



*Lack of finances, student unrest, and threats to academic freedom*

## Coping with an Unholy Trinity

*By Dr. George L. Cross*

Dr. Cross discusses three of the thornier problems his successor will face

A few weeks ago the University chapter of the American Association of University Professors asked me to speak at their regular monthly meeting on the "unsolved problems that would face my successor." For a few minutes I was overwhelmed with the magnitude of the assignment and not quite sure that in the time available I could cope with it at all. I was about to protest, and then it suddenly occurred to me that they might have asked me to talk on the "solved problems," in which case I wouldn't have had a subject at all.

The University of Oklahoma, like all good universities, has three functions: a teaching function, a research function, and a public service function. When my successor arrives, he will need to take a serious look at these three func-

tions. I am quite sure that he will wonder where to find the money necessary to perform them satisfactorily. Doubtless before he arrives, he will be familiar with some statistics concerning increased appropriations for higher education in our country. He will know that between the school years 1964-65 and 1965-66, the 50 states increased their appropriations for higher education on an average of 44 percent. He will know that during this same period the appropriations in Oklahoma were increased 25 percent. He will know also that between 1960 and 1965 the 50 states increased their appropriations on an average of 132 percent, while Oklahoma increased its appropriation only 55 percent. He will know that OU is in an unfavorable competitive situation with the universities of the surround-

ing states—specifically that the University of Kansas will have approximately twice the appropriated money that is available to the University of Oklahoma. He will know also that OU has had a larger enrollment than KU.

Perhaps my successor will be impressed most by the fact that Oklahoma stands 49th among the 50 states in the per capita appropriation for students. This will depress him. On the other hand, he will be cheered by the thought that the University of Oklahoma stands in the upper 15 percent of state institutions in the amount of private money that it has been able to attract for use in the support of programs of excellence. He will wonder how to get additional money from the state legislature, and he will wonder, perhaps with reluctance and misgivings, how he can get more from the federal government. But when the money becomes available, whatever the amount, he will have the problem of dividing it among the three functions which I have mentioned: how much to spend on instruction, how much to spend on research, and how much to spend on public service. In other words, his problem will be how to use his inadequate financial sources most effectively in serving the state. Finance will be the first problem he will face, but perhaps it will not be his most serious problem.

My successor will be confronted with a situation of student unrest which has been publicized widely throughout our country. This is not a local problem, not a local phenomenon peculiar to the institutions of the United States. In 1965 I attended a meeting of the International Association of Universities in Tokyo. There were presidents there from universities in more than 70 different countries. Without exception, they reported student unrest. Some of the presidents from underdeveloped countries reported that the unrest had to do with increased demands for educational facilities. In the developed countries, the unrest seemed to be related more to a demand for better education. But the restlessness of youth is not confined to university campuses. It has swept around the world and is just as evident off the campus as on.

There is a state of tension among our young people. You may remember an article in *Time* not long ago written by a reporter who had visited the Netherlands and had explored with the youth there the reasons for the discontent. The young people reported that they were against many things but weren't quite sure how to express their dissatisfaction. They seemed to take the position that "whatever is, is wrong" but they were nonplussed as to what to do about it. They reported unhappily that they didn't have much to demonstrate against. They complained that the young people in the United States were in a much better situation, where there was an opportunity to protest against the draft laws and the Vietnam situation. They didn't have much to work with in Holland, so they had to do the best they could with what was available.

This is an attitude which, as I say, has been expressed to a greater or lesser extent in all of the countries of the world. It has been expressed in the United States on the campuses by occasional demonstrations varying in magnitude and intensity. On the campus of the University of Oklahoma, this unrest has been expressed by the existence of an organization known as the Students for a Democratic Society, by the existence there of a couple dozen or more of whom are commonly known as "beatniks" or "hippies." You will remember this type of development started on the

West Coast, swept to the East Coast, and has come into our own area by way of Michigan, Iowa, and Kansas. OU has experienced a bit of the movement, not a great deal, but some.

How to cope with the youth problem is perhaps the most important problem my successor will face. I emphasize this because we have not seen the full development of this movement as yet, but according to Clark Kerr, whose prognostications have been remarkably accurate in the past, my successor will see it. Clark Kerr predicted accurately the uprising which led to his own downfall at the University of California, and he now predicts that the movement has about three years to run.

How should a university deal with this sort of problem?

## *Student movements should not be suppressed or handled with force*

I have taken the position and, without offering my successor any advice, I hope that he will take the same position, that the movement is not to be handled effectively by suppression or by the use of force.

In my opinion, any forceful effort to regulate student activity on a campus will not only prove futile, but will attract additional support through an undesirable movement. One does not cure a disease by merely removing the symptoms. To attempt to remove the symptoms of modern student unrest by eliminating certain supposedly undesirable individuals from the campus might be likened to sweeping dust under the rug—not an effective way to clean up a situation, although it might result in momentary relief.

On most university campuses, two types of dissenting student movements have emerged. They have been identified by psychologists and psychiatrists as "hippies" and "politicals." The "hippies" are the ones with the long hair, the nondescript clothing—those who seem to take pride in a complete disregard of personal appearance. This group appears to take no pride in the past and to have no hope for the future. They live in the present and their objective, apparently, is to get the most that they can out of the present. They are said to have untraditional attitudes toward morals, and many of them, though perhaps not all, are frequent or occasional users of marijuana, LSD, and other psychedelic drugs. The "hippies" constitute a conspicuous segment of the membership of an organization known as the Students for a Democratic Society, although the SDS has other membership as well.

In addition to the "hippies" there are the "politicals." This group has no respect for the past nor for the present, but they do believe that things can be better in the future. They are most impatient for reform and want reform accomplished immediately. They are impatient of dialogue and discussion and use it only in an effort to convince others of the rightness of their views. I should emphasize that these student groups of which I am speaking are not neces-

sarily made up of poor students. It may make you reflective to remember that the University of California, where the largest and most repelling student demonstrations have occurred, admits only the top 12 percent of the high school graduates to the institution. Some of the most brilliant students on the campus were involved with the demonstrations which caused much commotion not long ago.

The fact that some of the best young minds of our time have been involved in these demonstrations emphasizes to me the need to find the cause of the trouble rather than to merely try to remove the symptom. In talking with students on the campus of the University of Oklahoma and in reading reports that have been prepared on other campuses, I have learned that most students are quite convinced that the generations preceding them have blundered beyond comprehension in managing the affairs of the world. The young 18- and 19-year-olds believe that if the preceding generations had not committed such colossal blunders, the modern international situation could not conceivably exist. They are appalled that their elders are engaged in organized effort to kill other human beings. To this group, wars are incomprehensible. The existence of war today is regarded by many of the young people as evidence that those who have gone before have been incompetent and have failed dramatically in managing world affairs.

Since these youngsters have no faith in the preceding generations and, therefore, no faith in parental guidance, they resent what they refer to as the *in loco parentis* concept—that the university should take the place of the parents while the students are away from home.

Perhaps a part of their resentment of control is related to the fact that in the modern homes, young men and women are given privileges which they perhaps should not have. Young women coming to us as freshmen in many instances have had almost complete freedom at home as to social activities, curfew, and that sort of thing. However, when they come to the university, their parents seem to expect that they can easily be subjected to regulations—the require-

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ments that freshman women get in at 8 o'clock weeknights and perhaps 11 o'clock on weekends. There is deep resentment of all controls over personal lives. The resentment is shared by practically all students and not just by the "way-out" groups that I have mentioned.

But above all, these students, especially the brighter ones, are concerned with the quality of the academic programs in the universities of the country. They criticize the education they are receiving. They say that it is not relevant to the lives they will lead, that it never has been relevant in history, or the international situation of today would not exist. They criticize our universities for not, as they put it, preparing them for the real problems that they will face as adults.

Specifically, they criticize the standard lectures that are

used so widely in our classrooms and the parrot-like recitation periods. They criticize and allege that boring materials are used, that professors are out of touch with their professions and, for that matter, out of touch with their classrooms. They allege that the professors are represented in the classrooms only by underpaid, overworked assistants who have objectives other than teaching in the classroom. They criticize what they refer to as a retreat from the classroom on the part of distinguished professors who have a tendency to turn instruction over to their students. They have suggested that a "full professor" is a professor who is absent from the classroom full-time.

The overall problem, of course, is related to the scarcity of faculty. When I started teaching in 1930, the enrollment in this country in all of the colleges and universities reached a total of one million for the first time. During my career as teacher and administrator, this enrollment of one million increased to five million without anything like a corresponding increase in professors.

When I started teaching, this country was spending less than a half-billion dollars each year on research—perhaps less than a quarter of a billion. Now it is spending at the rate of between 23 and 25 billion dollars a year and expecting the same people to perform the research that are teaching or should be teaching in the classroom. It is no wonder that the faculty has retreated from the classroom in response to the demands for the performance of this research.

The students criticize the grading system and the competition for grades which it generates. They believe that the competition for grades has led to wholesale cheating and a consequent deterioration of moral fiber in the student body. The need to have good grades for honors in our institutions and to compete for jobs following graduation, they believe, has led many very competent students to cheat because they know if they do not cheat, their less competent associates will make better grades, carry off the honors, and get better jobs.

But why should this great surge of student unrest be in existence now throughout the world? It has been suggested that perhaps the students are beginning to realize that knowledge is power and that the university, as the seat of knowledge, is the key to power. Worldwide realization of this may have come about as the result of the tremendous revolution in communication of recent years which has brought information of what is going on in one part of the world to all points of the world. And perhaps young people all around the world, realizing that knowledge is power, are resenting the fact that the powerful knowledge has, in their opinion, been used improperly in the past and, therefore, are demanding an opportunity to have a part in this use of power. They may think that they would be able to use it much better in the affairs of mankind than it has been used in the past.

Analyzing the problem is one thing. Solving it, of course, is another. But after the unhappy events at Berkeley, a faculty committee, headed by a Professor Muscatine, made a thorough study of the California situation and submitted a report with recommendations as to what should be done. High on the list of recommendations was to give the students a voice in the affairs of the university through the use of their best leaders. This means that the university should try to identify the best leaders and get them into the situa-

tion before undesirable leaders emerge on the horizon and cause the trouble that was experienced in California.

The committee suggested also that the approach to teaching might be revised somewhat, that the problem approach might be utilized and the problems of everyday life be used in the teaching rather than to have routine lectures covering a segment of a discipline as a course experience.

The committee suggested that the basic principles of each field of learning should be emphasized to a greater degree because these basic principles are less susceptible to obsolescence than are the rather superficial facts which are often presented in survey courses used so commonly in the classrooms throughout the country.

The committee suggested also that an exploration in depth of a field should be substituted for the survey approach. Rather than to skim the surface of a discipline, it was suggested that a portion of the field be explored in depth so that the students might have an idea of what is going on in the field and learn how people in that field go about their business in daily life. This means, in effect, that an effort should be made to apply knowledge in a problem approach to the affairs of mankind in a real educational program rather than to present to the student a package of simplifications—temporary facts which change rapidly and become obsolete.

These are interesting and pertinent suggestions which I think my successor may wish to consider in conference with the faculty. I have an uncomfortable feeling that it is already late and that something needs to be done rather promptly to improve our academic situation if we are to regain the respect and the cooperation of this younger, disturbed, and resentful generation.

My successor also will be confronted with the delicate problem of academic freedom—an absolute must in the minds of most students and members of the faculty. Academic freedom for the faculty is fairly well established at OU, but academic freedom for students involves a somewhat newer concept in higher education—the right to listen, hear, and explore all ideas and to express opinions concerning these ideas. Over a period of time, in my opinion, students will accept no less than this, and I think they should not accept less.

There is a common misconception concerning academic freedom—namely that it is something which has been developed to protect professors. This is not the case. Academic freedom was designed to protect the public's right to hear what the professor has to say and the right of the student to hear what the professor has to say.

Academic freedom has been tarnished a bit by the tendency of some faculty members to misuse it. I do not deny this, but in the same breath I would insist that the danger from the occasional misuse of academic freedom on the part of members of the faculty is much less than the danger that would result from the restriction of speech or restriction of the exploration of new ideas. After all, who or what group of people could possibly have the wisdom to pick and choose the ideas to be discussed on a university campus?

Many Oklahomans have given me a rather hard time concerning the appearance on our campus of Dr. Altizer and Bishop Pike. They were welcomed to our campus, not because it was thought that any substantial proportion of our faculty or student body share their ideas or would be

converted to their ideas. The invitation was approved in my office because in a real university you simply cannot afford to deny the exploration of any idea.

The road to human enlightenment has been a long and tortuous one and is still not completely traveled. There have been many tragedies along the way because people were unwilling to permit the exploration of ideas which were at variance with their own. Socrates was executed for presenting certain ideas to the youth of Athens, yet Socrates provided the basis upon which the philosophy of western civilization rests today. Jesus Christ was crucified because he

## *A real university cannot deny the study of any idea*

persisted in presenting ideas which were unpopular to the people of his kind, yet he provided the basis upon which the spiritual life of western civilization rests today. Galileo, defending the Copernican idea that the earth revolved around the sun rather than the sun around the earth, was persecuted and jailed, yet this concept of Copernicus defended by Galileo is basic in our modern attempts to explore space. Martin Luther had troubles because of his ideas. He was harassed by his associates, and his church excommunicated him, yet his ideas provided the basis for the development of the Protestant religion.

Thus the folly of an attempt to suppress free exploration of ideas has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout history. Today we take the position that we should explore everything and discard after a thorough discussion that which is not useful or not good, trusting to the good judgment of the people to make a determination of what is acceptable and usable and what is not.

The millionth volume added to the University of Oklahoma library last year was John Milton's *Arcopagitica*. The *Arcopagitica* is a published version of a speech which John Milton made in England in 1644—a speech in defense of the freedom of the press. A compelling portion of the book reads as follows: "As soon kill a man as kill a good book. Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, if truth be in the field, we do injury by prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let truth and falsehood grapple. Whoever knew truth to be put to earth in a free and open encounter?"

I submit that the solution to the problems which exist on the campuses of our country today depends in large measure on the freedom of students, faculty, and administration to explore ideas together. The solution involves a need for frequent dialogue, for discussions, not with the thought of one group convincing another that an idea is right or wrong, but with the thought that through thorough discussion the right answers may emerge as a result of agreements reached by the discussants.

This is my position in the current campus situation. This is what I have stood for at the University of Oklahoma for more than 23 years. This is what I will continue to stand for.

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