

THE DEDICATED CITIZEN

He's the man who is ready to serve when called on — by his government, or by his neighbors

By ARTHUR S. FLEMING

I REGARD IT as a real honor to have the opportunity and privilege of addressing the members of the class of 1953 of the California Institute of Technology.

I have long admired the outstanding contribution that this institution has been making to the Nation. We are more dependent on the number and quality of graduates from this and other similar institutions than ever before in our history. We have been and still are confronted with serious shortages in the field of scientific and technical manpower. We need men and women who have had the finest kind of scientific and technical training and who, at the same time, are equipped to provide us with the leadership in the field of management which will result in our utilizing our limited resources in the most intelligent and effective manner. I know that, as a result of your work at this Institute, you will in the years which lie ahead provide us with that kind of leadership.

I also consider it to be a high honor to have the opportunity of being associated with your President in this Commencement program. As many of you know, Dr. DuBridge is the Chairman of the Science Advisory Committee of the Office of Defense Mobilization. This is just one of many connections that he has with the Government. In connection with all of these assignments, he has given and is giving of his time, energy and talents to the Nation during one of our most critical

periods. He is the type of citizen who goes the second mile in his determination to recognize and discharge the duties of citizenship.

In an address to the Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy just a few weeks ago, the President of the United States said:

“There is something special about dedicating your lives to the United States of America that lives with you, and, what is more important, in my opinion, with your children as long as they shall live.”

The President was addressing, of course, a group of men who in many instances will serve in the United States Navy for most of their active careers.

But the President's remarks are applicable to each one of us. There is something special about dedicating our lives to the United States of America. And no matter what our vocation may be, we can dedicate our lives to our Nation in just as real a sense as the man who takes an oath of office in the United States Navy.

And here are some of the ways in which we can make such a dedication.

First, we can place our duties as citizens ahead of our own personal desires and selfish interests.

If we do, we will always vote; and before we vote we will always do everything we possibly can to obtain the information which will enable us to arrive at intelli-

gent conclusions regarding both candidates and issues.

The man or woman who fails to do both of these things is deliberately placing personal desires and interests ahead of the best interests of his Nation.

We need the contributions that men and women trained in scientific fields can make to the solution of our major political issues. There is no way in the world in which you can satisfactorily rationalize your failure to make such a contribution. You are either going to strengthen your Government by becoming a participant in the affairs of Government or you are going to undermine your Government by standing on the sidelines as spectators. You can't be neutral.

He serves his neighbors

Second, we can help our neighbors realize their highest possibilities.

The surest way in which to undermine the foundation on which our Nation rests is for citizens to decide that they will take care of themselves and let the other fellow take care of himself.

The dedicated citizen is one who always is ready to utilize his time, energy, and resources in the interest of assisting, for example, the Red Cross, Community Chest agencies, and above all, the church of his choice.

And the dedicated citizen is one who believes that he must have the same concern for his neighbor 5,000 miles away as he has for his neighbor five blocks away. He may argue about the best way in which to express that concern, but he will never contend that he and his fellow citizens should not be concerned.

When the Master of us all told us "to love our neighbor" he was stating a law of life which, if obeyed, will bring us satisfaction that just cannot come to us in any other manner. If we follow this Commandment we will lose our lives in service to others and in so doing we will find joy and peace. Also, in so doing we will be strengthening our Nation. When we dedicate our lives to our fellow human beings, we dedicate our lives to the United States of America.

He serves his government

Third, we can respond quickly and enthusiastically when we have the opportunity to serve our fellow human beings through Government.

I know that this point has special meaning for at least some of the men of this class. You know that for a specified period of time you will be called upon to dedicate your lives on a full-time basis to the United States of America.

And I hope that those of you who find yourselves in this position will not let anyone persuade you to become cynical about this period of service.

We are confronted with the most serious challenge to freedom that has ever faced our Nation. The Undersecretary of State, the Honorable Bedell Smith, provided us with a brief but accurate analysis of that challenge

when, in an address a few days ago, he said:

"... we confront a ruthless, barbaric, and power-hungry clique who seek to subject the world to their tyranny. And I speak as one who spent three years in Moscow."

Personally, I just can't understand those who, referring to our mobilization program and the war in Korea, ask "What is it all about anyhow?" I can understand differences of opinion as to the best methods to use in meeting this challenge to our freedom. I can't understand, however, a failure to recognize the existence of the challenge.

We can deal with this challenge to free men effectively only as we proceed from a position of strength.

It is the hope and prayer of all of us that by proceeding from such a position we can avoid all-out war. Unless, however, our efforts to avoid all-out war rest back on a foundation of strength, the freedom that we cherish will perish from the earth.

Maintaining a position of strength

And that position of strength must be maintained even though there is a cessation of hostilities in Korea. To quote again from Undersecretary of State Smith:

"If we gain an armistice, we should beware of letting down our guard. We cannot relax. Korea is but one flank of a conflict that girdles the world. Danger spots are many. We must remain alert and ready.

In other words, an armistice in Korea cannot possibly eliminate, or even diminish, the challenge to our freedom. We will still be dealing with a "ruthless, barbaric and power-hungry clique." And we can only deal with such a clique by proceeding from a position of strength. That is why the members of this graduating class who will be called upon to serve for a period of time in the armed forces will have the high privilege of dedicating their lives to the United States of America and, in so doing, will be making their contribution to the preservation of freedom.

But the men who will be serving in the armed forces are not the only persons who will have the opportunity of serving their fellow human beings through Government. Each one of us, at one time or another in our lives, is very likely to be brought face to face with such an opportunity.

A clear decision

We may be asked to serve the political party of our choice. We may be invited to stand for election to the city council, the state legislature, or the Congress of the United States. Officials of our city, state, or federal governments may urge us to accept appointment to a position of trust.

When we are confronted with the opportunity of serving in such capacities let's make our decision, not on the basis of what we would like to do, but on the basis

Arthur S. Fleming, Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, delivering the 1953 Commencement address at Caltech on June 12.



of whether or not we can render a real service.

One of America's greatest weaknesses is the unwillingness of qualified citizens to serve their Government when called upon to do so. Citizens are very willing to complain about the weaknesses they find in Government. And they should be. But many of them are unwilling to make a positive contribution in the direction of eliminating those weaknesses.

Incompetence and responsibility

Whenever the spotlight is turned on an incompetent Government official you can be almost sure of the fact that, in the background, there is a story of a qualified person being asked to assume office and refusing to do so because it interfered with some of his own selfish interests.

We can dedicate our lives to the United States of America by deciding here and now that when we are called upon to serve our Government, we will respond to that call.

Fourth, we can decide that at all times and under all circumstances we are going to look to the God and Father of us all for strength and guidance.

Unless we do, it is idle for us to talk about dedicating our lives to our Nation. It has been and must always be "this Nation under God."

Congressman Rabaut of Michigan underlined this fact a few weeks ago when he introduced a joint resolution calling for a change in the wording of the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States so that it would read as follows:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

It is a source of inspiration to all of us to know that, at the opening of each meeting of the Cabinet, all present are asked to join with the President in a period of silent prayer for Divine guidance and strength.

But that isn't enough. We, as citizens of this Nation, must also constantly ask for such guidance and strength. Unless we do we will not place our duties as citizens ahead of our personal desires; we will not help our neighbors realize their highest possibilities; and we will not respond quickly, enthusiastically and in a sacrificial spirit when we are provided with the opportunity of serving our fellow human beings through our Government.

The rewards of service

It is God and God alone who can give us the strength that will enable us to make the decisions that in turn will bring us to the place where we discover that we obtain real satisfaction from living only as we dedicate our lives to the service of others. We must live under God, if our Nation is to live under God.

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