

# U. S. Department of Transportation

# news:



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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
BROCK ADAMS BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON COMMENCEMENT,  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, JUNE 11, 1977.

In every person's life there are highlights that are remembered forever. Two of those occasions mark this particular place in my memory -- the day I graduated and the honor today of returning as an alumnus to address the graduating class of my Alma Mater.

One of my classmates said my appearance as commencement speaker should give great confidence and courage to the graduating class, because if that funny looking little kid shown in the TYEE could make it, anyone can.

I wondered why I was asked and was beginning to think maybe I was important until last week when one of my children saw my picture in the paper waiting in line with Charlton Heston to shake hands with the Vice President and calmly stated --

"See Daddy, if you stand in line next to somebody important, you can get your picture in the paper."

I also promised President Hogness I would resist the temptation to reminisce about how things were many years ago and that I would not insult your intelligence by presuming to tell you with great wisdom how your lives will change as you leave here. I simply would quote from Thoreau,

"Things do not change, we change."

and repeat an ancient story told to me by the Ambassador to Greece when I was there last week:

"It is the story of the young man who completed an arduous pilgrimage, beset by dangers, to a distant land in order to ask an extremely old, extremely successful man what was the key to success.

The old man told him, "To succeed you must make the right decisions."

"How do I learn to make the right decisions?" the young man asked.

"Through experience," he was told.

"One final question," asked the young man, "How do I gain experience?"

"By making the wrong decisions," the old man stated.

Now the old man's advice was not mere cynicism. The story of all our individual lives, that of all nations, is written in that simple story about decisions. The choices we make and the changes that we make in our individual lives determine the way we will live. The quality of the decisions we make as a nation and the changes that we bring about will determine our place in history.

I want to spend my few brief moments in your life talking with you about the hopes we have and the decisions being made to create a new world role for America. The proposition is so simple that our national communications system has trouble reporting about it since it lacks the Byzantine twisting and turning of past years.

It is simply that we want to reaffirm to the world that the American people believe in democracy and the respect for human rights that flow from our constitution, and we expect to practice it within the limits of our human capabilities, both at home and in our attitude toward others.

I have just returned from Europe where I met with many public officials as well as individual citizens. It is clear that the world is holding its breath and waiting to see what this vision of America will mean as individual policy decisions start to unfold. The same is true on this campus and throughout America.

There are five main principles which the President has proposed to the American people as a basis for our national foreign policy decisions:

- our commitment to human rights
- close cooperation with the democracies of the world with whom we share values and hopes
- through a mixture of strength and accommodation with the Soviet Union and China, we want to reach across ideological divisions and reduce the risk of war
- to reach out to the developing nations to alleviate suffering and reduce the chasm between the world's rich and poor
- to rise above narrow interests to encourage all nations to work together to overcome threats of nuclear war -- racial hatred -- the arms race -- environmental damage -- hunger -- and disease.

In the next few months the President and Secretary of State will be presenting these principles again and again in individual conferences, negotiations, and other foreign policy forums. Each of us will be making choices in our lives and decisions which will affect the lives of others and will thus affect the reality of these policies. In the welter of day-to-day details, it is often hard to remember Woodrow Wilson's remarks as a professor to a young man at Princeton:

"Every man sent out from a university should be a man of his nation, as well as a man of his time."

The attitudes you and I reflect to the world and the decisions we make will be America's policy because in this democracy, a consensus of the people is necessary to maintain honest, open and effective foreign policy.

The most important contribution I can make as an executive officer in the domestic field which in some cases impacts on foreign policy is to make decisions promptly and clearly and not leave the issue to always be handled in the courts. As a former member of the legislative branch, now in the executive branch, I know how tempting it is to announce the popular things and leave the politically unpopular decisions to be made in the courts which are more insulated from public reaction. This must not continue because policy should be made in the legislative and executive branches which have the resources of people and money to develop the solution and implement it and are always subject to public reaction. The courts should check those decisions to be certain that constitutional safeguards are observed and that decisions are not arbitrary and capricious. The court system, however, does not have

the resources to deal with the overloading of the system due to the failure of the other branches to decide difficult issues nor the physical resources to carry out a plan or proposal indicated in a decision. I hope to change this abdication of responsibility so far as the Department of Transportation is concerned.

I know my statements on automobile fuel usage and energy conservation will be controversial and may be heard more easily than yours at this point in your life, but the principle is the same. When I say to other nations we will reduce our ever-increasing demand on the world's oil supply using fuel "to serve our need not our greed," it means tough rules at home. Your response and the thousands of individual choices made by each American to observe the 55 mph speed limit and use more fuel efficient cars and pay more for mass transportation systems and not my statements will show the the world whether a new decision and thus a new American policy is really in effect.

This will be a test of whether our democratic system can discipline itself and survive. I am asking you to be a part of this process. As Clemenceau said of democratic government:

"It is the art of disciplining oneself so that one need not be disciplined by others."

Even our great national strength can be sapped if we continue to waste our energy resources and are therefore required to send a higher and higher percentage of our national work product abroad to purchase more and more oil. It also reduces the amount of world supply available for others. We can do this. As John Silver, President of Boston University said in a Bicentennial speech last year:

"We confuse the pursuit of happiness, guaranteed by the Constitution, with the pursuit of pleasure. The distinction is fundamental. In the midst of prosperity, more accurately described as luxury, on a scale unprecedented in history, we have come to believe that the pursuit of happiness is reducible to the pursuit of pleasure."

If a foreign policy that stresses the dignity of mankind is joined with the call for the sacrifice and discipline at home to demonstrate we will do our part in meeting the world's problems with limited resources, then it will be possible for America's bright moment on the stage of world history to continue through our lifetime and that of our children.

I have returned to the executive branch again because I have the same sense of expectancy and excitement I felt many years ago when John Kennedy brought many of us into government with his words:

"I do not accept the view that our high noon is in the past and that we are moving into the late afternoon. I think our brightest days can be ahead."

I believe our country's brightest days are ahead. I wish you courage and good fortune. From this University we have received much -- you and I -- let us hope we use it well.

Thank you.

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