





Da Nang. And the reason is that I cannot resist the temptation to talk to young people -- to the leaders of tomorrow. I cannot resist an invitation to share your day of enthusiasm, eagerness, curiosity and ambition -- any more than I can resist saying that it is bound to be tempered over the years by the realities of life's experience -- any more than you can resist saying to yourself -- here comes the commencement speech.

But that is as far in that direction as I will go. The only advice I bring as you prepare to leave the relative seclusion of Jacksonville University to join us in trying to make this a better world is: beware of commencement addresses. You will hear them all the rest of your life. You will hear them from people who have a better grip on rhetoric than on reality. You will hear them from people who are more interested in what they think than in what you need to know. You will hear them from people who are trying to sell you something you don't really need -- whether it be a nuclear toothbrush or a worry-free substitute for democratic government.

I am here today because I am a member of the President's cabinet and because I am a Floridian. I am proud to be both.

I am also glad to be with people who know what a Floridian is. There are too many places where they think it is a member of a pressure group that wants to pour chemicals in the drinking water to stop cavities.

I did not come prepared to admit that I am old enough to be part of any generation gap or that you are young enough to insist that one exists.

Life changes so fast these days that the young must always be older than their years and the old always younger just to remain relevant to the world around them.

No sooner do we learn to deal with one environment, one situation, one set of circumstances, than we have to start learning all over again.

We are all inescapably caught up in events and developments whose pace and scale seem -- in contrast to earlier eras -- much larger than life.

It is no longer possible for any of us to seek to pursue our dreams alone and apart from the world around us -- if it ever was.

It is no longer possible for any of us to follow Voltaire's advice and, fenced off from the rest of the world, to cultivate our private gardens.

A bomb that explodes in Da Nang or Detroit rattles windows in Washington and Jacksonville as well.

The automobile, the airplane, the telephone, the television set have all but abolished space and time -- and have involved us all in an incredibly complex network of interaction and interdependence.



The experts say we are moving toward a "loss of insulating space."

We can see and sense the trend in every aspect of our lives.

There is the sheer physical fact that far more people are living far closer together than ever before. A century ago only twenty percent of America's population lived in cities. Now almost three out of four of us live in urban America. And by the end of this century -- one generation from now -- some experts have estimated that roughly one-half of the total American population will live in three super-cities; one that will stretch from Boston to Washington -- one that will stretch from Chicago to Pittsburgh and then north to Canada -- and a third that will stretch from Santa Barbara (or even San Francisco) to San Diego.

One of the most crucial consequences of this loss of insulating space -- of this living in increasingly close quarters -- is that those choices we make in common will assume increasingly greater importance in our lives.

Each of us, for example, can buy his own suit of clothes or his own car -- but none of us can buy his own share of clear air, or his own stretch of clear highway.

There is a whole host of such choices, which in the past we have left simply to the mechanism of the marketplace, or to the experts, or to chance -- and which we now have to make together, deliberately, as matters of conscious political decision.

For as we live closer and closer together, as we all become caught up in an intricate and expanding web of interrelationships, the volume and variety of choices available to each of us individually depends on the kind of environment we create for all of us. Our ability to make any genuine individual choices at all, in fact, will depend on how sensibly we act in building our educational and health and recreational facilities; upon our transportation system; upon the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink; and upon the extent to which all of our citizens have ample incentives and opportunities for a decent education, a decent home and a decent job.

I have no doubt we will find these collective decisions difficult to make, for it is in the American tradition that we make most of our decisions individually -- and only with extreme reluctance do we make choices in common.

Some years ago the distinguished anthropologist, Ralph Linton, wrote of the human species that: "No two persons are exactly alike in their physical and mental potentialities, and certainly no two individuals, even identical twins reared in the same family, have the same experiences. Human beings are thus potentially less alike than the individuals of any other species. It is most surprising, therefore, that they have chosen to live in closely



organized groups whose members carry on a variety of specialized activities but are mutually interdependent for the satisfaction of practically all their fundamental needs. We are, in fact," Mr. Linton wrote, "anthropoid apes trying to live like termites, and, as any philosophical observer can attest, not doing too well at it."

That is rather rough handling of the human species, but it is reasonably valid, as far as it goes. What is ignored, of course, is the fact that termites do not make conscious decisions to chew holes in houses; anthropoid apes spend very little time improving their minds or their condition; while man is not only capable of rational decision and relatively free choice but of using that capability.

It is true he makes some very bad decisions. But he has made enough good ones so that we are able to gather here today with enough accumulated knowledge to pass judgment on those decisions and to worry about the ones that lie ahead.

We have progressed to the point where we can concern ourselves not with where we will find our next meal but with the depersonalization of life in an industrial society; not with whether we can find shelter but with the danger of the displacement of man by the machine and, worse, by the machine mentality -- whether it be the corporate machine, the bureaucratic machine or the computer machine.

Industrial man is awed and appalled by his tremendous technological feats.

He is awed by the fact that he is increasingly able to invent whatever he envisions. He is appalled by the fact that he sometimes invents things he did not envision.

And there is where the problem begins: we seem to have an infinite capacity to create new technologies over which we have uncertain control and whose implications -- and complications -- we seem only dimly to understand.

It is not only that we can use our technology for good or bad ends -- that television, for example, can enlighten us or stultify us, or that nuclear energy can drive a ship or destroy a civilization.

More and more, we find we are dealing with machines where once we dealt with men: machines that handle our bills, our bank accounts, our tax returns.

"I am a human being; do not fold, bend, mutilate or staple": so read the signs carried by the student at Berkeley.

There is no healthier concern. Can you imagine the trouble we would be in if we simply accepted with wide-eyed gratitude every new machine the engineers or scientists wired together?



Technology is not an unmixed blessing, and I would not for a minute minimize its ambiguities, for I do not think they are easily resolved.

Indeed, I do not think they are ever resolved. They are inherent in the human condition. The same ambiguities, in infinitely simpler form, confronted our ancestors with the discovery of the stone ax.

There is a danger not only of dehumanization in our time but of a sort of technological feudalism under which a handful of scientists and engineers will own all of the knowledge just as a handful of kings owned all of the land in the middle ages.

But so, at one time, was there a danger of a ship straying too far from land and sailing over the edge of the world.

An exaggerated fear of technology is equally as unwarranted as an unquestioning acceptance of it. The computer can, indeed, pose dangers to our individuality and our freedom. It can also immeasurably enhance that freedom and accentuate that individuality.

The distinguished sociologist David Reisman has made it clear that the computer and the individual can coexist by pointing out that the computer programmers in many companies are what he called "brilliant, bearded beats."

And there is the report on a pilot education project in Palo Alto, California, which describes children in semi-isolated booths being taught by machines. It sounds rather grim. And yet the report concludes: "The children are learning about the same amount they would have learned under the regular system, but their attitude toward learning is entirely different. Learning is fun, they are more curious. The computer gives the child a measure of individual attention that he could receive in no other way, short of a private tutor."

The computer is, of course, not the only example of technology and of its power to alter our lives. But it has become for many the symbol of the sterile, stultifying aspect of the machine.

Yet, as I have suggested, the computer holds tremendous potential for genuinely liberating man -- for enabling him to cope with the incredibly complex problems posed by an increasingly complex environment, by opening up entirely new dimensions for human creativity and human control.

And certainly in terms of its capacity to frustrate man's effort to expand his personal freedom, the computer cannot touch the cliché.

At the Department of Transportation, we intend to use the computer to help us sort out the various options available to us for building better and safer highways and airways. The computer has already been put to work



on the design of faster trains and on the enormously complex problem of dealing with America's ability to move people and goods through an overall system, not as a problem of the airlines or the railroads alone.

The cliché has no such utility.

The cliché, for example, that says government is too big without asking the only germane question: too big for what?

The one that says that in the richest nation in the world, taxes are too high, without asking: What are the goals of our nation and what is the cost of achieving those goals?

Or the one that says that more of the work now done by government should be turned over to volunteers without questioning whether a part-time effort is what we need at one of the most critical times of our nation's history.

And the cliché that says government is too remote from the people it represents when, in fact, government is no more or less than a mirror which reflects the needs and the hopes of all of its people, not just most of them.

The world has never known government that is more of, by, and for the people than American government is today. That is not just rhetoric. It is a statement of fact easily confirmed by the social and economic achievements of America in recent years.

As for the size of government, it can logically be judged not only by the population explosion but by the technology of our time which often creates at least one new problem for every one it solves.

The cliché and the computer do have one thing in common. Both can be destructive if we accept them with uncritical faith rather than seek to understand them -- for we cannot control what we do not understand.

Both can frustrate progress if -- by default or design -- we become so enthralled by the things we can do with our computer; or the things we can avoid doing with our cliché; that we move along without thinking, without planning and, above all, without purpose.

The environment our technology creates for us will be the environment we want it to create for us.

One observer has put it this way:

"If we want to have a Great Society, we will have to free ourselves of viewing man in terms of economic production and rewards. That Western society can afford to put economic considerations second to human needs is the greatest achievement of our technological age. It allows us, for



example, to stop thinking of education in terms of greater earning power; nothing is more destructive to education for human purposes than to educate for economic ones. If we think of high school and college as a means of fitting us to a job or ensuring a higher income, that is all they will yield. Nothing is more alien to the good life than to make man fit for a job when the real problem is to make the job fit for man -- or for a wife and a mother."

We have managed in this country, in recent decades, to reach a level of affluence unmatched anywhere in the world.

Yet one expert has remarked that the appalling poverty we can find in nearly every large American city "simply cannot be found in comparable cities in Europe, or Canada, or Japan" -- and another has told of encountering "some white youths from our most exclusive towns in the Eastern seaboard" who wished "that they were Negro students in the civil-rights movement... who have infinitely less, but apparently more."

In the last analysis, it is not the machine, but man alone, who can emancipate or enslave himself.

And, frankly, I am more than half convinced that your generation will do a lot better job than mine at creating an environment in which man can live and thrive.

I am immensely impressed, for example, by the growing numbers of bright young people coming into the Department of Transportation as well as into public service generally.

I understand that some of our largest and most prestigious national corporations have found it necessary to spearhead their campus recruiting drives with the slogan: "The Peace Corps may not be for you."

I could cite other examples. But I think it is time for me to be silent. Today, as in the decades ahead, the last word is yours.