

The original documents are located in Box D20, folder “Commencement Address, Ionia High School, June 9, 1966” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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In process of getting an education - I attended these graduation exercises -
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS--IONIA HIGH SCHOOL, JUNE 9, 1966

South

AS I RECALL MY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION, I REMEMBER THAT MOST OF MY CLASSMATES WERE CONCERNED WITH WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO ^{that evening} AFTER THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES AND WERE HARDLY TINGLING WITH EXCITEMENT OVER WHAT THE SPEAKER OF THE EVENING MIGHT SAY. IF THEY TALKED AT ALL ABOUT THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS THEY WERE ABOUT TO HEAR, IT WAS TO WHISPER: "I SURE HOPE HE DOESN'T TALK TOO LONG."

I DO HAVE SOME THINGS TO SAY TO YOU THIS EVENING, BUT I TOO HOPE IT WON'T TAKE A VERY LONG TIME TO SAY THEM

4.9M

YOUR NATURAL ITCHINESS TO BE OUT AND DOING REMINDS ME OF AN EXPERIENCE ANOTHER CONGRESSMAN HAD JUST THIS



LAST MEMORIAL DAY. HE WAS TO BE THE MAIN SPEAKER AT MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES IN HIS HOME TOWN. WHEN HE ARRIVED AT THE SITE OF THE CEREMONY, THE PROGRAM CHAIRMAN HANDED HIM A NOTE. THE NOTE SAID, "OUR MEMORIAL DAY PROGRAM INCLUDES A TALK BY THE MAYOR, A RECITATION BY A STUDENT, YOUR SPEECH AND THEN THE FIRING SQUAD."

I HOPE WHAT I HAVE TO SAY TO YOU THIS EVENING DOES NOT PROMPT YOU TO SAY, "HE SHOULD BE SHOT AT SUNRISE."

A FEW DAYS AGO I NOTICED A NEWSPAPER CARTOON WITH THE UNMISTAKABLE MESSAGE THAT YOU ^{as high school} GRADUATES WILL BE GOING OUT INTO A WORLD THAT IS A MESS.

THE DRAWING SHOWED A YOUNG FELLOW IN CAP AND GOWN GAZING DISMALLY AT A WORLD THAT HAD BEEN SQUEEZED INTO



or ocean

THE SHAPE OF A WELL-KNOWN SEA CREATURE. THE CAPTION UNDERNEATH THE CARTOON READ: "THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER."

THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER. BUT DESPITE THE CARTOONIST'S FEELINGS ABOUT IT, THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE IT IS AN IRRETRIEVABLE MESS.

IT MAY BE A FRIGHTENING WORLD IN MANY WAYS, BUT ANYONE WHO ACTS OUT HIS LIFE ON THE PREMISE A BOMB MAY FALL ON HIM THE NEXT DAY IS BEING JUST PLAIN FOOLISH. BETTER TO TELL YOURSELF, I'M GOING TO LIVE 'TIL I DIE, AND I'M GOING TO LIVE MY LIFE THE BEST WAY I KNOW HOW.

BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU THESE ARE GOOD TIMES IN WHICH TO LIVE. THEY ARE MOMENTOUS TIMES, CHALLENGING TIMES. THERE IS NO ROOM IN THEM FOR THE PERSON WHO

and twittles his thumbs

IS INCLINED TO SIT ~~AND~~, MOPE¹ IN A CORNER. BUT FOR HIM WHO HAS DRIVE, WHO KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS AND SETS OUT TO GET IT, THESE ARE THE MOST EXCITING AND THE BEST OF TIMES.

LET ME ASSURE YOU--YOU CAN'T MAKE FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME BY SITTING DOWN.

YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION. IF YOU FIT INTO THE NATIONAL PATTERN, ABOUT 7 PER CENT OF YOU HAVE ACQUIRED A SKILL THROUGH VOCATIONAL TRAINING; 20 PER CENT OF YOU WILL GO ON TO COLLEGE AND EARN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE. THE REST OF YOU WILL SEEK JOBS REQUIRING ONLY GENERAL BACKGROUND AND TRAINING.

I TRUST THAT ONE OF THE DIVIDENDS OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL



EDUCATION IS THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED HOW TO GET ALONG
WITH MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE. THIS IS IMPORTANT
NO MATTER WHAT FIELD OF WORK YOU ENTER.

YOU MUST HAVE GOOD WORK ATTITUDES AND GOOD WORK
HABITS. THIS KIND OF TRAINING, WHICH I AM SURE YOU
RECEIVED AT IONIA HIGH SCHOOL, IS THE BEST BASIC
PREPARATION FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT.

NOW I MUST ASK YOU A QUESTION WHICH FOR SOME PEOPLE
PROVES EMBARRASSING. HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

I ASK YOU THAT QUESTION BECAUSE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED
A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS IN RECENT YEARS--THE NUCLEAR
EXPLOSION, THE POPULATION EXPLOSION AND NOW THE
KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION.



THERE WAS A TIME IN AMERICA WHEN ALL ^{one} ~~YOU~~ NEEDED TO EARN A LIVING WAS A STRONG BACK AND A WILLING PAIR OF HANDS. THIS IS NO LONGER TRUE.

NOT ONLY DO THE BEST JOBS GO TO THOSE WITH THE BEST SKILLS AND EDUCATION, BUT THE PERSON WITHOUT AT LEAST A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION IS LIKELY TO FIND HIMSELF UNEMPLOYABLE.

THERE IS TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG AMERICANS IN THE WORLD OF WORK TODAY. BUT THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED, THOSE WHO HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER IN SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE EDUCATION OR TRAINING YOU HAVE, THE MORE YOU HAVE TO OFFER A PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYER.

IT FOLLOWS THAT YOUR EDUCATION SHOULD NOT STOP NOW THAT YOU ARE LEAVING HIGH SCHOOL. IDEALLY, AS MANY OF YOU AS ARE ABLE TO BENEFIT BY IT SHOULD GO TO COLLEGE.

America
~~THIS~~ IS BECOMING A NATION OF COLLEGE GRADUATES.

COMPETITION IS BECOMING EVER KEENER TO ENTER COLLEGE AND ^{to} OBTAIN A DEGREE.
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RIGHT NOW THERE ARE NEARLY FIVE MILLION YOUNG AMERICANS ENROLLED IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES--OR ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF THE 18-TO-21 AGE GROUP. THAT FIGURE IS FORECAST TO GROW TO 50 PER CENT OR LARGER BY 1985. MOST PEOPLE NOW LIVING WILL SEE THE DAY WHEN EVERY OTHER AMERICAN WILL BE A COLLEGE GRADUATE.

THE TRUTH IS THAT IN ORDER TO ADJUST TO THE RAPID

CHANGES OF THIS TECHNICAL AGE IN WHICH WE ARE LIVING, PEOPLE NEED TO ABSORB ALL THE BENEFITS THAT ONLY A GOOD DEAL OF SCHOOLING CAN GIVE THEM.

AMERICA HAS BEEN EXPERIENCING FANTASTIC GROWTH. ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRIES IS THE "KNOWLEDGE" INDUSTRY.

WHAT IS THE "KNOWLEDGE" INDUSTRY? YOUR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ARE PART OF IT BECAUSE IT INCLUDES THE FIELD OF EDUCATION--THE RETAILING OF OLD KNOWLEDGE AND THE INSTILLING OF THE HABIT OF ACQUIRING FURTHER KNOWLEDGE.

IT ALSO INCLUDES THE PUBLISHING AND PRINTING BUSINESS. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, ENTERTAINMENT, INFORMATION

MACHINES, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES WHICH PROVIDE ACCOUNTING, ARCHITECTURAL, MEDICAL AND LEGAL INFORMATION TO BUSINESSMEN, AND THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY.

YOU MAY WELL FIND YOURSELF EMPLOYED BY THE "KNOWLEDGE" INDUSTRY; BUT IN ANY CASE, YOU MUST NEVER STOP LEARNING.

YOU ALREADY KNOW MUCH MORE THAN THE AVERAGE MEMBER OF THE LABOR FORCE DID IN 1930. YOU HAVE SPENT NEARLY TWICE AS MANY DAYS IN SCHOOL.

AS I SAID BEFORE, THE UNSKILLED ARE HAVING TROUBLE FINDING WORK EVEN IN TIME OF NEAR-CAPACITY EMPLOYMENT. THE CURRENT AND FUTURE DEMAND IS FOR EDUCATED AND TRAINED PEOPLE--AND THE DEMAND IN THESE CATEGORIES IS GREATER THAN THE SUPPLY.



THIS IS WHY I SAY THERE ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU IF ONLY YOU ARE PREPARED OR WILL CONTINUE YOUR SCHOOLING SO YOU CAN OPEN THOSE DOORS.

I HOPE YOU HAVE THOUGHT IN TERMS OF A WHOLE FIELD OF WORK AND HAVE OBTAINED THE KIND OF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND THAT WILL SERVE FOR A VARIETY OF JOBS IN THAT FIELD.

I'M THINKING ABOUT THE HEALTH FIELD, FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE YOU NEED AS MUCH SCIENCE AS POSSIBLE TO GROUND YOU IN THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT HOLD GOOD FOR SEVERAL TECHNICAL JOBS.

THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF ALL KINDS OF HEALTH WORKERS, AND THE SHORTAGE IS GETTING WORSE. WITH THE LAUNCHING



OF THE MEDICARE PROGRAM JULY 1, THIS CRISIS IS CERTAIN TO BECOME EVEN MORE ACUTE.

FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO WORK IN THE HEALTH FIELD, THERE ARE JOBS OPEN FOR X-RAY TECHNICIANS, THERAPISTS, LABORATORY TECHNICIANS AND OTHERS. THERE ALSO IS A NEED FOR DENTAL AND MEDICAL ASSISTANTS TO TAKE OVER CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF DENTISTS AND PHYSICIANS, AND FOR NURSES' AIDES AND PRACTICAL NURSES TO ASSIST REGISTERED NURSES. I MIGHT NOTE THAT NURSE AIDE AND PRACTICAL NURSE WORK REQUIRES A YEAR OR LESS OF TRAINING.

THERE ARE JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN ALL OCCUPATIONS. EVEN IN CROWDED FIELDS, THERE IS AMPLE ROOM FOR THE PERSON WITH SOUND TRAINING AND GREAT AMBITION. BUT OF COURSE



IT IS EASIER TO FIND JOBS IN FIELDS THAT ARE NEW OR GROWING THAN IN THOSE THAT ARE STANDING STILL OR SHRINKING.

IT'S EXPECTED THAT ABOUT 88.7 MILLION AMERICANS WILL BE GAINFULLY EMPLOYED IN 1975, ABOUT 18.3 MILLION MORE THAN IN 1964. THAT'S AN AVERAGE INCREASE OF NEARLY 1.7 MILLION A YEAR.

WHERE WILL THEY ALL FIND JOBS? MOST WILL FIND WORK IN THE FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRIES. IT WON'T BE BLUE-COLLAR WORK.

THE GREATEST INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT WILL BE FOR PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WORKERS. MORE THAN 4-1/2 MILLION MORE PEOPLE WILL BE NEEDED FOR SUCH WORK BY 1975.



THE WHITE-COLLAR GROUP AS A WHOLE IS EXPECTED TO EXPAND BY NEARLY TWO-FIFTHS AND TO CONSTITUTE 48 PERCENT OF ALL MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS BY 1975.

THE BLUE-COLLAR OCCUPATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO GROW AT LESS THAN HALF THIS RATE. THEY WILL MAKE UP ONLY ABOUT 34 PER CENT OF ALL REQUIREMENTS.

THE NEED FOR SERVICE WORKERS WILL EXPAND GREATLY ALONG WITH THAT FOR PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES, ABOUT 3.2 MILLION MORE SERVICE WORKERS WILL BE NEEDED.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT WILL INCREASE SHARPLY. CONSTRUCTION AND TRADE WILL ALSO MAKE UP A BIGGER SHARE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT.

IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, LET ME



URGE YOU TO CONSIDER GOING TO JUNIOR COLLEGE IF YOU HAVE NOT PLANNED ON A FULL FOUR YEARS OR MORE IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

A JUNIOR OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAN GIVE YOU JUST THE TRAINING YOU NEED FOR MANY OF THE OPPORTUNITY JOBS THAT ARE GOING BEGGING TODAY.

THOSE OF YOU INTERESTED IN JOBS REQUIRING CERTAIN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING SHOULD EXPLORE WHAT A JUNIOR COLLEGE CAN DO IN PREPARING YOU FOR CAREERS IN X-RAY TECHNOLOGY, DATA PROCESSING, OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT.

I HAVE TALKED LARGELY ABOUT THE WORLD OF WORK AND THE FACT THAT SOCIETY TODAY IS DEMANDING SERVICES



WHICH CAN BE PROVIDED ONLY BY THOSE WITH SPECIAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

LET ME REMIND YOU IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE QUALIFIED FOR LIFE NOT ONLY AS A TECHNICIAN OR A PROFESSIONAL BUT ALSO AS A PERSON.

HOW DO YOU BECOME A PERSON? THE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC IS INTEGRITY. PERSONAL INTEGRITY IS A ^{the key,} ~~KEY~~ ¹ *fundamental* INGREDIENT IN ^{any individual} ~~THE~~ FORMULA FOR SUCCESS.

WHAT FINER THING CAN ANYONE SAY ABOUT ANOTHER THAN THAT HE OR SHE IS A PERSON OF INTEGRITY?

WHETHER OR NOT HE BORROWED THE WORDS FROM OTHERS, THE GREAT PLAYWRIGHT WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE PENNED MANY LINES OF WISDOM. AMONG THEM ARE THE WORDS SPOKEN BY

POLONIUS TO HIS SON IN THE PLAY HAMLET. SAID POLONIUS:

"THIS ABOVE ALL: TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE,
AND IT MUST FOLLOW, AS THE NIGHT THE DAY,
THOU CANST NOT THEN BE FALSE TO ANY MAN."

I SPOKE TO YOU OF SUCCESS. WHEN I TALK OF SUCCESS,
I DO NOT TALK OF GETTING RICH. TRUE SUCCESS COMES IN
EARNING THE RESPECT OF OTHERS AND IN ACHIEVING
EMOTIONAL MATURITY. WITHOUT THAT SUCCESS, YOU CANNOT
FIND HAPPINESS. AND CERTAINLY HAPPINESS IS A PEAK OR
PINNACLE SOUGHT BY ALL.

THERE WILL COME A TIME FOR EACH OF YOU, I HOPE,
WHEN YOU WILL KNOW THE TRANQUILLITY THAT COMES WITH
ACHIEVING EMOTIONAL MATURITY, THE WONDERFUL CALM THAT

COMES WITH BEING AT PEACE WITH YOURSELF. THEN YOU CAN
TRULY SAY YOU HAVE TAMED THE TIGER IN YOUR TANK.

UNTIL THAT TIME COMES, I WISH YOU THE ^{very} BEST.
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THANK YOU.

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