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This Day and Your Future Responsibilities, June 11, 1981

Vern Riffe

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"THIS DAY AND YOUR FUTURE RESPONSIBILITIES"
SOUTHERN OHIO COLLEGE, CINCINNATI, OHIO
ROCKDALE TEMPLE
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
BY
OHIO HOUSE SPEAKER VERN RIFFE
8:00 P.M. - THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1981

INTRODUCTION

PRESIDENT ELMER SMITH, VICE PRESIDENT DUANE HAWKINS,
DIRECTOR JUDITH MILLS, _____
(OTHERS SUCH AS THE MAYOR, ETC.)

GRADUATES, PARENTS, RELATIVES AND GUESTS. IT IS INDEED A
GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE TODAY AND TO HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO SAY A FEW WORDS TO THE NEW GRADUATES.

YOUR COLLEGE CATALOGUE TELLS ME ABOUT THE MANY FIELDS
OF STUDY THAT YOU HAVE PURSUED. THE LONG LISTS OF COURSES
AND PROGRAMS INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO
GAIN MUCH KNOWLEDGE. I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE.

BE PROUD OF YOUR COLLEGE

YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF SOUTHERN OHIO COLLEGE. SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1927, IT HAS SERVED MANY PEOPLE WELL AND HAS GROWN CONTINUOUSLY. TODAY'S TOTAL ENROLLMENT ON ALL CAMPUSES OF ABOUT 3300 STUDENTS IS VERY SIGNIFICANT. THE COLLEGE HAS MADE MUCH PROGRESS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

PRIMARILY A BUSINESS ORIENTED INSTITUTION UNTIL RECENTLY, I AM INFORMED ABOUT THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TECHNICAL DIVISION. THIS DIVISION PROVIDES EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ENGINEERING AND MEDICAL SUPPORT FIELDS AS WELL AS IN THE AREAS OF MACHINE TOOLS, DIESEL AND AUTO SUBJECT AREAS.

THE COLLEGE NOW HAS A WIDE RANGE OF STUDY AREAS AND COURSES THAT ARE DESIGNED TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE WORLD OF WORK, AND GOOD CITIZENSHIP.

YOU HAVE CHOSEN AND ARE GRADUATING FROM A COLLEGE
THAT COMMANDS THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION OF PEOPLE THROUGH-
OUT OUR STATE AND NATION.

THE INCREASING ENROLLMENT AND EXPANSION OF PROGRAMS IS
EVIDENCE OF THE SCHOOL'S SUCCESS AND INDICATES THAT YOU MAY
EXPECT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR CHOSEN FIELDS IF YOU WORK
HARD.

JOB ORIENTED EDUCATION

I AM A FIRM BELIEVER IN JOB ORIENTED EDUCATION -- AN
EDUCATION THAT GIVES YOUNG PEOPLE THE SKILLS AND THE
KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN OUR WORLD. OUR COMMUNITIES
AND OUR STATE REAP THE BENEFITS FROM THE BOUNTY OF STUDENTS
WHO ATTEND CLASSES AND WHO HAVE A SKILL TO OFFER SOCIETY.

STUDIES INDICATE ONLY 20% OF THE AVAILABLE JOBS IN 1985 WILL REQUIRE FOUR YEAR COLLEGE DEGREES. THIS STUDY UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS THE FACT THAT GROWTH IN TWO YEAR SCHOOLS IS OVER 17% WHILE INCREASES IN UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENT ARE JUST OVER 1%.

FIGURES SHOW APPROXIMATELY 88,000 STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED IN OHIO TWO YEAR COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS IN THE STATE AND AN ADDITIONAL 80,000 OHIO STUDENTS ATTEND PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOLS IN OTHER STATES.

EDUCATION IS BASIC TO PRESERVING AN INFORMED DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. ACTUALLY EDUCATION IS BASIC TO EVERYTHING, AND WE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ARE ANXIOUS TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THE PEOPLE OF OUR STATE.

I AM PARTICULARLY PROUD OF THE LEGISLATURE'S EXPANSION OF THE OHIO INSTRUCTIONAL GRANTS PROGRAM. THE LEGISLATURE INCREASED THE INCOME ELIGIBILITY LIMITS FOR THE GRANT PROGRAM TO \$20,000 PER YEAR. IN ADDITION, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE PROGRAM STARTED BACK IN 1969, STUDENTS AT PROPRIETARY SCHOOLS WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR OHIO INSTRUCTIONAL GRANTS. TWO MILLION DOLLARS WAS APPROPRIATED IN THE CURRENT BUDGET TO MAKE STUDENTS ATTENDING PROPRIETARY SCHOOLS SUCH AS YOURS, ELIGIBLE FOR AN OHIO INSTRUCTIONAL GRANT. THERE ARE 33 PROPRIETARY SCHOOLS HERE IN OHIO WHICH AWARD ASSOCIATE DEGREES.

THIS JOB-ORIENTED SCHOOL IS DOING A TREMENDOUS JOB IN TRAINING INDIVIDUALS FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT. I SALUTE YOU, THE ADMINISTRATORS, THE FACULTY, AND THE STUDENTS ON YOUR OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DAY

TODAY, I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS,
YOUR COMMENCEMENT DAY.

THE MILESTONES WE PASS AS WE GO THROUGH LIFE HAVE A WAY
OF MAKING US STOP FOR A TIME TO THINK ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR
ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THIS COMMENCEMENT EXERCISE IS A MILESTONE
FOR YOU, AND AS YOU SIT HERE THIS EVENING AND THINK BACK
OVER YOUR TIME AT SOUTHERN OHIO COLLEGE, YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO
BE VERY PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THE DIPLOMA YOU'RE
ABOUT TO RECEIVE REPRESENTS MANY YEARS OF HARD WORK AND DEDI-
CATION.

BUT THE DIPLOMA YOU'LL CARRY HOME REPRESENTS SOMETHING
MORE AS WELL. IT'S A TOOL THAT YOU CAN USE FOR THE REST OF
YOUR LIFE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO.

THIS VALUABLE PIECE OF PAPER, WHICH SAYS SO MUCH WITH SO FEW WORDS, REPRESENTS THE TOOL OF EDUCATION, AND NO BETTER TOOL FOR SUCCESS WOULD BE GIVEN TODAY'S WORK FORCE WHICH FACES THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE IN THE YEARS TO COME.

IT MAY SEEM ODD THAT THE CEREMONIES WHICH MARK THE END OF YOUR BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION ARE CALLED COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES SINCE THE WORD COMMENCEMENT MEANS A BEGINNING, AND, IN REALITY, THAT IS WHAT THIS DAY IN YOUR LIVES IS ALL ABOUT.

I SEE BEFORE ME YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WITH THE ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM, AS WELL AS THE COURAGE, TO ACCEPT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CITIZENS, AND TO TAKE HOLD OF THE REINS THAT ARE HANDED THEM TO GUIDE THIS COUNTRY TO A NEW AND BETTER DAY.

YOU ARE THE HOPE OF OUR NATION. YOUR ACTIONS -- NOT THOSE OF YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS -- WILL DETERMINE THE COURSE OF WORLD EVENTS IN THE YEARS TO COME. TO HELP YOU CARRY OUT THIS OVERWHELMING RESPONSIBILITY, YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN A RIGHT AND A POWER THAT THE PEOPLE OF FEW OTHER NATIONS IN THE WORLD CAN CALL THEIR OWN. IT IS THE RIGHT OF CHOICE AND THE POWER TO CHANGE.

PEOPLE ARE NEEDED, NOT JUST AS WAGE EARNERS IN OUR BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES, NOR AS MEMBERS OF OUR ARMED SERVICES, BUT AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WITH A FULL ROLE IN THE LEADERSHIP OF OUR COUNTRY.

I SAID A FEW MOMENTS AGO THAT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE RIGHT OF CHOICE AND THE POWER TO CHANGE, AND INDEED YOU HAVE.

FOR THIS IS WHAT THE VOTE TRULY REPRESENTS. THE RIGHT TO VOTE, HOWEVER, ALSO CARRIES WITH IT THE ROLE OF FULL CITIZENSHIP WITH ALL OF ITS ACCOMPANYING RESPONSIBILITIES.

A PERSON WHO IS KEENLY AWARE OF THESE RESPONSIBILITIES KNOWS THAT FULL CITIZENSHIP ENTAILS MORE THAN A TRIP TO THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY . . . FOR THE VALUE OF A VOTE LIES IN THE VOTER. IT IS HIS OR HER KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATES AND ISSUES THAT DECIDES WHETHER A VOTE IS THE VOICE OF THE TRUE SELF-GOVERNED, OR THE MERE UTTERANCES OF ONE WHO IS CONTENT TO SIMPLY GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

FULL CITIZENSHIP GOES FAR BEYOND EVEN THE CASTING OF A WELL-EDUCATED, WELL-INFORMED, AND WELL-INTENTIONED VOTE.

FULL CITIZENSHIP IS A 24 HOUR A DAY, 365 DAY A YEAR JOB,
AND IT INVOLVES NEARLY EVERYTHING YOU DO.

IT DEMANDS, FIRST OF ALL, A HEALTHY, EARNEST AND CON-
TINUING RESPECT FOR OUR LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS.

THIS NATION WAS FOUNDED ON LAW NEARLY 200 YEARS AGO.
AND, IN LARGE PART, LAW HAS LIGHTED THE OFTEN-DARKENED ROAD
WHICH THIS COUNTRY HAS TRAVELED THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY.
FURTHERMORE, IT WILL BE THE LAW AND ADHERENCE TO IT THAT
WILL DETERMINE WHETHER AMERICA REMAINS IN THE FOREFRONT
OF THE WORLD-WIDE STRUGGLE FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND PERSONAL
FREEDOMS IN THE YEARS TO COME.

IN THIS COUNTRY TODAY, WE HEAR A GREAT CRY FOR CHANGE
AND A VIGOROUS DEBATE OVER WHETHER CHANGES WILL COME FROM
WITHIN OR FROM OUTSIDE OF OUR LEGAL SYSTEM.

SOME SAY CHANGE CAN ONLY COME FROM OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM. THEY WOULD ABANDON THE TRADITIONAL PROCESSES FOR CHANGES THAT HAVE BROUGHT US TO WHERE WE ARE, BECAUSE THEY HAVE LITTLE TASTE FOR THE EFFORT AND PATIENCE WHICH THE GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS REQUIRES. THEY WOULD PUSH RATHER THAN LEAD, AND COERCE RATHER THAN PERSUADE.

HOWEVER, SEEING THINGS FROM THE UNIQUE VANTAGE POINT OF THE SPEAKER OF THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, I HAVE FOUND, AND CAN ASSURE YOU WITHOUT RESERVATION, THAT LASTING CHANGE, CHANGE THAT BENEFITS ALL CITIZENS AND NOT JUST A CHOSEN FEW, HAS ALWAYS COME AND WILL ALWAYS COME ONLY THROUGH HARD WORK, DETERMINATION, AND COMMITMENT, AND ONLY THROUGH A PROCESS THAT TESTS AN IDEA FOR ITS WORTH, NOT JUST ITS POPULARITY AT SOME GIVEN MOMENT.

I SAID BEFORE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE POWER TO CHANGE, AND INDEED YOU HAVE. IT IS WITHIN YOUR SCOPE AS CITIZENS TO WORK FOR THE REPEAL OF LAWS YOU CONSIDER UNJUST, FOR THE RECALL OF OFFICIALS YOU FEEL ARE NOT COMPETENT, AND FOR THE ENACTMENT OF LAWS YOU BELIEVE ARE NECESSARY. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PURSUE YOUR DREAMS OF A BETTER COUNTRY AND A BETTER WORLD, AND TO SEEK THE CHANGES NECESSARY TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES A REALITY.

AS CITIZENS, YOU NOW MUST ASSUME AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HELPING TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR INSURING THAT WE BECOME A FREE AND INDEPENDENT NATION OF JUST AND EQUAL LAWS IS ONLY ONE OF THE MANY RESPONSIBILITIES YOU FACE.