



ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE GOVERNOR OF
PUERTO RICO, RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
DURING THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY EXTENSION ASSOCIATION
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Ladies and gentlemen of the National University Extension Association. I am very pleased to welcome you to Puerto Rico for your Annual Meeting. Our people and our university as well as our government, offer you the best of Puerto Rico's traditional hospitality. We want your visit among us to be agreeable as well as useful.

The modern world is a learning society. Our ideas and our techniques have become complex. They change at a faster rate with each passing generation. Our complex and changing world cannot be understood or lived in well in the simple ways suitable for older, simpler societies. You probably remember how the great anthropologist Robert Redfield described that older, simpler world. He called it a folk society. He said its simple values, ideas, and techniques were easily learned by maturing boys and girls imitating their fathers and mothers while helping them. The young looked at

their parents and knew what they themselves would become. Their parents looked at the grandparents to see how they too would be. They learned throughout their lives, but they learned only a few things, slowly, almost without being aware of it. It is different in our society.

In our society, the values, ideas, and techniques we must understand and work with are complicated. They present alternatives which we dispute and debate. We must choose which alternatives will guide us. Such decisions must continue all our lives, because change is now so rapid and constant. To survive then, we must accept the pedagogic imperative of our modern society: one must continue his learning throughout his life.

You association members, of course, know this intimately, professionally. You place your lives in this field of work. You accept the obligation to carry your learning beyond the customary hours and places of university instruction to help modern man continue his learning on which his well-being depends. This is a necessary and vital work.

This new function of the university began a little more than a century ago. Extension work began at the ancient English university in Oxford in 1850, where a commission recommended "carrying out knowledge to the people". In the United States, a few years later, in 1862, the land-grant colleges were authorized by the Morrill Act.

The University of Puerto Rico is one of these land-grant institutions. Like most of them, it has also become a university.

William Bainey Harper, the distinguished first president of the University of Chicago and, indeed, most of the heads of the swiftly developing universities in the United States in the second half of the last century shared the intentions of Oxford University and the land-grant colleges and universities. The university scholars and scientists should carry their learning out to the great majority, to the people who did not find it convenient in youth to go to the universities. University learning was carried to the farm and rural population by the agricultural extension agencies. It can hardly be a coincidence that these farmers became the most productive farmers ever known in the world. Harper and many of his colleagues carried their learning into the adult city populations in a variety of divisions - adult education, night colleges, extension courses, extra-mural studies, and continuing education. Today, our universities carry learning everywhere through television and radio. The members of your association deserve praise for these great advancement.

Given the rapid change of our society, there is one aspect of the mission of carrying university learning out to the people which seems to become more and more important. Professionals needs change so swiftly that many professionals become obsolete in mid-life. It can be a shattering experience. In carrying learning

out to the people, universities might search about for these groups and provide learning to shift them from their initial profession to another. We in Puerto Rico a few decades ago needed professional engineers for our sugar milling plants. But circumstances change in commerce and industry. Now we need professional engineers for our growing petrochemical industry.

The Council on Higher Education of the University of Puerto Rico has been aware of this kind of need. Recently, they commissioned a study to discover what technicians are needed so that regional college curricula could be shaped to these needs.

Agricultural extension work, retraining professional persons when their initial profession declines, and analyzing job markets to determine the requirements for various technicians have been necessary roles of the university in carrying its learning out to the people. But the original purpose of many university extension programs remains critically important. Carrying their learning out to the people has always been the central, necessary, and unique mission of universities since they began 800 years ago in Bologna, in Paris, and in many cities. Some of the people are young in the cohort 18 to 24, who come full time to the campus, and some of the people are of this age or older who need university instruction off campus or after usual work hours on campus. But the learning is the same.

Walter Lippmann defined the mission of the university as

answering the serious and interesting questions of human-kind as perfectly as they could be answered in this time and place by using the known methods of scholars and scientists to state what is true and what is false. Lippmann said very clearly that he did not believe that all or even most of these answers were wise and good. He also said that many persons not found in universities addressed such questions and provided answers. Lippmann himself, obviously, was a preeminent example of such a person. But he came to believe at the end of his long life that this was primarily the work of university faculties.

Lippmann's concept of the university mission is very similar to the idea of José Ortega y Gasset. Ortega wrote in 1930 in The Mission of the University that it should "hacer del hombre medio, ante todo, un hombre culto - situarlo a la altura de los tiempos". (Obras Completas, IV, pág. 335) - make the average man, before all, a cultivated man - to place him at the height of the times". In a famous public dispute in 1909 with Miguel de Unamuno, who preferred Spanish to European patterns of thought and institution, Ortega wrote that he was emphatically a European. One could not reach the height of the times unless he connected his country to the larger civilization. This is the central work of the universities - to provide learning and instruction to help people be the full or part-time students to achieve cultivation and to live at the height of the times.

One of the big challenges^s facing education today is to guarantee this learning and instruction which Lippmann and Ortega, were concerned about, is carried out to the people without being adulterated in the process. One must avoid even the suspicion that university instruction can be had in two categories --the quality product and the second-rate product. This is one of the grave responsibilities in university development in these times of just equalitarian demands, and perhaps the responsibility is even more serious in the area of extension education.

This responsibility will increase, not diminish, because the interest in this program grows daily by people who want to satisfy desires for more cultivation without regard to program completion or the acquisition of credentials. In these instances, it is helpful to think of courses instead of study programs. It is the course in itself which rouses the interest of the student. Such students often want cultivation in fields which they lacked time for earlier in their lives. I am thinking of the linguistics professor who studied the chemistry he could not fit into his study program when he was a regular student. There may be a doctor of medicine who comes to a philosophy course which the pressure of his earlier study put beyond his grasp. Courses on Cervantes have always been interesting to adult people, for the major questions this great Spanish writer treats are more interesting to the mature than they are to the young. When universities carry

their learning out to the people, they will surely find many people like these questing for learning in courses apart from the principal line of their former study and work. They deserve to be satisfied.

Our complex modern world with its upsetting rapid changes compels us to become a learning society. We cannot avoid learning throughout the mature and older ages any more than we could avoid learning as youth becoming adult. The clients in this learning society are often clients for university instruction. Often they find attendance in regular university classes somewhat inconvenient. They are usually older than the usual university student. They often find working hours dedicated to family and work demands. Quite often they lack the established requirements to be enrolled in a course and the program of study of which the course is a unit. These are candidates for university instruction carried out to the people. They are the clients for university continuing and extension divisions. They deserve the best instruction the universities can give them. They seek the best available statements of what is true and what is false. They seek cultivation to live at the height of the times.