

From the Office of

SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON (D., WASH.)

FOR RELEASE: On Delivery

Sunday, June 9, 1968

AGENDA FOR A NEW GENERATION

by

Senator Henry M. Jackson

Commencement Address

CLAREMONT MEN'S COLLEGE

Claremont, California

Sunday, June 9, 1968
2:00 P.M.

AGENDA FOR A NEW GENERATION

by

Senator Henry M. Jackson

President Benson, distinguished guests, faculty, students and graduating class:

You can be very proud to be graduates of this outstanding center of learning and of excellence.

I am greatly honored to be a participant in these Commencement Exercises.

I.

The heart-rending events of this week bring home once again the tragic consequences when persons take the law into their own hands. Another brilliant career of public service has been cut short by political murder.

Senator Kennedy passed that ultimate test of service to the nation, self-sacrifice, that gives up even life itself for the sake of others. The irony of it is that he was struck down brutally in the midst of an effort to rally the progressive forces in this country and to fit social reform into a framework of law and order.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, the whole nation must now take stock of the state of our society and of the attitudes and conditions that turn people to the lie that wrongs can be righted by taking the law into one's own hands.

Argument by gunfire is no way to conduct the business of democracy for where the mob rules, the rights and freedoms of free men disappear.

The task of the responsible citizen is to call for obedience to the law and to denounce the violence of those who want to halt the advance of justice

and of those who seek the millenium now at any price. Americans, young and old, must be courageous enough to stand up for rule by law -- and for the true progress that can come with respect for the laws that we the people have established in our free society.

II.

"Where there is no vision," we read in Proverbs, "the people perish." A nation, like a man, faces many tests. It must pass these tests or slip, as many nations in the past have slipped, into a period of decline. The test is a test of its vision, of its courage, and of its intelligence. And perhaps the key is vision. For without vision, what will summon up our courage? And without vision, to what tasks do we apply our intelligence?

Americans have a vision -- a vision in our mind's eye of an America devoted to the happiness and welfare of its people and to the progress of peace and well-being in the world. Our vision is nothing less than the building of a better America in a peaceful world society fit for our children and our children's children to live in.

Today we have in our hands the spoiling or the fulfillment of that vision. Our nation faces now, in this generation, a time of testing as decisive as any in its history.

Looking ahead, here are some of the tasks that urgently need doing.

III.

At home, we cannot be satisfied with our economy unless it assures a decent job at decent wages to every person who is able and willing to work.

We must at long last triumph over poverty and the remaining barriers to full and equal participation in American life by all our citizens. We have

gone far in eliminating the legal foundations for discrimination in America. We have moved to improve the economic welfare of the poor of all races, to reduce prejudice, to open up opportunities. We have done a lot. We have to do a lot more. We have started down a road, there is no turning back, there is no stopping short of full membership in American society for all Americans on the basis spelled out by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

Also, we must assure every American child an opportunity for a good education up to the limit of his abilities. We have recently passed historic education legislation. But there is still a big job to be done.

We need to protect the health of our people. After a 20-year struggle we passed Medicare. Today, decent medical care is the right of almost 20 million older Americans. We must continue to improve the health opportunities of all Americans.

Beyond this, we must give every American a chance to grow up and live in a good environment. We should treasure, conserve, and develop the beauties of the countryside. We should have cities and towns fit for people to live in -- with sunlight, fresh air, green grass and space to move about.

IV.

We cannot stop at these homefront tasks, however.

Make no mistake about it. We won't be able to keep building a better America at home if we duck our responsibilities abroad.

A sound foreign policy, of course, rests on an understanding of the limits to our national interests and responsibilities. The nation's resources are limited, and our capability and treasure should be committed with discrimination and prudence.

But a great power inescapably bears the responsibility of great power. It may use its power wisely or unwisely -- and what it does not do may be just as consequential as what it does. It was in the days of our youth as a nation that we enjoyed the pleasures of avoiding responsibility, precisely because we had not yet arrived at great power.

Unless we understand the relation between national purpose and national power and are freely prepared to accept the responsibilities of power in a world where national interests conflict, we may well stumble and flounder from one crisis to another, making the problems worse and worse and the difficulties finally unmanageable.

Ours must be the steady hand in an unsteady world.

It is not within our power to transform the Soviet Union into a peace-loving, law-abiding state. But it is within our power to handle the Russian problem responsibly.

In relations with the Soviet Union we must pursue two consonant courses of action: to work with them where interests converge, and at the same time to maintain, in cooperation with our allies, a relationship of forces favorable to the deterrence of adventurism and aggression.

For this reason, we should encourage discussions with Moscow on reciprocal arrangements for the control and limitation of arms, including balanced and mutual East-West force reductions in Europe. At the same time we should maintain the strategic and conventional power needed to protect the present and future credibility of our military deterrent and to fortify our diplomatic hand.

For this reason also we should support Western efforts to move toward normal relations with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, including expanded cultural, scientific, trade and diplomatic contact. At the same time, we should

continue to meet our responsibilities in the Atlantic Alliance and help to preserve the cohesive, stabilizing effect upon world issues that is brought about by this great, productive and freedom-respecting area. This is no time to rock our NATO boat.

For this reason also we should have frequent and frank discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union, in order that each side might gain a clearer understanding of the range and limits of the other's intentions and actions and might identify new areas of common or parallel interest. At the same time, we should not succumb to the siren songs that go: "if we trust the Kremlin, it will trust us," or "if we disarm unilaterally, Moscow will reciprocate."

I am not sure how history will record our involvement in Southeast Asia. What I am sure of is this: having wisely or unwisely gotten involved, the urgent question now is how do we proceed from here on.

We all want to see the Vietnam war ended. But an American retreat or humiliating compromise in Vietnam, far from ending United States commitments in Asia, would doubtless extend them on an even greater scale to all sorts of other areas, from India to the Philippines. It could increase the danger of a later, larger conflict in Asia. As I see it, we must not disengage from the conflict in such a way as to forfeit important U.S. political assets in Asia and undermine our position in the world. I would suggest, therefore, that as the various vehicles for getting out of Vietnam are unveiled, we should examine them with all the care we would devote to Edsel automobiles on a used car lot.

There is of course the problem of working out, in the years ahead, a livable relationship with mainland China. For many years now the United States has offered to have cultural relationships, exchanges of scholars, and

negotiation of Chinese participation in the general affairs of the world. We should periodically repeat that offer. I believe it is of great importance to keep the issues in our relations with China out in the open -- and in the mainstream of thought and action.

V.

The heart of the matter is this: America faces in the last third of this century one of the most fateful and difficult periods in its history.

As Winston Churchill said:

"The price of greatness is responsibility. If the people of the United States had continued in a mediocre situation, struggling with the wilderness, absorbed in their own affairs, and a factor of no consequence in the movement of the world, they might have remained forgotten and undisturbed beyond their protecting oceans: but one cannot rise to be in many ways the leading community in the civilized world without being involved in its problems, without being convulsed by its agonies and inspired by its causes."

The road for your generation will not always be straight. The skies will not always be clear. You will often be discouraged. It will often take patience and understanding and imagination to work out compromises that fall far short of perfection but that underlie those creative political adjustments that permit progress in an imperfect world.

Some of you will be called upon to serve in the nation's armed forces, and some of those who are called will not return. Freedom is not cheaply defended.

You will not always be successful. My generation has made mistakes and so will yours.

Once at a wayside lunchroom a man found himself seated next to Will Rogers, the comedian, and in the course of conversation said, "What's wrong with

the world, anyway?" To which Will Rogers drawled in answer, "Well, I dunno. I guess it's people." I guess it is!

It is people with fortitude, good sense, and the steadiness to use our strength wisely that America needs in this critical hour -- and to meet the tests that lie ahead.

Theodore Roosevelt said the right words:

"We see, across the dangers, the great future...and we rejoice as a giant refreshed, as a strong man, girt for the race....The greatest victories are yet to be won, the greatest deeds yet to be done.... There are in store for our people, and for the causes we uphold, grander triumphs than have ever yet been scored."

And John F. Kennedy also said the right words:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."