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THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH COMMENCEMENT

Michigan's seventy-eighth Commencement, held June 19, 1922, was the most impressive in the University's history. Not only was the graduating class larger, by almost a third, than ever before, but the Commencement address by Charles E. Hughes, Secretary of State, his first public speech since the closing of the Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, was unusually significant.

Perhaps the change in the time of holding Commencement from Thursday to Monday had something to do with the extraordinary demand for tickets, a demand which unfortunately could be met only in part because of the size of the senior class. On the accustomed basis of two tickets for every senior, the hall would not have been large enough to hold the graduating classes and their friends, let alone the alumni and others

who sought admission. Only the semi-centennial class of '72 and the still older classes of '67 and '69 were able to find seats; the rest of the alumni were given special tickets on the reviewing stand just across from Hill Auditorium.

The pageantry of Commencement was never more impressive. The long lines of seniors seemed almost interminable; they marched into Hill Auditorium five ranks abreast, filling almost the whole of the lower floor of the great hall. Secretary Hughes entered with President Burton, followed by the candidates for honorary degrees and the Board of Regents.

Mr. Hughes in his address made a strong appeal at once for American ideals of open diplomacy and for the enlightened public opinion which is absolutely necessary to support it.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

Commencement Address delivered by the Honorable Charles E. Hughes,
Secretary of State, June 19, 1922.

I desire to take this opportunity to present some observations on the conduct of our foreign relations, not to define particular policies, but to consider method and control.

Recent developments abroad have marked the passing of the old diplomacy and the introduction of more direct and flexible methods responsive to democratic sentiment. Peace-loving democracies have not been willing to rest

content with traditions and practices which failed to avert the great catastrophe of the world war. Public criticism in some instances overshot the mark and becoming emotional enjoyed the luxury of a bitter and indiscriminate condemnation. The most skilled diplomats of Europe were charged with having become "enmeshed in formulae and the jargon of diplomacy"; with having "ceased to be conscious

of pregnant realities". More potent than the critics where the exigencies due to the war which required the constant contact and direct interchanges of responsible leaders. The aftermath of problems has made necessary the frequent use of similar methods permitting concert, flexibility, more frequent informal intercourse, and decisions which, if not immediate, are relatively speedy. The international conference attests the new effect to achieve the necessary adaptation to new demands. An eminent chronicler of European conferences tells us that he has attended over five hundred international meetings since 1914. There has been a corresponding stirring in foreign offices, modifications of the old technique and a new sense of responsibility to peoples.

American Diplomacy Candid

It would be a shallow critic who would associate the United States with either the aims, the methods or the mistakes of the traditional diplomacy of Europe. To her "primary interests", as Washington said, we had at best "a very remote relation". We have had no part in the intrigues to maintain balance of power in Europe and no traditions of diplomatic caste. From the outset—from the first efforts of Benjamin Franklin—American diplomacy has deemed itself accountable to public opinion and has enjoyed the reputation of being candid and direct. It has opposed circumlocution and unnecessary ceremonial. Its treaties have been open to the world. Indeed, instead of being burdened by the artificialities, reticences and intriguing devices of an organization essentially aristocratic, instead of holding itself aloof from the current influences of politics, the organization of our instrumentalities of foreign intercourse has rather suffered from too much regard for politicians and too little attention to the necessity for special aptitude and training. But, while we have thus been immune from most of the destructive criticism visited upon old world methods, we also feel the pressure of a heightened demand for popular control, and it is essential that we should carefully consider the relation of public opinion to the conduct of our foreign relations, its proper aims, the special dangers in this field if public opinion is unintelligent or misdirected, and the conditions of the wholesome exercises of its authority. In the sphere of international action, the people have peculiar obligations as well as power, and education for

citizenship implies a just appreciation of civic responsibility when peoples are dealing with each other as peoples and not merely determining domestic policy and settling internal disputes.

Public Opinion Rules

President Lowell has reminded us that, in asserting the final control of public opinion in popular government, the opinion to which we refer must be "public" and must really be "opinion". It imports the conviction of the people as a whole that the prevailing view expressed in the manner appropriate to our institutions should be carried out. It embraces deep-seated convictions due to the influence of tradition, authority or suggestion. In new conditions, where familiar standards are not involved, it is developed in a rational process by consideration of what are supposed to be the facts of the particular case.

It becomes at once apparent how difficult it is to develop true public opinion in relation to matters of foreign policy. There are, of course certain viewpoints of the American people which are readily recognized, as they represent accepted postulates formulated and approved by generations of American statesmen and which could be changed only by a revolution of opinion. But in a host of matters, indeed in most cases, there is no such criterion. There are complicated states of fact which cannot be understood without an intimate knowledge of historical background and a painstaking and discriminating analysis of material. There are situations of controlling importance which are wholly unknown to the general public, and which cannot be appreciated without the special information available only to officers of the Government. The people cannot judge wisely without being informed, and the problem is how to inform them. Lack of accurate information does not imply any check upon the dissemination of what passes for fact or the withholding of comment or criticism however mistaken in its assumptions. The multiplied facilities of communication are always in use, and the processes of conjecture and suspicion go on uninterruptedly. In dealing with the problem of developing sound opinion, the fundamental consideration must always be that misinformation is the public's worst enemy, more potent for evil than all the conspiracies that are commonly feared.

A True Perspective Difficult

Moreover, the difficulty of maintaining a true perspective and a distinctively American opinion in the field of foreign affairs is greatly increased by the natural and persistent efforts of numerous groups to bend American policy to the interest and particular peoples to whom they are attached by ties of kinship and sentiment. The conflicts of opinion and interest in the old world are reproduced on our own soil. Then there are the various sorts of propaganda by which organized minorities and special interests seek to maintain a pervasive influence.

Whatever the advantages of our governmental arrangements — and I should be the last to under-estimate them — I think it should be candidly admitted that they have the effect of limiting the opportunities for the responsible discussion which aids in the understanding of foreign policy. The conduct of foreign relations pertains to the executive power, and the executive power of the Nation is vested in the President, subject to the exceptions and qualifications expressed in the Constitution. The President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, has the power to make treaties and to appoint Ambassadors and other public Ministers and

Consuls. The President has the exclusive authority to receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers. The Executive is thus entrusted with the conduct of diplomatic intercourse with foreign powers. At the very beginning Mr. Jefferson said: "The transaction of business with foreign nations is executive altogether. It belongs then to the Head of that Department, except as to such portions of it as are especially submitted to the Senate." Practice under the Constitution has abundantly confirmed the initiative of the President in the formulation of foreign policy.

The Relation of the Executive to Foreign Affairs

The wisdom of this disposition of power has been fully demonstrated, for in view of the nature of the task, the delicacy of the negotiations involved, the necessity for promptness, flexibility and unity of control, this authority could not well be lodged elsewhere. But the separateness of the executive power under our system, while it has advantages which have been deemed to be of controlling importance, deprives the Executive of the opportunities, open to parliamentary leaders, of participation in parliamen-

tary debates. Official communications are made by the President in the discharge of his constitutional duty. The Department of State, which is the instrumentality of the Executive in connection with foreign affairs, makes its public announcements. The Secretary of State appears before committees from time to time and gives the information which is asked. But there is lacking the direct personal relation to the discussions of the Senate when foreign affairs are under consideration. The Secretary of State, acting for the President, may negotiate an important treaty, but he has no opportunity to explain or defend it upon the floor of the Senate when its provisions are under debate. The knowledge which is at his command is communicated in formal writing or merely to those members who sit upon the appropriate committee. The advantage of oral explication and of meeting each exigency as it arises in the course of discussion and thus of aiding in the formation of public opinion in the manner best adapted to that purpose is not open to him. There are numerous situations in which an opportunity for the Executive through his Department Chiefs to explain matters of policy would be of the greatest aid in securing an intelligent judgment. As President Taft said, "Time and time again debates, have arisen in each House upon issues which the information of a particular Department Head would have enabled him, if present, to end at once by a simple explanation or statement." This is especially true in relation to foreign affairs where the Department concerned has sources of information which generally are not available to others.

The Necessity of Fuller Co-operation

I should not favor a change in the distribution of power or any modification of practice which would encourage the notion that the Executive is responsible to the legislative branch of the Government in matters which under the Constitution are exclusively of executive concern. I should also deplore any method so contrived as to facilitate antagonism between the executive department and legislative leaders or which would merely provide opportunities for the censorious. But speaking in my private capacity and expressing only a personal opinion, I do believe in multiplying the facilities for appropriate co-

operation between responsible leaders, who understand their respective functions, in a manner suited to the full discussion of great international questions when these fall within the constitutional competency of the Senate. To enable Cabinet officers to vote in either House or Congress would require a constitutional amendment and I should not favor it, but it is quite consistent with our system that the Head of a Department should have the opportunity personally to be heard where important departmental measures and policies are under consideration. Indeed, the propriety of this method of promoting a better understanding was recognized at the outset, and instead of being foreign to our system it found for a time a place in our original procedure. You will remember that the long continued abstention from such appearances followed the refusal of Congress in 1790 to hear Hamilton when he desired to make in person his Report on the Public Credit. Mischiefs will not be cured by methods which make misapprehension easy. Every facility should be provided, consistent with our system, which will aid in avoiding misconstruction, allaying suspicion and preventing unjust aspersions. The remedy for misunderstanding is explication and debate and the opportunity for thus informing the public judgment in a responsible manner should not be curtailed by any unnecessary artificiality of method.

Relations With the Press

The paramount importance of contact with the Press is fully recognized, but in the nature of things, this contact for the most part must be informal. Occasional public announcements are expected, but the representatives of the Press desire to write in their own way and to obtain material by their own inquiries. What is desired is not control of news but accurate information. To meet this demand, the President himself meets the correspondents twice a week and Department Heads still more frequently. The Secretary of State has two press conferences each working day at which either the Secretary or the Under Secretary is present. The officers are not quoted, but there is frank disclosure of facts and aims within the widest possible limits. There is thus the most direct contact with those who are the principal purveyors of information and the chief educators of the public. This is our substitute for parliamentary

interpellation. It is in this manner that, in substance, account is rendered to the final authority.

Open Diplomacy

But open diplomacy must still be diplomacy, and it cannot be open at the cost of losing its essential character and of frustrating its proper purposes. By diplomacy, I mean the art of conducting negotiations with foreign Powers, and when we refer, with suitable discrimination, to open diplomacy, we have in mind the appropriate publication of international engagements, and, with respect to negotiations, the absence of intrigue, the avoidance of unnecessary secrecy, candor and directness. The diplomacy of the United States has been, and is, open diplomacy.

The management of negotiations with Foreign Powers, however, has its essential conditions which relate (1) to the interest of one's own State; (2) to the requirements of honorable intercourse between States; and (3) to the maintenance of international good will. These conditions impose a measure of reticence in the course of negotiations, with which the most high-minded negotiators cannot afford to dispense. Thus Washington, maintaining the right of the President to refuse information with respect to pending negotiations when he deems its disclosure incompatible with the public interest, said:

"The nature of foreign negotiations requires caution, and their success must often depend on secrecy; and often when brought to a conclusion a full disclosure of all the measures, demands, or eventual concessions which may have been proposed of contemplated would be extremely impolitic; for this might have a pernicious influence on future negotiations, or produce immediate inconvenience, perhaps danger and mischief in relation to other powers."

Even the most democratic governments must desire to succeed in their negotiations, and there is no reason why democracy should turn upon itself and deprive its agents of its essential means of defense. Premature disclosures may prevent the accomplishment of the most enlightened aims, giving opportunity for the insidious efforts of selfish interests as well as favoring opposition abroad. If both the Peoples and Governments concerned were in complete accord, there would be no need

for negotiations, and when they are not in accord and are endeavoring to reach a basis of agreement, it is fatuous to suppose that negotiations can be conducted without prudent reservations on each side. The observations that are sometimes made on this subject seem to presuppose the existence of some dominant external authority which can impose its will, whereas the Peoples concerned are themselves sovereign, and if they are not to resort to force, they must have opportunity to reach an agreement mutually satisfactory. The wholesome pressure of world opinion for peaceful solutions is quite consistent with such a conduct of negotiations as will make peaceful solutions possible.

The Obligations of Honorable Intercourse

As the parties to the negotiations deal with each other upon the basis of the equality of States, they must recognize the obligations of honorable intercourse between equals. The confidence with which suggestions are received must be respected. Each must be free to make tentative suggestions and withdraw them. There must be opportunity for the informal discussion which does not represent the final stand of governments, but reflects the proper desire to ascertain to what extent there is accord and the state of mind of each party to the controversy. It is an essential condition of intercourse that representations made by one government to another or the publication of the details of negotiations must rest upon the express or implied consent of both parties. Any government that refuses to recognize this basis of intercourse would find its opportunities for suitable adjustment of controversies seriously impaired and its influence and prestige greatly diminished.

Moreover, the maintenance of international good-will during negotiations is of vital importance. While it is assumed that democracies are peace-loving, it cannot be forgotten that the activities of democracies frequently make it difficult to arrive at a good understanding. The press in each country, in large measure, is likely to voice extreme demands and to resist accommodations. Often the pseudo-patriotic spirit is developed, most probably in the interest of local politics, and efforts are made to prevent settlements by inflammatory appeals to passion in one or more of the countries concerned. It is most desirable that such endeavors should not be facilitated by information of mere proposals, argu-

ments and tentative positions; by disclosures which at the best, pending the efforts at adjustment, can but afford glimpses of the situation. At least we may appreciate the fact that peoples cannot deal directly with peoples; that there must be agents of negotiations; and that when these are selected as wisely as may be practicable, there must be a reasonable freedom to enable them to secure results. They cannot adequately perform their task under a fire of criticism or successfully conduct negotiations which are practically taken out of their hands and directed by a clamorous public.

"No Secrecy for Its Own Sake"

With all these considerations, it remains true that there should be no secrecy for its own sake; that general policies should be made clear; that particular aims should be appropriately disclosed; that there should be public announcement of all proceedings to the extent consistent with the essential requirements of negotiation; and that nothing should ever be done by our diplomatic agents which so far as its actual character is concerned could not be publicly proclaimed and justified as being free from artifice and deception and in full accord with American principles.

The attitude of the public toward foreign relations is almost as important as the securing of adequate information; that is, there should be a suitable appreciation of the objectives of diplomatic effort. There is of course the fundamental matter of national security, and the instinct of self-preservation causes a quick response to any appeal on this score. Indeed, the danger is not that the people will become indifferent to the essential conditions of their security, or will lack information as to any policy or procedure which actually threatens it, but that the endeavor will be made to frustrate peaceful settlements which are eminently judicious, and which really promote the safety of the country, upon the ground that in some indirect way they will diminish the opportunities for protection. We have had recent illustration of this. The need for enlightenment, in this aspect of the matter, is with respect to what really makes for national security.

Peace the Object of Diplomacy

However, in emphasizing the importance of public appreciation of the aims of our diplomacy, I do not mean to imply that there is any great lack of understanding or of support of our historic policies or of the economic inter-

ests, the protection of which has become more and more the object of diplomatic effort. It is rather my desire to emphasize the importance of peace as the object of diplomacy, and the necessity of intelligent opinion, not merely as to the desirability of peace as an abstract conception, but with respect to the conditions that are essential to the maintenance of peace. With these conditions public opinion should be deeply concerned. Attention has been directed to formal institutions, to international agreements relating to the maintenance of peace. But the fundamental fact is that, however well-devised, these will be of little worth in the absence of that state of international feeling which will promote amicable cooperation and permit the removal of the causes of discord.

It must be remembered that only a small portion of the controversial matters of great consequence, which are now engaging the attention of foreign offices, admit the application of juridical standards. They are matters demanding not legal decisions but adjustments by mutual consent. It is not simply the dispositions of old controversies that is needed, but understandings with respect to new situations and novel enterprises. In this world of intimate relations, you are likely to have either hostility or cooperation. There is no artificial method by which adjustments can be reached in the absence of a sincere desire for accord, and the cultivation of the spirit of mutual friendliness is thus the primary consideration. Without it, even the most direct contacts and the flexible arrangements of Conferences will be of no avail.

The Necessity of a Sense of Civic Responsibility

The nation that can most easily settle its differences and promote its interests, the nation that can look most hopefully for a recognition of its claims, is the nation that by its reasonable and friendly disposition, its poise and sense of justice, inspires confidence and wins esteem. Here we touch the point where the authority of sound public opinion is most necessary. It must frown upon the constant efforts to create suspicion, distrust and hatred. There can be no assurance of peace, and few of the necessary and just settlements which make for peace, in a world of hate. It should be recognized that what is more necessary than formulas is a new sense of civic responsibility in matters of international concern. The chief

enemies of peace are those who constantly indulge in the abuse of foreign peoples and their governments, who asperse their motives and visit them with ridicule and insult. We resent attacks upon American character and motives when they come from abroad and we should remember that other peoples are quite as sensitive as ourselves. Intercommunication is so easy that domestic discussions of foreign affairs are not confined within the three-mile limit but are immediately published abroad as indicative not of the sentiment of particular individuals, who may be of little relative consequence, but as indicating the sentiments of our people. It is in this way that peoples become separated by a mutual distrust, even while their responsible agents of government are endeavoring to bring about beneficial settlements and mutual confidence. The public-spirited and well-informed American, the intelligent patriot, will approach all discussions of foreign affairs with the full understanding that every reckless attack upon foreign peoples and governments reacts upon his country's prestige, impairs its influence, and to some degree threatens its peace. The principal difficulty at this time in our conduct of foreign affairs is not with method, or organization, or aims, but with the untruthful, prejudiced and inflammatory discussions in which some of our citizens and certain portions of the press permit themselves to indulge.

The Discussion of International Questions

If there is to be less reticence in diplomacy, there must be, if not a greater reticence, at least a keener sense of responsibility in the discussion of international questions. Open diplomacy and blatant and injudicious utterances will not go well together. The corrective can only be found in that state of the public mind which will unsparingly condemn and ostracize those who by their base imitations imperil our friendly relations with other nations.

An intelligent attitude toward foreign affairs will also take account of the essential instrumentalities of intercourse and of the importance of making these as efficient as possible. The many millions of our people cannot conduct their foreign relations, and the inescapable conditions to which I have adverted make it necessary that our people should have at their command the most expert diplomatic organization. I shall not at this time review, as I have had the privilege of doing recently,

the requirements of our diplomatic and consular service. I merely wish again to emphasize the point that intelligent opinion will demand that there should be an opportunity for career in this service which will draw to it as many as may be needed of the best of the educated young manhood of the country. This result will not be served by excluding from the higher posts those who have in other fields of effort demonstrated special ability and obtained that wide knowledge of affairs which is needed to invigorate the conduct of foreign relations. But such men, selected from the highest ranks of American culture, must depend upon their trained staffs, and it is impossible to have an adequate service unless men of career see before them possibilities of promotion, achievement and distinction which will warrant them in turning aside from other opportunities to serve their country in this most important sphere of action. Further, it must be a service so supported that the poor young man, as well as the young man of independent resources, can afford to enter it. In short, it should be an American service. This is not in the interest of the development of a caste; it is in the interest of the American people and public opinion should demand it.

The Place of Higher Education

It is apparent that this attitude of the public mind, this instructed public opinion, cannot be had save as it is produced by the conscious endeavor and constant influence of men and women who have had the special advantages of higher education. It is the interaction of the influence of the University on the one hand and of the many schools of experience on the other, that produces that clear, practical and intelligent view of affairs which we call the dominant American opinion. With respect to matters the importance of which is not immediately or generally perceived, where special study and instruction are needed, it is especially the example and influence of those who have had the advantage of college or university training that is imperatively needed.

It is not my purpose to dwell upon ideals in American education further than to say that they may be open to the criticism of being too individualistic. It goes without saying that a young American should be able to make a living and should have every opportunity for vocational and technical training. There is no question, of course, but that it is this training of the individual which makes for the

enrichment of society. And I am one of those who believe that the cultivation of the spirit, that one may have life more abundantly, is quite as important as the equipment which will enable one to secure the primary necessities of food and shelter or the means of a comfortable existence.

Training for Citizenship

But along with the appropriate consideration of individual needs, there should go a more definite appreciation of the necessity of meeting the demands of training for citizenship. This implies adequate knowledge of our institutions, of their development and actual working. It means more than this in a world of new intimacies and perplexities. It means adequate knowledge of other peoples, and for this purpose there is nothing to take the place of the humanities, of the study of literature and history. When I speak of the study of history, I do not mean a superficial review, but the earnest endeavor to understand the life of peoples, their problems and aspirations. Nor is it simply or chiefly the history of a distant past that it is now most important to know. It is recent history that is of first importance, with sufficient acquaintance with the past to understand the happenings and the developments which have taken place in our own time. In our many years of schooling how difficult it is to give to our young men and women the knowledge that is worth while, which through a just and clear discernment will properly relate them to the duties and opportunities of their generation!

The Beginning of a New Era

There are those who view the dislocations caused by the war, the present wide-spread impoverishment, the assaults and too frequent triumphs of unreason, the controversies over superficialities and the ignoring of the causes

of distress and instability, with a feeling of hopelessness. But this is not the end of the world; rather it is the beginning of a new era, a formative period when it is the highest privilege to live and perform one's part. We need young men and women who are profound students of these developments, who are ready not only to grapple with the problems of our domestic life but who understand the origin and source of international difficulties and controversies and thus are able to take an intelligent and helpful part in forming a sound public opinion which will control America's conduct of foreign affairs. Above all we need the spirit of reasonableness which men and women of good sense and culture may bring to public discussion,—that calm judgment which proceeds from wide knowledge and keen insight.

Power and opportunity are yours. They are not confided to impersonal institutions. What will you do with them? Our ultimate security and the assurance of our progress will not be found in constitutions or statutes or treaties or Conferences, important as these may be, but in the self-respect that will not permit abasement, in the national pride and just self-interest that will not tolerate interference with independence; in the spirit of helpfulness which seeks not alliances but honorable cooperation; in the love of justice which will not permit abuse of power and which scorns to profit by unjust accusation; in the insistence upon the processes of reason by which alone we can avoid the mistakes of prejudice; in the detestation of the demagogue and all his works the most dangerous enemy of the republic; and in the sympathy with the weak and oppressed and in the dominant sentiment of human brotherhood through which we shall be able to reconcile our national aspirations with the full performance of our duty to humanity.

