



The Association of American University Presses, Inc.  
One Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 · 212 889-6040

AAUP Annual Meeting, June 1972

Address by William B. Harvey, Director, University of Florida Press  
and President (1971-1972) of  
The Association of American University Presses

It is customary at this point in our affairs for your President to give you an account of his stewardship and a report upon the state of our union.

I don't intend to avoid this duty, but I do propose to fulfill it in a way more suited to my own predilections than to the admirable examples set by my predecessors in this office. Also to keep a stern eye on the clock and thus on more desirable alternatives.

We hear a lot these days about re-arranging priorities. Having visited a number of our member presses during the year I can tell you that I find no evidence of such rearrangement afoot nor much need for it. We are busy publishing scholarly books, as we are supposed to do, although it now seems clear, fewer of them. Whether this is desirable per se is still under discussion, one press director having stated that too damn many inferior works are being published anyway, and others, gentler types no doubt, having said that it would likely bring some hardship to the young scholar whose work might never achieve publication.

So the concern is not with priorities, but with management techniques, particularly with reference to finances. And rightly so. Consider, if you will, the following:

Item: Edward Booher, President of the McGraw Hill Book Company, tells us in a recent address that the total expenditure for education in the country will increase by 6.2%, compounded, over the decade 1971-1981, from 78 billion to 143 billion dollars per year. Total sales of books will increase even more dramatically, from 3.1 billion to 7.2 billion dollars or 131 per cent in that decade.

Item: William Jovanovich, Chairman of the Board of Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, in a recent interview carried by Publishers Weekly, said he thought is possible, although admittedly doubtful, that his firm's business would be doubled by 1980.

Item: On Monday of this week, at the annual marketing conference of the the New York Stock Exchange, it was reported that the gross national

product for 1972 would be increased by an amount up to one hundred and ten billion dollars.

Item: In a report entitled THE MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES: AN IMPERATIVE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION prepared by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and issued last week, the nation's colleges and universities are warned that they face critical money problems unless they cut their rate of spending 10 billion dollars annually by the year 1980.

Item: Three of our member presses have recently withdrawn from the Association for poverty-related reasons. Some few others have been or are now in jeopardy.

It appears from these indications that in spite of our wild-cat war, the nation is thriving, and education continues to be a growth industry in which the book will enjoy an increasing role. Yet higher education, in its funding from private or public sources, is unlikely to share in this prosperity. This is the paradox upon which today's sessions were focused.

Last spring--along in the middle of January as I recall--I observed what appeared to be a few incipient disaster areas in my lawn. I consulted my friendly neighborhood fertilizer dealer on the problem, seeking to involve him in culpability, but he declined the honor and sent me along to our County Agency with samples from the affected parts. In due course I returned to hear the diagnosis.

At this point I want to report to you, if you haven't had any traffic lately with agronomists, that they haven't fallen into the deplorable practice so common in the medical profession of using the first person plural, thus: "How are we feeling today?" or "We seem to have a little trouble down here," and so forth. Contrary to this verbal idiosyncrasy, agronomists employ the second person--presumably plural--establishing a cozy, ecological relationship, thus: "You've got too much acid here at the front," or "You're pretty damp down there at the south east corner," and so forth.

The diagnosis given me was in keeping with this practice. I was (or we were, as the case may be) found guilty of hyper-acidity, deficiency or iron, and being too shady in certain areas. "But," said the Agent, "Your worst problem is that you lack friability."

Well, I had always thought I was pretty well situated in the friability department, so this came as something of a shock. When I asked what could be done about it he looked at me in a funny way and he said, "Mr. Harvey, do you own the property?" Although we don't actually own the property, we are its custodians and it is therefore our duty to look after its friability, or any other capability found wanting. Hopefully, we have all learned a bit from today's sessions.



A year ago--or I should say with an injured look--thirteen months ago-- I inherited a smoothly functioning Central Office and a set of problems of known dimensions, which, if not on the way to solution, at least were being coped with.

Without recounting details which would be as dull to you as they were aggravating to us, I will simply say that not one problem known in advance turned out to be as advertised; further, that most of our efforts were spent on problems which came upon us suddenly and un-announced. Indeed in the conduct of our Association affairs I was reminded constantly of the situation at my own Press where I can sometimes get enough clear space on my desk to do a little productive work only to find that I am required right now to submit a budget for the next five years, or to explain by return why it has taken us more than six months to produce a 400 page book on citrus virology written by a septugenarian who doesn't know a non sequiter from a dangling participle. I suspect that all of you suffer this crisis-directed syndrome and will therefore not be much surprised to learn that it is endemic on the eighth floor at One Park Avenue. To their credit all our people in the Central Office are good soldiers. Somehow the decisions are made and the work gets done. If I may here be permitted to add another few words to the advice I'm giving to those who will succeed me, they are: Beware of tranquility; it's nothing but camouflage for booby traps.

In the U.S. Field Artillery, where I spent four happy and productive years, we had a maxim having to do with the conduct of fire. Concerning the number of powder bags suitable as propellant, it said "Always use the lowest charge consistent with the mission, in order to save wear and tear on the tubes." I have always cherished this advice, and will abide by it now.