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FRESHMAN WEEK PROGRAM

Address to Freshmen -- President Wright

September 29, 1931

Young friends, we are delighted to have you with us at ^{the} ~~this~~ beginning of this college year. Dr. Meadows says you have started on a four-year voyage and will get acquainted with each other--he took a trip and got seasick, but still made friends--I expect you will get homesick, in fact, I hope you will. If you want to cry go ahead--^{there is no regulation against it} ~~we had had a basin put in each room in the dormitory.~~

~~But~~ seriously, we are delighted that you have found it so you can come to college this year, and doubly pleased to have you here with us. George Peabody made this statement on one occasion "Education, a debt due from the present to the future generations." ^{Oh that} ~~if~~ the people of this great Republic of ours could realize the ^{truth} ~~great truths~~ in those few words by that great man who loved his fellowmen -- "Education, a debt due from present to future generations." How are we going to pay this debt? We realize, (some of us do), that it is a debt that the state of North Carolina owes to the boys and girls of this old state of ours. And North Carolina is striving, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, but always with earnestness to pay this debt that the present generation owes to the one coming forward. For that reason the state of North Carolina has builded this institution. Two million dollars, in round numbers, have been spent here to give the young white men and women who wish to become teachers an opportunity to get that kind of education which will give them the greatest opportunity to be of service in paying the debt which we owe to the children of North Carolina. ~~who are here.~~ You have come to this institution because it is the institution of your choice; you have come with a purpose, ~~because~~ that has been characteristic of every freshman class that has entered our institution. You have come from your homes with the determination that you are going to fulfill

a part, at least, of the ambition of your lives and the ambition of those back home who have made sacrifices that you might come to college. You will meet teachers and officers who have dedicated their lives to the young people of this state, ~~but~~ it is just as well that I tell you at the beginning that we cannot educate you. All this organization, all this money spent by the state, all the efforts put forward, the annual appropriation of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars ~~a year~~ is here to give you an opportunity to educate yourselves. It is an individual proposition. Do not work for your teachers. Do not work for a grade. You are here to grow and develop intellectually, to acquire facts, to get knowledge, to get power that will enable you to go back and be of service somewhere in some community in this state, ^{that} ~~it~~ is your job. These teachers and officers are your friends. I am glad to tell you young people that you have come to a college where the whole organization is working together as one perfect unit to help the students who come here to attain the things that they left home to attain, but it is your job.

There is onething that I find not only among college students but a large number of people in the world-- the horror of saying "I don't know" If you don't know, say so. That's why you are here, to learn. A high school graduate went with his father to see the president of the college in which he planned to enroll and when asked by the president ^{How much do you know?} he said, "I'm not sure that I know anything." The president's answer was that perhaps he should be enrolled in the senior class, as it usually took a student three years to learn that ^{much}.

Admit that you don't know and ask and you will find people here who will take real pleasure in helping you find the information you wish. A large number of students are here now just to be of service to you. The college authorities haven't required these girls to come back, and the state of North

Carolina hasn't paid the expense of it; they have come just because they want to help you. And that spirit runs all through this college. Acquire knowledge, get all the information you can, and when you don't know, ask,

Ignorance, I sometimes think, ~~and this college is here to help overcome ignorance~~, is the worst influence in the world. Ignorance, the world over, has done more damage to the human family than war, famine, and pestilence combined. George Washington probably died because of the ignorance of ^{the} doctors who attended him. Many, many, young men and women have died because of the ignorance of those who were supposed to doctor them. ^{terrible} The condition of this world today is ^{what it is} because of the ignorance of ~~those who have~~ ^{what it is} dominated, ~~often in high places~~, the ruling classes in the various nations of the world, ~~and~~ ^{we} we are here as a band or an army with our faces to the world's worst enemy--ignorance, and endeavoring to help subdue that enemy. You have come to join the ranks and we are here to help you. We want to help you make the fight.

You are not going to find things here like they were back home. I had a girl come to college here one time who brought a feather bed in her trunk. She stayed about three weeks, came to me in tears; was going home; just "couldn't stand it"; etc. Finally said the food was the trouble, said there wasn't anything she could eat--said she wanted some corn bread, collards, and fat meat. That girl did go home--and married three weeks afterward. (~~Don't any of you girls to lie to me like she did~~). ~~But~~ I do want you to realize that it will not be like home, and there ^{are} ~~will be~~ a lot of things to learn. This organization is builded to fit on top of your high school education. Down in the lower grades you didn't have much choice; in high school you had a little more ^{in College still more} ~~and~~ ^{and} with the greater liberty came greater responsibilities. ~~As you go along in the scale of education the greater the liberty the greater the responsibility.~~ We are not going to try to make you study your lessons; we are going to give you the opportunity.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. If you do your task your career in college will be worthwhile, but it is your responsibility.

You will have a few, not many, but a few rules and regulations to observe and I think you should realize that most of them are made by the students themselves out of their experience in the college. ~~They have made a number of regulations to govern themselves.~~ And young friends, the world today is suffering for the lack of intelligent leadership, more than it has during the past fifty years. We need young men and women with vision. We need young men and women with ideals, who are willing to sacrifice to accomplish the worthwhile. I hope that you will join the band who will labor and wait; who are willing to sow the seed and wait for the harvest; who are willing to be disappointed but will not give up, who are going forward and making the world a better place ^{in which} to live in.

I saw a statement in the paper today to this effect: 70% of the men in WHO'S WHO in America are college men, and only one person in a hundred goes to college. One college man in forty achieves distinction, while only one non-college man in ten thousand achieves distinction. ¹⁰ Twelve per cent of the white population in North Carolina are illiterate. Young friends, there is a great task lying out in front of you; to remove the bondage of ignorance from the citizenship of your state; to break the shackles and to set the youth of North Carolina free; that you may make your whole state the thing that Aydock dreamed it would be. You are here to make your beginning in this great war against ignorance in our state.

And may Jehovah give to each of you the opportunity to accomplish your life's purpose.