

Students in Commencement Speeches

PEACEFUL REFORM STRESSED BY SOME

Tempered Comments Mixed
With Protests Over the
War and 'Repression'

By WILLIAM K. STEVENS

The rhetoric of dissent and defiance once again resounds from the commencement platform as spokesmen for the college Class of 1970 cry out against war in Indochina and "exploitation" and "repression" at home.

This year, however, new, more positive, less apocalyptic notes are also being sounded by student speakers in the graduation ceremonies that escaped cancellation in this spring's wave of campus riots and strikes.

Interwoven with the voices of protest are calls for non-violent reform within the system, suggestions that students adopt a balanced sense of historical perspective in viewing the troubles of the world and pleas for reconciliation between generations.

Matthew Shuman of Windham College in Vermont, for example, told of the commitment of Windham students to "reduce generational hostilities and eliminate the communications gap," and offered this advice to his classmates:

"In the face of irrationality we must offer rational thought, and in the face of a violent Government we must offer nonviolent alternatives."

Some Problems From '70

William Derrickson, senior class president at the University of Hawaii, said:

"The Class of 1970 would do well to remember that like the generation before it, it, too, does not have all the answers; and that our descendants will inherit from us a unique collection of problems which they, too, will bemoan on occasions such as this."

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 1970

Urge Understanding Between G

John H. Zammito, speaking for the graduating class at the University of Texas, said:

"We are too often and too easily trapped into categories. We lose our sense of common humanity, dividing human life into camps of the old, the established, the youth. There is no youth, there are only children. There is no establishment, there are only parents. We must remove the blinders from our eyes."

Historical righteousness blinds the parent, moral righteousness the son, Mr. Zammito said. He explained that the parent remembers the Depression, World War II, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, "days of hunger and of struggle to survive."

The parent, in Mr. Zammito's phrase, is "driven by the harshness of historical necessity."

"He relishes his material possessions, for he labored for them," Mr. Zammito continued. "He relishes American power, for he fought for it. He respects the government and the laws, for they do not seem repressive to him. He trusts the men in power, for he cannot believe they would lie to him. And so he silently obeys. And he is certain he is right."

Justice and Blindness

Mr. Zammito saw the cry of the young as being "one of justice." "But it resounds with accusation," he went on. "In their fervor [the young] do not understand historical necessity or that the guilt must fall on all humanity. They are as blind as their parents."

Scorning the "man of rhetoric, he who appeals to the notion of necessity to pervert the old, and the notion of principle to pervert the young," Mr. Zammito continued:

"Have we so completely forgotten the love and care of our parents? Have we forgotten our origins? Are we to believe those who tell us to hate them or to ignore them? Are we so free from guilt? They faced historical necessity as we face it today. Only when we understand that we are theirs and that they are ours and that this is the only truth—only then can we turn to the restoration of hope."

Miss Bonnie A. Cooke, valedictorian at the Davis and Elkins College graduation ceremony in West Virginia, told adult listeners: "You'll need to be patient with us as we will with you. I believe we're in a position to teach each other, but one of us might have to meet the other more than halfway. Who's it going to be first?"

Running beneath the pleas for rationality and understanding remained the strong current of dissent, reflected not only in words but also in styles and actions.

Symbols of dissent bloomed on campus after campus—white armbands on commencement robes, signifying peace; red, clenched fists, stenciled on other robes, signifying revolution; the shunning of caps and gowns so that the money spent on them might go instead for social and legal causes.

The year's turmoil had its effect on graduation forms, too, as the traditional valedictory speakers were supplemented by, or gave way to, additional speakers addressing themselves specifically to the issues of the day.

At Harvard, as in past years, a faculty committee chose the three official student speakers for tomorrow's commencement. But for the first time, the

senior class asked for and received permission to present a speaker of its own choosing to deal with the issues of war, repression and university relations.

At Yale the commencement podium was thrown open for a time to any graduate who wanted to speak his mind.

On campus after campus, students continued to spin out a graduation theme centered on protest.

Students "are discovering the relationships which connect the war in Asia and the political repression at home with the profits of corporations and the uniquely American institution of white racism," said Jan Ting, a student speaker at Oberlin College.

At New York University yesterday, a 1970 graduate, Phyllis L. Haynes, warned her listeners "not to define this [protest] movement as a youth movement." She said it had been "the tactic of the adult to make himself believe that these demands for change come from children," but that in reality they come from "the people."

On some campuses, students called for support of nationwide boycotts, of soft drinks, tobacco, the recording industry and automobiles.

Forty-five graduates of the College of New Rochelle, a Roman Catholic women's institution, signed a statement that said:

"We commit ourselves to direct political action until the cessation of the war in Southeast Asia and the sanctioned murder and racism rampant in the United States. It is our hope that our participation in both the economic boycott and the national academic protest will contribute to whatever

pressures are necessary to half progress of the American war machine."

The mixture of anger and reason, hope and despair expressed by the Class of 1970 was perhaps epitomized in the speech given by Tanya Neiman at the commencement of Mills College in Oakland, Calif.

She began with this quotation:

"The streets of our country are in turmoil. The universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting. Communists are seeking to destroy our country. Russia is threatening us with her might. The republic is in danger. We need law and order." — Adolph Hitler, 1932."

After drawing a parallel between Hitler's statement and what she considered to be a spirit of repression abroad in the United States today, Miss Neiman described what she believed to be a new attitude toward dissent on the campus.

"Today," she said, "the rock throwers have become as irrelevant as our Governor. Students have now begun to direct their efforts toward working 'within the system.' What has occurred is not a move to the left but actually a conservative trend to make the system responsive from within instead of destroying it from without."

She warned, however, that "this will likely be a last attempt at peaceful dissent." "The spell of apathy has finally been broken," she asserted. "More violence will come with growing frustration with the Government, since violence is bred out of the loss of faith in the responsiveness of the established Government."

Miss Neiman closed with a quotation from John F. Kennedy:

"Those who make peaceful evolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable."