

NEIL THOMAS PROTO  
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS  
SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGE  
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## I

Members of the graduating class, you are about to become part of what is classically referred to as the real world -- the world outside the classroom.

It is a social order of competing interests, constant technological change and numerous government programs. It is also, of course, the assumption of considerable responsibility for your well-being, and the well-being of others, regardless of the vocation you select or the direction you have chosen.

You came to Southern Connecticut State College -- as I did -- to prepare yourself to deal with this social order; to acquire an understanding of the technological changes and the government programs; and to acquire also an "objective credential" -- your degree -- so that you could qualify for a vocation or continue in the direction you have chosen. You will find, however, that the most immediate and difficult confrontation between you the the peoples and institutions of the real world will not be resolved or dealt with solely by what you have learned in the classroom, or by what you or others presume is embodied in your college degree. It will instead be resolved or dealt with by what you have experienced elsewhere.

My own exposure to the real world has been relatively brief. I have been out of school only four years -- but it has been a varied and intense exposure, involving public issues of substantial magnitude, conflicts with corporate interests, and travels and dealings with peoples in other parts of this country that were very different from those of New Haven. While entering this real world well educated; that is, with the necessary objective credentials -- it is not only my formal education that I call upon to deal with its problems. It is, in the final analysis, a sense of values and a willingness to judge the propriety of other people's conduct.

## II

A discussion of values can be a philosophic exercise and perhaps a definition sought with some degree of precision. In the real world a value is what is important to you. It is a perception of what you think is good or right -- the criteria you look to when you attempt to decide what kind of person you want to be, or what kind of world you want to live in.

Values are of course the product of many experiences -- exposure to religion, relationships with peers, informal relationships with teachers. And no input is more important than what is learned from the most critical source of personal values -- the family. In the family your conduct and ideas are subject to the constant scrutiny of parents, or a brother or grandparents. You live intimately with the despair or the joy of others, and you are exposed daily to the expression of diverse experiences and opinions. You are nurtured by parents, themselves the product of different families and, perhaps, of different cultures or religions.

It is from these experiences, from the family, friends, religion, and parts of the educational process, that you have developed your "values" -- your sense of what is important to you. It is a subtle process, and not easily discernable.

During college, questions like who am I, and what is important to me, are asked often. Occasionally those questions are answered, but most often they are not. We are hesitant to find an answer to these questions or to articulate it even to ourselves. Indeed, it is not fashionable to have a doctrine, or a creed, or a standard of conduct to live by. To do so means to decide prematurely, to decide before it is necessary or before we know enough. To answer these questions also means to exclude certain values as undesirable, and in the process to judge the propriety of the values and the conduct of our peers. During college, the answer to the hard question -- what is important to me -- is largely put off, delayed until the next class, or the next book read, or the next discussion with friends.

You sit here this afternoon, ready to enter the real world. For most of you there will be no more classes ~~no~~ no more summer vacations. There will be, instead, a world of competing interests, constant technological change, and the assumption of responsibility to yourself and to others.

What are your values? What is important to you?

Can you now articulate an answer, even to yourself?

If you can't answer these questions, are you willing to accept the consequence; that is, the consequence of having your conduct governed by the values of others.

III

In the late 1960's, three suburban housewives and mothers became concerned over the content of children's television programs. They were concerned particularly about the number and quality of commercials which appeared during children's programs, the impact these commercials were having on their children's desire for less than nutritional foods, and for the acquisition of material things. They were concerned also about the violent content of the programs, and the absence of programming that emphasized more positive modes of conduct.

These three women formed an organization called Action for Children's Television in order to confront and deal with these problems. They solicited support among friends which developed into what is now a membership of tens of thousands of people throughout the entire country. During the past five years they have actively and effectively petitioned the government and the broadcast media to change the content of these programs.

I use the conduct of these three women not as an example of activism -- it is not activism I am suggesting. What they did reflects, instead, a confrontation between the kinds of values they wanted their children to have and a technological change -- television -- which they thought was void of those values.

This confrontation did not raise an academic question. These women had no illusions about the media providing a free marketplace of ideas for their children or for themselves. They recognized that the values of management and advertisers, as reflected in program content, was being broadcasted daily into their homes, harmfully affecting their children.

So they judged. They concluded that the conduct of management and advertisers was wrong; and they acted.

For many of you, there will be similar questions and confrontations, whether you become teachers or enter government or business, whether you marry or live alone.

You will confront individuals with whom you disagree, and government policies and programs with which you take exception, or the conduct of corporate interests promoting technological changes

you do not like. And, to deal with these disagreements or exceptions or dislikes, you must bring to bear on their resolution your sense of values, your own perception of what is right or good -- of what is important to you.

In each of these cases, you will be compelled to judge; to judge the conduct of others. If you do not, if you are fearful of assessing what others say or do, if you retain the notion that the free, but unresolved, interchange which occurred in the classroom also occurs in the real world, then the consequence will be that your conduct will be governed by the judgments of others -- judgments based on their sense of values and not yours.

That is the challenge of the real world. That is the challenge you now face.

I wish each of you well, and thank you for permitting me to share this moment with you.