

The President Speaks

By DR. GEORGE L. CROSS

Ted Beard has invited me to prepare a series of articles or reports for the *Sooner Magazine*. He suggested that these articles might deal with news, plans, and needs of the University of Oklahoma. I appreciate this invitation very much and I am happy to accept. I hope to be able to bring to the alumni a greater appreciation and understanding of our contributions to the state and nation, as well as a better understanding of the problems which we face. In this first article, I shall discuss enrollment—past, present and future.

To do this adequately, it will be necessary for me to use some statistics. Statistics are usually boring but they are sometimes necessary to develop a point. I promise to avoid them as much as possible in the future.

During the semester which closed about June 1, something in excess of 42,000 students were enrolled in the colleges and universities in Oklahoma. Approximately 31,650 were enrolled in institutions supported by state appropriations. Thirty-four and one-half per cent of those in state institutions were on the Norman Campus of the University of Oklahoma. Thirty per cent attended A. and M. College on the Stillwater Campus. Enrollment in the state's two largest institutions is approximately double that of the best pre-war year. It will be obvious that this great post-war increase has strained our facilities severely.

12,000 Students at O. U.

The problem of obtaining sufficient faculty members, laboratory facilities, and classrooms to take care of all of these youngsters has been a serious one and it has not been solved completely. At the University of Oklahoma, with an average enrollment of about 12,000 students for the two semesters just completed, the yearly budget, exclusive of the cost of new buildings, has been a little in excess of \$5,500,000. Of this amount, about half comes from state appropriations and the remainder comes from fees. During the current year, we have received, or will receive, from the Veterans Administration more than \$2 millions to pay for the education of veterans. A similar situation exists in other state institutions.

We are now looking to the future, trying to predict what is in store for us. What will happen, for instance, when the 7,000 veterans now enrolled on the campus at Norman are replaced by non-veterans and we are no longer able to collect over \$2 millions from the Veterans Administration to help meet our costs of operation. Will the State Legislature be willing to appropriate an extra two or two and a half million dollars in order that the University may continue to offer instruction and do research on the same high level that has been achieved during the current year?

In my travels about the state, I find that many people have a tendency to under estimate this problem. The most commonly expressed opinion is that when the veterans are through, enrollments in the higher institutions will drop to something like the pre-war levels and the budgets can be reduced accordingly.

There are several very good reasons why this is not likely to be the case. In the first place, let us consider what has happened in education since the turn of the century. In 1900, there were 238,000 college and university students in the United States. During 1940, nearly one and one-half million were enrolled. This is an increase of something over 500 per cent in forty years. The fall of 1947 found two and one-half million in college—an increase of approximately 1000 per cent over the figure for 1900. It is interesting to note that during this period, the population of the United States increased only about 100 per cent. There-

fore, the percentage increase in number of students attending colleges and universities has been ten times the percentage increase in the population.

The figures show that the enrollment in colleges and universities since 1900 has increased steadily, regardless of wars or the presence of veterans in institutions, at a rate of approximately two and a half times each 20 years. Those responsible for university and college planning have been in agreement that this increase will continue until at least three million are attending institutions of higher learning. At present, only two and a half million are in attendance. We still have a half million to go by 1960, not counting the veterans found in our schools today.

A second reason which is certainly worthy of serious consideration is that in the highly technological age which we are entering, it will probably be necessary to increase somewhat the proportion of our population which will receive higher education or training. This increase will be made necessary in the interests of our national safety and our industrial advancement.

Commission on Higher Education

President Truman has shown a commendable awareness of this problem. Several months ago he appointed a Commission on Higher Education to make a study of the needs of higher education for the next 20 years. He asked the Commission to report its findings and make recommendations to him.

The Commission presented a report recently in which are included certain predictions concerning enrollment. The Commission selected the date of 1960 for making its estimates of enrollment because the young people who will be enrolled in the colleges in 1960 through 1964 have already been born and can be counted. One of the most significant statements in the report is as follows:

"The Commission believes that in 1960 a minimum of 4,600,000 young people should be enrolled in non-profit institutions for education beyond the traditional 12th grade. Of this total, 2,500,000 should be in the 13th and 14th grades (junior college level); 1,500,000 in the 15th and 16th grades (senior college level); 600,000 in graduate and professional schools beyond the first degree. The Commission believes that, as a matter of national welfare, federal government should subsidize education to the extent that students may go through the 14th grade on the same basis as they now go through high school, that is, tuition free.

"The plan would include also a subsidy for junior and senior years in college which would have the effect of reducing tuition and lessening the cost to students."

After a careful study of data from the results of the Army General Classification Tests, the Commission estimated that 49 per cent of our population has the mental ability to complete 14 years of schooling with a curriculum of general and vocational studies that should lead either to gainful employment or to further study at a more advanced level.

The Commission estimates that at least 32 per cent of our population has the mental ability to complete an advanced liberal or specialized professional education.

Will there actually be as many as four and a half million youngsters seeking entrance to colleges and universities by 1960? If the answer is "yes," will there be that many intellectually capable of taking advantage of higher education? And if this answer is "yes," will the country have use for so many young men and women trained beyond the high school level?



15,000 by 1960

Perhaps there will not be four and a half million in colleges and universities by 1960; but it is almost certain that there will be three million, which is 500,000 more than were enrolled last semester. This means that the University of Oklahoma will need to prepare for at least 15,000 by 1960, and possibly as many as 18,000 may apply for admission. Beyond 1960 it is difficult to predict. However, we have certain statistics which may be helpful. For instance, in 1940 we know that 2,360,000 babies were born in the United States. During 1947 there were 3,730,000 born. Thus in seven years the rate of birth was increased by nearly 1,330,000. The birth rate may subside somewhat during the next few years but our population can be expected to increase during the next 20 years at the rate of at least two million a year. If, as the Army and Navy intelligence tests indicate, 32 per cent of the youngsters can handle a university or college course profitably and 49 per cent can make use of two years beyond the high school level, it is in the best interests of the nation's welfare to make such training available for them.

In the years ahead, this country will need every trained mind which it can possibly develop in order to cope with the problems of national defense, industrial expansion, and international co-operation. The need for research personnel in industry is increasing at an amazing rate. A few figures in regard to research personnel in industrial organizations may be of interest. In the year 1920, only 300 industrial organizations had felt the need of research laboratories and they employed 9,300 research workers; in 1930 there were 625 industrial organizations that had felt the need, and they employed 34,200 research workers. By 1940, 2,350 industrial organizations had set up research laboratories and the total employed was over 70,000. These figures are concerned with young men and women who do actual research in laboratories, not the professional men and women needed for administration and management.

But we have an even greater need to develop young people trained in the science of human relations who would pursue search for truth in those areas where valued judgments influence human conduct. As a matter of fact, probably the most effective possible preparation that this country could make for national defense would be to educate its people to a better understanding of human relations.

Our troubles of the past and our troubles of the present have come as a result of the misunderstanding of the viewpoints of others. Peace may be achieved in part by making our nation strong in a military sense, but even more important is the training of our people to understand and work with others. This responsibility belongs peculiarly to education, and the achievement of the goal is worth all that it could possibly cost. The problem is to find money.