

'Don't Give Us the Usual Feed,' Wisconsin High Students Told Prof. Link

TO WISCONSIN HIGH BY PROF. KARL PAUL LINK

-1955 COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS DELIVERED

I AM NOT unmindful of the honor that this class has bestowed upon me. For those who do not know what the procedure is in selecting "the parent speaker," it should be mentioned that election is held by secret ballot. This is one of the few elections held in Madison whose outcome is not determined by some kind of political bosses, pressure groups, the press or radio or the power of the Deans and Vice-presidents. The secretary of the class informed me that I could say what I please.

The tact of this class might be debatable. But I hasten to add that no one could accuse it of lacking courage.

The arrangements for my appearance here were made a few days before the senior Senator from Wisconsin addressed the students of Wisconsin High. Shortly after Sen. Wiley's appearance I met several of the senior boys. One of them piped up: "We are all set to hear you at Commencement—but don't give us the usual feed." This remark startled me. I replied that since I am not up for election to public office, not aspiring to be either a Dean or a Veep, had no secrets to conceal, I would avoid the "usual feed."

Before I consider some of The Synthetic Lore of 1955—I wish to say a few words about this class, its performance, its teachers, and this school.

In the past four years I served as taxi driver for several members of this class. I have also seen a good many of you frequently from the window of my office while you lunched and played.

It is my sincere opinion that this class is a very good class. This class might well be among the very best this school has produced.

This is a good class when judged by any standards. You have been spared many of the dangers that have plagued comparable classes in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, Stalingrad, Tokyo, and Hiroshima.

You have been diligent in study; and democratic in your social activities. You have acted well on the stage. You have a very creditable record in sports, even though Hal Metzen and his staff cannot use those great athletes from the out-



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lying areas made ineligible by the existing rules.

The good record achieved is not due to inherited genes, or to the relatively favorable home environment. Credit must also be given to Principal Goldgruber and his associates for managing you in an intelligent, patient and understanding manner.

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Monument to Educators

WISCONSIN High School graduates good classes for two reasons. The student ability is above average and the bulk of the teachers are really devoted to the cause of education. These teachers have the dual responsibility of teaching the students and the practice teachers majoring in Education. This is not an easy task. Frequently the high school students know more about a given subject than the practice teachers from "the hill."

Apropos your building—it is apparent as it now stands—Wisconsin High is a monument to some bold educators of the past years whose dream has not come into reality. Look at that blank north-wall. The present structure was supposed to be only the beginning of things.

There is no assembly hall, no lunch room, no study hall; the gym space is too limited. The offices of the teachers are woefully inadequate.

What this school needs is a union or some pressure group that will promote its causes. Its causes are just as important as those of the cranberry growers, the mink farmers, the Wisconsin canners, the cheese makers, the highway builders, or the Wisconsin National Guard.

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'Ours Is a Great Country'

IT IS the custom of Commencement speakers to dwell on the greatness of these United States. I shall assume the usual platitudes, beatitudes and fat-titudes of the day. Yes, we have per capita more plumbing, electricity, automobiles, radios, TV-sets, and phones. We have the fastest trains and planes, the biggest bull-dozers, the tallest buildings, the most productive factories; more cola drinks, more tractors, fatter hogs and more corn than any other people in the world.

We are on the whole better fed, better clad, better housed, better governed than most people. We can vote.

Our science leads on many fronts. For this position we are in part indebted to the European dynasties that caused such people as the parents of Dr. Robert J. Oppenheimer who headed the A-bomb developers to emigrate to our country.

We are also indebted to the European dictatorships who caused the late Albert Einstein and Enrico Fermi and many other brilliant men to seek freedom here.

This imported talent along with the great vigor of our technology—and according to some—the profit system—have made America one of the great industrial powers in the

history of man.

This science and technology has been super-imposed on the ideas of Liberty, Freedom, Justice and Opportunity forged by the founders in the Declaration of Independence, which according to Abraham Lincoln is—"an instrument forged not only for the benefit of Americans on this continent, but one destined to lift the weight from the shoulders of the peoples the world around."

Another important factor contributory to our technologic might is that by virtue of our geographical isolation the world wars have not been fought on our land. We have been spared the devastation that modern science produced.

Our science, industry and technology have had the benefit of many of the best minds that Europe has produced. It is Synthetic Lore to deny that we could have achieved our present position without the help of this foreign born talent. It is Synthetic Lore to deny that without our revered apostles of Freedom and Justice such as Jefferson, Lincoln, the late Justice Holmes, the United States would have been the land of their choosing.

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The Anti-Roosevelt Lore

MOST of you graduates were born in 1937. This was the first year of the second term of the only man who was four times elected to the Presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

When most of you were eight years old, he died suddenly from a brain hemorrhage. You have only a fringe memory of the sorrow and concern that his death caused.

I do not question what has been taught you in school about F.D.R. and his New Deal, and the leadership he gave during World War II.

But I do wonder if what you have been taught on F.D.R. has stuck under the impact of a one-sided press, radio and TV newscasters, and the malicious mouthings of some of our politicians.

The meanest "Synthetic Lore" rampant today is the conspiracy to push the period of Roosevelt's impact on America and the world as far as possible into history, or if it is mentioned to distort and discredit him.

The period of 1933-45 while Roosevelt was president have been referred to by Wisconsin's Junior Senator as "the period of treason."

It was "treason" to set up legislative machinery to put the American economic system back into operation in 1933 when a severe depression gripped and nearly strangled this country. "Treason" to assemble the best talent available—regardless of party affiliation—for the problems at hand.

It was "treason" to feed hungry people when agricultural surpluses were going to waste on our farms. "Treason" to protect our soil, to rehabilitate river valleys via TVA and the like and bring electricity into the rural areas.

It was "treason" to put the jobless to work. "Treason" to

provide decent housing, to help writers, artists, poets, playwrights, scholars, actors and scientists, professional people of all kinds, through government sponsored work projects.

It was "treason" to aid countries fighting Hitler and Mussolini. And here is the nub, it was "treason" to go into war against Hitler and Mussolini. "Treason" to recognize the U.S.S.R. in 1933, to help her via Lend-lease in 1941 when she took the full force of Hitler's war machine. It was "treason" to open a Second Front in Europe in 1944, and to sit at conference tables with representatives from Britain, Russia and China to create the United Nations.

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Recommends Crane's Book

I SUGGEST that you read the book by Milton Crane "The Roosevelt Era." This is not one-sided hero worship. It is an effort to communicate the words of many authors—friendly and critical—to reveal something of the ideas, the problems and the actions of men and women in Roosevelt's America. It puts into the record thoughts that breathe and words that burn on the "still sad music of humanity."

You need to read this book to understand the period in which you were born. You need to read it to learn about Roosevelt's critics and how it came about, though the press and big business were almost solidly against him—the citizens of these United States put him into the White House four times.

It was Roosevelt who listened to Albert Einstein and his associates in the fall of 1939. The day when Mass could be converted into Energy was on the threshold of big scale reality, and he appointed a committee known as "advisory Committee on Uranium."

Among the last words that came from Roosevelt in 1945 were:

"Today we are faced with the fact that if civilization is to survive we must cultivate the science of human relationship, the ability of all peoples, to live together and work together in the same world at peace."

This generation must learn that these last words stand as a beacon and a hope. For man now knows that to live by the atomic-sword means to perish by the atomic-sword. We can now have the choice between radioactive cinders and extensive lethal fall-out—or coexistence.

You can gain hope, courage and wisdom by understanding America's record during the first ten years of your life.

And so as you come of age, work diligently to develop your talents. Work is the best thing to make us love life. But carry yourselves beyond school and work by reading widely. Study and weigh that which may not be approved by the McCarthyites. Oppose any form of tyranny over the minds of men. Without freedom of thought and expression no man is free.

Over 2,000 years ago Apostle Paul said, "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good."