

# SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY CONVOCAATION CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

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paradox that in an age of unbounded human possibility, men should hate and kill and destroy one another.

For we must dissolve the attitudes which permit men to indulge those passions which keep the world in constant conflict. There have been about seventy wars since the end of World War II; yet this chaos has not induced us to make much progress in reducing our capacity for nuclear destruction, which could make each momentary crisis the last crisis for all mankind. We cannot do this by ourselves. Yet we can show increased understanding for the fears and suspicion of others and take occasional risks in the name of peace in preference to the monumental risks of mounting arms.

Nor is the peace we seek mere inaction or the absence of war. "Peace" said President Kennedy, "is a process - a way of solving problems." Thus peace for us means building new forms of political and economic institutions, which the smallness and terror of our world requires.

But all of this commitment - to the peace and progress of the world - also requires restraint. For we cannot impose any rigid pattern, any single solution, on the diverse peoples of the world. Nations, like men, often march to the beat of different drummers; it is our role to help these nations achieve their own goals of social justice, national independence, and increasing human freedom - not to condition the help we have to offer on their allegiance to our own political lights.

These tasks - this commitment - this restraint - are awesome challenges in the years ahead. And there are those who question where the energy and the will to meet these challenges will come from.

Our answer is the world's hope: it is to rely on youth. Each nation has different obstacles and different goals, shaped by the vagaries of history and experience. Yet as I talk to young people around the world I am impressed not by the diversity but by the closeness of their goals, their concerns and values and hopes for the future. I have seen students in South Africa, risking position and daring imprisonment against the awesome power of a garrison state. In Peru and Chile, I have seen students leaving the civilization of the university and the city, for the danger and disease and squalor of the countryside, seeking justice and progress for peasants who have never shared in the life of their country.

And in this task, the youth of Canada have a vital role to play. For you are among that small minority of men who live in a nation with the resources and the wealth to undertake this work. You are among the few nations whose youth has been educated, and who can teach others the skills they need to lead lives of dignity and purpose. Canada stands, with the United States, Europe, and Japan, in that small group of lands which do not fight a daily battle simply to stay alive.

You of Canada's younger generation have already begun this work. Through the Canadian University Service Overseas - an inspiration for our own Peace Corps - more than 500 Canadians are serving abroad, helping to teach the peoples of Africa, Asian, and Latin America - just as the Company of Young Canadians is working here in your own land. But much more needs to be done - and among your students are thousands more who can be working abroad, to bring hope into lands which know none.

But there are dangers in this commitment - and these are dangers you must face and overcome.

First, is the danger of futility; the belief there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills - against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young Italian explorer discovered the new world, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was the 32 year old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal.

"Give me a place to stand," said Archimedes, "and I will move the world." These men moved the world, and so can we all. Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

The second danger is that of expediency; of those who say that hopes and beliefs must bend before immediate necessities. Of course, if we would act effectively we must deal with the world as it is. We must get things done. But if there was one thing President Kennedy stood for that touched the most profound feelings of young people across the world, it was the belief that idealism, high aspirations and deep convictions are not incompatible with the most practical and efficient programs - that there is no basic inconsistency between ideals and realistic possibilities - no separation between the deepest desires of heart and mind and the rational application of human effort to human problems. It is not realistic or hard-headed folly. For it ignores the realities of human faith and passion and belief; forces ultimately more powerful than all the calculation of economists or generals. Of course to adhere to standards, to idealism, to vision, in the face of immediate dangers takes courage and self-confidence. But we also know that only those who dare to fall greatly, can ever achieve greatly.

For the fortunate nations, like Canada and the United States, the third danger is comfort; the temptation to follow the easy and familiar paths of personal ambition and financial success so grandly spread before those who have the privilege of education. But that is not the road history has marked out for us. There is a Chinese curse which says, "May he live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other time in history. And everyone here will ultimately be judged - will ultimately judge himself - on the effort he has contributed to building a new world society and the extent to which his ideals and goals have shaped that effort.

You come from a nation whose Prime Minister holds a Nobel Prize for his work in bringing peace to a war-ravaged land; a nation whose work abroad has been a living testament to man's longing for peace; a land whose people have put their energy and their wisdom to the task of a world in which human freedom is enlarged, and the peace preserved. Now you must turn to the work of building a new world - a world which will be better for the work you do.

Albert Camus said:  
"Perhaps we cannot prevent this from being a world in which children suffer. But we can reduce the number of suffering children. And if you will not help us do this, then who shall?"  
The young people of Canada, the younger generation of the world - must give the answer to that question.

