



DR. CROSS became O.U.'s acting president in January, 1944. This picture was taken in September, 1944 when he officially took office as president of the University.



AT THE BEGINNING of his 10th year in office Dr. George Cross' face reflects the changes wrought by nine years' experience in O.U.'s highest administrative position.

Reflections on the Administration of a State University

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(Abridged from a speech presented February 6 at a dinner commemorating the start of Dr. Cross' 10th year in office.)

My remarks will be informal—of the nature of reflections concerning the University of Oklahoma, especially during the last decade of its history. These reflections, unhappily, will not be based on deep and serious thought because I believe that no college president with a football team has time for deep and serious thinking. On the other hand, I hope that they will be based on more than fleeting impressions of the University's experiences and problems.

A few months ago I was scheduled to speak at a dinner in northern Oklahoma and, as usual, I found myself a little behind schedule as I traveled to make the engagement. While passing through one of the smaller towns en route, I allegedly drove too fast through a school zone. An elderly constable waved me to the curb. He asked me if I didn't realize that I should slow up while passing through a school zone, and I told him that I was sorry I had been so careless. He then walked behind my automobile and looked at the number. As he returned he said, "Cleveland County. What town are you from, son?" I told him. He asked me how long

I had lived there, and I told him 17 years. He looked at me reflectively and said, "So you live in Norman, the University city—you've lived there 17 years—and you don't know any better than to speed through a school zone. Hasn't the University of Oklahoma made any impression on you at all?" I didn't get a ticket. To my relief, the officer didn't even ask to see my driver's license. But the incident started a trend of thought which kept me occupied during the remainder of the trip.

In the course of my thinking, I recalled some remarks that Robert Maynard Hutchins had made at a trustee-faculty dinner at the University of Chicago in 1944 in recognition of his fifteenth anniversary as president of the school. Mr. Hutchins said, "The nearest analogue to a university president who has served 15 years is a champion flagpole sitter. The remarkable thing about him is not what he has done, but that he has done it so long. And you sometimes wonder why he should want to do it at all." Then he went on to say: "The fact is that as a university president proceeds up to and beyond the 15-year mark, his

loss of knowledge, accompanied by his loss of health, hair, teeth, appetite, character, figure, and friends, become nothing short of sensational."

Then I pondered my own situation—my receding hairline caused by too frequent brow-wiping; my expanding waistline caused by too much chicken a la king, mashed potatoes, and peas; my unreliable dentures; not to mention, an arthritic right hand, the occupational disease of college presidents. I thought sadly of the motto on my desk which reads, "Count that day lost when you don't get hell for something," but I brightened at the thought that I had not "lost" a single day in over eight years.

But the president of a university and the effect that the institution may have on him are not very important. The important thing is what happens to the university during the process.

A state university is a complex entity, and the problems associated with its administration are correspondingly complex. Perhaps the most important thing for a newly appointed president to realize is that

the administrative procedures and problems of his school are not comparable in any way to those of a large corporation or business enterprise. This fact is difficult for the average citizen to grasp. It is especially difficult for the successful business man or corporation executive to understand.

On several occasions well-meaning friends have outlined for me how some university problem would be handled in an oil company or a manufacturing establishment. In such instances I have tried to explain that a state university in most respects is just the opposite of an oil company. In the oil company, the most able personnel with the greatest intellectual development are found heading the corporation and, theoretically at least, there is a diminution of intellectual activity in the various levels of personnel from the president of the company down to the roughnecks who work on the rigs. In a university, just the reverse is true. The greatest intellectual development and activity is to be found in the faculty, and there is usually a diminution in intellectual activity as one passes through the administrative levels to deans, to vice-presidents, and president. This has important implications in regard to university administration.

With the exception of the student body, the most important part of any university is its faculty. The faculty consists of a group of professional personnel selected in such a manner that all fields of learning are represented. I cannot stress too strongly that members of a faculty *are* professional personnel. Their relationships to the university are, or should be, similar to the relationship of a doctor to his patient, or a lawyer to his client. If they are to perform satisfactory service for the state, they must have a maximum of freedom of thought and action commonly known as academic freedom.

The professional nature of a college faculty is not always well understood by the rest of the citizens of a state. Many individuals who would not think of trying to tell their doctor or lawyer how to perform professional services have no hesitancy in telling the college professor how or what he should teach. Incidents of this kind cause considerable difficulty for the president who is required to interpret the faculty to the public and similarly, to interpret the public to the faculty.

At such times, decisions are made which frequently are of the utmost importance in the development of a university. The president and the regents may experience an almost irresistible temptation to yield to public pressures—to do things in the way the taxpayers seem to want them done. It is

easy to yield to public opinion on the ground that an institution must maintain good public relations or on the assumption that the taxpayers have a right to direct the destinies of the institution.

Public pressures must be acknowledged and given a fair and impartial hearing. Usually, however, the pressures must be resisted firmly because the university that segments of the public seem to want may not be the university that the state should have at all. Frequently, pressures on the board of regents and the president come from minority groups of well-meaning citizens who have narrow, vested interests. Of necessity, the perspective of these citizens are limited and their demands almost always involve temporary situations and short-term planning. A state university can develop successfully only if those who are in charge keep long-range, major objectives in mind and are able to resist the short-run, minor pressures which inevitably develop from time to time. Educational sights must be trained on some distant star rather than on a nearby planet, if a university is to follow a direct course.

The institution which utilizes these principles steadily through the years may not always be popular with the entire public; but it will be following the only course which can lead to greatness.

To provide vigorous and unswerving leadership—moral and intellectual leadership—both on and off the campus, and yet remain sufficiently in the good graces of the public to secure adequate financial support, is a special dilemma of a state university.

There are reasons for believing that the public gradually is beginning to accept the professional status of faculty members and to look to universities for leadership. We must face the fact that the reluctance of the public to recognize the educator's professional status may be based, in part, upon the occasional unprofessional behavior of a small minority of faculty members.

As I said a few minutes ago, the most important part of any university, with the exception of the student body, is the faculty. The chief business of the faculty is to help young people educate themselves in order that these young people may become more effective citizens in a society which is becoming increasingly complex. All other parts of the university, including the physical plant, the university administration, the various student services, etc., important as they are, exist only in order that the faculty may have an opportunity to work more effectively at the business of education. The function of a university administration is to keep everything operating as smoothly

as possible so that the faculty will have a chance to get the real work done—through good teaching and productive research.

It follows that the success of the university will depend largely upon the quality of the faculty which has been assembled.

In order to recruit a good faculty, it is necessary to pay good salaries. The University of Oklahoma has been handicapped severely in this regard. Ten years ago the best salaries at the University of Oklahoma were paid to administrative personnel. A head or chairman of a department received two or three hundred dollars more than the best full professor in the department. Deans received salaries substantially higher than the chairmen of departments. Salaries on the whole were so low for members of the teaching staff that about the only hope one could have to receive a living wage was to secure an administrative position of some kind, such as a departmental headship or a deanship. This over-emphasis of the administrative functions of the University led, I think, to a considerable amount of campus political activity directed toward the securing of administrative appointments. Thus the main function of the University—the teaching and counseling of students, and research—was subordinated or at least under-emphasized.

During the past several years we have been trying to place greater emphasis on teaching and research and lesser emphasis on administration. As a step in this direction, we have eliminated the differential which had existed previously between salaries of departmental chairmen and full professors. The departmental chairman no longer receives extra compensation for performing administrative duties. The only extra compensation which he receives is a reduction in his teaching load.

As a further effort to encourage good teaching and research, it was decided to create special professorships, with minimum salaries for nine months equal to the average dean's salary for twelve months. Thus the David Ross Boyd Professorships for outstanding teachers and the Research Professorships for outstanding research personnel were inaugurated. These professorships have been reasonably successful. The salaries paid to the recipients have compared favorably to the salaries paid deans. Unfortunately, the University's budgetary difficulties in recent years have been such that salaries now paid to our most distinguished professors, including David Ross Boyd and Research professors, are scarcely equal to the average salaries paid *all* professors in other comparable institutions such as the universities of Missouri, Texas, and those of the Big Ten Conference.

The difficulty of recruiting and maintaining a good faculty under these circumstances will be apparent to anyone. The University's primary problem of the future is to secure funds to maintain a salary scale here sufficient to attract and retain an outstanding faculty. We have operated as an "academic bootcamp" for too long.

It is the responsibility of each department to develop and make available courses of instruction for the use of students who are seeking to satisfy the requirements for the various degrees offered by the University. The departments have been very diligent in this regard. In my opinion, they have developed far too many courses. When I became President of the University of Oklahoma, 1,700 courses were listed in the University catalog. We had an enrollment that year of 1,430 civilian students which meant that we had less than one student for each course listed. The number of courses was reduced somewhat in the years that followed, but most of those that were dropped probably have been reinstated or replaced. In fact, the last University catalog carried 2,508 courses. The Council on Instruction, which was set-up to carry on this "academic tinkering," has passed on about 1,000 course changes in the last three years.

There is an almost irresistible urge to create new courses, especially in certain of the professional departments, and the result has been some rather frothy offerings. Several interesting questions have been raised in connection with this problem. "Are the courses ends in themselves, or are they mechanisms for achieving educational objectives? Are we not gradually working ourselves into a position where we can't see the academic forest for the trees? Are the courses related to student needs, or do they represent faculty conceptions of what would be desirable from the standpoint of scholarship? Are we putting too much stress on systematic programs of advanced instruction? Are departmental organizations stressing specialization too greatly, and do they have the tendency to ignore those students who do not fit into their preconceived academic patterns? Would it not be possible to reduce the number of course offerings and thereby reduce teaching loads, thus giving faculty members more time for research and other scholarly efforts?"

But perhaps the whole procedure of using courses and the "academic bank account" as a method of determining requirements for graduation should be subjected to careful re-examination. Any mediocre student, by passing courses and thereby adding to his academic bank ac-

count, may receive a degree at the University of Oklahoma whether or not he is able to demonstrate intellectual competence or achievement at the end of his period of study here. The fact that a student may have completed a prescribed number of courses taken over a period of eight or ten semesters does not insure intellectual attainment, though it may show evidence of collegiate persistence. The inauguration of general, comprehensive examinations given prior to graduation is worthy of careful consideration by the faculty.

Our course system of instruction is perhaps subject to serious criticism also because the courses have to do rather narrowly with fields of learning rather than with the broad ideas and problems which the students will meet in later life. This would seem to be the case especially in the areas of the university which have to do primarily with liberal education, but it is significant also to a very great extent with respect to professional education. Some professional departments or schools in many universities have attempted to meet the problem through the use of the case method of instruction. The case method, long common in law, is becoming increasingly common in business administration.

It might be well at this point to say a few words about the general objectives of higher education. The average freshman enters the University with the view that he will acquire there certain information, skills, and training which will enable him to compete more effectively with his fellow citizens after graduation. He may even nurse the secret hope that he will be able to discover techniques of exploiting his fellow men. This, perhaps, is a natural attitude for an entering freshman to have, and there would be little need for concern except for the fact that probably the majority of our graduating seniors leave the University with the same idea. When this happens it means that nowhere in the process of formal education have our students been led to an understanding of the responsibilities and service to society which must come from the college graduates if civilization is to be preserved.

The professional schools have a special need to explore their objectives in this regard. It is tacitly admitted that our professional schools will produce graduates who will be more competent and perhaps better off financially than those who have not received the advantages of professional training. But there is too little emphasis on the fact that the graduates of our professional schools have the responsibility of determining and establishing the ethics and ideas of their professions. These schools have the

responsibility, as once stated by Robert Maynard Hutchins, "to make the learned professions true professions and truly learned."

In the life of any president of a state university, it is inevitable that there be a chapter entitled, "Intercollegiate Athletics." Once when I was in a mildly cynical mood concerning collegiate football, I told the Appropriations Committee of the Oklahoma Legislature that "I was trying to build a university of which the football team could be proud." The implications of the remark were misunderstood by a surprising number of people. I was trying to hint to the Legislature that if the people of Oklahoma would give the same support to the rest of the University that they gave to football, we might be able to develop some other top-flight programs here. The remark didn't impress the Legislature very much.

For a while last fall it seemed that one obstacle to building a university of which the football team might be proud was the football team itself. The prestige of the 1952 team had reached such heights that hundreds of citizens of Oklahoma thought our school should be immune or exempt from the regulations of the conference and the accrediting association to which we belong. Many rash suggestions came to the President and Regents in the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls and conversations. Nearly all expressed the same thought: Leave the Big Seven and the North Central Association; join the Southwestern Conference or "go independent" and establish our own rules and regulations. Because of this pressure, as a prominent state editor so aptly expressed it, "Lightning almost struck the University of Oklahoma."

Fortunately, the immediate problem was solved. But there still remains the over-all problem of what to do about the over-emphasis of intercollegiate athletics in America. In this connection, there is a basic fact which must be faced. College sports, in all likelihood, will continue to be over-emphasized by the public for some time to come.

To me, the whole intercollegiate athletic program boils down to one basic issue; namely, is there anything in the program which harms the boy, and by harming the boy, harms society? We should keep in mind that it is possible to use college athletics to develop a boy and bring out the best that is in him. It is possible also to use the activity in such a way as to degrade him. It is possible to use any extracurricular activity in such a way that a boy's academic life will be broadened and enriched.

It is possible to use the same activity in such a way that he will not have time for study, and, thereby, will be robbed of his opportunity to secure a college education.

If the activity is used in such a way that a boy's character is impaired, or he is robbed of his opportunity to secure an education, the institution sponsoring the activity is guilty of a serious crime against the individual and against society.

I am not greatly concerned about the idea of strict amateurism in college athletics. Probably in the program, as it is set up today, an institution which does not provide some subsidy for an athlete would be guilty of exploiting the boy's talents. In any event, athletic subsidies doubtless are here to stay. The public is too well satisfied to permit any drastic change.

I think that the really important issue is whether the subsidy is provided in an honest and above-board manner and whether it is in keeping with the regulations of the conference and association to which an institution belongs. Surreptitious gifts and other inducements, made under conditions of supposed secrecy by well-meaning friends of an institution, or friends of a boy, may constitute the first step in the undermining of the lad's character. The difference between accepting money of this kind and accepting money for shaving points in a basketball game is, I believe, too vague and indefinite for the average college athlete to grasp. The lad who launches his college career in this fashion may become involved more readily in moral and ethical misadventures later.

The fact must be faced also that athletic aid cannot be kept secret on a campus. Its existence will become known to the student body, and the students will realize that the administration and the faculty must have some knowledge of what is going on. A condition of this kind cannot be conducive to the development of moral and ethical thinking on the part of university students, and where in the world, if not at a university, can students expect to find opportunities for developing high moral and ethical standards?

Because, in my opinion, athletic scholarships or aid in the one form or the other is inevitable, I believe the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was unrealistic when it established the regulation that the ability of a student to win an athletic contest may not be taken into consideration in providing financial aid of any kind for students. If the regulation is enforced, there will be widespread return to surreptitious and dishonest subsidies.

But there is much other than the matter of subsidies in college athletics which needs

the attention of the administration and the faculty.

The coach who requires so much of his squad by way of practice and preparation for competition that the squad does not have adequate time for academic programs is stealing from the boys and stealing from society. Athletes should make progress toward graduation and not merely satisfy minimum eligibility requirements.

A member of a college faculty who maintains dual standards for athletes and non-athletes is, at the best, guilty of deceit and of encouraging young men to develop false values.

A college president who knows of any situation on his campus which is detrimental to any student, and who does nothing about it, is not performing his duties properly.

The athletic program at the University of Oklahoma is, I believe, one of the finest and cleanest in the nation. The present Athletic Director, Bud Wilkinson, is to be commended for the level-headed and ethical manner in which he has performed his duties during times of extraordinary pressures and confusion. The high percentage of varsity athletes making normal progress toward graduation is proof that most of them are profiting from the scholarship aid they received.

I shall use what influence I have to see that the University of Oklahoma continues to be honest in regard to its athletic program. This will include compliance with the regulations of the Big Seven Conference and the North Central Association, although I hope that some of these regulations may be revised soon.

When I was invited to make this talk I was asked to include a brief statement reflecting my philosophy of life. This has been difficult because I do not have a philosophy that is entirely satisfactory to me.

I have found it increasingly difficult to reconcile present world conditions with any pattern of thought involving "philosophy" as it is understood by those who have not specialized in the field. On the contrary, I find myself disturbed by what I consider to be the aimlessness of contemporary civilization and the moral inadequacy of people to cope with the diverse problems of this technological age. There may be a bit of frustration brought on by the thought that I have been able to do little or nothing to help improve the situation.

But, regardless of philosophy, I do have a *policy* by which I live. It is my policy to accept as cheerfully as possible each responsibility that comes my way. When there is need to make a choice between responsibilities, I always—perhaps somewhat unwisely—accept the larger or the largest of them.

That is what happened when I became president of the University of Oklahoma. (To become a college president, one needs to be in the right place at the right time under favorable circumstances. I was chairman of a faculty committee which had been selected to help the Regents find a new president for the University.)

I am not a college president by profession. I am a scientist, retooled for administrative responsibilities during World War II—a time when there was a serious shortage of personnel. I accepted the new responsibility with misgivings which have not been allayed entirely. But after nine years of experience I have come to believe that practically anyone can get along fairly well as a college administrator if he can learn to do five things:

1. Use the collective judgment of the members of the faculty in deciding all matters pertaining to policy. This is difficult. It means committees, and committees mean delays. Someone has said that if Moses had been a committee, the children of Israel would still be in Egypt. But it means fewer mistakes also because one can't make mistakes as fast if he uses committees.

2. Find very competent administrative officials to whom much University business can be delegated, and keep out of their way as much as possible. After nine years I am convinced that this is extremely important. During times of crisis I find it advisable to leave the campus so that the vice-presidents can get the job done without interference.

3. Develop the ability to distinguish clearly between personalities and issues when dealing with University affairs. There is no place in college administration or any place else for even the slightest degree of personal prejudice.

4. Learn to decide each issue on a merit basis, with the institution's long-range interests always uppermost in mind, and pay no attention to the pressures which will be exerted from time to time by groups with vested interests. This may reduce somewhat the length of a president's service, but it will mean more effective service.

5. Approach each day's problems with the knowledge that throughout history the good in man has always outweighed the bad, although perhaps only slightly; and with the faith that this will be the case in the future.

Possibly, in a sense, these ideas may be considered a philosophy of life. At least they involve acceptance of responsibility, faith in one's fellow beings, respect for the individual, and belief that if one does his best each day, somehow, with God's help, things will work out all right.