



A Forecast of 2000 A. D.

Commencement Address
by John Cowles

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**BULLETIN OF
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A Forecast of 2000 A. D.

AN ADDRESS BY JOHN COWLES

President, Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company

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By JOHN COWLES

★ When I received the invitation from Hamline to make this year's commencement address I felt deeply flattered by the honor being paid me, for Hamline is the oldest college in Minnesota, with a record of public service to liberal education extending for over a century.

Speaking to a graduating class here is obviously a high and exacting privilege, so I began reflecting on what I might say that would be worthy of the significance of the occasion, something that conceivably a few of the class would remember throughout their lives.

The old anecdote concerning Samuel Butler occurred to me. As some of you may recall, Butler was once asked to speak to a distin-



Mr. Cowles

guished audience on the subject of "How to Make the Most Out of Life." Butler stood up and said, "I don't even know how to make the most out of the next 15 minutes."

At that stage in my reflections it dawned on me that not only could I not remember a single thing that any of the commencement speakers had said when I was graduated from Harvard more than a third of a century ago, but I couldn't even remember who any of those speakers were.

So, after further thought, in the humbling realization that 30-odd years from now your memory of your commencement speaker or of his ideas probably won't be any better than my memory is of mine, I adjusted myself to following the accepted path, on these academic occasions, of prophecy followed by exhortation.

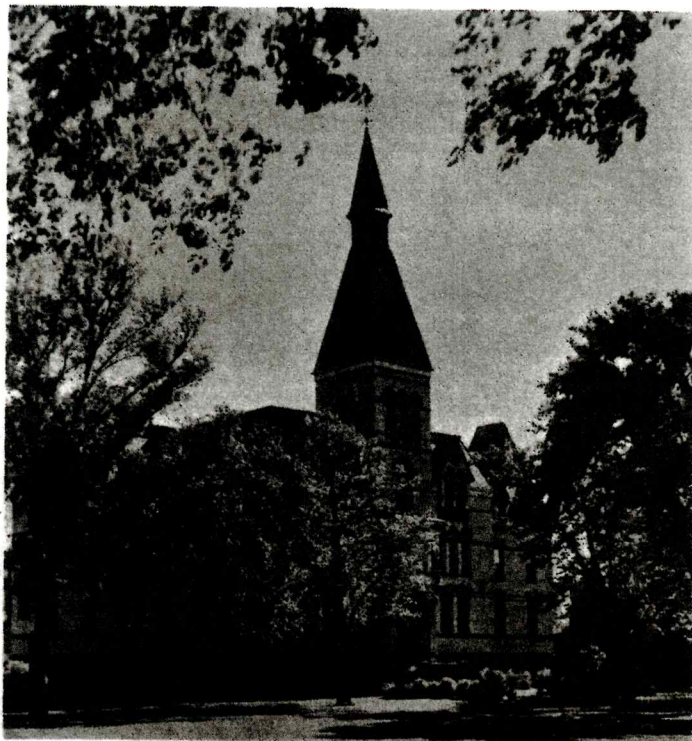
Now one does somehow think of prophets as being old, but just why it should be assumed by all college boards of trustees that any aging member of the bi-focal generation, like me, who is rapidly approaching the tri-focal lens stage, should be able to be clairvoyant about

what is going to happen in the next 50 years is beyond me.

Before I attempt any prophesying, I must say a word of caution. As a newspaperman all my adult life, I have been particularly interested in the forecasts or prophecies of the political columnists and commentators. Occasionally I will go into our editorial library, or "morgue" as it is called in newspaper parlance, and reread from the files the prophecies these columnists made a few months or years ago. This has proved enlightening to me, because it has convinced me that even the best informed men are frequently, if not usually, in error in forecasting the shape of things to come.

You will all recall that almost all of the political experts were proved wrong in their predictions of a Dewey landslide in the 1948 presidential campaign. You will recall the predictions made by many foreign affairs experts when Hitler's Panzer divisions attacked Russia in the summer of 1941 that Russian resistance would last only a few months at most. You will recall the economic prophets who, following the end of World War II, predicted that Great Britain was finished as an important nation and could never stage an economic comeback.

But since it seems to be expected that a commencement speaker will do some prophesying,



Old Main (Administration Building) at Hamline

with this warning that I have given you to be skeptical, I will tell you what I see when I gaze into my private crystal ball.

You may have noted that I selected as the subject of my talk "A Forecast to the Year 2000." I did this because the next 45 years will cover the most active and effective years of your lives. You will all play roles, some of you I hope highly important roles, in determining what the shape of things will be when the 21st century rolls around. I hope you will all be active in a political party, join some foreign policy or current affairs discussion group, be a member of the League of Women Voters or the Junior Chamber of Commerce, or whatever the organization may be in the community where you live, and so help determine what our national policies will be.

* * *

I'm not going to talk at length about the new mechanical gadgets or even the scientific advances that will undoubtedly come in the next 45 years that will change your lives. I accept, for example, but without particular enthusiasm, the idea that most people will probably wear a second wrist watch, which will be a miniature walkie-talkie radio receiver-transmitter, part of the telephone system.

Probably a person will be able to fly from New York to California in an hour or so, or across the Atlantic in two or three hours in a luxury

air liner. Probably helicopters will become the accepted mode of travel in congested metropolitan areas.

New Living Standards

Due to automation, our productivity—our output per man hour—will be steadily increased. Probably before the end of this century our average standard of living will be double or triple what it is now, even though the average work week is reduced to 30 hours, with a minimum of a month's annual vacation.

Leisure time, and what one does with it, will be much more important than it is today. Through the blessings of atomic energy, if wisely used, we may have the opportunity for the first time of eliminating poverty throughout the globe.

Undoubtedly within a few years we shall have small artificial satellites revolving around the earth, and probably before many years there will be space ships carrying human beings to other planets. These and many other such ideas are pretty familiar to all of us.

Undoubtedly the advances of medical science will be enormous, and the average length of life will be significantly increased. Half the hospital beds in the country are now occupied by mental cases. I would guess that we will make great progress in developing better techniques and new drugs for treating the mentally ill. Surely ways will be found to prevent a high proportion of the

deaths that now result from certain types of heart disease and cancer.

I don't want to stretch your credulity too far, but perhaps the scientists will even discover ways to grow hair on bald heads!

Fertility Problems

I hope and believe that the scientists will find ways to increase human fertility and enable more couples that want children to have them. I similarly hope and believe that before many years the scientists will have discovered a simple, harmless, inexpensive, anti-fertility pill, which will stop fertility for a known period of time but which will not affect a woman's future ability to have a child when she wants one. Then families could be planned, children properly spaced, and each baby born would be a wanted child.

We desperately need such an anti-fertility pill because the current rapid increase in population throughout the world, coupled with a steady exhaustion of many of our important natural resources, is alarming in its implications.

In the past half century medical science has reduced infant mortality and lengthened the life span with the result that total population everywhere on the globe is increasing at an unprecedented and accelerating rate.

The estimated population of the world a century ago was about one billion people. Today it is about

two and one-half billions. Experts estimate that by 1980—only 25 years from now—it will be three and one-half billions or even four billions.

Recently Dr. E. C. Stakman, a professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota, who is one of the world's most distinguished plant pathologists, said—and I quote—"Man is menacing himself with two tremendous powers: the power of atomic energy and the power of human reproduction. The population of the world is exploding in our faces."

* * *

Of course, it is possible that the scientists will some day develop relatively inexpensive ways of taking the salt out of sea water on the one hand, and of using the oceans to grow food on the other. It is also possible that economically feasible ways will be found to extract, through grinding and processing, many—but not all—of the minerals that we need from ordinary, common rock.

If, however, the current world trend toward industrialization continues, if the relatively undeveloped areas are developed so that the peoples of Asia and Africa and Latin America begin to consume minerals at even a small fraction of the per capita consumption of the United States, we will rapidly face global shortages of minerals that we now assume are abundant.

Or let's consider for a moment such a simple natural resource as

water. If any of you in the graduating class has as one of your material goals in life your eventually moving to the sunny climes of Arizona or southern California so you can have a private swimming pool surrounded by green lawn and flower gardens, I venture to suggest that before many years that may prove impossible.

Population is growing rapidly in the west and southwest, and the amount of water available per capita is steadily declining. I suspect that it will not be many years before private swimming pools in Phoenix or Denver or Los Angeles will be forbidden, in order to save the water that they would otherwise consume.

I suspect that the watering of lawns will be made illegal in many communities, due to the growing water shortage in relation to the expanding population. Perhaps the lawns of the future in the west and southwest will be of asphalt, painted green, or gravel dyed whatever shade is the most becoming to the housewife.

These are, of course, trivial examples of the effects of skyrocketing population on the one hand and static or dwindling natural resources on the other, but in all seriousness I suggest that the world population problem in all its ramifications ranks second in importance only to that of avoiding another world war and maintaining our basic freedoms.

No Victors

Of course the issues of war and peace overshadow all others in importance.

The disastrous consequences of a global war fought with atomic and hydrogen bombs stagger the imagination. Neither side could win such a war in the traditional meaning of the word "win." One side might be completely exterminated and the other side only partly. That would be victory in a sense, but it is also possible that in such a war not only what we call civilization but even most of human life itself might be wiped out.

Some people are still gripped by the old delusion that war can make peace. War can only destroy, and the extent of the destruction that another global war would produce is almost beyond anyone's power of comprehension.

The atomic energy commission reported that the hydrogen bomb exploded in the Bikini test polluted an area of 7,000 square miles. A leading nuclear physicist has stated that lethal doses of radioactivity would cover 2,100 square miles of that area for at least a week, and that humans spending any extended period of time in the area even two or three weeks after the explosion would probably die.

* * *

We now have guided missiles with



Dr. Paul H. Giddens, President of Hamline; John Cowles, speaker; and Cleone Hillesland, Red Wing, valedictorian of senior class.

ranges up to 5,000 miles, designed to carry an atomic warhead. Although all the technical difficulties have not yet been solved, the statement has been published that the United States hopes within two or three years to have intercontinental ballistics missiles which will have at least 20 times the speed of sound, or a speed of some 15,000 miles an hour, which could not be intercepted or diverted from their target.

It would be foolhardy for us to assume that the Russians may not be equally advanced in their development of comparable weapons. These intercontinental missiles, carrying hydrogen bombs, would constitute pushbutton warfare of a kind potentially capable of destroying, in a few hours, most human life over a whole continent.

A Better Course

So long as the danger of war exists we obviously must do everything within our power to keep ahead of Russia, in military preparedness in being, so that Russia knows that we have the means to strike instantaneously a retaliatory blow so deadly to her that any attack on us, however crippling it might be, would mean her near or total extinction.

But there is, I believe, a better course than a continuance at an accelerated rate of this arms race, with increasing tensions and the possibility at any time of a holo-

caust. That better course is universal disarmament under effective, continuous, unqualified international inspection and control.

Universal disarmament, not one-sided or partial, but complete, is the paramount need of the second half of the 20th century. The mutual fears and tensions produced by nuclear weapons and intercontinental missiles are such that there cannot possibly be real peace until there has been universal disarmament, right down to the level of lightly armed and strictly limited forces for internal order only, with continuous and effective international inspection and control.

We will have to discard a lot of our outworn political ideas and prejudices before we will be willing to do those things that are essential if we are to have complete and enforceable world disarmament, even if Russia and the other major powers were willing.

* * *

I do not minimize the difficulties. Many people would object to what they would call "the sacrificing of our sovereignty" to the extent of permitting international inspection teams to examine our military establishment as we would want to examine Russia's.

Some intelligent people say that the very idea of universal disarmament under international inspection and control, desirable as it might be, is so Utopian and so impossible of

realization as not to be worthy of serious discussion. I say to such people, "What is the alternative?"

So far I have received no satisfying reply other than the expression of the wishful hope that Russia might break up through internal dissension, and the threat of a catastrophic world war thereby be eliminated.

Is it possible that Russia is now willing to make an over-all settlement, on a basis that the free world could accept? I doubt if anyone knows. My own guess is that it is extremely unlikely but conceivable. In any event, I think our position should be that we are willing to negotiate, to talk and to listen, at any time.

Test for Soviets

I suspect that Russia wants to use the forthcoming conference at the summit for propaganda purposes to convince the neutralists that the United States and not Russia is the nation blocking the road to peace, and to prevent if possible Western Germany's rearmament as part of NATO.

It seems to me that if instead of getting into a sterile dispute with the Russian delegates over limitations on certain types of weapons, or on the evacuation of military or air bases on foreign territory, the United States would unequivocally advocate total universal disarmament, perhaps done in stages over

a 10-year period, with continuous international inspection and control, the whole non-Communist world would applaud.

I hope that President Eisenhower, for whom I have deep admiration, will take that bold step.

Russia's reaction to that proposal, and her subsequent conduct in the meetings called to formulate the mechanisms for international inspection and control would quickly reveal her intentions and her sincerity or lack of it. Conceivably agreement could be reached, although the problems of implementation would be extremely difficult, and if so, the threat of a hydrogen war destroying civilization might be eliminated.

I hope that those of you who share my belief that the attainment of universal, enforceable disarmament is the most pressing problem of the second half of the 20th century will spread the doctrine with missionary zeal. I hope that those of you who are not convinced will continue to study and ponder the problem, always keeping in mind the alternatives.

I am an optimist. I instinctively believe that man has the innate wisdom and resourcefulness to turn aside the threat of war before it culminates in his destruction.

I am confident, in short, that the human race will meet the life-or-death challenge by choosing to survive, and that the dawn of the 21st century will be bright.

