

# Oklahoma's Future

By JOSEPH A. BRANDT

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS DELIVERED  
AT OKLAHOMA A. AND M. COLLEGE

I AM delighted to be back home again. And, as an Oklahoman who spent many happy days on the farm and who still hopes eventually to retire to the farm, I am especially pleased that my initiation as an Oklahoma speaker should be at the commencement exercises of this Class of 1941.

All of you—Mr. President, members of the Board of Agriculture, members of the faculty, and members of the class of 1941—have been most kind in giving me the latchkey to Sooner hospitality. The invitation, I suspect, reveals why your distinguished president is so brilliantly successful.

He is willing to take chances!

Instead of inviting some famous college president whose acid words appear in *Time*, whose photographs at home, at the office, and between Hollywood beauties appear in *Life*, whose words have the much-quoted ring of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, you and your president have invited as your commencement speaker the rankest amateur of the lot!

Now, we Oklahomans are gluttons for punishment so far as speeches are concerned. We are the most speechified state in the Union. Our public speaking classes are crowded with future statesmen and whenever we see a gentleman dropping his hat, we crowd together to hear the modern Demosthenes.

Seriously, however, I am pleased to be here today, here at Stillwater, in the heart of the Oklahoma country. I hope that your most gracious invitation means much more than a mere courtesy to a man who should know better than to try to collect the scattered thoughts of a group of professors! I hope it augurs, in these extraordinary times, an indication that at long last Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College and the University of Oklahoma, the twin peaks of Oklahoma's future, or the Scylla and Charybdis of the politicians are going to work brilliantly together to lift Oklahoma to new heights in the national scene. Both of us are supported by the hard-earned money of the Oklahoma taxpayer. The taxpayer, no doubt, tends to look upon us educators as the explanation for the fact that the eagle on our money has wings!

Our sister institutions will either work together for a greater Oklahoma, or work separately for a lesser Oklahoma. And may I say, at this juncture, that I am going to speak to you, the members of the Class of 1941, rather than the distinguished gentlemen and ladies on the

platform with me today? I rather think this is your day—I realize that there are many of you who are saying to yourselves, when is this guy going to get to his message, after all, we're here to get a degree we've jolly well earned? I toss the "jolly" in to symbolize the present Anglo-American relations. But please be patient. Life may be terribly long for all of you, or terribly short, but whatever its length, it should be rich, brilliant, satisfying. I am just a step—a long step, perhaps—removed from you in age, slightly envious, perhaps, of you who are not going to be president of a university!

Well, my message is going to be brief, because I'd like for you to remember me as one commencement speaker who realized this was your day. I don't remember who it was twenty years ago who told us how to live when I took my degree at the University of Oklahoma, just three short years after the war had ended. I don't expect you to remember who it was who spoke to you today, twenty years hence. But perhaps, in the nebulous future, you'll take your grandchildren in your laps and say, "You know, sonny boy, when I was graduated from A. and M., when Hitler was rushing in all directions, I heard a commencement address. I was getting my degree—my first, not my third. There was a man there who delayed our getting our degrees, but do you know, he didn't talk about the war! He didn't tell us we were the hope of the future, and so on." Your grandson's eyes will grow larger, he will be frankly skeptical of you, and he'll ask, "What was the name of the speaker?" And you'll finesse that, but you'll say, grandchild, he talked about Oklahoma.

I'M not going to talk with you today about wars, about revolutions. There is much I could say on that score to you, much that all of us feel most deeply. I could frighten you, if you are not already concerned, with the new kind of war which is revolutionary rather than rational. I could urge you, were you not not already convinced, that these are not the times for lethargy but for action. But I realize that a thousand commencement speakers from coast to coast are saying that this week and next. A thousand ladies and gentlemen are going to point their fingers away from our shores—and rightly, too—and perhaps suggest that you forget the scene at home. But I know in the days to come, it is going to be so desperately easy to forget home, so I am

going to venture to talk with you about Oklahoma. Liberty, democracy, England, all are terribly important today—but so is Oklahoma. And if the 48 Oklahomas that make up these United States do not face a revolutionary world with faith, with courage, with respect for liberty, there is no point in defense, in being agitated.

And that is especially why I am so happy to be here today. The future Oklahoma, the Oklahoma you are going to talk about with your grandchildren, is the Oklahoma our educators and their products, the graduates, of our state college and our state university, are going to build. Working together to create a rich farm country, a rich industrial and professional life, we can create here a commonwealth that may well be the envy of much of the world. Working separately, we can dissipate the splendid energies of all of us, while our state flounders because we, the educators and the educated, had not learned how to learn, how to think.

For that is the essence of education, how to learn, how to think. Many of you have already forgotten Newton's law, even though you do remember the Lambeth Walk. But if you have learned how to listen patiently, tolerantly, and if you have learned to add disagreeable conclusions and arrive at a truth that is satisfying to you, you are educated, educated in a way which is a guaranty that liberty is still something precious to Americans. I am not unaware of the splendid contributions which the other colleges of our state are making to the welfare of Oklahoma but ours is a peculiar and singular task, by its very nature unique.

I know of no state in this Union of ours which is great which does not have a great agricultural college and a great university—either combined in one institution, as at Wisconsin or Minnesota, or separate, as at Oklahoma, Iowa, or Oregon. Without the land intelligently cultivated, a state or a nation courts disaster. Without the professions and industry working intelligently with the people for their mutual welfare, a state or a nation soon faces the menace of fascism or communism. For fascism and communism are only possible where the economic system fails to work, where the poor are very poor, and the rich are very rich, and where the middle class is like the head which the sword of Damocles has severed.

Oklahoma can be great—it can be very great. If I were running for a political

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# Oklahoma's Future

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office, I would tell you our state is great. But you and I know better. We have to correct many of the mistakes which we have made in the lush days of the past. A wonderful start has been made, a start at once brilliant and courageous. We have had a number of distinguished red headed statesman in our history. Jefferson was great and Coolidge was Coolidge. But I venture to say that Red Phillips will be something more than just Red Phillips, don't you? Now, I realize it isn't delicate for an educator to speak kindly of a politician. Oklahoma governors, unfortunately, can't succeed themselves! In defense, I will say for myself, that I am not an educator, just an innocent newspaperman gone wrong, and that I have had the pleasure of meeting our distinguished governor just twice. For all I know, he may not like the color of my own hair! And not only have we a governor who has thought more of Oklahoma than he has of his political future, but we've had a legislature which thought the way our governor did. We had a group of people making our laws who realized that when they took money from the taxpayers, they ought to give something in return other than a second-rate Charlie Chaplin exhibition of slapstick.

I believe, though, that these gentlemen, in spite of the magnificent work they have done, would be the first to admit that theirs is just a start. The charter they have given us is one which will be made or broken by you, the members of the Class of '41, and by the classes which follow. Either we realize that the state is just as much a part of our business as is the means by which we earn our livelihoods, or we shrug our shoulders and say to ourselves, it's not our problem. If you and I had not the opportunity to secure, at state expense plus our own initiative, the educations we have, we might be excused. But I don't think either you or I can be excused for a moment from being concerned about the state's future, if we are members of the Class of '21 or the Class of '41 or the Class of Naughty-Naught!

While I am suggesting collaboration of Oklahoma A. and M. and the University of Oklahoma for the future welfare of the state, I am not for a moment suggesting we abandon our rivalries. I can't conceive of our annual football game's becoming a tea party, played to the soft melody of *Moonlight and Roses*. And I'm sure that D. C. Matthews, of the University, and Art Griffith would never, never consent to their men's going to the mat in white tie and tails. Of course, both D. C. and I would be glad if Mr. Griffith's tough hombres would see the light and give Herr Hitler's Panzer divisions a run for their money. One A. and M. wrestler is worth any half dozen

tanks, manned by the best of Heidelberg and Bonn universities!

Now, what do we want Oklahoma to be? Just another southern state, thumb outstretched, beckoning in vain to Eastern capital to come down and rescue us? Do we want to be an eastern city editor's dream of a dull day, when there is no news, or an ever-ready source of amusement, of E. Phillips Oppenheim stories of untold wealth and untold ignorance? We are neither now, we won't be either if we watch our step—but we have to watch our step.

The future of a state, of any commonwealth or nation, is both economic and cultural. In an easy economy, where everyone has a little of everything, you have democracy flourishing. And what is democracy, you ask, having heard the word on every radio broadcast. Well, democracy is simply respect for human dignity, for the development of human personalities. Democracy is the multiplicity of ideas. And ideas are the end product of education. So three things are needed in any self-governing community, education, democracy, and economic opportunity. In Oklahoma, we have education, but it is dreadfully limited from the grades to the Class of '41, because we don't have enough money as yet to do the job properly. In Oklahoma we have democracy, but we are apt to take it too readily for granted. In Oklahoma we have economic opportunity, but it is a waning opportunity, because we ship our oil and coal and our zinc to other states to let those states earn the money that ought to be kept here, and we buy the steel and the zinc and the agricultural products which other states make from our raw materials. This is a colonial economy—and I question whether we want to be an American colony forever.

IF we want to cease being a colony, we have to do a number of things in the realm of economics. We have to begin making things in our state to sell elsewhere. Our oil and our coal and our zinc will last a long time, it is true, but naturally we don't take hourly temptures the way a doctor does; and before we realize it, we may find ourselves facing the sheriff with an attachment order. The only real way to promote industry is to gather the facts—and facts are gathered not through glowing announcements of chambers of commerce but through research, through the laboratories. If the Dupont corporation can afford to spend eight million dollars a year in research for one single American enterprise, a state with two and a half million people to feed will have to become research conscious. A state, after all, owes as much to its citizens as does a corporation to its stockholders and its employees. Industry flourishes in the east because it hires scientists to develop new products. At Madison, New Jersey, the American Telephone

and Telegraph Company is now completing a four million dollar building just for research.

You, at A. and M., have been doing magnificent research to benefit the farmer. Now, at the University, we are going to compliment your work in the field of industry, and together we may create in fifteen or twenty years, a more stable economy. And just as you have aided the individual farmer, as well as the farmer as a class, so do we propose to aid the individual business man as well as the business man and industrialist as a class. Some of you may have been mesmerized by the magnificent outlook of defense industry—but don't be deceived for a moment as to its permanence. While it is true that the present war may very likely last for ten more years, when that war is over you are going to witness the most awful readjustment economically in the history of mankind. And I insist that if we are intelligent in this country, if we make our individual states sound and solvent economically, when peace does come we can meet it without fear.

I think we have had in Oklahoma entirely too much suspicion and hostility between business and education. After all, we are all of us working toward a common goal—a better Oklahoma. Why can't we work together? Many of you of the class of '41 will be going into business or into farming—part of your job, I insist, is to utilize your knowledge of education's value in fostering and cementing a mutual understanding between industry and education.

A business friend of mine once remarked to me that the faculty "lived off the state." When I got through with him, my friend had no doubts whatever. One of the great reasons for England's successful government has been that the people realize that working for the government is an honor and a responsibility, not an act of charity. I don't think the businessman is solely to blame for the misunderstanding; I have known faculty members who were afraid to talk to businessmen because they didn't have enough ten-cent words in their vocabulary. But that group is very, very small. I have many business friends who have ten-dollar words in their vocabulary which would put many a professor to rout. While some of my friends in business have questioned this or that phase of education, I have always found them reasonable and their questions shrewd and pertinent.

Democracy and education, the other sides of the triangle which make up the good state as opposed to the bad state, really complement each other. The history of nations is in reality the history of their educational systems. The Balkans, Spain, Italy, Russia have little or no educational systems. Democracy will never flourish in those countries during our lifetime, because you simply can't have de-

mocracy without education. But if you have education, much depends on the kind of education it is. Consider Germany and England, for example. The Germans had in some ways an admirable educational system, so admirable that much of our present American educational system is based on it, unfortunately. But the defect in Germany's system was twofold. Great as was their education in science, yet the Germans worshipped fact rather than ideas. And in the humanities, the Germans misread into their classical education a false worship of Caesar. It was no accident that their emperor was called Caesar, or that Hitler can assume, even though representing a minority of the German people, absolute authority as a Caesar. The essence of German education was to train people in mass thinking rather than in individual thinking. And frankly, this is the one thing that alarms me about our state educational systems in this country—we've borrowed too liberally from the German system and we tend entirely too much to deplore the brilliant, individualistic genius. Now, England was different. England trained people to think as individuals. It is true that the English did not educate the masses but they did educate people to be interested and concerned with the welfare of the masses. And it is because of the great and abiding strength of this form of education that England, in the midst of the bitterest war of her existence, can afford to allow a wide measure of freedom of expression to all her people. And it is because we have tended to the German form in this country that we are beginning to move away from the democratic process, to curb freedom here and there.

The English educated for tolerance. They realized, thanks to the slow revolutionary nature of their history, that free inquiry was an enriching thing, that the untrammelled exchange of ideas was like the blessed rain which stimulates new life in the plant world. And even though we have had a longer history as a democracy than has England, we can still learn from her, through her educational plan. We, too, must see that truth is the only end of man; and that truth can flourish when there is free inquiry. As educational institutions we must reexamine, as does the business man, our methods to find out why it is that we have not always succeeded in training people how to think.

Each of you, of the class of '41, should be a beacon of democracy in your communities. You should resist with your whole being anything that takes away from democracy. Our country and England today remain the sole hope for a world in which individuals can live as individuals, where free thoughts may flourish. To preserve that life of freedom is worth any and all sacrifices—except freedom itself.

## Army Draws Athletes

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"I don't think he'll come back for the half-mile," the impudent little Cornhusker told a teammate, after he had congratulated the Sooner and climbed into his warmups.

### Polo Pony Types

Jim Hester rolls his own cigarettes, speaks softly and articulately, practices a little law and coaches the University of Oklahoma polo team on the side. He contends that polo ponies have whims and personalities just like polo players.

In other words, Jim contends that horses, just like human beings, are sulky, dependable, smart or dumb, and furthermore he can name you examples from the R. O. T. C. string now playing in all Sooner polo games at Norman.

But let's put Jim up in the saddle and give him the reins.

"The orneriest pony on the Sooner string is a 10-year old dark brown blaze-face called Dr. Pepper," Hester asserts, "If Dr. Pepper doesn't agree with his rider, he will go anywhere he wants to and you can't do anything about it. He's hard to handle. His favorite pastime is breaking loose at the South Canadian river and running every step of the two miles in.

"He is stubborn and headstrong. Once this spring when somebody in a riding class rode him across a highway, Dr Pepper ran over an approaching car, knocked it off the highway and demolished it to the extent of \$190 damages.

"The steadiest and best-behaved pony on our string is Betty Co-ed, a little 950-pound paint. She's not fast nor brilliant, but she's gentle and reliable and experienced and always ready to go. She's never missed a game that I know of. Betty is the favorite of all the girls in the riding classes although she's so much smarter than the average rider that sometimes when an especially dumb one mounts and tries to ride her off, Betty refuses to leave the picket line.

"Snuzzle is the dumbest pony we've got. He's even dumb looking, a big bulge-faced, roman-nosed, pig-eared bay. He won't run when you kick him or whip him, he turns the wrong way and when you try to ride off an opponent he may shy away.

"The smartest and best horse is War Chief, a big 13-year old brown. He's handy, rugged and can take it. He does everything well. He's fast, turns quickly, rides off well and can run in so small a circle you can write your name on him and dot the i.

"The clown of our string is Promenade, a long-legged bay. If you touch him a certain way with the reins, he will suddenly stop on all fours, causing his rider to sail over his head. His pet stunt is leaving the field without permission."

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