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**Record Group/Collection:** George H.W. Bush Presidential Records  
**Collection/Office of Origin:** Speechwriting, White House Office of  
**Series:** Speech File Draft Files  
**Subseries:** Chron File, 1989-1993

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**OA/ID Number:** 13572  
**Folder ID Number:** 13572-005

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**Folder Title:**  
California Institute of Technology 6/14/91 [OA 6034]

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Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
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91 JUN 17 P2:31  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary  
(Los Angeles, California)

For Immediate Release

June 14, 1991

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
IN COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS TO  
THE CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

California Institute of Technology  
Los Angeles, California

10:35 A.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pete, for that very generous introduction. I'm delighted to see Gayle with you over here. Congressman Moorhead -- and to the business at hand -- your Chairman of the Board Dr. Mettler, who I've known for years and admired and respected. Dr. Everhart, the President; Dr. Jennings; Dr. DuBridge; Dr. Beckman; Dr. Brown; Mr. Avery; Dr. Shuster -- hello. (Laughter.)

I'd also like to acknowledge this distinguished Board of Trustees that I had the honor to meet with just a while ago. And it's a pleasure to be here at CalTech -- my first visit. I'm told it's the first visit of a seated President since Teddy Roosevelt.

However, my trip back to Washington, I understand, will be delayed. Some of CalTech's finest reassembled Air Force One in the lobby of my hotel. (Laughter and applause.) Ditch Day, perhaps. (Laughter.)

You look restless out there -- let me tell you about a Yale graduation. I will confess to having gone to Yale. A minister gave the graduation speech. "Y," of course, was for youth. That took 40 minutes. "A," altruism -- brushed that one off in 20 minutes. "L" was for loyalty -- 45 minutes. "E" for enterprise -- 30 minutes. The speech ended and most of the kids had left. There was one guy praying. (Laughter.) The minister went over and said, "Oh, son, I'm glad to see a man of faith here. What were you praying for?" He said, "I was giving thanks that I didn't go to the California Institute of Technology." (Laughter.)

So I'll try to be respectful in that regard. But I should say with pride that we celebrate today the centennial of CalTech. This institution has accomplished astonishing things in 100 years. Your students, your professors and your graduates have peered into the heart of the atom, gazed out at stars billions of miles away. They've inspired new medicines and biotechnologies; and they've hurled rockets into the heavens. And they've helped redefine the sciences upon which modern technology -- and modern life -- depend. CalTech's mission is outward-looking, its quest never-ending, and its path of discovery truly remarkable.

We now stand on the verge of a new voyage in the American experience -- charting a fresh course to a world of unseen possibilities and promise. (Crowd disruption.) This is mild compared to what I normally run into. I feel, out of respect for the office, it ought to be greater. (Laughter and applause.) But to reach it, we will need a strong, swift current of ideas. Thomas Aquinas once said that if the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would stay in safe harbor forever. Now, as our imagination mulls over the prospects for the 21st century, the time has come to leave port and set sail -- to the new world beyond.

Many Techers have already explored new worlds -- worlds of the positron and the quark, and the fingerprint of the human gene,

and the microcosm of the silicon chip. These brilliant men and women understood the architecture of a problem -- and they knew how to navigate the maze of possibilities that stood between them and a solution. Like them, you think about the opportunities -- not the obstacles -- that lie ahead.

I think of the day I graduated from college. We were impatient, were optimistic, bored with the speaker -- but we sensed a coming adventure. And I suspect it's the same with you. Only this time, you probably aren't thinking about becoming farmers, like Barbara and I were. My generation built our future with mortar and brick and machinery. And yours will propel us toward destiny and innovation, ingenuity, and imagination.

Earlier this century, Henry Luce declared this "The American Century." In his time, that future consisted of smelters and smokestacks -- heavy, productive industries. And now, as this American Century draws to a close, ours is an age of microchips and MTV. Ours is an economy increasingly dependent not upon our natural resources or geographic location, but upon knowledge. As you well know, knowledge is dynamic -- never standing still. And it expands beyond the horizon. So my challenge to you today is to push beyond today's horizons and create new and more distant horizons for your future.

This is the next frontier. In the 21st century, knowledge will shape the power of the individual -- as well as the power of the nation. Knowledge, defined in our labs and libraries, on bookshelves and computer screens. Whether you're in the military, at the market or on the mainframe, that knowledge will define opportunity.

Some call this The Third Wave -- or The Information Age -- or the New Age of Discovery. With a nod to Henry Luce, I believe this serves as a cornerstone for the Next American Century. If we face this future foursquare -- if we accept the call to unleash our imaginations -- we will transform this nation. And I have no doubt America will transform the world.

We begin with the free market, the powerhouse of ingenuity. Free markets and free people breathe life into the American Dream. Look at the good that people can achieve: Charles Richter and George Housner's research has saved untold lives through their work on predicting and preparing for earthquakes. Harry Gray's research could lead to our harvesting energy from sunlight the same way the plants do. And medical researcher Pamela Bjorkman's research may someday prevent such diseases as arthritis and diabetes.

Look at all the creative entrepreneurs, the ones transforming basic research into new products -- the ones with that knack for know-how. This is a true story: I got a letter the other day from a company named Gemstar, founded by four CalTech grads. They'd heard me talk about our six national education goals to achieve excellence by the year 2000. I once joked that the seventh goal should be that by the turn of the century, Americans must be able to get their VCRs to stop flashing "12:00." (Laughter.)

I admit that I didn't think it was possible. (Laughter.) But this team of upstarts, CalTechers, invented a device that solves the VCR clock problem easily. (Laughter.) They wrote, "We respond promptly to your national call for VCR literacy by the year 2000 -- in fact, nine years ahead of schedule." (Laughter.)

Well, with mentors like these, there may be hope for students like me, still struggling with the complexities of this age of technology. Their kind of entrepreneurs -- their approach to entrepreneurship helped make our nation prosperous and great. This kind of can-do spirit, this expression of natural American creativity will make our new education strategy work. America 2000, as we call it, summons the nation to create a New Generation of American Schools -- schools that break the mold, schools where all students reach world-class standards of performance in English, science, history,

geography and mathematics. It's time that we started measuring success by something other than the federal dollars spent. (Applause.) Let's not ask ourselves: What does it cost? Let's ask: Does it work?

This administration has rewarded programs in which government acts intelligently and programs produce results. Head Start, where kids get the tools they need to start school ready to learn -- it works -- and we support it. We've expanded Head Start funding by over \$700 million in the last two years.

We advocate programs that employ free market incentives -- like tax credits for low-income parents to choose their own child care -- because they use human nature as a lever, not as an obstacle. We support initiatives that create opportunity -- like our housing vouchers for public housing tenants. Our HOPE initiative gives public housing tenants control over their lives and their futures.

But, you see, home ownership and tenant management -- these are the waves of progress that can truly reduce hopelessness and despair in our great country.

Whether in schools, in child care centers, or factories or neighborhoods, we must ensure that government is part of the solution -- not part of the problem.

I'm not opposed to government per se. I'm not a government-basher. But we in government must understand, bigger isn't better; better is better. (Applause.)

One hundred days ago today, I asked the Congress -- and Pete referred to this -- to tackle the urgent problems here at home with the same commitment that this country dedicated itself to in tackling the crisis in the Persian Gulf. I spelled out a comprehensive domestic agenda, but asked Congress, recognizing the complexities, to pass just two bills in 100 days -- a comprehensive anticrime bill and a transportation bill to do something about the infrastructure in our country. These bills would work. As a matter of fact, I sent that crime bill to the Hill 24 months ago -- two years ago tomorrow. Neither bill has reached my desk -- and the American people, as they look at our system, don't understand why.

The American people don't understand what's so hard about passing a bill in 100 days to fight crime. They don't understand the delay, the inaction, the foot-dragging, particularly when they see that Congress can pass a funding bill for a ferry boat in Samoa or a study of the Hatfield-McCoy feud while threatening to cancel the manned space program and the Space Station Freedom.

Last week, a congressional committee nearly cancelled the Second Golden Age of space exploration and its possibilities for new knowledge, new technology, and whole new industries here on Earth. Thanks to wiser heads in Congress, both Democrat and Republican, the Space Station survived -- not, as some believe, at the expense of science. Science and space must be partners in the budget wars, both vital investments in the future.

We must invest now in a brighter future. That's why our administration fully supports high performance computing, and math and science education. We're also proposing a 13-percent increase, bringing research and development to \$76 billion. We want to increase funding for the supercollider by more than 100 percent. Government and the free market often converge in the field of basic research. Together, they help produce a brighter future for all Americans. And that's why my commitment to it is so strong.

Most Americans find beltway bickering mystifying --- and they should. We ought to think of nobler issues and purposes. We must call upon our higher aspirations. We've done it before -- first carving out a superpower out of the wilderness, and then creating the most prosperous, educated society on Earth -- and now, thanks to the leadership of many right here on this stage, reaching beyond our



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planet to the glory of space.

With the telescopes on Mount Palomar, with the Keck Telescopes in Hawaii, your astronomers are looking farther than mankind has looked before. Your JPL labs enable unmanned space missions such as the Pioneers and Voyagers to touch the distant boundaries of our solar system.

And here in Pasadena, scientists can now use the world's fastest computer. I hear that the computer is so advanced, it can actually calculate the number of "Tommy's Burgers" that you all eat -- (laughter and applause) -- and I am told -- this may be far-fetched -- that it can reprogram the scoreboard at the Rose Bowl even faster. (Laughter and applause.)

You know, it's great -- CalTech is one of the few schools in the country where "P.C." has always stood for "personal computer."

To guarantee that the 21st century becomes the Next American Century, we must combine the might of the free market and intelligent government with something else: the brilliance of those who make a difference in the lives of others, including the ones that I refer to as the Points of Light.

We know what it takes to solve problems in our own neighborhoods. Some among us have decided to step to the front lines of the war on drugs; others have taken time to teach others to read, or volunteered to care for AIDS babies after work at night.

Your education here at CalTech enables you to lead, to use your talents for the sake of our country and communities and our children. Those of you who volunteered to help abused women and children at the Hestia House, or taught kids to read in Pasadena, or helped the boys and girls at Five Acres -- you have accepted the challenge. You understand that with your diploma today comes a commitment to reach for the horizons of justice and opportunity, freedom and peace.

In the Next American Century, all of us will have a responsibility to lead. Each part of our communities -- the union halls, the police clubs, the chambers of commerce, the parents, teachers -- everyone can use their power to solve problems. Because, if you think about it, there isn't a problem in America that isn't being solved somewhere.

Whether you're drawn to the magic of the marketplace, to the honor of public service, or to the ethic of serving others, each of you will be building an America whole and good. Your generation will map our voyage into the next century. I join you in your quest for faraway places and salute your vision of worlds unseen.

Thank you for your hospitality. And may God bless each and every one of you as you graduate from this wonderful institution. Thank you very, very much.

END

10:54 A.M. PDT