We Want You, Dukakis Tells Assumption Grads

By Jan Brogan
of the Telegram Staff

Massachusetts, a leader in education for 300 years, must meet the national challenge to rebuild its schools, Gov. Michael S. Dukakis said at the 86th commencement at Assumption College yesterday. Dukakis asked the graduates to become part of the network that will support the cause of education in the state.

In an apparent reference to the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report that there was a "rising tide of mediocrity" in education in the country, Dukakis said Massachusetts must achieve "a new excellence in education."

"We have to face the reality that we have an economy that is increasingly dependent on knowledge," he said. Dukakis noted that education affects the national security of a country as well as its economic base.

"Twenty-five years ago, education was strongly supported. Parents with children in school made up half of the population. Today it's more like a quarter of the population. The rest of the support has to come from legislators, corporate executives and much of the national leadership. But we can't do it without you," Dukakis told about 500 students who received degrees at yesterday's ceremony on the college athletic field.

"You're closer to schools and closer to the future. We want you to stay here and put what you've learned into the state. We want you to keep taking classes, speak at a class of a favorite teacher, offer your tutoring services, run for school committee, or help a friend run for school committee."

Wants Excellence

In a later interview, Dukakis said his administration was working toward creating this new excellence in education through its package of increased state aid to Massachusetts communities. He said there was "no question" that legislators, who must vote on the package as part of the state budget, realize that money is absolutely necessary to the health of the communities.

Although the state cannot mandate that the aid go exclusively toward improving schools, communities would be monitored closely to see how much money and effort actually went toward improving education, Dukakis said. He said the state legislative Committee on Education was conducting a sweeping review of the educational system and that, by the fall, he would be able to make major recommendations about the revamping of public education in Massachusetts.

Love of knowledge and pursuit of ideals was the theme of valedictorian John F. McLaughlin's speech, which interspersed humor with a serious perspective on what four years of college at Assumption College means.

"I yearn to be governor of Massachusetts, so I majored in politics," McLaughlin, of Peabody, said. He paused as laughter rustled through the audience. "Others have their majors, but we can never leave college overconfident. Knowledge is dynamic. What we digest today may be passe tomorrow. But there is another kind of knowledge we learn here that is very important. We learn about ourselves and what we must continually strive for."

Salutatorian Mary T. Nevala of Maynard introduced Dukakis, who gave his speech after the awarding of degrees. About 200 undergraduates received their degrees yesterday before a crowd of about 3,000 parents, teachers and friends at the ceremony.

Nursing Program

The first class of a nursing degree program exclusively for registered nurses was among yesterday's graduates. They were Betty M. Butkiewicz of Northbridge, Alice M. Jercha of Fitchburg, Shirley M. Smith of Cherry Valley, and Robin M. Sommers of North Grafton.

College President Joseph H. Hagan presented degrees to the 44 graduates of The Center for Continuing and Professional Education and to the 150 graduate school degree candidates.

Dukakis was awarded an honorary degree of doctor of public administration. Dr. Mortimer J. Buckley, cardiac surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital, was given an honorary doctor of science degree. District Court Judge Andre A. Gelinas was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree. J.W. Pelton, president of the American Council of Education, received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree. Wilcomb E. Washburn, scholar on the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institution, was given an honorary doctor of humanities degree.


The national anthem was sung by three members of the graduating class: Kimberly M. Barba of Brantree, Denise Kearnley of New Bedford, and Anne-Marie Lewis of New Bedford.

A reception for the graduates was held after the ceremony at the Laska Gym.
The President and the Faculty
of
Assumption College
request the honor of your presence
at the
Sixty-sixth Commencement Exercises
Saturday afternoon, May fourteenth
Nineteen hundred and eighty-three
at three o'clock
Assumption College Campus
Worcester, Massachusetts