ADDRESS

BY

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125TH ANNIVERSARY OF CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

BELLEVUE-STRATFORD HOTEL

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I am delighted to be here with you this evening, and I am greatly honored to be the recipient of the First Barnwell Distinguished Service Award.

For 125 years your school has maintained a tradition of excellence that is one of the beacon lights of the public school system in America. That tradition is a credit to you, to your insistence on the highest standards and to your continuing interest in young people. You have developed for the current graduates of Central High School a great legacy of education; your city and our nation are richer for it.

And I am proud to be able to share a small part of it with you tonight.

In some ways we are very fortunate in America. We have attained the political stability needed for such traditions to flourish. Here men of vision and high purpose can create lasting educational values which will endure for generations to come.

But in many nations of today's world such orderly development is not possible. Under conditions of turbulent social and political change the young are often directly involved -- not in learning about history in the classroom but in making history wherever it is made.

These young people are vitally important to us, I believe, as are the young people fortunate enough to share the tradition of your school. It is this importance that I would like to discuss with you briefly tonight.

As you know, President Kennedy was intensely interested in the young people of the world. He sought them out at every opportunity and he probably understood them as well as anyone can. He felt that what they thought and did would powerfully influence the world of five, ten or twenty years from now.

I think this cannot be seriously questioned. In the unsettled atmosphere of the world today the young have significant advantages as they are proving in country after country. This is particularly true of the developing nations where there is great pressure to race through centuries to the present.

Perhaps the first aspect of the importance of young people is that there are so many of them. In every Latin American country, for example, a majority, more than half, of the people are under the age of 25. In Brazil 64% of the population is under 25 and in Venezuela the figure is 72%.

In India -- where the population of 450 million is more than double that of Canada and the United States combined -- six out of every 10

people are under the age of twenty-five. There are comparable figures for most other developing nations, higher figures for several.

I know, of course, that these figures include children, the very young. But also included are most of the university students in these countries. And students in the world today are a dynamic force with an importance all out of proportion to their numbers.

You will recall the Hungarian uprising of 1956. Students organized and led it. Of course, these movements were repressed by Russian tanks. But before the freedom fighters fell onto the bloodstained cobblestones of Budapest, the world knew them. They had rocked the structure of international communism to its very foundation. It would never be the same again.

Students and young workers rioted in Warsaw that summer with less bloodshed and more practical success.

And then came Latin America. Many here reacted in shocked disbelief when Vice President Nixon was jeered and stoned by students in Peru and the windows of his car smashed by students in Venezuela.

Not long after, student riots in Japan forced President Eisenhower to cancel his visit there and Premier Kiski to resign.

Two years later 100,000 youthful rioters swarmed through the streets of Seoul. More than 100 persons lost their lives in a single day, but the Korean government of Synghman Rhee was toppled.

The Mendares government in Turkey fell after the violent demonstrations of students and army cadets. Students, as you know, played a key role in the overthrow of the Diem government in Vietnam last November.

Nearly four months ago, the activities of Panamanian and American students led to riots in which more than a score of lives were lost and diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed.

These are but a few of the better-known examples of the impact of youth on the world scene. But young people have a special importance today for still another reason: a few of them--particularly in Africa--are leading their nations. Others are in positions of significant political power. In time, the classroom may be only a few short years away from the presidential palace.

There is Kenneth Kaunda, for example. Kaunda is 39. He has headed the Northern Rhodesian nationalist movement since he was 33. In a few months, when Northern Rhodesia becomes the independent state of Zambia, Kaunda will be its Premier. Oskar Kambona, the Foreign Minister of Tanganyika is 32. Jonas Savimbi, Angolan exile leader, is 30. Sekou Toure became President of independent Guinea at about the same age.

Tom Mboya, Minister for Justice in Kenya, has been in the front rank of his country's leadership for a number of years. He is still in his thirties as are Justin Bomboko and General Joseph Mobutu of the Congo.

The list could go on and on, and it is not limited to Africa. Rufino Heckonova, Minister of Finance of the Philippines, is 33. Fidel Castro made himself Premier of Cuba at 32. Nasser became President at 36 and General Khanh, Prime Minister of South Vietnam is that age now.

Although these are examples of a current trend in world leadership, it is worth mentioning that several of our early leaders in the United States would qualify for this group on the basis of age. Thomas Jefferson was only 33 when he drafted the Declaration of Independence. Alexander Hamilton was but 30 when he wrote most of the Federalist Papers and James Madison was 36 when he wrote the rest of them.

President Kennedy, of course, appointed many young men to high positions in our government. One of President Johnson's first appointments was of a 29-year-old attorney, Nicholas Johnson, as the Federal Maritime Administrator.

But I mention these young leaders only as one important aspect of the youth of the world today. Current history suggests that the leaders of the developing nations throughout the world for the next few decades will come from the young intellectuals, the students, the young labor leaders and politicians of today. These are the ones with whom we should be primarily concerned.

This is what I suggest to you as thinking fore-sighted American citizens. We must be concerned with these young people, with who they are and where they live, with what they are thinking and saying, and with what we are saying to them.

I raise this point for two reasons. First, I think that we often tend to overlook the real significance of young people and to look toward the

established order. Seniority is sometimes impressive for its own sake.

Secondly, I think that it is always difficult to look past what we have in the present and to guess for the future. The military have been criticized for training for the last war instead of the next, but many of us do that in our thinking every day.

It requires a conscious effort to think ahead and an intensive effort to be concerned with the problems of the young in other nations.

But the young throughout the world will not wait for our concern. They are going ahead with their own revolutions in their own ways. In many countries today they are in open revolt against oppression and poverty, against the grinding condition of systems which have not allowed progress.

History is on their side -- in one way or another -- they will achieve a large measure of the progress they seek.-- whatever the cost. In so many instances their revolution is an easy decision because they feel they have nothing to lose.

What they think and what they do has a direct impact on all of us here in the United States. Across the globe they are a force of cyclonic proportions and the world of tomorrow will bear the imprint of their ideals and goals.

For this reason we must be concerned with them. Someone will share their aspirations and their leadership; if not us, another system at what may be a tragic price for them and for us.

There is, I believe, an even stronger reason for our concern. In essence, these young people throughout the world are engaged in a phase of the same battle we have fought since the days of the Founding Fathers. In America we no longer have to carry on the battle with arms and blood. We have had our revolutions.

For us the field of battle has shifted because we have formed a government capable of adjusting to change. It is within the orderly processes of that government that we fight today -- as fight we must -- to provide a future for all our young people -- the young Negroes in the cities and the young whites caught in the valleys of despair in Appalachia, who are beginning to doubt what future there is for them under our system.

We must not lose sight of the fact that we have a common cause and purpose with the young revolutionaries of the world. We must remember that we ourselves were the first revolutionaries.

And we showed the way.

It was here in Philadelphia, as a matter of fact, just a little over 100 years ago that Abraham Lincoln described the single great principle of the Declaration of Independence as: "something in that declaration giving liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope for the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and all should have an equal chance."

I feel that we cannot too often remind ourselves of this great tradition as it applies to the world of today. It is this tradition which establishes our identity with the young in the developing nations and enables us to talk directly to them across oceans and continents and through the barriers of time, language and culture.

For we are engaged in an epic struggle for the hearts and minds of men. To recognize that this struggle is perilous is also to recognize that it is exciting. If the odds seem long, then, as Edith Hamilton said of Aeschylus, "To the heroic, desperate odds fling a challenge...men were not made for safe havens."

But it isn't the long odds that impress me -- I would view the real odds as strongly in our favor.

We overlook our great advantages or do not make the most of them. We are not always as tough, articulate or aggressive as we might be in the war of ideas; we sometimes do not recognize our revolutionary tradition with the candor and pride it deserves.

But, I feel that we can approach the young people of the world with strength and with confidence. We have made a representative government work and have maintained freedom at the same time.

We are big enough to admit our own errors and strong enough to be tolerant of ideas and diversity. I think this advantage is irresistible. No other system can match it in the contest for inquiring young minds.

We are a young nation and we have, in addition, the strength, and the spirit to lead the world by our example. If only we have the discernment to identify true values and goals, however difficult that might be. It was Emerson who said: "God offers to everyone his choice between truth and repose. Take which you please -- you can never have both." I want to be certain we make the choice not for sleep but for truth.

A part of the truth is the tradition of academic excellence which your school represents; another part is the rising aspirations of young people throughout the world.

If we pursue our national goals with the same zeal you have shown here through the past 125 years, we shall prevail in our quest for the minds of the young as you have in yours. Despite temporary setbacks, I am confident that in the words of Macaulay, "A single breaker may recede, but the tide is coming in."

Thank you.