The original documents are located in Box D16, folder "Commencement Address, Grand Rapids Junior College, June 14, 1963" of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Commencement Address
H. R. J. C
June 14, 1963

Mr. Chairman and Friends:

At the outset, I want you to know that I deem it a unique privilege to have been invited to meet with you on this significant occasion. It is always a pleasure to be able to share with others those special moments which highlight life's journey. You who are graduating this evening are among the thousands of young people who have attained a certain educational goal this Spring. This is neither the beginning nor the end of your education, but it is an occasion which gives us an opportunity to pause, to reflect, and to examine our place in the world.

Education is not just something required by state law, or commended by commencement speakers, or encouraged by parents or older brothers or sisters; education is a social necessity and an individual attainment to be personally achieved, personally exhibited, and personally enjoyed. It is yours, only yours, to get, to have, and to hold.

Because we live in an ever-changing world, educational goals, as well as subject matter and methods, change. Until about 200 years ago, training for a life of usefulness was relatively simple. Physical skills were the primary requirement, and these could be taught at home, on the farm, or in the shop. The individual who learned his skill was relatively sure that he could use it for the rest of his life with little or no need to change.

As the industrial revolution developed, manipulative skills grew in importance, the training period was extended, and pressing technological changes made the future of acquired techniques less certain. The individual had to adapt himself more rapidly and more often to a new way of life and to a new way of working and living. Education took on a new dimension in order to train the individual so that he could adapt himself more easily and more effectively to the scientific and technological changes going on about him.

During the second half of the 20th century we see a further development: an expanding emphasis on mental skills. Physical skills are still important; manipulative skills are essential, but as we look ahead to the 50 or more years which you may expect to live, the people whose mental skills are most developed and most adaptable are going to be most useful and happiest members of society.

It may surprise some of you to know that 80 to 90 percent of all scientists who ever lived are alive today. Or, to quote Professor Price of Yale University, "Any young scientist, starting now and looking back at the end of his career upon a normal life span, will find that 80 to 90 percent of all scientific work achieved by the end of the period will have taken place before his very eyes, and that only 10 to 20 percent will antedate or precede his experience."

If Professor Price is correct, and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of his observation, we know that the world of

your lifetime will be a world of drastic change, calling for tremendous alterations in your way of life, and demanding an adaptibility on the part of the individual heretofore unknown in the history of mankind.

Professor Price, in his book, LITTLE SCIENCE, BIG SCIENCE, demonstrates that the population of the world doubles every 50 years. The number of universities doubles every 50 years. But the number of students graduating with a bachelor's degree doubles every 15 years as does the number of known chemical compounds. The number of telephones as well as the number of engineers in the United States doubles every ten years. Likewise, the speed of transportation doubles every decade. Dr. Price recognizes that there are limits to possible growth and development in certain areas. But did you notice in the paper recently that a commercial plane is being built which will carry passengers from New York to London in 2½ hours?

1953 - 40 hrs
1963 - 18 hrs
1993 - 5/6

I am sure you can see the implications of this for all of us. To you who have just completed your stay at Junior College, I can only urge continued learning, greater development of mental skills, and the growth of a spirit of adaptability so that you can use and enjoy the years that lie ahead.

With this in mind, I want to analyze with you some current issues of importance to all of us which bear upon my basic theme this evening.

Our nation's scientists have made tremendous advancements in the physical sciences--in mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology. We have made particularly impressive gains in the field of agronomy in America today. We can produce far more food than we use, with fewer & fewer people & at reduced costs. And yet people go hungry at home and throughout the world.

It is often pointed out that the social sciences have not kept pace with the natural sciences. But what isn't made clear

is that many of the problems facing the social scientists, and particularly those with which the politicians have to cope, arise out of advances made in the physical sciences. This is particularly true of two basic areas in our society--agriculture and industry.

A foremost example of our failure to make the most efficient use of our resources is agriculture. The farm program has been a major topic before Congress this year, as it has been for the past two decades. Two of the characteristics of the current farm program are price supports and restricted acreage allotments. This program creates problems for everyone: the farmer, the taxpayer, and the consumer.

The most obvious effect the farm program has on the farmer is to saddle him with a complex set of government regulations and prohibitions. Less obvious is the fact that price supports are hurting many farmers by pricing their products out of the market. For example, domestically sold cotton is so expensive that more and more other fibers are being used. American

that which is grown in the U.S.

National average number of bushels of corn per acre

produced in:

1942	35.1 bushels
1952	41.8 bushels
1962	64.1 bushels

cotton is losing its foreign market despite a heavy export subsidy of 8½ cents a pound. The farm program affects the taxpayer because he pays for the ptice supports, and the program is becoming more and more expensive. The Feed$ Grain Bill recently passed by Congress even authorized payment for not growing feed grains to farmers who haven't produced any in the past. Price support for the 1962 crop cost 165 million dollars more than the 1961 crop as of November 30th of both years.

The current farm program effects the consumer by keeping food prices high by means of price supports and artificial limitations on the efficient production of agricultural commodities. The current farm program attempts to limit production rather than to take advantage of increased productivity made possible by the biochemists, botanists, and geneticists. The natural scientists have created a problem that the social scientists have so far been unable or unwilling to solve. In America today, the top 3 percent

of all farms produce more than the bottom 78 percent. Yet most farm legislation helps to keep the less efficient producers in business; it encourages waste and outmoded methods of production. What we need is less government control and gradually lessened price support of agricultural products. This would encourage freer competition among farmers, would lower food prices for the consumer, and would lessen the burden on all taxpayers. But the lack of ability to adapt ourselves to 20th century conditions brings about this untenable situation. I am certain that had our people exhibited the degree of adaptability which is possible and necessary, we could have escaped the major consequences of an inefficient solution to a pressing problem in American agriculture.

American industry and agriculture have many common problems. As with agriculture, the social scientists in many industrial areas have not figured out ways to take adequate advantage of the advances made by the natural scientists. For example, let us look at the maritime industry in the United States. Shipbuilding

for our worldwide trade is highly subsidized and very expensive to the U. S. Treasury and all taxpayers. Yet Science and technology have shown us many ways to save money on shipbuilding. There is no doubt that cheaper ships can be built in America's shipyards, but because of the fear that ~~extensive~~ use of automation would cause economic dislocations these new techniques ~~it~~ has not been used extensively. The net result is that our shipyards are rapidly losing business to the Japanese and others. The hard facts clearly indicate that the American shipbuilding industry, both management + labor, has priced itself out of the market and would be in peril if it weren't for yet government subsidies. These subsidies are determined by comparing building costs of a comparable ship in another country and range from 46 percent to 52 percent of construction costs. Subsidies for operating the ships, once built, ~~shipping~~ are determined after involved and undoubtedly costly hearings. During the past two years our government subsidized the shipbuilding industry to the tune of $257 million. The shipping industry itself

received about $412 million from the U. S. Treasury and taxpayers in the last two years.

Last year, funds were requested for research and development on an experimental, partly automated ship. By making use of automation on board the ship, shippers could have cut costs drastically and enabled them to compete with their foreign competitors. The proposal was turned down by ~~an appropriations subcommittee~~ the Congress because of the alleged adverse effect it would have on employment. We see here again a lack of that necessary quality of adaptability in people and in institutions which is so essential now and in the future.

In the coal mining industry we have another example of the problems created by automation. For many years the coal mining industry was in bad shape & getting worse; wages were low, work was sporadic and there were a great many small, inefficient operators. As early as 1925, John L. Lewis realized that the industry would

To meet competition from other fuel sources such as oil & gas.

have to be reorganized. Gradually wages were raised to a level which many coal mining companies could not meet without raising prices drastically and probably pricing their product out of the fuel market. There was then the dear choice for both labor or management of maintaining or raising wage levels and allowing automation to be introduced, or of maintaining wage levels without technological improvements and driving some of the companies out of business, or of permitting wages to be dropped to a lower level with an unacceptable standard of living.

In 1937, Lewis was instrumental in setting up the Mechanized Mining Commission in the Appalachian Mountain area. The Commission inquired into the effects of automation on production costs and displacement of men by machines. The Commission found that automation in the mines enabled companies to cut production costs to such an extent that the companies could afford to maintain or raise wages.

By choosing to allow the mines to be mechanized, Lewis played a part in developing today's highly efficient and growing coal-mining industry. But the result was unemployment in an area of our country without any secondary industry to absorb the unemployed workers. What has the federal government done for these men? Tragically the principle solution so far has been extensive federal welfare assistance. A similar situation confronts steel workers today in Pittsburg, which is basically a one-industry area too..

Welfare assistance for technologically unemployed workers and subsidies for agriculture and shipbuilding are but two sides of the same coin. They are both unsatisfactory attempts to meet the problems created by modern technology and science. In the case of shipbuilding and agriculture, we are paying price supports to protect out-moded methods of production, keep inefficient producers in business, and thus to freeze the economic readjustment

which would result from the use of ~~automation~~ time and other money-saving technological advances. The other solution, massive welfare assistance, is in the long run a less desirable solution to the problems created by scientific advancements.

The answers we seek have strong implications for you, the graduate, the individual, the citizen. We as citizens and individuals will play a crucial part in their solution, because in America, the government does not, and must not mold the individual; it is the individual which molds the government.

In order to insure social and economic progress in America, the individual must be able to adapt himself to changing conditions. He must realize that science cannot solve all our problems. Actually science may create more problems than it solves. He must be willing to take the risk, to alter the nature of his business, to undergo retraining for a new job, possibly to move away from home into strange territory. He must adopt a new attitude of mind, a new flexibility, not toward moral principles but toward his role in our economic society.

And our educational institutions must foster this attitude of mind. Our education must prepare us to meet demands that are not yet identified. We cannot become devoted merely to the pursuit of factual knowledge, because with the development of new techniques of investigation, facts change. The factual knowledge you have acquired at Grand Rapids Junior College will be different from that which your children will be taught. Education must be oriented toward the process of inquiry rather than the product of inquiry. Modern education must develop more highly those skills and diciplines of inquiry which will continue to enlarge the mind after the individual has ended his formal education. It must also instill in the individual a continuing intellectual curiosity. The individual must learn to adjust to a changing environment, both for his own happiness and for the success of our national endeavor. Social scientists, (economists, historians, political scientists, and the sociologists) and natural scientists--

--chemists, physicists, engineers and biologists--will have to work closely together if they are to come up with workable soultions to the problems facing us today.

Workable solutions can be found. Sometimes they come from unexpected quarters. Many politicians were surprised at the results of the recent wheat referendum. High government officials believed they could entice our wheat producers to accept strict, artificial political controls over the wheat economy. But 52 percent of the wheat farmers of the United States said, "No, we simply want an opportunity to adapt our production to the demands of the market."

Our wheat farmers are to be congratulated on the intelligent decision which they made. I was especially pleased to note that only 18 percent of the farmers of the Fifth District wanted to continue the current program.

This decision by our farmers, as the one by John L. Lewis, demonstrates that national leaders as well as the man who toils in the field can and will make sound and constructive decisions.

In order to solve the crucial economic and social problems facing the nation, the government can, and must, create an atmosphere which fosters economic growth and permits industrial choices on a wide scale. The social scientists must make every effort to come up with more viable solutions to our problems. Only in this way can we as a nation take full advantage of our human and natural resources. The social scientists work with people; consequently, all of us share in the solution to this problem. As individuals in the group we determine public policy and influence governmental action.

The government must help to create an environment which will encourage private enterprise. Young men and women should be encouraged to assume risks, for the benefit of the economy

with reasonable assurances of success. New industries, operating in new fields opened up by research and technology, will provide jobs for the technologically unemployed. If we do not solve the problems stemming from over-abundance and automation, we will be facing in other areas the same disturbing problems we face in agriculture and in the shipbuilding & maritime industry. We cannot have a healthy economy in America when over 4 million workers are unemployed. And we cannot have a sound economy or a healthy social order without individuals who have the character and training to adjust to new conditions in a changing world.

Because I believe most sincerely that the educated person is the adaptable person, I have stressed this element in your development. Because I have spent over 14 years as a member of the national legislature, there is one aspect of educated adaptability which comes close to home. Some may call this "compromise;" others speak of the "art of the possible;" it can

also be designated as "achieving a meeting of the minds." In any event, it means working out a public policy or solving a community problem by the "give and take" method. It is the opposite of that rigidity which roadblocks ~~prevents~~ a person from responsible cooperation in worthwhile efforts.

Politicians are often severely criticized for compromising. Yet compromise is the essence of the democratic process and it has been as since the days of our forefathers' landing at Jamestown and Plymouth Rock. In the Mayflower Compact the Pilgrim fathers agreed that policy would be determined after discussion and a majority vote, and that all would abide by the wishes of the majority. In the House of Burgusses established at Jamestown a year before the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth, decisions were to be based on agreeable compromises.

Politicians are criticized for ignoring "principle" and for being devoid of "backbone." Now I do not deprecate "principle" --we need more men and women with the right and proper principles. And a strong, sturdy backbone prevents many aches and pains. But I am a little disturbed when one's personal principles become his private dogma, and anyone who dares to doubt is a heretic.

An educated adaptability includes the facility of being able to see the other fellow's side. It means being able to talk with him, and to walk with him in a joint and mutually beneficial endeavor for the good of all.

We hear from time to time that there must be no compromise with the words, phrases, and principles of the U. S. Constitution. I revere this basic law of our country as much as anyone. Yet we all know that the Constitution itself was the product of compromise. The 39 "Fathers of the Constitution" were strong-willed men representing sovereign states with a divergence of conflicting interests.

We honor them because they were able, under these crucial circumstances, to frame a system of government which still endures.

Our Congress today, with equal representation for each state in the Senate and proportional representation in the House, is a product of their compromise. The four-year term of the President, one of the last decisions made at the convention of 1787, was a compromise between those who wanted a very short term and those who desired an extended tenure. Those Americans who achieved independence and formed a new government chose the hard way and adapted themselves to meet new problems intelligently and effectively.

This is the kind of adaptability that I am pleading for: Not the easy conscience, not the crowd follower. I'm not endorsing the spirit of "everyone's doing it." Far from that. This is not the educated adaptability which will solve our problems.

Rather, my plea is for the strong, independent spirit, equipped with the essential mental skills of this era, who knows when and how to lean with the breeze or bend with the wind, but who remains deeply rooted in the foundations of our American heritage.

Commencement U.R.I.C.
June 14, 1963

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cotton is losing its foreign market despite a heavy export subsidy of 8½ cents a pound. The farm program affects the taxpayer because he pays for the price supports, and the program is becoming more and more expensive. The Feeds Grain Bill recently passed by Congress even authorized payment for not growing feed grains to farmers who haven't produced any in the past. Price support for the 1962 crop cost 165 million dollars more than the 1961 crop as of November 30th of both years.

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of all farms produce more than the bottom 78 percent. Yet most farm legislation helps to keep the less efficient producers in business; it encourages waste and outmoded methods of production. What we need is less government control and gradually lessened price support of agricultural products. This would encourage freer competition among farmers, would lower food prices for the consumer, and would lessen the burden on all taxpayers. But the lack of ability to adapt ourselves to 20th century conditions brings about this untenable situation. I am certain that had our people exhibited the degree of adaptability which is possible and necessary, we could have escaped the major consequences of an inefficient solution to a pressing problem in American agriculture.

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Welfare assistance for technologically unemployed workers and subsidies for agriculture and shipbuilding are but two sides of the same coin. They are both unsatisfactory attempts to meet the problems created by modern technology and science. In the case of shipbuilding and agriculture, we are paying price supports to protect out-moded methods of production, keep inefficient producers in business, and thus to freeze the economic readjustment

which results from the use of automation and other money-saving technological advances. The other solution, massive welfare assistance, is in the long run a less desirable solution to the problems created by scientific advancements.

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