

Speech by Gov. W.W. Barron

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

HUNTINGTON -- MAY 28, 1961

I consider it a special honor to have the opportunity of serving as the speaker for Marshall University's first commencement. This is an honor which I will never have to share with any other person.

How did it happen that, from a relatively small beginning as an academy in 1837, Marshall has grown into West Virginia's second largest institution of higher education and its newest university? It would be idle to say that the founders of Marshall Academy had any positive vision of Marshall University. It is probably more reliable to say that they tried to build a good academy --- and they did. Then times and goals began to change and Marshall became a college. Times and goals changed again, but not abruptly. These things do not happen that way. Change is a continuous and gradual process. We all know the immediate facts which led up to the establishment of Marshall as a university. But, becoming a university was possible because Marshall was a good college, a highly-respected college. I recently enjoyed the privilege of signing, on your campus, the bill which made a reality of Marshall University.

These singular honors of signing a bill and of speaking at the first commencement of Marshall University have fallen to me. But the series of dreams and the series of creative ideas, which caused the succession of events that resulted in Marshall actually becoming a university, were also accompanied by great amounts of hard work. There is ample reason to expect Marshall to be a leading university. The vision of Marshall U. must, and will, advance to meet the needs of the times.

Great universities were formerly thought of as centers of academic learning only. They were places where people desiring to pursue academic freedom could find asylum and work with, and write of, sound ideas. But modern universities are much more than that. They are still seats of academic freedom which is essential to progress; but they are also now working laboratories in which much of the pattern of our society has been developed. And it is from these laboratories, these modern universities, that we get the cultivated intellects -- the famous leaders of our people.

Marshall may very well become an outstanding university. It is located in a thickly-populated and busy area of America. In meeting the needs of West Virginians and others, Marshall has shown a vigor that promises great things. Marshall will continue to offer good preparation programs in all of its colleges. But, Marshall is a university now. It will turn its dreams into plans and further progressive action. It will carry on research on a new scale and it will serve West Virginia in many another new capacity. It is my personal hope that Marshall University can turn itself into a great research center.

There is one area of particular importance to West Virginia just now, an area in which Marshall should lead the way. We need deep and pointed research around the general idea of how to make small industries grow and develop in West Virginia, especially in the southern part. The need is quite clear and it is urgent.

It is part of our job to expedite the development of small industries in West Virginia. The best brains in our State are available to us. Our most demanding task is to devise effective ways to apply these brains to the problems of our day. And, if Marshall University acts with the same vigor Marshall used as a college, and, earlier, as an academy, we can expect Marshall to lead the way to a better West Virginia.

How do we go about building a better West Virginia? It can be done in many ways--indeed, we will have to show advancement in many ways--but one of the most important steps we can take is to establish, develop and expand small industries. This will help provide the new jobs which are essential for our citizens, particularly young graduates, like you here at Marshall, who are seeking their proper places in this age of vast and swift change.

To attract new industries and aid existing ones, the first vital requirement is to have a favorable industrial and business climate. We have made rapid strides in this direction by bringing management and labor closer together. Business and industry can never prosper in a state where labor is weak or ineffective. By the same token, labor can never prosper in a state where business is weak or unstable. Good wages and steady employment can be provided by healthy business with good markets and satisfactory profits. There is a mutual dependence between healthy labor and healthy business which is so fundamental that neither can prosper without the other.

By promoting strong development of the West Virginia economy, we can, in fact, do what is best for both labor and management and they will both benefit. We must cultivate new or expanded small industries and endeavor to locate such activity in a manner to bring employment opportunities to the people who need them in the places where they are. It is in this way that we can save communities, hold families together and pave the way to a brighter future for our youth. It is a case of preserving what we have by plugging the holes in our economic structure.

To achieve these goals we must know the potentials of each community and translate those potentials into reality. This is where Marshall University is expected to shoulder an important responsibility. It is my hope that we can fully utilize the intellect of Marshall and other educational institutions to pinpoint our assets, our needs and our possibilities in the field of small industries, working with enlightened civic and community leaders.

Once these essential reports are available and a plan of action has been mapped, the State can step in to provide much of the necessary technical and financial assistance. Federal aid also is available under the Area Redevelopment Act signed into law recently by President Kennedy.

In any plan for a better West Virginia there must be a prominent part for the young men and women of our State. It is only a matter of common sense that each of us can serve his own best interest by promoting the common interest of all of us. My ideas rest upon a concept of spirited self-help for West Virginians and by West Virginians. And my ideas rely strongly upon the initiative and the courage of youth.

It is reported that some of the men and women of West Virginia -- graduates, like you -- have asked why they should remain West Virginia. They are represented as asking what future there is for them in West Virginia.

I answer their questions with a question of my own: What future is there for West Virginia without you?

It also has been said that our purpose here today is to honor the graduates of Marshall University for a job well done. But is the job done? No! It is only the beginning. We even call these affairs "commencements" because they are beginnings; beginnings of a new way of life -- a new profession -- a new purpose. Many of you who are graduating are West Virginians, others are from our neighboring states, and some even from foreign countries. Each of you, for one reason or another, chose to attend Marshall. You are to be congratulated for this. We here today are proud of you, whether you are West Virginians or whether you come from elsewhere. We are all Americans and world citizens. This class can contribute to a better world, a better America, and a better West Virginia. The world needs your intellect. We in government need to consider the ideas of youth.

We all know that the great movements of history are partly the result of intellect and largely the result of emotions. But all of these have been based on the strength of youth and most of them have only been tempered by the judgment of elders. It is important that we realize this -- we who exercise power through governments, through universities, through our jobs. This is quite a different idea from one that most of us often seem to be following. Too many of us try, too hard, to hold on to what our elders built by using the strength of each generation of our youth. Yet we all know we cannot hold, we can only move. And we can hope to move ahead.

You members of this graduating class stand on the threshold of wonderful opportunities. You are young. The best years of your lives are before you. What you make of them is up to you. State officials and other West Virginians of the older generation are ready and willing to assist you, but the initiative, the enthusiasm and the drive must come from you. No one else can do that for you.

I urge you to stay in West Virginia -- to make your homes and rear your families in West Virginia. The future for you in West Virginia is bright, believe me. As graduates of a State university, you are indebted to West Virginia -- and West Virginia needs you.

Yours is a world of change and opportunity. Each of you must find your own individual place in it. May God grant that you see and understand the changes, then grasp the opportunities that will shape your lives.

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