

copy REF no. 104

A LEARNER, NOT A LEANER

Remarks of Honorable Robert E. Freer to the graduating class on the occasion of the Second graduation exercises of the Honeywell Foundation, Bethesda, Maryland, Saturday, June 4, 1949.

Dr. Honeywell asked me earlier this afternoon to give him a title for the remarks I shall make to the graduating class. On the spur of the moment I told him it was "A Learner, not a Leaner."

The United States of America is still the land of opportunity, of hope, and of promise for the individual man or woman, boy or girl. This great stronghold of free enterprise rests on freedom of opportunity: (First) for education and (Second) for leadership in life based upon capacity.

During your progress through school to this your graduation day, you have learned what was known in the nineteenth century as the three R's -- "Reading," "Riting," and "Rithmetic." There is a fourth "R" about which I wish to speak to you briefly today. To my mind it is a most important "R". It is the "R" in the word "learn". Take away that "R" and you have left only the word "Lean." Now, when our people become leaners instead of learners we shall no longer be able to maintain that leadership which is the envy of all the other peoples of the world. When we become leaners we shall sink to the level of those in the rest of the world who do not have our opportunities for learning or for exercising leadership based upon our capacity.

More than one hundred and fifty years ago Benjamin Franklin wrote in "Poor Richard," "These are the evidences of an education:

"Correctness in the use of the mother tongue.

Refined and gentle manners.

The Power and habit of reflection.

The Power of growth.

The Power to do "

These words of "Poor Richard" were painted on the wall of one of the classrooms of a very respected eastern college when the building was erected sometime around 1870. They exercised, no doubt, a large influence on somewhere near twenty thousand graduates of that college before whose eyes they appeared. While perhaps not all of those five evidences are accorded the same respect that they once were, I wish to assure you that the power to do is the hall mark of the free enterprise system of the United States of America in the eyes of everyone throughout the world.

This power to do is nurtured by the powers of reflection and of growth and in large part is founded upon the development to the fullest extent possible by each individual man or woman, boy or girl, of what I have been pleased to call the three "I's"; namely, his or her "Intelligence," "Industry," and "Ingegrity." The way is hard, not easy, but in the United States of America the reward is great, not meager, for those who learn, not lean.