

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 5, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR:

BILL TIMMONS  
BILL BARODY  
RICK BROWN  
PAT BUCHANAN  
JIM CAVANAUGH  
KEN COLE  
LEN GARMENT  
LARRY HIGBY  
DICK HOWARD  
LEE HUEBNER  
KEN KHACHIGIAN  
NOEL KOCH  
DICK MOORE  
DAVE PARKER  
RAY PRICE  
JERRY WARREN

FROM:

DAVE GERGEN 

SUBJECT:

Florida Tech Commencement Address

The President has tentatively decided to address the graduating class at Florida Tech this Friday morning. We have already received one strong recommendation that he speak about the need for a strong national defense in a vein similar to the Norfolk appearance.

After further discussions over here, John Andrews has written up some different ideas in the attached memo. Our general thought is that the President should make these points:

-- Be strong and upbeat on the theme that the American system is working extremely well, despite today's headlines. What we need today is more people who recognize the strengths and are willing to work for it -- not the cynics who wallow in despair.

-- The challenges of the last third of the century are some of the most exciting that man has ever faced:

-- preserving a generation of peace,

-- assuring that the individual comes first in our democracy and maintains a personal role in making it work,

-- remolding our institutions in a form more responsive to our needs,

-- preserving a prosperous, free economy.

-- Today the government has an ambitious agenda to achieve these goals but the bulk of the work will have to be done with the sweat and ingenuity of the young people graduating from our colleges today.

In short, an upbeat speech with a high tone, showing that RN still has his eye very much on the long-range future of the country, that the Administration is not paralyzed but is working toward those goals, but that it's everybody's job to pitch in and help.

I would very much appreciate it if you would look over this material and return your thoughts to me Wednesday morning by 11 a.m. We'll then present a draft to the President along with a summary of staff views.

Many thanks.

cc: John Andrews

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 5, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: DAVE GERGEN  
FROM: JOHN ANDREWS  
SUBJECT: Florida Tech Commencement Speech

You asked for my thoughts on the angle the President should take in this forum -- the first non-military, non-GOP audience he has addressed since Watergate broke, and his first young audience in many months.

To begin with, I think it would be too bad to use up a fine opportunity like this one with a standard "strong defense, America's role in the world" speech. That ground has been well plowed of late and we can make better use of this occasion. On the other hand, I do not feel that the President's own standing as a moral leader is solid enough at this time for him to wax philosophical <sup>and</sup> hortatory in the usual manner of commencement speakers.

What would be most effective, in my opinion, is to make this essentially the State of the Union speech he never gave back in January. He could cast the discussion in terms of challenges that will face these young graduates as they move into positions of leadership during the remainder of this century. This would permit a sweeping survey of the world outlook and of major domestic concerns -- economy, energy, social policy, etc. The main focus should be domestic since evidence of real Presidential attention to this sphere has been so glaringly missing in recent weeks.

The overall effect of this approach would be to put the country on notice of a key fact recently lost sight of -- that their President still has a

grand design for the America we hope to build by 1976 and by the year 2000. It would complement the motion and visibility gained on the foreign side by the VN talks and the trip to Iceland. He could wind up with an oblique reference to Watergate by making a pitch to these upcoming young citizens for commitment to the still-resilient, miraculously resourceful and productive American system -- for faith in themselves, their country, and their future.

I see the approach as one that would raise the right questions and tag the right bases of sensitivity to problems, more than as an attempt to spell out all the answers. The more areas we can touch on the better, if only to demonstrate that he still knows all of this is going on and that he still has hold of the helm. Indians, legal services, the gasoline shortage, busing, health, tax reform, school finance, urban revenue sharing, and the minimum wage are just a few examples of major subjects that have heated up recently with little followup advocacy from the President on any of them.

Eight years after Watts exploded, 82 percent white Los Angeles has elected a black mayor. Three years after higher education ground to a halt in May 1970, the campus scene is notable mainly for its good order and businesslike atmosphere, Antioch being only the exception that proves the rule; the draft is at zero and the vote is at 18. Judge Kerner stands convicted -- the judicial system is truly blind and spares not even one of its own from the sword. By God, the system works. Let's put the President up on a campus platform and have him point that out.

Let's have him admit that national security is a tough line to draw, and that he may not have drawn it in just the right place every time though he sure meant well, and invite the country to a serious reconsideration of just what's involved in balancing liberty with order. Let's have him show some real righteous indignation at all who put themselves above the law, -- not just the secret-stealers of the left. Such indignation would be at least a little more plausible before the first anniversary of Watergate than after.

Franklin implored the Constitutional Convention to keep reminding themselves that they might be wrong sometimes, might not have all the answers wired. With a little of that spirit leavening it, and with a heart really full of good will and high hopes for the Nation's Class of '73 as represented by this particular audience, I think Florida Tech could turn out to be a hell of a speech -- good for the country and incidentally for RN too.