



The Association of American University Presses, Inc.

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AAUP ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 1977

Address by Willard A. Lockwood, Director, Wesleyan University Press
and President (1976-1977) of
The Association of American University Presses

A year ago on this occasion, in New Haven, as I was entering my presidential year, I gave a refreshingly brief talk--and I will emulate myself this year in this respect. So listen sharply. My remarks will be over in a nonce, and if your attention flags so much as a moment, it's hard to say what gems you will miss--never to be recovered.

Before launching on my comments, however, I would like to share a personal pleasure. Back in the early 1880's, perilously close to a century ago, a young woman who was to become my grandmother came to Asheville from Minneapolis, to teach poor mountain children in a mission school. Shortly thereafter, a young Mr. Lockwood (whose role you can already guess) came from Troy, New York, at the urging of his older sister who had settled here, to open a law practice. The details of the next few years are obscure, but these two young people were married and built a house just off Biltmore Avenue, about a half mile north of the river. My father was born there in the middle 90's. A few years later, across the road and three houses down, another kid was born who ultimately became much more famous and said, among other things, that you can't go home again. But I have. Although I've never been here before, I feel that I have come home again, in a sense. I am a Tar Heel, once removed, and I appreciate the thoughtfulness of our host press in making this pilgrimage possible.

And now to my remarks.

I am going to thank a number of people for a number of things, and then I will make some observations about us--about us in the year just past and about us in the years ahead.

Leonardo da Vinci, a man of action as well as thought, noted that "Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigors of the mind."

By this criterion, we are extremely vigorous, since certainly we have not suffered from inaction.

I would like publicly to acknowledge and thank those involved in four centers of vitality and vigor--four centers of tremendous activity:

First, the staff of American University Press Services--our subsidiary profit-making and tax paying corporation. They have again turned in a stellar performance and our Association has materially benefited. We are grateful to them.

And to the Central Office staff of AAUP--a small, dedicated, faithful band--I extend my personal thanks as well as the thanks of my office. No administration could be effective without their help, their unstinting energy, their thoughtful, daily involvement.

May I ask all those AUPS and AAUP staff people who are here to rise and accept our applause?

Third, I want to acknowledge, in behalf of the rest of us, all those who have served this year on AAUP and AUPS committees. As amply demonstrated in the reports which all of you received in the material sent prior to this meeting, the heart as well as the soul of our Association is in the committee structure. We would be a group in name, and perhaps in aspiration, without committees--but we certainly would not have the da Vinci vigor without their activity.

Will all of you who have served on committees this year please rise? You may applaud each other!

I would also like to commend those who planned and participated this year in regional meetings. These, in my view, are of increasing importance and are still evolving as meaningful adjuncts to the activities of the Association. Some regional meetings are more effective than others, but all seem each year to improve on their own models and all enhance our Association's goals and purposes.

As an Association, we have seen this year some extremely significant developments which will affect our lives for years to come. We are not the sole participants, but we have had seminal roles in each of them. I speak, of course, of the National Enquiry, the policy change with respect to publication support by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the revised copyright law. Each has engaged countless hours of concern and deliberations on the parts of committees and your Board of Directors. Many of you have been good enough to share with us your views, your judgements, and your support. In all three instances, we have every right to be pleased with the progress to date and can view the future with optimism.

In an organization as varied and as individualistic as ours, I should not pretend that this optimism is unreserved or unguarded in all quarters--but in my view the noun is sound and only the adjectives are in possible dispute.

We have also seen this year a few developments within AAUP which seem to have met with general approval. The abortive attempt to revise the By-Laws was not among them, but that experience was in its own way heartening in that it demonstrated the Board serves as a creature of the membership--and the membership always retains the power to blow the whistle--to stop the steamroller, if that's what it is perceived to be.

The developments I mean--those which seem to have captured the enthusiastic support of the membership--are those that have fostered greater communication. I think of a number of new people on committees, of Jack Putnam's View From One Park, of the Board meeting in October back-to-back with the Western Presses meeting, of the mid-winter meeting of press directors, and especially of the so-called Parish System--the system whereby each member of the Board of Directors "represents" six or eight presses and serves as liaison between them and the Board.

The Parish System--although still in its developmental stage--seems to be working very effectively both for the presses represented and for the Board.

This brings up my final and closing point.

It seems to me that there are some considerations that simply do not yield to easy solution--if indeed they are soluble at all. I refer to the inevitable tensions between the younger and the older presses, the smaller and the larger, and more particularly the western, southern, middle-western, and eastern. We are varied, and in this variety--sharing basic goals--lies our strength. We are alike in our sense of mission, in our steadfast adherence to quality, in our devotion to scholarship and to its effective dissemination. But we are also extremely diverse in our means, our resources, and our points of view. We are the mentors of articulation in communities where articulateness is exasperatingly ubiquitous. And in our Association, we are articulate. We often give voice to our differences--heightening the tensions which, in many ways, in my view, constantly challenge us and form the core--the very center of our creative vitality.

While it is often tempting, for the sake of peace, to want to see these tensions relieved and resolved, I'm not at all sure it would be desirable or that resolution would create a better world. Desirable or not, however, they've not been resolved this year, and I predict they won't be in Weldon's year--or in Matt Hodgson's.

I've tried these past twelve months to alleviate some of these tensions, but without visible success. They are going to remain with us.

I am reminded of the Australian aborigine who spent a year of careful loving work carving a new boomerang--and then spent the rest of his life trying to throw his old one away!