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REMARKS OF W. M. BATTEN
PRESIDENT, J. C. PENNEY COMPANY

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of

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June 13, 1932, I sat in the stadium, along with hundreds of others, waiting for the Commencement Speaker to finish and for President Rightmire to present me with a diploma. The location has changed, most of the faces are different, but I strongly suspect that your attitude about waiting for the speaker to finish (so that you may receive the tangible evidence of your degree) closely resembles my attitude of over 30 years ago.

Had some one told me, then, that I would have the privilege and pleasure of congratulating each of you on this very significant occasion in your lives, I would have questioned his sanity.

Today, on one of the few clearly discernible plateaus in your progression through life, I salute you, your Alma Mater, your loved ones, and your friends.

We who graduated in the thirties still recall how often the words "mature" and "maturity" were used at the time. Many of our economic and social problems were thought to be caused by the fact that our growth, as a nation, was said to be practically over - we were a mature economy and could not expect to grow much more.

There was a great deal of concern in governmental, educational and business circles about our mature economy. Seems incredible now, doesn't it? As you graduate today, and as we look ahead to the 70's, we are concerned - not about a mature economy but about growth, its opportunities, its problems and pains.

One of the major issues of the last Presidential election was the rate of growth of our economy, particularly as compared to that of the Soviet Union. The rate-of-growth issue is still with us in connection with the current debate over the proposed income tax legislation.

The growth problem transcends our national boundaries. It is a world problem, especially in newly developing nations and in densely populated countries. Population growth outruns the ability of many countries to expand their productive capacity and economy, and thus provide an acceptable standard of living for their people.

Growth ... economic growth, population growth, growth in college enrollment ... growth stocks ... wherever we turn, we hear the word. To grow ... and what is an acceptable rate of growth ... is one of the burning issues of the day.

But let's get closer home and look at the growth of this great University and what is behind it. Since my senior year, the faculty has grown in number from 678 to nearly 2500. The size of the physical plant has tripled. 31 years ago the enrollment was 10,000. Last fall's enrollment of 30,000 is expected to double in the next 7 years.

More importantly, Ohio State has grown in stature as an outstanding educational institution.

Obviously, this tremendous growth was not just an accident - it didn't "just happen." I suspect there have been many painful moments in the process ... and there will be more.

A vast complex of people contributed to bring Ohio State University to its present position of leadership. Vision on the part of the trustees and the administrative group, the competence and loyalty of the faculty, the interest of and the tax dollars of the citizens of Ohio, the support of the alumni, and the receptiveness of its student body ... these groups have combined their common interests into making Ohio State what it is today.

This achievement was made possible by the individual growth in understanding, ability and willingness of many thousands of people.

Growth, basically, then, is an individual matter. As we think about our own lives, how do we as individuals relate ourselves to something as big as society in general or even to our nation? In what frame of reference will we live and contribute? It is not an easy decision, but one which we all must make.

To provide a better basis for understanding, let us bring this matter of growth down to an individual institution. You will forgive me for using my personal experience with a corporation to indicate how the corporate entity relates itself to the individual, and, conversely, the relationship of the individual to the corporation. Hopefully, this will serve as a small-scale model for illustrating how we as individuals may relate ourselves to other types of activity or institutions, and to society as a whole.

Let us start with a definition of a corporation ... what is it? It is not, as some people think, a big, cold, heartless entity. It is a group of people. These people joined their careers and their efforts toward achieving a common goal in order to secure job satisfaction, earn a living and provide for their future security.

The corporation today exists in a world of fierce competition. There are always others ... properly so, in our competitive society ... who are seeking and working to take over its position. Harsh as it may sound, a basic rule for a business enterprise is: "grow or perish" ... and the short answer on how to accomplish growth in a corporation is: "have people who can and will grow."

In our particular business, the only action we can take in the present to insure the Company's growth five, ten or twenty years from now is to have good people and provide the right climate for their growth. We cannot buy merchandise that will be right for the consumer five years from now; we cannot plan now the new stores that will open in 1973. But we can now recruit and develop and encourage the right people, who will make the required, sound decisions in the years ahead.

If a corporation is to succeed, one of its major responsibilities must be: to provide a good climate for the personal growth of its people.

The first step is to develop an understanding among its people of this basic fact: that the corporation's most valuable asset is its people. Despite the size or complexity of the business, it is the individual ... his competence, his growth potential, and his motivation ... that will determine the future success of the enterprise. The individual may be only a number in the Social Security or Internal Revenue Department records, but, in a corporation, he is a live, human being and its most important asset.

A second area of major responsibility and concern of a business is the continuous growth in knowledge and skills of its people. It has been said that there is no such person as an "educated man or woman" because "being educated" is not a destination but a life-long journey. The fact that so many of you here today are about to receive your degrees is dramatic evidence of your understanding of the importance of continued growth in your knowledge and skill.

It is difficult for us in business to realize the speed with which our standards must be raised. A constant problem in everything we do is the level of our standards. The degree of competence, the rate of growth five years ago or even last year, of our knowledge and skill, is not sufficient for today ... certainly not for tomorrow.

Here, I am reminded of an incident that happened to me in the army. My boss was a shrewd old colonel, who, as he said, "came up from a private in the rear ranks." He and I had just completed a meeting with a group of Personnel Officers. Trying to look on the bright side, I said that I felt the officers had increased their knowledge and ability during the past year in the field of personnel management - that we had made some progress. He chewed on his cigar, looked at me and said, "Yes, we've made progress ... but it's too darn gradual" ... except that he didn't say "darn."

This is the critical question: Not, are we increasing our knowledge and skill, because in most cases we are, but are our standards high enough and are we increasing our competence fast enough for the world of today and tomorrow?

A third area for personal growth which is of concern to management is the approach to the job ... people must grow in their objectivity and their willingness to assume the normal risks inherent in the business.

The challenge of change is more than a slogan today. The world, business, and education have always undergone change, but, periodically, we encounter times when there is almost a complete upheaval of accepted methods and patterns ... when the rate of change steps up sharply. Certainly, we are in such a period now in nearly all fields of endeavor.

Periods of rapid change can be, and often are, times of stress and even crisis for certain individuals. Am I part of the force causing the change? Am I just swept along by it? Do I resist it? Can I adapt myself to it? An individual's contribution drops conspicuously when he devotes more effort to proving that innovations can't be introduced than he does to making them work.

I recently saw a list of progress-killing epitaphs; among them were:

"It's too radical a change."

"We're not ready for that."

"We did all right without it."

I'm sure we could all add to this list.

I do not mean to imply that all change is an improvement or that an individual should be so open-minded that all ideas "go in one ear and out the other" without any critical appraisal in between.

A month ago, while visiting another company, I noticed a sign on the wall. It said, "Tradition is the enemy of progress."

Like most slogans, it is an over-statement and an over-simplification, yet it contains a truth that presents us with a constant challenge. With the rapid rate of change going on today in nearly every field, the premium is very great for individuals who can analyze a situation with objectivity, who can reach sound conclusions that go beyond and perhaps even contradict their own experience, and who can contribute constructively to change and adapt themselves to it.

And it is equally important for the individual to have the courage to act on his conclusions and convictions ... being willing to assume the risk for individual decision and action, especially when the decision is sometimes an unpopular one.

A fourth area of concern of a corporation about the growth of its people is their willingness to assume personal citizenship responsibility. The day we were born we were beneficiaries of a priceless inheritance, which has grown in size every day of our lives.

This inheritance is physical, in terms of a rich, productive land.

It is material, in terms of buildings, facilities and equipment which are ours to use.

It is also an inheritance of knowledge and ideas.

It is most importantly a spiritual and moral inheritance, passed on to us through the ages, resulting in the acceptance now of such once-revolutionary ideas as personal freedom and the dignity of the individual.

Not long ago I heard a person say he would oppose the passage of a school budget which contained the cost of adding a much-needed wing to an elementary school. The reason for the opposition was that his "children were now out of school" and that he "had already done more than his share." There may have been sound reasons for opposing the budget but certainly not the ones he gave.

Fortunately, such attitudes are not typical ... because thoughtful, mature people know that, regardless of how much they give, they can never balance their account. We may give all we can, within the limits of our time, talents and financial resources. But whatever the gift, it will always fall short of our true share, because of the great inheritance we have all received.

An enlightened business, therefore, wants its people to "care" to "become involved" in civic affairs and in other worthwhile causes that contribute to the betterment of society. When we shirk our personal responsibilities in these areas, we are denying ourselves one of the truly important opportunities for personal growth.

A fifth concern of a corporation about its people is that they continue to grow in their concepts of personal ethics and integrity.

Perhaps you heard the story about the little boy who came home from school with good grades in all his academic courses and a poor grade in conduct. Trying to explain it to his puzzled father, he said, "But, Dad, you don't understand. Conduct is my most difficult subject."

How true! Since the time of Moses and the Ten Commandments, men have been developing codes to guide them in their personal and professional conduct. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, developed the principles of the Hippocratic Oath, which medical students still take today. Other professions have codes of ethics; others are in the process of developing them, and there is even talk among some Congressmen that there should be a code of ethics for Congress. But while codes of ethics can be helpful, ethics is really a personal matter.

Here again, when measured over a period of time, I sincerely believe that in nearly all fields the standards of personal ethics and integrity have been raised. Because of this, "good conduct" is not news; thus, stories about unethical practices, as communicated in our news media, can sometimes distort our perspective in this matter.

In the retail field, the common practices of 75 years ago ... of unmarked and varying prices, caveat emptor, and gross misrepresentation of merchandise ... have, for the most part, given way to the one-price system, satisfaction guaranteed and a much more honest representation of merchandise in advertising. Yet, as consumers, you know that the retailing industry has not reached the ultimate in ethics and integrity. Responsible retailers are properly concerned about the existence of some undesirable practices by even a small percentage of merchants.

Yes, progress has been made and is being made. Our concern is, as the colonel said: is it too darn gradual? Again, as with other areas, present-day standards of ethics and integrity will not be sufficient tomorrow. This explains a corporation's concern for people who can and will grow in their concepts of ethics and integrity.

These, then, are the five areas where a corporation has a major concern for the growth of its people:

1. Growth in understanding of the vital importance of the individual in the business.
2. Growth in knowledge and skill.
3. Growth in the approach to the job - objectivity and ability to evaluate, reach sound decisions and take action.
4. Growth in the assumption of personal responsibility.
5. Growth in concepts of ethics and integrity.

Before closing, I would like to discuss this word "integrity" in a different and larger sense. I refer to the integrity involved in doing the job to the very best of one's ability. Again, let me use the corporation as an example.

The corporation has many responsibilities. Its first obligation is to be successful and continue to grow. Unless this occurs, it cannot fulfill any of its other obligations. If successful, there are profits (or fruits of the business) to be divided among its partners. Included in this partnership are: the stockholders ... who actually own the business... the people who manage the business and perform the actual work, the customers, the suppliers, and the communities in which the corporation does business.

Responsible management is always aware of the various partners in the enterprise and the need to allocate as fairly as possible the fruits of the business among the partners, based on their contributions.

Stockholders are entitled to dividends from their investment. Yet, except in unusual circumstances, a certain portion of the earnings must be retained in the business ... for a measure of insurance against the unknown future, and for the growth and development of the business; this, in effect, is a protection of the long-term interests of all the partners, including the stockholders, themselves.

The people of the corporation are entitled to their share of the fruits of the business through adequate plans for pay and benefit programs. But, as with stockholders, if the employees are given more than they deserve, the shares of the other partners will have to be reduced.

The customers are important partners too. They are entitled to the best values in terms of quality, style, price, and service that can be given and still return the needed profit to the company. As fruits of the business can be increased, customers, as partners, should expect to share through lower prices and better quality and service.

In our case, the 8 thousand suppliers are also indispensable partners. If we pay them too much for the merchandise, we cannot compete, and their and our business will suffer. If we pay them too little, their profits are squeezed to an unhealthy point. This may ultimately threaten their survival, or damage their ability to serve us with the proper-quality merchandise on time.

We are citizens of over 1600 communities and they, too, are partners in our business. We have a responsibility, along with the other citizens, to promote the welfare of the many communities in which we operate. Obviously, there is a built-in self-interest in our doing so, for our ability to succeed in a city is dependent ... to a large degree ... on the general welfare of the community, itself.

Stockholders, the employees, customers, suppliers and communities..all are essential partners in a corporation.

Management compromises its integrity when it does less than its best to fulfill its obligation to succeed, when it fails to recognize the contributions of its several partners, and when it fails to allocate fairly the fruits of the business. None of the partners is entitled to more than his fair share of the fruits of the collective efforts. None can possibly be favored except at the expense of the others.

Throughout my remarks, the relationship between a corporation and its people has been used as an example, hoping that it may, to some degree, typify the relationship that exists in other areas of endeavor.

The scope and complexity of our national and world problems and the magnitude of the opportunities for the improvement of our society are enough to overwhelm us as mere individuals. As never before in the history of mankind, we must "think big." But a wise, successful man once said he had never been able to solve a big problem ... he had to break it up into several small problems and solve them. So, while we're "thinking big" we must also "think small" ... as small as one person and how we, as individuals, can overcome our problems and fulfill our destiny.

The answer lies in personal growth.

In closing, I would like to relate a recipe given to me by a close friend and a man who was an expert in stimulating growth among his people. He said he advised each individual to do three things ... and I commend them to you, as an excellent guide for your continued personal growth:

"First - Do well what is required in your present job.

"Second - Do more than is required in your present job, and

"Third - Reach beyond your present job and learn about things that are none of your business at the time."

Thank you.