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Convocation Address
In one of his essays on psychology, William James described the stream of our consciousness as being composed of an alternation of flights and perchings. It is the same with life. It is the same with human progress. You who are the graduating seniors of Ohio State University have just made a flight through higher education—and I mean this in the serious sense! You are now perched before us to receive the awards that you so richly deserve. Perhaps my function on this occasion is to give you the "briefing" before your next flight into action.

I believe that higher education has a functional relationship to men's efforts at building a finer life on earth. The highest justification for having programs of higher education lies not so much in their value to the individual student in preparing him for more successful living, important as that is; instead, it lies in the contribution that education can make toward creating on earth a finer life for all men. The practical approach to this goal is found in working at the solution of the problems that exist in contemporary society. The graduates of our colleges and universities, because of the education they have received, have the best perspective of the total of men's knowledge and experience accumulated from the past. It is they who are best prepared to be relatives in advancing civilization, and who should possess the dedication to work toward the good life on earth.
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I shall orient what I say to some of the great problems of civilization. One of the ways in which human beings make progress is through working toward the solution of the problems that exist at the time. True, solving a problem does not bring Utopia. The correction of one maladjustment in society ordinarily creates new ones; fresh discoveries and the invention of new devices help create new demands. But these events are steps on the path of progress. If a problem is favorably or partially solved, it means that men have taken a step forward in evolution. They have made a flight, and during the momentary ensuing period of equilibrium they get perched for the next flight.

For some time it has been customary at my school for the Librarian to post in the Library lists of books which individual faculty members have found to be especially worth reading. Recently in the list of one of the faculty there has appeared the title "Alice in Wonderland." This suggests that it is not necessarily undignified to admit an interest in things in the realm of fancy. If in my preview of the future, I may seem to verge on the fanciful, that is not the intent. After thirty years of uncertainty about the fate of civilization, the direction for the next flight in human progress is
becoming clear. In order to make what I say as factual and realistic as possible, I shall follow the technique of throwing the spotlight on a few scenes, of varied nature, where there already are some leavening influences at work.

A recent scene that has interested all of us was the conference at Yalta. Here the heads of the three most powerful nations of today, together with their ministers, met to plan a new system of world order.

Through the tragic experiences of two world wars, it has become crystal-clear that a nation may no longer do anything it pleases. Such actions invite wars. If war is the inevitable result, then we know the price of failing to join with the other nations in maintaining world order. World security requires collective planning and action.

It is not unreasonable to suppose—to use a pet phrase of Adam Smith's—that we can now have collective security. Why not? The requirements are clear: There must be a procedure through which the nations meet together for common discussion of their problems and their plans; there must be provision for adjudicating agreements, and for enforcing decisions resulting from the group meetings; there must be an underlying program for cultural and educational interchange in order to provide a basis for international understanding. Techniques such as these are common to our daily living. They only need sensible
Possibly the Yalta meeting will go down in history as the beginning of genuine world order. If so, then we who are living in this time are perched on one of the Great Divides in civilization. Behind us in time lie two or three centuries of aggressive nationalism as a phenomenon of political organization, and several generations of the use of war as an instrument of national policy. Ahead in the future lies a world grown small in distance and time, whose peoples may have learned how to plan constructively and collectively their relationships on the international level. This is at least the hope we treasure. Ours is more than the view of a mere spectator; we are really viewing a field of future action --of action for ourselves, for the orderly world we envision will have become such only after we have helped make the vision become a reality.

One of the great problems requiring solution in order to have genuine world order is the economic one. This is a complex problem composed of disparities in the allocation of natural resources, in the degree of modern industrialization, in the relative standards of living. The problem is exaggerated by nationalistic policies of the exploitation of backward countries, of imperialism. If in the future we are to avoid maladjustments among the peoples of the world, so serious as to break down the machinery of peace, we must find solutions to these economic problems.
As an interesting experiment to watch, being always alert to learn from new experiments, let us turn the spotlight upon Soviet Russia and her method of handling international trade. Russia's international trade is, of course, a managed one. She imports, under her planned economy, what she needs and can pay for, and she exports what she needs to in order to pay for what she wants. She thus conserves her own resources, and makes equal exchanges in trade with others. Presumably she has no need for tariff barriers since her object in trading is to get the products of others. Neither does she have the incentive to exploit cheap labor in other countries, since her first concern is always to keep her own labor fully employed. Whether we like the Russian method or not, we must agree that in her external economic relationships she is trying a new method that may help solve the international economic problem. The economic strength of her position may force the adoption of managed trade as a general policy. Indeed, the nations of the world have gone a long way in this direction already, as is evidenced by the trade agreements made by the United States during the past decade. Thus we may be on the threshold of a whole new pattern of international economy.

We get some additional evidence of the new thinking about economics on the international level when
we look at the Bretton Woods Conference. For example, there was proposed here the formation of a new International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The name is significant. The war-torn countries need economic reconstruction. The bank becomes a medium for quickly mobilizing resources for this purpose.

But of greater significance is the fact that the initiation of this bank represents a profound change in thought about the economics of backward countries. The backward countries, mostly colonies of European powers or the less industrialized countries of the Americas, have been the happy hunting grounds of the economic imperialists operating under a laissez-faire economy. The new attitude is that these countries should be assisted to develop their productive facilities and raise their standards of living. It is no longer thought desirable that they should remain economic colonies. The new idea is that there is a better flow of trade between two prosperous countries than there is between a wealthy country and a poverty-stricken neighbor. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development will make possible a positive program of international investment. Its capital of $9,100,000,000, supplied by the several sponsoring countries, will be used primarily to insure these investments against loss. Its method of operation will be similar to that of the method used by the Federal Housing Administration in the United States in insuring
loans on housing. The results should be equally good, especially in greatly reducing the cost to the borrowing country of securing loans for developmental purposes. Hopefully we should expect to see a sound investment in the Bombay Plan proper to allocate for higher education and scientific research.

While on this subject of economics, let us take a brief glance at another conference. This is the conference in India which announced the 15-year Bombay Industrialization Plan. The plan proposes to treble the national income of India in fifteen years. We have become accustomed since the early twenties to hearing about 5-year Plans, and other economic plans. But now we are listening to voices from another region of the earth. Irrespective of the success or failure of this particular plan, the 15-year Bombay Industrialization Plan puts our spotlight on the thinking that is engaging the minds of men in the East. In India, in China, in Burma, in Indo-China, and in the East Indies, live more than one billion people. They possess tremendous quantities of varied natural resources. They are beginning to industrialize and to talk about 15-year plans for industrialization. They have made a modest start through the co-operatives in China and the war industries of India.

During the past quarter century, people have learned that education in the construction and use of machine tools is the third essential element in an
industrial economy—the other two elements being supplies of labor, and of natural resources. The Far East, then, doesn't need a store of gold. What it needs, in addition to what it has in plentiful supply, is the "know-how." This it can get in short order. For example, the Bombay Plan proposes to allocate for higher education and scientific research about the same portion of the national income as we do in the United States. We who are meeting here today need not be surprised if within our lifetimes we witness the intensive industrialization of the East.

Having for a moment looked in upon the peoples of the East, let us take stock of the meaning of their actions to us. The nations of the West have been standing on the top side of the globe. Assuming the charitable attitude called the "White Man's Burden," they have rationalized their position of White supremacy. Political dictation has been accompanied by economic imperialism. The high standard of living for the peoples of the West has in part been based upon wage and profit exploitation in the East.

I am not suggesting that we be conscience-stricken about the past. On the whole, we Westerners—the British, the Germans, the French, the Dutch, and the Americans—meant well, and we did much good along with the bad. And we are now working out new techniques in world relationships, such as I have mentioned. But I speak with emphasis upon this subject because I want us
of the West to recognize fully that we cannot continue to treat people with skin pigments different from our own as being inferior to us. Perhaps we can for a while, but the price will be a horrible one if it leads to interracial warfare on a world-wide basis. The seeds of such a potential conflict have already been planted. The industrialization of the East will enable the implements for war to be built—we have already seen this happen in the case of Japan. You who have had the opportunity through higher education to learn of these things have now a responsibility to help educate the people of the Western World to respect the people of the East. We must get on to a basis of mutual cooperation and friendship with them. Fortunately, as a starting point, the United States is now setting a good example in our dealings with the Filipinos.

These problems of economic colonies and of differing skin pigments come very close home to all of us. We have an economic colony right here within the borders of the United States. Its geography is co-extensive with that of our great industrialized economy. It must therefore be recognized by criteria other than those of geographical boundaries. This is easy because the differentiation is based upon the presence of the black skin pigment.

I need not describe to you the gravity of the
interracial problem here in the United States. I can
label the problem as one of the most acute of those con­
fronting our nation. One of the really great oppor­
tunities that lie ahead of young people today is to work
constructively and objectively toward the solution of
this problem. The method is so easy, and yet so difficult.
As Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish writer, in his remarkable
study, says, the clear-cut solution is simply that of
applying the good old American ideals as expressed in the
Constitution of the United States and as found in the
Christian religion. But in applying these ideals to our
relationships with Negroes, we who are White must re­
orient our thinking. And I am sure that those of you
who are Black and are defensive in your attitudes toward
White men, must reorient your thinking.

The first step in establishing a satisfactory
economic position for Negroes lies in education. Let me
throw the spotlight on a large department store where
there was a Negro problem. During the war the number
of Negroes employed increased to over 300. There was
much resulting friction between Whites and Negroes. The
Negroes had to be handled with "kid gloves" because they
resented supervision. They would say: "You're picking
on me just because I'm a Negro." The department store
consulted a Negro educator, and together they worked out
an employee training program. It was modeled after the
training given to our boys when they were first sent
into Africa. It was designed to give these new employees
a thorough preparation for their responsibilities in an
economic situation that was new to them. The program
was highly successful and reduced the misunderstandings
to an unimportant number. After training, the Negroes
became excellent co-workers. This example contains a
moral for us. Our ideals need implementation. The
implementation comes through education. We must educate
the Negro for new economic responsibilities so that he
may have equality of opportunity. We must educate all
of our young people in anthropology and in sociology so
that they will be rational in overcoming the emotional
prejudice that lies deep in the American people.

The over-all economic problem in the United
States is one of the really difficult ones to be solved.
A statistical study of production and consumption under
the laissez-faire system of economy shows conclusively
that there are recurring cycles of prosperity and de­
pression. During the depression periods there is always
prolonged unemployment. The unemployment occurs irrespec­
tive of the brand of politics subscribed to by the
particular President of the United States in office at
the time.

The problem before the nation is simply this:
How can we plan our economic activity sufficiently to
avoid these recurring periods of unemployment, and at
the same time avoid the disadvantages of bureaucratic
restrictions on freedom of enterprise? This problem will
take the best thinking, planning, and patient effort of
which we are capable during the next decade or two.

Personally, I believe we can learn some things from our war production. Certainly we have achieved an enormous flow of production. It has been obtained by a combination of governmental direction in planning, and of private initiative in carrying the plans through production. I believe we should learn from this experience, because I think some such co-operation among government, business, and labor, is the key to economic stability and to the full and continuous utilization of our excellent productive capacity.

May I shift our attention to a problem of a different sort? The other day I visited the health center of the Permanente Foundation at Oakland, California. As many of you know, Henry Kaiser has created there an unusual health service for the benefit of his employees in the shipbuilding plants. I was genuinely amazed at this achievement. Basically, he has accepted the idea about which the advocates of socialized medicine talk. This is to have the well people (that is, all of the people) of a community participate in the health center program to keep well. In Kaiser's case, in the medical center that I visited he has secured the voluntary support of 61,000 out of 65,000 employees. They each pay 50¢ per week. Their families can come in on the plan too. Although each individual thus pays only $26 per year, the
total revenue for the project becomes millions. For this small fee, the Foundation is able to provide almost complete examination, medical, and hospitalization services. And the equipment and the services which are under the direct management of the doctors are the best obtainable. I say "Foundation" because the whole project, while paying its way, is on a non-profit basis. Thus Kaiser has removed the element of profit from human illness, and is getting the incidental advantages derived from the increased health and happiness of his employees and their families.

We have reached the stage in human history when people can expect to have continuing health. Disease for the most part has been conquered. Knowledge about food and other bodily needs is comprehensive. Trained physicians and technicians are available. But we are only beginning to see that health services can be mobilized on an economic basis which makes them available to all human beings. Kaiser, and a few others, have shown how this can be done in a manner satisfactory both to the doctors and to the laymen.

Just one final problem, because I want to include another illustration of interest in the science fields. In nature, billions of little factories everywhere are constantly busy at capturing energy from the sun and converting it into starches and sugars, foods and fuels, for the potential use of men and animals. The factories are green plants. In some instances, when these plants have been buried in the earth for a few million years, they
become converted into coal.

Recently I have visited several laboratories, including the Hopkins Marine Station and the Carnegie Institution at Stanford, and of course the Kettering Foundation for the Study of Chlorophyll and Photosynthesis at Antioch, where scientists are trying to learn how the green plant does its work. As Mr. Kettering puts it: "Why is grass green?" The answer has yet to be found.

Men in laboratories such as these have been making great progress in discovering how to produce synthetic materials. It is little short of miraculous how, when access to some product of nature is shut off, the scientist comes forth with a synthetic material. Witness the developments in such fields as rubber, rayon, plastics, and that very persistent substitute for butter which we now find on our plates at every meal. When men learn how to capture energy direct from the sun, as we almost certainly will in time; when we no longer have to live in fear of the depletion of our basic natural resources, but can harness this new storehouse of energy, we may see the lives of men on earth considerably transformed.

I believe that the past three decades have been essentially revolutionary in character. In terms of the advancement of human progress we have been in a period of confusion and transition. The earlier industrial revolution, which brought such wonderful developments in the short space of a century, has reached a certain crisis
in terms of the exploitation of natural resources and of human beings. We in the United States have achieved the finest results of any people because we have had a splendid program of education, a plentiful supply of resources, a flow of labor, and a considerable measure of democracy in sharing the activities and the fruits of industrial expansion. But in other spots in the world the pressures of the later stages in the rapid, but uneven industrialization of society, have brought about great frustrations. These have caused nations to resort to war, and other peoples, as in Russia, to try revolution by force. During these decades, civilization was temporarily perched on the brink of disaster.

But now there is a new spirit alive in the world. It is the spirit of true democracy. It is the spirit that recognizes that the welfare of individual nations is bound up with the welfare of all of them; that the interests of individuals everywhere must be reconciled with the interests of the groups of people of which the individual is a part. The next flight in human progress will be in the direction of securing for human beings generally their full measure of the happiness that can flow from men's co-operative efforts.

To avoid being fanciful about the world of tomorrow I have turned the spotlight on a few experiments of today. They are suggestive of what is to come; rather,
they are suggestive of what can come. For progress does not happen automatically. It comes as a result of thought and action, of planning and the execution of plans. There is no mystery about it. There is, however, a key to it. The key is knowledge. Men make rapid progress in evolution as compared with animals because they educate themselves. Education therefore is really a tremendous power. Educated people can, if they will, see to it that we build a successful world order, that we reduce poverty and illness, that we achieve full respect for and confidence in men who are born black, or brown, or red, or yellow, and that we keep pushing outward the horizon of our scientific knowledge.

It is possible that the next half century will be the most interesting and see the most rapid human progress made of any period in history.