



The Association of American University Presses, Inc.

One Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 · 212 889-6040

AAUP ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 1978

Address by Matthew N. Hodgson, Director
The University of North Carolina Press and President (1978-79) of
The Association of American University Press

First, let me thank you for the compliment that you have paid me. I am deeply grateful for it.

Traditionally, incoming presidents of the Association of American University Presses have been allowed certain perquisites. One of these is free stationery. Another is the opportunity of visiting member presses and offering them egregious advice, which, if imprudently accepted, as often as not compounds existing confusion and creates fresh chaos. A third prerogative of a president of our Association is to be the primary recipient of numerous letters of closely reasoned abuse from his colleagues and contemporaries which have the cumulative effect of broadening his knowledge of the vagaries of human nature and sharply contracting his working vocabulary.

On a more sober note, perhaps the most attractive advantage, benefit--call it what you will--to be afforded to new presidents of our Association is the opportunity of selecting certain goals that seem to them to be most important to attain in general interest of our membership.

With your consent and, I hope, your active support, during the coming year I intend to pursue the following objectives as vigorously as possible: a closer identification of university presses with the scholarly community. While I believe that our Association can--and should--act in concert with our brethren in commercial publishing in those instances where it is manifestly proper for us to do so, the ultimate well-being of university presses seems to me to rest squarely upon our ability to achieve a more collegial relationship with the scholarly and cultural communities that largely sustain our activities.

Some individual presses have found it useful to maintain memberships in such organizations as the Association of American Publishers; indeed, certain university publishers of extraordinary ability have been elected officers of this group and have received from it important citations of distinction. While rejoicing at these honors conferred upon our colleagues,

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I would be less than candid if I did not suggest to you that I would be even more pleased if present or future members of AAUP should be appointed to the advisory or governing bodies of such organizations as the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

With your assistance, I shall work hard to establish a climate which will make such appointments seem to be both appropriate and desirable to these distinguished societies and foundations that contribute so greatly to the cultural and scholarly life of our country.

A second goal will be the maintenance of friendships that we have thus far established in the national government and the cultivation of new friends in the Congress and elsewhere in Washington. The financial support afforded university presses by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission has been of inestimable value to university presses and the scholarly community alike. The program of modest financial support of the publication of humanistic studies implemented last year by the new leadership of the National Endowment for the Humanities has been both materially and symbolically important in focusing attention on the increasing difficulty of humanists in finding appropriate publication for the results of their often valuable research. Given our happy--and mutually supportive--relationships with NHPRC and NEH, I see no reason why similar programs ought not to be negotiated with the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Education, the National Institutes of Health, and those other federal agencies that support scholarly research.

Finally, it is my intention that representatives of our Association will have the opportunity to visit with the officers of many universities--and university systems--throughout the United States to acquaint them, at first hand, with the adverse financial climate that confronts academic publishers, and to convince them that institutional funding should be made available to support partially the costs of publication of manuscripts written by members of their respective faculties, which have received qualitative acceptance by reputable university presses.

Within the next two weeks, the number and composition of AAUP committees will be selected. There will be fewer such committees than last year--and these will have fewer members. This decision is predicated partly upon financial considerations and partly because a number of us believe that there may be other, more effective ways to involve talented persons, whatever their particular areas of expertise, in the activities of the Association. Let me assure you that there will be no cessation of the sponsorship of workshops on various aspects of scholarly publishing by the Association.

Like most of you, I happen to be associated with a state university press of medium size, geographically removed from the traditional centers of book publishing. As such, I have often thought how the Association of American University Presses should function to the optimum benefit of the University of North Carolina Press. I have concluded that what we, at Chapel Hill, want most is the the Association--through its elected officers and permanent staff--should provide us with an increasingly strong and persuasive national presence.

I am confident that the Association can assume this role with no lessening of the educational benefits and societal pleasures that all of us enjoy from it.