

Exeter Assembly Remarks Luigi R. Einaudi '53 May 9, 2006

Principal Tingley, thank you. Students, faculty, friends. My wife Carol and I are very happy to be here. This Academy was a key force in my life.

I came to Exeter as a Lower Middler and graduated in 1953 after three formative years. Thirty-six years later, as a newly confirmed Ambassador, I met the President who had nominated me at a White House reception. As we shook hands, the first thing I said to him was "I am delighted, Sir, to finally meet the enemy." George Herbert Walker Bush, the father of our current President, was taken aback (I am not sure that any President of the United States had been greeted quite that way in a perfectly friendly setting). So I explained: "You went to Andover. I am an Exeter man. You are the enemy." He laughed. I laughed. And we agreed to work together for the common good.

And that is what I want to talk with you about today: Public service for the common good. I was deeply honored when Bill Dakin, the President of our Class of 1953, and the members of our Visitors Program Committee, asked me to come before you to suggest that public service has real merits and rewards, even in a world that is less than the Utopia we would wish it to be.

As I am speaking at Exeter, I can invoke NON SIBI as a Utopia all of us in this Academy can understand. [Our Academy motto] NON SIBI does not mean selfless in the sense of denial of self; rather, it means working beyond your self with others, in society and in the world, for the common good. That is what I would call a genuine Utopia, a goal that is not always attainable, but a goal so constantly present and so powerful that it can serve as an organizing beacon for our lives.

I was chosen to visit with you because I had a successful diplomatic career. I do not know what you know or think about diplomats. So let me start with a straw man. It is often said that diplomats are persons who are paid to lie for their country. Let me tell you that that statement exemplifies one of the most corrosive aspects of public life: cynicism. The truth about serious diplomats is rather the opposite: a good diplomat is a person who knows how to advance his or her country's interests without lying. Every lie is a failure. A liar loses credibility and respect. And without respect and credibility he or she will not be able to do the job. So my first point is:

Fight Cynicism: Cynicism is a recipe for failure and inaction. Exeter is such a unique haven that when you leave it will be hard not to be cynical about something, even if it is only the claim that whatever college you next attend is "the best." The problem is that cynicism is the enemy of progress, both

personally and for the community at large. I came to Washington as a public servant during Watergate. I was proud to have been asked by Henry Kissinger to serve on his Policy Planning Staff. I was proud to have become a bureaucrat. Bureaucracy emerged with the birth of the nation state and the specialization of functions in organized society. Good government is impossible without a good bureaucracy. Yet every President elected since Richard Nixon has run for office against the “bureaucrats in Washington.” To put it bluntly, politicians have discovered they can get votes by equating civil servants with wasteful dundering idiots. Don’t expect to get a lot of recognition, even if you are working for Utopia.

So here is my second point:

Accept Reality, but uphold Utopia: Sometimes life is trench warfare in freezing mud. Sometimes it is simply boring. Too often cynicism seems a prudent response forced upon us by promises not kept, the incompetence of others, our own failings, or similar harsh realities. Keep your head up. Develop your inner compass. It does help to think beyond yourself; it is not easy to survive without a Utopia for which to strive.

My third point is

Learn to listen and never underestimate others. Never forget that in every audience, in every situation, there will be some who will be ahead of you, just as there will be some who will need your help. Respect all of them and respect their interests. Benito Juárez said *La paz es el respeto al derecho ajeno*. Peace is respect for the rights of others. My favorite extrapolation of that concept is: *Democracy among nations is as important as democracy within nations*. Small countries have the same rights under the law as big ones. These caveats are particularly important for the United States, the world’s only superpower. Fearing our displeasure, and assuming that our power and resources mean we know what is going on, foreign leaders often keep silent. Beware of silence and do not assume it implies agreement. Agreements that do not advance the interests of all concerned will not be well implemented, and will not last.

My next point is

Rules matter. Your mind is an inherently revolutionary instrument, but imagine your computer without default settings! Descartes wrote that when you are thinking about a particular problem, you must accept the conventional wisdom on all other matters. Only then can you keep your mind clear to concentrate. In societal matters, whether domestic or foreign, the rules are codified in the law. Only under the law can you work, produce, save and invest effectively. If you want to change the rules, you must learn to make rules, to influence government or to participate in public service. The United States is too developed and too big for guerrilla warfare.

Let me open a topical parenthesis. One of the biggest reasons immigration has become such an emotional problem in the United States today is that there are no enforceable rules. The greatness of the United States is closely tied to the fact that the US has been the country that has best realized a Utopia consisting of a rule of law that accepts the rights of ALL individuals. The US has been energizer of the world's exploding democratic revolution, realizing to an unprecedented extent equality of opportunity regardless of gender, race, class, religion or nationality.

My generation – the class of '53 and a few privileged others -- were part of the great explosion and healing of the US civil rights movement that helped affirm the rights of American blacks. Henceforth they were CIVI (as our teacher would have boomed in Latin class at Exeter), citizens entitled (as the black historian Roger Wilkins once put it) to "exert relentless energy to hold up [their] end."

For some years now the sheer mass of uncontrolled migration from across our southern land borders has brought us countless men and women who daily exert relentless energies to better themselves in ways impossible in their countries of origin. We are individually and economically the better for it, but the sheer mass is bringing growing controversy.

To say that our civilization is at threat misses the point. THEY are now part of US. Lashing out and repeating the mass expulsions of Mexicans in the 1930s will uselessly compound the pain. In any case, Mexico and countries in Central America and the Caribbean already receive repatriation flights daily -- with effects that are strategically ineffective, locally destabilizing and regionally dispiriting.

What is needed is a return to the spirit of equality before the law that made America great. We need immigrants. But we do not need shadow communities that live in the dark, at the margin of the law. To regain control in a way that is worthy of our civilization, we need a law that will shape an open system, with dignity and responsibility for all. We need internationally enforced controls defining guest-worker rights, requirements for citizenship, and national security.

My fifth point is that

Theories that do not fit the facts cannot explain them. The days of the *Encyclopédie Française*, when knowledge was so limited serious people could attempt to publish all that was known in a single set of volumes, are over. Now less than ever can education be just a matter of rote learning. Today education is a process of stretching the mind so you can learn to think, find facts and fit them together to find meaning. The trouble starts when we are lazy and accept shortcuts to help us give meaning to a complicated world. When I was growing up, the shortcut was "communism." Today it is "terrorism." Tomorrow it may be "global warming." We must resist allowing symbols like these to become a

substitute for thought. And in the long run, they lose their value even as political rallying cries.

Learn to write. A leader must know how to communicate. Speaking matters. But writing is the discipline that brings clarity and influence to speaking. I remember when I was a student at Exeter being repelled at the thought that then President Eisenhower read nothing longer than one page. Twenty years later, I had become a specialist at putting what mattered for decisions into a one page decision memorandum. I think it was at Exeter that I learned that Napoleon was reputed to have said that *Armies travel on their Stomachs*. Well, if armies travel on their stomachs, then I would say *Bureaucracies travel on paper*. And papers carry words. Most people do not know how to write. If you write well, you will stand out.

You will have to decide. If you become a leader or a senior official to whom people look to for guidance, and with a duty to provide it, all the precedents, instructions and field manuals in the world will never cover every situation you will encounter. Yet you will have to decide how to act. And you will never have precisely the information you will need to cover all aspects of your decision. Many times you will know so little it will be like trying to find a light in the dark in a strange room. Sometimes, rarely, you will have too much information. A great study once demonstrated that the US government had information about the impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, but could not pick it out of what the analyst called “static.” So, most of the time you will starve for information, and the rest of the time you will have to pick through the static. But always you will have to decide. Fifty four years ago, in English class at Exeter, I learned that without free will Buridan’s Ass would have starved, unable to choose between the two buckets of oats set before him in perfect symmetry. Look at each other. Look at the persons sitting next to you. You are each other’s base. Staying in touch with your friends, parents, siblings, the family you will create, your neighbors, that is what will enable you to know what to decide. It will even enable you to fight for your utopia and be a good bureaucrat at the same time. In the State Department, Ambassadors had a formula for it: The UNODIR cable. UNless Otherwise DIRected, I will do/say the following.

Finally, to conclude:

Act *sub specie aeternitatis*, act in the light of eternity. Think of how what you do or say will look like to you and others ten or fifteen years from now (not quite eternity, but long enough). Think of tomorrow, not just today. Yours will be a career, not a job. Think of others, not just yourself. Act with dignity and respect, and never forget your Utopia.