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An address prepared for presentation at the Winter Quarter Convocation at the Ohio State University, March 19, 1959, by Terry Wickham, President of Heidelberg College.

FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

One of the finest characteristics of higher education in Ohio is the wholehearted spirit of cooperation with which all of our colleges and universities, publicly and privately supported, large and small, work together through the Ohio College Association to solve problems of higher education throughout the state. Each of the member institutions respects the quality and integrity of the others, recognizes the differing roles that each must play in undergraduate and graduate instruction and strives to play well her own part. Ohio State University, younger than many of our colleges, grew quickly to become the largest. To her we look for distinguished leadership in graduate and professional education and for the myriad services in higher education that only a great "People's University" can provide. The Ohio State University is a good teamworker with whom all of us are proud to be associated. Visitors from other states often comment quite frankly that the harmony and good will between institutions which prevails in Ohio is a unique quality which they covet for their own states. In Ohio we work together in higher education; we help each other.

It has been my personal good fortune to have known your distinguished president, Novice G. Fawcett, for a quarter of a century, and to have observed the skill and sureness with which he brings gifted leadership into the administration of public education. He is a man who looks and plans far ahead; one who has demonstrated that he knows how to get what he goes after; one who never gives up. The roster of Ohio State University presidents includes the names of great men -- but none more able than the present incumbent.

Let me now speak directly to the group of March 19, 1959, graduates. To each one of you upon whom the Ohio State University will this day confer a degree I offer my heartiest congratulations upon your achieving the proud distinction of becoming an alumnus of this University. A good many years ago that honor came to me. After enduring the heat of five summer sessions in Columbus (I was a slow student) I was privileged to sit with the Master's candidates at a similar convocation to receive from President Rightmire a degree which is today a cherished possession. As a fellow alumnus I welcome you into the proud company of Scarlet and Gray graduates!

It is not to your role as alumni that I wish now to give attention. Rather it is to our continuing involvement -- along with all other Americans -- in that most vital of all the ongoing processes in our free society, the lifetime process of education of which the operation on this campus is an important part, but only a part.

The American people place great faith in our program of education. We think of it as an organic union of "Freedom and Excellence" and are confident that through it we can provide education for all and at the same time offer unlimited opportunity to the gifted.

The record of our progress toward these goals is encouraging. As we look

to the future, I submit four basic propositions for consideration:

- I. Freedom to Learn is the most precious of all our freedoms.
- II. When the people keep the process of education firmly in their own hands, the Freedom to Learn flourishes.
- III. Excellence in learning can be the reward for anyone who has fire in his heart.
- IV. Those who teach play the key role in our way of life.

I.

Freedom to learn is most precious of all the freedoms we enjoy.

In his January 1941 message to Congress, Franklin Roosevelt captivated his hearers with his dramatic delineation of the four essential freedoms which he envisioned for all men: Freedom of speech, freedom to worship God in his own way, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

But it is through freedom to learn that man equips himself for all of the famous four. Without freedom to learn -- to seek the truth wherever it may lead us -- our speech would be empty and our worship blind idolatry.

Freedom from want is a mockery to those whose bellies are filled from a storehouse whose replenishment they haven't the know-how to assure. There is no freedom to learn where everyone has to toil around the clock to produce enough of the bare necessities to sustain human existence. It is our development of the freedom to learn that has enabled our people to lift our economy to the world's highest level, to come near to the goal of freeing our people from want.

Finally, freedom to learn gives us an opportunity to triumph over fear -- but it doesn't guarantee it. Our freedom to learn met successfully the test of war. It not only produced men who teamed themselves together in war to produce the most awesome destructive force ever assembled -- but it produced also a people who have learned to choose their own leaders and who are determined to have peace.

Is there any admirer of the Moscow-dominated training system so naive as to believe that we should have escaped the disaster of World War III if they -- instead of we -- had for several years been sole possessors of the power to destroy the world?

In the fragmented world in which we live today we must use our freedom to learn to produce scientists, engineers, and other experts who can keep us in the forefront in the development of raw military and economic power. If there is one

thing above all others that we have learned from the whooshes, the bangs, and the beeps of Atlas, Thor, Explorer, and their opposite Soviet numbers, it is that the most magnificent defense system we can devise may be just as outmoded as was the Maginot Line by the developments that take place in other men's minds. If we are to free ourselves from fear, we must produce men capable of winning any war that may be forced upon us, but wise enough to maintain the peace.

But freedom to learn means that while equal opportunity to learn shall be open to everyone, no one who has reached the age of reasonable discretion shall be compelled to stay in school. For practical purposes this means that compulsory schooling should not extend beyond the elementary school.

With what we know today of the individual differences in capacity to learn and our growing understanding of the growth process in children, we ought no longer to enslave them in the arbitrary grade organization with which our lower schools are encumbered.

The graded system with its built-in encouragement of lock step mass movement is based upon the concept that all will make equal progress each year, will receive high school diplomas at 18 and college sheepskins at 22. No wonder we must compel attendance! What freedom to learn is there in such a program for the youth whose talents are not "average for his age"?

We ought to shake off the shackles of the hand-me-down graded system in favor of flexible grouping, custom-tailored to the capacity and related as far as may be practicable to the achievement of each pupil.

Freedom to learn means that each individual shall have equal opportunity to be challenged to do his best. There is implicit in this freedom an obligation to prepare adequately at each level for the opportunities that will be open at the next higher. It is a travesty against the ideal of freedom to require our state universities to enroll all graduates of first class Ohio high schools regardless of the adequacy of their preparation. The Ohio statute governing this practice ought to be modified.

Through the high school years and beyond, freedom to learn will attract young Americans along many different educational pathways. The pathway that leads to college should be well marked, but those who travel it should earn social respect in exactly the same way as do those who elect other pathways -- by performing at the highest level of which they are capable.

Freedom to learn is precious. By the excellence of our performance we prove ourselves worthy of it.

II.

Freedom to Learn flourishes where the people keep the processes of education firmly in their own hands.

In this country we do not have an "American Educational System". We have FREEDOM TO LEARN, all the way from the cradle to the grave, in schools provided, paid for, and managed by the people themselves -- not by Uncle Sam. Ours is a genuine "PEOPLE'S EDUCATION".

To implement our FREEDOM TO LEARN at the elementary and secondary levels we have private and parochial as well as a great array of publicly supported schools in all of the 50 states. We have become a literate nation in which we have within our reach the goal of providing universal free education through high school.

The autonomous local school district, electing its own school board, hiring its own teachers, determining its own curriculum, is a unique stronghold -- all the way across our country -- in which our people are solving their own public school problems in their own way. We should encourage them to keep on doing it and to keep on accepting responsibility within each state for paying the bills. If, in some states, there be cases of extreme financial hardship, let them be dealt with through specific appropriation. For a state like Ohio to accept Federal government money for the general support of its public schools is to take the first step toward bartering away our freedom to learn.

Those college presidents who view with alarm the doubling of the number of young people of college age certain to come in the 1970's apparently assume that all who will then be of college age will have to be herded into institutions of the type we have now. They talk about needing to make provision for twice as many students to enroll at Ohio State and Heidelberg and the other existing Ohio colleges. I do not share their alarm. Of course, there will be more student seeking admission to the existing colleges and universities, yet I envision the development of new types of education which will attract increasing numbers of students away from us. Indeed, if these new facilities were available right now, many present students would find other programs more helpful than those we offer.

Beyond the high school there are more than 1900 colleges and universities, no two of them alike. But we have also as many people enrolled in business-sponsored educational programs as are enrolled in all colleges and universities. Each of the armed services has extensive educational activities. According to the President's Committee on Education Beyond the High School, one out of every three adults participates in some sort of adult education program.

In all of this variety rests one of the great strengths of our way of life. Our people from early colonial times have insisted upon founding our own schools and colleges in which we can have FREEDOM TO LEARN; in which we can seek the truth according to our own lights, and teach the truth as we understand it. We have established schools to serve all kinds of constituencies as well as to offer instruction for many special purposes. This bodes well for the future as new schools are being planned today to meet tomorrow's needs.

Cherishing their freedom to learn, the American people will add 13th and 14th grades to their local schools; they will offer the freshman college year in every county seat town; they will invite colleges to set up branches; they will establish community colleges and vocational institutes; they will meet the educational demands of a new day with new devices. But as long as they are free to experiment and to manage their own search for truth there will be progress, some of it through formal programs in schools, but part of it making use of new methods of communication reaching out to people wherever they may be.

In the 1970's virtually every young man and woman of college age will be participating actively in an educational program provided, controlled, and managed by the people themselves and by the 50 states. If we are to have genuine freedom to learn, we shall never permit education in the United States to become a function of the Federal government.

We need to be especially alert in the field of higher education for under the guise of helping us to expand more rapidly, our friends in Washington have introduced bills into the Congress now in session which, if enacted into law, will give Federal money directly to the privately supported as well as to the publicly supported colleges. Uncle Sam would subsidize new buildings to the extent of 25% of their cost. But of course this will be only the beginning; if at first 25%, then why not 50% or 100%? It will be mighty easy, within a generation, when we are no longer paying our own bills, to accept a central pattern program devised by an all-wise Washington bureau.

Some of those who cry for Federal funds to be brought to the support of higher education in Ohio contend that we can no longer get enough money from state taxation, voluntary giving, and other sources. The report of the Ohio Commission on Education Beyond the High School entitled, "Ohio's Future in Education Beyond the High School", does not bear this out, with reference to state taxation. Data presented from a study of 12 North Central states show that "while Ohio ranked second in total personal income, it ranked 9th in percentage of funds received for higher education from state sources". We have the wherewithal in Ohio with which to pay heavier taxes in order adequately to support our state universities with our own tax money. It is up to you and to me to see that more Ohio tax money is channeled into higher education. Let us not ask Uncle Sam to boost our Federal taxes so that we can depend upon depleted dollars doled out from Washington.

We who are in church colleges believe strongly that the state and municipal universities should be adequately supported by tax money -- and we propose to help them get it -- but we want none of it for ourselves. We place a high value upon our freedom to learn. Our freedom to be CHRISTIAN colleges, to seek the truth wherever it may lead us, to teach the truth as we understand it, and to promote the Christian religion as we do, depends upon all of our support coming from the church and other voluntary sources, none of it by force of taxation.

Of course, it is difficult to raise funds; but we are doing it. Proud of the quality of our programs and committed to an ever-rising standard of performance we have been able to attract steadily increasing voluntary support. In the institution I know best we have, within a decade of development, doubled church support, increased alumni giving eight-fold, and we now receive from an

entirely new source -- business corporations -- substantial voluntary gifts which are increasing every year. The independent colleges want no tax money!

A study entitled "Where's the Money Coming From?" made by the Council for Financial Aid to Education, which appeared just last month, provides some interesting comparisons. Data for the years 1943-44 and 1957-58 are presented. During that 15 year period income of all American colleges and universities moved up from \$863,000,000 to \$3,530,000,000.

"In 1943-44, public sources furnished 59% of the educational and general income of U. S. Colleges and Universities, and non-tax sources, 41%. In contrast, in 1957-58, sources other than tax funds are carefully estimated to have furnished 51% of educational and general income, and public sources, 49%."

The whole study presents encouraging evidence that great headway is being made toward adequately financing higher education in America from voluntary as well as tax sources.

III.

Excellence in learning can be the reward for anyone who has fire in his heart.

The fire I am talking about is the fire of enthusiasm to make the most of his freedom to learn. Without the fire of enthusiasm in their hearts those who attend our schools may remain pupils all of their lives; they may never even become students, let alone educated adults. On the other hand, we all have known of self-educated men who were possessed of an inner fire that drove them to acquire wisdom wherever they could and thus to make up for deficiencies in their schooling.

One of the greatest blessings you receive with graduation from college is that you are now free to get on with your education. No longer need you be concerned with the mechanical trappings with which the pathway to a degree is overgrown. Tomorrow you can take your eye off the diploma chase and concentrate on promoting your own day by day growth toward excellence in that in which you seek to become proficient. There is a good deal of truth in the old story about the father of a new college graduate who congratulated his son on winning his A.B. degree and then remarked, "Tomorrow you must begin to learn the rest of the alphabet".

In this country we have freedom to learn and freedom to choose the field in which we seek for excellence. The fire of enthusiasm enables us to make the most of the wisdom, the talent, and the equipment we have been able to assemble both in school and out.

Last autumn when the Russians scored their great scientific triumph by putting Sputnik into orbit, there were strident voices calling for us quickly to

copy the Moscow-dominated scheme of education. That would have been to act like the Kentucky Colonel who, when his champion horse lost a single heat in the race, immediately gave away the horse and bought another, spotted like the heat winner. Of course, the horse he gave away went on to win the next heat and the race.

In the Soviet regime Moscow decides what skills are needed and in what proportion they will provide the most efficient development of the nation. The Soviet system prescribes the pattern of education which shapes schooling at every level from pre-school through the university. Curriculum and methods of instruction are proscribed so as to be in line with Communist Party policy which is planned for the nation as a whole, for it is the announced intention to create a "New Soviet Man" who will be wholly the creature of the State and a useful appurtenance thereto.

On the other hand, our own PEOPLE'S EDUCATION looks to the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ, for its inspiration. Each individual is respected as a free person of surpassing worth, created in God's image, for whom we seek to provide an educational climate in which he will develop the full sweep of his own capacity and will be fired with enthusiasm to do his best for the people about him.

Let each one of us who would light the fire of his own spirit -- that he may seek for excellence -- look up to his Creator each day for guidance, the guidance which will free him from enslavement to the commonplace, from the fatal error of undervaluing his own worth as an individual.

We are here today to celebrate your graduation from one of America's great universities. The academic degrees that will be conferred this afternoon are important symbols in our way of life. Whatever a degree may be, it marks an uncommon man; it designates one who has had unusual opportunities to develop his capacity and his interests; it is a challenge to that man to lift his individual achievement to the level of excellence. But more than that, our degrees are sharp reminders that we are all members of a free democratic society whose progress certainly, and whose survival probably, depends upon dynamic utilization of every new resource that has been or can be created in us.

When highly placed college people raise a noisy fuss over the propriety of their being required to take an oath of allegiance and to disavow Communist sympathy when they ask for a loan or a grant from Uncle Sam, I am grievously disappointed. The humblest American is honored equally with the President of the United States or the Governor of Ohio, when he stands up publicly to swear allegiance to his country and to disclaim connection with any organization that would overthrow our United States government by force or violence.

As for me, I do not intend to apply for a loan or a grant from Uncle Sam, but I do enjoy in this country the greatest freedom -- including the freedom to learn -- that is enjoyed by any people anywhere. I would deem it an honor to take an oath of loyalty to my country and to disclaim Communist connections anywhere, anytime!

It is the high privilege of a loyal American to use his freedom to learn not only to lift himself but also to maintain, to defend, and to improve the community and the nation which gives him that freedom!

IV.

Those who teach play the key role in our way of life.

Some of you who are graduating today will become teachers in schools or colleges. I congratulate you! The part you will play as you help young people to make good use of their freedom to learn, and as you seek to inspire them to seek excellence, will oft-times be decisive.

One of the good things that have developed from the voluminous and severe criticism of American education is a growing respect for the teacher. Even those who have denounced bitterly such educational movements as "Progressive Education", "Social Promotion", and "Life Adjustment Education" have depicted the good teachers as sometimes unwilling victims of the schemes of those who, like myself, have had administrative or supervisory responsibility. It was observed that an excellent teacher was likely to get good results in any classroom, if given a chance.

To our teachers in the public schools we commit the highly professional tasks connected with helping our young people to develop competency in the skills of Communication, Computation, and Community. We look to the teachers to find ways to open young eyes and to stimulate them in the pursuit of excellence.

But these tasks assigned to the teacher are all professional tasks. They call for teachers who are the best we can produce. They must not be loaded with additional nondescript chores associated with keeping in school teen-age boys and girls who don't belong there; with providing community entertainment; and with other side issues.

The task of the college teacher is even more challenging, for he is responsible for the basic training of candidates for all of the professions. As the President's Commission on Education Beyond the High School has pointed out:

"Unless enough of the nation's ablest manpower is reinvested in the educational enterprise, its human resources will remain underdeveloped and specialized manpower shortages in every field will compound."

Slowly, but I believe, surely, the general public is coming to recognize that our teachers are performing thoroughly professional services of the highest type, and that their compensation must equal that received by members of other professions requiring similar preparation. Of even greater import is the steadily increasing respect with which our college students are looking upon college teaching as a career. Herein lies a great promise for the years ahead.

The American people are revising their evaluation of the relative importance of the three elements in that famous university: Mark Hopkins on one end of the log, the student on the other end, and the log itself. There was a period

when the log, which was assumed to represent the curriculum, was adjudged to be of paramount importance. In another era nothing seemed to matter but to get the student on a log, any old log, regardless of who was on the other end. But today, we recognize that the student who brings to the log a spark of interest in learning should find on the other end a teacher who can ignite that spark and fan it into a flame of enthusiasm for excellence.

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In conclusion, may I say,

I cherish the hope that we Americans always will preserve our most precious freedom, the freedom to learn, by keeping control of it in our own hands; that each one of us will find in his heart the fire of enthusiasm to reach for excellence; and that we may have dedicated teachers to help us as we seek constantly to lift the level upon which we live our lives.