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STUDENTS FACING TOMORROW

Commencement speakers are jovially referred to as dispensers of good advice. Probably seniors, about to take off on life's adventure, need all the sound advice they can get, or will accept. But any man who seriously tackles the needs of graduating students today is far more eager to arouse straight thinking and personal convictions than he is to pass out easy advice. From that standpoint I invite you to think with me as realistically as we can, about several matters which deeply concern every student who confronts his own tomorrow.

Probably we are agreed that students face a world both of unprecedented opportunity and ~~also~~ of fathomless peril. It is a great day for the brave, the self-disciplined and men of good will. It is a perilous day for cowards, parasites, and exploiters. No one with honest convictions expects the sons and daughters of freedom-loving ancestors to drift easily into a ready-made world of peace and order or to build a one-world civilization on ignorance, selfish impulse, and inhumanity towards their fellows. Students in these chaotic days require penetrating insights to make up their minds whether present confusion and future dangers do not arise largely from substituting cleverness for character, skills for statesmanship, knowledge for wisdom, earning for learning, force for freedom and even gadgets for God. And students facing tomorrow need these insights because they are charged with responsibility of using their individual freedom constructively to help build a new era of mankind and to avoid further retreat of quarreling humanity towards the jungle.

In facing tomorrow's world, I am proposing that a student's first obligation is to face himself. "Know thyself" is basic, no matter how much we know about the physical world outside, or the facts of human history. Shakespeare's familiar lines ring true today, "This above all to thine own self be true and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man".

It is significant that at a time when men are sharply divided into races, nations, industrial blocs, rural and urban groups, political parties, religious sects, and all the rest, that leaders of thought are emphasizing anew the basic importance of the individual.

The failure of National Socialism reassures us that the effort to make an individual person a mere cell or tool, simply will not work. When the individual is ignored, stunted, thwarted and used as a piece of machinery, the decay of the social group, made up of these individuals, is just around the corner. The basic unity in our human world is a free, growing person. A man cannot be divided and retain unified thinking, friendships, memory, creative living. Each person unites his world in an individual mind and thinks his universe into a single consciousness. Unless he is free to grow, pursue truth, practice justice, cultivate moral values and spiritual insights, these basic realities will not exist at all. The group mind does not create them. Any community of human persons can be strong and wise and good only as the individuals are such. A student facing tomorrow's world must first face himself if he is really to share that world and play a constructive part in building it. Sound education aims primarily to produce a complete, coordinated person. Dr. M. T. McClure recently wrote: "At the present moment there is a tendency to put onto society all the responsibility for the individual behavior, thus exempting the individual from personal obligation." And he added, "I think this is the most alarming characteristic of contemporaneous life." Over whole areas of life individuals have been shirking responsibility, citizenship, moral obligations, social sharing and even personal religion.

A striking expression today is, "Why should I stick my neck out?" That typifies thoroughly undemocratic persons who want to enjoy the privileges of freedom but seek to dodge the responsibilities of being free. Democracy cannot thrive where its individual citizens hide behind some party, industrial organiza-

tion, race or financial hierarchy. We glory in a Washington or a Lincoln or the thousands of more obscure toilers, soldiers, and leaders who do "stick their necks out" and expend themselves for a mighty cause and the welfare of their fellow men. And such leaders act on their own individual convictions and drive.

Recently Dorothy Thompson took occasion to comment upon what she called "a degenerate individualism". She too, seemed to sense the danger of resigning moral responsibility, religious faith, social sharing, and loyal citizenship, to the drift of public opinion or crowd psychology or easy conformity to popular customs. The history of human progress seems to confirm the clearly defined judgment of democracy and ethical religion that the individual person must ever be considered as of supreme importance in our human world. Edwin Markham has put it into verse in his lines,

"We are all blind until we see  
That in the human plan  
Nothing is worth the making if  
It does not make the man.

Why build these cities glorious  
If man unbuilt goes?  
In vain we build the work, unless  
The builder also grows."

Each student as a thinking, choosing, sharing, worshipping, individual confronts tomorrow's world primarily alone, with his own outlook, beliefs, ambitions and rational judgments. What he is and does determines largely what that world is to mean to him and what he is to mean to that world. Philosophy knows how "the world without responds to the world within". But one man sees opportunity where another sees only obstacles. Each one's viewpoint is tremendously important in facing tomorrow. Our age bids for individual men and women, each one of whom has built himself into somebody in order that he may do something and share effectively with others. No man can face tomorrow well who has not honestly faced himself.

And, for motives to dare great tasks, or aims to strive for worthy goals,

or zeal to surmount opposing obstacles, must not each one come to terms with the universe on his own individual initiative? Must he not rely upon his own personal conviction that there is a cosmic order into which he can gear his life and succeed? Does he not require a rational faith that "right is right since God is God, and right the day must win"? Does he not need to think through the claim that "truth though crushed to earth will rise again", and that there are laws inherent in the very structure of life which a man does not make but discovers and must obey if he is to succeed and avoid calamity?

These qualities of the individual man cannot be handed over to him by others, nor held simply as intellectual theories and dreams. Each student needs first to face himself and demand that these qualities shall be elemental in his own personal being as he faces his world of tomorrow.

## II.

A second matter of major importance for every student facing tomorrow arises from the fact that however well educated, well balanced and complete he may be, he must live and act in a confused and sick world. Someone has compared this confusion of our outgrown civilization to a flock of sea birds driven off their familiar nesting place, flying about in the upper air with screaming and turmoil till some one of their number leads the way to a new promontory where they can settle down again. Students who keep level heads and sound ambitions in this generation will serve their day well.

A few months ago everyone was speaking and writing about the "post-war world". One of the freedoms to be achieved was "freedom from fear". Here we are, nearly a year after victory, and men are fearing themselves and the powers in their control and the perils in the path to peace almost more than they feared war and specific enemies. Can students who are free and privileged with a sound education dominate that fear and boldly build a secure future?

Students must know that with all our progress they still confront a civilization that is shallow and materialistic. In an exaggerated way "things are in the saddle and ride men". Our scientific skills and controls of physical power with the accumulation of factual knowledge has outrun our moral controls, spiritual energies and social dreams. We want a more human world; we want peace; we want freedom; we want to use newly discovered power and the world's wealth constructively and not destructively. But when we survey the real progress of our day, it has to do overwhelmingly with externals of civilization. We have scientific insights, tools, controls, power, speed. But we do not surpass the ancient Greeks in art and philosophy. We fall behind the Hebrew prophets in ethical religion and social justice. We have lost much from the theistic view of the universe which the early fathers possessed. Even in democracy we have not maintained the glow for "liberty, equality and fraternity" which the Revolutionary fathers knew. Over wide areas of our current thinking, action and living secondary matters have usurped the place of that which should be first in the cultivation of earning, art, good will, and abundant living.

Real students know that these moral and spiritual forces must be restored to the very heart of any one-world order which is to discard war and bring "the parliament of man, the federation of the world". How to restore these elemental forces to the lives and relationships and even to the current language of mankind is one of the heaviest burdens ever laid upon the shoulders of youth. How wise must be the planning and how dynamic must be the work done by the students of this generation.

If the global civilization of tomorrow is to be more than areas of competitive struggle for material wealth; or exploiting the weak for personal or group privilege; or something far more than eating, drinking, and being merry while life lasts, then it is not strange if the very turmoil of today seems like some vast cosmic urge pushing mankind towards a showdown on the supremacy of

moral and spiritual over physical and financial forces. The pressures of today which drive men towards a better world give meaning to John Bennet's statement that "the grain of the universe is with goodness", and to Whitehead's assertion that "the instability of evil is the moral order of the universe". "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune" and in many ways the student's world of tomorrow is at flood tide.

The student facing tomorrow needs more than poetic sentiment to believe that "It's coming yet for a' that, -- that man to man the world o'er shall brothers be for a' that". He needs to see that this is tied into "some great far off divine event, towards which the whole creation moves". Educational insights will have to be implemented and built into a program of action if that dream is to be increasingly realized in and beyond the present crisis.

Every student facing tomorrow needs clear insights and resolute incentives and unconquerable courage as he heads into his world of tomorrow to play a man's part. This spirit is well expressed in Van Dyke's "Last Voyage of Henry Hudson",

"To have a certain aim  
Before us always, which our will must seek  
Amid the peril of uncertain ways,

So point her up, King John, nor'west by north,  
We'll keep the honor of a certain aim  
Amid the peril of uncertain ways  
And sail ahead, and leave the rest to God."

The student facing tomorrow will acknowledge as another obligation his debt to all who shared and died to give him and all mankind a new and larger chance for the high uses of freedom. He will understand that the enlarged liberty for many oppressed peoples must mean disturbance and adolescent fumbling until many will wonder if government by dictators is not better than democracy. He will have to acknowledge that the present industrial revolution will probably make as great an impact on the next century of human affairs as did the political revolution upon the last century and a half. His world will be shaken to the center.

Only slowly do we learn that liberty comes by obedience to laws which were here when we arrived and will be here when we are gone. We exercise freedom in a framework of necessity. To succeed we must discover facts and obey laws which we do not create. To use electricity, radio and aviation, man exercises freedom by strictly gearing into a cosmic system of law and order. Liberty comes by obedience to law. Likewise, we must recognize that there are moral, social, international laws which must be discovered and obeyed if men and mankind are to succeed. The responsibilities of freedom will have to be accepted by free men everywhere. Responsible freedom permits and requires men to think their way through false propaganda, defend truth and practice justice in building the commonweal as well as the commonwealth. Freedom cannot be lawless or blind in students facing tomorrow's world. Our generation needs very much to clarify and create conviction concerning the uses and misuses of freedom for the one-world order which we seek to build.

Using freedom to think and live and share, as you face forward, may the future summon you with a trumpet call to serve as educated, free citizens in helping to build peace, prosperity, and good will among men.

Clutched in the dead hand of an Australian soldier was found this poem:

"You who have faith to look with fearless eyes  
Upon the tragedy of a world at strife,  
And know that out of death and night  
Shall come the dawn of ampler life;  
Rejoice, whatever anguish fills the heart  
That God has given you the priceless dower  
To live in these great times and play your part  
In Freedom's crowning hour!  
That you may tell your sons  
Who see the light high in the heavens,  
Their heritage to take;  
I saw the powers of darkness put to flight  
I saw the morning break!"

May you know the realization of this vision and your own fair dreams before the years of your generation have passed.