office of Education, too, for giving recognition to this most distinguished group of gifted young men and young women.

Secretary Weinberger, through his presentation of the medals commemorating this honor, has shown his personal interest as well, as well as the interest of the entire Department, in rewarding individuals for their initiative and their desire to achieve, and thanks must also be given to the members of the Commission of Presidential Scholars and the Educational Testing Service, for the donation of their time and efforts in completing the selection process.

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I am delighted to join with the many, many parents here today when I say that we have very good reason for all of us being extremely proud of a Nation that is able to produce young people of such high caliber.

More important, I think, to all of us, is that we can feel very secure that the future of America is in very good hands.

I am sure they will do an infinitely better job than we have done, and that is certain because of their educational opportunities and their great exposure to not only the problems of the day here at home, but the difficulties of our problems around the world.

Now for the past few days all of you have had a wonderful opportunity to see very closely, very intimately, the workings of our Federal Government here in Washington, and I hope that this personal experience has given you a far better idea of how our system of Government actually operates.

I also hope that when you have acquired your experience here, that in the process of learning about our Government it may encourage many of you to become active participants in Government at the local, State or Federal level. Your leadership, your intelligence, could play a very vital role in writing the agenda for America's third century.

As you are all very well aware, the learning process, like the political one, must be a two-way street for in a sense, as I see it, the greatest wisdom consists in knowing that no one ever has all of the answers.

It is through the free exchange of varied ideas that real wisdom, the kind of wisdom enshrined in our Declaration of Independence, in our Constitution and in our Bill of Rights, is attained, and as all of us approach our Bicentennial, I believe we can be proud that in spite of the follies of a few individuals, relatively speaking, the collective wisdom of democracy has managed to prevail and do more for freedom and more for the beneficiaries of it than any other system in the history of mankind.

I do hope that you will always remember that the learning process in America reflects the true substance of our democratic life here, chiefly because our system of Government is a great and good learning process.

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Our very unique experience in self-government has been going on for almost 200 years because we have succeeded in retaining the open experiment, the spirit of open experiment, of confronting each new challenge with wisdom gained from the past. And I hope that each of you will go back to your community, your colleges, your universities, with a renewed sense of purpose and direction, to learn well the lessons of the past, that you may deal more wisely with the future.

I trust that you will contribute, through your scholarship and practical experience, new thought and new insights into our national wisdom. In this way you will strengthen the American democracy which all of us cherish.

Where do you go from here? Or where you go from here, I should say, is up to you. So you have got to think big, be big, act big, dream big, and above all, accomplish big, for everywhere you go I am sure that the members of this Commission, your teachers, parents, friends, join me in saying that success will entail traveling along endless roads since success is not a destination, but a long, infinite journey.

You are just now getting into orbit. It might be the end of 12 years of preparation, but there will be many, many more to come.

Make them meaningful and useful, not only to yourselves but to all.

I conclude by saying I am very proud of all of you and I have enjoyed spending this time with you.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 3:29 P.M. EDT)