

REMARKS

Eighth Annual IUSB Commencement Exercises  
Athletic and Convocation Center; May 15, 1974

President Ryan, colleagues, ladies, gentlemen, and--most importantly--students of the 1974 class for whom I primarily offer these brief remarks: For the eighth time in IUSB history a group of people bound together in a high hour of personal and institutional focus are here gathered in happy conclave. Probably no other human ceremony allows so many persons to be both the bestowers and receivers of warm recognition for the completion of sustained and critically important effort. Thus, a university commencement exercise provides a moment for each graduate that is at once intensely private and joyously communal. The communal aspect, symbolized by the robes of ancient academic tradition, the audience of family and friends, and the unifying presence of the President of our distinguished multi-campus University, combines with the individual pride each of you deserves to feel for having attained that particular corner of understanding which your degree represents.

The commingled mood of idiosyncratic worth and public harmony we feel on an occasion like this is, in a sense, the end of all learning and the necessary base for civil society. When that delicate accord breaks down, or when the personal and communal become antagonistic, we must consider--as we are considering on a dramatic scale in our country today--the extent of disruption that can be caused by serious discrepancy between magnanimous outward proclamation and inner self-serving. Men should be what they seem, Othello said, and Emerson, distinguishing between greatness and meanness observed that "it is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great

man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

While Emerson to some degree was decrying the crowd, and extolling the individual, we all must live in the larger world, so that if necessary devotion to a particular idea of personal space becomes obsessive in a way that makes one insensitive to the mighty interdependencies that link us to heaven, earth, society, and to each other, then everything we have done in all of our institutions has failed for that man or woman.

Last year the gifted poet W. H. Auden died, leaving a body of precisely framed utterance that remarks upon the varied orchestration of the mortal scene. A brooding generosity about the need each of us has for definition--even for psychic survival--through our unique life situation, coupled with bemused awareness of how limiting such definition can be unless by some act of capacious sympathy we can see our personal position as only one possibility among myriad others, shines through his poem "Law Like Love." A few stanzas go like this:

Law, say the gardeners, is the sun,  
Law is the one  
All gardeners obey  
Tomorrow, yesterday, today.

Law is the wisdom of the old  
The impotent grandfathers shrilly scold;  
The grandchildren put out a treble tongue,  
Law is the senses of the young.

Law, says the priest with a priestly look,  
Expounding to an unpriestly people,  
Law is the words in my priestly book,  
Law is my pulpit and my steeple.

Yet law-abiding scholars write;  
Law is neither wrong nor right,  
Law is only crimes  
Punished by places and by times,  
Law is the clothes men wear  
Anytime, anywhere,  
Law is Good-morning and Good-night.

And always the loud angry crowd  
Very angry and very loud  
Law is We,  
And always the soft idiot softly Me.

If IUSB has served you well, you will have the strength of your own convictions, and yet you will have openness toward others. You will have a sense of the richness and diversity present on this fragile globe we inhabit together. You will recognize in the human witness of men like Jesse Dickinson and Albert Beutler, who leaves IUSB in July to become president of Bethel College, the beautiful integration of personality that allows no distinction between what a man says, and what he is and does. Let these two represent for us how continuing intertwined personal and communal spirit can go forth from this night to suffuse all our future acts and days.

Mr. President, I now take great pleasure in presenting to you the Class of 1974 for the conferring of degrees.