An Ode to Fletcherism

Friends, faculty, Fletcherites,

I come with a warning. Oratory is not my forte. Fresh out of college, I did a brief stint as a speechwriter. Very brief, because I resigned when I witnessed my boss seize the microphone and transform a rousing line I had written from

“May we unite for parliamentary oversight of development aid disbursements,”

to

“Let us hold hands for the children of Africa.”

Today, I shall swallow my pride and take that cue.

Let us hold hands for the accomplices of the Class of 2011:

For the professors, who enthralled us with an unparalleled intellectual adventure;

For the caring faculty advisors, who taught us how to manipulate snake bight treatment vacuum pumps during internships in Sierra Leone;

For Linda and Giovanna, who never made us feel ashamed for ordering that Snickerdoodle with our fifth coffee of the day;

And for the friends, families, lovers and offspring who played their part in squeezing us into these polyester costumes to charge the podium.

Whilst self-congratulation permeates the air, the Class of 2011 should remember this: none of us would graduate without our supporters.

We are so fortunate that many of you, our supporters, are here today. But you might well be asking: what did I get for my exertions? Over the next few minutes, I think it only polite to offer an answer. And so I shall attempt to share what your toil has constructed – what the Class of 2011 looks like, smells like and tastes like.

However, I could not possibly evoke this beast alone. Instead, I shall give a speech that the Class of 2011 wrote together. This address derives from our collective musings over the so-called Social List.

For those unacquainted, I assure you that the Social List is a non-partisan institution in the form of an e-mail listserv. Through this, we do everything from having opinions about things to borrowing rubber chickens from each other. So, here goes:

Yo Fletcher.

Mubarak to address nation tonight. This could be it folks. Let's see what Mubarak says in 30 minutes... Mubarak speaks NOW Capslock on: HE IS DELUDED.
The vending machine mistakenly vended Coke (non-diet). Since I don't drink Coke, I would like to sell it for $1.50 (that's a 25cents discount). Let me know…

The annual thesis haiku competition begins.

Entry number one:
Threat from Hindu East? 
No, war in Waziristan. 
Either way: still screwed.
Thesis Title: The Pakistani Army's Incursions into North and South Waziristan: A Strategic Culture Approach

The perfect graduation gift: Giraffe Calves
We are expecting baby from Vladimir and Raina in approximately 156 days. 
If you are interested in having own petite lap giraffe please sign waitlist.

MM, I appreciate your deconstruction of FO's argument, but it's like using a Kalashnikov to pick a lock - a bit of an overkill. FO is, well, FO. Just as you can count on PE to know literally everything there is to know about Tufts and Fletcher, you can rely on FO's quick-draw responses to make light-hearted jabs and always contain a few spelling mistakes.

Thesis-ku entry number two:
A fresh pair of sneakers  
Got Family in Miami  
Show me the money!  
Title: A shift in Cuba's remittance landscape from traditional consumption purposes to productive investment use.

Wanted: Squirrel Hunter
Your Objective: take out the damn thing. Paintball gun, sling-shot, or old fashioned stone-throwing - whatever it takes. Just don't break my window.
Reward: Squirrel Sliders and a hand-sewn Squirrel-Skin Hat.
xxxx, The Residents of 35 Fairmount Avenue

So, here is a small sample of the rich Fletcher fabric.

Funnily enough, if you look up the word "Fletcherism" in the Oxford English Dictionary, what you get is "the practice of chewing a substance until it is reduced to a finely divided, liquefied mass". As you can see from the Social List, this is pretty much what we do.

However, there is so much more to the Fletcher experience than collectively chewing over international affairs.

The Fletcher journey is sublime and dazzling but demands mettle and grit.
We came here under disparate guises - as entrepreneurs, as peacekeepers, as fighter pilots, as film makers, as Olympic figure skaters, as intelligence agents.

Wherever we came from, Fletcher brought struggle and discovery in equal measure. Fletcher fashioned for us a novel kaleidoscope of the world. Many times, we looked into that kaleidoscope and our assumptions came crashing down.

What our professors did for us, and we did for each other, was to water the seeds of our ideals whilst dissecting the core of our beliefs. The beauty of Fletcher is that it offers a refuge for this perilous exercise, one remove from the board rooms, government agencies, war zones and humanitarian emergencies that so often muddy our reasoning.

Now, we shall return to those theatres, but this time emboldened by Fletcher's unique arsenal of spirit, deliberation and integrity.

In the novel Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf describes perfectly what the Class of 2011 has obtained:

The value of Fletcher is simply this:

That the passions remain as strong as ever, but one has gained – at last! – the power which adds the supreme flavour to existence – the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it around, slowly, in the light.

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