THE
HUMAN
FAMILY
INC.

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Commencement Address and Address to Graduates
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ANY MAN and any woman together, anywhere, may start a family. Every individual born of any family is different from every other individual on earth. Human beings are characterized from other forms of life in that they have a sense of justice, what we call a conscience, and a conscious urge to be free. All of us humans are one kind of an animal, since we can interbreed regardless of color, race, language, religion, or economic status. We have recently had in the blood bank, in plasma infusions and in blood typing, clear-cut and remarkable examples of the close links which all human beings have to other human beings. To me one of the most graphic pictures which has so far come out of this war is that of a blind soldier, apparently an Australian, being led by a naked Islander back to safety.

FOR UNTOLD centuries the continents and the seas which separate them have been vast enough to keep the human family segregated into distinct units, particularly large racial and national units. One of man’s greatest difficulties has been that of the distribution of goods and of himself over the earth. Now, distribution can be made with such comparative ease that it has brought about the unity of much of the world from a mechanical and practical side, before we were ready for it, and while man’s thinking is still provincial, timid, and selfish. Men and women of every nation and of every race are now considering in one way or another the question of how we can create order in our world family. All sorts of solutions are being suggested, varying from birth control to massacre. We know from past experience that if the food and the comforts are available, and if disease is controlled and production is maintained, the population will increase.

IN GREAT business operations, where confusion creates losses and where order brings profits, there has been introduced and widely used in some form and for centuries an organization to which we give the name of “Incorporated.” This brings together the savings of
the past, the brains and energy of the present, cuts out duplication, advances simplification, develops order, and provides records as to just what is being done while building up reserves that can be helpful for the future. Are we reaching a stage in the human family where we can outline those procedures upon which we can stop conflict, promote peace, happiness, and comfort, and do this on a world-wide basis, regardless of prejudices, passions, conflicting ideals and religions, different moral conceptions, and a host of other characteristics that are difficult to blend?

War seems to offer one way for bringing about unity of action. Our mutual dangers give us new conceptions of individual conduct. There is a greater willingness to be unselfish, to work together, to work with the peoples of other nations with whom we might have had very little sympathy before. It has been said that only in the height of a dangerous war do human beings rise to their full physical and mental capacities. But war has in it the greatest peril of all for aggregates of human beings. That peril is over-centralization. Over-centralization of power means that any mistake by an individual may affect the lives of literally millions of people—millions of those born and millions more of those as yet unborn. Throughout the ages there has been this constant struggle, ever recurring, of power centralized around a throne or in a dictator and the effects of the misuse of that power upon peoples. There have always been some who fought for power and some who fought for freedom.

II

I am convinced that man, in order to be happy or reasonably contented, must have an attachment to the soil, to his neighborhood, or to the products of the soil used in industry. Over and over again I think of the shock of the San Francisco earthquake in 1906, of the way in which the products of men were broken up, destroyed, and burned, and of the feeling I had as I went to care for some of those injured in the earthquake and passed by a tree undisturbed by it all, going right along with the development of its fruit. Its roots were in the soil; it was all in one piece; earthquakes could not disturb it. That tree brought home to me the necessity for man himself to fasten with sound roots into his environment if he is to face successfully the vicissitudes that are inevitable in life.

For human beings there is no possible substitute for good local self-government, with full responsibility accepted by each and every citizen. It is the willingness to compromise with our neighbor and work in common effort with him that has made it possible to go as far as we have in the development of government. The greatest of all dangers is that of relying on distant decisions rather than upon ourselves.

Man is an organizing animal. We always have a considerable group of blue-printers who insist on laying out our future down to the last clerk in the least important office. There is grave hazard in overorganization. If the Human Family, Incorporated, relies too much on blueprints that relieve communities from immediate responsibilities for order, good social protections, and the development of food supplies then danger is just around the corner. Nations are like families. The various things that have to be done must be divided up. The children must be cared for, stores gathered in for winter, order maintained, and houses built against the storms. As we view the community so will we view the world. Nations are indeed like families, and families are like people. When things go easy, easy becomes the rule. Ease leads readily to indolence, and indolence to such indifference that responsibility for the group is left to others. There are always men seeking political power ready to pick up such opportunities. The present drive for "all-out security" has in it these elements of danger for the human race. It is remarkable that we hear so much about security from this and that when our men have none at all and must give up everything upon a nod from the government. Too much security, based upon the actions of others, means overdomestication. Domestication is a form of preparation for the butcher. The beef animal does not determine when he shall go to market.

Over and over in the history of the world we have seen those who thought they had security fail to secure it. One needs only to think of what has recently happened to the great castles and homes in England and in our own country in such places as Bar Harbor,
Newport, and parts of California, to realize that those who thought that they were secure have been disillusioned. Any nation that is not alert, whose citizens have gone to sleep on the job, is sure to be turned over from either the inside or the outside. It is just a part of how human beings act and how they probably will always act. They may take political methods instead of the sword, but the results will be the same. There is always danger from the use of any distant power, whether it is from the capital of a state, or a nation, or from those at the head of other nations. We must remember that only those who live life in a special area and environment can handle the local problems of that area, and that there is always great risk in turning over anything concerning that area to the outside. Every time something is turned over to the outside, no matter how necessary it may seem to be, a new strap or two is added to the harness that eventually may lead to control. Free men do not like the idea of having a harness on them, or even one hanging up in the barn; but free men who will not accept responsibility are sure, sooner or later, to feel the pressure of the harness over their shoulders.

I think that the greatest illusion facing the Human Family, Incorporated, today is the belief that lasting security can be achieved and that, if such security were achieved, man would still be worth preserving in a biological world. For we must remember, always, that basically this is a biological world, where life is uneven, where an unused muscle becomes flabby, where strength is maintained only through struggle, where the have-nots are always ready to pounce upon those who have—like the Sioux Indians did in the heavy winter when the saving tribe was attacked by those without food. In this biological world with the family as a unit, struggle, industry, and labor are the building forces that must be ever present. Idleness leads to easy destruction of the individual and of the nation. There is no way by which the rules of the biological world can be avoided. We get a good football team by training men in competition, not by promising places on the team beforehand. We can stage a fair contest with good teaching and good physical care, but it must be a contest. Football teams made up of those who hold their places through inheritance, political pull, or the aid of pressure groups would become the easy prey of teams put together in a fundamental way.
and, even before the development of legal procedures, managed to get speaking different languages, came together under the common said that it was all very simple. It revolved around two things: first, keep your word, whether you gave it written or oral, drunk or sober, and, second, fight your partner and your neighbors until a common decision had been reached, then fight with everybody else who opposed that decision.

There is no possibility of getting this world on any such simple basis—its peoples are too scattered and too various, and too many complications have grown up over the years in trade and association and now in the wastes and hates of war. There are, though, certain unifying forces. There is one force, that of science, that is or can be universal in its applications. Fundamentally science, to be applied, needs co-operation—the close bringing together of economic and political units and the telescoping of distances so that science can be made available to all who seek its benefits. The use of science in world economy and in world relationships is comparatively new. The war has spread what science can do over the whole earth with astonishing rapidity. The Red Cross can use science, aviation can use science, to bring the world closer together rather than for destruction. Science debased to develop instruments of destruction has reached the point where it must be controlled and understood or it can be so destructive as to make the world an exploded shell.

IV

Man is characterized by having what we call intelligence, and we add to that something that is called soul. In the use of the brain in this field of intelligence lies the hope of the whole human race. The functioning brain is controlled by the emotions. We can speak of these emotions as coming from the suprarenal glands or the hypophysis, etc. Whatever the physiology is, it is in the control of the mind and in the ordering of the emotions that man reaches his highest point as a civilized being. Conscience and what we call our moral nature must inevitably play the largest part in human decisions if the Human Family, Incorporated, is to make good on this little earth of ours. Each man is different from every other man. Each man, though, has in him to some degree the sense of justice. It is the essential dignity of the human being that is the background of his position among living things. Governments that do not recognize this dignity of the individual are oppressive; their leaders are tyrants. Governments that compel men to join organizations in order to have a job are sowing seeds of future civil war.

It is the recognition of the human unit as a separate person with rights, privileges, and responsibilities that is the basis of what we have developed here in this republic of ours. We perhaps might call it "democracy" but "democracy" seems to have such a variety of meanings that it may not be quite the term to use. Our form of government is of but little significance unless we accept our responsibilities as citizens. The more that we turn over to others to decide the less freedom there is for us. Lessened responsibilities and the willingness to "let George do it" create the hook upon the gallows where our liberties are sure to hang. Whatever we do as individuals or think as individuals is reflected in the community and on to the state, nation, and the world.

It is because of the wide variety of these communities and of human experiences in all parts of the earth that the difficulty of bringing order to the Human Family, Incorporated, is so great. Patience and the willingness of the educator to take time to let people gain knowledge must be essential. Too much hurry means too little respect for the opinions and views of others, and will lay the basis for future combat and difficulty. Our problem is one of learning to live with our neighbors. Neighbors in the early communities of this and other pioneer nations joined together in house-raising, harvesting, fighting enemies, and so on. The neighbor was more than an acquaintance; he was a helper. Now in our cities and many communities there are few
common meeting places. We can meet our neighbors at the school, at the ballot box, and at times at the church; but the neighbor is attached to the community in such a way that we may see him, we may know that he is there, yet we do not work with him. War has brought us together; but without the sense of the neighbor and the neighborhood we can make little progress toward better understanding, and can do but little to help science and its achievements bring the world closer and closer together and increase the number of neighbors that we all have.

**Man is the most peculiar of all the animals because he creates symbols.** As Stephen Vincent Benet has put it, in his poem *John Brown's Body*:

> "We do not fight for the real but for the shadows we make.
> A flag is a piece of cloth and a word is a sound,
> But we make them something neither cloth, nor a sound,
> Totems of love and hate, black sorcery-stones.
> So with these cities."

It is these symbols, these creations of the mind, some of the people's ordinary ambitions, it is the desire to make your life count, make it worth while, that gives us hope. To live may be of but little significance. The prolongation of life that has come through the discoveries of medical science may not be of great advantage to the human race unless the prolongation of life leads to more service. Just to live longer, doing nothing, is not worth while. If those who have had experience and who have reached the period when life by various processes can be made easier for them, will devote some of their time to securing good government, to taking over some of the responsibilities that are not always possible to those in the midst of their productive period, the human family can profit immensely.

**There must be more understanding and better organization of the possessions of the Human Family, Incorporated.** This organization must begin and continue at the roots. No matter how vast and complicated the superstructure, no matter how idealistic those who build it, down it goes when the storms come unless it is soundly based in the realities of individual and social living. As we look forward out of this present strife let us remember that we are now making the plans for those longed-for days of peace. Postwar planning is planning too late. Man's imagination makes him great but it can also make him too visionary. We must not attempt too much too fast. We will have to build on man's innate and necessary selfishness as much as on his idealism. My plea is for patience and toleration and for seeking the right directions to go rather than laying out an organized Cook's tour over routes now in limbo.

This may sound pessimistic to you, but it is not. I have unbounded faith in the future of man but only if he remains a rational, intelligent, moral being willing to co-operate with all of his fellow men on a basis that respects and protects human rights, individual initiative, and human dignity.
MESSAGE TO GRADUATES

You are living through one of the most astounding periods in the history of the whole human race. No doubt similar occurrences in miniature have taken place in the world many times in the past; but you have been given an active part in a drama of enormous extent. You have been privileged to read about it, hear about it over the radio, see it in the news reel, you have talked to some of those who have served in the war, and you have been preparing yourself to do your part in this world crisis in accordance with what your nation believes is the most important and desirable thing for you to do. You have had the privilege of attending a university in a period just before that in which the Army and Navy of the country have taken over the responsibility for our young men who have reached the age of eighteen years. The boys and girls who follow you will have many decisions made for them not by their parents or their families but by the government. Its decisions will be dominant.

The University has been adjusting most of its work in such a way as to do its part in the preparation of young Americans for national service—some in the laboratory, some in the hospital, some in the home, but many in actual combat.

You have grown up in the period between two wars. You have seen depression, concern as to the future of government, reckless expenditure, and new conceptions of government. You have lived in the midst of debate. You have heard everything discussed from atheism to Hindu philosophy and from Communism to the life of the Maharaja.

We have tried here at Stanford not only to give you training and preparation that will fit into life in some practical way and that will give you interest and occupation but also to let you know something of those ideals and attitudes that have made man great. You have
learned that there were great men in Greece in a period when science was just beginning to germinate and that there have been built up in the early ages through these great men in Greece and those who followed them in all parts of the world new conceptions of the universe. You have found out that religions have had a profound effect upon the human race and that through these religions man seeks a relationship to other men and to the universe that is unique among all living things. Whether you have realized it or not, most of you have acquired a philosophy of life, perhaps immature and uncertain; but the way in which you and other young men and women of this country have approached the problem of this war and your participation in it has convinced me that you have done more basically hard thinking and have been less willing to accept slogans and totem-pole decisions than any previous group of University students.

We hope that your mind has been expanded and enriched by your experiences here. We hope that you have a willingness to look at anything with clear vision and with as little prejudice as possible. All of us, of course, have to surround ourselves with some patterns of thinking and attitudes in order to be reasonably comfortable, but the culture of man has now a universality which you have no doubt glimpsed, at least to some extent. It is this universal quality that will intrigue the university man or woman of today and of the future.

You will have to fasten your roots firmly in some local area. You will have to base your future on yourself and your capacity to work and understand. As an educated man you will have the responsibility not only of taking care of yourself and your family but also of finding margins that can go into the service of the community, the state, the nation, and even of the world. It will take all of our men and women of training and good will and of understanding to get the human family out of the mess that it is in. We have turned too many responsibilities over to others and have taken too few for ourselves. Every time you lose a liberty by turning it over to the government you have given a bureaucrat more power and have contributed to his salary. Keep alert to all that goes on about you. Use your head and remember that a mind not used is a mind abused. In your experience with our student government and the honor code you have had a glimpse of what it means to participate in the life around you and to accept responsibility. Some of you have not responded to the call of these ideals, but most of you have. This respect for honor, this willingness to give the neighbor a chance, this realization of the need of order and reason so that the University will not be disturbed and damaged by unfortunate or unwise action of its students, can all lay the basis for community citizenship.

In the years that I have been at Stanford I have developed more and more faith in student participation in student government and in the control of the students by themselves. Although this plan is full of inadequacies and difficulties it is by far better than anything else. The introduction of the same sort of self-governing system among the peoples of the various nations is the only way I see to get even a reasonable amount of order and of peace in the world. Life is a struggle, human beings are fighters—they are the best fighters on earth. If we can get them to fight for something else than power and can establish in their hearts the desire to be good neighbors and the sense of a participating community and world responsibility, the shadows of this great war will be followed by a brighter period in human history than we have ever known.