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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO GOD AND COUNTRY AWARDS DINNER, AT THE HOLLYWOOD PALLADIUM, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1970, 7:00 P.M.

I begin tonight with reassurance. It has been my privilege over the past eight days to deliver commencement addresses at three different colleges -- in three different parts of the country -- here at University of Southern California, at Niagara University in New York State and at Southern University in Baton Rouge.

I make it a practice when I speak -- particularly to young people -- to spend time with members of the audience. I met many of these young students and was very much impressed. A great many of our college students today -- the vast majority, I would say -- are sincere, hard-working youngsters. They don't come any better. I am disturbed that a small minority of our students has -- perhaps by default -- assumed leadership roles among the student body. This is a well-documented phenomena -- I am sure you know the background.

But if we widen our perspective to include all of our restive young people -- not just the leaders -- there is a new cause for concern. And this is the sheer size of this minority. The number of young people in our Nation -- the 15 to 25 year old age group -- totals 36-million people. That is more people than there were in the United States at the start of our Civil War.

Even a minority of these represents a tremendous number of people. Their dissent deserves our attention. If a "cure" is called for, then I would point out that curing begins with diagnosis and here I think we might first look

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to ourselves. Is the unrest of our young people a consequence to the surrender to weakness by some of our adult population? We claim we are the land of the free. Yet too many of us increasingly subject ourselves to unnatural dependencies -- dependency on stimulation -- dependency on psychiatry -- dependency on handouts. We boast that we are the home of the brave yet too many are increasingly afraid of individual responsibility -- afraid of ourselves. Too many are letting themselves be buffeted by the winds of vast impersonal forces.

This is a time of progress, change and turmoil. And yet it is precisely at this time that some adults who should have been setting an example for young people, have let them down.

I recently was presented with a statement by the American Association of University Professors deploring the tragedy at Kent State and attributing this tragedy to America's participation in the Vietnamese War. I was asked to give the statement my consideration. I did and I responded to the Association.

I'd like to take this opportunity -- with your indulgence -- to read parts of that letter here tonight. It was written with sincerity and conviction. It reads as follows:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the statement issued by the American Association of University Professors with regard to the tragedy at Kent State University. It is indeed a tragedy that four young Americans were slain by other young Americans who no more wanted to kill than the victims wished to die.

Like you, I am gravely concerned with the possibility that we may be alienating our younger generation. I have been on many of our Nation's campuses and expect to visit many more in the immediate future. I have found the vast majority of the students to be intelligent and concerned; patient with my presentations and constructive with their criticisms; and, most of all, optimistic of the future and willing to do the work that must be done.

The issue here is a serious one and the students have a right -- an obligation -- to dissent if they oppose the policies of their leaders. They have a right to be heard and heeded, not ignored or patronized. I have never shied away from meaningful dialogue; I thrive on it. But I abhor irrational and violent methods of dissent, especially on our campuses, for they erode the fundamental principles upon which our colleges and universities must stand. If the academic community surrenders to the strident voices of unreason, American colleges and universities will surely die.

America is a land of many peoples -- a mixed bag of cultures, concepts, ideals and hopes. Its great strength has been in melding this diversity into unity. That unity is being sorely tested today.

I am never content with what I have done, even when I work 70-hour weeks. I'm constantly nagged by the thought that more could have been accomplished if I'd only tried harder. You may be assured that I will continue to work hard to maintain and improve communications between our citizens and their government. I would ask you in turn to assess the actions that your membership may have taken, or failed to take, which have led to this point of crisis. In far too many cases faculty members and administrators have not only nurtured irrational dissent but fanned the ignited flames as well.

Students, with their youthful idealism, are inherently revolutionary, and this is good, for it helps to keep vital the spirit of man. But somewhere our militant students have got the idea that they can be revolutionaries without risking the penalties revolutionaries have always faced. They act as if it were a game, complete with cheering sections and spectators. They count on the other team playing the game. It's not a game. Many of the Kent State students had been -- and still were -- rioting. They destroyed by arson and attacked firemen, they taunted guardsmen with vile invective and stoned them. While giving full vent to their outraged feelings, they expected the young guardsmen to keep their cool. Result: Tragedy.

As an association of educators, you are in a unique position to channel meaningful dissent into constructive action. I wish you well, and assure you of my intent to continue to strive for improved communication and understanding. Sincerely, John A. Volpe.

My friends, I think most of you here tonight can remember times of hardship and difficulty. For many of us, adulthood began with the depression. We came of age in a decade of despair and began our careers in a time of war. And many of us in our childhood knew poverty. One of my earliest memories is walking along the railroad track picking up lumps of coal for the stove at home. I am certain many of you here tonight can tell similar stories.

Yet, we were lucky. As Sir Wilfred Grenfell, the famed explorer wrote: "Difficulties, hard physical work and simplicity are still invaluable assets in evolving the world's most important product -- a real man."

I think, too, there is an urgent need for more appreciation for the spirit which brings us together here tonight -- devotion not just to country but to our creator as well. Our laws make no requirement affecting faith or patriotism. Yet this same faith in an eternal wisdom and this same respect for great Americans who have gone before is the true source of our national strength.

This is the meaning of our meeting here tonight. Because of these good and patriotic men we honor, ours is a better Nation. I wish there could be a thousand dinners like this. I wish every American could attend one. Faith and patriotism are essential qualities of American life. Indeed they are essential to all aspects of life. Why should we have faith? Let me give you one man's reasons --

I marvel at the miracle of creation -- at the critical and complex balance of nature. I am awed when I realize that if the earth rotated at a speed just a few miles an hour less, all vegetation would eventually disappear. If our orbit in space were changed just a few degrees, we should boil half the time and freeze solid the other half.

If the moon were 18 percent further away, there would be no tides and shallow oceans would cover the entire surface of the earth. And if the radiation of the sun increased by only one percent, all life on earth would perish by fire. And, my friends, we accept these physical facts of the world -- because we have faith in God.

Indeed, we could not function as human beings without faith. Someone once described man's ability to walk as the ability to fall forward in the complete faith of prompt recovery. In a more serious vein, the famed British physician and writer, Sir William Osler said: "Nothing in life is more wonderful than faith -- the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible." And -- faith is indestructible. Faith is that which endures when even hope is lost. Indeed, the only limit to faith is fear, and if we fear not, faith will light the way for the world.

My confidence in the strengthening of the religious fabric of our country is joined by my complete faith that our Nation will triumph over present dissension and move on toward new and promising horizons.

I do not believe the sky is falling, nor do all our young people. I learned from my campus visits, that most of our students, when they look beyond the present era of protest and dissent, foresee for themselves, a life of opportunity and challenge. For most of them the American dream still lives.

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