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Text of Speech by Norwegian Crown Prince Olav at UND Commencement, June 7, 1939

Olav V

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Text of Olav Talk to Seniors

Here is the text of Crown Prince Olav's commencement address at the University Wednesday, in which he stressed the value of pioneering spirit and described ties which bind Norway and America.

"The Crown Princess and I want to thank you most heartily for the kind invitation to visit the University of North Dakota. Long before coming here we had heard about the fine reputation and standing of this institution, the light of learning and high endeavor which from here spread to thousands of homes and communities in this part of the country.

It is therefore to me a very great distinction to receive the honorary doctor's degree and I want to express my deep appreciation and thanks. I feel greatly honored and happy to be in this way connected with your great institution and in years to come this shall constitute a strong tie binding me not only to this University, but to the people of the state of North Dakota as a whole.

Perhaps you'll allow me to add that I feel quite relieved that the overwhelming kindness and hospitality with which we are being received in Grand Forks does not leave any time for my being submitted to an examination for this degree! It is quite a few years now since I went to college!

I realize fully that this great reception which you were giving us and this great honor you have conferred on me is largely a tribute to the country and the people from which we come. What has been in your mind, I'm sure, is the outstanding contribution which men and women from Norway or of Norwegian descent have made to the upbuilding, materially and spiritually, socially and politically, of the state of North Dakota.

In Norway we have followed with deep interest and satisfaction what sons and daughters of Norway have done here, and the high recognition which their contribution have won on every side here in their new country. And we are proud and grateful for the share which my country men have had in making North Dakota what it is today- a state in the forefront of progressive, humanitarian development.

It is a significant fact that an extraordinary large number of men of Norwegian birth and heritage have held and are today holding positions of the highest trust and distinction in this state. Governors, senators and congressmen, state senators and representatives, mayors, judges and county and city officials. It would carry me too far to mention names, and I shall only have the privilege to refer to one man as the outstanding personification of what I have just said, a man who is honoring the crown princess and myself with his presence here today: Honorable John Moses governor of the state of North Dakota

But if my countrymen have been able to make such contributions to this state- contributions of men and women, of character and work and ideals- we do not in Norway forget for a moment what they received here. We know that the Red River Valley is among the most fertile regions in the world, we know that thousands upon thousands of Norwegians have found here not only material advantages and happy homes for themselves and their children, but also an environment entirely congenial to their aspirations and ideas of civic government.

Opportunities have been afforded them here to create, hand in hand and in perfect harmony with their fellow-Americans, those free, democratic institutions which have as their aim the physical and spiritual well-being of every man, woman and child who called North Dakota home.

The deep, fundamental kinship between the Norwegians and American people has nowhere been more strikingly illustrated than in those parts of the United States where Norwegians have settled in large numbers. It has been amply proven that though we are widely separated as measured by physical distance, we are close indeed in those things which matter most. And though literally we speak each our own tongue, our hearts and our aspirations speak the same language.

No questions of mere size, of numbers, enter into this fundamental understanding and friendship between two great nations, one of 130 million people and the other of three million.

And today we are closer than ever before. We feel more keenly than ever our community of outlook on most fundamental matters. Our peoples deeply believe in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of action under the law. We share a fervent love of free, democratic institutions, of social justice, of brotherliness, of peace between men and nations.

You young men and women who have spent happy years at this great institution are now going out into the world to seek each your own place and future. You will find it a different and complicated world in many ways. But also a most interesting, fascinating world, perhaps more so than ever fell to the lot of a young generation. You will be called upon to rally all that you have in you, all that this college has developed in you of knowledge, of vision and of courage!

The time of actual pioneering is practically over. But the spirit of pioneering has and always will have its place in all human affairs, and it is was never more needed than it is today.

The frontier in the original sense has more or less disappeared. But the world has an urgent need of pioneers of many kinds on the various frontiers of human intellectual and spiritual endeavor. 'It's not life that matters but the courage you bring to it' has been well said.

Material comfort and wellbeing, desirable as it is in itself, is after all only a means to an end. The end is and always must be growth of human knowledge, the search for truth and beauty, the development of the highest possibilities inherent in man. In that spirit alone lies real progress. And in the measure which you are now graduating from this University or those who are graduating from any other university- are imbued with this spirit, in that measure they will be able to contribute to that in the truest sense of the word- greater world of tomorrow for which we ardently hope and pray.

Mr. President, friends, let me thank you again for this opportunity to be present on this inspiring occasion. The crown princess and I shall always cherish the memory of this day and this great institution of light and learning. We feel that into its foundation there has gone a perfect blending of much of what is finest and best in the American and the Norwegian heritage. May all good things come to you, and to those generations of young men and women who from here go out into a world which needs them."

Grand Forks Herald Evening Edition, 7 June 1939, page 9

