

[John Hannah] In [John Hannah] the course of its long history, Michigan State University has presented many distinguished men as speakers at its annual commencements. Seldom, however, has it been privileged to welcome to this platform one as well qualified to speak to young people just about to enter upon their life work as our speaker today. He qualifies for this special distinction by reason of what he himself has accomplished in the comparatively short time since completing his formal education at Whittier College and the Law School of Duke University. Determined to make a career of public service, he has been elected successively to the House of Representatives, to the United States Senate and to the vice presidency, offices to which so many others aspire only after careers in other fields of activity. He has been able to bring into the federal government the vigor and imagination of youth, along with his sound judgment and wholesome personal philosophy. They have stood him in good stead for he has been entrusted with duties and responsibilities both demanding and exacting. That he has been willing to aspire and able to achieve should be a final answer both to those who are inclined to doubt the wisdom of entrusting momentous affairs to younger leaders and to youth who doubt their own ability to meet the challenges of maturity. It is to his great and lasting credit that he has widened the dimensions of the office he holds so as to make it far more than the empty honor it has been at times in our history. It has gained in dignity and importance by virtue of his faithful, conscientious and imaginative discharge of the added duties and great responsibility placed upon him. It is a very great privilege to welcome him to this campus and a great honor to present him to this audience to make the commencement address. Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States. [Richard Nixon] Thank you. [Richard Nixon] Doctor Hannah, members of the class of 1957, members of the faculty of the Board of Trustees, and friends of Michigan State University. It is indeed a very great privilege for me to have the opportunity to address this graduating class today. And this is particularly so because of the close association and the friendly association I have had with this institution in the past. As I speak here, I'm reminded of the fact that I was first on this campus in 1954. I spoke in your fieldhouse then and afterwards received a football autographed by the members of that championship team and the Rose Bowl, as you recall, defeated at UCLA and the Rose Bowl that year. That same year, I made the Coach of the Year Award to Coach Biggie Munn in Washington, DC. And then in 1956, when I spoke at the Lansing Railroad Station, Clarence Peaks and other members of the Michigan State University team presented me with a Michigan State blanket. Now, I am to have a very great honor today to be made an honorary Doctor of Laws of this institution. But I can assure you that for a man who couldn't even make the second string at Whittier College, a Michigan State blanket certainly was the height of anything he could possibly imagine. And finally, may I say that it has been a particular privilege for me as with other members of your present administration in Washington to have worked with the president of this university during the time he rendered such distinguished and splendid service as an Assistant Secretary of Defense 1953-1955. I think you can understand, therefore, for these reasons and others, why I feel so much at home on this campus today. However, I would be less than frank if I didn't admit that the preparation of a commencement address is about the most difficult assignment that any speaker can have. I recall my first commencement address after becoming vice president. I was searching for an appropriate subject, and so I finally decided to consult an expert. I sought out a former university president. He now heads the organization for which I work, and this is what he said. This is what he said. "All I can tell you, Dick, is those young folks are smart. You better talk about something you know." So I'm going to try to follow that advice today. And may I begin by expressing the hope, the request that each member of this graduating class will

today make a personal lifetime commitment to take an active part in the political life of your communities. Now, some of you will run for office. And I hope that those of you who might consider this don't avoid that responsibility with the usual excuse that politics is a dirty business. If you believe it is, get into it and do something about it. Those of you who do not make politics a career can participate on a volunteer basis in the political activities of the party of your choice. And I can assure you that both of our major parties can use and need new blood and new leadership. All of you can help create the intelligent and informed public opinion which is essential if the democracy can survive. I know that I don't need to tell you that the two most dangerous enemies of that successful democratic government are ignorance and prejudice. And you with the background which it has been privileged for you to have at this institution are particularly qualified to fight and defeat these enemies in the communities in which you live. Those of you who do not make politics a career, those of you who become doctors and lawyers and teachers and engineers and farmers and businessmen, homemakers, you will be tempted to adopt the attitude when political questions come up. Why borrow trouble? Don't take a position on any controversial issue. And if you do, always support what appears to be the popular side of the question. After all, it's good for business. You get more clients, you keep more patients. Whatever your business happens to be, the same analogy seems to apply. But I urge you today not to take the easy way. I urge you to have the courage to take a position on the great issues of our time. And in doing so, don't let a Gallup poll make up your mind for you. Now in making this statement, I cast no reflections on polls, but what may be the easy or the popular answer to a hard question may not always be the right one, as you know. And if you believe that what appears to be an unpopular position is the right position, may you make it your business to make it the popular one. Now, I realize that what I just said amounts to nothing more than pious platitudes unless we get down to cases. And so let me be specific by discussing some of the controversial issues on the Washington scene today. Let's begin with the labor racketeering investigation being conducted by the McClellan Committee. You've been hearing about it, you've been seeing some of its hearings and television. Now at the outset, there are some things that everybody here, I think, can agree on about these hearings. First, the investigation is serving a useful purpose in exposing the activities of union officials who broke faith with their union membership. And second, the hearings are being conducted with dignity and with fairness, the very best tradition of congressional investigations. They serve to remind us that no leader of government or business or labor is so big or so powerful that he cannot be made to account for his actions before the elected representatives of the people. Now, on all these things, we can agree, these are easy conclusions to reach. But now we come to the more difficult question. What legislation should be passed to avoid such abuses in the future? Now, public opinion at this moment would probably support legislation of the most drastic character, which would have the effect of curbing legitimate union activities, as well as the abuses that have been exposed in these hearings. The tendency for most people is probably to go along with this prevailing public sentiment. What's the right thing to do? Organized labor today is going through a period of trial comparable to that endured by the business community 20 years ago. But we should not repeat the mistake that was made 20 years ago and blame an entire movement for the blunders and crimes of a minority. Rather, what we should do is to help outraged union members to restore honesty and integrity to the union. The protection of the integrity of union welfare funds, the insurance of democratic procedures in the conduct of union business are among the objectives which Congress should properly consider in determining what legislation should be adopted. And I emphasize that the aim of any legislation in this field must not be to weaken or destroy unions, but to give union

members the tools they need to make all unions follow the good practices which many unions follow today. And I would go further and suggest that this is a golden opportunity for American businessmen to encourage and make friends of the honest and sincere men who constitute the great majority of union officers. Now is the time to build lasting goodwill in labor relations rather than to ostracize all union leadership, good or bad and create the conditions which would lead to industrial strife in the years ahead. Now, let us turn to the international field for our second controversial issue. You picked up your papers this morning. You'll notice that we've just signed an agreement to send \$95 million worth of agricultural commodities to Poland. The question then is, should the Congress appropriate the necessary funds to carry out this agreement? Now, the first reaction to perhaps the majority of our people would be that to send aid to a communist country is not only wrong but foolish. After all, why should the American people be taxed to help a nation which might be aligned against us in the event of a conflict. But let's examine this question a little more closely. How will the interests of the United States best be served in this case? Let's look at the situation in Poland right today. There isn't any question but that Poland is a communist country. But the Polish people have been displaying increasing evidence of their determination to follow a course independent of the Soviet Union. In response to that popular sentiment, the leaders of the Polish government have been trying to soften the features of communism that do the most violence to human nature. For example, the churches of Poland have much greater freedom than in the past. The Polish cardinal is allowed not only to exercise his functions, but to leave the country at will. The powers of the secret police have been substantially reduced. While the Polish press is not free by any means, by our standards, it has a greater degree of freedom now than it has had in the past. Some farmers have been allowed to own their own farm. And, of course, you know, this is a marked deviation from strict communist theory and practice. Now we come to our alternatives. What should we do? Well, we can drive the Polish people and government back to complete domination by Moscow in the hope that Poland will then be an economic burden on the Soviet Union. But if we follow this course, we are in effect saying this, that there is no evolutionary road to independence for a people dominated by communism and that violent revolution is their only resort if they want to be free. Now, what is our other alternative? It is to help Poland progress toward greater internal freedom and increasing independence from the Soviet Union with the hope that communists and other lands will see that freedom and freedom alone brings out the best qualities in men. So we do this not because we approve of communism, but because we believe, as we must believe today, that the explosive power of freedom is great enough to destroy communism, any other false idea once it's given a chance to flourish. Now, in making this decision, we should be under no illusions that our policy is certain to succeed. The Polish government, Polish people might still be forced back under the complete domination of the Soviet Union. But certainly, here is a gamble worth taking because if by our action, the movement toward independence and freedom is enabled to remain alive and to grow in Poland, the other satellite countries will have an example which they in turn can follow. What I mean to say today is that we should favor any step that will promote freedom and even limited independence in a communist state. By our action, we will be announcing to the world that we are not writing off the Polish people or any of the other millions who are held in bondage behind the Iron Curtain. Now, a related controversial issue in the international field is going to be debated on the floor of the Senate within the next few days. It's the question of what we should do about our foreign aid programs. Here again, the snap judgment of many people might well be, why should the Congress appropriate our hard earned tax dollars to aid people in other land? You know, you've

often heard the term giveaway applied to this whole program. Now, I think we will agree that it's relatively easy to develop public support for the military phase of this program. When we realize that it costs on an average five times as much for the maintenance of an American soldier abroad as it does for a fighting man and the allies we aid, it's obvious that a vote to cut foreign military aid is not a vote for economy, it is actually a vote for larger budgets in the years ahead. And spending less for aid abroad would not only mean more dollars for defense at home, but it would inevitably mean more American boys in uniform. But let us turn now to a far more difficult phase of this program. The president, in addition to the military aid side of it has asked for \$1 billion for the purpose of foreign economic assistance programs. Now, the greater part of this money will not go to nations allied with the United States military. Where will it go? To countries in Africa, the Near East and Asia, for the most part, which are uncommitted or neutral in the world struggle. Now, how can we justify spending the taxpayer's money in this way? Let's examine for a moment the breakdown of people in the world today. The world is roughly divided into thirds, one third communist, one third free, one third uncommitted. Now, the communists know that if they can win a substantial part of the 700 million people who live in the uncommitted areas of Asia and Africa to their side, that they won't have to fight a war in order to achieve world domination. If they succeed in this objective, the overwhelming majority of the world's people will be under communist control, and the free world will be denied access to economic resources that are essential to our survival. I visited most of these countries. I talked to their leaders and I talked to literally thousands of their people. After centuries of poverty, the people of these lands are determined to have economic progress which will lead to a better life. When you consider, for example, that the per capita income of the average person in the countries of Southeast Asia is one twentieth of what it is in the United States, you can see why they feel as they do on this score. These people, both their leaders and the people, the rank and file, would prefer to have economic progress and retain their independence and freedom. But make no mistake about it. If we and other free nations give them no other choice. If we, in other words, refuse to help them toward economic progress, they will be forced to turn to the communist world for help. And the communists know this. That's why they're making every effort to meet the needs of these countries for education, technical assistance, and political advice, and that is why we are spending \$1 billion a year for our economic and information programs. I've seen these programs in action. There has been some waste, some inefficiency in their administration. But I say today that when we consider the tremendous stakes involved, we can only conclude that the remedy for these difficulties and errors is to try to do a more effective job and not to give up and let the Soviet Union start taking over the world. Mr. Khrushchev said in his television broadcast to the American people last Sunday that our grandchildren would live under socialism. Now by socialism, he of course meant the communism we see in the Soviet Union today. But he added this significant statement. He said that the Soviet Union would win the struggle for the world through other than military means. Let's see why he said it. The communist world has gained 600 million people since World War Two, without the Soviet Union being involved directly in war involved outwardly losing a single Soviet soldier in combat. Now, if we allow the communists to win the uncommitted areas of the world in this manner, the balance of power and resources and men will be such that the free world will be strangled into submission by the communist world. The billion dollars then that we are spending for economic assistance to these uncommitted areas is actually what? It's an investment in America's freedom, in our independence. It's the premium we pay to ensure our survival as a free people. And I am confident that the Senate of the United States will follow the lead of its Foreign

Relations Committee in refusing to make the substantial cuts that some have advocated in the amounts requested by the president for this program. And I am also confident that as the American people know the facts, they will support the President of the United States in his requests in this field. May I turn finally to a controversial but vital domestic issue, which has far greater effect on our foreign policy than many of us realized. I refer today to the great battle which is going on in the world for the allegiance of peoples and the uncommitted nations. These people are alike in many respects. Their economies are underdeveloped, as I already pointed out. Most of them are newly independent and they're most jealous of that independence as they should be. All of them belong to races which are not white. And I can testify from personal observation and experience that even more than independence, even more than economic progress, the people of Asia and Africa want and deserve from the rest of the world recognition of their equal dignity as individuals and as nations in the world community. Now we can tell them as we do that we respect that dignity, that we consider them to be our moral and political and social equals. But the impression that people have of America abroad is determined far more by what we do than what we say. I find in country after country as I visited them in these areas that the question is inevitably asked, do you really believe in equality when you practice racial discrimination in your own country? Now, the easy answer to this question for the members of this class and the rest of us is to ignore the problem or to say, let the government do something about it. Now, there are some things the government can do in this field. The enactment of the Civil Rights Bill now before Congress would be an effective step toward living up to our democratic ideals. But in the final analysis, legislation will not solve the problem with which we are confronted. A law is only as good as the will of people to keep it. And this will must come from the hearts of the people themselves. In every community where racial tensions exist today, and let me emphasize that this is not a problem limited to the South. In every one of these communities, there is need for moderate, constructive action by people of both races. We must not allow the extremists and the demagogues to take over this field by default. It is only through the willingness of public spirited citizens in all walks of life to assume personal responsibility for removing the causes of racial prejudice that we can assure the progress that eventually will make the American dream of equality of opportunity a reality for all of our citizens. In discussing some very difficult and controversial questions today, I would not want to leave the impression on the members of this class and your friends in this audience that we in the United States should be pessimistic about the future, pessimistic about the eventual outcome of the struggle for freedom and for peace. I referred a moment ago to Mr. Khrushchev's prediction that our grandchildren would live under socialism or communism. May I give you a contrary prediction from one of the wisest men it has been my privilege to know. Three and a half years, I met with Mr. Rajagopalachari, the Chief Minister of Madras in India. And he said on that occasion that communism in the end was doomed to fail in its attempt to win the world, because communism ran contrary to the nature of man. I believe he was right. And I say today that there is no question about the outcome of this struggle. We are going to win, and we're going to win because we're on the right side, on the side of freedom, on justice, belief in God, against the forces of slavery, injustice, and atheism. And despite what you hear these days about the problems of armament and disarmament, tensions in various parts of the world between peoples and governments, the forces of peace are going to prevail over the forces of war because the people of the world are on the side of peace. For we read of incidents of hatred every day in our papers, and we hear those who say that it is natural for people and nations to engage in warfare against each other. But could I tell you in just a word my own experience in this respect? In the past four

years, I have visited 40 countries in all parts of the world. Before I first took my first trip to Asia, in 1953, I was briefed by various experts on those countries. I was told how different the people of the various countries were that I was going to visit. The people in the first country were anti American. The people in the next country had an inferiority complex. The people in the next country had a superiority complex and so on down the line. One bit of advice that was given over and over again was this, Mr. Vice President, you and your wife can't possibly stop your car and greet people in ordinary walks of life in these other countries. They wouldn't understand it. It's never been done before and you, your government, your position, would lose face among the peoples of Asia. They are different from the people of the United States. Well, we took the trips, we didn't take the advice. You know what we found? Oh, there were differences, all right, differences in race and religion, color, and food and clothing. But we found that a smile, a handshake, a friendly word or gesture got exactly the same reaction in every one of the 40 countries that it gets right here in the United States of America. What does this mean? It means, and I am convinced of this on the basis of my own personal observation, that is the people of the world, as distinguished from their leaders, have the opportunity to meet and to know each other. That those prejudices and hatreds that might be instilled in them by some leaders will inevitably melt away. And so having these great factors in mind, I say to you today that you can look to the future of the United States and the future of the world in which you and your children will live with confidence. And I say to you finally, that I know that each member of this great class, 2,400 strong, will take upon yourself the responsibility, the privilege which is yours, the privilege and responsibility not just to be followers, but to be leaders, and to help to develop the intelligent, informed public opinion we need in support of the kind of national leadership which is dedicated to the great American ideals of independence for people, freedom for individuals, and peace and brotherhood among the nations of the world. [WKAR-TV announcer] And that was the message of Vice President Richard E. Nixon to the graduating class of Michigan State University of 1957. You can hear from the applause that the vice president's words were very well received, and now we are coming to the part of the ceremony that is so important, the bestowal of the degrees. And President Hannah will do that honor. [John Hannah] Now we will proceed the conferring of the degrees. By authority of the state of Michigan vested in the State Board of Agriculture and delegated to me, I shall now confer degrees upon the candidates of the several colleges of Michigan State University as they are presented by the deans. In the current academic year, degrees have been or will be conferred upon a total of 3,952 individuals. Of that number, 3,189 are baccalaureate degrees and 763 are advanced degrees. Incidentally, the total number for this year is greater than the total number of degrees conferred by this university from the date of its founding in 1855 through 1920, a span of 65 years. You may be interested to learn that up until this year, Michigan State University had conferred a total of 49,363 degrees in its history, and that the degrees earned this week or earned this year add 8% to that total, bringing it to 53,315. The presentation of the candidates for the baccalaureate degrees will be made in the order in which the several colleges were established. The candidates of the College of Agriculture, the first college on this campus and the first such in the United States will be presented by Dean Thomas K. Cowden, Dean of the College of Agriculture. Dean Cowden. [Thomas Cowden] Will the candidates from the College of Agriculture with the degree of Bachelor of Science, please rise. The President of the faculty of the College of Ag...