

K-Blinder

REMARKS OF

THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. KEAN

GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY

AT THE

50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

MONMOUTH COLLEGE

WEST LONG BRANCH, NEW JERSEY

MAY 20, 1984

PRESIDENT MAGILL, FELLOW HONOREES, MEMBERS OF THE
FACULTY, GRADUATES, FRIENDS:

THANK YOU.

I AM DEEPLY HONORED TO RECEIVE THIS DOCTOR
OF LAWS DEGREE, AND I AM MOVED BY THE WORDS WITH WHICH YOU
HAVE CHOSEN TO INSCRIBE IT. IT IS SOMETHING WHICH I SHALL
REMEMBER, AND TREASURE, FOR ALL THE YEARS OF MY LIFE.

IT IS A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE HERE TODAY, AS
YOU CONCLUDE THE CELEBRATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDING OF THIS PROUD COLLEGE. IT MADE ME PAUSE AND THINK
ABOUT WHERE WE WERE AS A NATION, AS A STATE, AND AS A PEOPLE
50 YEARS AGO -- EVEN AS I SEARCHED FOR THE PROPER MESSAGE TO
BRING YOU ABOUT YOUR FUTURE; ABOUT THE NEXT 50 YEARS.

IT IS A CLICHE TO SAY THAT TODAY MARKS YOUR PASSAGE
INTO THAT FUTURE, THE BEGINNING OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR
ITS OUTCOME, THE END OF YOUR CHILDHOOD AND, FOR MOST OF YOU,
OF YOUR FORMAL PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIFE.

IT IS A CLICHE --- BUT OF COURSE IT IS TRUE.

TODAY, YOU FORMALLY JOIN THE COMMUNITY OF EDUCATED MEN
AND WOMEN. AND AS YOU JOIN, YOU INCUR A RESPONSIBILITY:
FOR YOURSELVES, FOR YOUR CONTEMPORARIES, FOR THE SOCIETY
WHICH MADE THE GIFTS THAT ALL OF YOU HAVE RECEIVED POSSIBLE,
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, FOR WHAT IS LEFT TO YOUR CHILDREN AND
TO GENERATIONS TO COME.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, THE OCEAN WHICH LIES JUST A MILE AWAY
FROM THIS BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS WAS A DIFFERENT KIND OF OCEAN.

ITS WATER WAS BLUER; THE BEACHES WHICH LINED IT WHITER. IT
SUPPORTED THRIVING VACATION SPOTS ALL ALONG THE NEW JERSEY
COAST, AND IT NOURISHED A FLOURISHING FAMILY OF LIVING
THINGS IN ITS WATERS.

TODAY, THANK GOD, WE STILL HAVE BEAUTIFUL BEACHES. WE
STILL HAVE THRIVING FISHERIES. WE STILL HAVE SWIMMABLE
WATERS.

BUT AS ALL OF YOU KNOW, THAT OCEAN IS THREATENED. SOME
OF ITS WATER IS FULL OF THE REFUSE OF MAN; SOME OF ITS
FISH ARE SICK WITH CONTAMINATION.

AND AS I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT TO SAY TO YOU TODAY, MY MIND KEPT TURNING BACK TO THAT OCEAN THAT WE ALL LOVE SO MUCH. MY THOUGHTS RETURNED TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES WHICH FACE NEW JERSEY MORE THAN ANY OTHER STATE -- AND TO THE AWESOME RESPONSIBILITIES THAT I FACE, AND THAT YOU FACE, FOR MEETING THEM.

IT WAS JUST OVER 50 YEARS AGO THAT A FELLOW REPUBLICAN, A MAN WHO BECAME KNOWN AS THE FATHER OF CONSERVATION -- REALLY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT -- IN THIS COUNTRY, WROTE THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

"THE CENTRAL THING FOR WHICH CONSERVATION STANDS IS TO MAKE THIS COUNTRY THE BEST POSSIBLE PLACE TO LIVE IN, BOTH FOR US AND FOR OUR DESCENDANTS."

THAT MAN WAS GIFFORD PINCHOT. HE SERVED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT. AND HE WENT ON:

"CONSERVATION IS A MORAL ISSUE," PINCHOT WROTE, "BECAUSE IT INVOLVES THE RIGHTS AND THE DUTIES OF OUR PEOPLE -- THEIR RIGHTS TO PROSPERITY AND HAPPINESS, AND THEIR DUTIES TO THEMSELVES, TO THEIR DESCENDANTS, AND TO THE WHOLE FUTURE PROGRESS AND WELFARE OF THIS NATION."

TODAY, MANY OF YOU ARE RIGHTLY CONCERNED WITH YOUR OWN FUTURE. WITH YOUR FINANCIAL SECURITY. WITH HOW YOU WILL FARE IN THE WIDER WORLD THAT, IN MANY WAYS, YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER.

BUT AS YOU EMERGE FROM THESE BEAUTIFUL GROVES, AS YOU MAKE YOUR WAY ALONG WHATEVER PATH YOU CHOOSE, DON'T FORGET YOUR WIDER OBLIGATIONS. DON'T FORGET ALL OF THE ELEMENTS OF THAT FUTURE. DON'T FORGET THE FACT THAT ONE DAY SOON, YOUR CHILDREN WILL SIT WHERE YOU SIT NOW. DON'T FORGET TO CONSIDER, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY TO SHAPE THE LEGACY THAT YOU AND YOUR GENERATION WILL LEAVE TO THEM.

THERE IS A POPULAR MISCONCEPTION THAT THERE IS SOMEHOW A TENSION BETWEEN ALL OF THESE GOALS. THAT, SOMEHOW, THE GOAL OF A MORE SECURE ECONOMIC FUTURE ON THE ONE HAND, AND THAT OF A GREATER SOCIAL CONSCIENCE ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE INCONSISTENT.

IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD, THIS TRANSLATES INTO THE BELIEF THAT THE GOALS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. THAT BOTH CANNOT BE PURSUED SIMULTANEOUSLY.

I SUBMIT THAT THE REVERSE IS TRUE. I SUBMIT THAT, IN FACT, ONE OF THE KEYS TO OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE IS A CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT. I SUBMIT THAT EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES ALIKE WANT MOST TO LIVE AND WORK IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS BOTH SAFE AND SUSTAINING. THAT ALL OF US -- BUSINESSMEN AND LABORERS, INDUSTRIALISTS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS, MEN AND WOMEN -- MOST NEED TO KNOW IS THAT THE AIR WE BREATHE AND THE WATER WE DRINK -- AND THAT OUR CHILDREN WILL BREATHE AND OUR CHILDREN WILL DRINK -- IS CLEAN. THAT IT IS PURE. THAT IT WILL ALLOW US TO CONTINUE TO LIVE THE HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE LIVES WE ALL WANT.

WITHOUT THAT ASSURANCE, ANY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WILL FAIL. WITHOUT THAT KNOWLEDGE, ALL OF THE MONEY IN THE WORLD WILL NOT MAKE YOU SECURE.

TODAY, IN NEW JERSEY, ONE OF MY GREATEST CHALLENGES AS GOVERNOR -- IF NOT THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF ALL -- IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THIS IS TRUE.

IT IS TO TAKE ON A LEGACY OF FORGOTTEN DUMPS, OF UNTHINKING POLLUTION, OF MINDLESS DISREGARD FOR PRECIOUS RESOURCES.

SO IN COMING BEFORE YOU TODAY, IN THINKING ABOUT BOTH THE LAST 50 YEARS AND THE NEXT 50 YEARS, I'D LIKE TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP IN MEETING THAT CHALLENGE.

MOST OF YOU COME FROM A STATE WHICH IS A LEADER IN DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS THAT CONFRONT US ON THE ENVIRONMENT. I HOPE YOU ARE PROUD OF IT.

BUT MORE THAN THAT, I HOPE YOU WILL HELP US MAINTAIN THAT LEADERSHIP IN THE ROUGH YEARS AHEAD. IT WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT IT WILL BE VITAL.

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST CLOUD ON THE HORIZON IS THE HOST OF DUMPS THAT DOT OUR STATE -- DUMPS WHICH CONTAIN TOXIC CHEMICALS WHICH ARE LEAKING INTO OUR AIR AND WATER.

WE HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD IN MOVING TO CLEAN UP THESE TOXIC WASTE SITES. WE HAVE BEEN AGGRESSIVE AND THOROUGH IN FINDING THEM, IN DETERMINING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM, AND IN SEEKING HELP FOR THEIR CLEANUP FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

WE HAVE CREATED A SPECIAL SITING COMMISSION TO TACKLE THE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF WHERE AND HOW TO DISPOSE OF THESE WASTES IN THE FUTURE.

AND WE HAVE SET UP A SCHEDULE FOR CLEANING UP WHAT NEEDS TO BE CLEANED UP ALREADY.

I HAVE ASKED PRESIDENT REAGAN, AND I HAVE ASKED THE CONGRESS, TO RE-AUTHORIZE THE FEDERAL "SUPERFUND" WHICH CAN GIVE US THE RESOURCES TO STAY ON THIS SCHEDULE. IF THE SUPERFUND IS REAUTHORIZED THIS YEAR, OUR SITES ARE READY TO BE CLEANED UP. IF NOT, IF CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT DELAY, WE HAVE PLANNED TO PROVIDE THE RESOURCES TO FILL THE GAP FROM STATE FUNDS UNTIL IT IS.

IN ANY EVENT, NEW JERSEY IS READY TO GO. BUT NO MATTER WHAT, IT WILL BE A LONG AND PAINFUL PROCESS TO CLEAN UP THESE SITES-- AND TO MAKE SURE THAT MORE ARE NOT CREATED IN THE MEAN TIME.

IT WILL NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED DURING MY TERM IN OFFICE -- OR PERHAPS EVEN IN MY LIFETIME. INSTEAD, IT IS A PROBLEM, AND A DIFFICULT AND EXPENSIVE ONE, THAT YOU WILL FACE THROUGHOUT YOURS.

THE SAME IS TRUE OF SOLID WASTE -- OR GARBAGE.

MOST OF US FORGET OUR GARBAGE ONCE IT LEAVES OUR CURBSIDE. WE EXPECT IT TO BE TAKEN AWAY, TO BE GONE.

BUT IT MUST GO SOMEWHERE. AND SOMEONE MUST PAY TO TAKE CARE OF IT.

FOR TOO LONG, WE HAVEN'T CARED ABOUT OUR GARBAGE. WE HAVE DISPOSED OF IT CHEAPLY, CARELESSLY.

AND TODAY, NEW JERSEY'S LANDFILLS ARE FILLING UP. COMMUNITIES HAVE NOWHERE TO PUT THEIR OWN GARBAGE, SO THEY DUMP IT IN OTHER COMMUNITIES. AND THOSE COMMUNITIES IN TURN ARE OUTRAGED AND CONFUSED.

WELL, WE ARE ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF GARBAGE. WE HAVE PROPOSED A SYSTEM OF RESOURCE RECOVERY FACILITIES. WE HAVE ASKED ALL OF THE COUNTIES IN NEW JERSEY TO BEGIN RECYCLING GARBAGE, TO TURN IT INTO USEFUL THINGS: REUSABLE GLASS, METAL, OR EVEN ENERGY.

AND WE HAVE ASKED COUNTIES TO PLAN AHEAD.

BUT AGAIN, IT WILL NOT BE EASY, IT WILL NOT BE QUICK, AND IT WILL NOT BE CHEAP.

NO, YOUR GENERATION WILL HAVE TO WRESTLE WITH THE UNPLEASANT PROBLEM OF GARBAGE. YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY MORE FOR ITS DISPOSAL. YOU WILL HAVE TO THINK MORE ABOUT WHERE IT GOES. AND YOU WILL HAVE TO PLAN MORE TO MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT IS DONE WITH IT.

TOXIC WASTES AND GARBAGE ARE JUST TWO OF THE MANY ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS WHICH FACE US ALL. WHICH I AM WORKING TO SOLVE RIGHT NOW BUT WHICH, ULTIMATELY, WILL BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL OF US HERE TODAY FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

THEY ARE BY NO MEANS ISOLATED. NEW JERSEY'S FORESTS AND LAKES ARE DYING FROM ACID RAIN, THE SULFUR POLLUTION THAT RESULTS FROM THE BURNING OF COAL FOR NEEDED ELECTRIC POWER IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

THE BEAUTIFUL OCEAN I MENTIONED EARLIER IS USING UP ITS CAPACITY TO ABSORB ALL THAT WE ARE DUMPING INTO IT. I HAVE ASKED THE E.P.A. TO MOVE SOME OF THAT DUMPING FURTHER OUT TO SEA, AND THEY HAVE AGREED.

THAT, OF COURSE, IS A SHORT TERM SOLUTION, BUT IT DOES NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

INSTEAD, WE NEED TO TURN TO THE OTHER ALTERNATIVES THAT NOW EXIST, AND THAT DO NOT THREATEN THE MARINE LIFE, THE TOURISM, AND ALL THAT THE RESILIENT OCEAN CAN SUPPORT GIVEN THE CHANCE.

ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS -- TOXIC WASTE, SOLID WASTE, ACID RAIN, OCEAN POLLUTION -- HAVE SEVERAL THINGS IN COMMON; THINGS WHICH ARE RELEVANT TO US AS WE CELEBRATE TODAY.

THEY HAVE ALL BEEN SUCCESSFULLY, IF SORROWFULLY, IDENTIFIED. WE HAVE STUDIED THEM. WE KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE. WHAT WE NEED NOW IS THE WILL AND THE COURAGE TO DO THEM.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE TIME FOR STUDY IS OVER. IT IS TIME NOW FOR ACTION.

WITHOUT IT, WE HAVE FAILED. IF WE WAIT, AS SOME SUGGEST, FOR FURTHER STUDY, WE WILL MERELY HAVE THE MOST WELL DOCUMENTED ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IN HISTORY.

AT TIMES, YOU HAVE DECIDE THAT YOU HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ON WHICH TO ACT. ON WHICH TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. THAT TIME IS NOW.

I ASK FOR YOUR HELP IN PURSUING THIS ACTION: IN
MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM
TO ADDRESSING IT -- THOUGHTFULLY BUT FORCEFULLY.

WE WILL NOT SOLVE ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS THIS YEAR OR
NEXT, OR EVEN IN THIS DECADE. NO, OUR FASCINATION WITH
SHORT TERM RESULTS WILL NOT SERVE US WELL IN THE DIFFICULT
AND COMPLICATED AREAS I HAVE JUST DISCUSSED. INSTEAD, WE
WILL HAVE TO LEARN TO THINK IN TWENTY YEAR TIME FRAMES.
YOU WILL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THESE PROBLEMS WILL BE WITH
YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFETIME. BUT THEIR SOLUTION IS NEITHER
IMPOSSIBLE NOR UNIMPORTANT. IT WILL REQUIRE PERSISTENCE,
PLANNING, AND PATIENCE. AND IT WILL REQUIRE THAT WE BEGIN
NOW.

MANY OF YOU MAY HAVE READ IN YOUR BUSINESS COURSES A NEW BOOK. IT IS CALLED IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE: LESSONS FROM AMERICA'S BEST-RUN COMPANIES. ONE OF THE SECRETS TO SUCCESS THAT THE BOOK IDENTIFIES IS PRECISELY THAT WHICH I AM CALLING TO YOUR ATTENTION TO NOW. IT IS, IN THE BOOK, CALLED "A BIAS FOR ACTION."

I HOPE THAT IT IS A LESSON THAT MY WORDS CAN HELP INSTILL IN YOU TODAY. ONE OF THE GREATEST PROBLEMS WE MUST OVERCOME IN GOVERNMENT IS THE FEAR OF BEING WRONG. TOO OFTEN, FOR FEAR OF MAKING A MISTAKE, WE DO NOTHING.

WELL, WE ALL WILL ERR IN OUR LIVES. WE WILL SOMETIMES CHOOSE THE WRONG COURSE. BUT AT LEAST LET US CHOOSE A COURSE. IN WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT. AND TO DO IT NOW.

LAST SUMMER, WE CONDUCTED AN INTERESTING AND IN MY MIND VERY SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT ON THIS CAMPUS. WE CONDUCTED THE FIRST GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL WAS TO GATHER SOME OF THE MOST PROMISING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE STATE -- THE LEADERS OF TOMMORROW -- AND TO INSTILL IN THEM A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THEIR STATE. WE BROUGHT TOGETHER THE FINEST FACULTY WE COULD FIND, AND WE OUTLINED SOME OF THE KEY PROBLEMS -- IN THE ENVIRONMENT, IN HEALTH, IN THE CITIES -- FACING NOT ONLY NEW JERSEY BUT THE WORLD.

AND WE COMMUNICATED TO THE STUDENTS THAT THEY -- EVEN AS 17 YEAR OLDS -- COULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT THOSE PROBLEMS.

WELL, TODAY I STAND IN FRONT OF SOME OF THE MOST PROMISING COLLEGE GRADUATES IN THE STATE. AND YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THIS OUTSTANDING FACULTY. AND YOU HAVE LEARNED ABOUT BOTH PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

SO I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH THAT VERY SAME MESSAGE. YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM. AND YOU CAN BEGIN TO DO IT TODAY.

IT WILL NOT BE EASY, AND THE RESULTS WILL NOT ALWAYS BE QUICK OR EVEN EVIDENT AT ALL.

BUT THAT DOES NOT ABSOLVE YOU FROM THE RESPONSIBILITY
OF TRYING. AND IT WILL NOT ROB YOU OF THE SATISFACTION OF
HAVING GIVEN YOUR ALL.

SO AS I WELCOME YOU TO THAT COMMUNITY OF EDUCATED MEN
AND WOMEN, I DO SO WITH A CALL: A CALL FOR YOUR HELP; A
PLEA FOR YOUR CONCERN; AND A WARM WISH FOR YOUR SUCCESS IN
FULFILLING THE RICH PROMISE THAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR YOU.

THANK YOU.