

A plea for liberalism

By FRANCES HUNT, '29

PITHY comments which showed a penetrating insight into the needs of modern life and modern education punctuated President W. B. Bizzell's convocation address delivered Tuesday morning, September 15, in the Fieldhouse. Speaking on "Liberalism in Education," he gave his audience dozens of terse, almost epigrammatic observations. For instance:

"Freedom of thought is the oxygen which a university breathes."

"Institutions of higher learning have been the center of liberalism through the ages."

"Liberalism is both an attitude of mind and a philosophy of life."

"Liberalism has found its finest expression in the academic environment because of the peace and serenity prevailing there."

"Our colleges and universities can safeguard jealously the freedom to teach and the right to investigate every problem of national and public concern."

"It is the high privilege of teachers to present facts to their students and to impart the truth fearlessly."

"Social unrest always creates a critical attitude toward existing institutions."

"The greatest problem in our national life today is that of the relations between the state and the individual."

"Our theory of liberalism in learning is based upon training our citizenship in a sense of social responsibility and the love of truth for truth's sake."

President Bizzell devoted several minutes to a defense of the college professor's right to speak out about the things he knows about. But, he said, the current prejudice against college professors is justified in cases where the professor talks on subjects he has not mastered. "A man may be a profound scientist and as ignorant as a child about the workings of economic laws," he said.

He said he doubted the wisdom of "teachers' oaths" which have caused agitation in Massachusetts and other states.

Following the annual custom, faculty members marched from the Armory to the Fieldhouse in academic procession, and the student body gathered to hear the president. Because of the September heat, professors did not wear academic gowns.

Dr. Bizzell said that the University was beginning its forty-fifth year most auspiciously, and that he hoped it would prove the best year in the history of the

school. "Each of us has a responsibility and an opportunity to make it so," he said. "A university community is a society of socially-minded people drawn together by a common interest. They should be capable both of co-operative and individual effort.

"If they are socially-minded, they will work together harmoniously and sympathetically. If they are personally responsible, they will perform every task, be it teaching or learning, with fidelity and devotion. That is what a university community should strive to be, and I invite you to join me in the common task of making this academic year notable for its high standards of intellectual accomplish-

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ment and adherence to the highest and the best in moral and spiritualistic idealism."

President Bizzell spoke first about the strategic place occupied by our colleges and universities in conserving and promoting the liberal spirit in all the relationships of life. Liberalism naturally belongs to youth, he said, for buoyant young people are not inclined to accept things as they are. Youth wonders why the elders have not done something about the disordered state of the world, and older people should not disparage or condemn this attitude, he cautioned the faculty.

"Probably the greatest opportunity of our educational institutions today is to give new direction to youthful aspirations in their desire to create out of the chaos about us a more stable social, political and economic life for those who must live and work in the world they are trying to create," he declared.

Explaining his ideas of liberalism, Dr. Bizzell said that the liberal spirit thrives best in normal times when people are reasonably free from fear of dire calamity.

"It is too much to expect it to flourish when men are sitting up late at night discussing when the next war will begin or where the next meal will come from," he said. He pointed out that liberals as a rule are poor fighters.

"But," he said, "it becomes increasingly

important for colleges and universities to safeguard the spirit of freedom when the world outside is torn asunder by turmoil, for should this die out in academic precincts, under such conditions the spirit of liberalism would disappear altogether from the consciousness of men."

War and economic troubles have almost destroyed the liberal spirit, Dr. Bizzell believes, because men and women are distracted away from the old traditions by the immediate necessities of the moment. He saw this in Europe during his travels last summer.

"I visited a nation where the social order had been purged of the spiritual values that we cherish most in life, and many of the human virtues that we think are essential to happiness are regarded almost as vices," he said.

We should cherish the fact that our Bill of Rights remains the greatest charter of liberalism in existence, and we need to remember that the history of government is essentially a survey of man's struggle for freedom of thought and freedom of action, he warned. He directed his hearers' attention to the many recent biographies of Thomas Jefferson, the great philosopher of liberalism in America.

"Liberalism has had its ebbs and tides in America," the President said. "Selfish interests have never failed to take advantage of adverse conditions to strangle the spirit of liberalism, but it has always been revived when normal conditions were restored. At a time when the liberal tradition was at its lowest ebb in America, it reached flood tide in Great Britain . . . The influence of the great liberal leaders in England was felt in this country for a time after the Civil War."

He showed how liberalism declined here in the last part of the nineteenth century, but revived with the coming of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Then war clouds eclipsed Wilson's liberal aspirations. Wilson tried to carry his liberal philosophy into the peace conference.

"No one could have foreseen when the war clouds were dispelled in 1917 that in less than a decade a crop of dictatorships would arise such as the world had not seen in nearly two milleniums," Dr. Bizzell said. "It may truthfully be said that liberalism became one of the great casualties of the World War. Perhaps history will reveal that it was the greatest of that bloody and tragic conflict."

He asked, "What can our educational institutions do in an emergency like this?" and he answered his own question by saying that our colleges and universities must safeguard their freedom and right to teach and investigate problems of national and public concern. Our educational system must be adapted to a changing world. Schools should not offer "mass education," but should retain the personal relationship between teacher and student. Educators should recognize that individual

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designed to train men for the petroleum industry.

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EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

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The visitor comes away from Russia feeling that a great effort is being made to produce a better social order for the people. The appearance of sadness, however, on the face of almost every one indicates that the better things of life are being secured at a great price. It is apparent that the hunger for bread is a little less real than the hunger for knowledge.

It is one of the great tragedies of the world that thousands of intellectuals were killed or driven into exile during the Revolution whose only crime was that they could not accept the creed of communism. These men are greatly needed now to assist in the work of education. As sanity is being restored out of the hysteria of revolution, old methods of instruction and subject-matter of curricula are being restored. But a new generation of intellectuals must be produced before great accomplishment can be realized. When that time comes, Russian communism will have made many concessions to the economic order which it has attempted to supplant. In fact, this process is going on rapidly today.

One of the things that must impress every visitor to Russia is the fact that the policies of government are rapidly changing. This is reflected in the new Constitution as well as in actual practice. The educational agencies are still completely dominated by the state, but even Stalin seems to have recognized that greater freedom of expression and independence of judgment are essential to educational progress. In pronouncements and public declarations he has encouraged a greater spirit of liberalism in thought and action.

But with all the educational and cultural resources that are available, or that are being made available, Russia has a long way to go before learning can be made the effective agency of the new social order. As the visitor is being shown the educational facilities, he wonders whether or not, after all, they are being utilized in the most effective way.

It is my belief that up to the present time the training of technicians by empirical methods has overshadowed every other objective in the educational program. Circumstances probably have made this necessary; but as life becomes more normal, effectiveness will be given to other aspects of education.

Most visitors to Russia are greatly impressed with the material progress that is being made, but I was primarily impressed with the educational progress. A nation that undertakes to raise the intelligence of one hundred and seventy million people, most of whom are peasants scattered over one-sixth of the earth's surface, challenges admiration. If the educational program is liberalized, the time will come when enlightenment and knowledge will make deep inroads upon fallacies in governmental theory. The ability of the country to make its vast educational program effective is the contingency upon which the future of the country rests.



A PLEA FOR LIBERALISM

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ualism and collectivism represent two opposing tendencies in human society. Students must be trained to think critically.

"I remind you in conclusion," he said, "that a university has no platform to advocate and no creed to profess save that of the dissemination of knowledge and an abiding belief that the truth will make men free.

"Educators everywhere understand that revelation comes through knowledge and enlarges the mental horizon; while propaganda closes the mind of the individual to critical judgment, arouses prejudice, and stimulates passion. It is this conception of his task that causes the educator to safeguard jealously freedom of expression and to teach the truth with all the zeal of the missionary."



CHANGES IN FACULTY

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Dr. Horace Peterson, graduate of Cornell, to fill temporarily the position left vacant by illness of Dr. C. C. Rister, professor of history.

Dr. Carl Ritzman, formerly instructor of Northwestern agriculture school, Crookston, Minn., as instructor in speech, taking the place of Floyd K. Riley, University debate coach who accepted a position as speech professor at Baker university, Baldwin, Kan.

Henry Emmett Gross, formerly with the Shell Petroleum company, to succeed Irwin F. Bingham as assistant professor of petroleum engineering. Mr. Bingham resigned to take a position with the Universal Atlas Cement company, Waco, Texas. Mr. Gross is a graduate of the Missouri School of Mining and Metallurgy, Rolla, Mo., and has an M.S. degree from the University of Illinois.

Dr. Milton Hopkins, who received a Ph.D. from Harvard in June, 1936, as assistant professor of botany.

C. C. Smith, as special instructor in botany; Frances Hunt, '29as, assistant in journalism; Henri Minsky, assistant in violin, and Jean Sugden, '31M.A., assistant in English.

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