

But this nation was not founded solely on the principle of citizen-rights. Equally important, though too-often not discussed, is the citizen's responsibility. For our privileges can be no greater than our obligations. The protection of our rights can endure no longer when the performance of our responsibilities each can be neglected only at the peril of the other.

I speak to you today, therefore, not of your rights as Americans, but of your responsibilities. They are many in number and different in nature. They do not rest with equal weight upon the shoulders of all. Equality of opportunity does not mean equality of responsibility. All Americans must be responsible citizens, but some must be more responsible than others by virtue of their public or their private position, their role in the family or community, their prospects for the future, or their legacy from the past. Increased responsibility goes with increased ability. For those to whom much is given, much is required.

Comodore Vanderbilt recognized this responsibility and his recognition made possible the establishment of a great institution of learning for which he will be long remembered after his steamboats and railroads have been forgotten. I speak, in particular, therefore, of the responsibility of the educated citizen, including the students, the faculty, and the alumni of this great institution. The creation and maintenance of Vanderbilt University, like that of all great universities, has required considerable effort and expenditure, and I cannot believe that all of this was undertaken merely to give this school's graduates an economic advantage in the life struggle.

"Every man sent out from a university," said Professor Woodrow Wilson, "Every man sent out from a university should be a man of his nation as well as a man of his time." You have responsibilities, in short, to use your talents for the benefit of the society which helped develop those talents. You must decide, as Goethe put it, whether you will be an anvil or a hammer, whether you will give to the world in which you were reared and educated the broadest possible benefits of that education.

Of the many special obligations incumbent upon an educated citizen, I would cite three as outstanding: Your obligation to the pursuit of learning; your obligation to serve the public; your obligation to uphold the law. If the pursuit of learning is not defended by the educated citizen, it will not be defended at all.

For there will always be those who scoff at intellectuals, who cry out against research, who seek to limit our educational system. Modern cynics and skeptics see no more reason for landing a man on the moon -- which we shall do -- than the cynics and skeptics of half a millennium ago saw for the discovery of this country. They see no harm in paying those to whom they entrust the minds of their children a smaller wage than is paid to those to whom they entrust the care of their plumbing.

But the educated citizen knows how much more there is to know. He knows that knowledge is power -- more so today than ever before. He knows that only an educated and informed people will be a free people; that the ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all; and that if we can, as Jefferson put it, "enlighten the people generally," "tyranny and the oppressions of mind and body will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day." And, therefore, the educated citizen has a special obligation to encourage the pursuit of learning, to promote exploration of

the unknown, to preserve the freedom of inquiry, to support the advancement of research, and to assist at every level of government the improvement of education for all Americans -- from grade school to graduate school.

Secondly, the educated citizen has an obligation to serve the public. He may be a precinct worker or a president. He may give his talents at the courthouse, the state house, the White House. He may be a civil servant or a senator, a candidate or a campaign worker, a winner or a loser. But he must be a participant and not a spectator. At the Olympic Games, Aristotle wrote, "It is not the finest and strongest men who are crowned, but they who enter the lists. For out of these the prize-men are selected. "So, too, in life," he said, "of the honorable and the good, it is they who act who rightly win the prize."

I urge all of you today, especially those who are students, to act -- to enter the lists of public service and rightly win (or lose) the prize. For we can have only one form of aristocracy in this country. As Jefferson wrote long ago in rejecting John Adams's suggestion of an artificial aristocracy of wealth and birth, "It is," he wrote, "the natural aristocracy of character and talent." "And the best form of government," he added, "was that which selected these men for positions of responsibility." I would hope that all educated citizens would fulfill this obligation, in politics, in government, here in Nashville, here in this State, in the Peace Corps, in the Foreign Service, in the government service, in the Tennessee Valley, in the world! You will find the pressures greater than the pay. You may endure more public attacks than support. But you will have the unequalled satisfaction of knowing that your character and talent are contributing to the direction and success of this free society.