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President's Page...

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President's Page . . . *

Mr. Chairman, delegates, and faculty sponsors attending the Fourth Delta Sigma Rho Congress:

It is only proper that at this time we gather in general assembly and pause for a moment to consider the immediate objectives, obligations, and opportunities of this Congress and to get a general perspective of our meeting here in relation to the over-all picture of forensics on your campuses and throughout our country.

This Congress is a mile-stone in a long chain of developments in the history of college forensics and the history of Delta Sigma Rho. We are today perhaps witnessing the Golden Era in college forensics—at least it is a golden era if our activities are measured in terms of quantity and diversification.

The story of forensic activity among our colleges and universities goes back to colonial times. Long before we had any intercollegiate debate contests, the early colonial chartered colleges had their literary and debating societies, their faculty sponsored seminars, and their commencement exercises with formal forensic disputations. Always these formal forensic exercises were highly regarded by both faculty and students.

Roughly we may say that college forensics are over 200 years old. Intercollegiate debating is about 60 years old, Delta Sigma Rho 45 years old, the Student Congress 22 years old, and our own Delta Sigma Rho Congress 10 years old.

Although the average person on or off the college campus perhaps knows much about college football and very little, if anything, about college debate, the average person would be surprised to know that college forensics are much older than college football. He will be more surprised to know that in this modern day the colleges and universities sponsoring and supporting intercollegiate forensics far outnumber those which support intercollegiate football. One of our largest and most famous universities with a Delta Sigma Rho chapter, the University of Chicago, of this city, has a most dynamic forensic program, but no football team.

Now a word about this Congress. Logically this Congress should be about the best of its kind ever held in this country. If we can profit by the mistakes of the past, and if past experience means anything, you have at least the advantage of a more finished product as far as mechanics are concerned. We don't claim to have a perfect plan for running this Congress, but I know we have a committee of experts in the field of student legislative procedure. Professor Thorrel Fest, chairman, and Professors J. Jeffery Auer of Oberlin, William Howell of Minnesota, and John Keltner of Oklahoma have left no stone unturned in charting and formulating the

course of this Congress. But you know and I know that no matter how good the mechanics of this venture may be, all these mechanical trappings are so much junk without the will and the spirit of you students. You are the ones who can make or break this Congress, which may be the richest and most meaningful venture of your entire College career.

Early in the last war, at a moment when England had her back to the wall, standing almost alone against the Nazi hosts, Mr. Churchill paid a tribute to the British air force. When the Nazi bombers were raining fire and destruction on British cities and London was on the point of burning down, Mr. Churchill referred to the small but gallant air force with these words, "Never has the world owed so much to so few."

As I look at this small group of students, the forensic flower of forty of the finest colleges and universities of the land, I can see how, in twenty or thirty years from now, the same might be said of this small group. Here you are some 150 delegates, only one in a million out of our entire population. Yet, based upon Professor Henry Ewbank's survey, as reported in the last issue of the *Gavel*, at least one out of every nine of you will be in *Who's Who*. In this very group there should be at least five future Governors or State Senators, and there is a 50-50 chance there will be one member of the Supreme Court of the United States.

In terms of potential leadership, in terms of a real contribution to the democratic way of life and a free society, it is seldom where we can find gathered together in one room so few in number to whom we some day may owe so much.

This Congress is particularly a challenge. You are deliberating on a great public issue, an issue almost too hot for the United States Congress, an issue which if not faced with courage and the spirit of justice may well some day cause our structure of Democracy to crack and disintegrate.

May I urge you, therefore, that each of you tackle the subject of Civil Rights frankly, fairly, and fearlessly. Face the issue realistically; and when you return to your homes and halls of learning, may you be proud of the work you did here and may your lives be enriched for having had this forensic venture with such a fine group of fellow students and fine young countrymen.

My hearty good wishes to you, one and all. May this be one of your finest forensic experiences.

E. C. BUEHLER,
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* The text of the President's address to the Opening Assembly.

The public question selected for consideration by the Congress was: *What Federal legislation should be enacted regarding civil rights?* Committees were organized around the four basic rights considered by the President's Committee on Civil Rights in the report, *To Secure These Rights*. The four sub-topics were:

1. The right to safety and security of the person.
2. The right to citizenship and its privileges.
3. The right to freedom of conscience and expression.
4. The right to equality of opportunity.