

mencement addresses. Valuing their time conservatively at the minimum wage level, I estimate that these addresses in the past ten years have cost the American economy some \$40 million or approximately 16 cents per word of advice! And given the typical ratio of words to sound ideas in the typical speech this is very expensive counseling indeed. Further costs of 30 million missed martinis and 22 million unseen TV shows have to be added in to complete the reckoning.

In the face of these facts, I began to despair. What could I possibly add to this overflowing superabundance of wisdom? I then admonished myself to return from the past. Forget the past decade and ask, "What does the college graduate of *today* wish to hear from his elders?" But it took only a few hours perusal of the headlines from Columbia and Berkeley to block this avenue of escape. The obvious answer to that question is "very damn little."

Yet despite these negative results from my research efforts, I determined to follow the tested approach of the true scholar: Ignore the results of your research, and plunge ahead to a set of conclusions. And that is what I shall be forced to do.

I start with what I take to be a self-evident fact. American society is being driven by a set of internal tensions, the intensity of which we have not confronted previously in this century. The cleavages are growing steadily wider between young and old, poor and well-to-do, black and white, between advocates of social change and guardians of social order.

The unparalleled growth of the American economy in the past seven years has paradoxically widened, not narrowed that conflict. During those seven years alone we have added \$250 billion or over 40 percent to our national output, measured in dollars of constant purchasing power. The yearly income of the average American family has risen to \$7,400 a year and 14½ million families now make over \$10,000. Yet another 11 million families, containing 30 million people, still live in the direst poverty. We have created 10 million new jobs in our labor force, yet the unemployment rate for young Negroes exceeds 16 percent, and in the heart of some of our major cities one-third of the labor force is unemployed or underemployed. Our consumption of tobacco, liquor, and cosmetics has reached all time highs—yet, despite our wealth we rank 15th among the nations of the world in the infant mortality rate—and most of our high rates occur in the poorest 10 percent of the Nation's counties. The rate for whites is 22 deaths per 100,000—for Negroes almost double, 41 per 100,000.

Our per capita consumption of food is the highest in the world, yet every year thousands of children in some parts of our Nation are permanently stunted physically and mentally by malnutrition. Sales of new automobiles reach the staggering sum of 9 million per year, and we spend \$8½ billion a year on highways over which to drive them. But we also pump about 350 billion pounds of poisonous wastes into the atmosphere every year, and the poisoning grows by leaps and bounds. We spend over \$18 billion a year on higher education, double what we spent five short years ago. Yet, rightly or wrongly, a growing proportion of our college students are becoming disenchanted with their universities, their faculty, and their courses. We are becoming increasingly an urban Nation. History will judge us as it judges all civilized people, by the kind of cities we build and maintain. Yet at a time of unparalleled wealth and sharply rising national income, our largest cities are being slowly strangled to death by traffic congestion, crime in the streets, substandard education in the ghetto, and the flight of high income tax payers to suburbia.

I recite this familiar litany simply to emphasize that our growing social tensions—however exaggerated by demagogues and played upon by irresponsible revolutionaries—do have a solid basis in fact. That these tensions have accelerated during a period of literally unprecedented economic growth and prosperity for most of society simply underlines an important historical truth.

Pressure for social change is strongest precisely when there is some hope for improvement. When all are poor then none may hope. But when affluence grows by leaps and bounds, when the resources of a rich society are swelling each year, and when the miracle of modern communications constantly displays the Nation's wealth in every corner of the land, then it takes very little to loose expectations which can never be bottled up again.

Compared with other nations, the web of laws, institutions and relationships which binds American society together has always been relatively elastic. In some places that social web has indeed been quite rigid—it has stretched only under terrific pressure from the weight of decades of injustice which should never have been allowed to accumulate so long without relief. Yet, for the most part it