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Groundbreaking Ceremony Address

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REMARKS OF RICHARD B. OGILVIE
GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS
GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY GROUNDBREAKING
PARK FOREST SOUTH, ILLINOIS, JUNE 12, 1971

Dr. Engbretson, Chairman Stipes, distinguished public officials and guests, friends of the university:

I am delighted for this opportunity to join you in the making of history.

As governor, I am called upon to participate in a wide variety of functions, but an exercise in breaking ground for a new state university holds very special significance for me.

For the breaking of ground represents that vital first step in another journey of a thousand miles, that irrevocable commitment to the future. There will be other special days in the life of this institution, but none of them will generate quite the same excitement or sense of anticipation which is attendant to this proud beginning.

What we are doing today is setting out to build a monument to our continuous striving for excellence. We are launching on a perilous journey an academic enterprise which will one day enrich this growing area and all of Illinois.

This act of beginning is a testament to our commitment to the spirit of renewal which animates our democratic experience.

We are reaffirming our faith in the future in which this university will take shape. We are reiterating the premise that the spirit of the university which will build and sustain these facilities cannot be torn down or burned into submission.

In this age of the interrogatory, when an idealistic younger generation is questioning our direction as a society, let this day and this institution be our answer:

We are committed to seeking the old and new truths about man and his world, committed to broadening the horizons of human knowledge and understanding.

The action objectives which you have established at Governors State offer ample evidence of the dimensions of your task.

You seek to make the student a more useful and productive member of our free economic system...to prepare him for the responsibilities of full participation in our democratic process...to widen his personal horizons and relationships...and to enrich his appreciation of our cultural traditions.

What you are talking about--and quite properly so--is the whole man, the civilized man, the man characterized by Cardinal Newman's virtues of "freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation and wisdom."

At Governors State, you will seek to develop an understanding, an awareness and that analytical turn of mind so essential to the achievement of excellence in an increasingly complex age.

We seek to educate not only accountants and teachers and other specialists, but always citizens--knowledgeable and concerned men and women prepared to participate actively in the affairs of their communities and come to grips with the broad and interrelated problems confronting society.

Without detracting from the vital role of the specialist in this technological world, I believe we can take heart from your renewed attention to the "generalist."

I cannot resist quoting Cardinal Newman once again, for his thoughtful prose still ranks as the standard of measurement for any dissertation on the objectives of true education.

"Our desideratum," he wrote in his famed treatise on the university, "is the force, the steadiness, the comprehensiveness and the versatility of intellect, the command over our own powers, the instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us."

The properly formed intellect, he added, is able to have a "connected view or grasp of things."

There is, I submit, no nobler purpose or more critical responsibility for this university than the development of that kind of intellect. And if I read your bulletin of programs and interdisciplinary studies correctly, that is the course which you already have charted for yourself.

There is another aspect to this occasion which is worthy of note, for we are marking a very basic change in the structure of our system of higher education.

In recent years, two types of institutions have dominated Illinois and American public higher education: the state university and a widespread network of junior colleges.

Now we have a third factor--the senior university.

The Board of Higher Education has called the senior university the "third force" in higher education. A report of the board explained in these words: "This emerging institution has been recognized in Illinois as the liberal arts university, providing programs in the liberal arts and closely related fields but not emphasizing basic research and the discovery of new knowledge, functions properly reserved to the comprehensive state universities."

It was one year ago this week that I broke ground for the first of these two bold Illinois experiments in higher education. At that time, I noted that we were utilizing an "untested instrument of the learning process" to extend educational opportunities to our young people.

That is no longer quite accurate, for the instrument--though still with many rough edges and unsolved problems--has been tested at Sangamon State. And we know it works.

But here at the southern vanguard of a growing metropolitan area--within the radius of one of the world's greatest concentrations of educational facilities, removed from the close proximity to the workings of state government--you will face different challenges than those being confronted by your colleagues in Springfield.

You are still very much pioneers in Illinois public education. Thousands of educators--and millions of taxpayers, especially those in the Chicago area--will watch your performance. And they will pass judgment on what you do.

They will demand that you justify the confidence and high hopes which have greeted this new concept in higher education.

In undertaking that challenge, you must provide a balanced emphasis on the liberal arts and sciences for those students desiring to attain a bachelor's degree or entrance to graduate school. But at the same time, you must set your sights on facilitating the student's entry into a gainful occupation in business, industry, teaching, public service and applied science.

The balance of these two curricular patterns will directly reflect the needs of community college graduates. I am encouraged by the machinery which you are creating here to assure a continuing dialogue between the university and a dozen or more junior colleges whose work it is your role to complement.

In this context, I will watch closely the development of your cooperative education program. Its aim will be to help a student relate classroom theories to the practices of the economic world which lies beyond his graduation from Governors State.

Above all, you must commit the total being of this university to serving the community which forms the framework for your existence.

Seldom has an institution had a greater opportunity to work from the ground floor in helping develop its community environment. A new town, a rapidly growing suburban area, industrial expansions, changing attitudes about education--for better or worse, you at Governors State will play a major role in shaping all of them.

And you can shape them for the better only from the inside, from a vantage point of total immersion in the community, its people and its problems.

As you move forward to fulfill your unique charge from the Board of Higher Education to seek out qualified minority students, you will be meeting one of the critical needs confronting the modern city.

And there are other needs as well which will cry out for your attention--the needs for better housing, for improved metropolitan planning, for new techniques in dealing with pollution, for expanded energies in the development of our manpower resources.

The institution, of course, must commit its facilities and its brainpower to working with community leaders in finding solutions to the problems. But your most important contribution to their resolution will come through the production of graduates equipped to understand and deal with them, educated men and women with Newman's "connected view or grasp of things."

The administrative and curricular innovations already under way here offer encouraging evidence of your commitment to an academic program which will exploit and channel the individual talents and energies of your students.

And the growing complexity of the urban dilemma will impose stringent demands on those talents, and on the students' sense of perspective, or "grasp of things."

The urban crisis will involve them in a now-familiar litany of problems: We have too many people, in too many slums, on whom we have spent too much money, to operate too many ineffective programs, which have created too much despair.

The problems are frighteningly real, and the answers elusive. But if we are to confound the prophets of gloom and realize the dreams which are the spiritual foundations for the campus which will rise here, this college must commit itself without reservation to building a better community, a more vibrant urban area.

The challenge is immense. You are being asked to build from the ground up a new university. You are being asked to restore teaching to its rightful role in the university and make the student-teacher relationship the most important quality of the learning process.

You are being asked to be innovative and think in bold terms consistent with the needs of our fast-changing society. You are being asked to make learning vital to the world in which people live and work.

In ordinary times, these challenges would tax any man. But these are not ordinary times. We need extraordinary leadership, and we need it here at Governors State.

You have the rarest of opportunities: to build anew at an hour when familiar practices and long-cherished notions are under major assault.

The task is formidable, but so are the possible rewards for those who succeed in this pioneering venture.

I wish you Godspeed.

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