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THE UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY

THE HONORABLE EDITH GREEN*

Basic to our American civilization is faith in the individual, in his abilities, and in his ultimate decency. Because of that faith we have an unwillingness to dictate to people, a confidence that, given opportunities, people will develop their abilities and work to better themselves and their fellow men. This faith is reflected in both the foreign and domestic policies, including education, of the United States.

Throughout our history we have always favored pluralism. We have tried to preserve options, *e.g.*, open-ended flexible arrangements. We have opposed monolithic authoritarian solutions. That policy has meant that we have been continuously in difficulty, in the sense that problems are not clearly met by decisive action. On the other hand, our search for pragmatic step-by-step solutions has also meant that at home we have preserved the possibility of change, and abroad we have avoided a hydrogen conflagration.

In this second half of the twentieth century the responsibility of protecting and advancing western civilization has fallen on our country. It is not an easy responsibility. Nevertheless it is ours and in applying our pragmatic open-ended philosophy we have not failed, either at home or, in spite of Vietnam, abroad.

Although we had the enormous military advantage of the bomb several years before the Russians, and have maintained strategic and tactical superiority year-by-year, we have used that advantage to maintain peace, not to achieve a world empire. True, we have had to place our military forces on the edges of the world. Sometimes, as can happen to amateurs, we have made mistakes, as we have in Vietnam. Our problem there is not so much in making a mistake, which in a less than perfect world is bound to happen, but in our refusal to recognize the mistake and to extricate ourselves.

The great value of difficulty and defeat is that they offer an opportunity to learn. Vietnam, for example, is a tremendous learning experience for us. There is very little good that can otherwise be said of that unfortunate experience. If, however, we learn what Vietnam

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has to teach us it may turn out to be the most worthwhile war in which we were ever involved. We shall behave differently in the future because of our experience there.

That same liberal pluralistic philosophy dominates our domestic politics. We are moving in strategically decisive fashion, although in tactically tentative fashion, on a broad range of problems: racism, poverty, pollution control, urban rebuilding, and education. In none of these areas have we been able to commit resources sufficient to do the job. On none of them have we decided, in fact, quite how to do the job.

Here also our open-ended decision making process has exposed us to the most severe criticism. Nowhere have we been more strongly criticized than by students in academic circles.

We in Congress understand differences of opinion. Our political function is to recognize and cope with it. But we have great concern about the manner in which this particular criticism has been expressed. It has been violent, demanding, intolerant, and destructive, not only of property but, more importantly, of our value system. It renounces pluralism, easy tolerance, the willingness to listen, the desire to move step-by-step in the solution of problems, all in favor of instant gratification of the demand, whatever it is.

This is troubling. Does it mean that under the great pressures of modern life our young people are willing to throw overboard their liberal democratic heritage and grasp at totalitarian solutions? The attractiveness of these solutions, on history's record, is more illusory than real.

Let us examine specifically the relationship between colleges and universities on the one hand and society, and more particularly, the federal government on the other.

Universities do not exist in a vacuum. They are supported by society because they perform a social purpose. That purpose is not to serve as a rest home for adolescents or a haven from adult responsibilities. The universities perform two very valuable social purposes: they educate the young in the values and techniques of civilization, and they advance the study of truth. Remember, the value system of our society is open-ended. We do not have final answers on problems. We may be on the road to truth but we certainly have not yet arrived. In our view we never will have absolute certainty. Therefore, we need constant critical review of our position and our actions. The universities are one of the social agencies, not the only one, that perform the job.

After World War II it became apparent that expanding technology

would greatly affect the style and quality of our living. Among other things it became apparent that we would need the best educated citizenry we could get. Accordingly over the years the nation has moved strongly to make post-secondary education available to everyone who wants it and has the ability to profit by it. That decision has meant among other things an enormous commitment in national resources. Next to defense expenditures, the education budget is now the largest single item in the national budget. The federal share of the cost of higher education is now twenty percent and conceivably could go as high as forty percent by 1980. During the 1960's total expenditures, public and private, rose from \$6.6 billion to \$20 billion. The proportion of GNP devoted to higher education rose from 1.4% to about 2.3%. Total enrollments rose from 3.5 million to over 7 million.

It is precisely because education means so much to us in terms of national welfare, even survival, that our experiences in recent years with student violence has been so distressing. The record is a dismal one: Berkeley, San Francisco State, Northwestern, Chicago, Columbia, Cornell and Harvard. Our very best institutions have moved close to anarchy.

We must face a number of questions. Are we making the best use of our universities? Should they be used as front-line socializing, civilizing agencies? Should they drop their admission standards in order to receive numbers of unprepared students as part of the national effort to bring in the disadvantaged who are now excluded? Would the initial job be better done by a system of preparatory schools? Should the job be done by community colleges? If so, what should be the role of the federal government?

Should a pedagogic system be perpetuated that emphasizes research and publication over teaching? It has always seemed improper to give the youngest faculty members the most students and the heaviest courses. Is there any way of separating a research career from a teaching career? What part do government research grants play in this problem? Again, what role should the federal government play?

Should everyone go to college? Should we not recognize the necessary dilution of quality education if we flood the colleges with students who are there, not because of any driving urge to learn, but rather because they have been offered no other logical alternative? Would we not be better off if we were to offer post-secondary vocational training or para-professional training in a wide variety of fields? Should we not consider the possibility of a national service year, or two years, after

high school, giving everyone the chance to serve his country as a teacher's aide, nurse's aide, librarian, member of the civilian or military defense, Peace Corps volunteer, park officer, or in the construction of park and recreational facilities.

If the colleges and universities are unable to maintain order on campus, what should society do? Admittedly no society can tolerate permanent disorder, particularly in an area which is both so vulnerable and so defenseless as the campus. Should the effort to maintain order be further entrusted to colleges? Should it be left with the local civic authorities? What role should the federal government play?

From the point of view of Congress it would be best if all these problems were handled successively by the colleges and universities. I might remark in this connection that I have run across people who believe that Congress is eagerly looking for an opportunity to strong-arm its way onto campus. I know of no such sentiment. Congressmen spend their lives in the governmental process and have had too much experience with it to regard it as an easy nostrum. We have enough problems without looking for more.

From our point of view, it would be much easier to say that we are satisfied with the job that the colleges are doing both in educating young people and in advancing the study of truth. Then our role would be the simple one of providing the necessary money. But student and young militant faculty violence has disenchanted us. If the beneficiaries of the system are so dissatisfied, we must examine it to see what is wrong.

For eight months last year the House Special Subcommittee on Education held hearings on student unrest. It is difficult for my generation, which wanted very much to go to college and which has demonstrated its willingness to make sacrifices to send its children to college, to understand what is wrong. After all, if a student dislikes a college so much that he wants to tear the place down, why does he not leave? The door is open.

The hearings were broad. We heard from college administrators, professors, students, psychiatrists, historians, sociologists—everyone who conceivably could help. It turned out that there were no easy answers.

There was a great variety of explanations: that students had valid complaints which were not being heard; that students were being misled by leaders who were at least anarchistic and possibly paranoid; that disaffected younger faculty were angry; that college administration was a system of non-government; that students were alienated from

our society because of our failure to reach ideals which they, and their parents, held; that they were upset particularly because of the draft and our failure to close out the Vietnam war, and because of our failure to solve the problems of race, poverty, and city decay, and air and water pollution immediately and to their satisfaction. We were told that in part the problem was psychological, attributable to generational conflict, to an adolescence prolonged by endless study, to a feeling of guilt because of having received from society all their lives without being able to return anything, and to a feeling of unreality because of the long years of study divorced from work.

Solutions to most of these problems were at the moment beyond anyone's control; certainly they seemed not readily amenable to national action. If youthful leaders were paranoid or anarchistic, the real problem was—why did they obtain a following? If the younger faculty were angry, the problem was one of reform within the university. The same was true of the really incredible system of university governments: a complicated morass of faculty, senates, committees, task forces, associations, unions, schools, divisions, deans, and administrators that on the face of it would seem incapable of producing a decision about anything.

Most tragically it seemed clear that students were in fact alienated in varying degrees from the society which had so well provided for them. Alienated in the real sense that they were willing to participate in or condone acts of destruction designed to tear down the structure of the university, either as an expression of inchoate rage or designedly as a way of attacking society itself.

With these circumstances the House Committee on Education and Labor deliberated long and hard. There was a great reluctance on the part of most members to interfere in the internal administration of the colleges if there was any chance at all that they could solve their own problems. There was, however, substantial doubt that they were doing all that they could.

The bill that finally engrossed the committee's attention was H.R. 11941. I favored its passage because it seemed to me a proper vehicle to express the national concern about violence on campus without in any way interfering with the ability of the colleges and universities to reform themselves. By Title I of H.R. 11941, the colleges and universities, as a condition of receiving federal aid, were required to publish disciplinary regulations, and upon request to supply a copy of the regulations to the Office of Education. This burden seemed to me not at

all onerous. It was almost inconceivable that any college or university today would not have rules controlling student conduct. The effect of the legislation would be to require closer attention to the problem and possibly a national exchange of information.

Nevertheless, there was considerable opposition to it, which was finally successful. The opposition basically expressed a reluctance to have the federal government express any interest at all in the internal administration of colleges and universities.

Title II of H.R. 11941 effectively reenacted Section 504 of the Higher Education Amendments of 1968. That section provided for the withdrawal of federal financial aid from students who, in the decision of the college or university, had been convicted in a court of law or who had been found guilty of violation of a university regulation because of an act of violence that substantially disrupted the campus. Title II modified the present law, but when Title I was dropped, the bill was abandoned.

The effect of committee nonaction was on the one hand to lay open the possibility that the Congress, in response to constituent pressures, would address itself to the problem in other ways. Consequently, every appropriation bill containing money for educational purposes had a rider attached to it, either by the Appropriations Committee or by amendment in the course of debate on the House floor, relating to student discipline. Additionally, every authorization bill dealing with higher education must face the prospect of floor amendment providing for student discipline. Consideration of that possibility has inhibited easy treatment of substantive higher education issues.

The more insidious result of nonaction has been to affect adversely the public attitude toward education, not only at the higher education level but also at the elementary and secondary levels. We are seeing something in the nature of a taxpayers' revolt, the causes of which are difficult to analyze but in part at least seem attributable to a lack of confidence in leadership, a feeling that problems are not being recognized and dealt with. It is my belief that elementary and secondary school bond issues across the country have failed, and an untold number of school boards have decided against putting needed bond issues on the ballot, partly because of a public temper irritated, worried and frustrated by television and news media coverage of student violence.

Aside from such difficulties, the committee's refusal to act has given colleges and universities additional time in which to demonstrate their ability to put their affairs in order. There is reason to think that a

combination of circumstances may have made that possible. For one thing, I think students themselves are now not nearly so willing to follow radical leadership in destructive adventures. For another, the faculties, always so permissive of student activities and protective of students themselves, have taken a second look at themselves. Faculty members this year have set a higher value on order than they did a year ago. Where they once second-guessed the administration with the greatest of willingness, they are now inclined to do so only after careful deliberation. Thirdly, the pattern of college administration has been remarkably tightened up; and even more important, students have been given a substantial participatory role in the decisions on curricula and faculty.

Unrest on campus in the last few years has been in a sense a domestic Vietnam experience; not only in the sense of violence, but also in that it offers us a learning experience. What use can we make of that experience?

First, we have learned that our national commitment to equality of opportunity means that the disadvantaged will require major, sympathetic, and expensive assistance if they are to make it. It is not enough just to enroll Blacks, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans in high school and college. They require continuous, sympathetic, and expensive help all the way through if the disadvantages of early years are to be overcome.

Second, our colleges must effect major internal reforms. In the past their emphasis has been on their role as citadels of learning. They have tended to make curricula decisions in order to gratify faculty interests. They have underplayed their other major responsibility, that of educating the young.

Reforms involve refocusing attention on the needs of the young. This means both that students must be heard in the governance of the universities and also that they must be heard in regard to curricula decisions. I hope that this reform is not carried so far as to give students the final decision-making authority, particularly in the curriculum area. There is a basic difference in competence between teacher and student that exists by definition of their roles.

In a sense the universities are being pushed into reform by both students and government. Both want the universities to turn their attention from isolated study to the problems of a hard-pressed society in this last third of the twentieth century. Students and government may disagree as to the priority of problems and as to their solutions,

but both see the university as inextricably involved in their identification and solution.

Third, we must offer our young people more options. The pressures on high school graduates to go on to college are now unbearable. Forty percent of our high school graduates now go on to college and the proportion is rising. The needs and talents of many of these young people might find better expression in post-secondary vocational and para-professional training. We must give dignity and prestige to vocational and business training and careers. High school graduates should have career options and not be locked into pipeline delivery into college.

These reforms all follow logically from the American philosophy described initially, *i.e.*, our belief in the importance of the individual and our confidence that he is a reasonable and decent person. If given an opportunity, he will help himself and in so doing he will help society. Therefore, we must give the poor and disadvantaged a chance to obtain an education. We must give students a chance to govern themselves and to participate in decisions regarding the education that they want. We must give them real career alternatives particularly at the time of graduation from high school.

On the other hand, we must resist any effort by radicals or anarchists to narrow our alternatives and to force us into an authoritarian mold, either by destruction of universities as institutions or by preventing the free flow of ideas. Universities are simply too important to society for us to allow them to be destroyed or crippled.