

ACCEPTANCE:

Stephen R. Lewis, Jr., President

Mr. Chairman, delegates and honored guests, students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, parents, and friends of Carleton:

First, let me say how pleased Gayle and I are to be here and how appreciative we are of the many expressions of kindness and welcome that have come our way from the Carleton and Northfield communities. And, my thanks to friends and colleagues who have perjured themselves this afternoon. I'm sure I will be pulling out their kind remarks as balm for wounded spirit and tired soul at a later date.

Let me also express my appreciation to those who have handled the arrangements for this week-end. Gary Iseminger's committee is listed in the program, and they have labored long and hard. But Gayle and I also want to thank all the staff in facilities and food services who are less visible but who have enriched our environment and our enjoyment of these days.

As I pondered what to say today and what issues to address at convocation yesterday, two thoughts came to mind. One was that most basic of all questions of college students: Can I please have an extension? The other, especially when my Muse was silent, was from the Psalms: "In my distress I cry to the Lord." But, I put those behind me and got on with the business at hand.

In the past months I have read and reread a number of things which I hoped would provide some guidance or even inspiration for remarks yesterday and today. It was a stimulating exercise to seek out some new sources, to go back again to some familiar issues and authors, and to read a number of inaugural addresses by other college presidents in other times, including those of some on this platform today. I was daunted by the task and by the superb use of language in many inaugural statements. I'll not try to compete; you may remember the remark of that philosopher, Winnie the Pooh: "I *like* talking to Rabbit. He talks about sensible things. He doesn't use long, difficult words like Owl. He uses short, easy words like 'What about lunch?' and 'Help yourself, Pooh.'" I'll try to follow Rabbit's example.

I spoke yesterday about a number of issues related to education, and I will not repeat much from that discussion, except to incorporate those remarks by reference, as if this were the *Congressional Record*. Today I want to address briefly some elements of my understanding of the basic purposes and nature of liberal arts colleges, our mission, and our principal constituencies and how I understand my role. I still have much to learn, especially about the history and traditions of Carleton, so I think of this as a first report.

I. Liberal Arts

In many ways the purpose of a liberal arts college was nicely articulated in a 25th alumni reunion speech of a few years ago. The class speaker began by saying, "I would like to thank Professor A for teaching me how to read, Professor B for teaching me how to write, and Professor C for teaching me how to think." [This is] a bit basic, perhaps, but not a bad definition of what we are about.

In the attack on the liberal arts, which happily seems to have eased from the peak of a few years ago, the allegation frequently was made that a liberal arts education was not "practical." I really cannot think of something more "practical" for a young person whose life expectancy is a half century or more beyond the college years — who will change jobs many times and, according to some recent estimates, change careers or occupations an average of four times — than to learn how to analyze a problem; read a text critically; write intelligible, perhaps even lively and interesting, prose; understand some basic elements of the approaches of modern science; and become familiar with, to the extent of being able to read and write, a language other than English. In addition to this most practical of all educations, the extra enjoyment of life from being able to look at a picture, listen to a piece of music, and enjoy a poem, a novel, or a short story surely is a good investment for a person interested in "payoff."

The liberal arts colleges are the source of a disproportionately large share of those who rise to

leadership positions in fields ranging from business and finance to law, government at all levels, medicine, education, and the management of the arts. From the viewpoint of national investment, what could be more important than an education which helps to refine the judgment, to widen the vision, to increase the sensibilities of individuals who may someday be called to positions of leadership? Socrates warned that “cities will never have rest from their evils, — no, nor the human race, as I believe,” until those who pursue *either* “political greatness or wisdom” to the exclusion of the other are replaced by leaders *combining* those two virtues. While his specific reference was to the guardians of The Republic, wise and able political leadership is critical in a democracy — something that those who have observed the last quarter century of political leaders in the United States should well understand.

I spoke yesterday of Mr. Gaudino, a master teacher. I watched him once speaking to an earnest engineer from the upper Midwest, whose freshman son, Mr. Gaudino’s advisee, was intending to pursue mathematics and science at college. Upon hearing that Mr. Gaudino taught political philosophy, the parent inquired, anxiously, “But, do you teach anything *practical*?” Mr. Gaudino responded vehemently, “Well, I *hope* not!” The parent was stunned. But, of course, in helping us to learn to read, write, and think, as well as to consider painting on a broader canvas than any we had ever dreamed of, the education we received from him was the most practical and the most fundamental that could be imagined.

The vast majority of liberal arts undergraduates, and virtually all Carleton students, are entering adulthood, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually. Each matures at a different rate, indeed, at a different rate within each type of development. The years from eighteen to twenty-two should be years of reach and discovery, testing the limits of one’s capacities and doing so in an atmosphere that both challenges and supports — a tension that is fundamental to real education and to real learning, as I emphasized yesterday. The American liberal arts college, and Carleton as a particularly effective example, provides and must provide not only curricular or academic or scholarly opportunities for growth and development, but those in the extra-curriculum as well. And, in the residential colleges, special opportunities exist for developing associations between students and faculty outside the classroom to support the growth and development of young women and men across the full range of human talents. I think we have a responsibility to do just that.

II. Constituencies

The well-known passage from Ecclesiastes with which we began this afternoon speaks of continuities and cycles of history. That is relevant, I think, to the nature of Carleton and to the constituencies we serve. Carleton today is the product of much effort, pain, and sacrifice as well as vision, hope, and a willingness to take risks and make tough choices in defense of the fundamental objectives of the College — efforts that have continued for over 120 years. We are beneficiaries of that past dedication, and we celebrate and honor that history by our events this weekend.

By far the most important of our tasks is encouraging, facilitating, making possible the education of currently enrolled undergraduate students. But Carleton, like all good colleges, must concern itself with the education and growth of a number of constituencies — faculty; the administrative, professional, and support staff; and, wider afield, parents and alumni.

Robert K. Greenleaf, a distinguished Carleton alumnus, has written and lectured extensively on the notion of “servant leadership,” a concept I find appealing since it puts the *others* first in an organization, institution, or polity. Such a leader, Greenleaf says, makes sure “that other people’s highest priority needs are being serviced. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” I hope I can fit his vision.

My understanding of this kind of college — and what I have learned of Carleton and its unique

traditions of governance make the lessons even more important here — underlines the importance of seeing the various constituent parts of the College as just that: *constituent parts*, not competing subgroups. Doubtless, we will face particular choices at particular times that will benefit, in some way, some parts more than others. However, it is important to recognize both the interrelation of the parts and the importance of continued growth and nurturing of *all* those associated with Carleton — both for the sake of the individuals and for the long-run health of the College.

As an institution established in perpetuity, our constituents include those who will be students, faculty, staff, and alumni in the future. One of the most difficult tasks, and one which falls largely on the president and fellow trustees, is to maintain the balance of claims between today's beneficiaries and those in the future. In that respect, and in some others, the role of the trustees is very different from that of one among many constituencies. They must not, they cannot, be "interested" parties; they must take a long view, and they must be concerned with maintaining the conditions under which the College can serve its many constituent parts.

Wise trustees (and apart from a possible lapse of judgment in naming the current president, Carleton's seem to me to fit that description) keep themselves well informed about the operations of the College, but they leave the daily and immediate governance to those closest to the scene — unless there are issues which might affect the integrity, independence, financing, or overall intellectual health of the College. Van Alan Clark, a long-time friend and superb trustee of Williams and several other institutions, a man of boundless humor and energy, was fond of saying: "The trustees should have only two items on their meeting agenda: the first a motion to fire the president and the second, that motion having failed, a motion to adjourn." Having said that, he was also likely, at every meeting of the budget committee, to find some arithmetic error or some unexplained deviation from trends deep in the annexed statements, just to keep us on our toes; and, he was willing to spend long days working with us analyzing the college's problems and prospects and thinking through the fundamental, long-term issues.

As I read Carleton's history, the trustees have stepped in on a few occasions to ensure that outside influences did not intrude on academic freedom or on the independence of teachers and students. Casey Jarchow's history of the first century, for example, notes several episodes. In the 1880s, a scholarship was offered on condition that "the theory of probation after present life not be held." It was declined. In the 1920s, the Scopes trial raised the national consciousness about the teaching of evolution and led first to a spirited defense by President Cowling of the right of faculty to teach truth as they knew it and then to a severing of relations with the Minnesota State Baptist Convention. In the depression years of the 1930s, the trustees declined financial support that was conditioned on changing the curriculum of the College in a direction urged by a donor but not desired by the faculty. In the McCarthy era, President Gould and the trustees spoke in defense of academic freedom and against the use of loyalty oaths.

The Carleton trustees have consistently held that the program and the independence of the College are not for sale. With an apparent increase in the number of corporations and private foundations and, unfortunately, even some Carleton alumni, who are attaching ideological tests to their grants or contributions, I think it appropriate for me to state categorically that I wholeheartedly share the Board of Trustees' determination to maintain academic freedom and independence.

III. Students

The most important of our constituent parts, our reason for being in the first place, is the student body. The Carleton for which I take formal responsibility today has a splendid group of young women and men, talented academically, alive politically and socially, active athletically, caring about issues of the day, whether global, national, or local — witness the several hundred volunteers working under programs of Acting in the Community Together and the participation

in the We are Together vigil — and creative in the performing and other fine arts — witness the superb music last evening.

In addition, Carleton students are just plain fun to be with. Gayle and I felt we had really arrived at Carleton during this past week when the Knights gave us an unexpected late evening serenade at Nutting House, and especially when, at the Homecoming game last Saturday, I was presented with Schiller's nose. This group of students has been actively courted, carefully selected, and, I hope, well-nurtured while they are here — though some seem to think that a bit more nurturing from Food Service might be welcome.

The current student body represents a range of diversity that on the one hand is impressive by the standards of other national liberal arts colleges — with more than half of the student body on Carleton grant aid and nearly three-fourths working for various departments of the College, Carleton is well ahead of most highly selective colleges in ensuring that its students come from a wide range of family *economic* backgrounds.

On the other hand, Carleton is not yet doing enough to identify and attract students from America's racial minorities — Asian, Black, Latino, and Native American. One of the clearest needs is for us to improve our ability to bring more students from our American minorities to Carleton, primarily to be certain Carleton is helping to increase the numbers of American minority students who have access to the highest quality education — though the larger numbers will make Carleton a better place for all students, too.

Nor will increasing our efforts and effectiveness at student recruiting be enough. If we are to play an appropriate role in meeting the nation's needs, Carleton must also find creative ways of ensuring that *all* students, as well as all other members of the Carleton family, are sensitive to the issues and problems of racism in American society. This is an issue for the College as a whole, and I have been most encouraged in these past few weeks by the energy and the imagination with which a large number of students of all races and a growing number of faculty and staff see this as an issue of importance to Carleton's mission.

IV. Faculty

As a transition between remarks on students and faculty, I might mention the advice received by one new college president (John Chandler, in fact) on how to deal with trouble from his constituencies. His predecessor left three envelopes in the top drawer of his desk in case of campus trouble. Upon opening the first envelope during his first crisis the president read: Blame the previous administration. Sometime later trouble erupted again. The card in the second envelope read: Reorganize the administration. A few years passed and a third crisis arose. This time the advice was: Start preparing three envelopes.

Carleton is one of a small number of fortunate liberal arts colleges that has a special role in American higher education, providing a disproportionately large share of individuals who go on to earn Ph.D.s in the academic subjects, to teach in the nation's colleges and universities, and to staff the scientific research establishment. Happily, a number of national foundations, including the one led so creatively by President Sawyer over the past dozen years, have recognized this special role and are providing assistance to our programs, particularly those aimed at faculty development, student-faculty research, and, most recently, efforts to encourage greater numbers of American minority students to pursue careers in higher education.

Carleton and its peer institutions are very demanding in what they expect of their faculty. While recruiting economists for another small, very highly selective liberal arts college, I was told by placement officers at the best graduate schools: "We have a hard time with you, since we would recommend to you only those we'd recommend to the best universities, but you want them to be good teachers, too!" We ask a lot. But the joys of teaching excellent undergraduates, young people who can join us at the edges of research in our various fields, are enticing for a small number of

people. It is that small number we seek. President Gould is quoted often as saying his principal task was scouting out faculty talent, since that's where the long-term future of the College lies. I think he is right.

A strong faculty is made up of a collection of strong individuals — men and women of diverse backgrounds, with different mixes of talents, different specialties, different interests, not necessarily (indeed very seldom) excellent at everything, but excellent at a range of things, committed to teaching and committed to personal professional growth and development. Carleton should not necessarily seek the kind or quantity of scholarly output — or what sometimes passes as scholarly output — that is, rightly or wrongly, expected of faculty at major research universities. Indeed, because of the unusual range and richness of interdepartmental and interdisciplinary programs at Carleton, there are opportunities for a type and originality of scholarship that the major universities, mired as they sometimes are in departmental concerns, cannot reasonably expect to achieve. Carleton faculty have been active scholars. My commitment is that they should, indeed must, continue to be, if Carleton is to maintain a leadership position among liberal arts colleges, since my experience and my convictions are that teaching and scholarship are complementary activities, not competitive ones.

V. Personal

Fear not, I'm nearing the end. The few remarks and suggestions I have made about some of my priority areas of interest don't in any way constitute a program or a "first hundred days." I believe it was Olin Robison who said, at the time of his inauguration at Middlebury, that his long-range plan was to survive until Thanksgiving. As I learn how much there is to learn, I have similar thoughts!

Gayle and I had a somewhat strange experience several times over the past few months when people asked us: "Are you looking forward to going to Carleton?" Our response (hopefully not too shocked or rude) was: Of course we are; we wouldn't be going if we were not excited by the prospect. And while we've been daunted by [my secretary] Janet Runkel's lists of appointments (she is almost ready to show them to me a day in advance now), the development office's list of planned travel, student invitations to stay in the dorms, and the fact that sometimes we can't find one another in Nutting House, we are still just as excited by the reality.

Enough. Let me again say how pleased Gayle and I are to be here, and how humble you have made us feel by calling us to this task. We will need all the help and support, as well as the questioning and challenges, that you can give us. Let me end with a favorite passage from Aldous Huxley to which Gayle first introduced me:

The choice is always ours. Then let me choose
The longest art, the hard Promethean way
Cherishingly to tend and feed and fan
That inward fire, whose small precarious flame,
Kindled or quenched, creates
The noble or ignoble men [or women] we are,
The world we live in and the very fates,
Our bright or muddy star.

Thank you. I hope I can do the job in the way you would like me to.