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Edith Green speaks at the commencement exercises at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1956

Series title: University of Alaska Fairbanks commencement addresses and exercises

Unidentified speaker introduces a special guest, Margaret Thomas Murie. Margaret Murie was the first woman to graduate from the University of Alaska in 1924. She came from Fairbanks and is married to Olaus Murie. Margaret Murie described landing in Fairbanks the previous day. She finally recognized the university on the hill and she felt she had returned home. She remembers her graduation day. She is looking forward to spending time this summer in Alaska.

Dr. Bunnell is recognized. He recently turned over materials and the Bluebird Mining property on Ester Dome to the university.

Special invitations were sent to alumni from the early graduating classes. They are scattered over the United States and South America. John Boswell, Theodore Loftus and Harold Stanberg were some of the alums who were present on the stage. Dr. Patty (?) reads some of the letters which were sent from other alums. Mrs. Ted Loftus is now organizing the alum association. He talked about his experience in Washington, D.C. with the mental health bill and Edith Green and her work on the mental health bill.

Edith Green said she had misgivings about speaking at the commencement. She wasn't sure about her generation giving advice to the graduating generation. She wanted to avoid the pitfalls of the commencement speaker. She compared her graduating decade and the 1950s decade. She talked about the cult of liberalism. She thinks the future of Alaska calls for the case of liberalism. Edith Green talks about moderation. True moderation is a means between two extremes it is not a mathematical middle. You have to be able to recognize the extremes. She talked about the proposal to provide Alaska with mental health facilities to provide care for their own mentally ill. Many people are opposed to this legislation. There are groups that call this a plot to create a Siberia USA. They charge that this is a scheme to allow the governors of Alaska and other states conspiring together to ship off their political opponents to a million acre concentration camp in the wilds of Alaska. Is the other extreme then the medical association, congressional members, the health, education and welfare department, the leading citizens in Alaska who conceived this project and drew up this bill. Are these the two extremes? Does moderation require the average citizen to take the middle of the road. What is the compromise for a mental care hospital in Alaska. What is the half-way point between decent medical care and inadequate care. There are those in Washington who are subjected to this propaganda who want to study this proposition a bit longer. This seems to be the dilemma we are left in by the cult of middleism. It is a cult that wants to avoid clear cut decisions. It wants to stand half way

between the points of controversy and this leaves us halfway between sense and nonsense. This she profoundly believes is an insidious and dangerous philosophy. Its symptoms are everywhere. In an attempt to avoid the charges of extremism men rush together to huddle in an indistinguishable mediocrity. They reduce opinion and belief to the lowest denominator. She gives some examples which accused people of being socialists. Public libraries come under attack because of controversial material. She believes this pressure toward mediocrity of the middle debases art and opinion, public action and leads to a dangerous illusion of unreality. After a decade of war and conflict many men are tired of the strenuous life and want instead a vacation from responsibility. The facts of life have not gone on vacation. The cult of the middle is a sedative banishing the hard problems of reality and creating the illusion of unreality. It does matter that we build a mental facility for Alaska. Building a hospital is more important than coming to some middle ground of compromise. She is concerned that a middle ground approach will lead to a paralyzing inertia in the center of a slump of conformity. This is not true moderation. This concept of moderation is gaining ground in our country. This deals with our problems by illusion and not a solution. Ms Green believes what we need today is a little more enthusiasm for differences, a recognition that there are conflicts of interests and to face the reality that there are hard choices to make. She believes that true moderation is liberalism. Today's moderation is coasting on the momentum of a liberal past. It is time to generate a new liberalism. She discusses liberalism and what it can offer.