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EDUCATING FOR SURVIVAL

Remarks by

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The Carnegie Foundation for
the Advancement of Teaching

Delivered at the

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Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Mr. President, members of the faculty and friends of Temple;
First, I wish to congratulate the graduates.

- ° I congratulate you for completing--with success--
your course of study.
- ° And I also congratulate you for choosing
Temple University as your alma mater.

Clearly in the days ahead you will not have the disappointment
encountered by the middle aged couple pictured in a New York
cartoon.

- ° In the cartoon a woman
was going through the morning mail
and she said to her husband,
- ° "Gracious, dear, I see the class of 1935
has been recalled because of faculty
incompetence."
- ° That just won't happen to the Temple
University class of 1980.

Next I also wish to congratulate the parents and the
wives and husbands of those who graduate today.

- ° You have given money and support
- ° and you have sacrificed to make this
dream come true.
- ° And in a very real sense
you too are members of the class of 1980.

Today--just before we move on to the main event--I'd like to say a word or two about two dramatic currents in the world.

- ° Currents which appear to be on collision course.
- ° On the one hand we seem to want to pull ourselves apart and become more and more separate from each other.
- ° While on the other hand down deep inside we somehow feel an urgent need to come together.

My concern is this: I'm convinced that in the days ahead we must become more world minded--a term I don't particularly like but I don't know how to say it any other way. We must emphasize

- ° not our isolation
- ° but our interdependence.

And those of us in education increasingly must underscore our irreversable relationship to the planet Earth.

Twenty years ago

- ° The Soviet Union pushed a 184 pound object into space
- ° and--almost overnight our pride and our complacency were completely shattered.
 - Congress passed the National Defense Education Act.
 - Foreign language--once again--was being taught at every level.
 - And as we watched that man-made star in orbit we began to understand that for better or for worse this small planet is--in fact--a global village.

But very shortly this world view was badly shattered--and colleges and universities reduced their overseas commitments.

During the traumatic decade of the 1960s

- ° we were savaged by the tragedy of Vietnam.
- ° We became enormously disillusioned with our relationships abroad
- ° and "isolation" rather than "engagement" became the prevailing mood.

Increasingly we turned inward and because of this retreat from reality we have paid a terrible price.

The President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies reminded us that

- ° today, less than 1 percent of college students are enrolled in any course which features "contemporary" international affairs.
- ° College enrollments in foreign languages have decreased by 30 percent in the past seven years.

A national survey revealed that:

- ° After President Carter's first major speech 3 years ago on energy, only half of the public, 52 percent understood that America must import oil.
- ° Several years ago 50 percent of the 12th graders tested could not choose correctly an Arab country from among four choices.
- ° And 40 percent thought that Golda Meir rather Anwar Sadat was president of Egypt.

Recently, while flying from New Orleans to Orlando, Florida,

- ° I read in the morning paper that University of California scientists now conclude that the earth's ozone band is being harmed by contaminants at "twice the rate" that had been earlier predicted.
- ° It was symbolic of our time, I thought, that this important perhaps life or death story, was reported in a single paragraph buried deep in section II.

The degree of our isolation was further illustrated several years ago when the Stanford University student newspaper crossed my desk.

- ° It reported that after having dropped almost all requirements in the '60s a faculty committee proposed a required course in western culture.
- ° The student newspaper, in a biting attack, said the new report
 - ° "proposed to remove from students the right to choose for themselves a course. . . .
 - ° This is not to deny that courses in western culture are valuable and that most persons could benefit from them.
 - ° To require such a course, however, carries a strong illiberal connotation. . . .
 - ° It imposes a "uniform standard" on "non uniform people."

Frankly I was startled by that statement.

I was startled by the fact

- ° that one of our most gifted students,
- ° after 15 years of formal education,
- ° had concluded that there was no common agenda that should be commonly preserved.

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But I believe that--once again--a new perspective is beginning to emerge--sparked by events beyond the classroom which cannot be ignored.

- ° Just a little over two years ago, President Sadat of Egypt said he'd like to address the Israeli parliament.
- ° Hours later, satellites beamed his remark around the world.
- ° Days later, Barbara Walters, Walter Cronkite, and John Chancellor arrived in Cairo to certify the trip.
- ° And millions of people all around the world watched transfixed as an Egyptian plane touched down on Israeli soil.

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It does not diminish what happened "politically" in the Middle East to say that

- ° none of the words exchanged
- ° none of the documents,
- ° none of the private meetings,

was as significant as the riveting of the whole world's attention on one single, breathtaking, symbolic image-- as two former enemies shook hands.

- ° Instantly, 500 million people felt their "connectedness."
- ° Instantly, their perspective was expanded, and--momentarily--the world was brought together in a grand human gesture on behalf of peace.

Since that day--

- ° we have all shared the hope and disappointment of Camp David.
- ° We've watched a dynasty topple in Iran.
- ° We've heard an American President say that the United States is now the world's "fourth largest" Spanish speaking nation.
- ° And we've seen the United States held hostage by one religious leader--10,000 miles away!

- ° Painfully, we learned that our gas pumps are somehow connected to the Middle East.
- ° We've learned that American industry is almost wholly dependent on foreign sources for chromium, cobalt, bauxite, manganese, and tin.

And now

- ° we vaguely sense that a child born today into a world of four billion people will- if he attains age 60, be sharing the Earth with three times as many human beings.

Interdependence is--quite literally--hitting us from every side!

Lewis Thomas in that remarkable book Lives of a Cell reminded us that in spite of education

- o most of us have remained woefully ignorant
- o about the imponderable system of life in which we are embedded as working parts.

Thomas went on to say that,

- o "It is illusion to think that there's anything fragile about the life of earth; surely this is the 'toughest membrane' imaginable in the universe."
- o "We, the human species, are the delicate parts, transient and vulnerable as cilia."

And yet with all our vulnerability

- o we have assumed that, in the name of something we call "progress," we could consume the resources of this earth without understanding our connectedness to each other and to nature.

Several years ago--while Commissioner of Education--
I joined with Joan Gantz Cooney--producer of Sesamee
Street to prepare a TV program on Science and Technology
for junior high school students.

In preparation for the program

- o children's television workshop interviewed
yound students to see how well
they understood their world.

I was fascinated to discover that when some children were
asked--

- o Where does light come from--the switch.
- o Where do we get our water--the faucet.
- o Where does the garbage go--down the shute.

Let me put the issue as pointedly as I can.

When it comes to education--narrowness of vision will not do.

And in the days ahead--all of us--young and old alike must urgently begin to understand that all actions on this planet

- ° whether physical or social--
are inextricably interlocked.

When Sputnik was lifted into orbit

- ° we emphasized the sciences
to establish our future out in space.

In the 1980s we must also emphasize

- ° the social sciences and the
humanities to help assure our
future here on Earth.

We must have both specialists and generalists to help us think about some very fundamental questions.

Questions such as:

- ° Where will we get our food and
how can it be appropriately distributed?
- ° What about our energy supply?
How can it be equitably shared?
- ° Can we reduce the poisons in the atmosphere?
- ° Can we have a proper balance between the
population and the life support system of this
planet?

- ° And how can we live together--with civility--
in a climate of constraint?

And to the graduates--I suggest that these questions are the kind of curriculum you increasingly may study as you live your lives well beyond the year 2000.

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In a monograph published by the World Affairs Council here in Philadelphia, Robert Muller said:

A child born today. . . will be both an actor and a beneficiary or a victim in a total world fabric, and he may rightly ask:
'Why was I not warned? Why was I not better educated? Why did my teachers not tell me about these problems and indicate my behavior as a member of an interdependent human race?'

Well--this "compulsory attendance" lecture is about to end.

I urge the class of 1980 to go on learning and to gain perspective throughout your life to better understand those issues which--as Walter Lippman said--

"cut across all the specialties."

That great American philosopher Yogi Berra said,

- ° "You can do a lot of observing by just watching."
You can do a lot of learning by
extending our vision of the Earth.

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After our first astronaut orbited into space, Archibald MacLeish wrote:

To "see the Earth" as it truly is
small and blue--
beautiful in that eternal silence where
it floats--is to see ourselves as riders
on Earth together,
and to see ourselves as truly brothers..

Clearly we do not yet see ourselves as truly brothers and truly sisters.

But I am filled with hope.

I am confident that those who graduate today leave this institution with a better understanding
of our heritage,
of our contemporary world and
of our prospects for the future
which in a thousand separate ways are being
shaped today.

I urge the class of 1980 to live a life filled with courage and conviction and to work very hard to make this world a better place.