



# The Association of American University Presses, Inc.

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AAUP ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 1976

Address by Willard A. Lockwood, Director, Wesleyan University Press  
and President-Elect (1975-1976) of  
The Association of American University Presses

First: A word about committees. As you know, many of the activities carried out by the Association are carried out by active and effective committees and thus the composition of them has a great deal to do with the sort of year we might expect. I am pleased to report that the committees this year are strong--widely representative of the full spectrum of membership, as well as of the varied interests and concerns of the Association. There has been an effort to provide continuity, a geographical balance, appropriate representation of large and small presses, of private and public, and of men and women. There has also been a successful effort to add to these committees a number of new people--people who have not previously served on committees, but who have distinguished themselves in their own presses and who have been proposed by their directors. In all, roughly thirty-six per cent of this year's committee members are new to the fray--new people who will give added strength to the already rich personal resources of our Association activities. I am grateful for the participation of all committee members and we all will be the beneficiaries of it.

With this committee structure, and with an active and committed slate of officers and Board of Directors, I think we can look forward to a productive and interesting year. It will be the more so, however, if the membership at large will comment, suggest, offer constructive criticism, and generally aid and abet their elected and appointed representatives. Your officers and committees, as well as the staff of the Central Office, will be sensitive and responsive to the membership. It is in the nature of our organization that we are geographically dispersed, and while this adds a certain zest to our meetings and other activities, it precludes knowing in any depth your wishes and needs--unless you tell us.

The fall meeting of the AAUP and AUPS Boards will be held this year at Stanford, to coincide with the Western Presses meeting. This, it is hoped, will provide an opportunity for increased communication between the Board and at least a segment of the membership. And if it proves to be helpful, perhaps it will set a precedent of having the Boards meet each fall in conjunction with a regional meeting.

And now to another topic.

There is little need to remind this group of the tremendous changes that have taken place over the last few years. The economic conditions in the world, in the nation, and in the institutions whose names we bear have had a resounding impact on all of us. The word "crisis," you will remember, entered our vocabulary a few years ago with a new meaning. Different presses of course have met changing conditions in different ways, and some presses--fortunately but a few--have been unable to withstand the economic pressures that the circumstances have imposed.

The changes that impacted upon us however, have already occurred. I think it is safe to say that we are not still in a time of change--that we cannot use the analogy of the pendulum, which having swung to an extreme in one direction is about to swing all the way back. In other words, the sixties are not going to come again, and we had best not waste any efforts or invest any hopes in such a prospect. To the contrary, we must live for today and for the future and as Satchel Page is reported to have said, never look back. Our problems have not all been solved--but the rate of change has certainly diminished.

I would hope that this coming year we will make a conscious effort to consolidate our gains. I would like to think that most presses are stronger now than they were a half dozen years ago--leaner, more knowledgeable, and more professional. These characteristics, it seems to me, are the legacies of our recent unhappiness, and I hope we capitalize upon them. Our recent focus, of necessity, has been quantitative. We have been concerned with costs, with prices, with discounts, with inventories, with the sizes of our staffs, with balance sheets, and operating statements. Don't misunderstand me: if we had not done this, many of us would not be here today to hear this message. But what I am saying is that, once having made these gains, we now go on with a conscious effort to retain them--and also to improve, and to maintain the improvement in the quality of what we do.

We are not in business simply to have lower costs and higher prices, lower inventories and greater turnover, smaller staffs and more intensive schedules--we are in business to publish the best fruits of scholarship and creative activity, and I am asking that we not lose sight of this in our never-flagging efforts to be more businesslike. All of the efficiencies we have gained are for naught if we are not using them to enhance the purposes for which we have been created. Indeed, we will find ourselves defenseless, in my view, if we don't grasp the opportunity now to strive for qualitative gains. I am not simply talking about the intellectual or creative quality of the manuscripts we choose to publish--I am assuming this and going beyond. The insistence upon unimpeachable standards is something that we, as an Association, are almost uniquely in a position to foster. In our efforts to be more efficient, let's not lose sight of the exacting editorial standards for which the best of university press publications are known. In our efforts to effect manufacturing economies,

let's not jettison sensitive design and quality materials for the short-term gain. In our fulfillment, let us remind ourselves of the service component of what we are doing--that it is the audience for the books we publish that should be served, not the computer.

My appeal to you, then, for this coming year, is to rededicate yourselves, with constant attention, to the quality of what you are doing.

Let me close with a little historic story. This is not a bicentennial story--it dates from 1903.

At the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford, there used to be a winged bronze female figure, representing the "Genius of Connecticut," that stood at the top of the gold dome. Never securely attached to her base, she was inclined to tip from side to side. Since she weighed several thousand pounds, the legislators and citizens who convened in the building below were bothered by her wobbly ways. Still they could not make up their minds to remove her--nor indeed to do anything to improve her condition. In exasperation, Charles Hopkins Clark, the then-editor of the Hartford Courant, acidly commented that the lawmakers seemed unable to choose between a loose woman over their heads or a fallen woman in their midst.

My message, I hope, is clear: let us mend the wobble; let us keep quality firmly fixed at the top of our structure.