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## UA1B3/7 Meeting Minutes

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Address by President H. H. Cherry at Faculty Meeting

January 19, 1937.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to do something I have never done before in a faculty meeting. I am going to talk about politics for a little while. I indicated several months ago that I was going to discuss political policies which I think the institution should pursue--not only this one but every other educational institution, and I am going to ask you to follow me for a minute in a brief interpretation without preparation of what I believe should be the attitude of every individual connected with an educational institution toward a political campaign. I shall try to be very honest and sincere. As I have said, I have had no preparation; I shall speak out of an experience and nothing else.

There isn't a citizen in this country, if he really believes in the freedom that democracy gives him, that is denied the privilege of an honest, sincere choice as to political issues--public issues--things that are best for the country. I have never discovered yet that there is any other feeling in this country, or attitude in this country, that would deny a citizen the privilege of being a freeman in the ballot box wherever he may be, or that would deny him the right to his choice, sincerely arrived at--the right to his own conclusions. That far is democracy. I know that much is democracy. These are the beliefs upon which our government is built and upon which an organization like this institution is built. This is not a Democratic institution, I mean from the standpoint of a party--not a Republican, Socialist, or anything else. Any individual within this organization is entitled to his choice as to his political party. If he wants to be a Republican, that is his privilege. If



he wants to be a Democrat, that is his privilege. If he wants to be that other thing, that is his privilege, if he is honest and sincere and has studied the principles of government and is honest with himself and has arrived at his own conclusions. That is democracy. A man in the Republican Party can be a better Democrat than a man in the Democratic Party. It depends upon justice--those things that give human happiness to the individual. There is no way around that now. I am by politics like I am by religion. There is just one church on earth, and it's not a Baptist church either--nor a Methodist, Episcopalian, or Catholic. I can prove it by the new testament and by the life of Christ. It is my own personal attitude, your own personal attitude toward things divine. What is my attitude toward God and Christ, those things that are beyond? What is my interpretation? That is my church. There is just one church. Why have all of these denominational organizations, the Baptist church and a lot of others? Why? For the same reason that we have political parties. The things of religion are helpful to society. There should be an effort made to disseminate those things, and as a result, there was a church organization. As a result we have Baptists, Methodists, etc. As far as I am concerned--excuse me now--I would not have any of them myself. I don't believe in the Methodist church or the Baptist church, or any other church, but I do believe in my personal relation to things divine. Spirituality doesn't come from walking into the door of the Methodist church, a mere building. It comes from a feeling that Christ is with me, going with me. You can't prove that Christ ever made a Baptist church or a Methodist or Christian church. He taught spiritual justice. Every time he went to the lowly, down yonder where the individual had sinned and sinned again, and lifted that individual out of the gutter and gave him breath and spiritual inspiration.

Now, I have read the new testament through a half-dozen times, four or five times, and have taught it, and that is the only thing I have found in it. Put



Christ at the head of a class on College Heights, and I don't think he would pay very much attention to credits. He would not have very many hard things to say about the boy who failed. Can you find anything else in the life of Christ? I think he would look for the individual without money who was worried and troubled and would try to put something in his pockets and give him a chance to go forward.

What caused the organization of churches? It was a fine fundamental thing that made the organization. I can defend myself in all I have said in that statement. It was a good thing that needed dissemination. It needed propaganda. It needed to be sent out yonder in a neighborhood where they had not heard of it and to be put in action. The church organizations were made to disseminate the principles and ideals of Christ. We would get further with religion if we would be more tolerant. We use the method of organization on this Hill to disseminate Western's principles and ideals. We have the county organizations and many others to disseminate the good things that will help civilization to be carried on.

Now I am coming to the political problems. This is not Roosevelt's hill, nor Hoover's. It is not any political party's organization. It is you, just you and nobody else set free to exercise your own political rights, and I don't have any patience with you if you are not independent in the exercise of your political rights. That is an inherent right that came through this nature of ours, an innate feeling and attitude that God gave us. Then it came through blood at Valley Forge in the form of a constitution, you understand.

So we are here today with this form of government in our possession, and let us all make this a democratic institution. Let us declare this afternoon that there is no political belief in this hall except the endorsement of Mr. Roosevelt's ideals and principles. Can you think of anything so unamerican as that would be?



What if we should say that we were going to endorse the principles of the Republican Party, the Communists, or something else? I would have lots more respect for some of these folks who call themselves Communists than for a Democrat, provided that individual arrived at his conclusions sincerely, honestly, keeping in mind the individual, keeping in mind spiritual, intellectual, and physical justice, that being his dominating thought, he can be anything he wants to be and still be a good American. I have said that carefully. I have. That is all the Lord can exact of anybody--all the government can exact of anybody. Anything else would be injustice.

Now I am coming on up to say something else. I have been embarrassed as a result of political campaigns. I should be relieved of this embarrassment and you should know it. I have paid the political debts of a lot of folks. Many times on the Hill a small group has paid the political debt for the larger group.

I am trying to come back and find where the association is. I am a Methodist and a mighty poor one, I want to tell you that. I could be a better Presbyterian than a Methodist. I wouldn't have been a Baptist, though, under any condition. Don't take that seriously under any condition. I just like that catechism of the Presbyterian church. It comes very nearly telling the story of the American fight. I like the Presbyterians better than I do the Methodists. I am not a good Methodist. Even the preacher doesn't know I am a member, but I am going to stay in the Methodist church if they will let me. I don't see any reason why I should change. When the whole story is told, all of these churches come together at one point. It is the Christian church, just Christ. You know Peabody about one hundred years ago wrote that or made the statement in an address. He said that there are Methodists, Baptists, and others, all going somewhere, but they don't know where they are going, but some day they will all come together in the same



order. That is what is going on in this country now.

I am coming back to the political side again. You know you have to saturate politics with religion or you get into trouble. That is what I am trying to do. What is the policy of the institution toward political campaigns? You don't understand political campaigns, I think. I have pursued only one policy and that is to stay out of politics. We got into the edge of politics during the last campaign, but the only reason I went into it was to save education. Maybe we had poor judgment, but the whole code of laws that furnished the foundation for education had been repealed, and something had to be done. That was when we ordered two special trains, twenty-eight coaches in all, and marched on Frankfort. We'll do it again to save education if it becomes necessary. Of course we'll do it. Maybe we were mistaken as to its importance, but we were left stranded without a dollar. The old school would have been closed unless something had been done. Some of you stood back and criticized and put burdens on some of our leaders because you did not understand the situation. You have! I doubt whether we would be here this afternoon if somebody had not been ready to take the gaff, bear the scar, and pay the price. I am for the fellow who did, the individual or group that did it. The group is quite numerous when interpreted in the form of members of the House and of the Senate and others. I stood out and spoke through the amplifiers when the thermometer was 110 and I was tired and worn out. I did not have a thing in my heart except to give the child an education. I thought we were lost. I felt education had been destroyed unless something could be done, and that quickly. That was the motive. Nobody can challenge that motive, if it was the motive; and I think it was the motive of everybody else. Maybe politics built up the situation that made us feel that way.



Some say that was the case, but that doesn't change the proposition any. The point is if you won't fight for education, you can't fight for America. If you don't go on the battle line for the school house, you won't go on the fighting line for the flag. That is Americanism. That is a fundamental principle, quite simple to me. We have understood it for ages, yet we don't interpret it and think about it. That is the political attitude of this institution. This is the policy that I shall pursue as long as I live. If there is ever a political program that would be injurious to education and would destroy the school house, I am going for the school house, it doesn't make any difference what will happen politically or otherwise.

Now I am coming up to the next proposition. Right here I want to say that it is an easy thing to go home and study your lessons and teach your classes. When you come back to your classes next morning, you come without any hard experiences that walk with you to your home, get in bed with you and stay with you until the sun comes up. That is an administrator's experience. Much of it is unnecessary. A teacher sometimes feels he is having a hard time. He doesn't know what a hard time is. Often I have thought what a blessing it would be if I could be relieved of the hard experiences that I go through with--just to have the blessing of intellectual silence in my own home, the opportunity to prepare my own lessons and go back and disseminate it to young life and let it go out over the State. You don't understand. Your position is no accident. Your position comes through suffering and blood. It is going to be maintained that way. The whole "dern" thing can blow up in a minute unless somebody has his hand on the wheel and watches so as to direct the course of organization. It is so easy to be in the attitude of ingratitude. It is easy to do that and not mean anything either. I tell you frankly I wish somebody would come around and tell me they love me and hug me too. We can't live alone. These teachers can't live alone.



The finest thing a class can do for a teacher is to express appreciation. It is being in the attitude of expressing appreciation that makes unity. There is no way to have unity without it.

So I am coming back to the political situation again. What are you going to do? There is a hot political campaign on. I am defining myself now. I want to be relieved of future embarrassments. I did what I did to save education. I did it honestly, but up to that time, what was the policy of this institution? Just what I am going to tell you now. - - - - Grise, I don't know whether there are any other R<sub>e</sub>publicans in the world besides you or not. I do not know whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, a Methodist or a Catholic. I am thinking in the terms of personality. I believe in giving individuals the right and privilege of determining their own conclusions and opinions and conduct. I say a hot political campaign is on. It is not, but it will be. Are you a Republican and for Mr. A? You have a perfect right to be. Are you a Democrat and for Mr. C? You have a perfect right to be for him. There isn't any reason to conceal political opinions, neither is there any reason to proclaim them from the hilltop. It speaks from within without a loud voice. It is a conviction, a principle, and an ideal. It is your privilege to go to the polls and vote as you please. No man has the right to deny you or challenge your right to do that. Then what should be the attitude of every individual?

(I am asking Miss Temple to take down everything I am saying, because I am afraid somebody will say that I made a political speech)

If you are a Methodist, you should make a contribution to the Methodist church. If you are a Baptist, you should make a contribution to that organization. If you are a Democrat and believe in the principles of the Democratic Party, you should make a contribution to that organization. If you are a Republican, you have a perfect right to make a contribution to that organization.



That is your business, not mine. I have been wondering why school teachers believe in the principles of a certain party and stand back and think that they don't owe that organization anything. You owe it your material support, and it should not be put through me or the school. It should be an individual matter entirely. I have had to bear hardships because a lot of folks are Democrats and never give a dollar. A lot of folks are Republicans and never give a dollar. I shall pay my own political debts from now on. I am not going to ask anybody to give anything. Is that right? (Applause) That isn't strong enough. There are a lot of people who proclaim Democracy, Roosevelt, and the new deal but wouldn't give a dollar. Now Dean Grise has a mortgage on his home because he gave so much to the Republican Party. I built a court because the Democratic Party has been so good to me. It loves me. I was even able to put up a court.

I want you to relieve me and this school of any future political embarrassment. I have tried to tell the story as I see it. You want to be honest and sincere, and after you have gone to the bottom and study a problem carefully, then you have a right to vote as you please. That is your privilege and right under our form of government. It belongs to you. No man has a right to challenge the privilege you have. That is very easily understood. It isn't hard at all to understand that.

I have been wondering who of you are Democrats and who Republicans in this institution. I don't know. You all look alike to me. I don't see any difference, so far as I am concerned. I don't know whether you are Methodists, Baptists, or Presbyterians. I didn't know that before I employed you, before I wrote that letter that brought you here. I had no knowledge of your political affiliations. I knew that you were a decent citizen, trained and qualified to do your work..



Dean Grise, you were here four years before I knew you were a Republican, and I haven't thought much of you since, and I mean that, provided you don't take it too seriously. I think that is what democracy is. I don't know how to work out any other policy. I am not going to be embarrassed or to have anything to do with paying your Democratic and Republican debts.

Canon, is that right?

(Mr. Canon: I think - - ).

That isn't strong enough. You don't mean you think.

(Mr. Canon: Amen!)

Come on. Has anybody else anything to say?

(Mr. Charlie Taylor: I don't know when we owe a political debt. We are willing to help, but I would like to know when we are to help)

That is the whole situation. When a campaign is on, you should go to headquarters and say, "Mr. A, I have brought you five dollars or one dollar. I am just interested in this program. Here it is." That whole house would catch on fire if such a thing should happen. That is the secret of the whole thing, isn't it?

Charlie, your question was all right, but from what you say, I don't believe you have been paying your political debts.

(Dr. Stickle: That means that we don't want anybody soliciting. I don't want a two by four politician to come up to me and say now you are holding a State job, hand me out so much. I think that is what your speech means)

That is what I mean exactly.

(Mr. Craig: I have been a citizen of Kentucky and a teacher for a long time. We have been more blessed than any other school of its size in the South by being free of political influences. We are still that way, and we can stay that way.



I went through the same agony of mind that Mr. Cherry did about the sales tax. I was a member of the K. E. A. for forty years. I believed that education should be divorced from politics, but I was one who said we must go to the committee and put this over. I did it for the school. If the K. E. A. hadn't gone on record, you would never had had a \$11.75-per capita today. It was not a question of political candidates, but it was a question of seeing that the schools were provided for, and they wouldn't have been if the K. E. A. hadn't gone on record.)

Craig, what are you anyway, a Democrat or a Republican?

(I'm a Democrat in a way--about the same kind of Democrat you are a Methodist).

Do we understand this situation? Have I said anything wrong? I don't think I have. I think I could go into the Governor's office, or anywhere else and say what I have said. I want to keep this school clear away from the appearance of politics. I am telling you if ever it gets into the hands of politicians, manipulators and job seekers, you had just as well set dynamite to College Heights and go away, because it will all be over. We want to avoid any such situation, and the way to do it is the way I think.

*Mare Temple*