


1946

UA3/2/4 Reply to Raymond Kent

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Certainly Dr. Kent's interpretation of the topic as implying that regimentation and indoctrination are directly related to the ability of the college to discharge its responsibility in interpreting and defending our democratic ideals must meet with our agreement. I take it that we are also in agreement as to the close relationship between such regimentation and indoctrination and the matter of academic freedom to be discussed by Dr. Hutchins. Of course our chairman, being a good chairman because of his before mentioned political affiliation, or in spite of it, according to your point of view, so arranged it.

I am not so sure that I like the word "conflict" as used by Dr. Kent to express relationship between college education as intellectual activity and the college as society's own instrument. To be sure, Jefferson saw the college as built upon "the illimitable freedom of the human mind" but his firm faith in education as the basis for a successful democracy seems to ^{me} ~~one~~ to have been in agreement rather than in conflict with this idea. Is it not only through the preservation of education as intellectual activity that the college can serve properly as society's own instrument?

If I understand the motivating idea prompting the raising of the voice of the younger Dr. Hutchins crying from the wilderness of Chicago, it is the fear that through the failure of the University to maintain its faith in education

as intellectual activity it may ~~seem~~^{cease} to be society's own instrument . It does not necessarily follow that we agree as to his instruments to insure such accomplishment. In fact you will remember that a member of the Department of Economics at Chicago is responsible for the following statement, "Acceptance of the curricular primacy of a first set of metaphysical principles would reduce science to dogma and education to indoctrination." Which raises the startling question as to whether the President of ~~the~~ institution is to be regarded with suspicion as a possible, or worse still, probable source of indoctrination. Surely this is not the time nor the place and certainly not the group before whom to bring this up. And let some braver soul, preferably from the faculty, discuss the question of regimentation in any particular institution as related to the administration. I merely suggest we might along with our horizon searching scrutiny of the dangerous outside sources of improper influence, with profit direct at least a glance or two at our own backyards. Which is to be sure in agreement with Dr. Kent's insistence that the college to defend democracy must itself be democratic. And surely we are justified in our faith that we fight for freedom of thought not contrary to the best interests of the state but rather in their behalf. You will recall that Justice Holmes said, "If there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other, it is the principle of ~~true~~^{free} thought-- not ~~true~~^{free} thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the

thought that we hate." Norman Foerster in "The American State University" says, "Educational indoctrination proper in the light of our constitution is nothing other than indoctrination in the principles of democratic government, indoctrination above all in freedom of thought and speech." So here we are as in the case of propoganda facing the question as to whether it may be our duty to indoctrinate a bit. Dr. Crane last evening seemed to suggest as a basis for judgment as to the nature of indoctrination such questions as, Is it honest or dishonest? Is its appeal to the intellect or the emotions? Is it democratic or authoritarian? Efforts at evil indoctrination find their basis usually I am inclined to think in a desire for commercial gain, in fear, when democracy or religion for example seem in danger but all too frequently on the part of ^{an} individual or group unable to attract attention through worth while accomplishment, seeking attention. Much is to be said for the statement of Dr. Crane that you cannot save democracy through fighting for it, though I do suggest the possibility that it may sometimes be necessary to fight to secure those conditions under which democracy may have a chance to flourish. In the main, however, we can advance the cause of democracy only by the teaching and practice of democracy. This is the opportunity of the college and in so far as the college product is intolerant and undemocratic we may expect to suffer from ~~reports~~ ^{efforts} on the part of this group for indoctrination and regimentation. I give credit to Nick M. Butler for the following: "In the truest sense American Democracy rests upon public

opinion. If that democracy is to be secure through the centuries, then public opinion must be educated. It must be alert; it must be open minded; it must be fair, it must be devoted not to group or sectional interest but to social, economic, and political liberty for all. The building of such intelligent and democratic public opinion it would seem is our best defense against the dangers of indoctrination and regimentation.

Certainly regimentation is destructive of individuality, that important quality of the college which marks its difference from all the rest and neither the Federal government nor the State government, nor any department of the State nor any Council on Higher Education nor any accrediting association can be permitted to hamper such individual differentiation without a vital interference with educational progress.