

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 13, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
1975-76 FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS
AND HOST FAMILY BROTHERS/SISTERS
OF THE AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM

THE SOUTH GROUNDS

3:25 P.M. EDT

Dr. Rhinesmith, our very welcome and special guests from foreign lands, and American students, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me extend to each and every one of you on behalf of Mrs. Ford and myself a very warm welcome here at the White House this afternoon. It is a special privilege for me to see so many happy faces and to welcome so many wonderful people here at the White House in our Nation's capital.

The American Field Service deserves congratulations for bringing all of you, the representatives of 62 nations, to the United States during the past year to study, to see what life in America is really all about. American Field Service has devoted over 25 years to building a network of international communication and cooperation at a very personal level.

We must remember that many thousands of host families and community volunteers make this program and others like it possible in the United States of America. Their dedicated support springs from the very best traditions of American generosity and international idealism.

You have seen through personal experience how this way of sharing life can promote harmony among people of different traditions and different cultures. The spirit of seeking understanding through personal contact with people of other nations and other cultures deserves the respect and support of all.

It is a work that goes on in many ways through private efforts in ongoing Government-supported programs of educational and cultural exchange. In 1959, Dwight D. Eisenhower talked to an earlier group of students visiting our country under the auspices of the American Field Service, and he said at that time he felt nothing could improve the program more than to multiply its numbers.

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On that July afternoon, President Eisenhower spoke to approximately 1,100 students. Today, your group numbers 2,700 or more students, and, more importantly, an equal number of American young people whose homes and family life that each of you have experienced. I am positive that you will agree that the best hope of making the world a better, more peaceful place is to seek even greater exchanges of persons of different backgrounds and different nationalities.

There are many compelling reasons for this program, which brings you to the United States and brings American students to countries around the world. The exchanges are educational. By living here, you grow to understand us and we learn to understand you. False impressions are corrected. In a very real sense they help to relax international tensions. They are enjoyable for all concerned. The best reason for you being here is the promise that you represent as the future leaders of each of your countries, and I know that you will.

Over the years while I was in the Congress and while I was Vice President and while I have been President, I have had the great pleasure of visiting many of the countries that you represent. In each of those countries I have met men and women in positions of high leadership who have experienced American life through the American Field Service program, and I expect you to do the same.

Here at home in the United States, in our Congress and our Statehouses, in the State legislatures and local government, I meet many, many young men and women now serving our country who have lived abroad under the auspices of the American Field Services. The result is, and will continue to be, the development and fostering of an increased awareness of our interdependence.

As we in America enter our third century as a free nation, we are ever cognizant of America's leadership responsibilities in global affairs. We, in the United States, are totally committed to the cause of cooperation on an equal basis between all nations, whatever their stage of development. The United States bears a heavy, heavy responsibility to promote the stability upon which freedom and peace depends. Therefore, we must provide you and young people everywhere the hope of a better future by mastering the great economic and social problems -- the social and economic challenges of building a new, equitable and productive relationship among all nations.

The problems faced by each of our countries have never been more interrelated. We must unite in understanding that our greatest concerns cannot be resolved by hasty actions aimed at short-term solutions. Instead, we have, and we will continue to follow, a sure and steady course aimed at producing and providing long-range answers in dealing with such vital concerns as the economy, the environment, energy, population growth and arms reduction.

You have visited us here in America as we celebrate our Nation's 200th birthday. You have seen the fireworks, you have listened to the patriotic speeches, you have watched the parades and looked on as we all considered the meaning and the significance of our two centuries of independence.

But fortunately you have seen much more than displays and bell ringing. You have seen a more important display -- the reaffirmation of the traditional American spirit of unity and solidarity. We have rediscovered that America has inherited a great, great trust. The founding of our nation was an act of faith, a promise to Americans and to the entire world.

The commemoration of our Bicentennial proves that people can govern themselves, that they can live in freedom with equal rights, that they can respect the rights of others. A great French philosopher once said, "Once you declare for justice, you have declared an unending revolution."

By living among us at the time of America's Bicentennial, you have participated in the reaffirmation of our pride and in our confidence that our unending revolution has just begun. We live in an age where awareness of mankind's common humanity among and within nations is an absolute necessity.

As you return to your homelands, I know you will carry with you an expression of our hope that the friendship and love that has grown between you and your American hosts will continue to flourish, that we will be bound together by our appreciation of the high values of personal liberty, freedom and dignity.

Working together, all of us--all 5,000-plus of you and millions and millions of people all over this great globe--by doing what we know is right and working with one another, let us light the way to a new century of peace and freedom for all mankind.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 3:35 P.M. EDT)