

PRESIDENT'S REPORT, JUNE 1962

When I learned that I was expected to deliver on this occasion a report on the state of our union I was hard put to it to know what to say. I finally decided that my brief remarks would be divided into two parts-- the first a rather personal message about what AAUP has meant to me, and the second an informal appraisal of the present status of our Association and future developments which it seems likely that we can expect.

In the Deep South in the early decades of this century an evangelist named Sam Jones went from city to city building tabernacles and holding rip-snorting revivals. He was a long, tall, boney specimen with a deep voice which he could roll like an organ and a habit of making personal remarks about people. On one occasion he was addressing a packed tabernacle at Charlotte, N. C., when he got on the subject of his own family. "My father was a Godly man," he said; "all of his life he walked in the footsteps of the Master. And my dear mother was a saint on earth. They both are now with the angels in glory. But--it grieves me deeply to say this--my old grandmother was a wicked woman. Yes, she was a wicked woman. She lived in sin and she died unrepentant."

At this point a man seated near the front of the tabernacle got up and started down the aisle--he had had as much as he could take. Sam Jones pointed a long talon of a finger at him and roared, "Hold on there, brother! If you remain in this tabernacle the hand of the Lord may be upon you, but if you walk out that door you are going straight to hell!" The man turned around and shouted back, "Any message you want to send your grandma?"

I told you that at least part of my message tonight was going to be rather personal.

The Association of American University Presses has played an important part in my life. I can never repay the debt of gratitude which I owe to AAUP and to the men and women who have made it.

In 1945 at the University of South Carolina I was ordained a publisher by an admiral, which is about as good a way as any to become one. The admiral happened to be president. The University had decided to publish a book and needed a Press for the purpose, and I didn't have but three other jobs at the time, so I was a natural choice for the assignment. I got out two books the first year with the assistance of a friendly

job printer, but I sensed that there was a great deal more to publishing than that. I was painfully aware of my ignorance, but I had no idea how abysmal it really was. So when I picked up a copy of Publishers' Weekly at a local bookstore and learned that there was such a thing as an association of university presses and that it was going to meet the following week at Princeton, I decided to attend and so notified Princeton. In the kindest possible way, Datus Smith told me that I could not attend the meeting, but instead he invited me to visit the Princeton University Press at my earliest convenience.

I hadn't been up North since I went to New York in a Model-T Ford bus with the University of South Carolina Glee Club in 1931, but I cut loose a few weeks after I didn't attend the AAUP meeting and went to Princeton. For three days it seemed that the people at Princeton had nothing more important to do than to answer my naive questions. Datus himself spent hours with me, as did P. J. Conkwright, Harold Munger, Helen Van Zandt, Miriam Brokaw, and others, including a personable young squirt named Bailey. I had already decided that publishing a book was a pretty exciting undertaking; I began on that Princeton trip to see dimly how much more exciting it could be if the book were a thing of real substance and of beauty--and that neither substance nor beauty can be achieved by accident. The next year, through the grace of a tolerant Committee on Admissions and the personal intercession of Datus Smith, South Carolina was admitted to AAUP and I attended the annual meeting, held again at Princeton. It was the turning point of my life. From that point on, I knew that publishing was for me. I sensed at the time that AAUP was a unique organization composed not of competitors but of colleagues jointly engaged in a big and exciting and worthwhile job, and every year which has passed since then has strengthened that conviction. I would never have made it through those first difficult, discouraging years at South Carolina if it had not been for the help of my new comrades throughout the nation. I never called on one of them for information, advice, or assistance without getting it. Of inestimable value, too, was the celebrated Kerr report which has helped us all ever since its publication to perceive a bit more clearly what the hell we are supposed to be doing.

Later on, after I had made the move to Texas and when the very existence of our young press there was threatened by proposals which would have put it out of business, my colleagues again came to my assistance--Norman Donaldson, Tom Wilson, Herb Bailey, Bernard Perry, and Chester Kerr, to name but a few--and provided me with the ammunition I needed to meet the threat. August Frugé sent a holograph letter written en route from Paris to Rome which is, I still

think, one of the finest statements I have ever seen of the proper mission of the university press.

And so to me, as to many, many others, AAUP has always stood for effective and selfless cooperation in a high calling, as well as a very special kind of comradeship. When the opportunity came to me, quite unexpectedly, to serve as your President, I accepted without hesitation, although there were personal reasons why I possibly should not have undertaken the job, and I knew that there were a number of better qualified men available. I am reminded of a preacher back in South Carolina who was bidding his flock farewell at the door of the church one morning. "Good mawnin', Brother Smith," he said; "it's always fine to see you in the house of the Lord. Good mawnin', Sister Simpson. Sister Simpson, I want you to know that I prayed for you two hours last night." "Lawd, Reverend," she responded: "I wish I'd knowed it. I could have been there in ten minutes."

I am tempted to go on and on reminiscing about AAUP. It would be fun to attempt to recapture certain moments at such places as Toronto ("Don't you hate your job?" one of our august members said to the house detective at the Royal York), at New Orleans, at New Haven (who will ever forget the Donaldson wet plank?) at Chapel Hill, at Norman, and at all of the other places where we have been so bountifully entertained. But when we repair to our rooms for more intimate communion, we always relive those times, anyhow, so I'll let it slide.

It is also a temptation to recite the achievements of AAUP in recent years. It is a record of intensive and devoted work on the part of officers and committee members out of which have come such things as the Central Office, Scholarly Books in America, the manufacturing survey, and many other constructive achievements. The record has been one of increasing effectiveness in meeting the needs of the membership in areas where joint action is indicated.

(This is probably as good a time as any to say a parenthetical word about the Central Office. As you know, some of us took that plunge with the same kind of misgivings which beset us when we first thrust tentative toes into that icy pool in Oklahoma last year; in both cases, when we got in we found the water was fine. Now, I am sure, there isn't a single one among us who doesn't feel that the Central Office has proved its value up to the hilt. On behalf of the entire Executive Committee, I want to take this opportunity to express to Tom Schmid the gratitude of the Association for a job well done. He leaves to his

successor, Dana Pratt, a going concern, staffed by a crew of women whose efficiency is exceeded only by their charm. The foundations have been solidly constructed. It is now up to all of us to continue to build upon them.)

Along with the growth of AAUP have come other problems. The Association has become larger every year and doubtless will continue to grow. In keeping with the current rapid expansion of higher education in general, more and more presses are bound to be established. I know that some of us feel that there are already too many university presses in the United States and that further proliferation is unwise, but we are certainly not in a position to tell universities which think they need presses that they shouldn't have them. However, we can and must use the influence of the Association whenever the opportunity presents itself to discourage the establishment of inadequately financed and inadequately staffed presses which are likely to end in failure and frustration. It is better for administrations to learn the facts of publishing life sooner than later.

I hope that we will never grow so large or be so preoccupied with our joint activities that we will fail to continue the splendid tradition of helpfulness to relatively new and weak presses which has distinguished AAUP throughout its history. The new pre-membership category which we established last year can, I think, be extremely useful in helping fledgeling presses get on their feet.

Another problem which comes with increased size is the difficulty of putting all of our people to work on the jobs for which they are best suited. We are too large an organization to permit the thrashing out of all details of the Association's program at the annual meeting. Most of the work must be done by committees. And only a small proportion of the personnel of member presses can be assigned to committees. Both the Executive Secretary and the Executive Committee will appreciate it most sincerely if all of you will let us know when you are in a position to undertake some special task for the good of the order. And all committee chairmen will be grateful for any suggestions which you may offer for the improvement of services under their purview. If some activity is not being handled as you think it should be, please let us know. Our committees are constantly working in an effort to improve all AAUP services; if you have a complaint about any of them, we beg you not to suffer in silence.

And now a word about the future.

With the Central Office firmly established and all of the service enterprises of the Association operating in high gear, we face perhaps the greatest challenge which has yet confronted us--the challenge of doing our share to improve the channels of communication in a fast shrinking world. I believe that it was H.G. Wells who said that civilization is a race between education and catastrophe. In our time, we seem to be going into the stretch in that race and to be rushing with frightening rapidity toward a conclusion which is still in doubt.

I doubt if there is a man present today who will deny the fact that if civilization is to be saved, it will not be through the agency of missiles and space craft and atomic weapons, as necessary as it is for us to have them, but through an increase in understanding among the peoples of the world. All sorts of obstacles--language barriers, racial differences, poverty, illiteracy, narrowness and provincialism, age-old hatreds and prejudices--stand like stone walls around the various peoples of the world and cut them off from effective communication with one another. The task of tearing down these walls seems at times an impossible one, but we know that we must attempt it, and that the way to go about it is to find the breaches which exist here and there and enlarge them. The Association of American University Presses is a tiny organization in point of size, but it happens to be strategically situated, and our peculiar situation and opportunity impose upon us a special obligation. For while most of the people of the world have little in the way of a common frame of reference which can provide the basis for international understanding, this is not true of the world's scholars, bound together in the common interests of their scholarly disciplines, working toward the same goals, motivated by the same ideals, stimulated by the same challenge.

Communication among scholars is our business. We have collectively a long and honorable record in interpreting other lands to America. We are already an international organization as of this meeting, embracing now the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Texas, and including presses which publish in three languages. We have a Latin American translation program in operation which promises important results, and a larger program for Latin America is in the making. Sub-committees of the Committee on International Cooperation in Scholarly Publishing are exploring the possibilities of developing effective programs for Asia and Africa, and another Committee is working on a presentation program which will make our books available in strategic localities throughout the world. The Committee on International Cooperation in Scholarly Publishing has during the past year invested literally thousands of man-hours in the consideration of these plans.

We must tread slowly and carefully on this relatively unknown terrain; we must guard against frittering away our resources and energies on international programs with high purposes but of doubtful practicality. But it seems to me an inescapable conclusion that we have now entered a period of constantly expanding international activity.

Barriers to effective communication exist in the United States as well as in the rest of the world. Our traditional refusal as a nation to concentrate on learning languages other than our own is one such obstacle. There are also among us many nincompoops (some of them are even organized and I suppose can therefore be regarded as card-carrying nincompoops) who refuse to recognize the fact that, like it or not, the destiny of the United States is inextricably intertwined with the destiny of the rest of the world, who believe that the United States is inhabited by a race of supermen, and that we should deal with the rest of the world only on the basis of a sort of cultural colonialism. We must be prepared to slap down this sort of thinking whenever and wherever it raises its addled pate.

Throughout the years we have developed in AAUP an unusually effective instrument for cooperation in an important common cause. We must now use this instrument more extensively and effectively than ever before as our contribution--a modest but a vital one--to the cause of international understanding.