

Towards A Greater Mercer

by Dr. Theron D. Price

On the person who has had no occasion to investigate such things, the staggering proportions of an adequate educational program make a surprising impact. The importance of our great educational machinery is admitted, its problems are not broadly recognized. Some of the major influences for good, and sometimes, sadly, for evil, which come into our lives, come through the schools. By a kind of process of osmosis, the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere of any school gradually becomes a part of those who share its life. The force of the college in molding life is, I believe, generally recognized.

This brief article expresses an effort to focus attention on some cardinal considerations for those who would like to see a good Mercer, a better one.

The difficulties which confront the average American college and university are really quite appalling. Even on the definition of our task it is impossible to secure unanimous opinion. Further, in the midst of broad diversity among the personnel, wide range of interest, and vast variety of function, some unity of action is desirable and even imperative. A truly unified spirit of understanding and application is extremely difficult of securing, when one remembers that the situation must be understood and dealt with in the light of the administration, the faculty, the individual department emphasis, the student body, the alumni constituency, and, in our case, our Georgia Baptist churches. Not the least aspect of our problem is the financial one, concerning which more will be said below.

Mercer is in operation to give a thorough orientation in the liberal arts and in law, and seeks, over and above that, to give college-level training in Christian studies, and to infuse the Christian spirit in the

total life of the school. Those who are interested in such things rejoice in the splendid achievements of Mercer's past, and would preserve that heritage by improving its future. How that can be accomplished is our real problem.

The following suggestions have been often made, and recently were re-emphasized in an address by our distinguished alumni president, the Hon. Eugene Cook. They are objectives towards which all friends of Mercer may work.

1. More adequate salaries for the teaching staff. In the last analysis, a university is as great as its ability to carry great ideas, sentiments and ideals into the lives of the studentbody. This rests more largely with the teaching staff than with others. Great ideas, sentiments, and ideals are not disseminated by petty people. To get and to keep the great minds and spirits, in any significant proportion, it is necessary to be able to compete in the salary field with other potential employers. The training and ability of the average Mercer teacher could command a salary increase from twenty-five per cent to sixty per cent in other fields. This all makes for greater faculty turn-over than is healthy for the school.

2 The above situation is inevitable under the existing circumstances . . . so the statements are not to be construed as an indictment of some who could have changed the situation and did not. For indeed, such matters were given prominence in the first of the ten-year plan for Mercer growth, and in the current five-year plan are presented with a sense of proportion and of urgency. Our need for increased endowment has been often faced, and, as a matter of fact, probably none of our schools have made more steady and satisfying progress in this direction than has Mercer. Mr. Cook stresses the need for an overall endowment

of at least five million dollars. It is not beside the point here to remind ourselves that Dr. Arthur Jackson of the Georgia Baptist Foundation, another of our alumni, has for two or three years been stressing the need in all our colleges for at least \$10,000 endowment for each student enrolled. For Mercer right now that would mean a total of thirteen million dollars.

I should myself say simply that we need immediately the five million in the most urgent way, that we could easily and immediately utilize the income from thirteen millions, and that in the long view . . . to achieve greatly in large-scale permanency . . . we need to think in terms of fifty million dollar endowment. This would make possible a desired expansion of personnel and facilities of the finest quality throughout.

3. A third point was an expanded Law School with a separate endowment of at least a million dollars. Perhaps no division of the University has had the visible success of the Law School. Its alumni in high and strategic places are numerous. Only recently has the school been named for one of its most distinguished alumni, and plans been begun for making it increasingly effective in its outreach and service. It should, it seems, be free to operate upon its own budget . . . for the good both of itself and of the institution of which it is a part. Again, I should like to think of a million dollar endowment as an immediate goal, and look toward an ever ampler supplementation of that amount.

The live-values at stake, the magnitude of our problems and the urgency of our task enlist our heartiest support in the great task of learning and sharing the full life. That such life-values are cherished and that the magnitude of such problems are recognized by those in

whose hands the future of the school so largely rests, may be evidenced by pages 7 and 8 of the June 2, 1947, Report to the Board of Trustees and President's Council of Mercer University, made by President Dowell. Perhaps the Cluster editor will be inclined in a future issue to present the proposals made in that report.

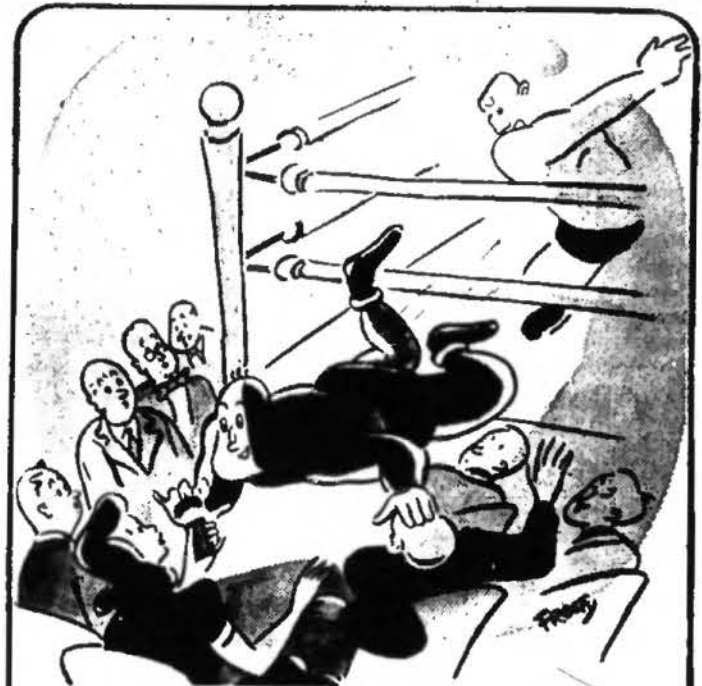
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