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LYNDON B. JOHNSON

XXXVI President of the United States: 1963-1969

216 - Remarks at the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs, Princeton University.

May 11, 1966

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Governor Hughes, President Goheen, trustees, faculty and students, Secretary Gardner, distinguished guests of Princeton:

I am happy that I could come here today to help celebrate Princeton's continued growth. It is good that one of the Nation's oldest universities is still young enough to grow.

This commitment to the increase of higher learning has deep roots in this country. Our forefathers had founded more than 50 colleges before the Republic was half a century old.

With a sure sense that the pursuit of knowledge must be part and parcel of the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, they set in motion two forces which have helped to shape this land.

The first was that learning must erect no barriers of class or creed. The university was to nourish an elite to which all could aspire. Soon after our first colleges came the first scholarships for worthy students who could not pay their own way.

The second idea was that the university would not stand as a lonely citadel isolated from the rest of the community. Its mission would be to search for truth and to serve mankind. As Woodrow Wilson later said: "It is the object of learning not only to satisfy the curiosity and perfect the spirits of individual men, but also to advance civilization."

THE VITAL FLOW

We who work in Washington very much know the need for the vital flow of men and ideas between the halls of learning and the places of power. Each time my Cabinet meets, I can call the roll of former professors-Humphrey and Rusk, McNamara and Wirtz, Katzenbach (another distinguished Princetonian), Gardner, and Weaver. The 371 major appointments I have made as President in the 1/2 years that I have occupied that Office, collectively hold 758 advanced degrees. Two of my own White House counselors I borrowed from Princeton, and they are here with me today--Dr. Donald Hornig and Dr. Eric Goldman. And so many are the consultants called from behind the ivy that a university friend of mine recently said to me: "At any given moment a third of the faculties of the United States are on a plane going somewhere to advise--even if not always to consent."

While learning has long been the ally of democracy, the intellectual has not always been the partner of government. As recently as the early years of this century the scholar stood outside the pale of policy, with government usually indifferent to him. That, I am glad to say, has changed.

The intellectual today is very much an inside man. Since the 1930's our Government has put into effect major policies which men of learning have helped to fashion.

More recently, the 89th Congress passed bill after bill, measure after measure, suggested by scholars from all over the country whom I had placed on task forces that were appointed in 1964.

In almost every field of governmental concern, from economics to national security, the academic community has become a central instrument of public policy in these United States.

THE AFFLUENCE OF POWER

This affluence of power for an intellectual community that once walked on the barren fringes of authority has not been won without some pain. An uneasy conscience is the price any concerned man pays, whether politician or professor, for a share of power in this nuclear age.

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More than one scholar, thus, has learned how deeply frustrating it is to try to bring purist approaches to a highly impure problem.

They have come to recognize how imperfect are the realities which must be wrestled with in this most complicated world.

They have learned that criticism is one thing and that diplomacy is another.

They have learned to fear dogmatism in the classroom as well as in the Capital--and to reject the notion that expertise acquired in a lifetime of study in one discipline brings expertise in all other subjects as well.

They have learned, too, that strident emotionalism in the pursuit of truth, no matter how disguised in the language of wisdom, is harmful to public policy--just as harmful as self-righteousness in the application of power. For as Macaulay said: "The proof of virtue"--and, we might add, of wisdom--"is to possess boundless power without abusing it."

The responsible intellectual who moves between his campus and Washington knows, above all, that his task is, in the language of the current generation, to "cool it"--to bring what my generation called "not heat but light" to public affairs.

The man for whom this school is named always believed that to be the scope of real scholarship. He never doubted the interdependence of the intellectual community and the community of public service. "The school," he said, "must be of the Nation."

A WORTHY CALLING

So today we dedicate this building not only to the man, but to his faith that knowledge must be the underpinning of power--and that the public life is a calling that is worthy of the scholar as well as the politician.

There was once a time when knowledge seemed less essential to the process of government. Andrew Jackson held the opinion that the duties of all public offices were "so plain and simple" that any man of average intelligence could perform them.

We are no longer so optimistic about our public service. The public servant today moves along the paths of adventure where he is helpless without the tools of advanced learning.

He seeks to chart the exploration of space, combining a thousand disciplines in an effort whose slightest miscalculation could have fatal consequences.

He has embarked on this planet on missions that are no less filled with risk and no less dependent on knowledge.

He seeks to rebuild our cities and to reclaim the beauty of our countryside. He seeks to promote justice beyond our courtrooms, making education and health and opportunity the common birthright for every citizen. And he seeks to build peace based on man's hopes rather than man's fears.

These goals will be the work of many men and of many years. We are still wrestling to provide a world safe for democracy just as Wilson did more than 50 years ago. We are still fighting to gain the freedoms that Roosevelt talked about more than 30 years ago. All of these will call for enormous new drafts of trained manpower that will be available for public service.

Over the next 4 years, the Federal Government will need 30,000 more scientists and engineers and 6,000 more specialists in health, technology, and education.

By 1970, our State governments, Governor Hughes, must grow by more than 600,000 to keep pace with the times. Employment for State and local government will exceed 10 million persons. Each year over the next decade, our Nation will need 200,000 new public school teachers to keep up just with our growing population.

THE CITIZEN-SOLDIERS

The call for public service, therefore, cannot be met by professionals alone. We must revive the ancient ideal of citizen-soldiers who answer their nation's call in time of peril. We need them on battlefronts where no guns are heard but where freedom is no less tested.

Here at the Woodrow Wilson School, you have done much to raise the sights of public service. I urge you to continue to promote its excellence at all levels. We intend to do the same in Washington, sparing no effort to assist those who select this as their life work.

I have asked Chairman John Macy of the Civil Service Commission to head a task force that will survey Federal programs for career advancement. I have asked him to study an expanded program of graduate training which, with the help of the universities, can enlarge our efforts to develop the talents and broaden the horizons of our public service career officers.

I also intend next year to recommend to our Congress a program of expanding opportunities for those exceptionally talented who wish to go into training for the public service. We will assist:

- students that are planning careers in Federal, State, or local governments,
- colleges and universities that are seeking to enrich their own programs in this field, and
- local and state governments that are seeking to develop more effective career services for all of their employees.

Our concept of public service is changing to meet the demands of the hour. A new public servant has emerged. He may be the scholar who leaves his study for the crucible of power in his State or national capital. Or he may be the young man or woman who chooses public service but does not abandon at its doorstep the techniques of scholarship and the search for knowledge.

These men and women will help us to answer the question that Franklin Roosevelt, our great American leader, asked more than 30 years ago: Will it be said that "Democracy was a great dream, but it could not do the job"?

President Roosevelt did not doubt the answer. Even as troubles mounted, he took the starting steps to strengthen a Federal structure capable of carrying this Nation safely through its crisis. With his detractors and his defacers, with his dissenters and his doubters, just as Wilson had had to carry them a few decades before, he began to organize the modern Office of the President and to bring American Government into the midtwentieth century.

THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

And now, as we enter the final third of this century, we are engaged again today--yes, once again--with the question of whether democracy can do the job.

Many fears of former years no longer seem so relevant. Neither Congress nor our Supreme Court indicates to me any signs of becoming rubber stamps to the Executive. Moreover the Executive shows no symptoms of callous indifference to the ills that we must cure if we are to preserve our vitality. State and local governments are more alive and more involved than they were 30 years ago. And our Nation's private enterprise has grown many times over in both size and vitality.

Some men, I remember vividly, said it was socialistic to consider enacting the social security measure. Some men said it was high-handed to favor the minimum wage when I first voted for it--25 cents an hour. Some said it was the sign of an overbearing police state when I proposed the voting rights bill only a short time ago. Those who would change the status quo have been called many names, not only by the demagogue on the stump, but on occasions by the intellectual on the platform.

Forgotten now are the charges of socialism that were hurled at social security by the defenders of the status quo. Silent are the voices which cried "high-handed" at the minimum wage. Irrelevant today is the denunciation of the voting rights law as an overbearing act of a central authority, an act of a police state.

The issue for this generation is a different kind. It has to do with the obligations of power in the world for a society that strives, despite its worst flaws, always to be just and fair and human. Like almost every issue we face, this is one in which scholars and public officials alike have a crucial stake.

Abroad we can best measure American involvement, whatever our successes and failures, by one simple proposition: Not one single country where America has helped mount a major effort to resist aggression--from France to Greece to Korea to Vietnam--not one single country where we have helped today has a government servile to outside interests.

There is a reason for this which I believe goes to the very heart of our society: The exercise of power in this century has meant for all of us in the United States not arrogance but agony. We have used our power not willingly and recklessly ever, but always reluctantly and with restraint.

Unlike nations in the past with vast power at their disposal, your United States of America has never sought to crush the autonomy of her neighbors. We have not been driven by blind militarism down courses of devastating aggression. Nor have we followed the ancient and conceited philosophy of the "noble lie" that some men are by nature meant to be slaves to others.

THE RECENT LESSONS

As I look upon America this morning from the platform of one of her greatest universities, I see, instead, a nation whose might is not her master but her servant.

I see a nation conscious of lessons so recently learned:

- that security and aggression, as well as peace and war, must be the concerns of her foreign policy;
- that a great power influences the world just as surely when it withdraws its strength, as when it exercises its strength;
- that aggression must be deterred where possible and met early when undertaken;
- that the application of military force, when it becomes necessary, must be for limited purposes and must be tightly controlled.

Surely it is not a paranoid vision of America's place in the world to recognize that freedom is still indivisible--still has adversaries whose challenge must be answered.

THE STERNEST CHALLENGE

Today, of course, as we meet here, that challenge is sternest--at the moment--in Southeast Asia. Yet there, as elsewhere, our great power is also tempered by great restraint. What nation has announced such limited objectives or such willingness to remove its military presence once those objectives are secured and achieved? What nation has spent the lives of its sons and vast sums of its fortune to provide the people of a small, striving country the chance to elect a course that we might not ourselves choose?

The aims for which we struggle are aims which, in the ordinary course of affairs, men of the intellectual world applaud and serve: the principle of choice over coercion, the defense of the weak against the strong and the aggressive, the right of a young and frail nation to develop free from the interference of her neighbors, the ability of a people--however inexperienced, however different, however diverse--to fashion a society consistent with their own traditions and values and aspirations.

THE SCHOLAR'S OBLIGATION

These are all at stake in that conflict. It is the consequences of the cost of their abandonment that men of learning must examine dispassionately. For, I would remind you, to wear the scholar's gown is to assume an obligation to seek truth without prejudice and without cliché, even when the results of the search sometimes are at variance with one's own predilections and own opinions.

That is all we expect of those who are troubled--even as we are--by the obligations of power the United States did not seek but from which the United States cannot escape.

It was twenty-six years ago that Archibald MacLeish asked of all scholars and writers and students of his generation what history would say of those who failed to oppose the forces of disorder then at loose in Europe.

We must ask of this generation the same question concerning Asia.

MacLeish reminded that generation of the answer that was given by Leonardo when Michelangelo indicted him for indifference to the misfortunes of the Florentines. "Indeed," said Leonardo, "indeed, the study of beauty has occupied my whole heart."

Other studies, no matter how important, must not now detract the man of learning from the misfortunes of freedom in Southeast Asia.

While men may talk of the "search for peace" and the "pursuit of peace," we really know that peace is not something to be discovered suddenly--it is not a thing to be caught and contained. Because peace must be built--step by painful, patient step. And the building will take the best work of the world's best men and women.

It will take men whose cause is not the cause of one nation but whose cause is the cause of all nations--men whose enemies are not other men but the historic foes of mankind. I hope that many of you will serve in this public service for the world.

Woodrow Wilson knew that learning is essential to the leadership that our world so desperately yearns for and needs today. Before he came to Princeton, he attended a small college in North Carolina and went to classes every day beneath a portal which bore the Latin inscription: "Let learning be cherished where liberty has arisen."

Today, this motto which served a President must also serve all mankind. Where liberty has arisen, learning must be cherished--or liberty itself becomes a very fragile thing.

So we dedicate this building today--not only to the man; not only to the Nation's service--but to learning in the service of all mankind.

There can be no higher mission.

Note: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in Princeton, N.J., at the dedication of Woodrow Wilson Hall at the university's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs where he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. In his opening words he referred to Richard J. Hughes, Governor of New Jersey, Robert F. Goheen, President of Princeton, and John W. Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Speaking of the academic figures among his Cabinet and advisers, the President named Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz, Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Robert C. Weaver, Special Assistant for Science and Technology Dr. Donald F. Hornig, and Special Consultant Dr. Eric F. Goldman.

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