

2507

CONGREGATION ADDRESS
FRIDAY, 27 MAY 1994 at 9.30 a.m.
AT THE
WAR MEMORIAL GYMNASIUM
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

HELEN K. MUSSALLEM, C.C.

MR. CHANCELLOR, MR. PRESIDENT, THE SENATE, BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
FACULTY, GRADUATING STUDENTS AND ALL RELATIVES AND FRIENDS
WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE VISIONS OF THE GRADUATING STUDENTS.

FIRST, I MUST THANK THE SENATE AND ALL THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE VERY GREAT HONOR JUST CONFERRED UPON ME.

I AM BOTH HUMBLLED AND HAPPY TO RECEIVE THIS HONOR FROM THIS
GREAT UNIVERSITY THAT FROM MY EARLY CHILDHOOD AND INTO MY
ADULT LIFE WAS THE ONLY BEACON OF HIGHER EDUCATION SHINING
ON THE WEST COAST.

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE PART OF THIS CONGREGATION, FOR GRADUATING
STUDENTS, IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES BUT ESPECIALLY FOR
THE CELEBRATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF NURSING IN THE THEN BRITISH EMPIRE -- NOW THE COMMON
WEALTH -- THIS SCHOOL OF NURSING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH
COLUMBIA

WE MUST SALUTE THE COURAGE AND VISION OF THOSE NURSES AND
THIS UNIVERSITY FOR THEIR GREAT PIONEERING ACHIEVEMENT IN
1919. IT SHAPED THE COURSE OF ALL NURSING EDUCATION ACROSS
CANADA.

ADDED TO MY GRATITUDE, I MUST EXPRESS MY PLEASURE ON BEING
INVITED HOME TO VANCOUVER FROM MY DUTY POST IN OTTAWA. What a
JOYFUL DAY THIS IS TO BE SURROUNDED BY FAMILY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES
OF FORMER VANCOUVER DAYS -- AND FORMER STUDENTS TOO. I REMEMBER
WELL THE WORDS OF MY PROFESSOR WHO SAID "BE GOOD TO YOUR STUDENTS.
THEY MAY SOMEDAY BECOME YOUR BOSSES". THEY DID AND THEY ARE.

THIS IS A VERY SPECIAL MOMENT FOR EACH GRADUATING STUDENT. FOR MANY, IT IS YOUR VERY FIRST GRADUATION FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING, WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN IMMersed IN ACADEMIC WISDOM. SOME WILL GRADUATE MANY TIMES MORE AS YOU PURSUE LIFELONG LEARNING IN A CONTINUOUS QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE. I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ADD TO THIS CEREMONY OF BEGINNINGS. MY PRESENTATION CONTAINS THREE ELEMENTAL THEMES-- I HOPE THAT EACH GRADUATE WILL FIND AT LEAST ONE OF THEM USEFUL.

FIRST-- I REMEMBER WELL A SENTENCE FROM THE CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT MY VERY FIRST GRADUATION, HERE IN VANCOUVER, MANY YEARS AGO. I HAVE RETAINED IT THROUGHOUT MY ENTIRE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE. THE SENTENCE IS THIS: "SERVICE IS THE RENT YOU PAY FOR THE SPACE YOU OCCUPY IN THIS WORLD". THIS SENTENCE HAS GUIDED, INSPIRED, AND HAUNTED ME, SINCE THAT TIME, AND CONTINUES TO DO SO. I BELIEVE IT IS JUST AS RELEVANT TODAY.

EACH GRADUATING STUDENT HERE THIS MORNING HAS MORE THAN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN THEIR CHOSEN FIELD. EACH GRADUATE HAS AN OBLIGATION. SOCIETY HAS A RIGHT TO EXPECT THIS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY OF AN EDUCATION AT U.B.C.

YOU OF THE CLASS OF '94 WILL PRACTICE IN A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS-- IN A WORLD STRUGGLING TO COPE WITH EXPLOSIONS IN TECHNOLOGY/ WITH ITS DEHUMANIZING INFLUENCES-- IN A WORLD OF RAPID ADVANCES IN ALL SCIENTIFIC SECTORS THAT MAKE YESTERDAYS INNOVATIONS TODAY'S HISTORICAL RECORD. TODAY'S GRADUATES, WITH YOUR NEWLY ACQUIRED SKILLS, WILL COPE WITH THESE RAPID CHANGES.

BUT AN ADDITIONAL SKILL IS REQUIRED-- IT IS THAT SPECIAL ONE OF UNDERSTANDING, COMPASSION AND LOVE. LET US NOT LOSE THESE AS WE COLLIDE WITH THE TECHNOLOGICAL FUTURE. COMPUTERS MAY BE USER FRIENDLY, BUT WHO HAS BEEN HUGGED BY A WARM COMPUTER? YOU HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE TO CARE EXQUISITELY, RESPONSIBLY, AND PROFESSIONALLY. THERE IS NO POINT IN BEING A GRADUATE OF U.B.C. UNLESS IT IS TO SERVE HOLISTICALLY .. THERE IS NO POINT UNLESS YOU CARE.

MY SECOND THEME IS A GOAL OF IMPORTANCE TO ALL -- ESPECIALLY TO EVERY GRADUATING STUDENT -- INDEED TO EVERYONE IN THIS GREAT HALL. IT IS THE GOAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, "HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000". THIS GOAL, PROCLAIMED IN GENEVA IN 1977, WAS ADOPTED BY 160 MEMBER STATES, INCLUDING CANADA. I SAT IN THE GREAT ASSEMBLY HALL IN GENEVA, AS A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION, AS COUNTRY AFTER COUNTRY ADOPTED THIS GOAL, OF "HEALTH FOR ALL". ^{1977 WAS} A TRULY UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE.

A YEAR LATER, ALL THESE GOVERNMENTS AGREED ON A DECLARATION THAT CHALLENGED EVERY COUNTRY TO DEVELOP WITH THE CITIZENRY -- AND BY THE CITIZENRY-- SOME FORM OF HEALTH CARE AT THE BASIC LEVEL.. PRIMARY HEALTH CARE.. THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL CITIZENS WHEREVER THEY LIVED OR WORKED... IN THE SMALL OR REMOTE VILLAGES, IN THE MID CANADIAN BELT, OR THE FAR NORTH, OR OUR INNER CITIES, OR IN AFRICA, OR SOUTH AMERICA, OR INDIA, OR WHEREVER. WE LEFT THE MEETINGS FULL OF COMMITMENT AND PASSION.

THAT CHALLENGE WAS ISSUED IN 1977/78. THERE WERE 23 YEARS LEFT TO REACH THE GOAL. THERE SEEMED TO BE AMPLE TIME... BUT GLOBALLY, ONLY A LITTLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS THAT GOAL. WITH ONLY SIX YEARS LEFT, EACH GRADUATING STUDENT HERE TODAY HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSIST IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THAT COMPELLING HEALTH GOAL, NOW BROADENED TO "HEALTH FOR ALL".

LET ME MAKE A PLEA. YOU HAVE WITNESSED THROUGH YOUR TELEVISION SCREENS THE DEPLORABLE LIVING CONDITIONS OF VAST NUMBERS OF CHILDREN, WOMEN AND MEN. WHEN YOU WORK IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, AS I HAVE, AND HAVE SEEN AND SMELLED AND TOUCHED THESE CONDITIONS, YOU APPRECIATE THAT ONE INDIVIDUAL CAN DO VERY LITTLE. BUT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING. THERE IS THE POWER OF ONE. THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY, OR SEEK THE OPPORTUNITY, TO WORK WITH PEOPLES IN THE UNDER-SERVED VILLAGES OF CANADA, OR WORLD-WIDE, WILL KNOW A RICHNESS NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.

MY THIRD THEME IS A CHALLENGE TO THOSE GRADUATING STUDENTS WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH CONDITIONS AS THEY ARE AND WHO ARE INSPIRED TO CHANGE THESE CONDITIONS SO THAT THE WORLD WILL BE A BETTER PLACE. THE CHALLENGE IS TO BECOME AN AGENT OF CHANGE. NO NEW GRADUATE CAN AFFORD THE LUXURY OF LIVING WITH INFERIOR CONDITIONS OR SYSTEMS THAT REQUIRE CHANGE.

FOR THOSE GRADUATES WHO ARE UNWILLING TO LIVE WITH THE STATUS QUO , CONSIDER THE OPTIONS. I SUGGEST YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BECOME AN AGENT OF CHANGE.

MAY I OFFER YOU MY HOME GROWN LIST OF IDEAS FOR BECOMING A SUPERIOR AGENT OF CHANGE.

1. BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEM AND START WHERE IT IS.
2. HAVE A CLEAR VISION OF YOUR GOAL
3. INVOLVE YOUR COLLEAGUES. INSPIRE THEM WITH YOUR VISION SO THAT IT BECOMES "OUR PLAN FOR CHANGE."
4. PLAN YOUR STRATEGY CAREFULLY. IT TAKES TIME BUT IT IS ESSENTIAL.
5. START WITH A SMALL VICTORY BECAUSE SUCCESS, HOWEVER SMALL, ENHANCES YOUR IMAGE.
6. LOOK AND ACT LIKE A WINNER.
7. KEEP LAUGHING.
8. PRAY A LOT.
9. BE PATIENT. PATIENCE IS NOT ONLY A VIRTUE. IT IS A MIGHTY WEAPON. USE DIPLOMACY.
10. TAKE RISKS BUT CALCULATE THE ODDS. RISK TAKING IS DANGEROUS BUT ESSENTIAL TO CHANGE.
11. DON'T BELIEVE IN MIRACLES. COUNT ON THEM.

THOSE ARE MY THREE ELEMENTAL THEMES. IN REVERSE ORDER THEY ARE:

1. BECOME A POSITIVE AGENT OF CHANGE.
2. WORK TOWARDS THE GOAL OF "HEALTH FOR ALL" FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE.
3. AND LASTLY, "SERVICE IS THE RENT YOU PAY FOR THE SPACE YOU OCCUPY IN THIS WORLD." THAT SENTENCE WAS RECALLED FROM MY GRADUATION OVER 50 YEARS AGO. I DID NOT GIVE YOU THAT STATISTIC AT THE BEGINNING OF MY ADDRESS BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WORRY THAT I WOULD NOT MAKE IT TO THE END. I HAVE ~~AND I~~ THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME SPEND SOME SOME PRECIOUS MOMENTS WITH ALL OF YOU.

I WISH EACH GRADUATE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE SUCCESS IN THEIR FUTURE CAREERS.

27 MAY 1994

HELEN K. MUSSALLEM, C.C.