



# Department of Justice

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"CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE"

ADDRESS

BY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Prepared for Delivery

at .

Commencement Exercises

of

Hamilton College

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Anyone engaged in public service honors the name of Alexander Hamilton. I believe it was Elihu Root, speaking here on the occasion of the presentation to Hamilton College of Alexander Hamilton's statue, who referred to "the great tradition of public service which is the most precious possession of our country, and found its highest inspiration in the life of Washington, and second only to him in the life of Alexander Hamilton."

I have learned and am gratified to know that this great tradition of public service is respected and followed here. I know this both by hearing about it from my forbears who attended Hamilton College, and by direct knowledge of present-day activities on your campus. Today Hamilton College stresses the requisites of responsible citizenship which underlie honorable public service. Among these are the right of scholars to search for the truth and make it known - the importance of free and critical inquiry - the unobstructed exchange of ideas as indispensable to our way of life.

I congratulate the members of the graduating class on this heritage which your College has provided for you, and your great opportunity to capitalize on it in the years ahead, for the benefit of yourselves and your country. Everyone in this hall, representing as they together do, decades of wisdom and experience fostered by this great College, joins in wishing for you the richest experiences of life open to men who have had the good fortune of a disciplined course of education in the liberal tradition.

The opportunities for public service open to college graduates are innumerable. Perhaps the most challenging are those that involve the current effort to establish a rule of law, instead of force, as the method of settling international disputes. Men have long dreamed of

reaching this goal of a civilized society. But it is only in the last few years that developments of atomic power, and the horrors of atomic warfare, have made it a practical necessity (not merely a humanitarian ideal) to solve this problem, lest our civilization perish.

In our domestic affairs we proved long ago the value of settling our disputes under a rule of law.

Because we are the strongest nation in the free world and as such are in a position of great responsibility, we must apply the same principles in our dealings with other peoples of the world that we apply in dealings among our own people.

Fortunately our national leaders have been and are conscious of this. Recently our nation did just that in dealing with the Middle East crisis.

For many months the eyes of the free world have been focused on the Middle East and on Washington. As a result of armed conflict, the Suez Canal was blocked. The free world was sharply divided on the proper course of action. Many factors might have dictated that we seek an easy way out of this dilemma. There were persuasive arguments made that the United States should take no definite stand since some of our friends and allies were deeply involved in the dispute.

Never has the position of leadership which this Nation has been called upon to assume been put to a more severe test than during this crisis. Never have our principles favoring a rule of law been more steadfastly adhered to than by the President of the United States, with the support of members of Congress and many national leaders of both political parties.

On the day after Britain and France joined Israel in the armed attack on Egypt, the President reported to the American people on the

situation in the Middle East. He said:

We believe these actions to have been taken in error. For we do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes.

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There can be no peace--without law. And there can be no law--if we were to invoke one code of international conduct for those who oppose--and another for our friends.

In meeting this crisis in the Middle East the President courageously applied the great moral concepts of our domestic legal system in our dealings with other nations.

If there is to be complete understanding of the need for a system of law to regulate the conduct of nations, and so to prevent recourse to arms, certainly college trained citizens have a special and, indeed, extraordinary obligation to discharge.

An acceptable solution must originate with those with a passion for justice and a sympathy for humanity. It could best come from those who understand from their own intimate experiences and breadth of view that world order must be based on law for the same reasons that law has been a restraining and constructive force at home. Self-preservation requires it; civilization can not exist without it.

Whether that contribution should be directed to the formulation of substantive principles, of better mechanisms, or of more acceptable forums, or of all of the parts of the total structure, I would not presume to suggest. What I am really probing for is to stir greater interest among fellow citizens who have the capacity for a great and lasting contribution to world order.

Public service in the broadest sense, means accepting the responsibilities of citizenship and contributing to the well being of our nation. As you carry on the great tradition of public service enshrined here you will discharge your obligations to your country as well as to Hamilton College, to your community, and to yourself. It is the way by which you can aid in advancing the noble aims of all mankind; in protecting the foundations of our great Republic; and in living your lives in dignity and respect in the eyes of God.