

Summer School Commencement

August 23, 1929

Friends, I hope that what Dr. Meadows said is not so individually; I hope it is true collectively. I have an idea that some of these girls love some other man better than they do me. All of them ought to. I am speaking, of course, of your father.

I am very much impressed at the number of our friends who are with us this morning and I am led to believe that some of our folks believe this is a church service. It is not. I notice in the church that people who come early get the back seats and leave the front ones for those who are late. If you cannot hear me back <sup>under</sup> ~~of~~ the gallery, do not hesitate to move up.

An occasion of this kind is a happy occasion to the faculty and the officers of the college because we are going to get rid of these girls. It is also a happy occasion to the girls because they are going to get rid of us. Seriously, it does in a sense wring ones heart strings to see those we have worked with for two or four years prepare to leave us and go back out into the state. But, on the other hand, it does our hearts good to realize that these young people have undertaken a task and have gone through with it and accomplished the thing that they started out to do. We rejoice with you young folks that you have reached this point in your educational development. I cannot say that you have completed your education. The best that I can say is that you have laid the foundation upon which you may build the rest of your life in an educational way.

I want to talk to you this morning not about education particularly. I am not going to give you very much advice. I know your faculty, the faculty

that has worked with you, has done that and I am persuaded that you have about all the advice you can carry. In fact, I doubt if you can put into practice all that you know.

I want to talk to you today about America and the trend in this great Republic of ours. As I see it, America is in the midst of the greatest revolution she has experienced since July 4, 1776. I do not mean that it is war. The great revolutions of this world are not measured by great wars of this world. We are in the midst of the greatest revolution that we have ever had since we broke away from the Mother Country. To every careful student of statecraft it is perfectly clear that, as a nation, we are moving steadily and rather rapidly toward some form of absolutism in government. I do not think there is any doubt about that. I think any student of statecraft will admit that this is true. It may be there is no power in our nation sufficiently strong to counteract this movement. As I see it the schools are the hope to save the Republic.

Since the great world combat and at the beginning of it, that is when America entered that conflict, we voluntarily surrendered many of the things that we held very sacred as a people. We allowed the central government in Washington to take away any number of things we had insistent and persistently refused to give up prior to that time. We allowed the government to tell us how much sugar we could get and what kind of food to eat. We let them tell us how much to eat and not to leave any food on our plates. We Hooverized at the suggestion of the man that is now our President. We surrendered any number of things that we had held tenaciously to since the beginning of this Republic.

We did this in order that we might meet the military power of Germany. We confidently expected to reclaim all that we had given up but we have not done so. If one studies the situation without prejudice, if one studies the situation without political bias, he is forced to admit that America has moved towards the same form of government that <sup>Germany</sup> we had in ~~america~~ before the World War and that <sup>Europe</sup>

*has moved forward toward the form of government that America had. This*

means that the governments of Europe and the government of the United States are not nearly so far apart as they were before this great conflict. It is barely possible that the nations of the world will some day work out the most efficient, the most satisfactory form of government that the world has ever seen.

If one would study the conditions in Italy without being prejudiced against the real ruler of that country he would realize that they have set up a Facist government on the basis of a lack of natural resources but that he has as a matter of fact given to the people of Italy more prosperity and more happiness than they have had for quite a number of years. But if one would notice the trend in America he will find the same thing on a basis of an over supply of natural resources. He would be forced to come face to face with the fact that we are moving towards the form of government set up in Italy except we are on the other side of the shield. America is setting up hers on the basis of a nation with unexcelled natural resources and Italy with practically no natural resources.

I think there is no question about it, we are tending toward some form of centralized government in the republic of the United States. Recently the President vetoed the bill of Congress for building certain war craft. But as a matter of fact ought the President of the United States to have complete power when the bill has been passed properly, signed and the appropriations made by Congress. It means that one man is saying to this nation you are not going to do what you promised your state legislatures you were going to do. That is pretty strong centralized power.

*I am against what is being done of this kind*  
*not of course*  
*Calhoun says*  
*with* ~~We have~~ recently passed ~~that~~ Congress what is known as the Farm Relief Bill ~~and~~ an appropriation of more than a hundred million dollars to relieve the farmer. The Farm Relief Board is taking ten million dollars of this money for those who grow grain and ten million for those who grow cotton in the United

States. Are those millions of dollars to be given to the people who grow agricultural products? No. The Farm Relief Board says it will use it to lend to only the farmers of America who are organized. What does that mean? It means by legislation by the Federal government of this country millions of dollars will be set aside to help one third of the population in the United States form a more centralized organization. It means an appropriation from Congress for the purpose of centralization in industry for a large per cent of the population of this country. They have made it clear that there will be no help for a farmer not in one of these organizations.

( Business methods in government<sup>93</sup> (every North Carolinian has heard that) is almost a slogan with us today. Big Business is a form of absolutism and we cannot get away from it. The organization of the farmers on such a basis simply means the concentration of power. The budget, and it is as big as an unabridged dictionary, the budget of the United States government is the President's budget. It is not a budget of the various departments of government, but it is an executive budget and while in theory our legislators can change it, in practice they leave it as made by the President of the United States. In actual practice we are pretty near the point where we have taxation without representation. In our state government we have practically the same thing. In theory we have representation, but the budget is passed almost as written by the Governor. The same principle is in operation in almost every state in the Union.

Therefore our slogan in government means a little more concentration, a little more standardization. We have today standardized and centralized everywhere and in everything, the individual is counting for less and less. He is swallowed up in the mass. He is no longer a free individual. Only the overpowering personality counts. There is a very grave danger here. The great Republic of free people is about to become history and a new day, a new order of things is before us. It is going to be good for us or is it going to consume us as a people? As I see it, the hope is in the public school.

The people of America see this and are going to demand an equal educational opportunity for all of the children of all of the people. I believe the folks in America understand it. It may not be in their thinking in the words that I have used in presenting it to you today, but the American people realize that the hope of this nation of ours is in an educated citizenship. The octopus of centralization sees its danger lies in the public school and so a nationwide attack is being made upon the public school. This attack is coming out of the city of Cleveland, Ohio.

*(Turning to the Graduates)*

You people have the destiny of our nation in your keeping. You and others like you throughout this republic should so teach that the child of today will be an individual, independent citizen of tomorrow. Let him learn to think for himself and to act upon the conclusion of his own thinking. No longer can you be a dictator in the class room. You must be a leader of the group and such a leader that each child will develop his individuality.

The republic of America has given to the world the highest type of citizenship to be found in any nation on the face of this earth. The republic of America was found not on a strong centralized government and not on absolute individual freedom but it was based on a balance between the two, on a line that was drawn about half way between them. And as such we have developed each individual throughout this nation, we have accomplished more as individuals, we have served the world better than any other nation on the face of this earth. That, my dear friends, is the kind of government, the kind of public schools, America has given her children. And you and I are living in the greatness of it today. This prosperity that is all over this state of ours in a large measure has been brought about because of the improvement in the education of the folks of North Carolina.

In your teaching so teach that each child will be an individual that ~~he~~ will be able to think for himself. The youth of today is seeking for the

truth. The youth of today is seeking for the truth as it has never <sup>been</sup> sought for <sup>before</sup> it in the history of the world. Certainly this is true with the North Carolina girl and boy. The truth makes people free. The truth will save all that is good in this day and will find something better for tomorrow. The truth will give us spiritual freedom. It will give us personal freedom. It will give us individual freedom; it will give us governmental freedom. Truth will save ~~many~~ people. Jesus the Messiah came to <sup>lead</sup> ~~let~~ people out of darkness into light. To lead people away from superstition to the great light of God's truth, ~~and~~ <sup>the</sup> day that they crucified Him the veil of the temple was rent in twain. ~~It had~~ <sup>Before this</sup> ~~been that~~ the High Priest <sup>only</sup> went to Jehovah for the people but from that time each person goes straight to Jehovah for himself.

<sup>Learn</sup> So teach the youth of today and seek the truth ourselves that they and we may be free.

Robert H. Wright, President

East Carolina Teachers College