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REMARKS BY
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There is a saying, at once obvious and profound, that seems especially appropriate today as we celebrate this commencement, an event that echoes the past as well as heralds the future.

"Today is the beginning of the rest of your life."

A beginning... the advent of a new personal era... the start of a new life--certainly today marks, for all of you, such a threshold to new experiences, new activities and--we trust and we hope--to new achievements that serve and benefit both yourselves and the larger society of man.

The more than 1,600 of you who soon will be saying "Goodbye, Columbus" carry away with you more than your own aspirations. To a degree that cannot be exaggerated, you--and young men and women like you across the country--are not just our hopes for the future, but our future itself.

And so we wish you success--and in so doing, voice our hopes that you may find the means and the will to repair the mistakes of preceding generations--and to build on what is good and right about our nation and her people.

Certainly you face enormous challenges. We are living in a period of great social change. Concepts long held sacred by men of good will are under attack--and some are failing the test of newer ideas. Institutions are increasingly being scrutinized--

and some are being found wanting. Alvin Toffler writes of "Future Shock," a condition in which change will occur so quickly that we will tend to lose our bearings. Scientists around the world warn us that our trip into the future on the magic carpet we call "growth"--and which we usually equate with progress--may take us not to Utopia, but to global disaster.

The complexities of the 1970s are enough to make some graduates yearn to heed the words of Bob Hope, who was asked what advice he would give a young man leaving campus life and going into the "real world." Hope's terse response: "Don't go."

Well, go we must--all of us--into a dynamic, even turbulent time that will sorely test our intellectual capabilities and our ethical capacities. And if we adults envy youth, I believe it is not for the relatively light physical burden of your years, but because so many challenges and opportunities lie ahead--and not behind--each of you.

Despite the prophecies of impending doom from those who analyze this diverse nation and find its problems to be insoluble, I am frankly sanguine about the future of America.

For every cry of institutional failure it is possible to cite an example of institutional renewal. And often the example is right before our eyes.

I was interested, for instance, to find that students today comprise one-third of the membership of Ohio State's Faculty Council, your school's principal legislative body. And that there is student representation on the Presidential Search Committee. Even as recently as the late 1960s, students were largely excluded from such activities.

I have read with interest about the plans underway to open the first university-related child care center, which will provide developmental care for 100 children of student and faculty couples--and a laboratory situation in which education students can gain invaluable experience.

And I also noted that the student vote last November--the first ever in which 18-year-olds could cast ballots--was credited with playing a significant role in Columbus' mayoralty election last year.

All these, I would submit, are examples of institutional change in response to new social realities. They prove that far from being moribund, most of our institutions are dynamic and flexible.

Yet we often ignore--or even reject--such evidence, preferring to focus on our system's failures rather than its successes.

To the degree this trait causes us constantly to question our goals and values, it has a positive effect on our national life. But the American predilection for self-criticism is a double-edged sword. When self-criticism spurs self-doubt that erodes our will, as well as our capacity to effect a degree of needed reforms, then it becomes a destructive force.

In truth, I believe the doubts being expressed today are generated not so much by our failures as by our successes.

No student of history, or of current events, could honestly deny the evidence that--by virtually any measure one might name--we are constantly and consistently moving closer to fulfilling the original promises upon which the United States was founded.

We have not only retained our original freedoms, but have enlarged upon them significantly, particularly in the field of civil rights. We are, as individuals, healthier and longer-lived. We are better-educated, better paid for our work, and at least some of us are capable of enjoying material goods on a scale that, if anything, causes twinges of conscience.

The number of people living in poverty is not only a relatively small proportion of our total population, but a proportion that has declined sharply over the past decade. And few of this number, however unconscionable their relative hardship, are afflicted with the miseries that commonly constitute poverty in most of the remainder of the world.

The phenomenon of rising expectations lies, I believe, at the heart of our national discontent. We move forward, sometimes with giant, precedent-shattering strides, but instead of finding satisfaction upon reaching a goal, we wonder why even grander goals elude our grasp. Like some helium-filled balloon, our expectations soar ever farther above our accomplishments.

In such a framework our successes--compared with our ever-escalating expectations--tend to appear as failures.

There is, besides, much actual failure. Exaggerated legislative promises, ill-conceived governmental programs, over-advertised "cures" for intractable ailments, cynical exploitation of valid grievances, entrenched resistance to obviously necessary change, the cold rigidity of centralized authority, the squandering of scarce resources--all these fuel frustration and foster disillusionment.

Population growth, technological change, mass communications and big government have, meanwhile, been progressively submerging the individual's sense of personal significance in a gray, featureless sea of homogenized humanity.

In a country which has been dedicated since its founding to the liberation of human aspirations and the fulfillment of human potential, these massive changes--these future shocks--make us anxious and uneasy.

We yearn for a greater voice in--a greater impact on--the processes that affect our lives. As individuals--you! I!--we long to make a difference.

President Nixon spoke sensitively of the self-doubts and self-criticism many Americans are experiencing when he said, in his 1972 State of the Union message:

"...These are the other side of our growing sensitivity to the persistence of want in the midst of plenty, and of our impatience with the slowness with which age-old ills are being overcome.

"...If we were indifferent to the shortcomings of our society, or complacent about our institutions, or blind to the lingering inequities--then we would have lost our way."

As individuals, and as a society, we still care. The problem, both for individuals and society, is to translate our feelings into meaningful action, to make our commitment match our concern.

That means getting involved in the processes--political and social--that govern the way we live and determine where we're going. The word drop-out usually is pinned on those who leave school. But there are millions of Americans, many of them well-educated and prosperous, who have dropped out of our national political life.

One of the sadder commentaries on our society, to my mind, is the fact that less than half of those who might have voted in the 1968 Presidential election actually did vote. And there are students of our electoral process who claim the 18-year-old vote will do little to raise that woeful percentage in this election year. I sincerely hope they are wrong.

But involvement in the political process means much more than simply casting a ballot. It means following the major issues, seeing how your elected representatives vote and finding out why. It means informing yourself. It means raising questions and demanding answers.

Finally, I think, it means questioning simplistic answers to exceedingly complex problems.

Let me give you just one example. How often have you heard someone say that all this nation needs to get on the right keel is to "reorder its priorities?" I'll concede that has a satisfying ring to it--and it sounds so enticingly easy. But to a practiced ear, it also should sound more than a little simplistic, more than a little glib, and far less than meaningful.

That's because to a degree many still don't--or won't--understand, this nation has shifted its priorities. In the past three years, for instance, human resources spending has grown from 32 percent to 45 percent of the total Federal budget, while defense spending has declined on precisely parallel lines--from 45 to 32 percent of the budget.

Fiscal Year 1972, in fact, will mark the first time in history that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare budget will exceed that of the Department of Defense.

But despite this rather dramatic, even drastic re-ordering of our military-domestic priorities, all of our domestic problems have not disappeared. Nor will they in the immediate future. Our chances of making meaningful headway in attacking these problems depend on our willingness to recognize this reality.

Once we accept the limitations of our resources--both financial and human--we take a major step in the direction of sound planning. Then, and only then, are we able to face the necessity of choosing among the literally thousands of competing claims on our resources.

In far too many instances, we haven't the slightest idea at present of the real cost of satisfying those claims.

Consider, if you will, the following list of widely accepted goals: Day care services for children who need them but whose parents can't afford them; fulfillment of the objectives of the Right to Read program; homemaker services, mental retardation services, and vocational rehabilitation services for all who need them; good compensatory education for every disadvantaged child.

You will recognize that these programs, however worthy, represent just a partial listing of what many people would regard as "top" priorities. They don't address needs such as cleaning up the environment, or improving mass transportation, or revitalizing our cities--or scores of other priorities set by individuals or organizations.

Yet to meet even the limited goals represented by the list, we would have to increase tax revenues by roughly \$27 billion a year. Even more importantly, meeting these goals would require the government to enlist and train six million more professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers than are now in service in such jobs.

Obviously, when you begin to factor in other major claims on our resources, you rapidly enter the realm of unimaginable numbers. It becomes abundantly clear that while the needs are very real, we cannot conceivably meet them all comprehensively, and all at the same time.

Enormous gaps between what we want, and what we can do, are thus inevitable. Even if we had bottomless public coffers--which would mean taxing Americans at a level approaching confiscation of all personal income--we could not, through normal manpower development channels, come up with the numbers of trained personnel required.

Thus it appears we must bow to an inability even ultimately to overcome these gaps--or we must recognize the necessity to utilize the abilities and dedication of people in a very different way.

And that means we must appeal anew to Americans to give voluntarily of their time and their energy to help others.

Rekindling the spirit of volunteerism, building upon a national legacy extending back to the time of our earliest settlers, is another great challenge facing your generation.

To the degree this nation can enlist volunteers for important, necessary tasks; to the degree we can tap the compassion, the concern and the commitment of our people-- to that degree will we be able to deal simultaneously with the problems of manpower and financial shortages.

Fortunately, your generation has demonstrated the heightened sense of social responsibility that encourages hopes these shortages can be overcome. It is our society's responsibility, I believe, to tap the reservoir of talent and good will you represent. Failure to do so would deprive the nation not only of an invaluable asset, but would rob you who want to serve one of life's most precious satisfactions: The satisfaction of service for the sake of service itself.

As you may have gathered, I am not pessimistic about the future of the so-called "real world" into which you are about to step. One cause for my optimism is my belief that higher education has, along with many of our other institutions, become more relevant to life off the campus, outside the ivory tower.

Most of you are leaving college with a history of involvement in the affairs of government, or in dealing with social needs, or in the election process itself, that students of an earlier era could not have imagined, much less experienced.

This involvement has opened your eyes to the shortcomings of our society. I trust also it has made you aware of what is good, and strong, and valuable about the American experience, and about the American people.

My hope for you--and for this nation--is that you would accept the challenges of today and help this country get on top of its tide of rising expectations. For like a surfer riding the crest of a monumental wave, America will either utilize the energy generated by her escalating aspirations, or else flounder as the wave's tremendous force washes over her.

As with the surfer facing the gigantic wave, accepting the challenges involves risk. Not every wave can be successfully ridden. You will be spilled from time to time. You will sometimes fail--and the failure will hurt.

Yet I hope, for your sake and the nation's sake, that you will accept the risks--and thereby add zest and meaning to your own lives, and to the life of this country.

Thank you.