

someone from outside your country who looks at you - and at your country - as you leave the university, will be even more concerned about your responsibilities and the way in which you meet them. It seems to us from abroad, that the generation of students who are graduating during this decade is inheriting responsibilities greater in size and greater in burden than those assumed in any previous period of American history. This is largely because of the tremendous change which has taken place in the power and influence of your country in world affairs. I do not think there has been any development of such importance since the centres of power in Europe shifted from the city-states of the Mediterranean and the towns of the Hanseatic League to the Atlantic seaboard in the 16th Century. Within the last half century another great shift in the centre of world power and authority has taken place. To some extent it has moved eastward to the borderlands between Europe and Asia. To a much greater degree, however, it has been transferred across the Atlantic to the North American continent. It is in this continent that world power is now predominantly centred.

This is not the result of any imperialist plan on your part. It is, indeed, almost accidental! If the British Empire was built up in a fit of absence of mind, American power rests on the basis of a reluctant acceptance of it. There is certainly no aggressive imperialism here.

A characteristic comment of your generation is "So what?", and I suppose you may be tempted to utter these words in response to my large generalizations about historic movements affecting you and your country. It may appear to some of you that what I say is something which may influence the lives of politicians and senior civil servants; and magnates of industry and commerce; but that as far as you are concerned, there will be no noticeable departure from the patterns of life which have been familiar to Americans for generations.

I am quite sure, however, that no matter what you do in life you will not be permitted to escape the consequences of the new responsibilities which have fallen to your country. If you are teachers, you will constantly be called upon to explain in language that will satisfy your students, the policies which your country must follow in the world because of its new and greater role. If you are editors or writers on public affairs, you may often be up against the problem of exercising your critical faculties in the manner which this University has taught you, without, at the same time, unfairly and dangerously undermining the position of your country abroad, or of its public servants at home. If you enter administration, whether it be in Government service or in the service of one of your great industries, you will find yourselves unexpectedly wrestling with the financial and political problems of strange people in distant lands. If you enter technical or scientific services, you may even find yourselves confronting these problems physically, for you may well be drafted for some of the technical undertakings which your country will be called upon to perform in many parts of the world.

It may be that you will only - I apologize for that "only" - be involved as a tax payer. But even here you will certainly be reminded of your new role in world affairs during your annual encounter with your income tax forms. Somehow or other this new role which has fallen upon your country will affect you personally.

You will recall that one of the characters in South Pacific - and I refer now to the book rather than to the play -