

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

RAY LYMAN WILBUR (d. 1949)

Chancellor Ray Lyman Wilbur, who had served as President of the University (1916-1943) nearly half of the lifetime of the University, died at his home on the Stanford campus June 26, 1949. In recent years his excellent health had been somewhat impaired and his public appearances had become infrequent. Yet he remained active in public affairs until the week of his death, and almost to the last day he was in his office in the Hoover Library, deeply interested in all matters that involved Stanford University, and actively at work in writing and in carrying on an extensive correspondence. Within his last month, he had attended the preparatory school graduation exercises, of two of his grand-daughters, and was keen and alert in his comment upon proceedings and pleasantly moved by the attention given him and his family.

Dr. Wilbur was a member of the Palo Alto-Stanford community from the time of his arrival here to enter the freshman class of 1892. He was awarded the A. B. degree in physiology in 1896, the M. A. degree in 1897, and the M. D. degree from Cooper Medical College in San Francisco in 1899. He supplemented this study by graduate work in medicine at Frankfort-on-Main and London, 1903-4, and at the University of Munich, 1909-10. He first became a teaching member of the University faculty in 1896, serving as an instructor in physiology. In 1900 he was made an assistant Professor. After some years in the practice of medicine in Palo Alto, he became Professor of Medicine in 1909 and Dean of the Medical School two years later, resigning in 1916 upon election to the presidency of the University.

Dr. Wilbur early displayed great talent for the practice of medicine. In addition to his keen and precise thinking he possessed in high degree that natural intuition which enables a great doctor to make brilliant and accurate diagnoses. Legends of his achievements along this line still linger in the halls of Lane Hospital. No less important was his skill and resourcefulness in helping the patient, and when human art could do no more his kind and confidence-inspiring presence helped many a sufferer through those "cold gradations of decay." As a teacher he was incisive, epigrammatic and impressive, basing his discourse on a solid knowledge of the fundamental sciences. Years later, his students could still recall his discussions of individual patients.

Those in a position to know had prophesied for him a distinguished career as a research scholar in medicine. Many in this community became keenly aware of his skill and success in medical practice. All this was put aside when he became President. In his inaugural address early in 1916, when he was approaching his forty-first birthday, he said that he expected to devote the rest of his life to Stanford University. This he did, except when service to the nation took him away temporarily, first as Chief of the Food Conservation Division of the United States Food Administration (1917-1918) and later as Secretary of the Interior both under his life-long friend, Herbert Hoover. The whole record marks his career as an educational statesman.

From the outset of his presidency, he let it be known that he looked for advice and guidance to the men who had had so great a part in building the basic structure of the University under Dr. Jordan's leadership. He won their confidence, and in general their approval. He used with precision the machinery of the organization of this Academic Council. He leaned heavily upon the elective Advisory Board, Executive Committee, and Graduate Study Committee. The changes suggested by him from time to time were in the interests of efficiency. His more striking proposals were for drastic reorganization of graduate instruction, for the establishment of the Lower Division, and for the grouping of departments within Schools of the University.

Early in his administration, he indicated his belief in delegating many functions ordinarily carried on by the executive officer of a University, and in holding those chosen appointees to complete responsibility. This enabled him, as years went by, to give an increasing amount of time and energy to planning and developing the enlarged services of the University in the national community and to the great number of outside activities which as a public leader he was called upon to perform. His speed in grasping details and the general purport of a book, report, or situation, and in making administrative decisions was notable and extremely valuable.

Undoubtedly his scientific training gave him unusual accuracy in administration whenever he exercised that function. Just so, his great skill as a sportsman gave him a keen sense of the timing of the right moment for action. Clarity, directness, sometimes bluntness, and always homely illustration characterized his addresses on educational policy. Even the Annual Reports of the President, ordinarily summaries of routine administration, included many paragraphs of deep insight and some startling prophecies.

Throughout his years of administration he held to the basic belief that he was the representative of the faculty in all academic matters. His grasp of financial policies and of needs in the physical development of the University more and more gave him leadership in his relations with the Board of Trustees in the larger planning of the University's future. As a rule he held to the "long view." He knew how to wait, and he often did, but he did not drift.

His deep interest in youth and penetrating insight on their problems were well displayed in his addresses before the student body, particularly at the opening of each academic year. They governed his actions in all the years in protection of their best interests. He asked for maturity in the well remembered salutation, "Stanford Men and Women!"

Stanford was fortunate in having his intellectual and spiritual leadership for the period of a quarter century. His was the guidance which determined the destiny of a rapidly growing institution. His were the decisions that had to be made, and important decisions were well known. Less known was the day-to-day routine, and the constant battle for efficiency and integrity. His was a powerful mind but also an understanding heart, and thus it was that he came to deal, as the years went by, fairly, honestly, and painstakingly with the personal problems of a highly personalized community. There were times for stern and uncompromising action; there were times for cooperation and

adjustment. Always the growing University of Productive scholars was of primary concern. Tolerance, in Dr. Wilbur's leadership, did not mean surrender of principle nor compromise as a concession to peace. Rather he consistently emphasized flexibility of mind and often said that he realized that man very frequently betrayed his animal ancestry.

As a president, with personal experience and deep interest in teaching as well as in scholarship, he brought to the University a great number of promising scholars and gave them unusual opportunities for developing their powers in teaching and in productive research. His intimate relationship with educational and scientific foundations, coupled with their respect for his judgment, enabled the University to secure numerous grants of considerable size, both for the expansion and maintenance of research and the advancement of teaching. Notable in the list, and illustrative of each, were the foundation of the Food Research Institute, the launching of the Graduate School of Business, the establishment of Independent Study, and the progress of liberal education in the School of Humanities.

In the judgment of those well equipped by understanding and experience to know, we had in President Wilbur a farseeing scientist and an appreciative scholar. He was a statesman within the wide area of his knowledge and activity, and often the prophet, not only in matters of academic progress but upon questions of national concern and policy. His utterances and actions as a public man were highly influential in arousing public interest and in determining public policy. This was notable in child welfare and conservation of natural resources. Although his major interests and activities lay within the United States, he was one of the guiding spirits of the Institute of Pacific Relations from the time of its Honolulu conference in 1925. It is well to remember that his tasks were performed in the most productive and most tragic period in the history of the world.

In addition to his Reports as Secretary of the Interior and various volumes of which he was editor or co-author, he published Stanford Horizons, 1936; March of Medicine, 1938; and Human Hopes, 1940.

Dr. Wilbur was the recipient of a number of honorary degrees from American universities, and numerous other honors accorded him for public service in the fields of medicine, child welfare, conservation of natural resources, and international relations. Among these were the Snow medal "for distinguished service to humanity" awarded in 1943 and the testimonial certificate of the California Physicians Service, presented in 1949 which included the citation, "As a leader in the founding of this organization and as its president from that time until 1945, Doctor Wilbur has given C.P.S. the ultimate in his wisdom, energy and interest." Perhaps the spirit of the eulogies given at the time of his death was best expressed by Herbert Hoover when he wrote, "America is a better place for his having lived in it."

Marguerite May Blake Wilbur, who he married in 1898, died on December 24, 1946. Their devoted home life was an outstanding feature of the Wilbur administration. The provisions of Dr. Wilbur's will reflect clearly his devotion to family, to education, and to the abiding beliefs that make for an enduring society. All of their children survive,

Mrs. Jessica Ely, Blake Colburn, Dwight Locke, Mrs. Lois Proctor Hopper, and Ray Lyman, Jr.

The undersigned committee moves that at its meeting on September 30, 1949, the Academic Council of Stanford University adopt this memorial resolution as an expression of an abiding sense of deep loss in the passing of a great leader, and that a copy of the resolution be sent to each of the Wilbur children, and to the secretary of the Board of Trustees of Stanford University. It suggests that the resolution be made a part of the record of this meeting.

Arthur L. Bloomfield
Joseph S. Davis
Edgar E. Robinson, Chairman