

WANTS ACADEMIC FREEDOM

President Hyde of Boston University Makes a Plea for It.

PERIL IN "ROCKEFELLERISM"

Man Who Gives Money, He Says, Has No Right to Prescribe What Shall Be Taught—Others Have Rights.

Special to The New York Times.

BOSTON, June 5.—President William de Witt Hyde made a strong address at the commencement exercises of Boston University, which were held in Tremont Temple this afternoon. "Academic Freedom" was his subject. He said, in part:

"The last decade of the nineteenth century raised the question of academic freedom, in several cases; at Brown University, Chicago University, Kansas State Agricultural College, and Leland Stanford University. This question of academic freedom did not arise so long as the colleges were content to teach Latin, Greek, mathematics, and a little science and philosophy, for the simple reason that nobody cared much one way or the other what was taught about these things.

"Interference with liberty comes only when the subjects taught are those for which the people care. Now that economic and social questions have come to the front it is with these that troubles have arisen. It is no accident that all four cases cited arose in connection with utterances of economic and social questions.

"Social and economic questions, however, are destined to divide the public more sharply than ever before. To define accurately the rights and duties of the parties to such university education, securing reasonable liberty for all and absolutely free course for the truth, is the most pressing educational problem which the nineteenth century has handed over to the twentieth for solution.

"Who then are the parties to university instruction? The parties to this partnership are six: First, the founders, donors, and benefactors; second, the State; third, the Trustees, Regents, or Overseers; fourth, professors and instructors; fifth, the students; sixth, the constituency of the college, that portion of the public from which money and students count."

At this point the speaker sounded a warning against the spread of "Rockefellerism," as he termed it, saying of the man who gives money to institutions of learning:

"He has no right whatever to dictate the specific view which the institution shall teach. The moment a donor has given his money he has entered into a partnership with the five other parties of the institution, and his rights must be limited by the rights which belong to them. Neither may he legitimately draw up a creed or statement of opinion which the Professors of the institution shall be bound to teach.

"To do that would be like sending a boat to sea with the tiller lashed in position, and with instructions to the sailors on no account to touch it, even though the boat might be making straight for the icebergs or the rocks."

Further along in his address Dr. Hyde said:

"It is the duty of the State to protect the public against misdirection of funds and the cheapening of degrees. An institution founded for the propagation of Christian Science, theosophy, palmistry, astrology, or alchemy would have no claim to exemption from taxation or the conferring of degrees, for some of these subjects have been proved to be without foundation, and others, to say the least, have yet to make good their claim of public confidence.

"There is no reason why the public at large should contribute to the support of such institutions or place confidence in their graduates. Furthermore, the State should refuse charters to institutions which attempt to duplicate means of instruction already adequate. The State should not support ten colleges when five are adequate to serve its educational needs.

"The State should refuse to grant charters for the promulgation of individual prejudice. It should not allow an institution to bind itself to teach either free trade or protection, the gold standard or the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1.

"Either imperialism or anti-imperialism; either private or municipal ownership of public service corporations; either trinitarianism or unitarianism; either universal salvation or the endless punishment of the wicked; either socialism or individualism; either sacerdotalism or independence of the local church. One side of these questions has as much right to be impartially presented as the other; consequently the State should not enter into partnership with either party."

Taking up the subject of professors' status, the speaker said: "Removal of professors for incompetence is a duty of Trustees and Presidents which they have never half lived up to. To shift this duty to students or to the elective system, as is being done at present, is cowardly negligence. The incompetent man should be dismissed at the first opportunity. Academic freedom demands it.

"Academic freedom is as necessary to the students as to any other party of the institution. We can never make men out of the boys who come to us unless, in some form or other, we give them a career in which to work out freely what is in them. Wherever prescription and paternalism undertake to domineer the life of the students, we are sure to find either lawlessness or good-for-nothing effeminate namby-pamby weaklings."