

SCIENCE

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THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

CONTENTS

<i>The American Association of University Professors:—</i>	
<i>Introductory Address: PROFESSOR JOHN DEWEY</i>	147
<i>Organization of the Association: PROFESSOR ARTHUR O. LOVEJOY</i>	151
<i>The American Association for the Advancement of Science:—</i>	
<i>Safety Engineering: DR. O. P. HOOD</i>	154
<i>The Geological Society of America:—</i>	
<i>Isostasy and Radioactivity: DR. GEO. F. BECKER</i>	157
<i>The Constitution of the Atom</i>	160
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	162
<i>University and Educational News</i>	165
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>Professor Daly's Igneous Rocks and their Origin: DR. WALDEMAR LINDGREN</i>	166
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Sheppard's Photo-chemistry: PROFESSOR S. W. YOUNG. Ellis on the Hydrogenation of Oils: PROFESSOR A. H. GILL. Patton and Cragg's Text-book of Medical Entomology: PROFESSOR CHARLES ATWOOD KOFOID</i>	166
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>The Simplest Constituents required for Growth and the Completion of the Life Cycle in an Insect: DR. JACQUES LOEB</i>	169
<i>The Botanical Society of America: DR. GEORGE T. MOORE</i>	170

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

IN calling this meeting to order, I wish first to say a few words about the services performed by the committee on organization—and I am sure none of them will think it invidious if I refer particularly to the work of the secretary, Professor Lovejoy, who has borne the heat and labor of the day more than any one else. All of its members are busy men and the work they have done is a labor of love. It is but fair to them that it should be known to all that their labors, continued for over a year, have been singularly free from a disposition on the part of any one to push a particular scheme or ride a particular hobby. If any one, perchance, has come here to-day with a fear that something is to be sprung upon the meeting, or that the committee has, as the saying goes, something up its sleeve, pray let him disabuse himself of the idea. The committee has tried to do nothing more than had to be done to bring together a representative body, without reference to factions or sections; to get matters into shape to facilitate discussion and economize time.

Doubtless we have made mistakes. But they are only such as are incident to getting a large enterprise under way, especially considering the lack of authoritative precedents to follow, and the lack of such clerical and other machinery as the organization itself will bring into being. The committee found itself between the Scylla of doing nothing definite and the Charybdis of doing so much as to forestall action that

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ought to be taken only by the organization itself. So it thought its main effort should be to collect representative opinions and to secure the adhesion of a body of men large enough to represent different types of institutions, different lines of work and different sections of the country. Each member of the committee was asked to prepare two lists of names; one of men of full professorial rank in his own institution, and the other of men (of like grade) in his own subject, irrespective of institutional connection. Then these two lists were combined so as to include names found on either. To simplify the work, invitations were not sent to men in institutions represented by less than five names.

You will readily see that there was no available way for standardizing the basis of selection employed by the more than thirty men on the committee. Hence it is not only probable that there are omissions of teachers who should have been asked, but that there is inequity of distribution among different institutions and branches of learning. But I am sure that there is no inequality which can not readily be straightened out in the workings of the association itself. It should also be stated that the draft of a constitution to be submitted has not, for lack of time and because of the wide geographical distribution of the men on the committee, been authorized by the committee as a whole. This is hardly to be regretted for it reserves for each member complete freedom of action, and emphasizes the point that the chief object of its preparation is not to supply an ideal or final draft, but a definite basis for discussions to bring out and register the will of the meeting. At the same time it should be said that the draft does not represent so much the wishes of the members of the subcommittee personally as the preponderant drift of the opinions ex-

pressed in letters in reply to the circulars sent out.

As much as this I should probably have felt like saying in any case. But the committee has asked me also to speak upon the reasons for calling this assembly together. What is the proposed association for? Any proposal to increase the existing number of associations, meetings, etc., assumes a serious responsibility. The burden of proof is upon it.

We are in a period of intense and rapid growth of higher education. No minister of public education controls the growth; there is no common educational legislature to discuss and decide its proper course; no single tribunal to which moot questions may be brought. There are not even long-established traditions to guide the expansive growth. Whatever unity is found is due to the pressure of like needs, the influence of institutional imitation and rivalry, and to informal exchange of experience and ideas. These methods have accomplished great things. Within almost a single generation our higher education has undergone a transformation amounting to a revolution. And I venture to say that, in spite of the deficiencies we so freely deplore, no country has at any time accomplished more in the same number of years.

But have we not come to a time when more can be achieved by taking thought together? In the future, as in the past, progress will depend upon local efforts in response to local needs and resources. We have the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the lack of the European system of centralized control. So much the more reason for the existence of a central body of teachers, which, lacking official and administrative power, will express the opinion of the profession where it exists and foster its formation where it does not exist. I am a great believer in the power

of public opinion. In this country nothing stands against it. But to act, it must exist. To act wisely, it must be intelligently formed. To be intelligently formed, it must be the result of deliberate inquiry and discussion. It can not be developed in corners here and there; it can not be the voice of a few, however wise. It must be formed democratically; that is, cooperatively. All interests, however humble, must be heard; inquiry and conference must glean all the experiences available; decision must be based upon mutual consultation.

The need of a voluntary organization is the greater because of certain facts in the history of the American university. The rapid growth already referred to has occurred under a machinery designed for very different conditions. We are doing our educational work under methods of control developed decades ago, before anything like the existing type of university was thought of. Our official methods of fixing fundamental educational polity as well as of recruiting, appointing, promoting and dismissing teachers, are an inheritance from bygone conditions. Their lack of adaptation to the present situation is due not to sinister intent, but to the fact that they are a heritage from colonial days and provincial habits. The wonder is not that there is so much restlessness and friction, but that there is not more. A system inherently absurd in the present situation has been made workable because of the reasonableness and good will of the governors on one side and, even more, of the governed on the other.

All the more need, then, of ascertaining, precipitating in discussions and crystallizing in conclusions the educational experiences and aspirations of the scholars of the country. I confess myself unable to understand the temper of mind which anticipates the danger of what some term trades-union-

ism or of interference with constituted administrative authorities as a result of the formation of this organization. As to the latter: I know of few teachers who wish additional administrative work: most would be glad of relief from duties that do not seem exactly significant and that are time-consuming. But it is not expedient, in view of the trust committed to us, to maintain a state of affairs which makes difficult or impossible among college teachers the formation and expression of a public opinion based on ascertained facts. I can not imagine that existing authorities will not welcome the results of inquiries and discussion carried on by a truly representative body of teachers. To think otherwise is to dishonor both ourselves and them. The only thing which is undignified and intolerable is that teachers, individually or collectively, should indulge in carping criticism of boards of trustees when they have not thought it worth while to cultivate an enlightened educational polity among themselves nor found the means for making themselves heard. If we do not like the present situation we have nobody but ourselves to blame.

Let me add that I can think of nothing so well calculated to lift discussions of educational defects and possibilities from the plane of emotion to that of intelligence as the existence of a truly representative body of professors. The best way to put educational principles where they belong—in the atmosphere of scientific discussion—is to disentangle them from the local circumstances with which they so easily get bound up in a given institution. So to free them is already to have taken a step in their generalization. The very moment we free our perplexities from their local setting they perforce fall into a truer perspective. Passion, prejudice, partisanship, cowardice and truculence alike tend to be eliminated,

and impartial and objective considerations to come to the front. The very existence of a recognized free forum of discussion with one's fellows gathered from all parts of the country will make for sanity and steadiness quite as much as for courage.

The fear that a "trade unionism" of spirit will be cultivated is ungrounded. I have great respect for trade unions and what they accomplish. Many of the questions which have been suggested for consideration by this body have their economic aspect. Since economic conditions seriously affect the efficiency and scope of our educational work, such topics are surely legitimate ones for inquiry and report. But the term trades unionism has been used to suggest a fear that we are likely to subordinate our proper educational activities to selfish and monetary considerations. I have never heard any one suggest such a danger for the American Bar Association or the American Medical Association. Pray, are the aims of college teachers less elevated? Or is it that our position is so much less assured that any organized association must take on such a color? Are we animated by a narrower or more sordid spirit? Is there anything in the history of our body which indicates materialism of spirit, or indeed anything but an idealism which lends itself to being imposed upon rather than to propaganda in behalf of narrow trade interests? Ladies and gentlemen, I resent such insinuations. I can not believe that we are fallen so low that association for the purpose of careful investigation and discussion of common educational interests can be interpreted by any right-minded person as a rebellious and mercenary organization. If we have so fallen, something immensely more radical than the formation of this organization is the indicated remedy.

A word upon the subject of the relation of the association to academic freedom

may be in place, especially as it has been mistakenly stated in the public prints that this matter is the chief cause of the formation of this organization. I do not know any college teacher who does not believe that cases of infringement may arise. I do not know any who does not hold that such infringement, when it occurs, is an attack upon the integrity of our calling. But such cases are too rare to demand or even suggest the formation of an association like this. Existing learned societies are already disposed to deal with cases of infringement as they may come to light, and in my opinion it is a matter of detail rather than of principle whether they should be dealt with by such special bodies or by a more inclusive body like this. In any case, I am confident that the topic can not be more than an incident of the activities of the association in developing professional standards, standards which will be quite as scrupulous regarding the obligations imposed by freedom as jealous for the freedom itself. The existence of publicly recognized and enforced standards would tend almost automatically to protect the freedom of the individual and to secure institutions against its abuse.

In conclusion, let me say that proposing such an association as this is to my mind but proposing to apply to our common calling the standards and ideals to which we have been trained, each in his special line of work. In his own branch, each of us recognizes how little he can do by himself; how dependent his efforts are upon cooperation and reinforcement by the work of a multitude of others. Let us cultivate a like social sense of the wide educational interests we have in common; of our dependence upon one another as institutions and as teachers. In his own specialty, each of us recognizes the need of careful study of facts before coming to a conclu-

sion. Shall we not require of ourselves a similar scientific spirit as we try to settle educational questions? A more intense consciousness of our common vocation, our common object and common destiny; and a more resolute desire to apply the methods of science, methods of inquiry and publicity, to our work in teaching—these are the things which call for the existence of organized effort. Surely we shall have the judgment, the courage and the self-sacrifice commensurate with reverence for our calling, which is none other than the discovery and diffusion of truth. No one has any illusions about what can be immediately accomplished. Let us therefore arm ourselves with patience and endurance in view of remoter issues. No one underestimates the practical difficulties in our way. But arming ourselves with the good will and mutual confidence our profession exacts of us, we shall go forward and overcome them.

JOHN DEWEY

ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

THE meeting called for the purpose of organizing this association was held in the auditorium of the Chemists' Club, New York City, on the afternoon and evening of Friday, January 1, and the morning of Saturday, January 2, 1915. Over 250 were in attendance in the course of the three sessions. Professor John Dewey, of Columbia University, called the meeting to order and delivered an introductory address upon the purpose and possibilities of such an association, as conceived by the committee on organization, of which he had served as chairman. Nominations for the chairmanship of the meeting being called for, Professor Dewey was nominated and elected permanent chairman, and Professor Over-

street, of the College of the City of New York, recording secretary. Addresses in support of a motion to proceed to the organization of the association were made by Professors Guthe of Michigan, Thilly of Cornell, West of Princeton, Howard of Nebraska; and a letter from Professor Gildersleeve of Johns Hopkins was read. The motion was unanimously carried.

The consideration of the draft of a constitution submitted by the committee on organization was then begun. This took up most of the afternoon and evening and a part of the morning session. In order that the alternative plans of organization might receive full discussion, the meeting, in most cases, voted upon the principles involved in the several articles, rather than upon the language of the instrument. A committee was appointed to draw up the text of a provisional constitution in conformity with the action taken by the meeting, this draft to be submitted for ratification at the next annual meeting. The decisions of the gathering with respect to the principal features of the plan of organization were as follows:

1. *Name*.—After the consideration of a number of alternatives, it was voted that the name of the society be "The American Association of University Professors."

2. *Eligibility for Membership*.—It was voted that any person may be nominated for membership who holds and for ten years has held a teaching or research position in any one, or more than one, American university or college, or in a professional school of similar grade; provided, that no person not having teaching or research for his principal occupation, and no administrative officer not giving a substantial amount of instruction, shall be eligible. Nominations for membership may be made to the council by any three members of the association; nominations thus made, and ap-