

Excerpts from
the Commencement Address
by
ADMIRAL BURKE



*Admiral Arleigh A. Burke
Chief of Naval Operations,
1955-1961*

... It would be wonderful if a commencement speaker could tell you as you complete this phase of your careers just exactly how you can realize your role as the "hope of the future". It would be very nice if someone could give you a dramatic and enlightened solution to the problems of the world in a half-hour.

You know, of course, that no one can.

But we can talk about qualities essential to your success as the realization of your country's hopes. Although no one can give you a blueprint for action, we can talk about those principles without which success is utterly impossible. Those who made possible the nation we know today were men of principle who practiced discipline—self-discipline.

... When George Washington expressed his belief that freedom is "staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people" he envisioned a disciplined people motivated by fundamental principles, by a sense of justice, by moderation, and by integrity.

... A certain amount of discipline, a very limited amount, can be achieved in our society by compulsion, by making laws and punishing people if they break them. Whenever there is a lack of discipline, whenever there is a lack of responsibility, there is a clamor for a new law. Unless people perform the way they are expected to perform, unless they perform out of a deep sense of responsibility, laws will be passed in an attempt to force them to meet certain standards. ...

Another striking limitation of laws is that they tend to be negative. For the most part, they dictate what we should *not* do. It is obvious that this is not what our times demand. The vital issues of our society are not a question of what we should *not* do. They involve much more than that. The deep, abiding problems of our age

can be answered only by the realization of what we should do, and by our determination to *do* it.

This personal acceptance of responsibility for our way of life must come from within, from the willingness of every citizen to work for his nation as well as for himself.

We live in a world of choice. And we are confronted by a world of coercion. In very real terms, it will be up to us to choose, to decide by our actions whether we will remain free. It will be up to us to choose what we will do with our great and varied strengths. ...

What you accomplish personally will be extremely important. Your vision, your resourcefulness, will do much to mold our nation's destiny. But what your example moves others to accomplish will be, perhaps, even more important. Although human limitations confine the scope of one man's actions, one man can be the inspiration for many—and there is no limit to what many men, properly motivated, can do. ...

Principle is not a thing apart from everyday life. And integrity is not a sometime thing.

Graduates, where will you take your country? Where will the American dream be at the turn of the century?

I believe the answer to that question will be found in the people of the United States—in their self-discipline, and in their sense of responsibility. Your duty will be to bring out these qualities in yourself, and to provide an example of discipline for others to follow.

Success in the task of insuring that the American heritage is re-lived will insure that our freedom will be re-earned, that every challenge will be answered, that our hopes for advancement and progress will be fulfilled.

You young men and women who are really the hope of the future have a lot to do. May God bless you as you get on with it.