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Nixon Asks Graduates to Be Optimistic

By JOHN HERBERS

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ORLANDO, Fla., June 8—In a rare public appearance, President Nixon visited Florida Technological University today and delivered a campaign-style speech that emphasized "what is right about this country."

Mr. Nixon, delivering the commencement address to a friendly but not enthusiastic audience of several thousand persons, did not mention the Watergate crisis that has buffeted his Administration.

He acknowledged soaring prices to be a problem but said they stemmed from expanding worldwide consumer demand, a sign of progress, and must be met in the long run through increased production.

"This is not time for any mouthing of pessimism about the future," he said. "There is a problem but we have the means to deal with it."

The speech, his first before an outdoor civilian audience since his second inauguration in January, gave no hint of the great stress he and his Administration have undergone in recent weeks. It was a combination of his campaign speeches of last year and his optimistic views on the chances of world peace as expressed in recent talks on military bases and before the former prisoners of war.

"In the whole history of the world, in all the nations of the world, there has never been a time I would rather be a grad-

uate than in the year 1973 in the United States of America," he said.

Florida Technological appeared to have been chosen to fit the occasion. A spokesman for the university said a two-year-old invitation for the President to speak here had been accepted only three days ago.

Dr. Charles N. Millican, the university president, had prepared his own commencement address but said he was glad to scrap it—"I cannot think of a better pinch-hitter than the President of the United States."

John Andrews, a White House aide who helped with the speech, said, "This is a solid middle-American student body."

About 70 per cent of the stu-

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dents here have outside employment. President Nixon noted that the university, founded in 1968, was situated in conservative Orange County.

"I live in Orange County, Calif.," he said. "Both have been very good to me in my political life."

Almost 800 graduates in black gowns and several thousand other students and parents were assembled between modernistic buildings and in humid heat when the Presidential helicopter roared onto the campus.

Signs Ask: 'Confess'

The President, in dark blue suit, his hair blowing in the wind, and Mrs. Nixon, holding a bouquet of red roses, were greeted with waving and applause. The only indications of dissent were signs far back in the audience saying "confess!" and other references to the Watergate case. A small band of demonstrators was blocked from the area.

The President's address was awaited here with interest. There had been speculation in the newspapers that he would address himself to the Watergate troubles. Instead, he said, "In view of the fact that there is somewhat of a tendency to have our television sets inundated with whatis wrong with America I think it perhaps would be well to start with the proposition about what is right about this country."

"This is the first graduating class in 12 years that will graduate in a year in which the United States is not engaged in war in Vietnam," he said. "This is the first graduating class in 32 years where the young men of this class will not be subject to draft."

If America meets its international responsibilities, he

said, "this graduating class has the chance to be the first generation in this century to grow up without a war, and that is a goal that we intend to achieve."

"A strong America is no

threat to the peace," he continued. "It is a guarantee of peace. Keep America strong and never send the President of the U. S. to the negotiating table as the head of the second strongest nation in the world."

After a ripple of applause, he added, "I assume that will be described as jingoistic talk. So be it."

'Opportunity' on Inflation

On inflation, Mr. Nixon said: "Government, of course, can act, and we shall act, where we think it is responsible to do so and where it will be effective, to hold down the inflation. But putting it in a more positive way, when we consider prices, for example, for food, have gone up and what can we do about it, we can see that this is not something to look upon as an enormous burden, but as an opportunity."

The Administration has been under increasing political pressure, from Congress and elsewhere, to take some steps to tighten controls against inflation. The pressure increased after the announcement yesterday that wholesale prices during May rose 2 per cent.

The President said today:

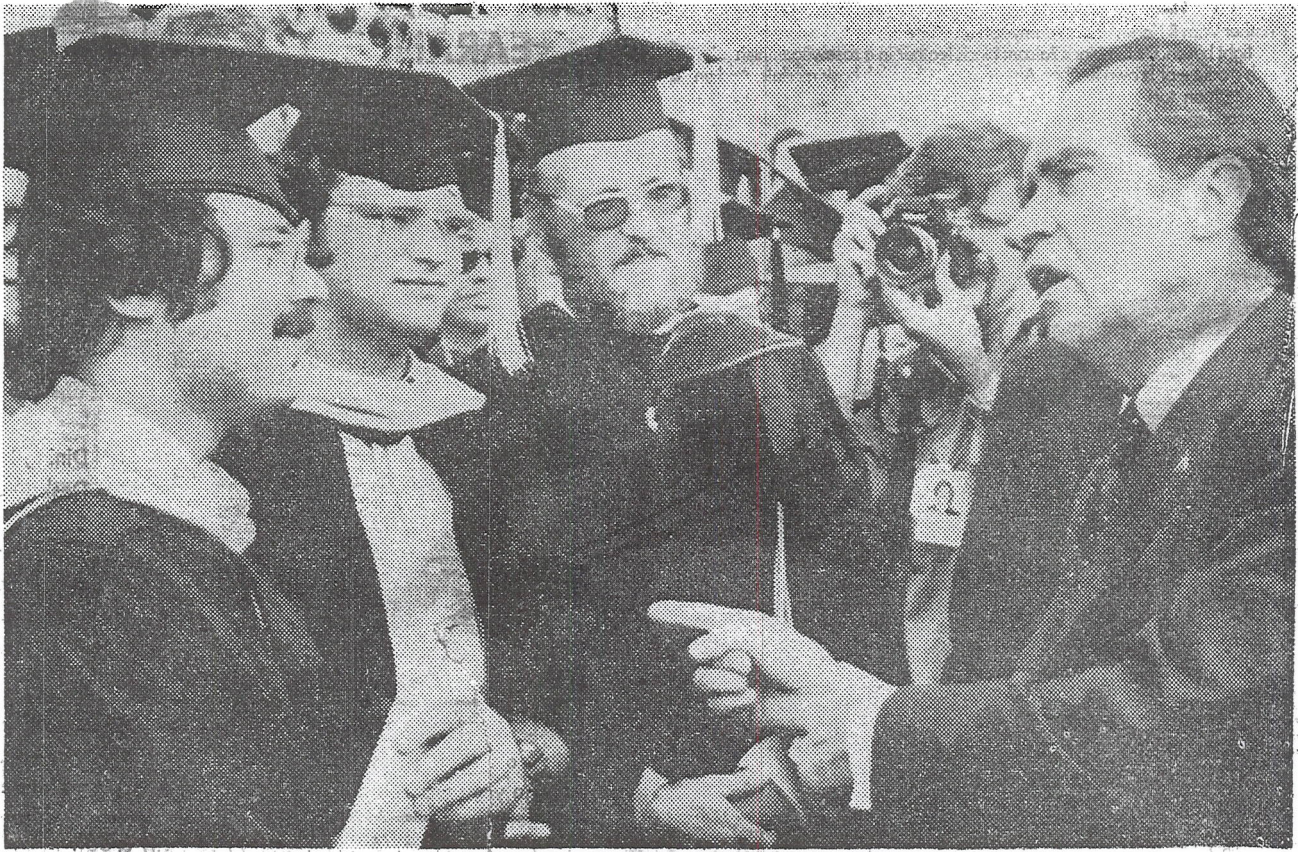
"All over the world today people are living better. There are many terribly poor people in the world, including some in the United States, but they live better, as a result, the demand for meat, the demand for grain, the demand for everything has gone up worldwide."

"It is good to know that people demand more," he continued. "The only answer then is: How do we produce more. The long-term answer to the problem of inflation is to produce more."

Mr. Nixon also talked about "the American spirit." "There are many in this country who had doubts about that spirit during the long agony of the war in Vietnam," he said. "As our men came back from those P.O.W. camps, as they came back standing straight, saluting the flag of the United States saying, 'God Bless America,' we realized that our people, the American people, have the strength and the character to lead the world as we will lead the world toward peace in these years ahead."

Mr. Nixon's speech, and his actions in Washington during the week, left the picture of a President trying to ride out the Watergate scandals without putting up a day-to-day defense. The stress he had put on national security, in his May 22 statement and his address to the prisoners of war, appears to have been abandoned.

After the speech, he shook hands at length with the graduates and faculty, then flew to Key Biscayne for another long weekend in seclusion.



Associated Press

President Nixon talks with graduates after speaking at the commencement of Florida Technological University