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Secretary Elizabeth Dole
Remarks Prepared for Delivery
Ohio State University Commencement
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Thank you very much, President Jennings. And thank you, members of the senior class--soon to be graduates--for inviting me to share this day with you and your families, and for honoring me with a degree from Ohio State.

My husband wanted me to ask if the Honorary Degree entitles me to dot the "I" in script "Ohio" at a halftime this fall. If so, I start taking Sousaphone lessons when I return to Washington.

And President Bush asked me to pass along his best wishes to the Ohio State Marching Band, which performed in the Inaugural Parade in January. In keeping with his promise of a "kinder and gentler nation" he says you're the "best darn band in the land."

I feel a great kinship at this hour with those about to graduate. For I, too, have sat in cap and gown, hoping my commencement speaker would remember what Franklin Roosevelt once said about public speakers: "Be brief, be sincere, be seated." I do know that you all want to have plenty of time for one last trip down High Street.

And I'm sure that many of you can relate today to the story about Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who once found himself on a train, but couldn't locate his ticket.

While the conductor watched, smiling, the 88-year-old Justice Holmes searched through all of his pockets without success. Finally, the conductor, who recognized the distinguished jurist, said, "Mr. Holmes, don't worry. You don't need your ticket. You will probably find it when you get off the train--and I'm sure the Pennsylvania Railroad will trust you to mail it back later."

The Justice looked up at the conductor with some irritation, and said, "My dear man, that is not the problem at all. The problem is not where is my ticket. The problem is, where am I going?"

Where, indeed. That's a good question for all of us to ask ourselves from time to time. And it's a good question for the

soon-to-be graduates of this great institution.

Today, a major phase of life's journey begins for you. It was a little over 200 years ago that the foundation for your journey was laid in Philadelphia. Fifty-five men gathered in what was then known as the Pennsylvania State House to consider alternatives to the existing articles of confederation. And this year we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the fruits of their labor: the ratification of the Constitution.

And it was exactly two-hundred years ago, in 1789, when George Washington was sworn in as the first President of the United States.

You might recall the television pictures recently when Washington's trip to New York City to take the oath of office was re-enacted. The actor playing Washington stepped into his carriage in front of a large crowd and many cameras...and 15 seconds later, the carriage hit a post and broke down. He travelled the rest of the way in a Ford mini-van. When I saw that, I felt very thankful that I was no longer Secretary of Transportation!

All of us can learn important lessons from Washington's life. "Instead of adoring Washington, mankind should applaud the nation which educated him," John Adams said. And he continued "I glory in the character of a Washington, because I know him to be only an exemplification of the American character."

And when we remember Washington and the other men of Philadelphia, it isn't their daily debates that we recall, nor even the individual signers, most of whom are lost in the pages of time. Rather, it's the idea behind the document...the idea that America was different because here, we, the people, would rule ourselves.

This awesome document was tailored to fit the changing needs of a dynamic and fluid society. It was a coat woven to fit an infant republic of three million souls, which now clothes some 240 million Americans in opportunity and freedom. The framers wrote for the ages. They embraced timeless beliefs in self-government and shared responsibility. For they believed in the ability of seemingly ordinary people--people like you and me--to accomplish extraordinary things. To make our own decisions. To realize our own destinies.

The drafters of the Constitution drew up a challenge as well as a charter. They fashioned a popular government, knowing that the only way it could survive was to enlist the energies and devotion of the people themselves.

They crafted a government strong enough to protect our liberties--but limited enough to keep from crushing them in its

embrace. Thomas Jefferson said it well: "That government is best, which governs least, because its people discipline themselves."

Recently, I happened to come across a speech on citizenship and democracy which I gave in 1978 when I was a member of the Federal Trade Commission. In that speech, I indicated my concern that many citizens seemed to have lost the sense of pride and commitment to the ideal of America that once prevailed among our people. I spoke of a decline in national confidence, and the rise of public apathy in its place. Sadly, many Americans no longer felt that as individuals they could make a difference.

And if they stopped believing in themselves, I wondered, then how could they believe in the American dream of individual effort and national service? As our citizens turned inward, we were in danger of turning out the lights in America. Little wonder that Thomas Wolfe dubbed the 1970's "The Me Decade."

Happily, I stand before you 11 years later to report what you already know--all that has changed. The "Me Decade" has been replaced by the "We Decade," as citizens all across America have regained confidence in themselves and in the mission of their country to serve as a beacon of hope to an oppressed planet.

Today, we are witnessing nothing less than an American renaissance...a grassroots revival of those fundamental principles that give character to our land and reality to our dreams. We are renewing the ancient ideals of hard work, pride of family, love of freedom, and yes, trust in God. We have rediscovered our roots...we are reaching for the stars...and we are making a difference.

When President Bush asked me to be his Secretary of Labor, I told him I needed some time to think about it. I wasn't being cagey. The truth was I wanted to be certain I'd feel a real sense of mission. I asked myself if I could make a real difference--a positive difference in people's lives.

Well, it didn't take me long to figure out that the Labor Department was the place I wanted to be. That the Labor Department is your department--the people's department. The programs, policies, and regulatory responsibilities of this Department have the potential for giving millions of Americans hope, and a future.

My agenda is to ensure that America has the finest, best skilled workforce in the world; that work and family are compatible and not conflicting goals; that we develop a comprehensive pension policy for this country; that we have safer workplaces, whether in the mines, factories, or offices of America; that labor and management continue the trend of the past decade--Eastern Airlines notwithstanding--and work together to ensure that America becomes even more competitive in a global

market.

As I developed this agenda, one area kept rising up to haunt me. While unemployment in America has remained close to its lowest point in 15 years--5.2%--youth unemployment is 14.4% and minority youth unemployment, a staggering 30.8%. Yet, between now and the year 2000, our work force will grow more slowly than at any time since World War II.

In those numbers I found my mission to help fulfill a long-awaited dream: That every man and woman who wants a job, can have a job--if they have the skills.

The jobs created over the next 10 years will be more complex. They will demand better reading, writing, and reasoning skills. Over half the jobs will require education beyond high school. As graduates of Ohio State, you are entering a college graduate marketplace which has been described as "the best since the beginning of the decade."

Most Americans, however, do not enter the work world with a diploma from The Ohio State University in their hands. Far too many don't even have a high school diploma in their hands. And far too many who have a high school diploma can't even read it.

That's why I've made at-risk youth my top priority. I'm determined to lower the far-too-high youth unemployment and minority youth unemployment figures.

President Bush and the Department of Labor realize that these young people need more than just job training. They need basic skills training, literacy, remedial education, and counseling. How else will we break the cycle of unemployment and arm youth not just with a job, but the independence and skills for a lifetime of productive work?

I will pay special attention to economically disadvantaged youth who face additional barriers to employment, such as basic skills deficiencies, homelessness, drop-out-prone due to a poor school record, or teenage parenting.

I am especially honored to be at Ohio State, because I believe that your "Young Scholars Program" sets an example for other universities across the nation.

In the spring of 1988, 200 economically disadvantaged sixth graders in eight Ohio cities were selected to participate in the first year of the Young Scholars Program. Beginning this spring, 400 new scholars will be selected each year from cities throughout Ohio.

For six years, these Young Scholars will attend a two or three week summer institute on this beautiful campus. The institute will include classes in mathematics, computer skills,

language, natural and social sciences, and fine arts. There will also be workshops on study skills, career exploration, and personal development. Young Scholars will be matched with college-educated mentors who will help supervise year-round programming in home communities. Program staff will also go into the homes to work with parents of Scholars to help them learn how to support their children in educational pursuits.

When they successfully complete the program, Young Scholars are guaranteed admission to Ohio State with an appropriate financial aid package. There is, however, no obligation to attend Ohio State. You, at this great university, realize that the program will have done its job when Young Scholars graduate from any college or university.

The Young Scholars Program is truly an exemplification of our national renaissance, and a celebration of our national character. And it provides the basis for my words of advice to the graduating class.

I truly wish I could convey how strongly I feel what I'm about to say--As you go through life, search until you find the areas where you feel a real sense of mission and commitment. Ask yourself "What can I do for others?" "What do I stand for in this life?" "Will I make a difference?" "What are my God-given gifts which can be used in the service of others?"

I truly believe when we're 80 or 90 years old and looking back on our lives, it's not how much money we made or the titles or awards that we won that are important. Rather, it's what we did for others. It's how we served our neighbors and our country.

Yes, each of us, in our own way, is called to service. Benjamin Franklin, who could have written America's first manual on public service, once said, "The most important task we are undertaking as a nation is to solve the magnificent challenge of being a free people." Two centuries later, his words have not lost their resonance. They still shine forth from the red brick state house of colonial Philadelphia to guide our steps along the narrow path of duty.

As a people who have lived with freedom under the guidance of the Constitution for two centuries, we can't forget about how precious and rare that freedom is. All of us have an obligation to participate actively in the system of self-government the Constitution establishes. It is an obligation we owe not only to ourselves, but to the framers of our government--men and women who risked everything for freedom, brave men and women who have bonded their nation with their blood, their toil and their sacrifice.

And, members of the Class of '89, you are now being given the opportunity to help shape the character of your country and

your times. The inheritance into which you are entering includes a land in the throes of national renewal--an America born again, yet, as never before, in need of leaders whose character is matched by their commitment. Woodrow Wilson once said, "We should not only use all the brains we have, but all that we can borrow."

Today, America applies for a very special loan--borrowing not only the brains assembled here, but the character, the sensitivity, and the courage that guides them. To be sure, as a nation, we require all the breakthroughs of which modern thought is capable. We need inventive thinkers to guide our economy, protect our environment, secure our rights and establish our place in the world. But most of all, we need individuals--committed men and women, for whom conscience is the North Star by which they guide their steps, and those of the nation they love.

I invite each of you to make your own contribution, in your own special way, to the land and its people. I hope you will consider public service at some point in your lives, whether it be at the local, state, or federal level. For while you may not get rich, you will enrich the lives of millions of your countrymen.

Your rewards may not be material, but rather the satisfaction of service--of making a difference--a positive difference in people's lives. And that, after all, is what really counts in this life.

I am mindful of the number of international graduates in our midst today, and would give the same advice to those of you returning to your native countries. Here on this campus, you have truly experienced some of the best ideas and qualities that America has to offer. I hope that you will utilize your experience and what you've learned in the interest of your people, and a peaceful, productive family of nations around the globe.

As I look at this beautiful stadium, I cannot help but think of one very special member of the Ohio State family for whom the running track is named.

Of course, I'm speaking of Jesse Owens. Raised in poverty during the American depression, Jesse Owens first gained national recognition here at Ohio State in the early 1930's. From here he went to Berlin and the 1936 Olympics. There he won four gold medals, defeating all competitors, and, more importantly, defeating the misguided beliefs of a Nazi tyrant.

Jesse Owens was more than a great athlete--he was a great American. Throughout his life, he served as a goodwill ambassador for America. He devoted his life to teaching disadvantaged youth that the guidelines of sports are also the guidelines of life: Respect the rights of others and play the

game according to the rules.

It was Jesse Owens' spiritual and moral achievements, and not his athletic achievements, that led former President Ford to award him the Medal of Freedom--the highest civilian award America can offer.

I'd like to leave you today with a thought that Jesse Owens put before us all. When asked what went through his mind as he stood on the Olympic platform, receiving his first gold medal and listening to the strains of the Star Spangled Banner played, Owens replied:

"It was the fulfillment of a dream, and I couldn't forget the country that brought me there."

Jesse Owens, in his greatest moment of victory, remembered what Adams said of Washington. That instead of honoring him or his achievements, we should applaud the nation that educated him, and the American character he exemplified.

As you leave the stadium today, the Ohio State Victory Bell, which has marked so many Buckeye victories, will ring again. Today, however, it will ring not for a victory of muscle, but for victories of mind...of spirit...of hope.

And as you put your mind and spirit and hope to work in whatever roads you may take, I ask that you, like Jesse Owens, remember that every American has a stake in government that lives up to its noblest promises. Each one of us is obliged to pass on to our children the freedoms that the men in Philadelphia entrusted to us. They created something unique in the annals of history

Let us not only preserve their past, but let us also make certain that the present is worthy of preservation, so that in another 200 years, our descendants will remember the country that brought them there, and will say as proudly as we do today, I am an American.

Thank you, Congratulations, and God Bless you all.