"THE OPENING TO THE FUTURE"

ADDRESS BY
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(As Delivered)

President DuBridge, Members of the Faculty, students and distinguished friends of Caltech:

Many of you, I know, are approaching the end of your schooling. The time of graduation -- and liberation -- is upon you. This is a time when you must expect to endure a good many profound remarks about your past and your future, your obligations and your challenges. I hesitate to afflict you further - and am consoled only by the fact that I went through a comparable ordeal when I finished college a few years back and I can recall not one word of what was said. This gives me, I might add, a pleasant sense of irresponsibility today.

Yet I suppose that the end of the academic year is one of those watersheds of life where a backward and then a forward look become almost mandatory. Students, after all, stand on the brink of the future. And you men of the California Institute of Technology stand there in a very special sense; not only because you are young, but because you are trained in the methods and ideals of modern science. If you believe, as I do, that our greatest national responsibility is to strengthen and enlarge the opening to the future, then science must obviously play a central role in this effort.

No two Americans thought more profoundly about the future of our country than Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. A century and a half ago Jefferson wrote Adams, "If science produces no better fruits than tyranny, murder, rapine and destitution of national morality, I would rather wish our country to be honest, ignorant and estimable, as our neighboring savages are."

Fortunately very few scientists turn out to be Dr. Strangeloves. Nonetheless, the advance of scientific knowledge now confronts our planet with the possibility of a disaster far greater than anything Jefferson and Adams could have imagined.

No one can be sure what sort of a future science will give us. The reason for that is plain. It is because science depends on what men do with it. And men, as this grim century has reminded us, are capable of

unreason and destruction fully as much as they are capable of reason and creation.

Science began as one of the noblest expressions of man's reason. It will continue to serve humanity so long as it never forgets that human beings remain the heart of its purpose.

Many years ago Albert Einstein addressed the students of this Institute. "It is not enough," he said, "that you should understand about applied science in order that your work may increase man's blessings." And he added; "concern for man himself and his fate must always form the chief interest of all technical endeavors, concern for the great unsolved problems of the organization of labor and the distribution of goods -- in order that the creations of our mind shall be a blessing and not a curse to mankind. Never forget this in the midst of your diagrams and equations," he went on to say.

And thus I come to talk to you not as scientists, but as citizens -- as some of the best-educated, most rational and most creative citizens of our country. Accordingly, you have a larger responsibility to apply the fruits of your education, your reason and your creativity to the future of society, as well as the future of science.

There can be no greater concern for each of us as citizens, than how wisely and how honorably our nation discharges its responsibility of preserving peace and promoting freedom. And the first obligation, if we are to preserve an opening to the future, is to make sure that there will be a future at all. For the first time in the long history of man, the obliteration of human life has become a technical possibility.

The leaders of the world face no greater task than that of avoiding nuclear war. While preserving the cause of freedom we must seek abolition of war through programs of general and complete disarmament. The Test-Ban Treaty of 1963 represents a significant beginning in this immense undertaking.

We cannot pretend that such beginnings signal a millenium or an armistice in the cold war. They are modest steps. But they are steps forward, steps toward the ultimate goal of effective and reliable international controls over the destructive power of nations. Until such a goal can be achieved, however, we have no other choice than to insure that we can defend our country and help other peoples who are willing to work for their own independence.

With the irony of a paradoxical world, the surest guarantee of peace at present is the power for war. The United States has that power. It comes from our programs of strength and deterrence -- programs to which this institute has made such substantial contributions for so many years. Without this strength, we could not have achieved the truly momentous victory of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Without this strength we cannot reasonably expect to achieve other objectives even at the conference table in our constant pursuit of peace.

This is not really a controversial point. We are agreed that American nuclear superiority is essential to unanimous nuclear restraint. But as we all know so well, the actual fighting since World War II has not involved nuclear weapons or even conventional warfare. It was in 1937 that Mao Tse-Tung wrote: "The guerrilla campaigns being waged in China today are a page in history that has no precedent. Their influence will be confined not solely to China in her present anti-Japanese struggle, but will be world-wide."

That prophecy has proved accurate. We have seen it in Malaya and Greece, the Philippines, and Cuba. We have seen the streets of Caracas become the front line of this era, and Communist guerrillas are fighting today over all of South Vietnam and Laos and at the outskirts of Bukavu in the Congo. The struggle has been broadened today to include violence and terrorist activities that could not even be described as guerrilla warfare. And this really has vastly increased the importance of local police forces and those who preserve an internal defense.

We might well wonder what would have happened in the closing weeks of Venezuela's national election campaign last December if heroic local police had not regained the upper hand there. And the fate of entire nations hung in the balance during those first turbulent months after independence in the Congo and in Panama and in the mines in Bolivia. These experiences point up the absolute necessity of our maintaining balanced strength. I believe they show that while we seek peaceful settlement of disputes, we need far greater strength in the field of unconventional warfare and the control of violence.

We have made a beginning. We have achieved some notable successes, but we have not mastered the art. More importantly, perhaps, in a practical sense, we have not perfected the technique of training foreign nationals to defend themselves against Communist terrorism and guerrilla penetration.

Having an adequate defense against terrorism is only part of the answer, however. To the extent that guerrilla warfare and terrorism arise from the conditions of a desperate people, we know that they cannot be put down by force alone. The people themselves must have some hope for the future. There must be a realistic basis for faith in some alternative to Communism.

It is for that reason that the United States must continue to expand its efforts to reach the peoples of other nations - particularly young people in the rapidly developing southern continents. Governments may come and go, but in the long run, the future will be determined by the needs and aspirations of these young people.

Over the years, an understanding of what America really stands for is going to count far more than missiles, aircraft carriers and supersonic bombers. The big changes of the future will result from this understanding -- or lack of it.

We have made some progress in reaching the peoples of other countries. The aid and information programs, the Peace Corps, Presidential trips abroad, are all ways of getting beyond mere government - to - government contact. But the critical moves -- the moves that will determine our success -- are the kinds of political choices this country makes in picking its friends abroad -- and its enemies.

Far too often, for narrow tactical reasons, this country has associated itself with tyrannical and unpopular regimes that had no following and no future. Over the past twenty years, we have paid dearly because of support given to colonial rulers, cruel dictators, or ruling cliques void of social purpose. This was one of President Kennedy's gravest concerns. It would be one of his proudest achievements if history records his administration as an era of political friendships made for the United States.

He valued most highly the cooperation established with the India of Nehru, the rallying of democratic leaders in Latin America to the Alliance for Progress, the support won from all the New African States for the American position on the Congo.

It is these examples and others like them now being advanced by President Johnson which will go a long way to determine our future. By achieving harmony with broadly based governments concerned with their own peoples, we do more than make our way easier for a year or two. We create for this country the opening to the future that is so essential.

Ultimately, Communism must be defeated by progressive political programs which wipe out the poverty, misery, and discontent on which it thrives. For that reason, progressive political programs are the best way to erode the Communist presence in Latin America, to turn back the Communist thrust into Southeast Asia, and to insure the stability of the New African nations and preserve stability in the world.

But however wise our efforts may be in unconventional diplomacy, however sensible our diversity of weapons, and however great our military power, there is another obstacle to enlarging our opening to the future and preserving freedom. That is what some of our own citizens believe the shape of the future to be.

To say that the future will be different from the present is, to scientists, hopelessly self-evident. I observe regretfully that in politics, however, it can be heresy. It can be denounced as radicalism, or branded as subversion. There are people in every time and every land who want to stop history in its tracks. They fear the future, mistrust the present, and invoke the security of a comfortable past which, in fact, never existed. It hardly seems necessary to point out in California - of all States -- that change, although it involves risks, is the law of life.

Nevertheless, there are those, frustrated by a difficult future, who grab out for the security of the non-existent past. Frustrated by change, they condemn the wisdom, the motives, and even the patriotism of those who seek to contend with the realities of the future.

The danger of such views is not that they will take control of the American Government. In time, the consensus of good sense which characterizes our political system will digest and discard frozen views and impossible programs. But there is a short-term danger from such voices. If they cause enough confusion, stir enough irrational fear, and attract enough political allies, they can restrict and inhibit a President's freedom to take maximum advantage of the openings which the future may present.

The answer to these voices cannot simply be reason, for they speak irrationally. The answer cannot come merely from government, no matter how conscientious or judicious. The answer must come from within the American democracy. It must come from an informed national consensus which can recognize futile fervor and simple solutions for what they are -- and reject them quickly.

And such a consensus must begin with the leaders of society. As people associated with one of the great educational institutions of the world, you are such leaders. While your specialized concern is a world of scientific creativity, you must also contribute to our nation's political creativity. You have a responsibility to lead and enrich the American consensus. You have a responsibility to fight against the debasements of political discussion and diplomatic alternatives by slanders and slogans.

A century ago, Lincoln observed that the dogmas of the quiet past were inadequate to the stormy present. "As our case is new," he said, "so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves."

Once again, our case is new -- and nothing is more urgent than the obligation to disenthrall ourselves from the dogmas of the quiet past. Let us not suppose that we can freeze the United States -- or the world -- into the mold of today, or of a generation ago.

President Kennedy, in the speech he was going to deliver in Dallas last November 22, wrote that while dissident voices will always be heard in our country, other kinds of voices are being heard in the land today -- "voices preaching doctrines," he would have said, "wholly unrelated to reality, wholly unsuited to the sixties, doctrines which apparently assume that words will suffice without weapons, that vituperation is as good as victory and that peace is a sign of weakness."

"We cannot expect that everyone, to use the phrase of a decade ago, will talk sense to the American people. But we can hope that fewer people will listen to that kind of nonsense."

President Kennedy felt we deserved better -- that as a people and as a country, we had the strength, courage and fortitude to face the future. He believed, as he told Congress in January 1962, that "while no nation has ever faced such a challenge, no nation has ever been so ready to seize the burden and the glory of freedom."

It is that faith which must sustain us as we face these difficult times. It is that faith, enlarged by you and by each succeeding class of this great university, which will enable us to meet our responsibilities, be worthy of our strength, and propel the whole world forward toward a new age of decency, justice, and peace.