# Inauguration Address

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*Seventh President of Cornell University*

I am honored indeed to accept the presidency of Cornell University. It is an unmatched opportunity for service to higher education, and I welcome the chance to contribute my talents to this great institution.

It is both stimulating and humbling to step into the large shoes of the six distinguished men who have preceded me in this chair. I will return time and again to the practical vision of Ezra Cornell and the intellectual creativity of Andrew D. White. It is difficult to conceive of a better embodiment of the twin stars of liberal learning and social application than the two founders of our University. President Charles Kendall Adams added a deep commitment to research, and Jacob Gould Schurman, a wide ranging pursuit of excellence. Livingston Farrand made it clear that institutions are made up of human beings, while to Edmund Ezra Day and to my able predecessor and warm friend, Deane Waldo Malott, we owe the building of what is modern Cornell.

The time has come to discuss the future of Cornell. The time has come to review the past, examine the present, and plan for the future. The dreams of our founders have become our traditions, and we must review these traditions in order to dream again.

At Cornell University in October, 1963, an inauguration is a prelude to a far more sweeping re-examination of our history and future mission. In eighteen months we

shall celebrate our Centennial. An inauguration that precedes a centennial adds bite to inquiry; it certainly adds sweep and moment to current concerns. The two events are naturally connected, and I propose we bind them closely together. I propose that we look to the next eighteen months as a period appropriate for the redefinition of our mission.

We have limited the ceremonial aspects of this occasion to those of a family celebration because it is really only the overture to our Centennial symphony. As befits any overture, it should only state the themes, not exhaust them; it should suggest, not answer; it should be provocative, not reassuring. Today is the overture; during the coming months we will move from andante to vivace; the finale will come in April, 1965. During this period we shall address ourselves to the issues that will determine our future course and how we shall exercise educational leadership. Today, we shall propose these issues, knowing that they will and must be restated even while they are being answered.

Education itself has moved up the priority scale of almost every country of the world. The revolution of rising expectations is, with respect to education, fast becoming the revolution of rising demands. From Santiago to Quebec, from Kyoto to Abadan, from Athens to Ithaca, the pulse of this demand is felt by every parent, every politician, every statesman, and by every person for whom education has become the hope for personal fulfillment. Even if an inauguration and a centennial did not excite our reflections and our prospects, this rising public interest would, by itself, require Cornell, as one of the world's great universities, to reassess its role and mission.

Here, at this University, this pulse takes the form of a desire for educational redefinition and a readiness for educational venture. I have sensed this readiness in discussions with every part of the University, and, to use a

familiar Quaker phrase, "This speaks to the condition of your new president."

I propose, therefore, that we proceed to a restatement of the Cornell idea. Today I shall suggest the outlines for this restatement, but tomorrow we shall all become involved. It will be an exacting and exciting venture—the far shore of this voyage is the spring of 1965. To use the figure of George William Curtis at the inauguration of Andrew Dickson White, the time has come to put our ship to sea and set sail.

First of all, we must identify some fixed points for our inquiry; otherwise we may well set a course that leads us nowhere. Three matters are likely to have a long-run and pervasive influence on our concerns and on our remedies.

The first has been suggested in an elliptical but arresting phrase by the French philosopher, Eric Weil, who says: "Faced with the prospects of controlling nature, man has now decided to control history." The control of nature is an old dream; what is new are the heady and hazardous possibilities of substantial success. Fission and fusion will unlock the doors to almost unlimited power. Desalinization will mean an unlimited supply of fresh water and a large increase in the world's arable land. Distance is fast becoming a detail, and even the limitations of the earth's size and characteristics that had begun to worry John von Neumann will disappear as a result of our increasing mastery and use of the space beyond our atmosphere.

But beyond these immediate conquests we have begun to see even more formidable opportunities and dangers for mankind. The unraveling of the genetic code and the generalizations about to emerge from the interconnected studies of chemistry, biology, and psychology point to some awesome prospects for man's power to influence the very nature and behavior of the human race.

And man's attitude is also changing with respect to his

role in determining the evolution of social and political structures. We no longer believe that free societies are mysteriously built into the genes of those who happen to be descended from King Arthur. Human will and human judgment have been reintroduced into the calculus of social improvement and will not easily be dislodged by prophets of inevitable doom or inevitable progress. The power of man both to influence and to resist social progress has now been restored to a place of highest prominence in man's universe.

Therefore, with respect to the natural world, society, and man—man himself, as prime mover and responsible agent, has moved front and center on the stage. For those responsible for education, the important questions must be: what must he learn? what more must he discover? what kind of man must he be? and, how far must he try to extend his influence and sense of service? Such a man has unlimited requirements for his education. These emerging demands must be the first guidepost in our educational re-examination.

A second consideration affects all our inquiries—the dynamics of an advanced technology with its consequent impact on the rate of social change. The rapidly expanding use of mechanical power, the shrinking of distance, the expansion of the individual's universe—these have a direct effect on our educational policies and administration. The speed and sweep of social change will put increased emphasis on individual initiative, on abilities rather than facts, on creativity rather than conformity, and on learning rather than instruction.

The third basic consideration results from a parallel drama unfolding in the institutional world of the university. Just as modern man is preoccupied with shaping his own future, so the university is concerned with the prospects of managing its own development.

The fact is that universities, after centuries of isola-

tion, are not fully prepared to operate in the hard world of affairs. Having meshed their gears with society, they must now develop the institutional policies and the administrative muscle required to be a driving rather than merely a spinning gear. The university has a direct stake in the shape and substance of the society in which it will do its work. If free universities require free societies, universities cannot shirk their obvious responsibilities. In Berlin and Buenos Aires the world has witnessed the temporary destruction of great universities that operated on the assumption that they could be protected by merely announcing their independence. It is told that such a posture only soaked the feet of King Canute.

But the pressures on the university from the public driving wheel are enormous and increasing. A rising demand for admissions, an increasing requirement for trained graduates, an insistence on research results, both basic and applied, and a rising tide of all sorts of social and public services—all these needs have knocked insistently at the university gates, and not without results. Our universities are increasingly jammed with a series of unrelated intellectual cocktail parties made up of students, teachers, faculty entrepreneurs, administrators and public officials, and, like most such parties, it is sometimes rather hard for the host to be heard. Frequently, he doesn't even try.

There are signs, however, that this state of affairs is about to change. Universities are coming to realize that their unique combination of services is precisely that most badly needed by modern man determined to have a say as to his own destiny. At the same time, both the university and man have come to recognize that, if the university loses its own sense of inner direction and balance, then the balanced requirements of man will be lost also. The universities must preserve their identity or man may not be able to fulfill his mission.

Our three guideposts are now in place. They are: the needs of responsible and universal man; the consequences of rapid social change; and finally, the requirements of a university that would lead, not follow. With these determinants in mind, we must now raise some of the issues that must be brought into focus in our coming deliberations.

First, we must start with our future students. We want more young men and women of high intelligence and talent, motivated to prepare themselves for the large tasks they must assume. We want those who, during their years at Cornell, will be able to free themselves from any lingering biases of race, color and creed; who will be devoted to their country, yet recognize the universality of the world's problems; who will come to realize that it is their own job to develop their own talents, whatever they may be; and who will be sensitive to the delicate balance between the requirements of individual self-fulfillment and the restraints required for adult membership in a complex society.

We must make sure we are really looking for students of this kind. We must feel some confidence that we know them when we see them. We must have far more sophisticated measuring rods than are now available. And, most important, we must find out how to attract more of them to Cornell.

Next we must ask whether our instructional programs and academic environment are geared to the students we wish to attract and to the level of preparation of the new secondary school programs. We must ask whether our attention to the excellence of our undergraduate program as a whole has slipped too far down our scale of priorities and has consequently endangered the balanced program that distinguishes a modern university from a research park. We must ask how to bring to the students we

seek and admit the instructional resources which will fully challenge and fulfill their individual capabilities.

We will want to take a hard look at our current ideas about graduate education. We should consider the pros and cons of a closer integration with the junior and senior years and, alternatively, a greater separation with special and higher standards of performance required at the graduate level. We may wish to make more specific arrangements for graduate work, depending on the objectives toward which the student is working.

We shall have to examine the growing number of postdoctorates on our campus who, in some departments, outnumber doctoral candidates. We may wish to ask whether they are likely to increase in numbers. But we shall certainly wish to consider their role in the learning, teaching, and research processes and decide whether their place in the university should be given more formal definition.

In today's world the interest of higher education does not begin with the freshman year nor end with a degree, and universities are beginning to assume increasing responsibilities for education at both ends of this spectrum. Sputnik made universities realize that their neglect of secondary education was responsible for the inadequate preparation of entering students. We next discovered that, if secondary educational experience was to be upgraded, it was imperative to assume more responsibility for the training of teachers and administrators. Today we recognize that this increased responsibility will require a substantial realignment of authority with state and local offices of education. James Conant's brilliant book, *The Education of American Teachers,* will be a burr under our saddle.

The chasm between secondary and higher education is being bridged and, as a result, our university faculties are bound to take a more direct responsibility for secondary-level education. We may wish to modify adminis-

trative and faculty arrangements to better represent the central interest of the university in the preparation of students.

The world will not be content with university performance, if it merely looks critically and constructively at other levels of education. The university must also recognize that its own performance is subject to critical analysis and improvement. Research and planning with respect to university problems have only recently become respectable ideas. We shall have to give increasing attention to the professional and responsible study and evaluation that are indispensable for healthy institutions.

And after the degree has been granted, has the university finished all it can do for modern man? We shall have to look hard at needs for further education, and we shall have to pay attention to the upgrading of talent and manpower long after formal education is complete. The acceleration of technological and social change will make education the lifelong process we have claimed it to be in theory but rarely recognized in practice.

So much for our coming preoccupations with education and learning. We must now turn our attention to the two other great responsibilities of the modern university—the advancement of knowledge and its application to the requirements of modern man.

The advancement of knowledge is a prerequisite to man's mission—the future management of his affairs. He has the most urgent requirements to know more and more about his environment, his society, and himself, and only through scholarship and research can he raise the ceiling on his prospects. The large commitment to research is surely the distinguishing characteristic of the university and has been ever since the German universities showed the way in the last century.

But it is precisely in the area of research that the modern university is in difficulty. The scissors effect of a world

of exploding knowledge and a world of insatiable demand is cutting into the universities' capacity to maintain a balance between teaching and research. It is equally difficult to balance research programs with available funds and facilities. The result, too often, is that decisions are effectively made by the enterprising professor and non-university institution with funds. University communities must learn to face up to the necessity of choice among glittering opportunities. They must be prepared to select or even to develop a rationale for selection of research projects.

Let it be said immediately that no one in his right mind can deplore the main thrust of this development. It has added zest and range to university affairs and has brought in much fresh air. But the fresh air is fast becoming a gale and the pictures on the wall are rattling—our teeth, also.

This will be a complicated and most delicate exercise, for what is one man's balance is another man's restriction—what is elbowroom for one is just a sharp elbow for another. There will be more agreement in principle on the need for rationalizing balance and integrated purpose than there will be on specific proposals for achieving these desired ends. But it was ever thus and will always be so because we must deal with the real world and not an imaginary one.

Perhaps we shall be able to evolve some agreed upon rules of the game. Maybe we shall agree to build on areas of unique academic strength. Perhaps we shall concentrate on research areas that are not duplicated in our immediate part of the world. Perhaps we may even generate our own list of priorities without reference to the availability of support and then go after the necessary funds.

At the same time, we will not lightly put checkreins on our most creative talent. Our best hope is for a better

picture of the University's entire research program and the consequences of particular decisions. The growth of the research effort in this country shows little sign of flagging, and Cornell commitments to research must and shall increase. To the availability of financial support, I propose to inject the new determinants of selectivity and choice.

Now we turn to the third dimension of the modern university: the application of knowledge to public problems or, at least, the demonstration of how the application can be made.

As complicated as it is, research may be an easier matter for the university to manage than the expanding demands upon it for public service. These requests are also frequently accompanied by large prospects for public funds. The university's concern for applied knowledge has been with us for decades, but we have now moved a step beyond to the development of public programs and even to the machinery for their implementation. Interest in research increasingly means interest in application. With a world in the throes of industrial and social modernization, the demands on our universities for help are only beginning. We shall have to respond in increasing measure, at all levels of public organization, and in an increasing number of fields.

We must consider how we can be of increased assistance to our own immediate community. Surely the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County have more claims on our attention than Ouagadougou in the Upper Volta. Cornell has an immediate and direct stake in its own community, and we will not neglect this responsibility.

Although a private university, we are the land-grant institution of New York State. This fact, plus our stature in the world of education, gives us the opportunity to participate in the affairs of the State, particularly in the educational problems that press on our colleagues in

Albany. We shall have to discover how we can exercise the maximum useful influence and be of the most service.

We are at the same time a national institution in the front ranks of the universities of this country, and this presents obligations for service and influence at the national level. We shall be there and we shall be felt. Our public and private traditions and resources will give us the chance for unique contributions in an educational world where private universities are now receiving public funds and public universities are building up their private endowments. The officers and faculty of a university which is a member of both the Ivy League and the Land-Grant College Association can make a special contribution to our nation's educational councils.

Of course, there is another plane of interest that demands our attention; namely, the rising concern for educational development overseas and the emergence of an international intellectual community. With respect to the first, Cornell has participated in some stirring adventures and will be involved in many more. Education has become, as I have already observed, a top priority on the agenda of all new and modernizing countries. Cornell's unique mix of public and private support will make us an increasingly interesting institution to study and an increasingly important source of counsel and advice.

The prospect of an international intellectual community is one of the most significant developments of our times. Since knowledge and learning, by definition, know no frontiers, is it too much to hope that universal interest in the advancement and diffusion of knowledge may provide the strong cement that can hold together our fractured world?

But, as in the case of research, expansion of activity in the area of applied demonstration will have to be viewed in the large. We cannot automatically assume wide-ranging responsibilities in the public arena without an aware-

ness of the relation of individual projects to the total university responsibility.

Learning, research and public service—this is the unique combination of tasks of the modern university. And now a brief comment about its inner spirit.

I refer to the freedom of thought and inquiry that is the oxygen of academic life. It is this freedom that makes it possible to search for truth, to dream of the future, to dare to innovate, to dare to be wrong. And society will protect this freedom as long as we commit ourselves to work and produce at the highest level of our individual capacities. Shoddy performance may well be a greater peril to academic freedom than attack from all extremists combined. The pursuit of excellence, to use a familiar phrase, is the best guarantee of freedom. It is also the power behind the democratic idea.

We now return to and rephrase our opening question: can the free university speak to man's great mission of the next century—the management of himself, his affairs, and his natural world to the fulfillment of his individual destiny? The university must try, and it will try because there is no other institution which can deal with these great concerns of modern man. Learning, research, and public service—these are the fundamental needs of modern man, and these are the fundamental missions of the modern university. Need and mission have been joined, and it will be the overriding responsibility of the university that would lead to make certain that all three missions are promoted, supported, and kept in balance.

This is a large and even breath-taking task to contemplate, but Cornell does not come to this assignment unprepared. We are the inheritors of traditions and solid accomplishments that stand us in good stead.

We have had wise and experienced voices on our Board of Trustees. We have them now, and in our present Chairman we have a great man and a close friend. We have had

great teachers, great scholars and able students, and we have them now—in abundance. We have produced an alumni body studded with successful and distinguished citizens both here and abroad. And, we have great assets in property and endowments, both realized and in prospect.

We lead from strength, but we must be stronger—far stronger in every respect—if we are to enter our next century running hard but breathing easily. The time is ripe to open this discourse. I have posed my questions and concerns. We must all share in the task that is now our main business—to demonstrate by thought and work that Cornell is a great university on the move.