

Relation of the State University to Democracy

By William Bennett Bizzell

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

ARISTOTLE said in one connection: "A given constitution demands an education in conformity with it." The public school system of the United States was established and has been maintained on this doctrine. The state university, as the capstone of this vast enterprise, is committed thoroughly and irrevocably to promoting the welfare of democratic institutions and diffusing faith in democracy among the people who sustain it.

It is impossible to understand the policies of higher education in America today without some knowledge of the traditions and history out of which our publicly supported institutions of higher learning have developed. While no reference to public education is made in our Constitution, it is a matter of common knowledge that those who formulated this document were vitally interested in education. James Madison made a motion in the Constitutional Convention giving Congress the power to establish a university. Madison and Pinckney at a later date in the proceedings of the Convention jointly moved to include among the powers specifically delegated to the Federal Government this authority, but the motion failed because of the opinion expressed that Congress already had this inherent power without specific authorization.

Washington's attitude toward the establishment of a national university is well known. He discussed the desirability of establishing a national university with some of his officers while encamped at Cambridge in October, 1775. The subject seems to have been a matter of more or less general discussion throughout the colonies previous to the organization of our National Government. One of the strong advocates of this proposal was Dr. Benjamin Rush, a graduate of Princeton and the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh and an intimate friend of Benjamin Franklin. He went so far as to draw up a plan for a national university and in writing about it said: "To effect this great and necessary work, let one of the first acts of the new congress be, to establish, within the district to be allotted for them, a Federal University, into which the youth of the United States shall be received after they have finished their studies and taken degrees in the colleges of their respective States. In this university let those branches of literature only be taught which are calculated to prepare our youth for public and civil life."

If Congress had adopted this plan, the Federal Government would have established the first real university in this country, for it was almost a hundred years before the establishment of Johns Hopkins University, the first institution of higher learning to place large emphasis upon graduate instruction.

Washington was, undoubtedly, impressed with the views of Dr. Rush and others toward this project, for he discussed the subject in his first message to Congress, reverted to it in his last message, and wrote many letters to private individuals advocating it. He even selected a site for the university in the Federal District and left an endowment for this purpose in his will. "Whether this desirable object," Washington concluded, "will be best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national university, or by any other expedients will be worthy of a place in the deliberations of the Legislature."

He seems to have never had any doubt about the constitutional right of Congress to provide funds for the establishment of a national university or to aid education in some other way, for in his farewell address he said: "Promote then, as a subject of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened."

THOMAS Jefferson and James Madison shared the views of Washington concerning the establishment of a national university, but they doubted the power of Congress to provide Federal aid by direct appropriation for higher education. Jefferson advocated a constitutional amendment for this purpose and it is significant that he favored public land grants as a means of supplying funds for educational purposes. Madison, in his message to Congress in 1810, recommended "a seminary of learning instituted by the National Legislature, within the limits of its exclusive jurisdiction." But he did not favor raising the revenue for this purpose from taxation derived from the sale of public lands within the states or territories. His plan for financing the national university was to appropriate "vacant grounds which have accrued to the nation" and located within the District of Columbia.

While a national university has never been established, the results of the discussion by the leading statesmen of their times focused attention of the public upon the importance of providing for publicly supported institutions of higher learning. The long controversy over the question of constitutional authority increased favorable sentiment for the establishment of state universities. It is, therefore, impossible to understand the rapid increase in the number of state universities in the years immediately preceding the War between the States without some knowledge of the historical background.

JEFFERSON is the great apostle of faith in Democracy. His philosophy of statecraft connected education with his conception of democratic government. He insisted that "a system of general instruction, which shall reach every description of our citizens from the richest to the poorest" was basic to an understanding of his teaching. He conceived that the objects of general education were twofold. His fear of despotism and oppression caused him to believe that enlightenment through education was essential. "Enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order," he said, "and they will preserve them." The second object of instruction was for the purpose of qualifying the electorate to select their leaders with discrimination and good judgment.

Jefferson's plan of education, as proposed for the State of Virginia, contemplated three years of elementary training in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Out of each primary school was to be chosen "the boy of best genius in the school, of those whose parents were too poor to give them further education," and this boy was to continue his studies in the grammar schools, "of which twenty are proposed to be erected in different parts of the country, for teaching Greek, Latin, Geography, and the higher branches of numerical arithmetic." From this smaller group, "the best genius of the whole" was to be permitted to continue his education for six years. At the close of this six-year period, the half of this number who showed the most promise for leadership was to be sent on to William and Mary College, which was the only institution of higher learning in the state at the time, as these views were expressed before Jefferson established the University of Vir-

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ginia. This selective plan has been designated by historians as autocratic rather than democratic in principle, but this is not a correct interpretation of Jefferson's opinion. He had the qualitative rather than the quantitative conception of education. He did not believe that all children were equally endowed with mental ability to profit by education at the higher levels of learning, but he did believe that educational facilities should be provided on a selective basis for all those who were to receive the benefits.

The modern state university might have developed out of the educational philosophy of Thomas Jefferson had it not been for the rise of Andrew Jackson to the political leadership of the nation at a time when these institutions were being established in several states. Jefferson, as Vice President had been associated with Jackson, who was a member of the Senate. Both were brought up on the frontier, but they differed greatly in personality and temperament. Jefferson reflected much of the culture of Western Europe, while Jackson personified the rugged intellectual and ethical qualities of his environment. Norman Foerster said in *The American State University*: "The one had tempered equality with quality; the other was satisfied with equality alone. The one had wished to retain the aristocratic principle within democracy; the other wished to destroy that principle and give democracy free rein. The one had reflected the caution of the founders; the other reflected the recklessness of the frontier. The one had insisted upon the guidance of the majority by talents—virtue and intelligence; the other insisted, simply, upon rule by the majority—the force of numerical quantity."

Jackson as a candidate for the presidency in 1828 was opposed by most of the newspapers, the financial interests, and manufacturers. This honest individualist of the West championed the cause of "the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers." As President, he adopted the policy of equalitarianism, which influenced the political and social life of the nation for more than a hundred years.

Equality of educational opportunity became the predominating doctrine in American education. The frontier spirit was reflected in the wide-spread demand for practical education adapted to the needs of the working classes. In 1853, Jonathan Baldwin Turner published his *Industrial Universities for the People*. "Any system of education," he wrote, "adapted to the exclusive or unequal and inordinate culture of any one class or profession in the State, is defective: it generates clans and castes, and breaks in upon that natural or-

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der, equality, and harmony which God has ordained. It will create a concentration of intellectual power in the educated head of the body politic—cold, crafty, selfish, and treacherous—which will sooner or later corrupt its heart; will exhaust and overlabor and overtask its weak, uncultured, and undeveloped subordinate powers and organs, and produce a bedlam rather than a kingdom on earth." It is obvious that this is a very different conception from the qualitative theory as advocated by Jefferson. "The industrial classes," according to Turner, "want, and they ought to have, the same facilities for understanding the true philosophy, the science, and the art of *their* several pursuits (their life-business), and of efficiently applying existing knowledge thereto and widening its domain, which the professional classes have long enjoyed in *their* pursuits."

Turner's doctrine had far-reaching consequences upon the future of American education. The first Morrill Act passed by Congress in 1862, providing for the establishment of land grant colleges for teaching the mechanic arts and agriculture, resulted from the equalitarianism of Jackson, which was definitely formulated and advocated by Turner.

The conflicting viewpoints of Jefferson and Jackson continue to be a matter of controversy. Those who advocate a selective process in public education are reflecting the view of Jefferson, while those who believe that every pupil who enters the public schools should have an equal chance when he completes his secondary school course to continue on a college career as far as he is able to go and to have as much education as he can assimilate provided for him at public expense are conforming to the conception of Jackson. I think most of us believe that the qualitative conception of Jefferson is the wiser course to pursue; but it is a stubborn fact, which we should frankly recognize, that educational practice in the public schools, including the publicly supported colleges and universities, is following the quantitative conception as conceived by Jackson. It is impossible for us to understand educational practices today without a knowledge of the history of educational thought of the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The state universities have been guided more or less consciously by six objectives. They are:

1. To provide educational facilities for all who are capable of accepting the advantages offered.
2. To develop the mind and personality of youth to the limit.
3. To train youth for the responsibilities of citizenship and leadership in democratic society.
4. To transmit the intellectual and social heritage of the race and to impart the cultural traditions that have come down to us.



Earl H. Grimes

DEMOCRAT FOR
REPRESENTATIVE

CLEVELAND COUNTY

Democratic Primary, July 12

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(Paid Political Advertisement)

5. To encourage the discovery of new truth and to extend the boundaries of knowledge through research.

6. To inculcate a spirit of tolerance and freedom of thought and speech in all the relations of life.

In the accomplishment of these objectives, the program of every state university should include:

1. The teaching of resident students in academic, professional, technical, and vocational subjects for which there is public and popular demand.

2. Adequate facilities and personnel for theoretical and practical investigations.

3. A comprehensive program for raising the general level of intelligence through adult education, which means that for this purpose the limits of the state should become the normal boundaries of the campus.

4. The publication of monographs, bulletins, and books as a means of encouraging research and developing the creative spirit in literature.

Few of our state universities have been able to give effectiveness to this comprehensive program. The objectives which I have outlined have resulted in confusion of purpose, but the American people can well take pride in the contributions that their state universities have made to the cultural life of the nation. Time may prove that they are the most powerful agencies in the world for sustaining and perpetuating the faith of Jefferson in democratic government and the hopes of Jackson for making equality of opportunity the most enduring influence in raising the standards of living for all the people.



Now residing in Schenectady, New York, James P. Hocker, '37ms, is working at the General Electric Research Laboratory on a trial period.

Jeanette Cravey, '37ma, of Hot Springs, Arkansas, is head of the English department of the Mangum Junior College.

Ruth Miller, '37, is recovering after a major operation in the Medical Arts Hospital at Dallas. The operation was performed to correct a back injury.

BASS-McPHERON: Miss Mary Jane Bass, '37, and Alan McPheron, '37law, were married in Durant in April. Mrs. McPheron was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority at the University. They will live in Durant, where he is employed by the State Tax Commission.

Emaline Collins, '37ex, resides now at 718 West Sixth Street, Ada. She is teaching in the Thackerville school.

COOPER-HEWES: Miss Lorraine Cooper, a sophomore in the University, and Elmo Hewes, '37ex, were married April 2 in Norman. Mr. Hewes is to play professional football this fall with the New York Yankees, but he and Mrs. Hughes will return after the football season to continue their work at the University.

CORBIN-MEACHAM: Miss Jewell Corbin, '37ed, and Phillip Alfred Meacham, '37eng, were married April 9 in Chickasha. Mrs. Meacham was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority and Mr. Meacham was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity.

NORTH-CRISWELL: Miss Pauline North, '37ex, and J. T. Criswell, '37law, were married in Seminole in March. He is a junior member of the law firm of Criswell and Criswell in We-woka, where they will reside.

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