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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY SUMMER COMMENCEMENT, COLUMBUS, OHIO, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1970, 9:00 A. M.

I appreciate very much the great honor extended to me in inviting me to speak here this morning. And it is a similar privilege for me to share the platform today with such a distinguished group of fellow honorees.

At the outset, let me offer to you and your families my heartiest congratulations on this memorable occasion in your lives. The turning point you are marking today -- even though it comes on the eve of Labor Day weekend and you are all eager to get away -- is a turning point of great significance.

You are leaving a campus-oriented -- somewhat cloistered -- world of concern. Yet you are facing involvement in a larger world that has an even greater need for that same concern, compassion and creativity which is the hallmark of your generation. And I waste no time in stating with no qualification whatsoever -- that your generation has a better chance of changing the world and its ways than any generation that has come before you.

And if you think that we, the older people (the "establishment", if you insist) are not listening, then you are wrong. We are listening and we are learning. In fact, through all the generations of civilization, the young have been the message-bearers and often the instigators of change. John Henry Cardinal Newman once wrote: "to grow is to change; to have changed often is to have grown much". And at this time in your lives -- as you grow to full adulthood -- you certainly can instigate change of substantial nature. Not change for the sake of change -- but for the sake of bettering the lot of all of us.

From my own standpoint as a member of an Administration that is making a concerted effort to improve the quality of our lives -- I think it is greatly significant that for the first time in a quarter-century, government spending for human resources and human needs exceeds government spending for defense!

In 1961, we spent 48 percent of our budget for defense and only 30 percent for human resources. But the budget for 1971 dramatically reverses these priorities; it calls for only 37 percent for defense and 41 percent for human resources programs.

To accomplish this goal, defense expenditures were cut sharply; they are down one point seven billion dollars this year over last year, and will fall by another five point two billion in the coming year. Active military forces have been cut by 16 percent since 1969, and direct civilian employment by the Defense Department has been cut by ten percent.

I mention these facts mainly because in my primary area of responsibility -- transportation -- we are now at the point where we can stop talking and dreaming, and start doing something about the tremendous challenges that are involved in providing basic mobility to a nation and a world filled with vastly-increased expectations. We have reached a turning point in American development where -- with reordered priorities -- technology can be (and is being) applied to the solution of very human problems.

There are some today who hold that technology in and by itself is dangerous and is an evil. But I believe its influence for good, and the benefits it has provided over the last half-century, far outweigh the negative aspects. I stand convinced that whatever problems technology has created in bringing a better life can be solved by even more-improved technology.

For example -- the internal combustion engine and the automobile have certainly brought expanded mobility, widened employment opportunities and vastly broader horizons to Americans from all walks of life. But at the same time we have had to put up with increasing congestion, air pollution, and death on the highways. The same technology that created the mobility we enjoy with our autos can be made to work for us to neutralize the side effects.

In fact, the work being done at Ohio State University's College of Engineering in transportation research is a prime example. Studies such as these, in driver perception, highway automation, pollution control, high-speed ground transportation, and new dimensions in aviation -- together with what we are doing at the Federal level -- are examples of technology being the servant to mankind and not vice versa.

The world you are inheriting is a world which some people warn is on its last legs. Yet other -- more optimistic -- scientists say we are entering a golden age in which we will be technically capable of doing anything we want. You are inheriting a world, then, that can crumble under its own weight -- or can, truly enjoy the advantage of the enlightened Age of Aquarius.

Your world is crowded, tense and jealous -- at the same time that it is better educated than ever before, and I believe there is reason for hope.

Your world, now, is in sharp transition from exploitation to preservation -- it is making a distinct swing from isolated independence to civilized dependence.

This is reflected in a great deal of what is going on everywhere -- and I would like to take just a few moments today to say a few words about my own responsibilities -- in the field of transportation -- and perhaps make a few suggestions as to how your concern, your help, and your involvement can help to improve the quality of life we want for your children and your children's children.

We set out -- some 19 months ago -- to insure that transportation served people; not the other way around. One of my first acts was to appoint -- to my own staff -- a new Assistant Secretary for Environment and Urban Systems. He is -- in a sense -- the "conscience" of our Department and this conscience has been keenly alert. It was concern for the environment that warned us of the dangers to the Everglades National Park -- indeed, to the entire South Florida Watershed -- posed by a new international jet airport, we stopped that construction.

We also stopped work on a freeway that would have wiped out the historic French Quarter in New Orleans. And, as one more example, we put a stop to another highway that threatened the scenic values of the historic Old Man of the Mountain in New Hampshire's Franconia Notch.

This concern for people also resulted in our enunciating a policy -- and interpreting a section of the 1968 Federal Highway Act -- to conclude that henceforth, no federally-financed transportation project involving the relocation of persons would be constructed unless and until adequate replacement housing for those persons was assured. Period!

We just decided that we will not throw people out into the streets -- in order to build more streets.

Our Department has helped combat air pollution, too -- working with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in setting rigid standards for automobile engines that will -- as time passes -- reduce obnoxious emissions by 90 percent.

But what is perhaps the most exciting to me is the transportation challenge of the future. We shall have to -- in the next two decades -- provide as much transportation capacity for this growing nation as has been put in place since the founding of the republic. I'll say that again. In about twenty years (probably more like 18 years), we will be facing a demand for twice as many ton-miles and twice as many passenger-miles as we are faced with today!

We don't intend to solve this by just building twice as many highways, twice as many airports, twice as many boxcars, or twice as many pipelines, however. We are looking to more efficient utilization of facilities already in place; we are looking to new technologies such as the tracked air cushion vehicle for high speed ground transport, and V/STOL aircraft for medium-haul intercity flights.

We are looking at a number of things that may look at first like science fiction, but in reality are a lot closer than many people think. In fact, the tracked air cushion vehicle (known as the "TAC-VEE") will be in operation in about 2 1/2 years out in Los Angeles, operating over a 15-mile track, connecting Los Angeles International Airport with suburbs on the other side of the city. This vehicle, traveling on a thin cushion of air, will move at speeds of up to 175 miles an hour, will cause no air pollution, and will be practically silent. Here again -- an example of technology being used to serve us, rather than the other way around.

So you see, it can be done. It is being done. The Department of Transportation was established just 3 1/2 years ago. Our mandate called for us to help move people and goods efficiently and effectively, through balanced transportation. But we insist this movement take place with full consideration for human and environmental factors in all instances.

These are some points I wanted very much to make this morning -- as I feel they are of great importance, and if they are to have solid results they will require your involvement, your understanding, and your help and support.

I would like to take just a moment more of your time today to make a few general points.

Points regarding where your generation is going and how best you can get there. First of all, let's take a look at your numbers. The Class of 1970 -- all told -- comes to about 3 1/2 million across the country. This is 3 1/2 million people going out on their own for the first time.

It is part of the beauty -- and the weakness -- of the young to somehow assume they will always be young. Some of us -- including your parents -- know otherwise. With the passage of time you will run up against the necessity of earning a living and providing for a family; you will have to cope with the special idiosyncracies and talents that each of you possess as individuals; you will face Acts of God, and the wild unexpected blows of chance or fate. All these will combine to send you to the four corners of the globe in a variety of tasks you cannot even imagine today. Perhaps that sounds too ordinary and dull for your tastes. Perhaps you have something a little more exciting, a little more challenging in mind. Perhaps you are saying, "we are different! We are something special! There is something more in store for us!" Well, perhaps you are right.

You are different and you are special. First in the downright size of your numbers. Three and one-half million young people and -- better educated than any other generation in history. The infusion of all this energy and fresh inventiveness into our productive processes will provide us new resources and new techniques in our efforts to survive, to grow, and to reflect a compassionate social conscience.

You are also different -- they say -- in the measure of your idealism and in the intensity of your protest against social injustice.

And this is proper. This is correct. For we do have a long way to go. We still have not achieved racial and class equality in this country through the foundations of equality have been laid. We have not found a way to get all parts of our society to pull together for common goals.

We still assault our landscape with sprawling suburbs, we poison the air and water, we waste our mineral resources, and we have allowed our cities to become centers of crisis by following the philosophy that "bigger" in some way equates with "better."

And -- as I am sure you are aware -- these problems must be tackled by your generation. To be blunt, you're the only young generation we've got. And if you really want to make something of your lives, if you really want to contribute, to participate, then you will reach for solutions. And you will reach for them with patience, decency, integrity and with faith.

Let us now, then, you and I talk as friends. Let us look to our common enemies -- the traditional enemies of change and progress that I have been battling with in public life and you have been demonstrating against as students. As concerned citizens you will be for the first time meeting these enemies in the flesh -- not in the remoteness of all-night bull sessions, campus rallies, and letters to the editor of the "Lantern". You will find, to your surprise, that your adversaries are joined together neither in organization nor conspiracy -- neither establishment nor system. For these opponents of ours do not, indeed even know each other -- nor are they conscious of their opposition. These traditional enemies of progress and change -- you will discover -- are none other than age-old self interest, the unwillingness to think new thoughts and pure unadulterated apathy -- and the most potent of these is apathy.

The nature of our enemy determines the nature of our weapons. And I submit that blind outrage and wanton violence are of no value. Blind outrage tends to make people look stupid, and of greater danger -- it makes those who do not want change dig in even deeper. And wanton violence, as we have learned only too well, only invites repression and over-reaction. No, if you would change the hearts and minds of men you must lay siege with the deliberate but far more potent weapons of persistent persuasion, hard negotiations and constant bargaining -- all the give and take, the often irritating backing and filling that occurs when human beings do business together.

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So let's consider, "What happens when we do work together?" A prime example is the story of Charles Evers, a black who dared to run for office in white Mississippi -- in the same area where his brother had been murdered. Charles Evers not only ran, he won; and is now carrying out his mandate with dedication and compassion.

Or here is a less-publicized success story of how to make the system work for you: in Cotulla, Texas, a 28-year-old school teacher was unhappy with conditions in his home town. But Alfredo Zamora was a Mexican-American and as such could reasonably expect to have little influence. Yet he organized the Mexican-Americans, got them to register to vote -- and ran for the office of mayor. Not only did he win but he paved the way for the election of three other Mexican-Americans to the five man city council. And two more of his neighbors were elected to the school board. Mayor Zamora said of his administration, "We are using the rules. We are making them work for us."

And here's another case history -- one that does not involve elective politics. It's the case of young Ralph Nader.

This man -- without benefit of rank or fortune -- had the temerity to rise up and challenge the automobile industry. He charged that some American autos were unsafe -- unsafe because they were poorly constructed.

Detroit tried to ignore him at first, but soon found he couldn't be ignored. Nader did not back down, but held his course, came up with the facts and figures, and to a great extent because of his efforts and the efforts of many others both in and out of Congress, we now have a strong auto safety law.

These men I have mentioned -- these people who have bothered to give a damn -- are not the exceptions. They are backed up by thousands upon thousands of dedicated people who serve on local school committees, in their village and town governments. There are thousands upon thousands of women throughout the nation who are working within organizations such as the League of Women Voters to bring needed reforms.

There are heroes upon unsung heroes -- ranging from scoutmasters, to narcotics rehabilitation center volunteers; from volunteer firemen to conservation groups -- who are working within the system, who are getting results, who are making democracy work.

This is what can and should happen across this nation. And I hope and expect that with the arrival of you young people from the class of 1970 on our political scene, there will be hundreds and hundreds of such similar stories.

I sympathize with these people who want change and with all of you who are looking for a better world. And I can understand how you might be impatient with some of the older generation who like myself also seek improvement. But we are working in a democracy -- a carefully constructed system of checks and balances designed to protect our people from demagogues and tyrants.

And this system, despite its faults, is still the system of government that has attracted more immigrants, more seekers of peace and freedom, than any other system of government in history.

One thing about checks and balances, of course -- you have to have a certain amount of patience. And I would ask you -- the graduates of 1970 -- to have patience with those who see the need for change, are working for change, but perhaps (according to your standards) are not changing fast enough.

I don't ask you to have patience with those who say "This was good enough for my grandfather so it's good enough for you." That's not what I'm talking about.

I would hope for your generation to have the patience and the persistence of the Charles Evers, the Ralph Naders, and the Alfredo Zamoras. Have the patience and fortitude to make the system work.

And now let me touch just briefly upon one other area of participation -- and that is the area of business and trade.

I gather it never was very fashionable to speak of commerce in academic circles, and I understand it is considered sporting among some graduates to turn their back on the business world. But someone must produce the goods and services necessary to survival -- and produce them for the young, the aged and the infirm who can not provide. I was a builder my profession, and in my career, I built several hundred buildings. Yet in none of these buildings did I ever live. I derive some satisfaction, however, that my buildings provide places of employment for others. They provide classrooms for our youth and shelter for the sick. It is imperative that we realize no man is in business for himself anymore.

Virtually everything you do will -- in one way or another -- affect someone else. Therefore everything you do must incorporate human values if this is to be a nation and a world fit for human habitation. With this in mind, then -- trade, commerce and business will not be the monster that some of you think it is. It can be whatever you want it to be, as long as you are willing to get involved.

I remember when I first agreed to run for public office back in Massachusetts; some of my friends thought I was crazy! "What do you want to get into that mess for?", they said. "Politics is dirty! Your life won't be your own! All you are asking for is grief."

But I told them the same thing I tell you today. And it applies to your whole way of life, not just to politics.

Politics -- and life -- will be just as dirty and distasteful as you want it to be, or just as clean and personally satisfying as you want it to be. Politics -- and life -- can be an opportunity to excel or an opportunity to be a failure.

Politics -- and life -- revolve not so much around events and actions as they revolve around attitude. And I would like to suggest an attitude -- a disposition -- for you in your present circumstance at this time of great change in your lives. Will Rogers once said, "What constitutes a life well spent? Love...and admiration from our fellow men is all that anyone can ask."

I would expand on that just a bit...with a quote from the great Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. which I think will give you a sense of what lies ahead. "No man", he wrote, "has earned the right to intellectual ambition until he has learned to lay his course by a star which he has never seen -- to dig by the divining rod for springs which he may never reach..."

My young friends -- a challenge such as this requires confidence, courage, hope -- and no small measure of present happiness. I hope all these are yours today. The world needs confidence, courage, and hope. There is so much to do. Let's do it. Together.

As you go through life remember what this school has given you -- remember your friends -- remember those who have labored in your behalf -- and when that faraway day comes when you too have a younger generation to talk to, remember what it is to be young, for that is the greatest remembrance of all.

Thank you.

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