

President Wright,
November 16, 1926

CHAPEL

I have planned to talk to you this week on some subjects that I think will be of service to every student in the college. I hope they will be, and I should like for each one of you to get the things I hope to bring to you this week. This talk, I had planned for last Friday. It is fitting that it should come right after Armistice Day.

I want to talk to you this morning on Some of the Effects of the World War upon Democratic Governments.

The world has recently gone through the most terrific war that we have any record of. We went into the war to make the world safe for democracy; at least, that is what we say we went into it for. And I believe that was the real reason that prompted the American people. It seems to me, the question now is - To Make Democracy Safe for the World. What is the meaning of what we call democracy, or representative government? What is a democracy? It has been splendidly defined as a "Government of the People, for the People, by the People". I wonder if we know just what that means. It is a government organized by the people themselves; that is, the people who are to be governed. It is a government organized by the people in a given nation, and that government is operated for the people constituting that nation. Let me repeat that it is a "Government of the People, for the People, by the People", and that means it is a government organized by the people in a said nation, and that government is operated for the people constituting the nation. That is what we call a republic or a democracy. It presupposes that the people are law abiding. That is something that we haven't yet fully realized. A democracy presupposes that the people in the democracy are a law abiding people, that they are not against the government, that they are individually active supporters of

their government. It is, therefore, founded upon individual right-mindedness.

Now some of these things may sound a little out of place to you in the light of what we have confronting us in America today. And yet, a democracy, as I understand it, is founded upon these principles that I have laid down for you. In a democracy the people can be trusted. If that is so; if all I have said is true, then it goes without saying that universal education is essential in a democracy, because the people who constitute a democracy must know, or they cannot act with intelligence. It should mean that we do not need thousands upon thousands of laws made by the central government in our country (the United States Government, I have in mind), and yet we do have thousands upon thousands of federal laws. Instead of having such an enormous number of what we call federal laws in this country; that is, laws from the central government, it seems to me, in a democracy that the people locally, and by that I mean in the United States, state, county and town should make most of the laws under which they live; laws that will fit the immediate environment of the individual. And that is the reason they should be local laws in the sense that I mean, and not in the sense that our state uses it. Certain conditions obtain in North Carolina, or South Carolina, or New York that do not exist in either of the other states, perhaps. They need to be met by the several states. Conditions exist in one division of a state that do not exist in other sections; that is, under county organization. They need to have laws to meet those local conditions. Certain conditions exist in a town that do not exist in another town, so the town should have its individual laws. What do I mean by law? What is law anyway? We have a local organization in the college (and this talk is not to deal with the Student Government Association), but we have a local organization that makes laws.

We have town laws in the town of Greenville. We have certain laws and regulations in the county in which this college is located. We have certain other laws in the state, and then we have others that cover the whole country. Now, what do we mean by law? If it does not come out of the public consciousness, and there is such a thing as public consciousness; if it doesn't come out of the body of folks to whom what we call the law is to apply, it is only a statute on the statute books and not effective. A law to be effective in a democracy must be an expression of public opinion on a given problem. That does not mean that every person must agree with it. It doesn't mean that, but it means that it must come out of the consciousness of the whole body of folks to be controlled by that law, and when it does so come, it is an effective law after it is enacted into law by the law making body having authority to make such a law. In other words, what we call law is an expression of the opinion of the people, written down as a statute, and recorded as one of the rules by which human beings are to be governed.

During the World War we centralized our government to win the war. We were organized almost as an absolute monarchy. That is, we gave to the President of the United States almost unlimited control. He even had control of what we were to eat. Maybe you do not remember that, but I do. He said how much sugar a family should buy, and how often they should buy it. We centralized our government to the extreme, because it meant the bringing to a focus of all the powers of this great republic and centering them upon one definite object, namely, to win the World War. And we not only authorized that, but, as a nation, we supported it, and we made the sacrifices that were necessary to see that the boys who went over there were given every thing that we could possibly give to them to protect them and to help them to be effective as an army.

The result has been that we haven't come back (and the things

that I am saying about the United States are true with reference to other republics). We haven't come back to the place where we were before the War, and probably never will come back. Today we find all through the United States all kinds of businesses, all kinds of organizations going to the government for aid. We people in the South have raised too much cotton. We have raised more cotton than the world can consume and pay us a profitable price for it. Immediately we ask, what can the government do? The people out in the Middle West raised entirely too much grain a few years ago. They had it stacked up, thousands upon thousands of bushels and no sale for it. They said, "The Government must help." A man goes into an industry, and does not find that the industry is profitable, he goes to the government and asks for protection, and if he is influential enough, he gets a tariff to protect him. We, as a people, it seems to me, are giving to our executives, those who enforce laws, entirely too much power for the safety of a democracy. A democracy means that the individual is to have the maximum amount of individual freedom under the law. The result of this whole thing is that all over the world democracies have very materially strengthened and centralized their government. They stood before us as the great example of how a government should be operated and we have moved up toward the idea of a monarchy. The monarchical forms of government have gone the other way until today we find democracies in the world that have centered in their chief executive more power than monarchies have left to the monarchs. The English people today have more freedom under the law than the American people and the King of England does not have as much power as the President of the United States.