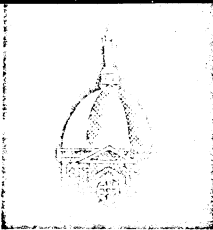


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(Following is the text of an address to the University of Notre Dame faculty given by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president, on October 5, 1970.)

In the twenty-five years that I have been associated with the university, as faculty member and administrator, I can think of no period more difficult than the present. Never before has the university taken on more tasks, and been asked to undertake many more, while the sources of support, both public and private, both moral and financial, seem to be drying up.

In the 314 years from the founding of Harvard until 1950, we grew in the United States to a total capacity of 3,000,000 students in higher education. From 1950 to 1970, that number and capacity more than doubled to over 7,000,000 students. Maybe our traditional ways of governance have not kept pace with our enlarged size and the new mentalities of both faculty and students. Maybe both we in the universities and the world beyond really expected too much of our university operation. We live in a university world of idea and imagination. But these alone will not insure peace, social justice, an end to racism and poverty.

Maybe our growth was too uneven, with the physical sciences getting the lion's share and all the other disciplines emulating the physical sciences' methodology to qualify for a larger share. This was doomed to failure for, however attractive the humanities and the social sciences are, they become singularly unattractive once quantified, mathematicized, and unattentive to values. Having sold their birthright, in large measure the mess of pottage was not forthcoming.

Maybe our problems relate more deeply than we suspect to the parlous state of the world around us - - to its basic malaise, to its anomie, to its frustration and rootlessness. I suspect that we are, in the Western world and even beyond its boundaries, passing through an historical watershed which we little understand and which may be ultimately of more importance than the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the industrial revolution.

I doubt that anyone would be able to label our age, although it might be called the age of frustrated expectations, the age of protest against almost everything, the age of unlimited possibilities and disappointing results. It is an age that can put men on the moon yet create an impossible traffic tangle in every metropolitan center. It is an age of unbelievable wealth and widespread poverty. It is an age of sensitivity to human dignity and human progress in which there is relatively little of either, despite the available resources. It is finally an age where the hopes, the expectations, and the promises of humanity have been more rhetorical than real. Because the university lives largely by rhetoric alone, it has come to be blamed for much of the frustration. In a very real sense, the university has been oversold as the key to all human progress. There is a wide gulf between the blueprint and the reality - - the word and the deed.

Given the actual state of the world around us, we in the university are little comprehended in that all of the world's anxieties are focused strongly in the university where there exists an explosive combination of young, searching minds that are invited daily to view all problems and every variety of response to them and a faculty that is problem-oriented and given to play to the generosity and idealism of youth. Also an administration that is only able to survive by responding positively and emphatically to the aspirations and hopes of faculty and students, however impossible they are of immediate accomplishment.

Into this explosive mix comes a strong cry for "law and order" from the so-called silent majority who are not anxious to face new approaches to human equality or social justice if these threaten their hard-earned gains. When the university responds negatively to this demand for law and order, which it rightly construes as "status quo", and continues to insist on stronger priorities for the nation, new initiatives for peace, for equality, for social justice, whatever the shock to the "status quo", then we have a super-explosive situation. The university is judged to be subversive, it is certainly not understood and it loses more and more the public and private support that is needed to sustain it.

It is simply an historic fact that any group, and particularly a university community, does not understand not being understood. What is more serious, young people in the university do not realize how much the university depends upon the support of the larger surrounding society. Even less do they understand that when their frustrations about the problems of the larger community lead them to act in anger and, at times, with violence, there is only one normal response, from that larger community, namely, counter-violence and repressive action. Japanese university students practically closed the principal universities in Japan for a year or so until the Diet passed a law envisioning the permanent closing of some universities, especially Tokyo, the largest. Then suddenly the message was manifest and the violence dropped off.

One might speculate what would happen if some American universities which suffer constant disruption were suddenly closed down for a year or two. It might be healthy and it might be disastrous, but it could happen and it may.

It would have been incomprehensible to mention such a possibility, even speculatively, a decade ago. But it does demonstrate the present state of affairs that it is being mentioned today.

Some have tried to describe the present situation as the politicization of the university. It certainly is true that faculties, even at Harvard and Princeton, have taken rather unanimous positions on the Vietnam War that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. University presidents have also spoken out to an extent that has brought them condemnation from the highest levels of government and from a broad spectrum of alumni and benefactors. Students who were termed apathetic a few years ago are now deeply involved in political lobbying, electioneering for favored candidates, and protesting the actions of other political figures with whom they disagree.

There is some merit in all of this, but some thoughtful university observers call it the politicization of the university and the end of that objective, other-wordly, balanced and impassionate activity that has long characterized the university. Some see in all of this the end of academic freedom and a call for repressive action.

The fact is that almost every state in the Union has considered in its legislature some punitive legislation against faculty and students -- about half of which has been enacted into law. Trustees and governors have practically forced the resignation of a number of presidents, for instance in Texas, Oklahoma, and California. Feeling is running high against many highly visible universities and the witch hunters are out and at work. Both federal and state programs of

support for higher education have been reduced or tied to impossible conditions. Many private universities find themselves hard put to hold fast to the support they now have, much less to augment it. Disaffection with universities, their presidents, their faculties and their students is simply a growing fact of life that will probably get worse.

The great majority of the best university presidents that I have known, respected and worked with over the past years are simply resigning to escape what has become an impossible task: to keep peace inside and outside the university, when trustees cry "law and order" and students condemn this concept as another form of "status quo" in a very imperfect world. Alumni think the whole enterprise is coming apart at the seams, while faculty call for even greater changes than those now taking place. Benefactors lose confidence in the whole unruly endeavor when they are attacked by students or faculty because they are accused of giving money gained through what is proclaimed to be an unholy military-industrial alliance. Parents expect a control over their children which they themselves have never been able to maintain, while the students in turn want absolute freedom and certainly no one acting in the place of their parents, however ineffective these may have been. At this point, the president, who is believed to be in charge although his authority has been monumentally reduced, begins to see that he simply cannot succeed unless the academic community is a real community -- something becoming ever more rare in university circles.

Many of the new experimental forms of university governance are aimed at building a stronger university community. Whether or not they will achieve this is simply conjecture at this point. In general, the trustee system has served American universities well, when faculties were allowed to decide academic matters and when students were given a reasonable voice in the arranging of their affairs. One might fault some university boards of trustees by noting that they have generally not represented the broad spectrum of the public they were supposed to represent. There have been all too few women, or blacks, or middle class, or younger people on most boards. Most of them, at least at the great private universities, resembled too much an exclusive club for W.A.S.P.s (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). But this is changing as it should, and faculties and students are having an ever larger voice in those decisions that mainly affect them and their lives. Reform of governance alone is certainly not the total answer to the problems that face us.

So far, I have been mainly engaged in an analysis of the present situation facing universities in a changing world. The view, as I have thus far presented it, is admittedly pessimistic. As a committed optimist, I believe that at this time I should attempt to find a few positive aspects of the total picture.

To begin with, student and faculty unrest in our day -- a world-wide phenomenon -- is in large measure a manifestation of their moral concern for the priorities or the values of present-day society. One would find it difficult to fault them for those things they oppose: war, violence, racism, poverty, pollution, human degradation on a large scale.

It has been a quality and inclination of most young people, since the time that Aristotle accused them of being too vehement about everything, to see the

world in absolute terms of good and evil, to be inspired by great idealism, generosity, and enthusiasm, and often to give their all, to man the barricades for causes of justice and equality. Life, problems, and solutions somehow seem simpler to the young who are yet unscarred by the acid of cruel experience. This is not all bad. Maybe the weary and cynical world today, more than ever before, needs this kind of youthful conscience to find its way out of the lassitude and ambiguity that attend so much of modern human life. Maybe the university is the only place on earth where we can bridge the generation gap by common moral concern on the part of young and old, faculty and students. Granting that students are often naive in their concern for instant solutions to very complicated problems, granting their addiction to absolute black and white judgments in matters that are often very gray, granting their lack of a sense of history, their rupture with tradition, and their inability to appreciate experience and competence, they still are concerned and are unafflicted by the anomie that is the cancer of so many of their elders.

Perhaps this calls for a greater dedication to teaching on our part, for great teaching can manifest competence without preaching it, transmit a sense of history without seeming to be antiquarian, show how much patience is to be valued just by being patient with them. Good teaching, nay, great teaching, may yet be the salvation of the university and of society in our day. It has been rather obvious that our professors have in large measure sought distinction through research rather than great teaching, through adherence to their discipline far beyond loyalty to their particular institution. The theory was that research would enrich teaching, but for all too many professors, it has largely replaced teaching. This has not gone unnoticed by the students who flock to the chosen few who still can profess and teach.

I do not believe that the university has by any means come to the end of its road, but I am willing to concede that it faces a fork in the road and must make some real decisions as to where it is going. Generally speaking, I would conclude that the university can and must remain politically neutral as an institution, although its faculty, students, and administrators are free to take their own political stance, indeed must do so when faced with national and international crises with deep moral undertones. It is difficult for a president to do this as an individual, but he must always try to make this clear to the public. I am personally against faculties taking political stances as a particular university body academic, unless the matter is of supreme moral, national or international importance. Students are somewhat freer in all of this because they do not have such permanent attachment to the university. Alumni less so. Avoiding politicization in highly emotional and deeply polarized times is not going to be easy. The threatening loss of academic freedom or academic objectivity is reason enough to keep trying in every way one can.

Balancing the development of research in the physical sciences, the social sciences and the humanities may be somewhat easier now that the golden age for research support in the physical sciences seems to be passing. Since teaching needs all the importance, respect, and reward that we can accord it, giving it some measure of priority may be at the heart of the solution.

The service relationship of the university to the communities that surround it,

local, state, national and international, is something that needs great clarification for the survival of the university. In some cases, the university has become too much of a service station expected to solve problems by its actual operation rather than seek solutions theoretically and pilot-test them in a more microcosmic fashion. The university cannot become the Red Cross immediately attending to all manner of social emergencies. It is not an overseas development corporation or a foreign or domestic Peace Corps. It may well have strong intellectual and educational ties to these and other service organizations, but it should never confuse its university identity or task with theirs.

Universities should be ready to experiment with new forms of governance, but I see no great value, in fact great loss, in confusing the specific tasks of trustees, faculty, administrators or students. Maybe we should proclaim more often that the prime function of the faculty is to teach, that of the students to learn and that of the administration to make the conditions for teaching and learning more fruitful. Trustees can be enormously effective to the whole operation if they appoint and protect good officers of the university, help keep the institution financially viable, and support against any power inside or outside the institution the integrity of the whole operation and its best priorities as they emerge from the total community, including the alumni. Every community needs, especially in troubled times, some final authority, some strong protector. Trustees have fulfilled this role for the better universities that have emerged in America.

One is often reminded of Charles Dickens' opening statement in The Tale of Two Cities: "It was the worst of times; it was the best of times." I think this can well be said of the state of the university in the rapidly changing world of our day. We can survive the worst if we achieve the better or hopefully, the best.