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President Enarson, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Clergy,
Members of the Faculty, Members of the Graduating Class, Parents,
Friends of The Ohio State University, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It was with genuine pleasure that I accepted the invitation to return to Ohio State to participate in these commencement exercises with you. I have a warm spot in my heart for your campus, for your students and faculty, and for the close and congenial relationship that has existed between our two universities for more than a hundred years. And, I have particular admiration for your new President, Dr. Harold Enarson, with whom I have had the pleasure of working in close association for these past nearly eight years. Ohio State is fortunate to have a man of his caliber and educational statesmanship as its chief executive.

Dr. Enarson and I share many things in common, particularly our very grave concern over the current, and prospectively worsening, depression affecting Ohio's public higher educational institutions. A

Gallup poll released yesterday revealed that inflation was listed by six Americans in ten as their number one concern. I am sure that, if the same poll were taken of Ohio's twelve state university presidents, all twelve would cite inflation as their number one concern as well, for universities are anything but immune to inflationary pressures. Because nearly four dollars out of every five that we spend go to wages and salaries, we can only view with the gravest alarm a prospective state budget that will not permit us to come even close to offsetting the crippling drain of inflation between now and 1975.

But enough of this. It is not about the budget outlook that I want to speak to you this morning, but rather about another concern that confronts all Americans, not Ohioans alone, at this time. I have entitled my remarks "Reconciliation: A National Imperative."

Reconciliation: A National Imperative

In March, 1968, when most graduates whom we are honoring today were still juniors in high school, Roger Hilsman, former Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and a professor at Columbia, predicted in an address at Miami University that, if American participation in the Vietnam War extended over another five years, it would result in a complete and irreparable fragmentation of our society.

To you graduates who lived on this Ohio State campus through the spring of 1970 when most of you were freshmen, as well as to the rest of us on other campuses throughout the nation in that unhappy time, the true extent of our disaffection as a people and division as a nation was all too clear. Indeed, I think it safe to say that we were as close to Civil War in this nation in May, 1970, as we have been at any time since 1865.

Yet, having been at the edge of the precipice of Civil War, and having looked over it into the abyss below, most of the disaffected

pulled back and the nation has been fortunately in a cooling off period ever since.

And, interestingly, the nation did achieve the end of its participation in the Vietnam War in January, 1973, just two months shy of the close of the fifth year since Professor Hilsman made his prophetic prediction on the Miami campus.

In addition to the war, we have also witnessed another threat in recent years to our social structure and our nationhood through what has been called the breakdown of our moral standards. A recent Gallup poll indicated that those to whom the question, "Is life getting better or worse in terms of morals?" had been directed here in the United States had responded nearly ten-to-one that it was getting worse--a ratio matched by no other nation in the world where similar polls had been taken, though elsewhere as well as in the United States the number believing that life was getting worse considerably surpassed the number believing that it was getting better. A host of

explanations can be proffered for the shift of manners and morals in our time. Besides the divisive impact of the Vietnam War, we have witnessed the antagonisms of racial discord, the breakdown of the nuclear family, the overweening pressure for academic success, the pollution of our environment, the abuse of drugs, the decline of traditional religion, and the rampant pace of change in social, cultural, and intellectual mores. Indeed, we have become so accustomed to the inexorable thrust of change that some among us no longer see any traditions, values, or standards as being immune from the potential for alteration or scrapping. For these, the guidelines and fenceposts of the past seem no longer to have meaning.

Yet, as John B. Goodenough recently observed, "The vehicle of freedom is the constraint of law. Because the law of gravity constrains us, we are free to walk and run upon the earth. Because we accept the constraints of a musical scale, we are free to make music. Because we have grammar and vocabulary, we have language.

Because we submit ourselves to the rule of civil law, we may enjoy private property and have at least some freedom of motion on the streets. Thus a 'free society' consists of individuals who willingly submit themselves to a common public ethic, and this can only occur where these individuals share common public goals.... The ideal of a pluralistic society is only possible within a limited framework-- within the framework of a few commonly accepted public goals that create a unity within the diversity of our personal goals."

For long decades, from the attainment of independence in the late eighteenth century until a few years ago here in the twentieth, with the sole exception of the Civil War of the mid-nineteenth, we had as a nation a considerable number of commonly accepted public goals that did, indeed, create a national unity within the diversity of our personal goals. And, it is my conviction that it is still possible, indeed, absolutely mandatory, that we unite together in support of common goals for our nation.

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What are these goals, these common principles upon which we ought to be able to unite? First, for all its imperfections, can we not agree that ours must be a government by law, not by the whim and caprice of rulers? Can we not agree that there must be scrupulously equal treatment under that law for all men? Can we not agree that selective obedience to the law is untenable in a democracy? As Ambassador George Kennan stated so forcefully in an address at Swarthmore, "respect for the law is not an obligation obliterated by the willingness to accept the penalty for breaking it."

And it was Seth Brooks who wrote: "For many years, persons in our nation have deliberately been trying to obliterate all sense of loyalty and patriotism for our government, flag and laws, and wrongly thinking that if they went to jail (and were martyrs), they had fulfilled a lofty duty. But, of course, they hadn't! They had wiped out only themselves as guarantors of our nationhood."

Are we not still a nation of free people living under a government

of law which derives its just powers from the consent of the governed?

Can we not coexist, all of us, under a system which hinges upon acceptance of its rules by its members? Brought down to basics, this means acceptance of the decisions of the majority. And, if we disagree, we have the opportunity through the ballot box to create a new majority at the next election.

Can we not agree that our support of religious freedom for all mankind should remain a beacon of hope for oppressed people throughout the world?

Can we not still agree that the best economic system for us is one based on free enterprise and the private ownership of property?

Can we not agree that the best social system for us is one based on the objective of making possible dignity and pride and a sense of individual worth for every American? Should we not seek the best for every man in such a system and expect the best from him? I am sure that all among us are agreed that we must as a nation make

our big cities livable again. We must conquer the rot and decay, the poverty and despair of urban life. We must cleanse the air and make the streets safe for all our people. We must end pollution and safeguard our invaluable water resources. We must encourage cultural and recreational opportunity for all our people. And we must end at once the cruelty and wastes of discrimination, that all men may live as brothers.

Reduced to the most elemental terms, can we not still believe in "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"? Can we not still believe in the self-evident truths, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Can we not agree with Henry Steele Commager that the "determination to make reality live up to rhetoric" can and must be "the great engine of progress in the American system"?

In short, I believe that all among us today--faculty, parents,

and friends, as well as all in this graduating class can in good conscience embrace these principles whether we be young or old; black or white; Christian, Jew, or atheist. The broad principles on which our nation was founded, and on which it has prospered as no other nation in the history of the world, make insignificant the petty jealousies and hatreds which have fragmented and divided us as a people for too long.

On this graduation day, the 16th of March, 1973, in the wake of the tumult of the recent past, you who are graduating into the greater society, into the world of work as we are wont to call it, are challenged to help bring the discord which has so sorely divided us to an end, to achieve the reconciliation of the nation, to reunite America.

Good luck, and God bless each one of you.

Phillip R. Shriver
March 16, 1973