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Valedictory

THE CHANGING AMERICAN CHARACTER

by Jeanne Anne Campbell

Members of the Board of Education, Mr. Kessler, members of the Faculty, honored guests, fellow students, friends and relatives:

It is the trend in this generation, as it has been in others, to look for and to demand individuality in others. As students, we have been told, from the first signs of adolescence, to be ourselves, to be independent, to show personal honesty, and to be of good character. A person with the sum total of these factors could be considered an individual. Facing this challenge is easier said than done.

David Reisman, an authority in the field of social interpretation, tells us that we delude ourselves if we really believe in our individuality. We demand, and are commanded to show personal responsibility. Yet, our institutions and culture make us conformists to the extent that we as a people allow it. For example, assumption disregards several facts: (1) that the Corporation cannot decide for itself what is best in business ventures, as evidenced in a recent court decision to forbid inter-stockholding between General Motors and the DuPont Co. (2) that the employees of General Motors Corporation are not free to express views or to compete openly for a higher position, but must conform to their unions' regulations and function as a legal entity represented by a small group of unionists, corrupt or otherwise. This example excellently shows us the strength of a force striving to achieve unity through conformity and to use conformity as a means toward the desired ultimatum.

I am not advocating that all restrictions and regulations are unjust or wrong in any way. I do, however, wish to point out the difficulty involved in achieving true individuality and the dangers in a society of conformists who allow a select few to dictate every fact and trend. The problem of mass conformity and a lack of individuality is becoming of increasing importance in America, today.

In attacking the problem from its root, one might ask, "What makes a person conform?" The reply could be, "What is there to discourage conformity?" Aside from the desire to keep the dangerous weapon of conformity from the hands of a few and to answer a challenge, religious or personal, there is very little. There are, in contrast, many reasons for establishing the habit of doing what "the gang is doing." From infancy, parents influence a child by forming his habitual routine and by making small demands upon the neophyte or beginner.

Psychologists have long stressed the importance of this period in character and conscience development. As a child develops and associates with others, the parents again demand something of the child. They demand that their child be vastly popular with other children, regardless of any basic personality conflicts. Already, the parents have begun to form the child's character, along the line David Reisman calls "Other directed" individualism.

"Other Directed" is one man's phrase for the child's attitude toward others. From an early age, the child's character, his method of making others accept him with little sacrifice of moral conscience, is a fixed pattern. The child is more concerned with what others think of him than with what he is. To please his parents, he must give up part of his individuality in favor of conformity. The guilty feeling that comes to the child from a common but unexpressable personality conflict must be suffered in silence. The desire to tell his feelings about others truthfully and unapologetically must be sacrificed for his insatiable parents and their demands.

Salutatory

THIS CHANGING WORLD

by James Noel Greene

Parents, faculty, Dr. Hersey, Mr. Kessler, Board of Education, friends and classmates; at this time I would like to welcome you on behalf of the class of 1963, to this commemorative event. I would also like to heartily thank each of you, for it has been you, our parents, our teachers, and our friends who have prepared us for this graduation tonight.

Every man since the beginning of time has lived in a changing world. Today, this world is changing much faster than ever before. These changes are especially evident in the political, social, and scientific fields of our time.

Let us suppose now that we have three coins: one representing the political changes, one representing the social changes, and one representing the scientific changes. As you know, all coins have two sides.

First of all, let's look at the coin representing the political changes both at home and abroad. South America and Latin America used to be relatively inactive and carefree in manner. When Castro came into power, however, a

This is only the beginning of a life-long relationship in which the child, as an adult, faces everything and everyone with a superficial affection.

This child, upon becoming an adult, learns to stage little "plays", taking the lead part himself. His every action is weighed for its effect. This person can "cry on cue", even though he feels no real emotion. The retribution he receives for his play-acting is a lack of the ability to feel and understand "the real thing", when it comes in life. Why do you suppose Hollywood actors and actresses remarry so often? When they are paid to express an emotion at every rehearsal, they lose the judgment necessary to secure happiness off stage. This is the vicious trap which threatens to consume all of us.

When I use the pronoun, we, I am not referring just to those of us present, this evening. This problem must be shouldered by every individual born, conceived and yet-to-be-conceived in America. America's society is rapidly becoming dominated by this "other directed" or play-acting person. People are beginning to believe, and rightly so, that everything can be had with a gimmick. In an effort to crash society's doors, people have been willing to give up their individuality and "join the flock". That is why there are Jackie Kennedys on every other street corner in our nation, today. Beware of the danger in this! Nothing can be led astray as easily as a group of conformists with one image in mind.

Those of us, on the stage this evening, will soon have the responsibility of raising a family. I challenge you not to say to your children, "Look at Susie Jones. She's the most popular girl in school. Why can't you be like her?" Even though you don't know how Susie got her popularity, your child may, in setting anything except God in his many forms, as an example, you are helping a dangerous element in our society to power. You are also trying to make your children the image of your youth and your ideal. This is the time to forgive a child for not being like you or your ideal. It is the time to vow to uphold any individuality shown. You will have a hand in the fashioning of the future American society.

For those present, who are fairly set in your ways, there is still hope. David Reisman says that individuality, as Americans see it, today, is non-existent. It can, however, be revived by changing a few ideas once championed.

rapid change occurred. Castroism challenged these countries. It challenged them to face the responsibilities and problems of a society in transition from the old world to the new. This challenge has brought about a number of political riots and revolutions in the Southern Hemisphere in recent years. Africa, too, has changed in a period of a few years, from a continent of semi-primitive countries and colonies, to a continent of countries attempting to build and maintain jet-airports, schools and responsible governments. This rapid change produces countries that are frequently unpredictable and unstable. In our own country, politics and Constitutional interpretation have undergone many subtle, but important, changes. The Supreme Court's decisions on resegregation, district reapportionment, and school prayers have reflected on many of these changes. Election techniques have changed too. Fifty years ago a Presidential candidate told the nation only his qualifications and major policy he would undertake if elected. Today the candidates have debates on television concerning nearly all the policies of the Federal government. Electronic computers are now able to predict with great accuracy the outcome of an election after a fraction of the votes in a district have been received. Similar techniques now enable politicians to measure public feelings on a given issue to a remarkable degree. Thus, this coin has shown its two sides; and representing the good changes, such as the election predictions and the other the bad, such as Castroism's effect on the Southern Hemisphere.

Let us now look at the second coin; the coin concerning the social changes of the world. Although our nation has made many great social changes in its years

of existence, perhaps none is more significant than the freeing of the slaves. Negroes now hold many important jobs both in private enterprise and the government. Yet, on the other side of our coin, we find the many people still do not consider them as equals. The older generations of Negroes tried to win equality over a period of many years, but the younger generation wants a more rapid change. A good example of this is the race riots in Birmingham, Alabama. They set off many demonstrations through-out the United States, making, unfortunately, headlines through-out the world. In South Africa, the apartheid policy has maintained strict separation of the races. Indications are that this policy will not change substantially in the near future. While South Africa hopes to solve her problem by putting a partition between the Europeans and Africans, this is utterly impossible in the United States. Therefore, the American solution must inexorable rest on the principle that wherever they live, the Negroes and Whites must form one community.

Now we come to our last coin; the coin representing the scientific changes of the world. Perhaps the most forceful way to show what tremendous strides have been made scientifically is to discuss the development of the nuclear bomb. On August 6, 1945 the United States dropped a bomb on Hiroshima, Japan that was equal in power to twice the amount of T. N. T. dropped on Hamburg, Germany, the year before, by 1000 bombers each carrying ten tons of bombs. This was the first atomic bomb used in war-time and that one bomb killed nearly 80,000 people. A decade ago the United States set off a nuclear bomb 750 times as great as the Hiroshima bomb. Last year Premier Krushchev announced that Russia had produced a 100 megaton bomb. That's a bomb equal to 100 million tons of T.N.T. and is five thousand times as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb. Although frightful destruction could be caused with these bombs, they also have great potential peace-

time uses, such as digging canals and harbors. For example, the United States dug a hole 1200 feet in diameter, in the Nevada desert with a nuclear bomb that left most of its radiation in the ground. Of course, this development of the nuclear bomb is just one example of the great scientific changes that occur everyday in our modern world.

What effect do these changes have on us? Actually, they affect us very much. This is largely due to the great acceleration these changes have gone through in the past few decades. The world is somewhat like a box of matches in the hands of a child. The child, not knowing what he was doing, could set fire to the whole box. It is the same with the world. We have the thought of a nuclear war hanging over our heads. It is frightening to think of what could happen in the event of possibly one mistake. We would be literally doomed. If not killed by the blast and the immediate fall-out of nuclear bombs, we would have to eat contaminated food and drink contaminated milk and water the next year. Yes, it really is frightening to think of this; so we try to forget it.

However, this is easier said than done, for the thought of the possible extermination of the human race results in confusion, tension, and fear in each of us. Recent tests with an Air Force biomeasuring device have shown that a Californian driving home from work on a busy freeway, may undergo more nervous strain than an astronaut in orbit. Even more striking, one out of every ten Americans has some sort of mental problem. One out of every twenty has to have psychiatric help. Many people just cannot take all

the pressures of modern society and end up in institutions as a result.

Of course, there are other factors causing this anxiety and most of them relate back to us, the people. Therefore, it would seem that our only hope is our faith, for our faith in Christ and Eternal life must never change. We must cling to our religion and faith in order to face all life's uncertainties, whether they be political, social, or scientific. This is expressed very well in these lines by William James: "Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact." Thank you.

NOTICE

The Summer Hours during the months of July and August for the Offices in the Courthouse at Belmont, New York, are from 9:00 A. M. to 4:00 P. M.

Card of Thanks

We would like to thank all for the many acts of kindness shown us during Harold's illness and death.

Mrs. Harold Emery
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Emery
and Family

Appreciation

We wish to express our appreciation and thanks to our many friends who gave gifts, flowers and money and also to the ladies who assisted with the refreshments at our Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary Open House.

Mr. and Mrs. Cowles Whiting

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