

# STANFORD UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STANFORD —

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President Richard W. Lyman of Stanford Friday night (Sept. 25) sharply criticized "academic apologists for violence."

In his first major speech since becoming president, he urged 1400 freshmen "to make of the youth movement in American political life something more durable, more constructive, and more significant than the headline hunting antics of the Weathermen and Yuppies."

The quality of American political life must improve "drastically and quickly," Lyman said.

"The general level of involvement in politics on the part of millions of people who are not professional politicians must rise dramatically, stay risen. It's not enough to get excited when the headlines of some fresh disaster stir one's metabolism; the involvement has to be steady and unremitting, patient but relentless.

"The terrible grip of private selfishness, not just on the part of major corporations but among everyday tax-paying—or tax-resisting—citizens, must give way to a sharply increased readiness to see money change hands and power relationships alter so that urgent public questions, such as racial equality and environmental protection, can be dealt with.

"All this and much more must happen. To say that it must happen is not to denigrate all previous generations of Americans, nor all present politicians; it is merely to say that the problems that must be resolved politically today are unprecedentedly serious and difficult, and therefore are not likely to yield to further doses of the-mixture-as-before.

"Clearly college students and other university people must help to accomplish the needed changes. If they don't, no one else will—not because they are uniquely virtuous—but simply because university people ought to be among the people most sensitive to the tragic condition of the world today, and best able, by reason of their abilities and their opportunities, to do something about it."

He warned his Memorial Church audience that "if the political voice of youth is to be the voice of the Wisconsin bombers, nihilism and despair will be the only winners.

"If every attempt, no matter how careful, to stem the tide of violence and hatred here at home is met by cries of 'repression!' or by indifference born of disgust at the violence abroad, we shall deserve our grim fate.

"It may just be that you have entered the University at a moment in history when... its body is being fought over and its soul imperilled.

(more)

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"If, in the agony of our time, freedom and diversity on the campus are thought to be luxuries we can no longer afford, there will soon be no universities worthy of the name," he told the freshmen.

Universities which abandon the idea of providing a refuge for all points of view, "however unpopular or distasteful," expose themselves to a contest for control "in which no holds are barred," Lyman said.

If that happens, there's no guarantee that the forces of enlightenment and unselfishness will prevail, he continued. "There is nothing in the law of nature that says a politicized university must always be politicized in favor of peace, freedom, and equality."

The university's first duty in relation to politics, ~~as in relation to anything else,~~ is to learn and teach more about the subject, Lyman said. "There is no reason why learning and teaching about practical politics, or about acutely contemporary problems of political action, should not take place in the University, provided only that the game is played with non-loaded dice."

Where youth have been quick to challenge social institutions largely run by their elders, "your own age group doesn't for the most part even seize the threshold opportunity for political involvement—the right to work and vote in elections," Lyman told his youthful audience.

Even when they are eligible by law to vote, only one third of those aged 18 to 20 do so, he noted. This compared with more than 50 percent for those age 21 to 24 and more than 70 percent "for the great armies of the middle aged" between 30 and 64, he noted.

"Some will tell you that [individual political involvement] would be a waste of time, that the system won't respond—perhaps even that it is now so moribund that it can't respond," Lyman said.

"The fact today is that the system is responding. But the people to whom it is responding are not for the most part those who want withdrawal from Vietnam now, an environmental clean-up now, and greater attention to the problems of poverty now.

"It is responding to the great and growing number [of voters] who are demanding law and order, fewer constraints upon the police, and a crackdown on youthful protest the moment it departs from strictest standards of decorum."

The median age for voters, he reported, is about 47.

A scholar of contemporary British history, Lyman has written for *The Economist* and contributed to the *Political Science Quarterly*. He is 46.

"You have a right to be told things you do not wish to hear, and beware of anyone who speaks only to truths you already know or prejudices you already share," he concluded. "I've no doubt that you'll do your share of talking back and that also is as it should be." He plans to make frequent visits to students in campus living units in the next few days.