

Remarks by  
Congressman LES AuCOIN  
Rededication of Marsh Hall, Pacific University  
and on the occasion of receiving an  
Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree  
October 1, 1977  
Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon

Thank you, Dr. Miller...distinguished members of the faculty...students...fellow alumni...and friends. I want you to know what a pleasure it is this morning to return to the scene of my academic crimes.

This occasion is very special for me. I am deeply honored by the degree my alma mater has conferred upon me.

It's a moment that fills me with a kaleidoscope of thoughts and feelings which span the 17 years I have known this University.

President Miller, bless his heart, revealed that in a earlier day I enjoyed a modest reputation for mischief during my student days on campus...

...Well, he was right.

In fact, it can now be revealed that within three months after arriving on campus, your congressman was part of a group which -- at a rally in front of Walter Hall in the fall of 1960 -- water ballooned the President, Dean, and Business Manager!

Now that I have my honorary degree, I feel I can make a clean breast of the facts.

To my knowledge, there is no evidence that President Mike Ritchie, who went home that night in a very soggy suit, had any knowledge of this deed...because six years later he actually hired me as Pacific's Director of Public Information.

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My own personal relationship with Pacific began on a Sunday afternoon in September of 1960, when my family made the trip over Mt. Hood from Redmond, Oregon, to move me into McCormick Hall.

From that day, many names came into my life and helped give it shape. Some of them are here today and I delight in seeing them again. Others are not, but I remember them.

There was Mike Ritchie, himself, who took a chance on a 24-year-old newsman and gave him an opportunity to finish his degree while serving as the University's Director of Public Information.

I think of many other names, each of whom left something of themselves with me: the late Cliff Rowe, who taught me the journalist's discipline of analysis and fact...Miles Shishido, whose classes in Logic gave me another important discipline and whose classes in the Literature of the Bible unlocked new insights into mankind...

Then I think of Frank Chipps, Brock Dixon, Steve Prince, Joe Frazier, Eldon Hout, Russell Roberts, Meredith McVicker, Bob Davies, and a dozen others who I cannot name here who contributed something lasting and special in their own way.

Finally, I must mention my friend Leigh Hunt, the head of the Political Science Department, who graded my papers with the most wicked pen I've ever seen. But patience has its own reward.

Thirteen years later, Leigh was one of several University professors who took off-campus internships in their fields under a university program funded by the Lilly Foundation. Leigh worked for a semester in my office in Washington -- where he wrote papers for me...Never realizing what a long memory I have! There isn't an alumnus here who cannot appreciate the perverse delight I took as I graded what he wrote!

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Ladies and gentlemen, beyond the honor the University has given me, I'm glad to be here today for another reason. I'm glad to be here because its a day that's so special to the University. And it's special, of course, because we've come to rededicate this magnificent building which has always been the focal point of campus activity and learning.

As a student and as an administrator, I studied and worked in this building for untold numbers of hours and I love it as anyone does who loves Pacific, itself.

I find meaning in this restored old building and I'd like to share it with you this morning.

Albert Camus once said that since life ultimately leads to death then life, itself, has no reason or purpose except for two things:

Love. And Change.

Professor Shishido used to tell his classes that there are several kinds of love. It's not for me to venture which of them Camus had in mind.

But I do want to speak to Camus's view of change. It applies to this institution...to you and me...and to the America we know in 1977.

This building is an example of change. It isn't what it used to be. Its change involves the best use of the old with the best of the new to form something fresh and creative.

And what is more, overcoming the tragedy of the 1975 fire required something extra of the Pacific community -- the students, the faculty, the administration, alumni and friends.

Their extraordinary efforts in the face of adversity transformed heartbreak into the Marsh Hall we see today.

Change. And, with it, human and institutional purpose.

It's no different with Nations, including our own.

We live in a time of redefinition. Redefinition of values, of direction, and of identity.

The world, itself, is new. It brings an entirely new set of equations and opportunities and risks.

Our place in this world depends on our country's ability to, first, recognize the differences in the world and, second, to be able to adapt to its new imperatives. The dustbin of history is full of civilizations which failed in this task.

Change -- like the Marsh Hall example -- does not have to mean inventing something altogether new. To the contrary, it can mean returning to new versions of old values.

That very notion is propelling a new politics of reform in America today.

Many of my fellow new Members of Congress -- progressives, all -- have shaken the cathedral of orthodox liberalism with precisely that approach to the issues.

This reform movement is trying to redefine the role of the federal government. It is essentially saying that the New Deal of the Thirties and Forties was fine -- but that progressives ought to be capable of more than one good idea every half-century.

Tempered by the bitter lessons of the 1950's, matured by the false hope of "The Best and the Brightest" of the 1960's and hardened by a war that somehow kept finding new justifications to fit its changing fortunes, there is a generation of elected officials today doubting the dogmas of the last several decades. This is a generation of leaders reaching for ideas, not pat ideologies. This is a generation of leadership, now emerging at the national and state level, which sees decay in stale, unchanging recipes for public policy.

Much of the change this generation advocates represents -- as does this stately old hall -- the new application of earlier values.

For one thing, borrowing from earlier days of thrift, a number of us subscribe to what has been called the "study of appropriate technology." Deeply rooted in the reality of limited resources, this area of study attempts to define more appropriate tools for society's work. It means less wasted energy and more efficient use of resources.

Boiled down to its simplest terms, it says if you're going to drive a tack, use a tack hammer -- not a sledge hammer.

This approach is not only resource-conscious...it also embodies a principle that should be applied to government.

The Federal Government has been trying to drive tacks with sledge hammers for too long. The result too often has been excess cost, surplus effort, a lot of noise, and twisted tacks! Not every problem demands the heavy-handedness of a federal solution. States, with Oregon a shining example, are no longer bereft of imagination and leadership; they are increasingly able to tailor solutions to their own specific problems.

This idea represents a change. It's an old idea that predates the New Deal. But the emergence of modernized state governments makes it possible. Today, in fact, states frequently lead the way for the federal government in environmental protection, consumer protection, government reform and a host of other fields.

The exciting new urban movement toward strong, distinctive, environmentally sound neighborhoods is another dimension of this new political leadership. It represents a revolutionary change in the structure of modern cities. Yet it parallels the Jeffersonian vision of a nation of "ward republics"...communities small enough to escape de-humanization and sufficiently closely knit to foster a sense of group responsibility for other members of the community.

As a member of the House Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs Committee, I consider this movement the cornerstone of a national urban policy to save America's Cities...to make the City a cluster of livable and dynamic small towns united into one. Then expanded roles for consumer cooperatives and credit unions could provide opportunities for human sharing and self-financing to make Jefferson's 18th Century dream an answer to the vexing 20th Century question of how to make our cities places for people again.

Today our society faces the imperatives of change in the use of natural resources, too. Land, in particular, is at issue. Zoning laws that are relics of state legislation in the early 1920s are no match for the development pressures of today because land remains a quick way to turn a buck.

There remain diehards who resist any effort to reform these ancient laws to bring order to growth and they make the struggle difficult. But as a nation the price we pay for the status quo is staggering. Cities are bled dry of commerce and revenue...transportation patterns are created that mandate high energy consumption...millions of acres of agricultural land each year are bulldozed and paved out of production.

In an earlier day, there was a different set of values that governed Man's use of the land.

It was the value system of the Native American, the American Indian. In his view, it was no more thinkable to parcel up the land than it was to parcel up the air...or the water.

Obviously, ownership of the land is a permanent part of our culture. But the Native American concept of stewardship -- the realization that the land is a temporary possession which we should husband carefully and leave in decent condition for the next generation -- this noble and ancient concept is a change this Nation must adopt if it is to manage its resources and address related problems with wisdom.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, perhaps nowhere are the imperatives of change for the nation more earnestly needed than in the conduct of foreign affairs.

We have long believed that our security depended on protecting the status quo, keeping the boat from rocking anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, this failed to comprehend the beginning of one of the epic chapters of history: the irreversible march of nationalism throughout the colonial and under-developed world. As a result of this shortsightedness, we first blinked at the colonial practices of our European allies. Then our fixation with maintaining the status quo led us into maintaining repressive regimes which exploited their own people. Given the population, the resources and the need for human justice in the world, it is an imperative to end the last vestiges of this foreign policy.

We really don't have to look very far for the inspiration to make this change. John Scali, the former ambassador to the United Nations, put it well when he said, as he left his post, that we would do well to remember that we, too, are a Nation born of revolution and were driven by a desire for self-determination and the rights of man.

The ability to adjust...to change...not only gives purpose to life. It is life. Without it, life stops. It's as true of nations as it is of individuals.

A new kind of liberal change is afoot in America today. It is afoot in the Congress. It's a positive, affirmative, confident move that seeks justice and a more humane world... with fresh ideas rooted in some of the best values of the past.

It's abundantly clear that change is also afoot here at Pacific.

None of us can predict with certainty that any of these efforts will succeed. But we do know, or should know, the alternative.

And that's why as individuals and as a community and as a Nation we would do well to remember Albert Camus on this day of change at Pacific: We find our own sense of purpose in our willingness not only to accept change -- but to celebrate it and to foster it.