

# Conference on Educational Finance

## Leaders Agree That Financial Problems of State Colleges Are Closely Tied With Common Schools

**A** COMPREHENSIVE picture of the state problems that must be faced by friends of the University of Oklahoma in their efforts to secure adequate financial support for the institution emerged from the conference sponsored at the University February 20 by the University of Oklahoma Association.

One hundred fifty persons representing the Alumni Association executive board and county advisory councils, and the executive boards of the University Dads and University Mothers associations, and other guests especially interested in the problems heard President W. B. Bizzell describe the University's present situation and then heard a panel of legislative experts discuss the practical problems of state finance.

President Bizzell spoke at the luncheon session. He emphasized that the per capita appropriation for the University has declined from \$213 to \$124 in the last ten years, and that even the maximum figure of \$213 was below the average for other midwestern universities.

Most of the afternoon session was devoted to a panel discussion. Those participating were Charles B. Duffy, Ponca City, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee in the last Legislature; James A. Rinehart, El Reno, president pro tem of the Senate; Herbert L. Branan, Muskogee, chairman of the House Committee on Revenue and Taxation; and L. D. Melton, director of research for the State Tax Commission.

Some of the significant points brought out in the conference included:

1. **TUITION.** President Bizzell took a stand for a modest tuition fee for all Oklahoma college students. He pointed out that enrolment at the University of Texas continued to increase after a \$25 tuition fee was imposed. Senator Duffy recalled that he introduced a tuition bill in the last session of the Legislature and that it received fourteen votes; but said he was willing to introduce one again. The question was raised whether the Oklahoma Legislature would ever vote favorably on a tuition bill, and whether tuition revenue would simply be deducted from appropriations. Opinions were divided.

2. **EAR-MARKING OF TAX LEVIES.** Explaining that some school people have advocated less ear-marking of funds—particularly for highway purposes—in order to put more state revenue into the general fund, Senator Duffy expressed belief that this would only expose the University to more serious competition for appropriations. Senator Rinehart agreed that the

University would be in a difficult position if it found pension advocates on one side of it and highway proponents on the other. Senator Duffy declared "it wouldn't help much to throw all the revenues into one pot and divide it up and then all go broke together—the trouble is there just isn't enough revenue from present sources to meet the present needs." Representative Branan explained that there are legal technicalities which have provided justification for ear-marking the motor vehicle license tax and a considerable part of the gasoline tax. Senator Duffy contended that if the state is spending more than it should on highways, that the gasoline tax should be lowered and another more appropriate tax be enacted to support education.

3. **COMMON SCHOOLS.** It was generally agreed that the problem of financing higher education in Oklahoma is inextricably tied up with the common school problem, and to seek special favors for either would be, as President Bizzell expressed it, "Like asking a father to say which child he loves the most." Senator Duffy urged that local communities be given authority to levy more school taxes and that more of the responsibility for financing schools be placed back on the local community. He branded the present primary aid system as "a political sop," which makes superintendents show as great a need as possible in order to get a maximum of state funds for their communities. Representative Branan agreed that local communities should at least be guaranteed five mills from the present limit of 15 mills for local government, but favored a system of classifying all school districts according to needs and per capita costs, the state to provide whatever funds are necessary to bring all districts up to an equal standard and perhaps raise the general standard. B. B. Barefoot, judge of the State Criminal Court of Appeals, spoke from the floor to suggest a comprehensive survey to bring about consolidation of school districts—particularly rural districts—in order to save money and improve the standards. Floyd Harrington, member of the last Legislature, favored a county-wide tax levy for common schools.

4. **NEW TAXES.** Senator Rinehart maintained that it was out of the question to seek new sources of revenue, and expressed belief that state institutions and departments are getting along now without serious difficulty. "The state is in a retrenchment and reform program now, and we can't have reform until we have retrenchment," he said. Representative

Branan expressed belief that the state now has a maximum level of tax revenue—about \$100,000,000—and that new levies cause offsetting losses from other revenues. Senator Duffy pointed out that a member of the Legislature cannot get many of his constituents concerned over the plight of higher education in Oklahoma. "But you can't solve the University's problems without finding new revenues," he said. "You might be able to have a common school fund bill that would include provision for higher education, and thereby enlist popular support." In answer to a question as to whether he believed any new tax of any kind whatever might be adopted by voters of Oklahoma, Mr. Melton commented that "The people of Oklahoma are the only ones in the Union who voluntarily voted a sales tax on themselves. It all depends upon what the new tax is baited with." The possibility of reviving the state ad valorem tax levy was discussed and some present declared it to be "outmoded." Mr. Melton explained that more than fifty per cent of the voters in Oklahoma are renters rather than home owners, and therefore would not be directly hurt by such a levy. In answer to questions, he said that about a dozen other states have abolished ad valorem levies for state purposes, that about twenty-four states have sales tax levies (most of them about like Oklahoma's) and that the gasoline tax in Oklahoma is slightly lower than the average for other states.

5. **THE STATE DEFICIT.** In introducing the panel discussion, Senator Duffy explained that some of the factors in the state's present financial difficulties are: abolition of the 3.5 ad valorem levy for state purposes without enactment of the gross income tax which William H. Murray had proposed to replace it; adoption of homestead tax exemption which reduced revenues of local government and required more state aid; adoption of the constitutional amendment putting a rigid limit on levies for local government and still further increasing the demand for state aid for local government; the general reduction of property valuations during the depression; the adoption of an old age pension system; the expenditures for direct relief; and the increase in state aid for common schools from about \$1,500,000 in 1933 to about \$15,500,000 in 1940.

6. **WHAT TO DO?** General sentiment of the legislators appeared to be that several common-sense reforms are plainly called for in the state financial system, but

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 28)

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but print your name  
and address.

painting murals in the Department of the In-  
terior Building. Mr. McNeil was student instruc-  
tor of jewelry and crafts at the University the  
first semester of last year.

W. B. Oldfield, '39, is a lieutenant in the  
United States Marine Corps. He is stationed at  
the Marine Basic School, Navy Yard, Philadel-  
phia.

Paul M. McLaughlin, '39eng, is employed as  
an engineer in Boling, Texas.

Rex. V. Phelps, '39eng, who received his de-  
gree in August, has become an assistant to the city  
manager of Nichols Hills, adjoining Oklahoma  
City. His home was formerly in Geary.

Mrs. Charles J. Picek (Margaret Hughes O'Reil-  
ly, '39) is living in Lawton.

Pearl Virginia Rea, '39fa, is teaching this fall  
in Hominy.

Formerly with the Spartan Aircraft Company at  
Tulsa, John Riley, '39eng, is now working in  
Seattle, Washington, with the Boeing Aircraft  
Company. He is employed in the stress analysis  
department.

Bernard Schillinger, '39eng, is a professor in  
the University of Kentucky at Lexington.

Mrs. Gilbert H. Smith (Virginia Haizlip, '39  
ms) is living in Oklahoma City, where she is en-  
gaged in social work.

Eleanor Louise Stanton, '39, is living in Arkan-  
sas City, Kansas.

William Gordon Stuart, '39eng, a stress analy-  
sis engineer, has resigned from the Spartan Air-  
craft Company in Tulsa and has accepted a job  
with the Brewster Aircraft Company, Long Isl-  
and City, New York.

Garth E. Viele, '39eng, formerly a student en-  
gineer for the Standard Oil Company of New  
Jersey, has gone to Aruba, Dutch West Indies,  
to take a position as chemical engineer there for  
the same company.

WEEKS-McCULLOUGH: Miss Jane Weeks  
and Hugh McCullough, '39ex, were married De-  
cember 1 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mr. Mc-  
Cullough, former University gridiron star, is a  
member of the Pittsburgh Pirates professional  
football team.

Engaged in designing and drafting plans for  
oil well equipment, Robert E. Witt, Jr., '39eng,  
is in the employ of the Bethlehem International  
Supply Company, Tulsa. He received both a  
bachelor of arts and a bachelor of science degree  
last year.

Milton Zuckerman, '39, is engaged in business  
in New York City.

Frank Wilton Jones, '29law, is editor of *The  
Young Clubber*, official publication of the Young  
Men's Club in Oklahoma City.



#### Selected by medical society

A complimentary ballot of members of  
the Oklahoma County Medical Association  
last month designated Dr. Tom Low-  
ry, '14, '16med, for the presidency for the  
new year. Although the formal election  
was scheduled later, this ballot was vir-  
tually tantamount to final selection.

Two of the three new directors chosen  
are University alumni. They are Dr. J. B.  
Eskridge, Jr., '19, '21med, and Dr. Robert  
H. Akin, '26, '28med. Dr. Oscar White,  
'21med, was elected to the board of cen-  
sors.



#### President of association

Albert G. Kulp, '34law, has been elected  
president of the Oklahoma Apartment  
Owners Association, Inc., at Oklahoma  
City. The organization is a trade organi-  
zation devoted to the interests of the mul-  
tiple dwelling industry.

Mr. Kulp, a practicing attorney in Ok-  
lahoma City, is owner-operator of the Am-  
bassador, Victor and Julianne Apartments.

He has served on the board of directors  
of the apartment owners association and  
as association attorney for the last four  
years.

A Life Member of the University of Ok-  
lahoma Association, Mr. Kulp is a mem-  
ber of the state advisory council to the  
executive board.



## Conference on Educational Finance

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

that most of them are not feasible politi-  
cally at this time because few persons or  
groups are willing to make sacrifices for  
the general welfare of all. (Examples of  
obviously sensible reforms: better equal-  
ization of property assessments over the  
state; consolidations of school districts;  
not complaining about tax levies that are  
necessary to pay for the governmental ser-  
vices demanded). The conclusion seemed  
to be that much educational work is neces-  
sary to give the people of the state a better  
understanding of the state's financial prob-  
lems.

This summary hits only the high spots  
of the day's conference. More details will  
be published in the next issue of *Sooner  
Magazine*.

Presiding officer at the conference was  
Hicks Epton, '32law, Wewoka attorney  
and president of the University of Okla-  
homa Association. James C. Nance, of  
Purcell, state senator for the University  
district who was booked to speak on "The  
Background of Educational Appropriations  
for This Biennium" was confined to his  
home by an attack of influenza and was  
unable to appear on the program.

R. R. Owens, state budget officer, was  
invited to speak on this subject and he  
complimented members of the Seventeenth  
Legislature for their industry and sincerity  
in working out the appropriations. He ad-  
vised the state educational institutions to  
"clean your own houses" and cited ex-  
amples of extravagance, without naming  
any institutions.

Dr. J. R. Hinshaw, of Butler, president  
of the University Dads Association, also  
was unable to be present because of ill-  
ness. His association was represented by  
H. L. Muldrow, of Norman, secretary of  
the organization, who assured the con-  
ference that the Dads are vitally interested  
in the welfare of the University and pre-  
pared to work for its interests.

Mrs. W. C. Kite, Oklahoma City, presi-  
dent of the University Mothers Associa-  
tion, told the conference that the mothers  
are chiefly interested in educational op-  
portunities for their children and that they  
hope to see the University's program main-  
tained satisfactorily.

The program closed with a brief address  
by Dr. M. L. Wardell, '19, assistant to the  
president of the University, who described  
the general plan for the University's Semi-  
Centennial Celebration to be held in 1941  
and 1942.