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THE CASE FOR DISSENT

Chancellor Schwada, President Weaver, members of the faculty, Board of Trustees, graduates and those parents who have given up so much so you can be graduates and who, unfortunately, cannot be accommodated in this same hall. (applause) I'd better savor that applause while I can get it, because these are parlous times in the world, in the nation, here on your own campus and the cliches and the bromides and the platitudes of normal graduation times hardly seem to apply. (applause)

There are so many things wrong with this world that we've made--poverty, ugliness, corruption, intolerance, waste of our resources, pollution of our air and water, urban sprawl, inefficient transportation, outmoded concepts of national sovereignty, secret society of the establishment elite, power of the military-industrial complex, the atomic arms race, population explosion, war.

The mere fact that this species of ours has survived so far seems hardly adequate cause for self-applause nor can we indulge in self-congratulations for our civilization's considerable material and cultural development that has failed to guarantee survival or nurture the bodies and the spirit of all mankind.

Things cannot go on like this. If we're to survive, and wipe out not only the symptoms, but the causes, of injustice and decay, there must be change. There's scarcely any argument on that.
(applause)

The question really is the form of the change and, as in such critical times in our history, we find conflicts between the

seeming intransigence of the established order and the impatience of youth. Each generation, when it is young, is anxious to get on with the obvious reforms that the establishment of whatever era seems reluctant to institute. With the world's present potential for mass suicide with nuclear weapons, overcrowding, hunger, is there any wonder that the students of today rebel with an urgency unknown to earlier generations?

The Vietnam war goes on--human beings at the grim game of slaughter--while the diplomats plow their ponderous way in Paris.

After a few thousand years of so-called civilization, it seems that there ought to be a better way, and that, I submit, is what the students are saying--there ought to be a better way, not only to settle international disputes, but to provide for the world's underprivileged and to assure peace and well being for all.

Almost everyone agrees with those broad objectives. It is the manner of achieving them--primarily the dispatch with which we get the job done that separates us, that brings us to this increasing and terrible polarization of our society. It's time that both sides look and listen. Don't stop, there isn't time to stop, but look and listen, one to the other.

Only the most strident forces seem to be coming through the cacophony. While each has his followers, I think it can be questioned whether either Spiro Agnew or ^{ABD/G} ~~Ann~~ Hoffman speaks for a majority. While much of what each has to say may be offensive to some, some of what they say may be important to us all.

As essential as is the need for listening to the other sides arguments, is the necessity for critical self-examination of one's own arguments. It would be helpful if each side

recognized its own excesses of speech and action even as it condemns those of the opposition.

It cannot be expected that more fanatical leaders or their disciples on either side are going to follow such rational behavior, nor are they likely to be tolerant of those who do. Fanatics seem to require total commitment and are not loathe to use bully tactics to get it. It also is the essence of their demagogery that they preach only part of the lesson.

The great middle--stretching as it does--quite far to the left and to the right must ask the questions and weigh the answers. The liberals must help reject that which is evil in the solutions even as the conservatives must help to expel that which is evil in the problems.

Violence, for instance, is intolerable on either side. Sticks, stones and firebombs are no more going to bring down the establishment than are tanks and tear gas going to suppress the ferment of the disaffected.

The suppression of free speech is intolerable on either side. (applause) It's as outrageous for the establishment to attempt to muzzle a television station (applause) as it is for the militants to harrang and to silence an opposition speaker. (applause)

Those who are hardened in their position practice and preach repression and their weapon is fear. To rationally examine our alternatives, we, none of us, can yield to fear. The leadership of the militant left would teach the fear of rejection--that there is no salvation within the system since, as they say, the system itself is evil. That's a highly doubtful premise.

The system has been sluggish, at times irresponsible to some of our population, at times insensitive to minority needs. But

working within the system, involved, concerned segments of our citizenry have won response to their needs. Labor won its rights and altered the system in the early part of the century. By mid-century, the Blacks began to win theirs'. There is much more to be done but it is blindness to ignore the great progress of the last 16 years.

Today the system is responding to the concerns of youth. Their involvement in the 1968 campaign, not the Yippy confrontation at Chicago, but the political participation for candidates and principles, profoundly affected the outcome of that year's presidential race. And believe me, the lesson has not been lost on the political power structure. Imperfections in the system are many and are worthy of our deepest concern but to suggest that reform is impossible within the system is to fly into the face of incontrovertible history. It's the worst form of demagogery on the left.

Now look at the militant right. The fear its members would spread abroad in the land is the fear of revolution. They would attempt to protect the status quo, their status quo, by branding as subversive the mere question of our institutions and their efficiency. They are afraid of knowledge. They attempt to discredit the intellectual community. They attempt to intimidate the media of public communication. They seem to understand better than does the leadership of the militant left, unfortunately, that knowledge is power; that for successful political action, research must precede advocacy.

Freedom of speech, press, and peaceful assembly, which we all should hold dear, really comprise the freedom of free inquiry-- the freedom to study our democratic institutions without fear of

harassment by misguided patriots or hockling malcontents,
freedom to advocate change without facing trial for heresy.
(applause) Such study may require throwing off old concepts,
shibboleths in the spirit of basic research.

A very keen observer of the scientific scene and a philosopher,
Lord Richey-Calder, notes that scientific revolution is the replace-
ment of one set of propositions that have served practitioners
satisfactorily, even in spite of anomalies, with a new set. A
set of propositions called a paradigm provides model problems and
solutions, as you know, the framework in which science must work.
But he notes that to reject the paradigm, to foment scientific
revolution, is to commit a breach of accepted scientific tradition.
And yet, the great scientific discoverers have been revolutionaries.
They have rejected an important paradigm of their history.

In political thought, in the discipline of the political
sciences, we must be willing to escape our paradigm. We must listen
to those who would escape. We must hear out the dissenters. We must
seek out and make use of the original thinkers.

We're now in a scientific revolution. In the life span of
the youngest member of this audience, we've plunged into three
eras--the atomic age, the computer age, the space age.

Now we stand on the threshold of the most revolutionary of
them all --the DNA age--the discovery of the genetic key which
unlocks the very secret of life--what makes us what we are. We
soon will have the frightening knowledge of how to make man any
way we want him--tall or short, smart or stupid, black or white.
In the next 30 years the transplant of human organs will be common-
place. The birth rate must be controlled in that time. We will
be exploring and perhaps colonizing the ocean floor.

Can anyone deny that a political revolution of sorts will accompany that scientific revolution?

We have the future in our power. The 21st century isn't going to burst upon us in full flower. Man can mold the new century into anything he wants it to be. But to do that, we must know what we want and we must examine each of our institutions to determine whether they stand up to the challenges of the century ahead.

We of our generation may have to look no further than our own failure to plan for this future, to find that seeds of youth spewer discontent.

Convinced that we're not doing the job, many of you have turned your backs upon us. Unless you reject that which is good of our institutions and that accumulated wisdom which we possess, perhaps solely by reason of age, we must not reject those among you who dissent. In youth's rebellion against any unsatisfactory status quo we must assist--not resist. This does not mean either for youth or for us groveling to coercion, yielding to blackmail, or forgiving violence. It does not mean we can tolerate lawlessness, for the law is the foundation of our freedoms.

It does mean that we must not let our revulsion to the transgressions of the militants blind us to the future.

Society is going to change. The only question is whether youth is going to help and indeed if we are going to help. Our help is needed. While our way of life will change, we need to communicate by word and deed to those coming behind us, the values that we know are constants--right or wrong, truth or falsehood, generosity or selfishness, dedication or cynicism, self-discipline or license.

The ferment abroad today in the land borders on anarchy and there are frightened calls for law and order but as surely as a boiling kettle will not stop generating steam just because the lid is clamped upon it, our ferment cannot be suppressed by force and counter-violence.

The great historian of our early days--noted of the Virginia gentlemen who met at Williamsburg to lay the foundations of our history,--"Their equality and status questioned, even threatened, the now united gentry, became radicals, gentlemen revolutionists. They revolted to preserve what they had." May I suggest that to preserve what we have--and it's dear and it's precious in this nation of ours--we must lead or at least join the revolution, not against the establishment, established order, but that which is evil in our society. Let our new gentry--the gentry of the educated and the wise--you who join that gentry, become radicals if that's what it requires and seek bold, new solutions to our problems.

Although it may come as a shock to some in high places, the greatest revolution in which we could all participate today would be one of strict construction. What promise this nation could realize if we all believed, without hint of doubt, that the words of the constitution and the Bill of Rights mean precisely what they say and apply equally to every man and woman of us, rich or poor, black or white, northerner or southerner, no matter how contemptible or untidy, either his thoughts or his appearance. Unless the language has lost all it's meaning, and sometimes I fear it has, a strict constructionist would be the last to argue that American liberties can be preserved by restricting their application.

There are those today who believe that this nation would be better off if the First Amendment guarantees of free speech and press and the right to assemble peaceably were abridged.

A recent CBS news poll indicated that a majority of the public --when faced with specific examples such as student demonstrations and news media criticism of the President--instant analysis, I suppose--the majority does not favor unrestricted right of speech, press or assembly. This is not only a shocking revelation of the mood of the nation but a disturbing reflection on the educational processes that have failed to inculcate these very foundations of our democracy.

As disturbing as the fact that this mood is fed and nurtured by some in high places, a particular target of late has been television news. And today their particular point is that by reporting the dissent that racks the nation we somehow have fostered it. Vice President Agnew, in a recent magazine, asks "How much disorder, How many of these illegal demonstrations which potmar; the country would ever take place if the ever-present television camera were not there?"

Well, I honestly cannot answer Mr. Agnew's question nor, of course, can he. I do know however, that there were no television cameras at either the American or French Revolutions or the Civil War riots or a few other noteworthy events of our past. We might be excused for believing that there are those who want to divert the nation's attention from the nation's ills to those who report it.

Unfortunately they have unintentional allies in this political skill game. The protesters, by their excesses, may be helping in turning the people's attention away from the problems to the pro-

testers themselves. The media, by reporting a protest, may be participating in that process.

Our attention, the attention of all of us, has been focused on the symptoms rather than the disease, perhaps because we are all secretly afraid of going in for a full diagnosis.

It is time we quit looking at the form and began examining the substance. It is time the politicians quit attacking the press and began attacking the problems. (applause) The sooner they quit worrying about their image and get down to establishing goals and priorities for this nation, the sooner this country is going to get back together again. (applause)

This country has not lost it's ability to respond to challenge. Though all the challenges of today seem frightening in their complexity, there should be no reason for despair.

I don't despair of the youth coming along, I don't despair of this graduating class of the Univ. of Mo. I don't despair that they are taking a more concerned interest in our affairs than ever before in our history. God bless you all for that.

The more and the greater the challenges, the greater the heroism of thought and of deed and of courage to surmount them. Just remember this--the more exciting, then, the prospects of the combat, Oh How much sweeter then the taste of victory.

Thank you.

THIS IS A TRANSCRIPTION OF A TAPE RECORDING OF CRONKITE'S SPEECH