

A City Drenched with Light

Inauguration Address by
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ON A DAY SUCH AS THIS, one is pleased with the many blessings he sees about him. It is good to have one's family and friends with him. To share a platform with the governor of his state is an honor. It is gratifying to see so many legislators and other public servants here. The presence of representatives of a large number of colleges, universities, and learned societies, who come to honor not an individual but the University of Hawaii, gives pleasure in its contemplation. And of course, one is reassured by the presence of a dedicated faculty and administrative staff, a conscientious Board of Regents, our concerned alumni, and representatives of an able student body.

I am particularly pleased with the presence in the presidential party of two distinguished educators to whom we all are so deeply indebted. I refer, of course, to Dr. Laurence Snyder and President-Emeritus Gregg Sinclair.

Gratitude needs to be expressed to all who have worked so hard to make this day and this week a success. My special appreciation is extended to the members of the drama department, for they, I think, have best caught the spirit of the occasion. I urge those of you who have not done so to attend their singularly appropriate performance of *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad*. I must confess to a certain relief that the department passed by the opportunity to present *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

One, of course, does not assume the duties of a university president lightly. It is a position, under the very best of conditions, fraught with a fair number of frustrations, a host

of dilemmas, constant paradoxes, and, it often seems, but pitifully few successes.

Unfortunately, society seems to expect a great deal of the university president. These expectations recently were expressed with both style and wit by John Gardner, the President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York: "The university president is expected to be kindly with the students, patient with the alumni, irreproachable with the faculty, irresistible to the legislators, and awe-inspiring to the general public."

Then he continues with a sentence from which I have never taken much comfort: "It is an impossible job."

Now I am sure that I cannot meet all of these requirements, nor even one of them perfectly. So I shall have to be what I am, a professional who will try to muster enough stamina to get through until next Tuesday and enough vision to see a little beyond Wednesday. If this be good enough, fine; if not, let us paraphrase the Bard by saying, "Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not for a university presidency."

Since I arrived in Hawaii, a number of citizens have been willing to give me the benefit of their views on various matters, large and small. And for all of this I have been grateful. I *have* been conscious of the number of times this counsel has concluded with the statement, "Hawaii wants one of the world's great universities." And one or two have held that we should settle for nothing but the world's greatest university.

Now such advice is not quite so novel as one might suppose. It has been some years since a university president was inaugurated with the admonition that he should bend his every effort to bring forth an institution of marked mediocrity. But I do wonder whether all who have expressed this goal are fully aware of its implications. I am reminded that, when told of a man who excused himself by saying, "After all, I'm only human," Dylan Thomas retorted, "But deep down inside himself he really doubted it."

Part of the difficulty arises, I suppose, from the debasement of language which we have suffered in recent years. In some quarters what is really but an adequate product is described as great; if it has the slightest elegance it is magnificent. There must be a kind of Gresham's law for language as there is for currency.

But assuming that we mean what we say, how does a university become great or for that matter even good? It requires, I think, the presence of five factors: resources, the proper environment, time, knowledge of the special nature of a university, and a sense of purposiveness within the university itself.

When one considers these factors one is impressed by the extent to which such reflection indicates the necessity for mutuality of concern on the part of both the university and the larger society of which it is a part. For while some seem to be primarily the responsibility of the university and others the responsibility of other segments of society, the sense of mutuality is the thing which penetrates. Surely only a good society can produce a good university, and, contrariwise, to postulate the former without assuming the presence of the latter is misleading.

The resource factor is, I think, the easiest to comprehend, although sometimes very difficult to come by—but one must face up to the fact that the higher learning is very costly.

Not quite at random, I selected three American state universities which I consider of first quality. Whether they are great or not is a moot question, but in my opinion they are among the best we have; and incidentally, I have been in this profession long enough not to be so foolish as to name them! Originally I included here a fairly elaborate analysis of the resources available to these three institutions, but this is no day for me to play the numbers game or, indeed, for you to consume a diet of statistics. Let it only be said that without any increase in number of students, our total budget would need to be doubled if the resources of our University were to equal the least affluent of these three. This is true in spite of

the fact that the State of Hawaii in recent years has made a far greater effort than ever before to support its university.

No one could hold seriously that the quality of an institution can be judged solely by resources available related to its enrollment. But a relationship there is, for in the long run less than average effort produces less than average results and never excellence. If this be a part of the price of greatness, are we willing to pay it? And can we pay it? Interestingly enough, if the University properly plays its role, I am not too concerned about the willingness of the community. This I think is present. Our economic ability to do so is another matter, one to which I have given some thought and to which I shall return.

I said that the second factor necessary for excellence relates to the environment. Much of this the university itself has to create. Institutions, as individuals, tend to play the roles they cast for themselves, and a great institution always must exhibit competence and poise and maturity and self-respect. But the environment of the larger community of which the university is but a part also is a conditioning element.

There must be present a society which at least in the main is sufficiently mature that it pays no homage to small words, to small deeds, to small men. While it must glory in the distinctiveness of human beings and delight in the creativity which results in a society which not only permits but encourages one man to differ from the other, it must strive to settle no issues of import on any basis other than principle. It must, without denying the importance of the emotional and the spiritual, have a high regard for rationality as the primary faculty by which we can comprehend man's essentially tragic condition.

And then there is the factor of time. It is paradoxically true that an excess of virtue may produce a vice. And this is sometimes true in our American attitude toward time. So eager are we, and properly so, to correct errors, to make progress, that we sometimes forget that some growth simply demands time.

A plant gains no health and vigor if it is pulled from the ground periodically to note the condition of its roots. A university, in particular, does not achieve excellence overnight. Recall that while many of the American universities which we now revere came into being in the 17th and 18th centuries, as late as the latter part of the 19th they were characterized by Dean Andrew West of Princeton as mainly institutions "with some anticipations of university studies toward the end of the course."

There is of course a danger here. If brash and imprudent impatience is a danger, complacency is its equal. Between Scylla and Charybdis the wise must steer.

The community desiring excellence in its higher learning must know a great deal about the special nature of a university. A university is the most perplexing, frustrating, difficult, and wonderful social institution devised by man. And it is all of these things because it exists for paradoxical ends. It is inevitable that universities should occupy an ambivalent place in a society even though that society creates, supports, and at times praises them. A university is established by a society to insure that the values to which that social order subscribes are perpetuated; there is, in effect, an orthodoxy at stake. And yet, in its rarer moments society also acknowledges that it is equally important to examine and, indeed, to modify that orthodoxy. Thus the university is mandated to question the value system which it is also supposed to preserve. Problems inevitably arise, however, from the fact that the whole society does not uniformly subscribe to both these ends. There are always some to whom it appears that the university ought to be preserving instead of questioning. And to others the reverse is true. This is why universities are so often misunderstood by the society which sustains them. This is why a public university is not like any other agency of government and cannot be so regarded if it is to achieve the excellence of its nature. And the proper treatment of a university cannot await universal agreement that it has achieved excellence, for the former is a prior and necessary condition of the latter.

The only proper stance for a university as it faces the paradox of its nature is the fundamental premise of the vocation of scholarship: that truth is always preferable to error. This does not mean that at all times the university can be confident it possesses the truth. A little humility here would help. With the best of intentions, universities have, with all their solemnity and tradition, taught error, whether it be the astronomy of Ptolemy or the theory of ether. But the validity of the premise is not by such facts disproved.

Finally, it seems to me that no good university can exist unless it contains within itself a sense of purposiveness which is shared by all who make up the university community. It must know its nature, it must know its purposes, it must know the needed means, and it must have a plan which relates means to its purposes. The possibilities of planning can, of course, be overemphasized. What physics department chairman in 1940 could have foretold his need for a reactor and an accelerator just ten years later? But the university must develop the general sense of direction related to time and means. If it does not, others will do the job and understandably so.

Keeping all these matters firmly in mind is perhaps most difficult in an institution such as this. This is the people's university. Being such it must be both responsible to the society of which it is a part and responsive to the needs of the peoples of that society. But this does not mean that it should sway with each new gust of the wind of public opinion. At times it will best serve the people by saying "no." And it need not be too concerned at the criticism which then ensues. One of the remarkable things about good universities is that their record of survival is far better than that of the particular societies which first established them.

These remarks may seem sobering. They were meant to be. It does no good for either you or me to underestimate the magnitude of the task with which we jointly are confronted. And yet I am not pessimistic. Given determination, we can, I think, by combining the assets of the State with federal

assistance, and a great increase in private giving, muster the resources necessary. Time is always available for wise use, use which avoids both imprudence and complacency. I shall use my influence, as others have and will, to see that the university exhibits poise and maturity and self-respect. We can hope with some confidence that the proper nature of a university becomes increasingly clear, and concern with purpose and means will be at the university a first order of business.

It is important that this be done. Given a society, such as ours, dedicated to human dignity and the equality of men, a society which must remain free and open, safe and productive, there exists no better investment than a university of quality. For it is a great university which can make of our society what Athens was in the eyes of Socrates. Maxwell Anderson described that vision in these words which I have quoted before, which I shall quote again, and with which I close:

Athens has always seemed to me a sort of mad miracle of a city, flashing out in all directions, a great city for no discoverable reason. But now I see that Athens is driven and made miraculous by the same urge that has sent me searching your streets! It is the Athenian search for truth, the Athenian hunger for facts, the endless curiosity of the Athenian mind, that has made Athens unlike any other city. This is a city drenched with light—the light of frank and restless inquiry—and this light has flooded every corner of our lives: our courts, our theaters, our athletic games, our markets—even the open architecture of the temples of our Gods! This has been our genius—a genius for light . . . Shut out the light and close our minds and we shall be like a million cities of the past that came up out of mud, and worshipped darkness a little while, and went back, forgotten, into darkness!