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THE TASK OF STATE UNIVERSITIES

COMMONWEALTH BUILDING

This issue of the University News Letter carries to twenty thousand households in North Carolina the inspiring inaugural address of President H. W. Chase—or the greater part of it. It brings to the people of the state his look into the days ahead and ahead, and his visions of the University as their agency for developing a democratic commonwealth upon the highest possible levels.

As the mind swings forward into the years that lie ahead, years big with destiny for the South, said President Chase, conviction deepens that out of all this creative energy, this confidence and faith, there is to come something infinitely greater and finer than a giant essay in materialism; that here a new civilization is to take form and substance—a civilization which blends into one harmonious and happy whole the best that is Southern by inheritance and tradition with the best that the new material freedom affords. The problem of achieving this civilization is the problem which lies at the heart of Southern life today. It is a problem which is to be solved, not by the mere imitation of that to which men have hitherto adhered in their common life, by a faithful but uninspired re-creation of the old familiar lights and shadows, but through such a liberation of the spirits of men that, reverent but unafraid, they shall catch up in their own hands the threads of destiny and weave them into a pattern richer and finer than America has yet seen.

The challenge of the South to the Southern State University today is that she show herself worthy of leadership in this great constructive enterprise, this the world's latest attempt to evolve a new and higher civilization. Such a challenge she can meet by no merely perfunctory response. It is for her passionately and reverently to dedicate herself and all of herself to this great task, to set about it, not in the spirit which would discipline men into obedient and unthinking servants of some rigidly preconceived mechanical and authoritative State, which holds the lives and souls of men as mere instruments to its calculated ends; but in the spirit of the democracy she serves, that spirit which sets men truly free to embody in ever higher and nobler forms the best that is in their hopes and dreams and prayers.

Responsible Freedom

For such a full liberation of all men, in body, mind, and spirit, is the very heart of the program of democracy. It holds with Burke, that government is not for its own sake, but a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for what men want, and it adds, as has been finely said from this platform, the faith that "with the right to live freely, men will live rightly;" that between what free and enlightened men really want and the deepest and highest interests of the democratic state there is no contradiction, but a full identity. Unrest and dissension within, it would hold that it cannot hope permanently to meet by the imposition of repressive authority, but that, true to its creed that the only control that is ultimately worth while is self-control, it must press with new vigor its effort to set men really free, not from responsibility, but through it.

It is the achievement of such a responsible freedom which is the common business of education and of the democratic State. In such a program all institutions of education, of whatever grade or name, however founded or supported, find a common purpose and an aim which joins them as brothers, each to each, and makes of all their learners and teachers one great company enlisted in the same high cause.

In such a spirit the University eagerly and reverently consecrates the utmost of her powers toward the upbuilding on this soil of a civilization which shall be not merely prosperous, but free, and because of its freedom, great and enduring; a civilization which shall fuse in one great creative synthesis the best in both old and new, a civilization in which more and more men shall do justly, shall love mercy, and shall walk humbly with their God.

But the Southern State University, if it is to prove itself worthy of leadership in the South at this hour, must offer more than her vision of
"The spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life";

more than her faith, however keen, that her goal is that of democracy itself. She must think through, and embody in tangible form, her answer to the question "How in the South today are men most completely to be set free for this high enterprise of building the greater commonwealth?"

The Enrichment of Life

Such a question can be answered neither by a blind reliance on the dictates of tradition, nor by a summary rejection of the old because it is old. It is not age that matters, but value, value for the enrichment of the lives of men today. And the University must determine such value, not by abstract speculation, but by a ceaseless effort to see the life about her steadily and whole, to interpret to herself and to all men the flow of its swift currents, and to minister to its real and abiding needs. I have said its "real and abiding" needs, for the university which in her zeal for quick results and practical programs forges the deep and permanent springs of life, is as unworthy of leadership as she that denies the value of the immediate and practical altogether. Her eyes must sweep with level glance the busy, work-a-day life of men about her, as with quick sympathy she declares "This is my domain", but they must also lift themselves up unto the everlasting hills beyond the work-shop and the market-place, into those high places where men walk alone with their souls and with God. For these, too, are her domain.

Her responsibility to the swiftly developing material life of the South is clear. "The greatest obstacle in the way of the development of the South's foreign commerce," said a leader of Southern industry the other day, "is the lack of men who are trained to understand its problems." The production of such trained men is a responsibility which the University gladly assumes, as it assumes that of fitting men for the ever more complicated problems which confront Southern business and industry as a whole.

She must see to it that trained workers man Southern laboratories, build Southern roads, develop her latent electric power, conserve her forests, build her bridges and tunnel her mountains. She must insist that such men be equipped adequately and thoroughly for the work they are to do. But her supreme task in all this is not the relatively simple one of training men who shall be efficient at their job. To rest content with this would be to ignore the whole vital problem which lies at the heart of the life of the new industrial South; the problem of whether the Southern civilization of the future is to center about the machine, or about the man.

Commonwealth Democracy

This problem of rightly relating industrial efficiency to human freedom every developing industrial civilization has faced, but none has fully solved. And as now the South confronts it, she must needs bring to bear upon its solution all her sturdy respect for the individual, all her idealism and her regard for human and for spiritual values. To lose these is to buy industrial efficiency at too great a price. But through these to transform industry into something more than a method of making a living or of accumulating wealth, to make of it a great instrument for achieving the ideals and the aspirations of democracy itself—this is to write a chapter in Southern history that the whole world will read.

This problem is no easy one. The record of the world's dealings with industry is eloquent testimony to that fact. But the University must all the more see to it that the men whom she trains for industry shall catch the sense of its vital significance, that their minds and hearts shall be so set free that they shall see their task, not as an isolated fact, but as an essential part of the great common undertaking of the democratic commonwealth, an undertaking which is based on cooperation, not on conflict, and which regards all human relationships, whether in industry or in government, as finding their complete expression just as they become means for the achievement of a more perfect freedom.

The obligation of so liberating the whole man that he becomes more than an efficient specialist rests with equal force on all the University's professional schools. Her lawyers must be trained in

ON THE FRONT LINE

An important social and educational development in the South is the recent opening at the University of North Carolina of a School of Public Welfare. Thus the State of North Carolina, already in the front line in progressive social legislation, plans to place more trained social leaders in the field. President Chase in his recommendation to the Board of Trustees of the University emphasized the importance of the school in its relation to universal educational policy, as follows:

"Nothing is more clear than that, if the citizenship of state and nation is to grapple successfully with the ever more complex problem of modern democracy, if popular government is to work effectively in these confusing times, our educational system as a whole must stress as never before the instruction of our youth in matters of the common weal. A knowledge of the fundamental laws of society, of what democracy really means and what its problems are, a spirit of social mindedness which leads the individual to look beyond himself and to think of himself in relation to his community—these things are more and more requisite for good citizenship. The social sciences, including economics, history, government, and sociology in its various aspects, must receive a new and more intense emphasis in the higher education of the future. North Carolina, feeling her way toward the solution of new social problems consequent upon the growing complexity of her life, with a new program of social legislation, needs and will need leaders well-trained in the fundamentals of their task."

The school will emphasize special training in the social sciences; vocational training for social work and public welfare; social engineering and university and research work, in which special efforts will be made to contribute to information concerning social needs and possibilities in the state. The American Red Cross will conduct during the summer, an institute extending twelve weeks. Lecturers from Columbia, the New York and Pennsylvania schools of social work, and from North Carolina itself will make up the summer faculty—The Survey.

the law, and they must also be clear that "law is only beneficence acting by rule." Her teachers must not only know how and what to teach, but they must go out quick in the faith that the future of democracy is in their hands; that day by day they are laying the very foundation-stones of the new Southern civilization. Those whom she trains for social service she would make proficient in technique, for she realizes that, here as everywhere else, good-will alone is an inefficient weapon; but she would also seek to touch their hearts with the deep conviction that it is only he who loves mankind who is worthy to serve it, and that the social service which is permanently worth while is that which points man the way to freedom.

The Farmer-Citizen

It is precisely her faith, that the deepest need of the new civilization is for men who are both efficient workers and fitted to cooperate in the constructive program of democracy through the full release of their own highest powers, that sharpens the University's sense of obligation toward the agricultural life of her State. For the technical training of the farmer-worker this University has no obligation; but she has every obligation to the farmer as a man and as a citizen. Were other responsibility lacking, the single fact that in her present student body the sons of farmers far outnumber those of men of any other occupation would of itself impose no light duty toward the homes

from which they come. But a further obligation rich in opportunity for service grows out of the fact that the farm is not an isolated compartment in the State's life, but the largest cross-section of that life. As local industries develop, it matters increasingly to the farmer that in a state whose industrial life so largely centers about the manufacture of its own raw materials, this life should be just and sound; as it matters to him that the physicians, and lawyers, and teachers who serve him shall be broadly and liberally trained. All these vital relationships into which agriculture must enter are matters of concern to the university; while still deeper and more intimate is the concern she feels that through her may be multiplied the avenues by which the farm home itself shall come into even closer and freer touch with the best that the new civilization has, and will have, to offer, so that it may share, and share fully, in the life of the new South.

Liberal Arts the Test

The crucial test of the ability of the University to identify her mission with that of democracy is found in her achievement in the college of liberal arts. For in the college, if anywhere, must emerge the answer to the question whether the ideal of freedom can successfully embody itself in concrete concepts of education and of life. To fail here, under conditions so fitted to the task, is to proclaim that the great underlying principles of democracy can nowhere be attained. Success or failure will spring ultimately from the attitude of the college itself toward what it is about and from no other factor. The heart of the matter is whether the college conceives its work in terms of a dull and dreary formalism, an uninspired repetition of a set of lifeless formulae, or whether it really passionately believes that its task is that of liberating men from all that is partial and limited and false, so that they shall look out upon life with eyes that see and understand. If such be its belief, all its work in whatever field achieves a unity of purpose which it is its mission to make plain, and, through which it may touch with flame the mind, the heart, and the will. Science becomes both the absorbing tale of the increasing liberation of man from the tyranny of nature and that of the liberation of his mind through its search for truth; literature, the record of the human heart as it has struggled to express its aspirations; history, the story of the march of the human will as it strives with nature and with itself for freedom.

Serving the Common Good

But it is not the ultimate aim of the college to develop men who are only spectators of life, however clear their vision of what in it is ephemeral and what abiding. At this hour of constructive need the college could not more greatly sin against itself and the state than by training men who should hold themselves aloof from the work-a-day life of the world, from participation and leadership in every fine and worthy human cause. The University believes with her whole heart that it is the function of the college to train for citizenship and for service; and she also whole-heartedly believes that citizenship and service proceed from within the man himself, not from external mandate. To this end she would seek to develop in those who come to her a free spirit of inquiry into the relationships that underlie the common life of man, an inquiry pursued, not in an atmosphere of destructive criticism, but in one in which it is constantly clear that only by holding fast to the best that men have toiled and dreamed and fought for can a yet greater good be attained. To this end also, since she holds that men best learn to live as free and co-operative citizens when to the study of what democracy is and means they add its real and constant practice, she would strive to make of her life as a whole, campus and class-room and play-ground, one great example of her faith that high ideals and fine habits of citizenship and service develop best when free men live together as members of a community whose obligations they themselves have defined and assumed.

For the college of arts which is true to its faith, the University conceives that the New South has a genuine and increasing need. For if this the South's great adventure is to end in more than the accumulation of wealth, if human happiness and freedom are indeed its goal, she must guard her institutions of learning, that they may be more than machines for the production of workers skilled in their craft.

The Upbuilding of Man

The message of the college to her sons is the message of democracy itself, that "the main enterprise of the world is the upbuilding of a man." Nothing is more vital, at this moment when the South is caught up on the swell of her newly released material constructive forces, than her constant clear vision of this fact. Now, if ever, must the South cherish the ideal of liberal education, that out of her colleges, as out of a great reservoir of power, there may come in increasing numbers and with increasing strength men who have caught the vision of what life really means.

An institution whose concern is truth must find one very real test of its vigor in whether it seeks to contribute new truths to the world's existing store. The impulse toward research springs from the same conditions which insure the vitality of its teaching, and reacts in turn upon its whole inner-life. The supreme question here is not whether research is of practical value to the state. To that question the whole history of Western civilization gives eloquent answer. Truth must indeed be sought upon the mountain-top, but with him whose passion to look upon her face wins him access to her high abode, she walks hand in hand down into the common haunts of men, and with her touch men's labors lighten, their bodies strengthen, and their souls grow great. In all that men may do there is assuredly nothing more practical than the seeking of truth. The real question is rather that of the spirit in which they go about their quest. Research may sink to the level of mere mechanical and lifeless routine, which kills the spirit while it preserves the letter, or it may become such a liberating power that the mind which comes under its spell is caught up forever into a higher and clearer air. Men with such a vision the state must surely count among its most precious possessions. Frontiersmen they, pointing the way through the untrodden forest to the millions who shall possess the land they find; builders of democracy through their eternal quest for truth.

With such a sense of the oneness of her mission with that of the democratic commonwealth the University becomes, if she keep faith, not an appendage to the State, but its warm throbbing heart, linked in a living union by the pulsing currents of life itself with every member of the one great whole. She is of the State, and there is no finer and worthy cause than the State's that is not also hers. Teaching, research, and extension, are but three various channels through which her life finds natural expression. If that life be vigorous and free, it will out of its abundance ever seek new and direct contacts with the citizenship of the state through extension which is real and vital, just as it will seek for better teaching and more productive research. Among these varied phases of university activity there is no contradiction; all embody one spirit and one ideal.

Setting Men Free

And this ideal, whether it find expression in the college or the professional school, in teaching or extension or research, is that of full and eager and constructive participation in the task of democracy as it sets men free to realize their higher selves. Such self-realization can achieve its highest expression only through that deepest of all human experiences which attune the soul to the one Reality existent through all forms, in the abiding faith that the stair which man has builded and by which he climbs to freedom, also "slopes through the darkness up to God."

There is in all the world of education today no greater responsibility than that which rests upon the state universities of the South. Theirs is not the easy task of ministering to a fixed and static life. Theirs is a sterner and higher obligation. They must serve and guide and interpret to itself and to the world a new civilization which is yet in the making. Holding fast to all that is best in the past, they must face the future confident and unafraid. Quick of vision, warm of sympathy, and broad of understanding, they must lead on through unfamiliar scenes and along untrodden pathways.

And upon her whose name is written on our hearts, oldest among her sisters and ever young, such obligation peculiarly rests. For the State she serves thrills from mountain to sea with the currents of the new life. Day by day skies brighten and horizons broaden, as Carolina presses onward toward a future more happy than her dreams. The state of North Carolina and her University! Partners in the supreme adventure of achieving in ever fuller measure that democracy for which their sons so freely gave their lives—fellow-workers in the same high cause, marching shoulder to shoulder toward the same shining goal, as they draw strength and guidance each from each!