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THE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION MOVEMENT

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The demand for vocational education during the last half of the nineteenth century has brought a great change in the functions of the university.

The last half of the nineteenth century has seen a profound change in the functions of a university. Until that time the idea of culture was its principal aim. Then came the demand for vocational education, with the result that colleges of agriculture, engineering, chemistry, commerce, journalism, etc., have been added. Then, beginning in a large way through Johns Hopkins University, the idea of research was added and is now one of the acknowledged aims of the higher institutions of learning. For a while it was thought that culture, vocation, and research surely comprised the possible functions of a university; but now the consensus of judgment of men in charge of universities has clearly decided the question, and another great purpose of the university has been established, namely, university extension.

The principles which demand university extension may be clearly formulated. To the middle of the nineteenth century the advancement of knowledge was comparatively slow, and at least a fair proportion of the knowledge that the people could apply had been assimilated by them in the more enlightened nations. But since the year 1850 the advancement of knowledge has been greater than in any thousand and probably in five thousand years before. The result is that the accumulation of knowledge has far outrun the assimilation of the people.

We know now, for example, that if knowledge were applied the agricultural product of a nation could be easily doubled. Soils could give this result and improve rather than deteriorate in their fertility. We know enough about the breeding of animals so that, if that knowledge were applied to man, the feeble-

mined would disappear in a generation and the insane and criminal classes be reduced to a small fraction of their present numbers. Even in politics, if our scientific knowledge were fully used there would be a vast improvement in the government of our country.

We have now come to know that one of the great functions of a university is that it shall carry to the people the knowledge which they can assimilate for their betterment along all lines. It is the function of the university because it has proven to be the best fitted instrument to do this work. The lower schools cannot disseminate this knowledge, for a large part of the knowledge which could be applied to the advantage of the people has accumulated since the men and women of middle age have left the schools. Moreover, this knowledge is being constantly accumulated, and if the people are to acquire it they must have constant access to it as long as they live. Also, large numbers of men and women, now engaged in the active work of the world, have not had the opportunities of the schools. It is this great class of people, constituting roughly about four-fifths of the population, whom the university, through extension, is obligated to serve. Carrying out knowledge to the people requires the highest grade of experts. It involves comprehensive knowledge of the more recent advancement along all lines. The work of carrying knowledge must be organized at some center. No other organization can meet these specifications so well as the university.

If a university is to have as its ideal service on the broadest basis it cannot escape taking on the function of "carrying knowledge to the people." This is but another phraseology for university extension, if this be defined as extension of knowledge to the masses rather than extension of the scope of the university along traditional lines.

The broadest ideal of service demands that the university, as the best fitted instrument, shall take up the problem of carrying out knowledge to the people, so far as the same is necessary to supplement the work of the elementary and secondary schools.

Originating at Oxford in 1850, university extension spread to Cambridge, and in 1885 was first definitely organized in this country by the University of Wisconsin. The University of Minnesota began the work in 1890. At this time a great many

independent organizations took up extension work, more than two hundred organizations carrying on extension in nearly every state of the union; and a national conference was held in December, 1911, at Philadelphia. Gradually these earlier movements lost their enthusiasm, and it was not until the reorganization of extension work on a new basis in 1906-07 by the University of Wisconsin that the present great growth of university extension began. Since this time a majority of state universities have established extension divisions with varying and extensive curriculums.

The rejuvenated movement of university extension, beginning about eight years ago, has shown power and breadth. The new movement, guided by the experience and disappointments of previous years, is upon a sounder and broader basis than heretofore. Indeed, it may be said that the policy of carrying out knowledge to the people has become a general one with the majority of the stronger American educational institutions; and it may be confidently predicted that those universities that have not already recognized this policy will do so in the near future.

It is my profound conviction that the correspondence method of instruction will become of increasing importance in work of college grade, and that it has a vast opportunity in vocational work, at least to such a time in the future as continuation and vocational schools are developed in this country on a basis as thoroughgoing as in some parts of Germany.

The work of carrying knowledge to the people is one of enormous magnitude in importance or in opportunity, compared with the functions of the university earlier recognized, those of instruction and research. The work is so vast that it can be best organized with the states as centers. In those states in which universities are mainly endowed institutions these may well cooperate with one another, as is now proposed in Massachusetts. In those states in which the universities are tax-supported institutions they are the natural centers of organization. When fully developed the work will not only involve in each state a center at the university but district centers. Already in Wisconsin six such district centers in addition to the center at Madison are established.

It should be realized at the outset that effectively carrying out knowledge to the people will prove to be expensive. For the work definite funds must be available, precisely as for the other colleges and divisions of a university. We may confidently predict that extension work will be sympathized with by state legislatures, and will be one for which an appeal may be successfully made. Wisconsin is now spending several hundred thousand dollars yearly in its extension work, without in any way curtailing the appropriations for the other divisions of the university.

The opportunity to carry out knowledge to the people is an advantage rather than a disadvantage to the growth of a university along other lines. But its chief justification is that of service. This idea was fully clarified in my mind when Ward's *Applied Sociology* appeared. Ward there proved that the greatest loss which we as a nation suffer is loss of talent. Talent is not the heritage of the rich, but is equally the heritage of the poor. If we could develop to the highest extent all of our talent so that it would give us the greatest efficiency, not simply along material lines but along all lines, our progress would be amazing. As I have said before, this scientific treatise of Mr. Ward simply proves what the insight of the poet Gray saw one hundred and fifty years ago, that in the country churchyard may lie a "mute and inglorious Milton." It should be the aim of the university extension to make this impossible; to find the way for the boy and girl of talent, whatever the place of birth, whether the tenement on the East Side of New York or the mansion on Fifth avenue, so that the states and the nation may have the advantage of his highest efficiency and at the same time make possible for him the fullest and largest life.

It should also be the aim of extension to assist the ordinary individual as well as the man of talent. If society were perfectly organized each individual would have an opportunity to develop to the fullest degree the endowments given him by nature, whether they be large or small. Doubtless this will never be accomplished fully, but it should be the aim of extension to assist every individual in this direction. This, then, is the purpose of university extension: to carry light and opportunity to every human being in all parts of the nation; this is the only adequate ideal of service for the university.