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Department of Justice

ADDRESS

BY

THE HONORABLE WILLIAM B. SAXBE
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

AT

THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

OF

BOWLING GREEN UNIVERSITY

10:00 A.M.

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1974

BOWLING GREEN, OHIO

LET ME THANK YOU AT THE OUTSET FOR TWO HONORS YOU HAVE GIVEN ME TODAY. THE FIRST, OF COURSE, IS THE DEGREE THAT I WAS PRESENTED, AND I SHALL TREASURE IT. THE SECOND IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK AT THIS COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY, THOUGH IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO SELECT A THEME FOR SUCH AN OCCASION.

YOU HAVE BEEN LECTURED AND TESTED WITHIN AN INCH OF YOUR LIVES IN RECENT MONTHS, SO I SUSPECT YOUR MAJOR IMPULSE IS TO TAKE THE DIPLOMA AND RUN.

I ALSO IMAGINE THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY HAS GROWN TIRED OF HEARING HOW THE GRADUATES ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE THEIR CLOISTERED EXISTENCE AND ENTER THE WORLD. THAT DOESN'T HOLD TRUE ANYMORE -- PARTICULARLY WITH SO MANY STUDENTS GOING ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL THESE DAYS.

I WILL MAKE TWO PROMISES AT THE BEGINNING. THESE REMARKS WILL BE MERCIFULLY BRIEF. AND THERE WILL BE NO REFERENCES TO THE SHELTERED LIVES YOU HAVE ALLEGEDLY LED.

FOR THE FACT IS THAT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE GREAT CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE. THEY ARE PART OF THE VERY REAL WORLD -- AS ARE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO STUDY IN THEM.

GRADUATION DOES REPRESENT A TRANSITION OF SORTS -- THE START OF A FRESH OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY WHILE ACHIEVING INDIVIDUAL FULFILLMENT.

HOW WELL EACH OF YOU DOES THESE THINGS RESTS UPON YOUR SHOULDERS ALONE.

HOW WELL THESE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE CARRIED OUT BY ALL THE PERSONS GRADUATING FROM ALL OF THE COLLEGES IN THE NATION THIS SPRING WILL HAVE A GREAT IMPACT ON THIS NATION.

WHAT IS AT STAKE RANGES FAR BEYOND THE PERSONAL FORTUNES OR FAILURES THAT EACH WILL SOME DAY HAVE TO TABULATE.

GREAT CURRENTS ARE FLOWING IN OUR NATION TODAY AND SOME OF THEM ARE RUNNING AT CROSS PURPOSES. WE HEAR, FOR INSTANCE, THAT THE NATION HAS NEVER BEFORE ACHIEVED THE LEVELS OF WELL-BEING WE NOW ENJOY. FROM OTHERS COMES THE VIEW WE HAD BETTER CHANGE DIRECTIONS BECAUSE WE ARE

HURTLING DOWN AN EXPRESSWAY TO DISASTER. AND THERE IS ANOTHER SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT FEELS THE NATION'S PROBLEMS ARE SO SERIOUS THEY ARE INCAPABLE OF SOLUTION.

FOR MY PART, I BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS INDEED FORTUNATE IN SOME --AND I EMPHASIZE THE WORD SOME -- OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT FINDS ITSELF.

WE ARE MUCH LESS FORTUNATE TO BE BESET WITH PROBLEMS WHICH POSE SOME DANGER TO OUR PROSPERITY AND STABILITY -- AND I EMPHASIZE THE WORDS MUCH LESS.

ON THE FINAL QUESTION, WHETHER THE PROBLEMS ARE CAPABLE OF SOLUTION, I BELIEVE THE ANSWER IS A RESOUNDING YES.

IT MAY NOT BE EASY. IT MAY TAKE MORE TIME AND ENERGY --- AND, YES, MORE SWEAT OF THE BROW -- THAN MOST OF US MIGHT CARE TO SACRIFICE. BUT IT WILL HAVE TO BE DONE, BECAUSE THE ALTERNATIVE IS SIMPLY TO DROP OUT OR DO LESS THAN OUR BEST, AND THUS PERMIT THE STORM FRONTS FACING THE NATION TO TURN INTO ONE LONG, AWFUL TWILIGHT.

AS IT IS, WE NOW LIVE UNDER WHAT IS PROBABLY THE GREATEST CLOUD OUR SYSTEM HAS EVER KNOWN. ITS NAME IS WATERGATE, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TOUCH EACH OF US.

THE CLOUD MUST BE REMOVED -- AND NOT THROUGH ANY COSMETIC PROCESS. THE PROCESS THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED IS THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ONE -- AND IT MUST BE FOLLOWED TO ALL OF ITS NECESSARY CONCLUSIONS, NO MATTER WHAT INDIVIDUAL IS INVOLVED AND NO MATTER WHAT OFFICE IS HELD.

I HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THAT WILL BE THE CASE, FOR AS MUCH AS ANYTHING ELSE, IT HAS BEEN OUR FRAMEWORK OF LAWS WHICH HAS MADE PROGRESS POSSIBLE THROUGHOUT OUR NATION'S HISTORY.

WE MAY HAVE FALTERED, STUMBLER, DONE SOME BACKSLIDING. BUT THE TRAIT THAT HAS ALWAYS ENABLED US TO PICK UP THE PIECES AND GO FORWARD HAS BEEN OUR ADHERENCE TO THE LAW AND TO THE DECENCY INHERENT IN IT.

MOST VERDICTS IN THE WATERGATE MATTER ARE NOT YET IN. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THERE BE FULL AND FAIR HEARINGS ON EVERY

ALLEGATION, AND THAT EACH JURY RENDER ITS VERDICT.

THERE ARE IMPLICATIONS BEYOND THE CASES THEMSELVES, FOR IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT JUSTICE BE DONE IF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TO BELIEVE -- AND SEE LIVING PROOF -- THAT OUR SYSTEM OF LAWS FUNCTIONS UNDER EVERY CONCEIVABLE CIRCUMSTANCE.

THOUGH IT MAY SEEM HARD TO BELIEVE, THERE WILL COME A TIME WHEN WATERGATE IS RESOLVED, WHEN IT IS BEHIND US.

WHAT DO WE DO THEN, YOU MAY ASK. AND WHAT DO WE DO IN THE MEANTIME?

I BELIEVE THE ANSWER HAS TO BE THAT WE SET ABOUT ALLEVIATING THOSE STORM FRONTS WHICH HANG OVER THE NATION TO ONE EXTENT OR ANOTHER.

WE HEAR SOMETIMES THAT A SPIRIT OF PESSIMISM AND DISENCHANTMENT GRIPS MANY OF OUR PEOPLE -- ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG. GOING HAND-IN-HAND WITH THIS ARE THE CONTRADICTIONARY CONTENTIONS THAT THERE ARE EITHER NO REAL CHALLENGES LEFT OR THE PROBLEMS ARE SO GREAT NO ONE PERSON CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THEM.

A RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLL REPORTED IT HAD FOUND INDICATIONS THAT 60 PERCENT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FEEL THE STATE OF THE UNION HAS CHANGED FOR THE WORSE DURING THE PAST 10 YEARS.

EVEN THAT GLOOMY ASSESSMENT CONTAINS A NOTE OF OPTIMISM, FOR DISSATISFACTION INDICATES AN IMPULSE FOR BETTER TIMES. I RECALL A COMMENT ATTRIBUTED TO MARK TWAIN: "ALWAYS DO RIGHT. THIS WILL GRATIFY SOME PEOPLE AND ASTONISH THE REST."

IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BEEN SURPRISED, SHOCKED, AND EVEN HORRIFIED. IT WOULD BE REASSURING IF WE COULD DEVELOP A SENSE OF NATIONAL ASTONISHMENT.

IF WE WANT BETTER DAYS, IT ALL COMES DOWN IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS TO A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND MORALITY.

THERE IS A LONG LITANY ON THE PUBLIC RECORD OF PERSONS WHO HAVE DEFAULTED ON THE TRUST PLACED IN THEM IN RECENT YEARS.

WE HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF GUILTY PLEAS IN WATERGATE AND CASES RELATED TO IT.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IS NOW HOLDING HEARINGS ON POSSIBLE IMPEACHMENT -- THE GRAVEST CONSTITUTIONAL PROCEEDING.

A VICE PRESIDENT RESIGNED FROM OFFICE AND ENTERED A PLEA OF NO CONTEST TO A CHARGE OF TAX EVASION.

LEADING BUSINESS FIRMS, ALONG WITH KEY EXECUTIVES, PLEADED GUILTY TO MAKING ILLEGAL CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS.

LEADERS OF MAJOR LABOR ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF SERIOUS CRIMES.

SCORES OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF CRIMES -- AT THE LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL LEVELS.

CONDITIONS CAN EVEN REACH SUCH A STATE THAT SOMEBODY TRIES TO FIX A SOAP-BOX DERBY RACE.

ALL OF THESE TRAGIC EVENTS DO NOT MEAN THAT THE COUNTRY IS COMING APART AT THE SEAMS. BUT INDIVIDUALLY AND IN TOTAL THEY DO SUGGEST THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS THAT MUST BE SOLVED.

LIKE ANYTHING ELSE, HONESTY MUST BEGIN WITH THE INDIVIDUAL. IT IS WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US -- AT THE VERY MINIMUM. THE RULES OF OUR SOCIETY, LIKE THE OLD-FASHIONED VIRTUES, ARE NOT FRIVOLOUS. THEY HAVE EVOLVED FOR GOOD REASON -- TO ENABLE US TO LIVE IN MAXIMUM HARMONY.

EACH MAN AND WOMAN, AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES, WILL COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH THEIR OWN PERSONAL WATERGATE.

IT MAY BE SOMETHING THAT SEEMS RELATIVELY MINOR ON THE GRAND SCALE OF THINGS -- LIKE A LITTLE FUDGING ON AN EXAMINATION.

OR IT MAY BE SOMETHING THAT IS REALLY QUITE GRAND ON THAT GRAND SCALE -- DEFAULTING ON SUBSTANTIAL TRUST, WHETHER IN GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE INDUSTRY, THE PROFESSIONS, THE ACADEMIC WORLD, OR PRIVATE LIFE.

THESE THINGS MAY INDEED SEEM ACADEMIC NOW BUT EACH DAY BRINGS NEW CRISES. AND THE QUESTION IS HOW WE WILL REACT WHEN THE CRUNCH COMES, WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN, WHEN THE PERSONAL WATERGATE IS AT THE FRONT DOOR.

THERE ARE NOT MANY WHO ACT OUT OF PURELY ALTRUISTIC MOTIVES. BUT ALL OF US CAN DO A BETTER JOB OF EXAMINING EACH MATTER ON THE MERITS -- AND LEARN TO MORE OFTEN SAY NO TO OURSELVES AND NO TO THOSE SEEKING TO HAVE US ACT IN WAYS WHICH ARE IMPROPER -- OR APPEAR TO BE IMPROPER.

A NEW ROAD TO REFORM AND GREATER LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY IS NOW OPEN TO US BECAUSE OF WATERGATE. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE HOW YOU EARN YOUR LIVING OR WHAT YOUR JOB MAY BE. THE REVULSION OVER WHAT WE HAVE SEEN LENDS SOME ADDED IMPETUS TO EACH PERSON DOING RIGHT.

THE ACTIONS OF LARGE MASSES OF PEOPLE HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY. A PERSON WHO CHEATS IN LARGE OR SMALL WAYS CORRODES NOT ONLY HIMSELF. HIS ACTIONS ARE LIKE A PEBBLE THROWN INTO A POND. THE RIPPLE EFFECT THAT RESULTS FROM ONE PERSON'S ACTIONS MAY BE SMALL. BUT IN THE MILLIONS, THE RIPPLES CAN TURN INTO A DEADLY TIDAL WAVE THAT CAN ENGULF A GREAT DEAL OF WHAT WE CHERISH MOST ABOUT OUR SYSTEM.

RIPPLES ARE CREATED IN MANY WAYS. WHEN PEOPLE CHEAT ON THEIR TAXES. MAKE BETS WITH ORGANIZED CRIME'S BOOKMAKERS. USE DOPE. FAIL TO REPORT CRIMES. PUT IN THE FIX. MAKE A SHADY DEAL. OR SIMPLY STAND BY UNINTERESTED AND UNINFORMED WHILE ZEALOTS TAKE AWAY THEIR FRANCHISE.

IN A BOOK ABOUT THE POST-CIVIL WAR PERIOD, HISTORIAN ALLAN NEVINS QUOTES JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL AS SAYING: "A STRONG NATION BEGETS STRONG CITIZENS, AND A WEAK ONE, WEAK."

NONE OF US HAS TO BE REMINDED HOW STRONG NATIONS CAN SLIDE INTO DECAY. HISTORY BOOKS ARE FILLED WITH EXAMPLES -- AS WELL AS THE FRONT PAGES OF THIS MORNING'S NEWSPAPERS.

IF HONESTY IS WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US AT THE VERY LEAST, THEN WE HAVE TO TAKE A GREAT MANY STEPS FROM THAT STARTING POINT.

LORD ACTON SAID: "POWER TENDS TO CORRUPT," AND WE HAVE SEEN RECENT EXAMPLES OF IT. BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THAT NECESSARILY HAS TO BE THE CASE. WE CAN USE OUR INTELLIGENCE, HONESTY, AND MORALITY -- ALL INSTRUMENTS OF GREAT POWER -- TO HELP FASHION A BETTER SOCIETY FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE.

HEAVEN KNOWS THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT ARE EVERYWHERE.

OUR SYSTEM OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE IS IMPERFECT. THERE IS TOO MUCH CRIME AND DISORDER. AND THOSE CAUGHT UP IN THE SYSTEM FREQUENTLY FIND THERE ARE TWO STANDARDS OF JUSTICE -- ONE FOR THE RICH AND ONE FOR THE POOR.

THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM HAS ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE MANY SOURCES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AN EROSION OF THE PULLING AND TUGGING FORCES WHICH HAVE MADE IT TICK.

SHORTAGES OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND EVEN SOME FOODSTUFFS HAVE OCCURRED. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DO A BETTER JOB OF FINDING AND HUSBANDING THE ENERGY TO RUN OUR ECONOMY, TO SAY NOTHING OF ASSURING WAYS TO PRODUCE THE DAILY BREAD FOR ALL A DECADE FROM NOW.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT CASCADE UPON US -- WHETHER IT BE CRIME THAT POLLUTES CITIES, OR WASTES THAT POISON OUR WATER AND AIR.

TOO MANY PEOPLE STILL DO NOT HAVE A FAIR SHAKE ON THE MATERIAL BLESSINGS OR NECESSITIES -- INCLUDING FOOD, SHELTER, AND MEDICAL CARE. INFLATION IS NOW PICKING THE POCKETS OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS AND INFLICTING SUBSTANTIAL SUFFERING ON THOSE IN THE LOWER ECONOMIC GROUPS.

AND PEACE IS STILL A FRAGILE COMMODITY IN TOO MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD. IT IS INSTRUCTIVE, HOWEVER, TO SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IF WE WORK HARD ENOUGH. THE END TO THE VIETNAM WAR FASHIONED BY THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION AND ITS KEY ROLE IN BRINGING A CEASE-FIRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST SURELY WILL BE RECORDED AS BEING AMONG THE PARAMOUNT EVENTS OF THE DECADE.

HERE AT HOME, WE ARE TRYING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH ALL OF THE PROBLEMS FACING OUR NATION. IN SOME AREAS WE HAVE ACHIEVED SUBSTANTIAL SUCCESS, BUT IN OTHERS WE STILL ARE WOEFULLY SHORT OF OUR GOALS.

WHAT WE NEED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ARE UNRELENTING HONESTY AND SUPREME DEDICATION.

FOR THOSE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND COLLEGE,
WHEN MOST CANNOT, THERE ARE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

NO MATTER WHAT VOCATION IS FOLLOWED, IT IS POSSIBLE TO
TRY TO EMULATE THOSE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OUR SOCIETY
IN MARKED WAYS: IN PUBLIC LIFE, THE COURAGE OF A LINCOLN;
IN SCIENCE, THE INSIGHT OF AN EINSTEIN; IN THE LAW, THE MAJESTY
OF A MARSHALL; IN MEDICINE, THE HUMANITY OF A SALK; IN
BUSINESS, THE INVENTIVENESS OF A KETTERING.

NO MATTER WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL ROLE MAY BE, IT IS
POSSIBLE TO CONTRIBUTE. OUR CONSTITUTION WAS FASHIONED BY
A HANDFUL OF ARISTOCRATS. BUT LIFE WAS BREATHED INTO IT BY
A RAG-TAG ARMY OF MEN OF THE MOST HUMBLE ORIGINS.

AS MOST OF THEM MUST HAVE FOUND, DEDICATION AND
VIRTUE RESULTED IN NOTHING MORE TANGIBLE THAN AN OPPORTUNITY
TO SCRATCH OUT A POOR LIVING.

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BUT THOSE QUALITIES MAY ALSO HAVE PRODUCED SOMETHING
THAT NOTHING ELSE CAN BUY -- A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. AND
THERE IS A LOT TO COMMEND THAT THESE DAYS.

THANK YOU.